Designing Bilingual Programmes for Higher Education in Spain: Organisational, Curricular and Methodological Decisions

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Abstract

In order to improve the language proficiency of students and hence their future employability, Spanish universities are developing bilingual programmes of various kinds. Implementing such programmes, however, requires much more than simply promoting a bilingual education policy in universities or the goodwill of teachers interested in participating in them. Given the general language proficiency of teachers and students, it is necessary to design programmes that have clear objectives and sensible timelines that take into account the particular characteristics of each university. Moreover, it is essential that bilingual programmes are well organised and use the appropriate resources and support measures (training in methodology, linguistics, incentives, etc.).

In this paper we review the basic methodological premises that should underpin educational proposals based on the learning of academic knowledge through a language other than the students’ mother tongue. We analyse the key problems faced by university education authorities when designing such programmes, and finally examine the structural, organisational and training measures that should be taken to overcome such problems and thus ensure the effectiveness of bilingual programmes.

Key words: higher education, bilingual programmes, curriculum, syllabus, methodology

Introduction

It is essential that university students receive adequate training to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills that will enable them to compete in a globalised labour market, including the obligation to know and master a second language, especially English. In order to develop knowledge of a second language and provide students with a necessary added value in the world today, and to comply with the regulations set out under European directives, Spanish universities have begun to design and organise programmes of study that include the teaching of subjects through a foreign language. In these cases the language of the students is social, the language of the majority, and the second one is learnt as an additional one (Lessow-Hurley, 2000). In 2000, some private universities offered bilingual studies and few public universities had launched bilingual programmes (Dafouz and Núñez, 2009:102), but now the majority of private and public universities have designed bilingual programmes or have embryonic programmes to promote the teaching of subjects in English. These programmes range from what is technically considered as ‘bilingual education’, ‘the use of two languages of instruction at some point in a student’s school career’ (Cummins, 2008: xii), to the implementation of ‘any learning activity where language is used as a tool to develop new learning from a subject area or theme’ (Coyle et al., 2009: 6). Indeed, attempts are now being made to develop a more or less organised structure which seeks to encourage teachers to begin teaching their subjects through what for their students is an additional language.
However, the implementation of such programmes requires more than just the good intentions of the university administrators and faculty involved (Marsh, Pavón and Frigols, 2013). Unfortunately, there are many misconceptions and erroneous assumptions that lead some to consider that these programmes can be implemented simply by changing the language in which the subjects are taught. This could potentially work if the necessary conditions were met (e.g. students possessing a high command of the additional language and teachers being fluent in the language). However, this is generally not the case in Spanish universities. The design and implementation of these programmes requires a rigorous prior analysis of the needs and objectives, which must be established on the basis of appropriate structural, organisational and methodological decisions; decisions that are directly related to factors that will have an impact on the effectiveness of the proposed educational model. To do so, it is important to begin by discussing the objectives to be achieved in relation to the academic knowledge and language proficiency that students must ultimately acquire. Another important factor is to set an appropriate timeline to implement a bilingual programme and achieve the objectives set out in it. The use of an appropriate methodology must also be assessed based on the lessons already learned in higher education (and other levels of education) regarding CLIL. Finally, the hypothetical implementation of a programme to teach subjects through a second language must take into account the available human and material resources. This helps ensure that a programme is in line with the educational reality of the university in question, and at the same time, ambitious enough to capitalise on the benefits of this method of teaching, and thus contribute to achieving reasonable minimum targets.

Throughout this paper we analyse the circumstances that led to the development of an educational programme of this kind in a higher education setting. We examine the reasons that justify this particular bilingual programme and identify the challenges that arose in its implementation. We then explore the need to set reasonable academic and linguistic objectives, as well as the use of suitable methodological and curricular resources. The paper concludes with a discussion of basic structural measures to ensure that a programme attempting to capitalise on the introduction of subjects taught through a second language is effective.

