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Profiles of Students in Bilingual University Degree Programs Using English as a Medium of Instruction in Spain

Perfiles de los estudiantes de las titulaciones universitarias bilingües
en lengua inglesa en España

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This is an empirical study which aims to examine the profile of Spanish university students in bilingual degree programs that employ English as a medium of instruction by utilizing the bilingual section of the teaching degree course at the University of Granada as a sample. To this end, a questionnaire was applied to 216 students. While 75% of the students reported having problems when following a bilingual class, these difficulties were found to diminish or disappear after the first trimester. The majority of the students (70%) were satisfied with the program offered but they also detected some deficiencies, which provided a basis for various suggestions as to how university bilingual programs might be improved.

Keywords: bilingual degrees, bilingual education at the university level, content and language integrated learning, English as a medium of instruction

Este estudio empírico se propone analizar el perfil de los estudiantes universitarios que cursan titulaciones bilingües en España, tomando como muestra la sección bilingüe del Grado de Maestro en lengua inglesa de la Universidad de Granada. Con ese fin, se aplicó un breve cuestionario a 216 estudiantes de dicho grado para obtener los datos. Aunque el 75 % de los estudiantes manifestaron que tenían problemas a la hora de seguir las clases en inglés, estas dificultades disminuían o desaparecían después de haber cursado el primer trimestre. La mayoría de los estudiantes (70 %) están satisfechos con el programa que se les ofrece, pero también detectan algunas deficiencias que hicieron constar con el fin de contribuir a mejorar la calidad de dicha titulación.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje integrado de contenidos y lenguas extranjeras, educación bilingüe en las universidades, inglés como lengua de instrucción, titulaciones bilingües

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Introduction

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the international dimension of university education has been expanding steadily due to various circumstances, among which it is important to highlight globalization (Stewart, 1996), the internationalization of institutions of higher education, and migration patterns. Although the terms *internationalization* and *globalization* are often used synonymously, there are important differences that are worth clarifying herein. Additionally, the need for communication, which facilitates globalization, has converted the English language into a social necessity and priority as it is an indispensable tool for international communications and access to the global labor market. Thus, globalization and membership in the European Union have contributed to the introduction and promotion of language study by the various educational institutions at all levels of education with English being the most prevalent due to its status as a lingua franca (Jenkins, 2014; Seidlhofer, 2011).

The establishment of the European Higher Education Area (Benito & Cruz, 2005) has also facilitated the reciprocity of university degrees within the European Union and the mobility of professors and students among member states. These developments have all served to foster the establishment of bilingual programs and curricula in European institutions. However, as Sierra and López Hernández (2015) stated, bilingual programs, which can be characterized as English as a medium of instruction (EMI) or integrating content and language in higher education (ICLHE), are often the result of the disjointed and experimental character of several initiatives which sometimes feature little quality control (Smit & Dafouz, 2012).

EMI and ICLHE as a Result of the Globalization and Internationalization of Universities

In the bilingual education modality, the following acronyms are frequently used: content-based instruction,

content and language integrated learning (CLIL), EMI, and ICLHE. Among these, EMI is the one that best defines what actually occurs in university bilingual programs due to the fact that professors use a second language (L2, English in most cases) in order to impart subject matter but the attention dedicated to the explicit teaching of the L2 is practically nonexistent. However, in primary and secondary education the CLIL label would be more appropriate because linguistic concepts are integrated to a greater degree into the teaching of subject-specific curriculum. Nevertheless, EMI, CLIL, or more specifically ICLHE are employed in studies on the topic indistinctly (Dalton-Puffer, 2011; Fortanet-Gómez, 2013).

