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Attitudes and anxieties of business and education students towards English: some data from the Basque Country

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to focus on university students' attitudes towards English and their anxieties concerning the use of English in the Basque Country, a multilingual context where exposure to English is limited but internationalisation is an important aim. Participants were 360 undergraduate university students of business ($N = 180$) and education ($N = 180$) at the University of the Basque Country. The results of the questionnaires indicate that business students had a more positive attitude(s) towards English than education students. The findings also indicate that female business students have a relatively positive attitude in comparison to male business students but also a higher level of anxiety. The results are discussed as related to the situation of English-medium instruction in Southern European bilingual areas and previous studies on gender, attitudes and anxiety.

Introduction

The use of English as a lingua franca has spread all over the world as a result of globalisation (Alcón & Michavila, 2012; Coleman, 2006). However, the spread of English is not uniform and that is reflected in the differences in levels of proficiency. The English proficiency (EF) ranking, compiled using data from over 900,000 adults from 70 countries, identifies Sweden, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway and Finland as the countries where the highest scores in English are obtained (Education First, 2015). In some European Countries such as France, Italy and Spain the scores are below European Union averages. The Eurobarometer (2012) pointed out that only 22% of the Spanish population was able to have a conversation in English, a very low rate compared to other European countries such as the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark where approximately 90% of the participants reported that they could have a conversation in English.

Universities have been influenced by internationalisation policies which lead to an increase of foreign students, exchange programmes and staff mobility. Internationalisation has become a priority for many universities in Europe and the use of English is promoted to attract international students and researchers from other countries (Airey, Lauridsen,

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Räsänen, Salö, & Schwach, 2015). As English is the main language of science and technology as well as the global lingua franca of academia, its use as the medium of instruction is becoming increasingly more common all over the world (see e.g. Dimova, Hultgren, & Jensen, 2015; Hu & Lei, 2014; Mauranen, Hynninen, & Ranta, 2010; Torres-Olave, 2012). In Europe, the spread of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) has been reinforced by the increased mobility associated with the development of the European Higher Education Area. A recent study by the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) on EMI in Europe lists the following main reasons to justify EMI (Wächter & Maiworm, 2014):

- Need to raise the international profile of the institution
- Abolition of language obstacles for the enrolment of foreign students
- Improvement in the international competences of domestic students
- Compensation for financial shortfalls by increasing enrolment and income
- Brain gain by recruiting international academic staff
- Altruistic motive(s) in contributing to development

An additional reason that is more often expressed by universities in Southern Europe is the importance of improving students' English language proficiency (Cenoz, 2009; Costa & Coleman, 2013; Fortanet, 2013). This study aims at exploring the attitudes and anxieties of business and education students towards English in the Basque Country, a multilingual context where exposure to English is limited but internationalisation is an important aim of the university.

Background to the study

Similar trends and different rates in EMI

EMI in higher education is spreading all over Europe but there are important differences when Northern Europe and Southern Europe are compared and there are also remarkable differences across disciplines. Wächter and Maiworm (2014) use three indicators to estimate the differences in EMI in higher education: the percentage of institutions offering EMI, the proportion of programmes provided in English and the number of students enrolled in EMI programmes. The rankings for the countries with the most and the least provision of EMI based on the combination of the three indicators can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Ranking of countries according to EMI in European higher education.

Countries high in the rankings		Countries low in the rankings	
Netherlands	1	Poland	18
Denmark	2	Slovak Republic	18
Sweden	3	Italy	20
Finland	4	France	21
Cyprus	5	Turkey	21
Switzerland	6	Spain	23
Lithuania	7	Portugal	24
Latvia	8	Romania	25
Austria	9	Greece	26
Norway	9	Bulgaria	27
		Croatia	28

Source: Adapted from Wächter and Maiworm (2014, p. 47).

The highest and lowest scores in the ranking provide an indication of the differences among countries in Europe. The data on the percentage of institutions offering EMI in different countries are also remarkable. Half or more of the institutions offer EMI in countries such as Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands and Iceland, the percentage reaching 80% in the first two. The proportion of institutions offering EMI is around 20% or lower in countries such as Spain, Greece, France, Bulgaria, Italy, Croatia and Portugal (see Wächter & Maiworm, 2014).

Similar differences have also been pointed out by Hultgren, Jensen, and Dimova (2015) when looking at master's programmes entirely or partly in English: 'There is a rather striking north–south divide with the Nordic and Baltic states having a higher proportion of English-medium master's programmes per 100,000 inhabitants than Southern Europe' (p. 3). Comparing 11 European countries, Hultgren et al. (2015, p. 4) report that there are nine master's programmes in English per 100,000 inhabitants in Iceland, 7.9 in Sweden and 6.5 in Denmark, yet the average is less than 1 in Germany, Spain, Italy, Turkey and Croatia.