2. Reasons for implementing bilingual programmes in higher education

As mentioned in the introduction, one of the main, if not the most important, aims of implementing programmes based on the teaching of academic subjects through an additional language is to improve students’ competence in the second language with the objective of equipping them with a very useful tool for their professional future. Following Lorenzo et al. (2011: 212), another aim is to promote multilingual competences that will enable citizens to participate in social processes in international contexts. According to Coleman (2006: 4), there are important reasons that explain why English is being increasingly used as the language of instruction at the university level, namely internationalisation, student exchanges, teaching and research materials, staff mobility, graduate employability, and the growing number of foreign students enrolling in university studies.

Although the linguistic benefits derived from the teaching of academic content using a language other than the learner’s mother tongue seem to be a new trend to promote the acquisition of second languages, especially in Europe, such benefits were already noted in the times of the Akkadians, approximately 5,000 years ago (Mackey, 1978: 2; Mehisto et al., 2008: 9). Many authors have reported the benefits of programmes of this kind at the undergraduate (Dalton-Puffer and Smit 2007; Dalton-Puffer 2008; Marsh et al., 2009; Lasagabaster 2008; Ruiz de Zarobe and Jiménez, 2009) and graduate levels (Johnson and Swain, 1994; Airey, 2004; Coyle, 2004; Coyle et al., 2007; Wilkinson, 2004; Lorenzo, 2002, 2008; Colemon, 2006; Dafouz et al., 2007; Dafouz and Nuñez, 2009; Doiz et al., 2013; Pérez-Cañado, 2013; Fortanet-Gómez, 2013; Smit and Dafouz, 2013). More specifically, however, we should analyse in depth the reasons why higher education has turned its attention to this new dimension of teaching. Although this is a relatively new method of teaching in higher education in Spain, it has been widely implemented in the European higher education setting, and is not so new in other educational levels in Spain (Martin, 1999; Plan for the Promotion of Multilingualism of the Ministry of Education of the Regional Government of Andalusia, 2004; Lasagabaster and Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010).
The rationale underlying the motives for such educational measures can be summarised as follows:

- the adoption of educational policies and regulations emanating from supra-national agencies and institutions
- the ability to attract national and international students
- the position of the university in the national and international arena
- the enhancement of the attractiveness of the university in the global context
- the opening up of new opportunities for students in the labour market. It is conceived as a measure of significant importance in improving the employability of future graduates.
- an important parameter and indicator for determining university funding
- the development of educational, economic and cultural partnerships with other countries through the signing of specific agreements between governments
- the creation of future collaborative networks among universities in academic, professional and research fields, and the improvement of existing ones
- the enhancement of the international and intercultural skills and competences of the students and faculty involved

Bilingual programmes are an effective way to provide students with linguistic skills in an additional language (mainly English) that are absolutely essential in today’s job market. Many of our students find it difficult to get quality jobs as one of the most common prerequisites is a sound command of the English language. Additionally, studying subjects in an additional language facilitates mobility within the European Higher Education Area, and students receiving academic instruction through English have greater opportunities to study in other European and non-European universities.

More specifically, the benefits of teaching of academic content through an additional language include:

- Teaching through a second language advocates the use of methodological strategies to promote interaction and language use in the classroom as the main means for students to access information. It aims to harness the principle of redundancy (repetition and coordination of content) and comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985).
- As students progress in the additional language they become more confident about the communication skills they are able to develop (Dalton-Puffer, 2005). As they gain confidence, feelings of inhibition and inferiority disappear. By improving their language competence, students gain greater self-awareness of their own capabilities in both the classroom setting and in terms of their future professional development.
- As concerns the influence of psycho-affective factors, it should also be noted that this new teaching and learning context leads to a progressive decrease in what is known as the ‘affective filter’, that is, the development of a psychological incapacity that blocks learning a foreign language (Krashen, 1981). This affective filter is responsible for inhibition in using language skills, particularly oral skills. The necessity to understand complex content through an additional language also improves students’ attitudes towards their own learning of that language (Arnold, 2011) which is considered one of the most important drivers of learning among adult learners in formal settings (Pavón, 2001).

