

English Medium Instruction: a way towards linguistically better prepared professionals in the Basque Autonomous Community?

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Abstract

In the Basque Autonomous Community, besides the official languages Spanish and Basque, English is considered an important third language for internationally operating companies. However, employees are not believed to be linguistically well enough prepared, due to shortcomings in English language learning in the Basque educational system. The introduction of English Medium Instruction (EMI) might improve the situation. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the relation between the experience of future professionals with English Medium Instruction at one point in their educational career and their experience as language learners, their self-reported proficiency and competencies in English, the exposure to English in their daily lives, and their expectations about English in their future workplace. A quantitative approach was adopted, by means of questionnaires among 194 students of Business Administration at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU). The data reveal that students who have taken English Medium Instruction classes report higher skills in English (especially in oral skills and at higher level tasks), have generally more exposure to English and would feel more comfortable using English in their future job. The results suggest that English Medium Instruction might help to prepare the future professionals linguistically better in this third language.

Key words

Multilingualism; Education; English as a third language; English Medium Instruction; Future professionals; Basque Autonomous Community

1. Introduction

Following up on the consequences of globalization, topics such as multilingualism have become trending in linguistic research. On the one hand, multilingualism in the workplace is an area that recently has gained interest in research. Current research sheds light on the situation of employees in internationally operating companies who have to deal with different languages in their daily professional tasks. For this purpose, policies and practices related to language use in the multilingual workplace are extensively studied by academic researchers (e.g. Angouri 2013; Gunnarsson 2012, 2013; Lavric & Bäck 2009) but also at an applied political level (e.g. European Commission 2006, 2011a, b) the economical effects of language management in internationally operating companies are studied. On the other hand, and related to the consequences of globalization and to multilingualism in the workplace, research is carried out on multilingualism in education. Language learning in higher education is, or should be, an important preparation for later language use in the workplace, especially in higher education, where students probably have more clearly defined ideas about the kind of job they would like to do in the future. It is among others because of the professional

demands that languages have been included in the curricula of institutes of higher education.

However, whether the aims of these educational activities really meet their goal to prepare students for their future professional lives is point of debate (Marchand et al. 2013). The European Commission (2006) explicitly advocates improvement of the link between higher education and business in relation to language learning by means of a better collaboration. Therefore, multilingualism in the workplace and in language education should not be two separate areas of research, but studying the relation between both could provide valuable insights for language use in the workplace as well as in higher education.

Also, the important role of English as a lingua franca (Seidlhofer 2011, Jenkins 2013) has been extensively analyzed. Perceptions of this global role of English go in different, even opposite directions, as some people consider English to be a serious threat to linguistic diversity (Phillipson 1992) while others see English as the great facilitator of globalization and as a necessary common language (Chiti-Batelli 2013). Stavans and Hoffman (2015) highlight that attitudes towards the role of English are especially antagonistic when it comes to bilingual regions where a minority language is in active use by the population. The use of a global language may bring additional pressure to the linguistic load of a minority community, but such processes also might bring new opportunities with them and increase the prestige of minority languages (Hernández et al. 2012).

Multilingual practices and policies in the workplace and their relationship to higher education have already been investigated in the context of international companies in monolingual European units (e.g. Archan & Dornmayr 2006, CBI 2012). However, even more interesting would it be to study this in a bilingual political unit (Alarcón 2005, Solé et al. 2005). Remarkably, research in bilingual regions on multilingualism in the workplace and in higher education has had far less attention so far.

To contribute to a better understanding of multilingual practices and attitudes in the workplace and higher education in a European bilingual region, we carried out a multi-annual project. The project is situated in the Basque Autonomous Community where there is, besides the official languages Basque and Spanish, an increasing prominent role for English as language of industry, trade, tourism and commerce.

One of the first key results found by means of interviews with employees in managerial positions in internationally operating companies in the Basque Autonomous Community was that the English language skills of professionals working in these companies were in general considered insufficient to successfully carry out their daily professional tasks (Van der Worp et al. 2016; Van der Worp 2016). The informants generally blamed the education in the Basque Autonomous Community for these insufficient English competences. However, some informants also believed that the level of English acquired at school was recently improving. Possibly, the relatively new phenomenon of English Medium Instruction in education is of influence, as it is one of the main changes in the last decades directly related to English language education. That is why we consider it relevant to examine the influence of English Medium Instruction on the competences in English as a third language of future professionals.

Therefore, the present article aims to explore how having English as a third language as the language of instruction in education is related to other variables, such as language learning experiences, English proficiency and competencies, exposure to English in daily life and expectations about English in the future workplace. A quantitative approach is adopted, collecting data by means of questionnaires among

students of Business Administration at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU). In the next section the underpinning theoretical framework of the study will be described.