The spread of EMI in Europe has been the subject of some debate. Kuteeva and Airey (2014) discuss the need to preserve the use of Swedish in academic contexts, because English is widely used in Scandinavian universities. Mortensen (2014) refers to the fear of 'domain loss' derived from the increased use of English in higher education in Denmark. The idea that some languages will be excluded from high level academic domains at the expense of English is discussed in countries where the national languages are not very strong in demographic terms and also in some bilingual and multilingual regions where minority languages are spoken.

Another characteristic of EMI is that it is not spread in a uniform way across disciplines. The differences across disciplines can be observed in the distribution of English-taught master's degrees in Europe (Brenn-White & Faethe, 2013). Twenty-eight per cent of the master's programmes in business and economics are taught through the medium of English while the percentages are much lower in applied sciences, professions and arts (7%) and humanities and art (8%). Bolton and Kuteeva (2012) reported the results of a survey conducted at Stockholm University. Participants were a total of 4524 students, 3277 undergraduates and 1247 master's degree students. They found that EMI was more widespread in science and social sciences than in humanities and law. EMI was used more at the master's level than at the undergraduate level. Kuteeva and Airey (2014) also reported the differences in the number of PhD theses in English across disciplines in Sweden. The highest percentages can be found in science, medicine, technology, philosophy and economics, and the lowest in education, arts, religion and history. The differences among disciplines can also be found in other universities such as the University of the Basque Country, where the study reported here was conducted.

Attitudes towards EMI, anxiety and gender

The differences across disciplines also affect attitudes towards EMI. For example, Bolton and Kuteeva (2012) reported in the survey conducted at Stockholm University that students generally supported English-medium courses, although the results were more mixed for humanities. Airey et al. (2015) considered the results of several studies on lecturer and student attitudes in higher education and concluded that there are important differences across disciplines.

There are mixed feelings regarding the implementation of EMI in Southern Europe, where it is usually optional. Campagna and Pulcini (2014) discuss the situation in Italy where the use of EMI in some institutions is strongly contested. One of the main challenges is the level of English language proficiency held by teaching staff and students in countries such as Italy and Spain. Costa and Coleman (2013) reported on the results of a survey conducted in 38 Italian universities. Their findings indicate that the faculties where EMI is most widespread are Economics and Engineering and that the experience of teaching through the medium of English is positive.

An additional challenge is that English is a third language in some bilingual areas, such as Catalonia, Valencia and the Basque Country in Spain. In these regions, the challenge of implementing EMI is even greater. Firstly, the level of EF is more limited than in Northern Europe and what is more, English can potentially be seen as growing at the expense of the minority language. The official use of the minority language in higher education has been promoted by language policies developed since the 1980. These policies have encouraged the use of Basque and Catalan for teaching and research at all levels of higher education. Soler-Carbonell and Gallego-Balsà (2016) reported how Catalan is the main language of instruction at the University of Lleida in Catalonia at the undergraduate level, but that English is becoming stronger at the graduate level. The main language for doctoral dissertations is Spanish (60.2%) while the percentages for theses written in English (18%) and Catalan (20.7%) are similar. Block (2016, p. 108) concluded that 'it is English, and not Spanish, which poses the most serious long-term threat to efforts to make Catalan the dominant vehicular language in the upper echelons of HE (the writing of MA dissertations and PhD theses)'.

Llurda, Cots, and Armengol (2013, p. 218) conducted a study on students who participated in an EMI programme at a Catalan university and reported their positive attitudes but pointed out that these attitudes are not necessarily 'representative of the overall student body, which would probably be more critical of any policy attempting to increase the presence of English in the academic context'. Another interesting point is that students expected to be able to choose the language of the course, so taking some courses in English was not compulsory. They wanted courses offered in English to also be available in Catalan and/or Spanish. Students gave as their main reason for choosing a course taught in English the possibility to improve their language skills. Regarding the implications of internationalisation for Catalan, Garrett and Gallego Balsà (2014, p. 371) reported mixed attitudes on part of 150 local students at the University of Lleida. The worry about the using Catalan less often can be seen in the following comment:

> Crec que el català pot sortir perjudicat. Si vénen estudiants de fora segurament sabran anglès i també castellà, però no el català. Això fa que s'hagi de canviar el català pel castellà i per tant el catatlà s'usa molt menys. [I think Catalan could be damaged. If foreign students come, they will probably know both English and Spanish, but not Catalan. This means that we have to switch to Spanish, and therefore, Catalan is used much less.] (2014, p. 371)

