

## **English as a Medium of Instruction in Galicia**

### **Resumen**

El uso del inglés como lengua de instrucción está creciendo en España. El esfuerzo y conocimiento desarrollado en las iniciativas AICLE en educación obligatoria deben encontrar un continuum en educación superior. En este sentido, la nueva corriente del inglés como lengua de instrucción trata de alcanzar un sistema universitario internacional y competitivo. Este estudio pretende mostrar no sólo cómo los profesores de las universidades gallegas se certifican como profesionales EMI sino también los módulos e incentivos que existen en este área. Los resultados muestran que las tres instituciones en Galicia siguen diferentes procesos y que un

### **Abstract**

English is used more and more as the language of instruction in Spain. CLIL initiatives are developed in Compulsory Education, but that effort and knowledge must largo camino que recorrer en el desarrollo de los sistemas bilingües universitarios.continue during higher education. English as a Medium of Instruction is a new trend which is trying to achieve an international and competitive university system. This study aims to discover how professors at Galician universities can be certified to become EMI professionals as well as the modules and incentives they have. Results show the three institutions in Galicia follow different procedures and there is still a lot to do to become a bilingual university system.

### **Palabras clave**

Inglés como lengua de instrucción (EMI), profesores EMI, lengua, educación superior.

### **Keywords**

English Medium Instruction, EMI Professor, Higher Education.

## Introduction

Education has become a pivotal driving force in terms of growth and prosperity, given its ability to train human assets and to prepare future citizens for a more and more global society. This situation implies not only an opening but also a transverse exposure that provide our citizenship with integration. Therefore, the main focus of this process is the internationalisation of the education, as a way to reach efficiency and quality in order to achieve knowledge which will lead to solid and stable development and growth.

One of the strategies to succeed is the promotion of Foreign Languages as languages of instruction. Considering that part of the national territory counts on two official languages, the change from a bilingual system into a plurilingual system should not be too arduous. However, Spanish education suffers from lacking Internationalisation, insufficient training in Foreign Languages, difficulties in international teachers' recruitment and limited presence in international nets and forums.

Nowadays, Spanish society is working hard to overcome those obstacles. Thus, regional education departments are contributing to the promotion of Foreign Languages, including bilingual sections, plurilingual schools and bilingual programmes in Higher Education. Consequently, it is more and more usual that future teachers and professors are trained in two leading methodologies. The first one is called Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), focused on Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education, and deals with teaching content using a Foreign Language and the consecutive learning of the language due to its usage and situations. The second method is known as English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). It pays attention to the content itself, regarding the language just as a partial immersion and it is aimed at Higher Education levels.

Although CLIL has become very popular in compulsory levels, there is still a long way to go in relation with Higher Education. The aim of this paper is to understand how teachers at Galician universities can be certified to become EMI professors and the requirements they are supposed to fulfil and the advantages they receive once they actually use EMI. Thus, we will first explain the Galician University System and its three institutions. Then, a brief list of EMI modules in Galicia is included. Moreover, the requirements and options to get the certification are displayed as well as the incentives the universities offer to professors to promote EMI. Finally, we will reach some conclusions based on the findings of this study.

## Galician University System

The university system in Galicia aims to attain high levels of prestige and recognition among Spanish, European and international universities. The Galician University System – Sistema Universitario Gallego (SUG) – was established based on two points of view. The first one is the principle that the financing programme takes the quality of universities into account, allocating part of the resources to the improvement of teaching and management, and the second arises from previous experiences in the field of assessment of new international trends and mainly from the recommendations by the Council of Europe on European cooperation in order to ensure quality in Higher Education.

The aim for Galician universities is to be distinguished firstly by the development of their autonomy, responding to the specific socio-economic and cultural needs that arise in the immediate context of the autonomous region of Galicia and, secondly, by their competitive integration in the Spanish and international university context. These two concepts can be summarised as autonomy to promote their distinguishing features, and integration to promote innovation and development.

It is crucial to develop a framework for cooperation and coordination among the Government, the Galician universities and other higher education and quality assessment bodies, both in Spain and abroad, to exchange opinions, debate and join forces. This will undoubtedly lead to the improvement of quality and the prestige of the Galician university system.

The first University in Galicia was the University of Santiago de Compostela, which was founded in 1495 and it remained the only university in Galicia until the late 1980s, when the two campuses of A Coruña and Vigo became fully independent universities with the authority to issue their own university programmes.

The University of Santiago de Compostela is a public university located in the city of Santiago de Compostela and with another campus in Lugo. It is strongly committed to providing high quality teaching, research and services as well as to the respect for the environment, sustainable development and the social, economic and cultural dynamization of Galicia. Moreover, in 2009, the University received the accreditation of International Campus of Excellence by the Ministry of Education, recognising it as one of the most prestigious universities in Spain and it also ranks 5th in Spain's best universities ranking by Complutense University of Madrid and IAIF and 4th amongst public universities.