2. Theoretical framework

The growth of multilingualism over the world has created a linguistic situation with new educational requirements. Advances in technology and the increasing demand for international communication and mobility have led to the need for people to know more than one language. At the same time the growing recognition of minority languages has also encouraged multilingualism (Gorter 2013).

In policy plans of universities initiatives about internationalization have an important presence because universities share their academic results across borders, exchange students with other countries and count with staff-members who are involved in international networks (Michavila 2012). The importance of languages for this internationalization of universities is beyond doubt. Especially English has a great instrumental value as a lingua franca, and has a high potential for exchanging ideas in an increasing globalized world with heightened mobility (Alcón & Michavila 2012; Fortanet-Gómez 2013; Hultgren et al. 2015). There seems to be a growing conviction that everybody needs to know English and that English should be used for the exchange of knowledge (Michavila 2012). However, the reality is much more complex than that, among others because not all teachers, researchers and students have a sufficient level of proficiency in English.

Multilingual education can be defined as “teaching more than two languages provided that schools aim at multilingualism and multiliteracy” (Cenoz 2009: p. 32). It refers to the use of more than two languages, as long as the objective is to develop the communicative competence in these languages. This means that education is not considered multilingual if only the students show a high linguistic diversity; it is the educational institution (in our case the university) that has to be developing linguistic competences. Adapting the “Continua of Biliteracy” (Hornberger 2003) specifically for the context of multilingual schools, Cenoz (2009) developed the “Continua of Multilingual Education” (see also Cenoz & Gorter 2012). In her model, Cenoz describes the different educational variables that can influence multilingualism in education, and which we will apply here to the university level. The model represents a continuum from less multilingual to more multilingual and offers the opportunity to make relative comparisons between – for instance - different multilingual universities regarding the knowledge and use of languages within the university, the linguistic distance between the languages and the language use in the sociolinguistic context. The Continua of Multilingualism at university is represented in figure 1.