Fortanet (2013) conducted a study at the University Jaume I of Castelló in the region of Valencia. She reported some negative attitudes towards EMI but also towards Spanish and Catalan by some students. Similarly, Doiz, Lasagabaster, and Sierra (2013) found that a number of students do not have a positive attitude towards EMI in the Basque Country where English is also a third language. They gave two different reasons for

these attitudes: the lack of confidence about their proficiency in English and the negative effect that the increasing presence of English can have on Basque. Larrinaga and Amurrio (2015) conducted a study among academic staff and reported that EMI can cause concern and mistrust because of 'the possible reduction and dissolution of the teaching space won for the minority language' (p. 165) but other participants did not see EMI as a threat. The potential effect of English on Basque can also be felt in online discussions. Zabala Unzalu (2015) explains that there are positive aspects in internationalisation and using English in doctoral theses but she also expresses her worry about its implications for the Basque language:

> *Joera horrek ondorioak ditu euskararen erregistro akademiko-profesionalen garapen eta finkapenean … ..Beste hizkuntzen erregistro espezializatuen galera edo garapen eza da ingelesak komunikazio akademiko-profesionalean duen lingua franca moduko erabileraren albo-kalteetako bat.* [This trend has consequences for the development and consolidation of the academic-professional register in Basque … . The loss or poor development of specialized registers of other languages is collateral damage resulting from the use of English as a lingua franca in academic-professional communication.]

In spite of the worries about minority languages, attitudes towards EMI are quite positive in many countries in Southern Europe where EMI is usually optional. However, as the level of proficiency in English is lower than in Northern European countries, EMI could potentially imply a higher level of anxiety than in countries where there is more exposure and more opportunities to use English. Foreign language anxiety is a complex multidimensional construct that can influence the process of learning a foreign language. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986, p. 128) defined foreign language anxiety as 'a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process'. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) found that students with a higher competence level in the foreign language have lower levels of foreign language classroom anxiety and higher levels of foreign language enjoyment. Santos, Cenoz, and Gorter (2015) also reported significant differences in communicative anxiety between participants who have different levels of proficiency in English among young adults in the Basque Country. These results confirm previous studies that have associated English language proficiency with higher levels of anxiety in other contexts (see, e.g. Liu, 2006; Thompson & Lee, 2013).

Another interesting factor when analysing EMI in higher education is gender because of its potential effect on attitudes and anxiety. In general terms, female learners' attitudes towards foreign language learning are more positive than male learners' attitudes (Jiménez Catalán, 2003) but their level of anxiety is higher (Cheng, 2002; Dewaele, MacIntyre, Boudreau, & Dewaele, 2016; Lien, 2011;Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013; Park & French, 2013; Thompson, 2015). More positive attitudes towards foreign language learning have been associated with female students. Koul, Roy, Kaewkuekool, and Ploisawaschai (2009) carried out a study at two universities and a vocational college in Thailand. They found that females not only had higher levels of instrumental motivation and language proficiency but that they also 'had significantly higher levels of perceived foreign language anxiety than males although previous research has noted that males are less likely to admit anxiety than females' (p. 685). Park and French (2013) conducted a study on university students taking an English conversation course in Korea and found that female

students self-reported higher levels of anxiety than male students. Öztürk and Gürbüz (2013) carried out a study among university students in Turkey and reported that both female and male university students experience communicative anxiety, with female students being more motivated but also more anxious than male students when communicating in English. Dewaele et al. (2016) found that females felt more worried about errors and less confident when using the foreign language but they also showed more interest and enjoyment in the foreign language classroom. The study conducted by Gargalianou, Muehlfeld, Urbig, and Van Witteloostuijn (2015) in a business school at a Dutch university discusses the higher level of anxiety presented by female students by explaining the complex relationship between anxiety and personality and also the differences between males and females in willingness to admit to anxiety.

EMI at the University of the Basque Country

The University of the Basque Country is the largest university in the Basque Autonomous Community and its official languages are Basque and Spanish. This implies the right to use either of those languages to teach and learn in Basque or Spanish, and to publish and conduct research in either of the two languages (Cenoz, 2012). Nowadays approximately half of the undergraduate students have Basque as the language of instruction and the other half Spanish. The Multilingualism Plan approved in 2005 added the possibility of using a foreign language as well (Cenoz & Gorter, 2012). The plan aims to improve students' proficiency in a foreign language (mainly English) in order to have access to academic information, mobility and better work/career prospects. It also aims at attracting foreign students and academic staff.

The spread of EMI is quite modest when compared to universities in Northern Europe. In the year 2015/2016 there were 277 courses being taught in English at undergraduate level, which is a very small number compared to the total number of courses at the university. In 2014–2015, out of 33,085 undergraduate students, a total of 4200 (12.7%) were enrolled in the multilingualism programme but there are substantial differences across disciplines. Business studies and economics offer a total of 79 courses in English while education offers only eight subjects apart from the specific courses to specialise as an English language teacher. Seventeen of the 100 master's programmes offered by the university are either partially or completely taught through the medium of English. In the year 2015 over half of the PhD theses were in Spanish (61%) but the percentage of theses in English is increasing (30.9%) while the percentage in Basque is lower than in the other two languages (8.1%). The differences across disciplines are also remarkable: 91.2% of the theses in English were in science, engineering and technology and health science while only 8.8% were in social science and humanities.