As we have seen, the development of bilingual curricula at international universities has been greatly favored by the ongoing processes of globalization and internationalization (de Wit, 2011; Knight & de Wit, 2018). In the last twenty years, the momentum generated by the processes of globalization and internationalization in the modern world and the belief that they are beneficial have positively contributed to a gradual increase in the number of foreign students in universities (Doiz et al., 2013; van der Walt, 2013) and to the adoption of English as the international language of instruction in higher education. In contrast, Dafouz and Smit (2016) showed that in some cases bilingual initiatives have hindered the development of some minority languages (e.g., Danish, Dutch, Finnish, Norwegian, etc.). Although the most popular acronyms employed to refer to university bilingual teaching initiatives are EMI (Doiz et al., 2013; Schmidt-Unterberger, 2018) and ICLHE (Pérez Vidal, 2015; Wilkinson, 2004), Dafouz and Smit (2016) introduced the acronym EMEMUS in reference to English-medium education in multilingual university settings as a synonym for ICLHE even though they conceptualize the term differently.

Dafouz and Smit (2016) situate EMEMUS in the theoretical framework that they refer to as “Road mapping,” which consists of the following six components:

- *English* playing a leading role in lesson planning and implementation as a lingua franca (Jenkins, 2014; Seidlhofer, 2011);
- *academic disciplines* with different types of discourse;
- *(language) management*, which sometimes favors English to the detriment of a country's official languages;
- the roles that must be exercised by the individual *agents* (e.g., professors and students) and institutions (administration, etc.);
- the teaching and learning activities created during classroom situations; and
- internationalization and globalization.

Nevertheless, Schmidt-Unterberger (2018) utilizes EMI as the most suitable acronym in reference to English language teaching in university contexts where there is hardly any attention paid to the linguistic features of the vehicular language. For this author, the combination of EMI subjects which employ the methodologies of English for specific purposes and English for academic purposes would be the most realistic teaching model to follow. In this way, training for EMI teachers must not only focus on linguistic competence, which is necessarily conveyed to have class, but also on the teaching of subject-specific content in such a way that professors are able to successfully integrate subject matter with language since all professors and teachers of nonlinguistic subjects are language teachers as well (Bullock, 1975).

According to Coleman (2006), the commitment of universities to internationalization has led to commercialization, which has caused many educational institutions to become commercial brands in search of clients to make ends meet. Due to this tendency, universities have increasingly sought to promote the establishment and development of bilingual and multilingual degree courses (Ramos, 2013; Sierra & López Hernández, 2015). Coleman identified seven factors that have been instrumental to the development of

bilingual EMI/CLIL programs in the context of European universities:

- The use of *CLIL* allows for the integrated study of the language as a means of instruction and the subject matter (Coyle et al., 2010);
- *internationalization* as an appealing indicator of prestige;
- increasing *student exchanges* by using English as the *lingua franca* without the need to learn the languages of each country;
- the use of research and *teaching materials in English*;
- *labor mobility*, involving professors traveling to foreign countries on temporary stays;
- increasing *career opportunities* for graduates; and
- attracting more *international students* by offering classes in English.

Knight (2011) identified various myths and misconceptions about internationalization that are usually defended by academic institutions, such as the erroneous view that the more international students are enrolled in an institution, the greater the extent to which an institution's culture and curricula will adopt internationalization. Knight further elaborated on false impressions such as the more international a university is, the better its reputation will be or the more the international agreements an institution is party to, the more prestigious it will become and, as a result, the more attractive it will be for students. Furthermore, de Wit (2011) added other commonly held false beliefs like the general idea that internationalization is similar to simply teaching English, studying abroad, and having many foreign students. Additionally, it is generally thought that higher education is international by nature and that internationalization ought to be an objective in its own right.

Although they do exist, the aforementioned misconceptions are relative and in many cases fail to come about. As such, universities have committed themselves to internationalization and have vigorously endeavored to augment and promote internationalization. For that

reason, Spain's Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports (MECD) emphasizes various strategic principles to facilitate internationalization through the following document: *Estrategias para la internacionalización de las universidades españolas 2015–2020* (Strategies for the internationalization of Spanish universities 2015–2020). For example, this document outlines such strategies as the consolidation of a highly internationalized system by increasing the number of bilingual undergraduate and master's degree programs, boosting the international appeal of Spanish universities, and promoting competitiveness and cooperation with other regions in the world (MECD, 2014).