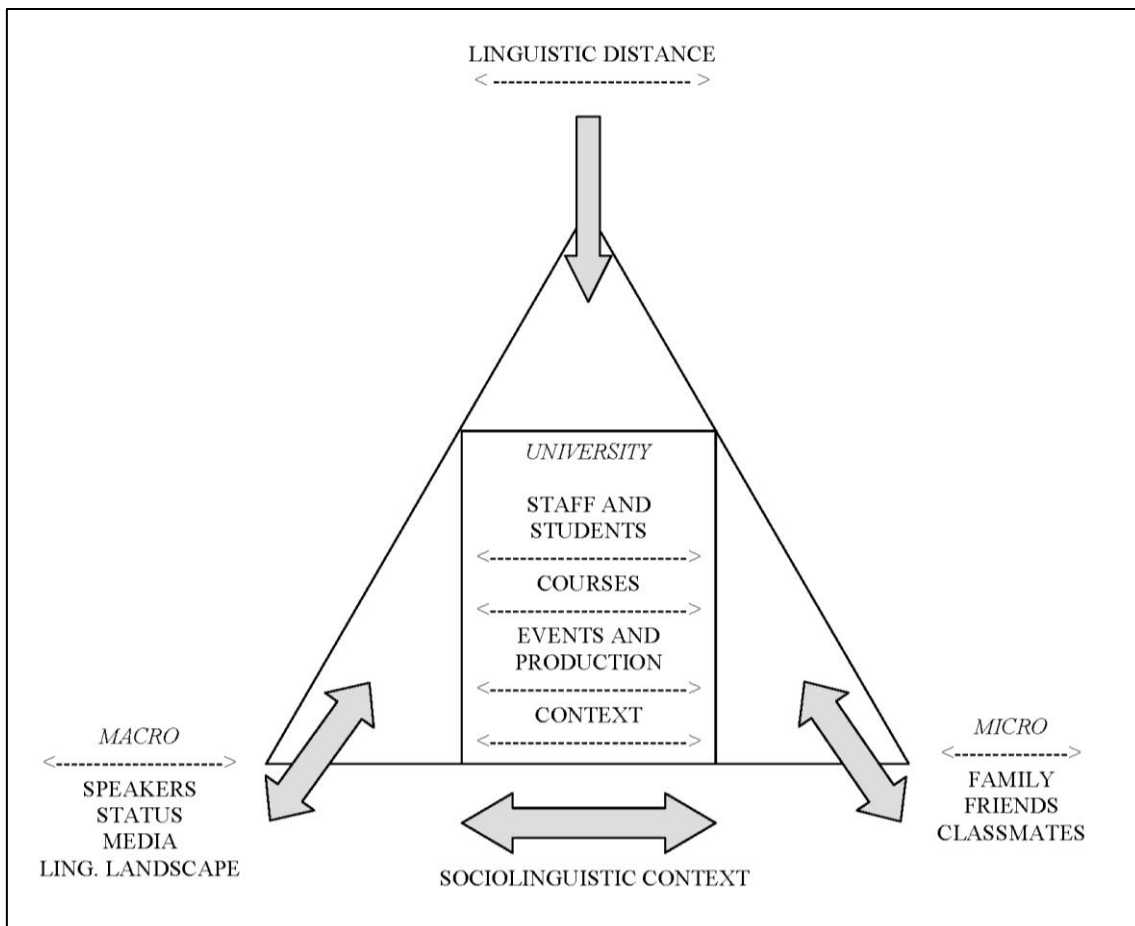


Figure 1. The Continua of Multilingualism at university (adapted from Cenoz & Gorter 2012)

Within the *university*, in the first place the staff and students might have different levels of multilingualism. Regarding the staff, one can distinguish between the language proficiency in different languages, and the specific training for multilingual teaching. Regarding the students, the fact that they have different proficiency levels in languages is important to take into account. In the second place, the linguistic planning of courses might differ in terms of the use of different languages as subjects of teaching, and the intensity of instruction. In the third place, we find the languages used during academic events and in scientific publications as indicators of the level of multilingualism of a university. In the last place, there is the context, referring to the language use for communication between teachers, staff and students, both for informal and formal situations, at the website and in the linguistic landscape of the university.

The linguistic feature considered in this model is the *linguistic distance* between the languages used. The languages can be more or less closely related because of their origin and can have more or less similarities and differences at a typological level. Linguistic distance can influence multilingual education, in terms of program design and the need to dedicate more or less hours to a language. The more distant the languages, the more difficult it might be for a university to establish multilingual programs.

The last element that should be taken into account is the *sociolinguistic context* defined in terms of a continuum between a macro and a micro level. The use of the different languages in the educational system, in the media and at an institutional level, as well as the distribution of the speakers of the different languages, indicate the level of

social multilingualism at a macro level. At the micro level, within society and closely related with the individual, we find the social networks. It has to be taken into account that the macro and micro level might not always coincide in terms of language use. For example, the home language of immigrant students can be different from the school languages (Cenoz 2009).

This study focuses on the educational context of the university, especially on the language of instruction and aims to analyze the relation between experiences of the future professionals with English Medium Instruction and their proficiency, competencies, exposure and perceptions of English as a third language. In order to carry out this study and to fulfill the expressed aim, the research question was formulated as:

How do future professionals with different experiences with English Medium Instruction perceive their own competences and the importance of English as a third language in companies?

The specific context of this study will be set out in the following section.

3. Setting of the study

The study is carried out in the Basque Autonomous Community which has around 2.1 million inhabitants and is located in the north of Spain, close to the border with France. Today this autonomous community is one of the three parts of the historical Basque Country that also comprises the Autonomous Community of Navarre in Spain, and the Iparralde area in France. In this article we focus only on the Basque Autonomous Community.

Since the Basque Statute of Autonomy in 1979, both Basque and Spanish are recognized as official languages in the Basque Autonomous Community. According to the most recent language survey data from 2011, 32% of the population of 16 years and older are bilingual in Spanish and Basque, 17.4% are passive bilinguals (with only receptive skills in Basque), and 50.6% - the majority - are monolingual Spanish speakers (Basque Government 2013). Not only in purely quantitative terms Basque is a minority language, but Spanish is also the socially dominating language. However, both languages are compulsory in primary and secondary language education, and there is a choice for parents between three educational models with either Basque, Spanish, or both languages as languages of instruction. Also at university, the role of Basque is important.

Apart from Basque and Spanish, foreign languages have always been part of education in the Basque Autonomous Community. Until the 1980s, the most common foreign language taught at school was French but nowadays English is studied as the foreign language by the vast majority of school children (Cenoz 1998). The last decades have seen the gradual introduction of English as a third language at all levels of education. In society one can also observe an increase in the diversity of languages and a greater emphasis on English. On the one hand, through a steady influx of migrants, and on the other hand, through an increased importance given to knowledge of English, because of the effects of globalization and a commercialization of learning English outside school (Cenoz & Gorter 2005; Gorter & Cenoz 2011; Etxeberria & Etxeberria 2015).