It is difficult to know to what extent EMI will spread in the future in contexts such as the Basque Country due to the confluence of several elements. Proficiency and exposure to the English language are limited in comparison to countries in Northern Europe but the differences between disciplines are also prominent. These elements, together with the use of two other languages, Basque and Spanish in higher education, may contribute to the development of specific attitudes towards English and could potentially result in high levels of anxiety concerning its use. This study aims at exploring the attitudes and anxieties of business and education students towards English. These two disciplines

were chosen because they correspond to the biggest differences in the implementation of EMI at the University of the Basque Country. The study also looks at the differences between male and female students. The research questions are the following:

RQ1. Do university students majoring in business and university students majoring in education have different attitudes towards English?

RQ2. Do university students majoring in business and university students majoring in education have differences in communicative anxiety?

RQ3. Are there differences in attitudes and anxiety between male and female students?

Methodology

Participants

This study includes 360 participants, 214 female (59.4%) and 146 male (40.6%). The mean age of the participants was 20.3 years (SD = 2.7). Half of the participants (N = 180) were university students majoring in business (50.6% male and 49.4% female) and the other half (N = 180) were university students majoring in education (30.6% male and 69.4% female). Both groups were undergraduate students in their second or third year at the University of the Basque Country. Business students were taking part in the Multilingual Plan and took one or more subjects through the medium of English.

With regard to the linguistic repertoire of the participants, 60.3% (n = 217) listed Spanish as their mother tongue, while 39.7% (n = 143) indicated Basque as their first language. The average age at which these participants started learning English was 5.7 (SD = 1.78). Both groups self-rated their language proficiency in Basque, Spanish and English on a scale from 1 to 10 for listening, speaking, reading and writing. The average scores for the three languages can be seen in Table 2.

Self-ratings of proficiency in the three languages indicated that participants were highly proficient in Spanish and Basque. The lowest scores were given to their third language, English. There were no statistically significant differences between business and education students in any of the languages.

Instruments

The instruments used to collect the data were the following:

Background questionnaire: The background questions were designed to obtain demographic, academic and linguistic data about the participants. This questionnaire included the self-ratings of proficiency in Basque, Spanish and English.

Attitude questionnaire: The attitude questionnaire was based on Gardner's (2004) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery and consisted of 19 closed items. Participants were asked

Table 2. Proficiency in Basque, Spanish and English.

	Business students		Education students	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Basque	35.46	6.02	34.45	6.41
Spanish	37.40	3.99	37.00	3.78
English	25.38	5.50	24.41	6.03

to rate statements on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from (1) 'strongly disagree' to (7) 'strongly agree'. Two items of the questionnaire had a negative value and they were reversed when coding. Internal consistency for this scale was measured and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 was obtained. The attitude questionnaire was in Basque and Spanish, so participants could choose the version which they felt more comfortable with.

Anxiety questionnaire: This questionnaire was an adaptation of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale questionnaire developed by Horwitz et al. (1986), which is one of the most extensively used scales to evaluate foreign language anxiety in the fields of second language acquisition, psychology and education. As participants in our study were not taking English language classes, the questionnaire was adapted by selecting the items that were not linked to language classes and also took into account the questionnaire used by Rubio Alcalá (2004) for a Spanish context. The anxiety questionnaire consisted of 13 closed items. Participants were asked to rate statements on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from (1) 'strongly disagree' to (7) 'strongly agree'. One item of the questionnaire had a negative value which was reversed when coding. Internal consistency for this scale was measured and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.81 was obtained. As before, participants could choose to fill in the questionnaire either in Basque or Spanish.

Procedure

Participants signed a consent form allowing the data to be used for the purposes of the research study. The data were collected during the students' classes in the spring of 2015 and were analysed with the SPSS program.

Results

Business and education students' attitudes towards English

The first research question aims at analysing business and education students' attitudes towards the use of English. In order to answer this question, we first conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to examine the underlying dimensions of the attitude questionnaire. Then an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was carried out to establish the differences in attitudes between students in business and education.

The result of the varimax rotated factor analysis was a two-factor solution with the 19 items. The first factor was labelled as 'Positive attitudes', and indicated participants' eagerness and interest when learning English. This factor accounted for 35.58% of the total variance and included 11 items (1–11). The second factor, labelled as 'Personal commitment and motivation to learn English', which indicated participants' effort, accounted for 8.86% of the total variance and compromised 8 items (12–19). The loadings results are summarised in Table 3.