As Lasagabaster (2008: 31) has rightly noted, the overall benefits of this type of education are linked to improved motivation, increased knowledge of specific terminology, the strengthening of intercultural communicative competence, meaning-centred and communication-centred learning, the promotion of teacher-student and student-student interaction, and as a result, improvement in overall target language proficiency.

There are also social benefits associated with the creation of better professional opportunities such as the ability to communicate in more than one language in a globalised world, the promotion of students’ own identities, and the enhancement of cultural awareness in their own culture and in the culture of the additional language (García, 2009: 94). Finally, there are cognitive benefits that
cannot be ignored, among them the development of creativity, the capacity to pay attention to the forms and uses of the language, the contribution that metalinguistic awareness posits for better academic development, and the ease with which a third language can be learned (Marsh et al., 2009: 5-8).

3. Definition of objectives

Many educational authorities, students and even many teachers think that simply because subjects are taught through a second language students will improve their knowledge in that language. However, the equation is not so simple or straightforward. The direct teaching of academic subjects in English (direct in the sense that no complementary measures are taken) does not necessarily imply a progressive and gradual improvement in the language since success is usually mainly the result of solid language skills previously acquired by the students. While it is true that a programme of this kind lays the groundwork for improving and furthering language skills, it does not ultimately achieve the desired results unless basic structural, organisational and methodological guidelines are followed. Notwithstanding, regardless of the characteristics of the programme to be implemented, there is general consensus that such higher education programmes can contribute to changing the profile of graduates and post-graduates. We propose that these programmes be designed in a very careful and cautious manner, but how can this be achieved and what criteria should be followed? The decisions on how to implement a bilingual programme must be made taking into account four main aspects:

A) **Linguistic objectives**: According to European higher education regulations on language proficiency, university graduates should attain a B1 level of competence in a second language (Council of Europe, 2001). It therefore seems reasonable that if students are to obtain a B1 level in a second language while undergoing regular programmes of studies taught in their mother tongue, a B2 target level should be set for bilingual programmes. It is important that university authorities ensure that this objective is achieved.

B) **Academic objectives**: Educators must ensure that students enrolled in second language courses do not encounter difficulties in assimilating academic content. To do so, it is essential that teaching schemes of this type be effectively monitored, assessed and administered and importance given to the organisation of teaching activities and the consistent use of effective methodology.

C) **Timeline objectives**: Educators must have a clear idea of what kind of objectives they wish to achieve. However, they must also keep in mind when such objectives can actually be achieved. To do so, it is crucial to establish a timeline of the actions to be taken, including the gradual implementation of the programme taking into consideration – as we will see below – the linguistic and methodological training of the teachers and the linguistic preparation of the students.

D) **Available human and material resources**: Proper implementation also depends on adapting the programme to the available resources, especially with regard to the methodological and linguistic preparation of teachers. Universities that already have the necessary tools to deliver training to teachers in these two areas as well as the resources to improve the second language competence of their students will find themselves well positioned to start programme implementation.
4. Overcoming initial problems

In implementing a bilingual programme, there are several initial problems that must be dealt with which will determine the characteristics of the programme. The first is the difficulties that students encounter in assimilating complex academic content through a language that they may not yet have mastered. In this regard, students run the risk of not successfully acquiring the same level of knowledge, as would be the case if they were taught in their mother tongue. As noted by Lawrence (2007: 503), the acquisition of productive skills (speaking and writing) may be impaired and at the same time, the assimilation of the content could also be altered by the mediation of the second language. However, Hellekjaer and Wilkinson (2009: 1) report that recent studies conducted at the University of Maastricht revealed that students engaged in academic teaching programmes using an additional language achieve the same or even better academic performance than their peers who study in programmes taught in their mother tongue.