Traditionally the level of English acquired at school was considered low. Possible explanations were the use of outdated or traditional instructional approaches and the lack of well trained teachers with adequate proficiency in English. It was

generally believed that English should be learned either in visits to English speaking countries or by attending private classes (Cenoz 1998). A peculiarity of the context to take into account is that the students outside school hardly have any exposure to English in society, and therefore have fewer occasions to practice the foreign language (Arocena et al. 2014).

The department of Education of the Basque Government and some educational agents therefore started to make efforts to improve the teaching of English. Among others, they developed plans for the early introduction of English as a subject at school. This was introduced for the first time in kindergarten in 1991 in some Basque-medium schools. Throughout primary and secondary education, pupils receive classes of English. Additionally, nowadays also the use of English as the Medium of Instruction is quite spread (Doiz et al. 2013; Cenoz 2009).

Not only at compulsory education, but also in higher education, there is an emphasis on English language learning. Herewith, an additional challenge is given to the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU), the major university of the Basque Autonomous Community, because of the need to move from bilingualism to multilingualism. In 2005 the Multilingualism Plan (*Plan de Plurilingüismo*) was introduced recommending the wider use of foreign languages, in particular English. The plan aims at 1) fostering mobility of students and improving participation in the European Higher Education Area, 2) following up on multilingualism projects in secondary education, for instance using English as an additional language of instruction, and 3) fostering mobility of teaching staff, as they can also benefit from using additional languages for increased international relations and mobility. This plan offers the possibility of choosing either English or French as the language of instruction for elective courses (UPV/EHU 2005). In practice, the use of English is highly prevalent over French.

Courses have been taught in English since the academic year 2005-2006. The number of courses is increasing and in 2015-16, there are 277 courses taught through the medium of English. The distribution of these courses is rather unequal for the different disciplines; English courses are more found in sciences, economics and business administration, and relatively less in social sciences and humanities.

After describing the setting of the study, we will now go into the methodology.

4. Method

In order to answer the research question, a quantitative approach to data collection was adopted for which questionnaires were used. The participants are a group of students enrolled in Business Administration (N = 194) at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU). 57.2% of them were in the second year of their studies (N = 111) and 42.8% in the third year (N = 83). The mean age of the students was 20.68 (SD = 2.19), with the youngest student being 19 years old and the oldest student being 33 years old. The students were equally divided between gender as 50% was male (N = 97) and 50% was female (N = 97). The vast majority, 90.7% of the students was born in the Basque Country (N = 176), whereas only 6.2% of the students was born elsewhere in Spain (N = 12) and 3.1% of the students outside Spain (N = 6). Regarding their mother tongue, a majority of 57.5% of the students claimed to be Spanish L1 speaker (N = 111), 40.9% of the students indicated they were Basque L1 speaker (N = 79) and 1.6% of the students considered both Spanish and Basque their mother tongue (N = 3).

On average, the students started to learn English at the age of 5.82 (SD = 2.08). When asked whether or not they had received English Medium Instruction, 56.7% of the students indicated they never had attended subjects taught through the medium of English (N = 110) whereas 43.3% of the students indicated they did attend subjects taught through the medium of English (N = 84). The subjects they attended were either subjects related with their present university study (e.g. Business Organization or Economics) or subjects at secondary school (e.g. Social Sciences or History).

Apart from learning English at school, the vast majority of 82.5% of the students (N = 160) had attended English classes at a language academy or other private institution, whereas only 17.5% did not (N = 34). The majority of 57.2% of the students did not have any certificate in English (N = 111) and 41.8% of the students (N = 81) claimed to have a title in English, the relative majority of them at a B2 level (59.5%).

Paper-and-pencil questionnaires in Spanish and Basque were used for collecting data in nine classes of Business Administration at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) in the months of February and March 2015. For the present study we analyzed the following questionnaire items, extracted from a larger questionnaire on languages:

- *Experiences as English language learners*: Six statements on a Likert scale from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree), e.g. “Teachers had sufficient knowledge of English”.
- *Self reported English proficiency*: Four skills in English (listening, speaking, reading and writing) on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (very good).
- *Self reported English competencies*: Eighteen Can-Do statements on English in the workplace¹ for i) listening and speaking ii) reading and iii) writing on a scale from 1 (completely incapable) to 10 (completely capable), e.g. “I can understand and express easy messages such as, meeting on Friday at 10.00 o clock”.
- *Frequency of exposure to English*: Ten situations of exposure or use of English on a scale from 1 (never) to 7 (very often), e.g. “Using social media”.
- *Expectations about English in the future workplace*: Fourteen statements on English in the future workplace, on a Likert scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree), e.g. “Knowing English is a requirement for finding a job”.