Once the factor analysis was carried out and two factors were obtained, the items belonging to each factor were averaged so as to use these averaged scores as dependent variables. Participants in this study were divided into groups according to their academic field and then a one-way ANOVA was conducted to explore the differences between business and education students' attitudes on the two factors. The results indicated that the attitudes towards English seemed in general rather positive but there were also

Table 3. Varimax rotated loadings for factor analysis of the motivation scale ($N = 360$).

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	h^2
Factor 1: Positive attitudes			
1. I wish I could speak several languages	**0.66**		0.44
2. Learning English is important for my professional future	**0.70**		0.52
3. Knowing English is an important goal in my life	**0.69**		0.59
4. I wish I could read the newspaper in several languages	**0.52**		0.31
5. Knowing English is important, because it allows me to meet people	**0.52**		0.38
6. I would like to learn as much English as possible	**0.55**		0.49
7. My goal is to speak English without making mistakes	**0.52**		0.49
8. Being bilingual is something valued in society	**0.69**		0.49
9. Knowing English is important for finding a good job in the Basque Country	**0.69**		0.49
10. It is important to have English certificates when looking for a job	**0.71**		0.50
11. Being bilingual is important to me	**0.68**		0.51
Factor 2: Personal commitment and motivation to learn English			
12. I try to understand everything I hear in English		**0.56**	0.47
13. As I have a good English level, I feel more motivated to learn a new language		**0.57**	0.34
14. My experiences with English have been so positive, that I have continued improving the language		**0.72**	0.52
15. I would like to have friends, whose first language is English		**0.48**	0.33
16. I feel motivated to learn English for being able to communicate with English speakers		**0.52**	0.41
17. My goal is to achieve a perfect pronunciation in English		**0.44**	0.38
18. Learning other languages is boring		**0.58**	0.34
19. I prefer to spend my time on other things than learning English		**0.62**	0.38

some differences. The differences between the two groups of participants in 'Positive attitudes' (factor 1) were statistically significant, $F(1, 358) = 6.16$; $p = .01$. Business students ($M = 5.82$, $SD = 0.81$) showed on average more positive attitudes with regard to learning English than students majoring in education ($M = 5.60$, $SD = 0.85$). The differences between the two groups of participants in 'Personal commitment and motivation to learn English' (factor 2) were also statistically significant, $F(1, 358) = 5.90$; $p = .01$. Business students ($M = 4.79$, $SD = 0.82$) were more committed and motivated to learn English than students majoring in education ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 0.92$). The results are shown in Table 4.

Business and education students' communicative anxiety

The second research question aims at analysing the differences between business and education students' anxiety in English. The first step was also an EFA so as to examine the underlying dimensions of the anxiety questionnaire. The result of the varimax rotated factor analysis was a two-factor solution including the 13 items of the questionnaire. The first factor, entitled 'Communicative anxiety' identified participants' apprehension when speaking English. This factor accounted for 33.41% of the total variance and included 9 items (1–9). The second factor, 'Concern about own communicative competence', which indicated participants' worries regarding the English language, accounted

Table 4. University students' attitudes towards English (max = 7).

	Business students (n = 180)		Education students (n = 180)			
	M	SD	M	SD	F	S
F1: positive attitudes	5.82	0.81	5.60	0.85	6.16	0.01
F2: personal commitment	4.79	0.82	4.56	0.92	5.90	0.01

Table 5. Varimax rotated loadings for factor analysis of the anxiety scale ($N = 360$).

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	h^2
Factor 1: Communicative anxiety			
1. I feel uncomfortable speaking English	**0.75**		0.58
2. I feel nervous when I have to answer in English	**0.61**		0.54
3. I had such negative experiences speaking in English that I prefer not to use it	**0.68**		0.47
4. I feel comfortable when I speak in English with my friends	**0.66**		0.44
5. Sometimes I get nervous thinking that others will laugh when I speak English	**0.44**		0.33
6. I feel nervous if I have to speak in English without preparation	**0.61**		0.63
7. I feel nervous when I have to speak in English in front of others	**0.64**		0.63
8. I was so frustrated with English lessons at school, that I decided not to continue practicing the language	**0.70**		0.52
9. I feel uncomfortable speaking English by phone	**0.41**		0.35
Factor 2: Concern about own communicative competence			
10. I worry about making mistakes speaking in English		**0.72**	0.53
11. Although I have a good English level I get nervous		**0.63**	0.48
12. I feel overwhelmed when I am not able to express what I think in English		**0.54**	0.35
13. When I get nervous it looks as if I know less English		**0.66**	0.44

for 15.37% of the total variance and compromised 4 items (10–13). The results of the factor analysis can be seen in Table 5.

Following the same procedure used to answer the first research question, after the two factors were obtained the anxiety items belonging to each factor were averaged and used as dependent variables. Participants were divided into two groups, business and education students. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to explore the differences in communicative anxiety towards English between the two groups of students. The differences between the two groups of participants in 'Communicative anxiety' (factor 1) were not statistically significant, $F(1, 358) = 0.00$; $p = .93$. The differences in 'Concern about own communicative competence' (factor 2) were statistically significant, $F(1, 358) = 4.94$; $p = .02$. Business students ($M = 4.54$, SD = 1.03) were more concerned about their own communicative competence than students majoring in education ($M = 4.32$, SD = 0.87). The results are shown in Table 6.