It is important to plan and implement the programme in a careful and cautious manner. If the programme is not implemented in a gradual manner, if the appropriate teaching content is not chosen, if the correct methodology is not used, and if the students’ language skills are not developed whilst they learn academic content, this could have a negative impact on the learning of both content and language. In a poorly organised setting, students are exposed to situations in which they experience constant feelings of inferiority as they are unable to perform the same tasks in the second language that they are capable of in their first language. This results in lower participation and growing frustration, two factors that could have a dramatic and negative influence on their academic performance, and, of course, this might also result in students not achieving the expected learning outcomes. The most sensible way to avoid these problems would be to establish an initial level of linguistic competence for the students. However, we think that this is not the only factor that would contribute to overcoming such difficulties, but should be accompanied by additional measures such as linguistic support in the form of language courses for students in specific areas of study, and a flexible and gradual introduction of the additional language in the classrooms.

A second problem is related to the language proficiency of the teachers. Teachers may also suffer from enormous stress when realising that they lack the necessary resources to address a variety of classroom situations. In this case we should ask not whether the teacher has a sufficient command of the foreign language, but whether he or she is able to teach in a spontaneous and natural manner, provide detailed explanations and clarifications, and respond to issues that may arise during the course of the class. In line with Dafouz and Núñez (2009), university teachers should combine two different types of competences: a general language proficiency and competence in the different linguistic skills, and other genre-based specific competences particular for academic contexts: ‘...university teachers would need to successfully exploit generic and textual competences at two different levels: a situational and global one and a disciplinary or local one’ (Dafouz and Núñez, 2009: 108). On the other hand, it is necessary to establish a regulated and approved system of assessment that includes clear criteria regarding what percentage of the evaluation pertains to content and what percentage pertains to the language used to express and work with the content.

Again, the establishment of a minimum level of linguistic proficiency, in this case for teachers, seems to be essential. In this sense, some argue that a C1 level (fifth level of the six established by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages-CEFRL, equivalent to the Advanced level of the Cambridge English assessment levels) should be the minimum acceptable level for university teachers involved in bilingual programmes (Lasagabaster and Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010: 288). Universities, however, may opt for a gradual model of implementation to offer bilingual studies in the short and medium term. In this case, a sensible selection of the contents, the use of appropriate methodological strategies for the transmission of academic content, and limitations regarding the use of the additional language in terms of time and type of activities become more important issues than the pure linguistic output of teachers (and of students). By doing so, moreover, teachers and students will have time to improve their linguistic competence and their familiarity with the second language. In our view, the teaching staff in a programme that is implemented in a gradual manner must be selected based on a linguistic criterion, but also according to their degree of motivation.
A third and final problem has to do with the methodological training of the teachers involved. It is commonly assumed that the most important prerequisite for teachers to take part in a bilingual programme is that they should possess a high command of the language of instruction, and in fact it is one of the most significant concerns for teachers willing to participate (Pavón and Rubio, 2010). Under ideal conditions, with both teachers and students exhibiting a C1 or C2 level of fluency in the additional language, the use of specific methodology takes on a lesser degree of importance. However, under non-ideal conditions (the normal case in Spanish universities), knowledge of specific strategies, techniques and activities to transmit academic content through a second language is of paramount importance.

5. Measures for implementing bilingual programmes in higher education

In this paper we have repeatedly stressed the importance of effective organisation in the implementation of bilingual programmes at the university level. We have seen the difficulties deriving from the target language competence of teachers and students and the need to ensure that it does not affect the progressive and successful acquisition of academic content. To overcome these problems, the programme must be tailor-made to the needs and objectives that the situation and the educational context demand, paying particular attention to three key aspects: a) the gradual implementation of the programme, b) the training of teachers, and c) the provision of language support for students. In addition, a number of important complementary measures must also be taken, namely the selection of teachers, entrance exams to access this type of education, international mobility programmes, new technologies and the establishment of regulatory mechanisms that ensure that the programme is implemented in the correct manner. This is a set of inter-connected measures that influence each other. The effectiveness of each will depend on complementarity and the capacity for all to operate in a parallel manner.