All the items were analyzed on an ordinal scale with either 7 or 10 values. One-way ANOVAS were carried out to study the significance of the differences between the English Medium Instruction group (hereafter referred to as EMI group) and the non-English Medium Instruction group (hereafter referred to as non-EMI group). The level of statistical significance was established at $p \leq 0.05$. The outcomes of the analyses will be presented in the next section.

5. Results

Experience as English language learners

¹ Adapted from the ALTE project (ALTE 2002) where all levels of the CEFR framework from A1 to C2 were converted into business related competences for three groups of skills

First, the outcomes of the one-way ANOVA on differences in perceived experiences as language learners of English between the EMI group and the non-EMI group are presented. The results are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Perceived experience of students as language learners of English, according to their experience with English Medium Instruction, on a scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree)

	EMI group		non-EMI group		F	S
	M	SD	M	SD		
1. The teachers had sufficient knowledge of English	4.95	(1.54)	4.60	(1.75)	2.14	0.14
2. The materials we used in class were adequate	4.79	(1.33)	4.30	(1.27)	6.72	0.01*
3. The amount of hours of English class was not enough	4.46	(1.77)	4.77	(1.58)	1.64	0.20
4. They taught me English with the objective of obtaining a title	3.42	(1.81)	3.25	(1.59)	0.44	0.51
5. I found learning English at school interesting	4.32	(1.73)	4.07	(1.72)	0.99	0.32
6. I found learning English at school easy	5.26	(1.51)	4.67	(1.55)	7.05	0.01*

The data show that students who have had English Medium Instruction find the materials used in class significantly more adequate than the students who did not have English Medium Instruction. They also find learning English at school significantly easier than the students who did not have English Medium Instruction.

However, the differences between the two groups regarding their opinions about other experiences with learning English at school were not significant. Both the EMI group and the non-EMI group believe that the English knowledge of teachers was rather sufficient and both groups also consider to a certain extent that the amount of hours was not enough. Both groups do not feel they were taught English with the objective of obtaining a title. Finally, the groups neither differ significantly in the extent to which they find learning English interesting.

Self reported English proficiency

The differences in self reported proficiency in English between the EMI and the non-EMI group are presented in table 2.

Table 2. Self reported proficiency of students in English, according to their experience with English Medium Instruction, on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (very good)

	EMI group		non-EMI group		F	S
	M	SD	M	SD		
English listening	7.49	(1.28)	6.19	(1.46)	41.82	0.00*
English speaking	6.44	(1.55)	5.25	(1.55)	27.99	0.00*
English reading	7.39	(1.55)	6.54	(1.54)	14.67	0.00*
English writing	6.69	(1.60)	5.81	(1.75)	12.99	0.00*

The results show that the students who received English Medium Instruction self-evaluate their proficiency in all four skills in English on average significantly higher than their classmates who did not receive English Medium Instruction. The largest difference in proficiency is found in the listening skills followed by respectively speaking, writing and reading skills.

Self reported English competencies

In this part we look into the English task-based competencies, subdivided into three categories: i) listening and speaking, ii) reading and iii) writing. First, the results for the listening and speaking competencies are presented in table 3.

Table 3.

Self reported listening and speaking competencies of students in English, according to their experience with English Medium Instruction, on a scale from 1 (completely incapable) to 10 (completely capable)

Listening – Speaking	EMI group		non-EMI group		F	S
	M	SD	M	SD		
A1. I can take and pass on simple messages of a routine kind, such as ‘Friday meeting 10 a.m.’	9.21	(1.30)	8.60	(1.77)	7.15	0.01*
A2. I can state simple requirements within own job area, such as ‘I want to order 25 of...’	8.92	(1.43)	8.16	(1.80)	9.94	0.00*
B1. I can offer advice to clients within own job area on simple matters	7.55	(1.77)	6.48	(1.82)	16.80	0.00*
B2. I can take and pass on most messages that are likely to require attention during a normal working day	7.74	(1.67)	6.43	(1.89)	25.00	0.00*
C1. I can contribute effectively to meetings and seminars within own area of work and argue for or against a case	6.38	(1.99)	5.05	(1.97)	21.35	0.00*
C2. I can advise on/handle complex delicate or contentious issues, such as legal or financial matters, to the extent that I have the necessary specialist knowledge	5.36	(2.31)	3.95	(2.06)	20.14	0.00*

The data reveal that on all CEFR levels, the EMI group believes to have higher listening and speaking skills in English than the non-EMI group. Furthermore, this difference is growing as the CEFR level increases. Thus on A1 level the difference in listening and speaking competencies of both groups is smaller than on A2 level. Also we can see that the EMI group consider themselves to be sufficient competent at all levels, where this is not the case for the non-EMI group. We take into account here that in the Spanish and Basque grading system, the grade five means “pass or sufficient”.