Attitudes, anxiety and gender

The third research question addresses the issue of the differences in attitudes and anxiety between male and female students.

In order to examine the differences in students' positive attitudes according to gender and academic field a two-way ANOVA was carried out. Factor 1 'Positive attitudes' was considered as the dependant variable, while the independent variables considered in this study were two: gender (male/female) and academic field business vs. education). There was a main effect of gender $F(1, 356) = 5.78$, $p = .01$ indicating that female participants showed more positive attitudes ($M = 5.79$, SD = 0.85) than male participants ($M = 5.61$,

Table 6. University students' anxiety towards English (max = 7).

|	Business students (n = 180)		Education students (n = 180)		F	S
	M	SD	M	SD		
Anxiety	4.02	1.01	4.02	1.08	0.00	0.93
Concern	4.54	1.03	4.32	0.87	4.94	0.02
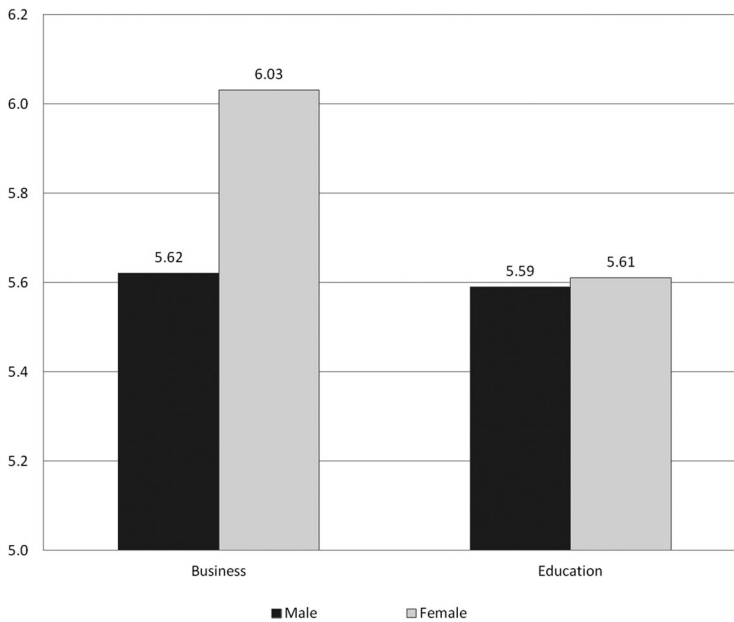
Figure 1. Positive attitudes, gender and academic field.

SD = 0.80). Female business students had higher scores (M = 6.03, SD = 0.73) than male business students (M = 5.62, SD = 0.84). Education students' scores were very close to those of male business students, both in the case of males (M = 5.59, SD = 0.76) and females (M = 5.61, SD = 0.89). There was a statistically significant interaction between the effects of gender and academic field on students' positive attitudes, $F(1, 356)$ = 4.41, p = .03. The results can be seen in Figure 1.

Personal commitment and gender

A two-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the differences in students' personal commitment according to gender and academic field. Factor 2 'Personal commitment' on the attitude scale was considered as the dependant variable, while two independent variables were considered: gender (male/female) and academic field (business and education). There were significant differences related to gender $F(1, 356)$ = 5.30, p = .02, indicating that female participants showed more personal commitment and motivation towards learning English (M = 4.75, SD = 0.91) than male participants (M = 4.57, SD = 0.81).