Secondly, the University of Vigo is an innovative and modern institution which offers courses on three different campuses, Vigo, Ourense and Pontevedra. It is a public institution that is committed to the principles of equality, solidarity, democracy and liberty. Freedom of teaching, research and study, together with interdisciplinarity, ideological pluralism and participation are basic to their job fulfilment. Although it offers degrees in all knowledge areas it is specialised in the scientific-technological field and the Campus do Mar, a project spearheaded by the University of Vigo, was awarded in 2010 with the International Campus of Excellence Programme. Modern, audacious and plural, the University of Vigo's principal assets are its people.

Finally, the University of A Coruña is territorially situated in the Campus of A Coruña and the Campus of Ferrol. It is a public institution whose primary objective is the generation, management and dissemination of culture and scientific, technological and professional knowledge through the development of research and teaching. It conceives its essential purpose as a quality public service aimed at achieving greater levels of welfare for the group of the society through the pursuit of social, scientific and technological advances in a framework of ethical values. Part of its mission is the formation of an open, critical, democracy and solidarity citizenship, capable of analysing reality, diagnose problems, formulate and implement solutions based in knowledge and oriented to the common good.

### **Modules of English as a Medium of Instruction**

The three universities that belong to the Galician University System offer modules which use English in the classroom. However, the amount of choices varies significantly and it is not in proportion to the number of students attending each university.

The University of Santiago de Compostela has over 35000 students, but English only appears in seven degrees and three masters. Apart from English Philology, Chemical Engineering (13.75% of the modules are in English), Cultural Science (5.19%), Computer Science (1.77%), Mathematics (1.26%), Dental Science (0.98%) and Veterinary Science (0.22%). In terms of masters, only three of them offer one single module in English, which are Business Administration, Environmental Engineering and Cultural Services.

The University of Vigo gives the widest range of opportunities to its 24000 students. Instead of being specific to each degree, the EMI modules are those which can be chosen by students of

different studies at the same faculty, either basic training or optional modules, such as Engineering Graphics – compulsory for all the engineering programs – or Management – basic training for economics, business administration, trade science and human resources. Therefore, we can find these modules, apart from the faculty of philology and translation, at the faculty of sciences (2 modules), school of business and tourism (14), faculty of education sciences (10), school of computer engineering (8), college of physiotherapy (2), faculty of biology (4), faculty of economics and business sciences (10), school of telecommunication engineering (11), faculty of marine sciences (6), faculty of chemistry (2) and school of industrial engineering (8). Moreover, there are six masters mostly taught using EMI, which are Inter-university Master's in Advanced English Studies and its Applications, Master's in Biological Sciences: Molecular, Computational and Environmental Biology and Bio-industries, Master's in Telecommunication Engineering, Master's in Theoretical Chemistry and Computational Modelling, Master's in Chemical Research and Industrial Chemistry and Master's in Industrial Engineering. Finally, the University of A Coruña, with almost 20000 students, offers seven degrees with at least 50% of their modules taught in English. They are Business Administration, Architecture, Biology, Computer Engineering, Naval and Oceanic Engineering, Architectural Studies and Chemistry. In addition, other faculties also offer optional EMI modules, like the Faculty of Law, the School of Physiotherapy or the Faculty of Civil Engineering.

#### **Certification to become an EMI Professor**

As we could already notice, the three universities work differently and so the process of obtaining the certification to teach using EMI also varies. The University of Santiago de Compostela, for example, does not have a specific protocol for those professors who want to use EMI. It depends on the desire of professors, who just should communicate it to their corresponding department and the module will be taught in English without any type of control by the university. However, the International Affairs committee is planning to publish next academic year the internationalisation programme for the university and, afterwards, the standards to obtain the EMI certification.

The University of Vigo offers three possibilities to get the qualification. This is valid from the approval of documents until three years after the last module taught in English. Once this period finishes, professors must apply again.

- a) Having a B2 CEFR title in English. This title must have been passed in the previous three years.
- b) Having taught in a foreign university in English. This teaching period has to be during either two following academic years or three alternate ones.
- c) Passing a specific test designed by the University of Vigo called Higher Education Lecturing Accreditation – HELA. This test consists of two parts:
  - i. Written part: Candidates have to answer three exercises related to the teaching profession, such as summarising a module, replying an email to a student or explaining how an exam will be.
  - ii. Oral part: Candidates have to show how they would develop a lecture using EMI, so they must prepare an oral exposition for about 5 to 7 minutes. Thus, they should include part of a session with the needed resources as well as questions and answers to the examiners, who pretend they are students.

The University of A Coruña has also a specific process for potential EMI professors. Unlike the previous university, if professors achieve the accreditation, they will be able to use it forever as it does not expire.