For the reading competencies the results are presented in table 4.

Table 4.

Self reported reading competencies of students in English, according to their experience with English Medium Instruction, on a scale from 1 (completely incapable) to 10 (completely capable)

Reading	EMI group		non-EMI group		F	S
	M	SD	M	SD		
A1. I can understand short reports or product descriptions on familiar matters, if these are expressed in simple language and the contents are predictable	8.21	(1.73)	7.82	(2.02)	2.08	0.15
A2. I can understand most short reports or manuals of a predictable nature within my own area of expertise, provided enough time is given	7.96	(1.75)	7.23	(1.90)	7.71	0.01*
B1. I can understand the general meaning of non-routine letters and theoretical articles within own work-area	7.38	(1.74)	6.47	(1.85)	12.10	0.00*
B2. I can understand most correspondence, reports and factual product literature I am likely to come across	7.42	(1.64)	6.26	(1.93)	19.31	0.00*
C1. I can understand correspondence expressed in non-standard language	6.30	(1.91)	5.32	(2.03)	11.68	0.00*
C2. I can understand reports and articles likely to be encountered during my work, including complex ideas expressed in complex language	5.65	(2.07)	4.41	(1.97)	18.25	0.00*

The data show that, except for the A1 level, the EMI group feels significantly better capable of reading in their future job on all other CEFR levels, than the non-EMI group. Once more, the differences between the groups get bigger as the CEFR level increases. We can also see that the EMI group self evaluate themselves as sufficient competent at all levels, where this is not the case for the non-EMI group, taking into account again that in the Spanish and Basque grading system, the grade five means “pass or sufficient”.

Now we turn to the last competency, namely the self reported writing competency. The results are presented in table 5.

Table 5.

Self reported writing competencies of students in English, according to their experience with English Medium Instruction, on a scale from 1 (completely incapable) to 10 (completely capable)

Writing	EMI group		non-EMI group		F	S
	M	SD	M	SD		
A1. I can write a simple routine request to a colleague, such as 'Can I have 20 ... please?'	8.74	(1.45)	8.25	(1.80)	4.04	0.05*
A2. I can write a short, comprehensible note of request to a colleague or a known contact in another company	8.42	(1.60)	7.93	(1.89)	3.65	0.06
B1. I can make reasonably accurate notes at a meeting or seminar where the subject matter is familiar and predictable	7.80	(1.63)	6.80	(1.85)	15.34	0.00*
B2. I can deal with all routine requests for goods or services	7.27	(1.68)	6.32	(1.89)	13.37	0.00*
C1. I can handle a wide range of routine and non-routine situations in which professional services are requested from colleagues or external contacts	6.51	(1.90)	5.53	(1.99)	12.11	0.00*
C2. I can make full and accurate notes and continue to participate in a meeting or seminar	6.05	(2.19)	4.80	(2.13)	15.93	0.00*

The data reveal that, except for the A2 level where no significant difference between both groups is revealed, on all other levels of the CEFR framework, the EMI group consider themselves better capable of writing in their future job, than the non-EMI group. The difference is bigger at the highest level C2 than at the lowest level A1. Furthermore, again we see that the EMI group self evaluate themselves as sufficient competent at all levels, where this is not the case for the non-EMI group.

Frequency of exposure to English

Regarding the frequency of exposure of the students to English in their daily life, the results are presented in table 6.

Table 6. Perceived exposure to English, according to experience with English Medium Instruction, on a scale from 1 (never) to 7 (very often)

	EMI group		non-EMI group		F	S
	M	SD	M	SD		
1. Listening to music or the radio	5.74	(1.57)	5.38	(1.64)	2.33	0.13
2. Visiting websites of your interest on the Internet	4.93	(1.82)	3.98	(1.72)	13.69	0.00*
3. Using social media (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube etc.)	4.86	(1.90)	3.87	(1.83)	13.38	0.00*
4. Watching movies or television programs in original version	4.74	(1.84)	3.63	(2.03)	15.46	0.00*
5. Studying English on my own	3.67	(1.83)	3.48	(1.74)	0.54	0.46
6. Reading books or magazines	3.62	(1.49)	2.88	(1.56)	11.06	0.00*
7. Playing games on the Internet	2.89	(2.22)	2.65	(1.73)	0.71	0.40
8. Sending messages by Whatsapp	2.57	(1.66)	1.84	(1.00)	14.23	0.00*
9. Calling by Skype or telephone	2.11	(1.53)	1.59	(1.15)	7.20	0.01*
10. Speaking with friends or family	2.07	(1.66)	1.52	(1.00)	8.31	0.00*