It was found that female business students had higher scores (M = 4.97, SD = 0.83) than male business students (M = 4.61, SD = 0.77). Female education students' scores were very close to those of male business students, (M = 4.59, SD = 0.94) and female education students had higher scores than male education students (M = 4.50, SD = 0.87). There was no interaction between the effects of gender and academic field on students' personal commitment, $F(1, 356)$ = 1.99, p = .15. The results can be seen in Figure 2.
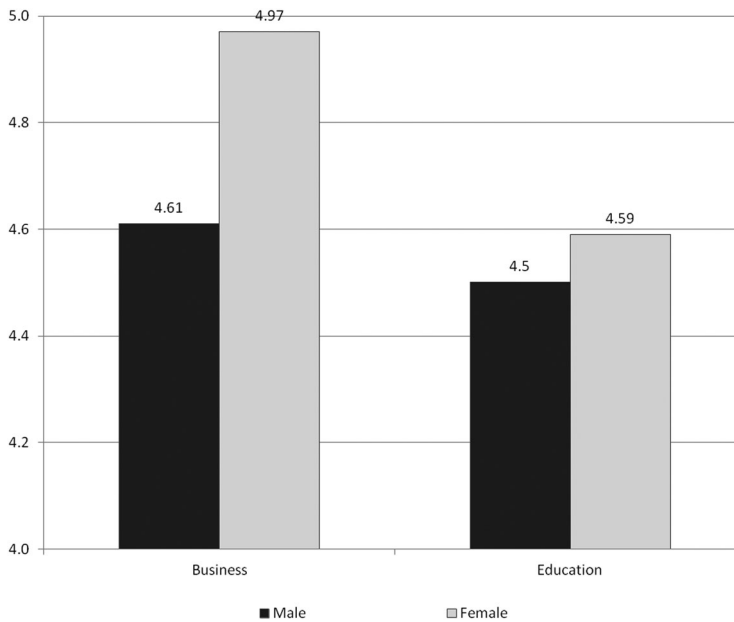
Figure 2. Commitment, gender and academic field.
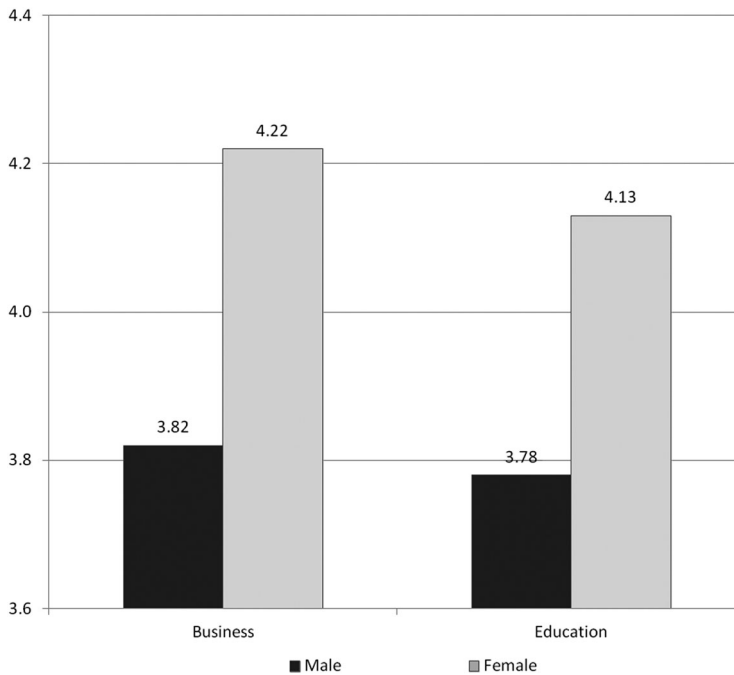
Communicative anxiety and gender

An ANOVA (two-way) was also conducted to explore the differences in communicative anxiety as related to gender and academic field. In contrast to the two factors in attitudes and factor 2 in anxiety, the ANOVA on factor 1 'communicative anxiety' of the anxiety scale (Table 6) indicated that there were no significant differences related to academic field. The two-way ANOVA showed that there was a main effect of gender $F(1, 356) = 10.96$, $p = .00$, indicating that female participants had more communicative anxiety ($M = 4.17$, SD = 1.07) than male participants ($M = 3.80$, SD = 0.97).

Female business students were found to have the highest levels of anxiety ($M = 4.22$, SD = 1.10), followed by female education students ($M = 4.13$, SD = 1.06). Male students' anxiety was lower both in the case of male business students ($M = 3.82$, SD = 0.87) and male education students ($M = 3.78$, SD = 1.11). There was no interaction between the effects of gender and academic field on students' communicative anxiety, $F(1, 356) = 0.05$, $p = .81$. The results can be seen in Figure 3.

Concern about own communicative competence and gender

In order to examine the effect of gender and academic field on students' concern about their own communicative competence in English (factor 2) a two-way ANOVA was conducted. There was a main effect of gender, $F(1, 356) = 5.59$, $p = .01$, indicating that female participants were more concerned about their own linguistic competence ($M = 4.51$, SD = 0.99) than male participants ($M = 4.31$, SD = 0.90).