Bilingual Degrees at Spanish Universities

In 2002, private Spanish universities began offering bilingual degrees, preceding the public education system in doing so. Dafouz and Nuñez (2009) pointed out that private universities provide more flexibility in the implementation of new degrees and greater freedom when it comes to staff renewal according to a university's teaching needs. In the last few years, European universities have been compelled by the need to strengthen their global reach with the objective of attaining higher levels of international competitiveness and attracting foreign students. Additionally, European universities are increasingly showing interest in multilingual degree programs and many institutions of higher education are offering more courses in foreign languages.

A full list of the courses and subjects based on EMI at Spanish universities can be consulted by viewing the document entitled *Degree Programs in English Language in the Spanish University System* (Matilla Vicente, 2013). The report found that the fields of economics, business administration, engineering, architecture, and education have the greatest number of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in English (Martín del Pozo, 2013). Within this broad panorama of bilingual degree programs, there is a great deal of diversity and

heterogeneity in the courses being offered, the teaching requirements, and the admission criteria for students (Fortanet-Gómez, 2013; Julius & Madrid, 2017; Martín del Pozo, 2013). According to Sierra and López Hernández (2015), in 2013 there were 33 Spanish universities offering different bilingual degree programs out of a total of 77. This fact serves to highlight just how important bilingual education has become in Spain in recent years (Escobar & Arnau, 2018; Ramos, 2013).

Precedents: Research Studies on EMI and ICLHE Degree Programs

The majority of studies in bilingual programs have focused on CLIL students in primary and secondary school. Even so, the last few years have experienced growth in EMI programs at universities and consequently, research into such programs has increased. For instance, Dafouz et al. (2007) studied the perceptions of 71 students and 67 professors in three science degree programs (chemistry, health sciences, and aeronautical engineering) with regard to the effects of the EMI programs on student competence and attitude. This study demonstrated that the linguistic skills which benefited the most were vocabulary, pronunciation, and listening comprehension in the language used as a means of instruction (English). For 72% of the students, classes given in English were more motivating than those in their native language (Spanish) and the use of a foreign language did not diminish student participation in class. Professors and students alike expressed very positive attitudes towards the EMI program and furthermore, the students did not simply acknowledge the benefit of learning by means of English but they also greatly valued the implications for their future career opportunities.

Toledo et al. (2012) studied the beliefs, academic performance, and the attitudes of university students beginning their bilingual degrees in the Faculty of Education at the University of Huelva. Their results demonstrated that the students positively evaluated

their selection of the EMI program and showed great satisfaction with their improvement in practically all language-related skills and their academic performance in general. Despite the supposed increase in effort and dedication on the part of the students due to following a bilingual curriculum, they considered the course to have positively impacted their education. As regards the teachers and professors, it also became apparent that it is of fundamental importance to improve their training in EMI/ICLHE methodology, enhance their linguistic competence in English, and increase our understanding of their personal motivations, interests, and needs for professional development.

Johnson (2012) analyzed the attitudes of five university professors from the University of Alcalá (Spain) towards their bilingual project and found that although the professors participating in the study felt well-prepared to teach EMI lessons in the university context, they did not have confidence in the extent to which students in teacher-education programs were prepared to teach in schools using an L2 in the future. Nevertheless, the overall evaluation provided by these professors was very positive.

Maíz-Arévalo and Domínguez-Romero (2013) studied the perceptions of students pursuing a bilingual degree in economics and business administration at the Madrid Complutense University as regards the effects of the EMI program. Their results showed that the students perceived considerable development in their English listening and speaking skills. Similarly, 71% of the students recognized their progress in learning subject-specific vocabulary and 75.5% acknowledged they felt more motivated as a result of having classes in English. In relation to their participation in class, the students recognized that it was similar to their experiences in classes taught in Spanish but indicated that it depended on the professor's methodology and the subject matter of the lesson.