The results show that the frequency of some types of exposure is significantly different for both groups. To start with, the EMI group visits websites, uses social media and watches movies or TV programs significantly more frequently than the non-EMI group. The EMI group reads books or magazines in English significantly more than the non-EMI group. When sending Whatsapp, the groups also differ significantly as the EMI group sends more Whatsapp messages in English than the non-EMI group. Regarding speaking English, whether by Skype, telephone or in person, the groups differ significantly from each other, as the EMI students do this more often than the non-EMI students.

The three other types of exposure do not significantly differ in frequency for both groups. The frequency with which the EMI group and the non-EMI group listen to music or the radio in English - the most frequent type of exposure out of all ten- does not differ significantly. Furthermore, students of both groups do not differ significantly in the exposure to English by studying English on their own. Finally, the students of both groups do not show significant differences in the exposure to English by playing games on the Internet.

Expectations about English in the future workplace

On the expectations about English in the future workplace, the results are presented in table 7.

Table 7. Perceived expectations of students about English in the future workplace, according to their experience with English Medium Instruction, on a scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree)

	EMI group		non-EMI group		F	S
	M	SD	M	SD		
1. With the English I have learnt at school I feel myself well enough prepared to use it in my future job	3.79	(1.43)	3.07	(1.45)	11.64	0.00*
2. Outside school, I have had enough opportunities to learn English for my future job	5.67	(1.26)	4.88	(1.79)	11.76	0.00*
3. I am afraid of using English in my future job	3.50	(1.90)	4.11	(1.91)	4.86	0.03*
4. I will feel uncomfortable speaking in English in my future job	3.35	(1.77)	3.89	(1.61)	4.98	0.03*
5. I will need to do English courses when I will be working	4.39	(1.59)	4.92	(1.41)	5.83	0.02*
6. Knowing English is a requirement for finding a job	5.88	(1.11)	5.69	(1.31)	1.20	0.27
7. The <i>First Certificate of English</i> is well valued by companies	5.38	(1.27)	5.28	(1.33)	0.31	0.58
8. The <i>Certificate of Advanced English</i> is well valued by companies	6.17	(1.00)	6.14	(1.01)	0.04	0.84
9. The English I have learnt will be very useful in my future job	5.76	(1.34)	5.51	(1.56)	1.37	0.24
10. I will need to understand English in my future job	6.10	(1.15)	6.13	(1.12)	0.04	0.84
11. I will need to speak English in my future job	6.10	(1.08)	5.91	(1.25)	1.18	0.28
12. I will need to write English in my future job	5.98	(1.09)	5.87	(1.22)	0.38	0.54
13. I will need to understand written texts in English in my future job	6.11	(1.04)	6.03	(1.08)	0.26	0.61
14. I will have to work with English computer programs in my future job	5.82	(1.20)	5.57	(1.26)	1.93	0.16

In sum, five out of fourteen expectations about English in the future workplace are significantly different for the EMI group and the non-EMI group. First of all, there is a significant difference in how well the students feel prepared to use their English in the future workplace. Where the EMI students feel neither prepared nor unprepared, the non-EMI students feel to some extent that they are not prepared well enough. Also, the students of the EMI group believe they have had enough opportunities outside school to learn English, whereas the other group feels they have had fewer opportunities.

Moreover, regarding anxiety for using English in the workplace, the EMI students do not really feel afraid or uncomfortable using English in the future workplace, whereas the students of the non-EMI group feel more afraid and uncomfortable. The non-EMI group think they will need classes to some extent which is significantly more than the EMI group.

For all other expectations, the groups did not differ significantly. They hold similar beliefs when it comes to English as a requirement for finding a job and that the First Certificate in English, and even more the Certificate in Advanced English, are valued by companies. They also agree that the English they learnt will be useful in their future job. Furthermore, both groups believe to a similar extent that they need to understand, speak, write and read in English in the future job, as well as working with English computer programs.

In this study we have analyzed the differences in the competences and perceptions of English as a third language in the context of the future workplace, between the students who have received English Medium Instruction and the ones who did not. In the next section a discussion of the results and a conclusion will be provided.