5.1 Time sequencing

Spanish university students that should have attained a B1 level in the additional language (equivalent to the Preliminary level of the Cambridge English assessment levels) upon graduating from secondary school usually have not achieved this level at the time of admission and therefore enter university with serious deficiencies in this language. Without attempting to assess the causes for this (cf. Pavón, 2006), it is clear that students do not have the most appropriate language skills to learn through a second language. How can we cope with this seemingly insurmountable obstacle? One way is to establish a calendar for the gradual implementation of the programme, introducing a number of hours devoted to the teaching through the additional language that will increase gradually. This would ensure that students' language skills, as well as the methodological and linguistic preparation of teachers could improve and adapt to new needs as they arise.

There are several ways to implement a bilingual programme in a gradual manner. The most logical way is to decide what part or section of a given subject is to be taught through the second language, that is, to establish the percentage growth over successive years according to the language requirements and the time set to achieve the first objectives. Thus, for example, considering unfavourable conditions on a five-year timeline, the programme might begin by establishing that 20% of the subject be taught through an additional language, and increase this percentage by 20% every year until the entire subject is taught through the target language at the end of the period.

Gradual implementation over time should also be supported by complementary techniques and strategies that help teachers to adapt to the requirements derived from the relationship between conceptual complexity and language needs. As Lorenzo (2008:23-24) suggests, teachers must make adjustments of three types: simplification by reducing the linguistic complexity of content; elaboration by using strategies to make the ideas and concepts more understandable with techniques such as rephrasing and repetition; and rediscursification by working with content on the discursive level and going beyond the use of sentences and texts.
5.2 Training

The following measure that should be adopted arises precisely from those set forth in the preceding paragraph with respect to the language skills of teachers. We refer to the development of a quality programme to train bilingual teachers in two major areas: language and methodology. As regards linguistic training, it is essential to offer specific courses using the second language as a medium for the transmission of academic content. These are not traditional language courses since they require specific skills and strategies (Mohan and Slater, 2005), but are aimed at equipping teachers with the rudiments of language necessary to ensure that the students progress in subjects and content of conceptual complexity (Sharpe, 2008).

Training in methodology is also a crucial element in this process. This requires developing a programme of specialised courses and seminars to train teachers in the principles of bilingual education and CLIL. According to Pérez-Vidal and Campanale (2005: 12), this type of training is a true educational innovation based on social constructivism, critical thinking, student-centred teaching, independent learning, and development of procedural knowledge, interaction and attention to form. The design and development of a methodological training programme should begin with the awareness that this type of teaching is not based on the mere exposure of knowledge to be assimilated by the students, but mainly due to circumstances arising from the use of the additional language as a vehicle of transmission. A programme of this kind gives priority to access to information (Wesche and Skehan, 2002), the negotiation of meaning (Musumeci, 1996), and tasks inside and outside the classroom (Long, 2000; Ellis, 2004; Lorenzo, 2007; Willis and Willis, 2007).

Specifically, it is training needs to emphasise the use of methodological strategies that move away from lectures towards more participatory activities. Such strategies permit a flexible approach to the language needs of teachers and students by focusing on the fact that the teacher is not the only administrator of knowledge in the classroom and adapting the programme to the language needs of the students. Some of the most important strategies suggested by Mehisto et al. (2008: 105-109) include the consistent use of the second language, the clarity and accuracy of presentations, the use of visual aids, repetition, exposure to various language models and registers, the emphasis on communication as a primary objective, giving equal importance to the acquisition of both oral and written skills, and setting high but realistic expectations. Bilingual training courses must address methodological issues relevant to this type of teaching such as task-based learning, class management, principles of the coexistence of the L1 and the L2, strategies for the collaborative use of the L1 and L2 (code-switching, translanguaging and co-teaching), assessment criteria and tools, collaborative learning, techniques to enhance teacher-student and student-student interaction, criteria for selecting academic content, structuring bilingual lessons, attention to heterogeneous classes, independent learning, designing activities and searching for course materials, use of multimedia and on-line resources (webquests, podcasts, browsing, etc.).