Yang and Gosling (2013) explored the perceptions of 54 students taking part in an EMI program in inter-

national tourism management at a national polytechnic university in Taiwan. This study showed the beneficial effect these programs have on linguistic and communicative competence among students using a vehicular language, particularly from the end of the first trimester onwards. However, the students did observe slower progress in course-specific subject matter and they reported having difficulties with reading comprehension and writing texts in English. Furthermore, the students were found to keep silent more frequently and participate less than in classes taught in Mandarin Chinese. When it came time to evaluate their experience, they preferred to complete the surveys in their mother tongue because they felt more competent than in their L2. Apart from that, they also showed a preference for professors who were native English speakers since the nonnative professors experienced difficulties teaching subject matter in English. Despite these challenges, they were motivated by classes taught in English and acknowledged their advantages over other professionals in competing for future employment. By contrast, 25% of the students did have a negative impression of the course due to the stress and anxiety that resulted from not being able to comprehend course contents in the English language.

Sierra and López Hernández (2015) studied EMI programs in professional development courses within the childhood education field and their findings illustrated the strengths and weaknesses of such programs from the point of view of both professors and students. On the one hand, the strengths included the high ratings given by students to all the subjects taught in English during their degree course, the importance of doing their student-teaching practicum in a bilingual CLIL school, and the completion of their final project in English. On the other hand, the weaknesses highlighted the inadequate training for professors related to nonlinguistic subjects using EMI methodology.

Jover et al. (2016) studied the types of basic training courses found in schools of education for future primary

school EMI teachers and their analysis explained the reasons why this training is deficient (de la Maya & Luengo, 2015; Madrid Manrique & Madrid, 2014; Pérez Cañado, 2016a) in addition to the complaints from university students in EMI programs in reference to the lack of training for the professors that teach these courses. In this study, they emphasized the precariousness of the EMI programs in operation at zero cost, which is to say those programs set up with the readily available human resources and without establishing a staff recruitment process specifying the necessary qualifications for an EMI professor: a degree in the academic subject to be taught, a C1 level in English, and adequate training in CLIL methodology.

Escobar and Arnau (2018) carried out various EMI studies at the University of Barcelona with students from the primary school teacher education program. Some very interesting conclusions were offered as to the sociolinguistic factors that influence students' decisions to study for a degree in primary education (Evnitskaya & Torras-Vila, 2018). Furthermore, Escobar (2018a) provided insights into the students' opinions of their degree course. Borràs-Comes and Escobar (2018) also analyzed the ability of students to develop discourse in an EMI/ICHLE setting. Moreover, Arnau et al. (2018) studied student academic performance in the same context. Finally, Escobar (2018b) explored the preparation of professors that offer such bilingual courses.

In light of the diversity and heterogeneity amongst EMI/ICLHE programs offered in the Spanish and European contexts specifically, we believe that it is necessary to study the characteristics of these programs and the students that enroll in them, the impact on the student body at large, and the perceptions of students as to program strengths and weaknesses with the aim of implementing measures to consolidate and contribute to a more efficient and effective system. That is the general objective of the study that we shall now present.

Method

The work that we are to present is a descriptive study of the personal characteristics of students in the bilingual degree course in primary school education (Maestro en Educación Primaria) at the University of Granada. We controlled for three quantitative and four qualitative variables, which were measured by means of an open-ended questionnaire. In this study, we intend to provide an answer to the research questions in the questionnaire included in the appendix.

Participants

This research was carried out with the four bilingual groups of the bilingual degree course in primary school education at the Faculty of Education (University of Granada) in 2017–2018: 52 first-year students, 54 second-year students, 57 third-year students, and 53 fourth-year students.

Data Collection Instruments and Controlled Variables

In order to respond to the aforementioned research questions, the participants completed a brief questionnaire that is included in the appendix.