Once again, female business students had the highest levels of anxiety ($M = 4.71$, SD = 1.09). Male business students were next ($M = 4.38$, SD = 0.95) followed very closely by female education students ($M = 4.37$, SD = 0.89). The lowest level of concern was shown in male education students ($M = 4.21$, SD = 0.82). There was no interaction between the
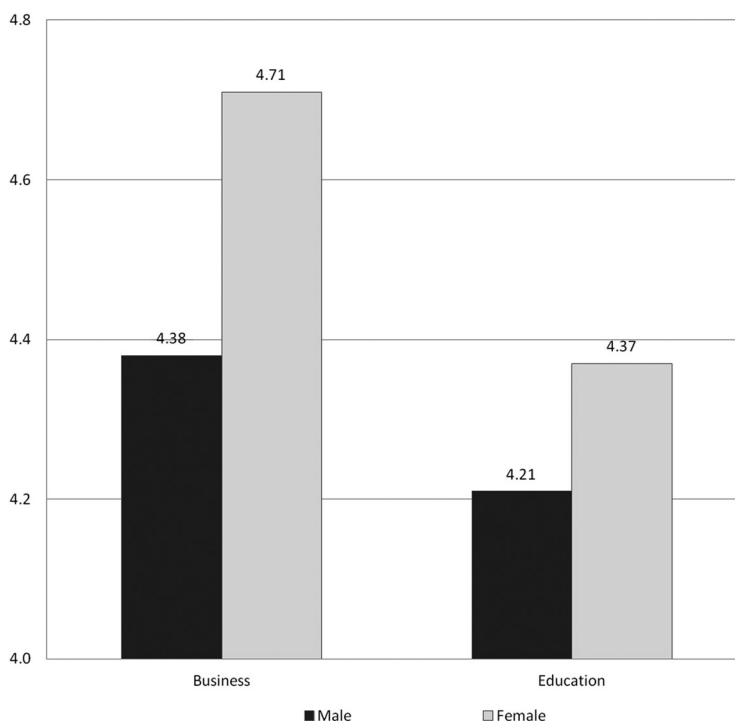
Figure 3. Communicative anxiety, gender and academic field.

effects of gender and academic field on students' concern, $F(1, 356) = 0.75$, $p = .38$. The results can be seen in Figure 4.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that business students have more positive attitudes towards English than education students. The comparisons between students in the two fields showed that this was the case for both dimensions of attitudes towards English: positive attitudes and personal commitment. Business students seem to see English as a very important tool for their professional career, in terms of contacting and building external relationships with foreign companies or working for multinationals. For instance, Taillefer (2007) reported that a high level of competence in English was viewed as a requisite for economics graduates who deal with foreign languages at work-place. At the University of the Basque Country, EMI is more prevalent at the undergraduate level in business studies and economics than in any other studies and the business students in the sample were EMI students. Even though the spread of EMI is limited at the University of the Basque Country, our results confirm those of Bolton and Kuteeva (2012) regarding the differences across disciplines found in the survey conducted in Sweden. The results also confirm the positive attitudes towards English reported by Byun et al. (2011) in the case of Korean business students. Interestingly, there is the assumption that business students will need English more than education students in their future jobs and that for this reason, together with the availability of EMI courses, they are more committed and have more positive attitudes. This goes in line with the

Figure 4. Concern about own communicative competence, gender and academic field.

study conducted by Taillefer (2007) who found that English language competence helped economics graduates to a certain extent in getting their first job position. However, it is not clear that business students will need English more than education students given that in the context of the Basque Country EMI is spreading fast in primary and secondary education. There appears to be a mismatch between the strong tradition of associating English with business studies and new demands in the job market. The students in this study as well as the university itself with its differences in the courses offered in English follow the tradition rather than the new emergent situation. Kuteeva and Airey (2014) explain the low demand for EMI in education as related to its vocational orientation but in the Basque Country there is an increasing need for English speaking teachers.

Our findings also indicate that there are certain differences between business and education students regarding students' concern about their own communicative competence. Anxiety can be associated with lower levels of proficiency and is commonplace among students with limited exposure to English, as is the case in Southern Europe (Santos et al., 2015). Likewise, it is common for people to feel apprehension when speaking English and to be concerned about their English level, fluency and pronunciation. Business students may also be more concerned about their own performance because they face those limitations in EMI. The self-reported proficiency in English is not higher for education students than for those studying business but they might feel less anxious because they are not in an EMI programme.

Our study shows some interesting patterns regarding gender. Female participants have better general attitudes and are more committed to English than male students as has

been reported in other studies (Dewaele et al., 2016; Koul et al., 2009; Llurda, Doiz, & Sierra, 2015). Female participants have significantly higher levels of anxiety than male participants, which is also a common finding in other studies (see e.g. Dewaele et al., 2016; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013; Park & French, 2013). The most interesting finding, however, is that while female business students have a more positive attitude, they are the ones who suffer more anxiety. It seems that female students taking part in an EMI programme and facing the challenge of studying through the medium of English, take more responsibility but they also pay the price in terms of concern about their own performance. Gargalianou et al. (2015) suggest that male speakers could be less likely to report anxieties than female students but it would be interesting to see to what extent this female acknowledgement of anxiety is reflected in natural conversations in English.

This study focuses on EMI but it is limited to the comparison of business and education studies in one university. The study has examined attitudes held by university students towards English and their anxiety about the use of English in the Basque Country. In this context, where a minority language is spoken and English is a third language, there is a slow development of EMI which is linked to limited proficiency in English, current attitudes and levels of anxiety. The study shows some important differences not only between business and education students but also between genders.

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