6. Discussion and conclusion

As outlined in the introduction of this article, language education can play an important role in developing multilingualism in the workplace. English Medium Instruction is one of the key strategies of the university to improve English language learning (Cenoz 2009; Doiz et al. 2011)). English is also a means for the university to attract international students and to prepare their own students for international mobility. It is also essential for spreading and having access to academic work. The University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) therefore has implemented its Multilingualism Plan since 2005. Herewith it aims to follow up on multilingualism projects in secondary education, improve mobility of students and staff and enhance participation in the European Higher Education Area. Nowadays, the university offers 277 courses in English.

This study was situated in the context of the multilingual University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) and aimed to analyze the perceptions of students of Business Administration on their competences in English and the importance of English in their future workplace. We contrasted the students who had English Medium Instruction during their educational career, either at compulsory school or at university (EMI students), to the ones who never received English Medium Instruction (non-EMI students).

For the aim of this study the following research question was formulated: “How do future professionals with different experiences with English Medium Instruction perceive their own competences and the importance of English as a third language in companies?”. For answering the research question, a quantitative approach to data collection was adopted, with questionnaires in Spanish and Basque.

A first interesting result regarding the experiences as learners of English, was that the EMI students found learning English at school easier than the non-EMI students. There are two ways in which this result can be interpreted. On the one hand, it might explain that English Medium Instruction has a positive effect on English learning. On the other hand, it might also implicate that the ones who found English learning easier at school, are the ones who later opt for studying through the medium of English. Furthermore, the EMI students considered the materials used in class more adequate

than the non-EMI students. This might be related to the fact that they also found learning English easier and thus found the materials easier to use and understand.

EMI students self evaluated their proficiency and competencies in English higher than the non-EMI students. They evaluated all the four skills in English higher, especially their listening skills. Particularly in higher level tasks, EMI students believed they are better able to carry out tasks in English than non-EMI students. This is especially important in the context of the workplace, as the companies indicate that doing business in English requires a high level of language sophistication (Van der Worp et al. 2016, Van der Worp 2016). According to Feely and Harzing (2002), language sophistication is one of the main language barriers in language management in companies. Therefore, EMI students might be better prepared to use English in the workplace on a higher level than the non-EMI students.

Additionally, EMI students were also generally more frequently exposed to English. This exposure logically supports better language proficiency and with a higher level of proficiency it is easier to understand the English exposure.

Furthermore, the EMI students appeared to feel somewhat better prepared to use English in their future workplace than the non-EMI students. This is in line with their self reported proficiency and competencies. The EMI students also felt stronger that they have had enough opportunities outside school to learn English for the future workplace. This could be related to the generally higher exposure to English of this group. The EMI students were also less afraid of using English in their future workplace and would feel less uncomfortable using English in their future job than the others. The EMI students also felt less the need to have English classes while working, than the non-EMI students. English Medium Instruction in compulsory education and at university might be a way to reduce the need of English language courses in the workplace. The latter is an interesting result, as in-company language courses are believed to be rather inefficient due to busy work schedules (Van der Worp et al. 2016, Van der Worp 2016).

Some perceptions about English in the future workplace were shared by the two groups. They all believed English is a requirement for finding a job and agreed that a First Certificate in English, and even more a Certificate of Advanced English, is valued by the companies. They also agreed that the English they learnt will be useful in their future job and that they need to understand, speak, read and write in English in the future job, as well as working with English programs. In sum, both the students with and without English Medium Instruction share their perceptions on the importance of knowing English for their future job.

According to Van der Worp (2016) English is considered important as a foreign language in companies, which is confirmed by the data of this study. However, managers of these companies believe there is an important shortcoming in English language learning in the Basque educational system to prepare future professionals adequately. Nevertheless, in this study we found important differences between future professionals who had English Medium Instruction and the future professionals who did not. Students who have experience with English Medium Instruction self report higher competences in English, especially in oral skills and at higher level tasks. They also have generally more exposure to English and feel more comfortable with using English in their future job. This might support the idea that English Medium Instruction helps to reach the aim of well prepared future professionals for the workplace.

This study confirms that the language of instruction is a key element in the Continua of Multilingualism as proposed by Cenoz (2009). Students who had English

Medium Instruction at some point of their educational career appeared to feel better prepared and more confident to use English in their future job.

In conclusion, English Medium Instruction appears to have a positive relation with the competences and perceptions of English as a third language of future professionals. Although this requires further research, by testing the language proficiency of EMI and non-EMI students, it supports the policies aiming at teaching at least part of the curriculum through the medium of English. Especially in higher level tasks, which are the ones most necessary in the workplace, experience with English Medium Instruction seems to make an important difference.

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