We addressed the validity of the questionnaire's content by ensuring that the research questions are a representative sample of all the aspects that we seek to measure in relation to the variables controlled for. For the purpose of improving validity and reliability and obtaining more exact insight into the responses to the research questions, we took into consideration the perspectives of the two authors of this research project and that of the coordinator of the bilingual degree course at the institution where this study took place.

Data and Statistical Analysis

The analysis of the data and the statistical calculations that we carried out with the first three research questions, which are quantitative, was done using the statistics software program SPSS 20. We calculated the

basic descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and then we checked for statistically significant differences among the students. To this end, we applied student's t-test or the Mann-Whitney U test according to the distributions of parametric and nonparametric student ratings with a significance level of $p \leq 0.05$ (95%).

Institutional Environment

The bilingual section at the Faculty of Education (University of Granada) teaches approximately half of the curriculum's subjects in the English language, which is to say 116 of the total 240 credits required for the degree. The teaching of lessons, course assignments, seminar activities, and evaluations are all completed in English in addition to the student-teacher practicum, which takes place in bilingual schools in Granada. This is an EMI experience in which the professors teach the subject matter in English by putting more emphasis on the curricular content than on the linguistics of English, which is learnt implicitly as a result of the intensive and practical use of the language in class. The main objective of the Faculty of Education is to offer graduates of the primary school teaching degree course an education that responds to the social demand for foreign language knowledge. In turn, this provides graduates with more competitive advantages and greater mobility in an increasingly globalized world in which the knowledge of languages is an indispensable necessity.

Results and Discussion

Once the questionnaires were applied and the opinions expressed by the students were analyzed, we obtained the following results in each of the areas investigated.

English Competence of Students

With regard to the students' attainment of linguistic standards as measured in the first question of the questionnaire, 45% of first-year students began the bilingual degree course with a B1 and 24% started with a B2 of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). In the study

by Escobar (2018a) with students at the University of Barcelona, 46% of the students enrolled in 2015 with a B1, 44% obtained a B2, and nobody earned a C1. However, as students advance in the degree program, they continue to develop their linguistic competence and this improvement coincides with more linguistic accreditations. In this study, second-year students with a B2 ascended to 35%, third-year students with the same accreditation increased to 40%, and a B2 was held by 63% of the fourth-year students. When considering all program participants, 10% of the students obtained a C1 and one student owned a C2 certification.

Based on the application of the Mann-Whitney U test, we analyzed the differences among students in the different years of their degree and found that these differences are statistically significant ($p = .00$ in every case) i.e. in favor of the subsequent year of the degree course (fourth-year over third-year, third-year over second-year, etc.). While in our study the final level of linguistic competence was situated around a B2, in other university contexts, like that at the University of Barcelona (Escobar & Arnau, 2018) for example, a B2 is necessary for enrollment and it is expected that the majority of students will attain a C1 by the end of their degree.

Complementary Language Education

In the context of complementing foreign language lessons at school, one quarter of all students (25.14%) did not have any supplementary private classes whereas all of the remaining students had enjoyed the privilege of additional language education: 13.77% of the students reported having as many as 108 classroom hours, 23.97% had up to 325 hours, 7.48% up to 540 hours, 4.79% up to 760 hours, and 24.85% of the students had surpassed 760 hours. Besides private classes, students complete their university education by participating in the Erasmus exchange program, whereby they study abroad in English at other European universities. According

to data from the Faculty Internationalization Office (Oficina de Internacionalización de la Facultad), of all the students who had studied abroad in academic year 2016–2017, a total of 20.6% were enrolled in a bilingual degree program whereas in 2017–2018 the proportion was 19.35%.

As we shall see below, the majority of the students surveyed were of the opinion that a B1-certified level of linguistic competence was sufficient as a starting point to be able to follow lessons taught in English, which was a fact shared by Sierra and López Hernández (2015).