- a) Having a C1 CEFR official title in English.
- b) Having a C1 title in English from the University's Language Centre.
- c) Having taught in a foreign university in English as a visiting professor.
- d) Passing the programme designed by the University of A Coruña called Plan de Apoyo Lingüístico para la Docencia en Inglés – PALDI. This programme proposes two choices:
  - i. PALDI test: Candidates have to prepare a mini-lecture of 10 minutes plus 5 minutes of questions. This mini-lecture should include the professor's introduction, summary and assessment of the module, ice-breaker activity, explanation of part of a lecture and, at least, one interactive activity. The examiners will pretend they are students, so they will make questions to the candidate similar to the ones students usually ask. Apart from the mini-lecture itself, all the resources will be considered. The overall certification result is based on a combined assessment of the lecturer's fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and question handling in English for university teaching.
  - ii. PALDI course: This course has 30 hours of compulsory attendance, with 27 of them focused on learning about EMI and 3 hours for a final test. The contents of the course include principles of EMI at the university, teacher planning, lecture methodology, interactive methodology, assessment, classroom management, multicultural awareness, effective English language and English pronunciation and oral expression. The assessment is totally formative, based on observation and participation in the course.

### **Advantages for EMI Professors**

To encourage professors to apply for EMI programmes, universities tend to give them some incentives which recognise the effort they make by using another language different to their mother tongue. As stated before, the University of Santiago de Compostela does not recognise any advantage for them due to the lack of control and supervision.

The University of Vigo does pay attention to the struggle of professors and that is why it admires their everyday work:

- a) Recognition of additional course load because of using a foreign language.
- b) Certification for taking part in EMI programmes
- c) Priority access to mobility programmes organised by the University of Vigo
- d) Priority access to teacher training activities, especially those about foreign language didactics.
- e) Usage of tools and resources of English language.
- f) Methodological advice.
- g) Free taxes for one foreign language exam at the university's Language Centre.

The University of A Coruña also develops some actions for supporting existing EMI professors and attracting potential new ones:

- a) Discount of 25 teaching hours per year on the annual plan. This discount lasts three years and it can be extendable.
- b) Right to continue teaching the same EMI module for three years.
- c) Unlimited access to PALDI teacher training courses throughout the academic year.

### Conclusions

Globalisation has forced higher education systems to adapt their offer and to change the language of instruction for training their students adequately. One of these transformations was the introduction of English as a Medium of Instruction, as it not only provides students with language training but also with international opportunities which will be very valuable for their future career. The three universities at the Galician University System include EMI modules, but the importance given is not the same.

The University of Santiago de Compostela, the oldest and biggest, only offers EMI courses to six degrees and the percentage of modules taught in English is less than 13%. However, it is the institution with more international students who, apart from local ones as a way of internationalisation at home, may need English as a lingua franca. Therefore, there is not a clear procedure to achieve a certification as an EMI professor, which leads to a lack of privileges for those professors who are struggling to teaching using a Foreign Language in class.

The University of Vigo is the Galician institution with more EMI modules and they are nicely distributed among faculties and fields of study. This division aims to present EMI to a vast number of students who might be interested in improving their level of English while doing their degrees. Additionally, all professors willing to teach using EMI know the requirements they must fulfil to get a certification. Their effort is valued by the university, which gives them advantages such as teacher training courses.

Finally, the University of A Coruña has also EMI courses mainly gathered in seven degrees which allow students to achieve an international title. The system for professors to get the suitable certification is the result of several years of reflection. Some of the conclusions of that reflection made it possible to add an EMI course to the existing EMI test, so candidates have more possibilities to get it and, therefore, EMI is highly promoted. Moreover, professors may ask for some incentives once they are teaching according to EMI.

As results have shown, Galician University System is working on updating and innovating its teaching and learning process. English as a Medium of Instruction is becoming more and more in demand so institutions must adapt their means to promote this acclaimed methodology. We do believe the University of Santiago should give priority to internationalisation at home. It may not be working enough and its figures show it is totally able to assign resources to this long-term project. If the process for obtaining a certification and the following benefits are not detailed, professors will not consider EMI as an option and students will not have that opportunity.

In terms of the certification itself, a combination of University of Vigo and University of A Coruña might be necessary. Regarding the requirements, we consider B2 is not enough to manage the classroom so we agree with the University of A Coruña that C1 is necessary. However, the option of having been a visiting professor is better explained by University of Vigo, as the minimum period is two academic years. Both HELA and PALDI show the effort made by professors and coordinators to find a fair test. Once again, we think they should be

joined. On the one hand, a course similar to PALDI course is crucial for those candidates who have never studied about methodology and teaching and learning process in English. On the other hand, there should be a test, a mixture between HELA and PALDI test, with a written and oral part which deal with micro-teaching and bureaucracy.

Finally, although both universities provide EMI professors with incentives and benefits, the University of Vigo includes more advantages, which are crucial to encourage professors to use EMI. It is well-known professors are not likely to use English as the language for teaching because some of them do not feel comfortable when speaking and they believe their level is not good enough. Thus, if training courses are available, they may be more willing to.

To conclude, Galician University System is progressing little by little. The total change from attending a classroom either in Spanish or Galician to studying in English is pretty arduous. Therefore, higher education institutions are striving to attain high levels of prestige and recognition. There is still much to do to become bilingual universities, but the team work of all implied actors may achieve it.

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