Stays Abroad in English-Speaking Countries

Stays abroad in English-speaking countries had a positive effect on students' linguistic competence. Although most students, when considered globally, did not enjoy a stay abroad in an English-speaking country (70.35%), 17.06% of the students reported having spent 4 to 12 weeks in a country where English was spoken, 6.28% had the chance to experience from 13 to 24 weeks, 4.19% had between 25 and 36 weeks, and 2.12% had the privilege of being in an English-speaking country for more than 37 weeks.

Reasons for Choosing the EMI Program

The students expressed a variety of reasons as to why they had chosen the bilingual degree course and those reasons are summarized in the following categories:

Finding a better job. A total of 61% of the students chose the bilingual section of the degree course because they believed the EMI program would provide them with greater future career opportunities and help them to obtain a better job. In other words, the students were clearly motivated by the utility of bilingual competence in a competitive labor market. Amongst all factors, the idea of having better job prospects in the future plainly stood out as the most important contributing factor for choosing the bilingual course as stated by the students:

“In the near future most schools will be bilingual and will demand teachers with a bilingual degree.”

“A degree in English gives you better opportunities in the job market.”

“I think that taking the degree in the bilingual modality gives students more opportunities to find a better job.”

“It opens more doors when finding a job.”

Love for languages. A total of 13.47% of the students acknowledged their passion for the study of languages. This motive was also frequently accompanied by the instrumental nature of foreign language competence in their future:

“I've always liked English and I was very good at school.”

Social recognition. For 13.20% of the students, a university degree in English entails a certain social prestige and global importance, which is reflected in its subsequent demand in the labor market:

“The social importance of English today is growing and it opens many doors.”

Complementary education. For 10.76% of the students, the appeal of earning a bilingual degree was seen as an excellent enhancement to their studies, especially as foreign language competence currently offers many advantages and provides better employment opportunities:

“In addition to the social importance of English and its usefulness in finding a quality job, this degree gives me the opportunity to get a more complete education.”

As was also shown in the study by Evnitskaya and Torras-Vila (2018), the *imagined identities* of each participant (Norton, 2000) have the greatest influence when choosing a bilingual degree in terms of their personal motivation. Additionally, students also decide to improve their English in bilingual programs because they believe English will enhance their future career opportunities and cultural awareness as the international

language of science, technology, and communication among countries (Norton & Gao, 2008). To sum up, the two main reasons why students choose a bilingual degree are students' imagined identities, which is to say the importance and meaning that English has in the personal life of each student (Evnitskaya & Torras-Vila, 2018), and the role of English as it is currently considered to be the language of prestige (Dafouz & Smit, 2016). Similarly, Doiz et al. (2014) showed that although students recognized the fact that taking courses in English is difficult and requires additional effort to understand contents, they chose a bilingual degree and accepted the challenge believing that they would learn more in English and that it would be extremely useful in their professional future.

Problems in EMI Classes

There are professors who think that a substantial number of students do not have the necessary linguistic preparation in order to follow a bilingual curriculum. In fact, 18% of the students had no linguistic accreditation and as such, would typically perform at a level oscillating between an A2 and B1 of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). However, 24.55% of the students admitted they generally had no problems following along in class. The remaining 75.45% did report having difficulties following lessons in English from time to time:

“The biggest problem I have found is not being able to transfer into Spanish the concepts learnt in English.”

“Sometimes I had problems with the vocabulary and oral expression activities.”

“After three years having classes in English, it is the same for me receiving the information in English or Spanish.”

The most frequent problems occurred during listening comprehension activities as students reported having difficulties understanding professors' explanations (37.72%), especially during the first weeks of class. Similarly, the comprehension of subject-specific

vocabulary was also reported as a frequent problem (17%). By comparison, Toledo et al. (2012) found that 20.5% of the students had trouble when dealing with specific subject matter. Regardless, from the first trimester onwards, students overcame their difficulties in comprehension and were able to follow classes normally. In spite of their improvements in comprehension, 12.38% of the students indicated they had some problems expressing themselves orally when it was time to participate and give presentations in class. Doiz et al. (2014, p. 124) found that: (a) 30.8% of the students encountered problems with the difficulty of the EMI program; (b) 13% reported not having sufficient English language competence to understand the professors' explanations; and (c) 10.2% found fault in the program's workload as it was deemed to be greater than that of the monolingual program.

Do EMI Students Learn More Effectively in Their L1 or L2?

There are professors who distrust the results of bilingual programs and believe that students learn less than if they take classes in their native language. Indeed, in this study 51.49% of the students reported learning more in classes taught in their mother tongue (Spanish) than those classes taught in English. This was offset by the opinion of 27% of the students, who thought that there was no difference between learning in Spanish and English as they reported learning in the same way regardless of the language. A total of 12.27% of the students recognized the fact that the more or less effective learning of subject matter in English depended on the methodology used by professors, especially their ability to make contents intelligible and adapt to the students' linguistic competence (Krashen, 1985):

“I learn more in Spanish because classes in the mother language are easier and we express ourselves better and with more freedom.”

“Complex concepts are clearer in the mother language.”

“The quantity and quality of knowledge is even higher when I learn it in English because there are more sources and information in this language.”

“I think there is no difference and I learn the same in both classes.”

“I think it depends on the professor and the techniques used in class.”

On this topic there was a sharp contrast between the results of this study and those of Toledo et al. (2012), in which 52% of the students reported having learnt more effectively in English than if they had taken a course in their mother language (Spanish). Only 2.6% of the respondents showed having learnt less in English than in Spanish and 44.7% asserted they learned in the same way regardless of the language used. These evaluations were also found to strengthen whenever the students chose the program voluntarily.

Despite the differences in student perceptions in this study, the number of students that successfully passed the courses taught in English is similar to those students who did the same courses in Spanish, at around 80%. Thus, the performance of both groups is similar despite the perceived difficulties of learning in an L2.

Overall Assessment of the EMI Program

In the survey's last question, students were asked to give their opinion about the EMI program in general (overall satisfaction, strengths, weaknesses, how to improve it, etc.).

Generally speaking, the students were satisfied with the EMI degree program. This finding is confirmed by research from Sierra and López Hernández (2015), who found that 73% of the students did affirm their satisfaction with their educational experience in the bilingual modality. In Toledo et al. (2012), the majority of the students was very satisfied with the program and even those students who had doubts about the program

at the beginning expressed their satisfaction. This level of satisfaction correlates with one's degree of linguistic competence, which is to say the greater language skills one possesses, the more satisfied they will be with the program. However, the determining factor in student satisfaction was not their linguistic competence but rather their attitude and motivation towards the bilingual program (Madrid & Roa, 2018). For example, there are students with only modest language skills who expressed tremendous satisfaction with the program (Martín et al., 2018; Toledo et al., 2012).

Amongst the reasons for satisfaction, most students mentioned their progress in learning the language. The specific skills that improved the most were listening and reading in addition to improvements in vocabulary. Students also pointed out the effect of the program on their speaking skills, particularly in reference to their ability to maintain a conversation in English with their classmates in order to complete an activity or assignment (Lasagabaster & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010; Marsh et al., 2015; Pérez Cañado, 2012; Ruiz de Zarobe & Jimenez Catalán, 2009). Doiz et al. (2014) also demonstrated the high degree of student satisfaction with EMI programs and the students highlighted their progress in the English language (45.7%), the advantages for their professional future (imagined identities; 42.9%), and the great competence developed for future international communication with peoples from other countries (26.1%).

Although a good deal of the students (36%) did not identify any areas for improvement and subscribed to the program as is, the majority (64%) suggested various ideas to improve the bilingual degree course. Included in the most frequent comments and suggestions by order of frequency, students mentioned the need to (a) officially recognize the bilingual nature of the degree with further accreditation (mentioned 181 times; Escobar, 2018a) and (b) to improve the linguistic competence of participating professors (159 times; see Escobar, 2018b; Johnson, 2012; Martín et al., 2018; Pérez Cañado, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c).

However less frequently, the students also established the need to (c) support students with scaffolding to help them overcome their difficulties in expressing their ideas in a foreign language (123 times), (d) increase the number of subjects taught in English in the curriculum (109 times), and (e) incorporate native English-speaking professors to teach as a part of the EMI program (95 times; see Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2002; Madrid & Pérez Cañado, 2004). At a much lower frequency, the students requested that (f) classes be organized according to the linguistic demand placed on students and adapt content to the students' linguistic competence (37 times), (g) professors not require any more additional effort than in the traditional monolingual program (25 times), and (h) professors place more emphasis on contents that are more difficult for students to understand (21 times). The students' comments emphasized the following points:

"Some professors are not competent to lecture in English. Many professors do not have enough command of the English language to lecture in a bilingual degree."

"The professors who teach in the bilingual degree are much more demanding with the students than those who teach in the monolingual program."

"We need more native professors to increase the quality of the program."

"It is urgent that the bilingual degree obtain official recognition and become a different degree than the monolingual one instead of being considered simply an accessory to the generic primary school degree."

Conclusions

In this study we explored the individual characteristics of the students enrolled in the bilingual degree course in primary school education (Maestro en Educación Primaria) at the University of Granada with the objective of identifying the linguistic profile of students at the beginning and end of their studies. Furthermore, we examined the reasons why they chose the degree, the difficulties they encountered,

their level of satisfaction, the educational benefits they experienced, the program's strengths and weaknesses, and the areas of improvement identified by students in order to enhance the quality of the program. These results enable us to better understand the typical profile of a bilingual student in education, with special reference to the Faculty of Education of the University of Granada, and to conclude that this degree is in high demand. The students' linguistic proficiency, though it may be deficient and cause problems when following class discussions during the first trimester for some first-year students, is sufficient to attend classes with good results, especially if the students are highly motivated from the outset. A majority of students chose the bilingual degree course because they regarded the program as a way to enhance their future job prospects or due to their interest in learning foreign languages (imagined identity). While about one quarter of the students did not have any problems following classes and carrying out subject-specific activities in English, the majority did encounter some difficulties, which were usually observed during the first trimester, after which they declined considerably. It is also worth noting that final student achievement in the bilingual degree and monolingual degree sections was similar; in both cases, about 80% of the students passed their assessments.

In general, most of the students were satisfied with the EMI program that they had enrolled in. While this level of satisfaction did correlate with linguistic proficiency, the main determinant in student satisfaction was their motivation and commitment to the bilingual program. Among the potential areas identified by students to improve program quality, they highlighted the need to officially recognize the bilingual section of the degree course for its merit beyond a normal teaching degree, provide more support for students who experience difficulties following the bilingual curriculum, increase the number of subjects taught in English in the syllabus, and incorporate native English-speaking professors into the program.

We hope this study contributes to a greater understanding of the main personal and individual characteristics of the students doing the bilingual degree course that we have analyzed in this case study. We believe this student profile extends to many other degrees in the humanities and education in other Spanish universities. The strengths and weaknesses detected and the areas identified by students for future improvements are very useful to bear in mind in order to improve the quality of EMI programs both at the University of Granada and other institutions.

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Appendix: Questionnaire

Choose the corresponding options and answer the following questions about your degree program.

1. As of today, indicate your level of English language accreditation (circle one): A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2, None, Only secondary school studies.
2. Besides your English classes during secondary school, have you ever received private lessons? If so, how many hours per week have you had and for how many years?
3. Have you ever lived in an English-speaking country? If so, for how many months?
4. What is the main reason why you chose the bilingual degree course?
5. Which problems have you had in following a bilingual English curriculum in class?
6. Do you think you learn more content and more effectively in the classes taught in Spanish or in English? Why?
7. Please give your overall opinion of the bilingual program (the benefits you have experienced, program's strengths, weaknesses, how to improve its quality, etc.).