5.3 Coordination

The importance of planning, organising and sequencing teaching activities is often downplayed due to the notion that: a) teachers are considered to be good teachers if they have the appropriate skills and characteristics ‘teachers’ are assumed to have; and b) they possess knowledge of the field (especially the latter in the university setting); while ignoring the benefits of good academic planning. It is not our intention to launch a debate on what these characteristics are, or should be, but to highlight the importance of establishing an organisational framework for the implementation of a new type of education and not relying solely on a set of alleged characteristics to substantiate the effectiveness of teaching. Indeed, it is essential to establish a mechanism that acts as a ‘backbone’ of the programme to coordinate and provide support for the full array of resources and actions which, from the linguistic and methodological point of view, must be put into operation.

The main element of this framework is the role of the programme coordinators. Given that a growing number of subjects are being taught using bilingual methodology, it is important to appoint one coordinator per degree programme. The primary duty of coordinators is to provide teachers with support in delivering academic content as follows:

http://www.icrj.eu/21/article7.html
• Determine the language needs of the students bearing in mind the subject matter, its inherent complexity and the academic year in which the subject is taught. It is very important that teachers understand what we call ‘complexity’ is given by the nature of the subject, the cognitive demands required to understand it, and the language load it involves.

• Regular programme meetings to coordinate the work of content teachers and language teachers (the latter may be teachers of the degree programme in the event that it includes language courses or they may be teachers of the language courses for students as we shall see in more detail in the following section).

• Aid teachers in jointly planning their courses and setting learning objectives. It is particularly important to coordinate different subjects having similar content to ensure that such content is delivered to students in a parallel manner over time. The idea is to use an especially effective strategy in contexts in which language difficulties and complex concepts occur jointly (Hainer et al., 1990; Stoller, 2004). The more students are exposed to complex notions, concepts, and processes, and the greater the variety of contexts in which they appear, the easier it will be to assimilate them.

• Provide the necessary resources so that teachers can search effectively for materials and design appropriate activities and, if necessary, provide language assistance in the classroom to teachers of academic content.

5.4 Language support

When the students’ language skills are not good enough to assimilate all of the course content, it is important to offer them language support. A series of measures should therefore be taken to provide students with the necessary linguistic knowledge and skills to ensure that they will assimilate academic content in an efficient manner. There are two aspects that should be taken into account when designing measures to improve students’ knowledge of the second language. The first is to coordinate the characteristics and content of the courses, that is, the courses must be of a particular type and serve as a source of specific linguistic resources for all the subjects delivered in the same degree programme. Moreover, when the principles governing the negotiation of meaning in the classroom and the actual transmission of content are the same across courses, the terminology and the very nature of the course will require providing individual attention to students. The second aspect is whether or not to provide language support prior to or during the bilingual courses, or both options. In our opinion, the combination of both (before and during) is the most desirable choice as it helps to ensure that they assimilate content more easily and that they learn more language.

Increased contact time with the second language, which is key to ensuring that language support is effective, can be achieved in two different, but not opposing, ways. On the one hand, degree programmes should increase the offering of second language courses (or design such courses if they are not already offered in the programme), thus internalising language support schemes within the academic curricula and the overall organisational framework of the programme. We are aware that implementing courses of this kind in degree programmes that have not offered them previously may be controversial, as these courses would account for a portion of the overall credits students are required to complete to earn their degree. Nonetheless, we believe that this measure would be very helpful, as it would facilitate learning in the content-based courses. On the other hand, specific language courses could be designed and developed to meet the needs of the courses taught in the same degree programme. Although this would require the necessary infrastructure and flexible faculty, we believe that the effort is worthwhile. In sum, these actions pursue a common objective, to enhance students’ language skills. Although it may seem difficult to implement these measures simultaneously, we believe that it is not only feasible, but also highly desirable to do so.
5.5 Complementary measures
To conclude our analysis of the structural and organisational measures that aid in achieving a successful bilingual programme, in what follows we briefly review other complementary measures that contribute to this same aim, and more importantly, that may be consolidated over time. These include:

1. Establishing mechanisms such as a supervisory committee/commission to ensure that the programme is implemented properly, particularly as regards the skills of teachers, infrastructure, curricular design and development; and appointing a bilingual programme coordinator who is responsible for designing the actions and activities in line with the general objectives of the programme. These mechanisms should ultimately serve to ensure the quality of the process and results.

2. Adapting bilingual programmes to the different faculties and schools according to their particular characteristics and needs. The implementation of the programme and the timeline chosen may differ across programmes due to two main reasons. Firstly, there will be programmes of studies in which the added value of a second language will contribute to improving the students’ qualifications and hence their employability, in others the bilingual course may serve to attract foreign students; whereas in some programmes neither of these two reasons apply and the implementation of bilingual teaching is simply inappropriate. Secondly, the available human resources may be sufficient in terms of number and linguistic competence to implement the programme, or it may be better to opt for a slow and gradual implementation until a necessary number of qualified teachers are found.

3. Selecting the appropriate teachers. It is essential that teachers who participate in a bilingual programme have the necessary language skills to do so. To ensure that this is indeed so, a minimal proficiency level should be established for all teachers wishing to take part in the programme. Additionally, teachers should be selected according to their own capacity to cope with the overall transmission of academic content. Basic knowledge and skills could be accredited according to the levels of the CERFL (Council of Europe, 2001), and based on experience (research stays abroad, attending international conferences, courses taken, membership in international research projects, etc.).

4. Administering a language entrance exam that is validated and approved following the CEFRL to all students wishing to study subjects through a second language.

5. Providing incentive programme for teachers. The perception the benefits their students are gaining should not be the only reward for teachers participating in a bilingual programme. Other incentives might include: recognition of the additional teaching load associated with bilingual classes, official certification, priority access to mobility programmes and courses abroad, specific language and methodology courses, and linguistic and methodological counselling in the preparation of classes and course materials.

6. Providing incentive programme for students. As with teachers, students should also be given complementary incentives other than improvement in their linguistic proficiency. These might include cost-free or reduced fees to engage in language courses, reduced fees in the language accreditation exams, priority access to student mobility programmes, and recognition of bilingual courses in the European Diploma Supplement.

7. Finally, upgrading facilities to the technical requirements of on-line teaching and using special technology and resources for teaching.
6. Conclusion

English-medium university courses are common all over the world and have tripled in Europe in the last decade due to the importance of this language as a *lingua franca* (Smit and Dafouz, 2013: 3). In a globalised world, it is essential that graduates receive adequate training to master English; an objective that requires designing an appropriate and, above all, effective educational model. One of the ways to achieve this aim is to implement a programme to teach subjects through an additional language. CLIL offers a promising path towards reaching this objective, which has been tested in all areas of education, including the tertiary level. While schemes of this kind aimed at the assimilation of academic content through a language other than the mother tongue offer students benefits in terms of knowledge and language acquisition, they must take into account the time and effort required to design and develop an educational programme based on this principle. It is essential, therefore, to reflect upon the needs, objectives and, above all, the characteristics of the educational context in which they are implemented.

Nonetheless, implementing a bilingual programme may be too high a mountain to climb, mainly because the linguistic competence of the teachers and students is insufficient. Additionally, a series of erroneous assumptions, misconceptions and stereotypes may lead some to assume these programmes simply involve the switching of the medium of instruction. Throughout this article we have suggested that implementing a bilingual programme based on a specific and widely tested methodology should start from a clear definition of the objectives to be achieved, take into account the time needed to achieve them and the particular characteristics of each university. The language skills of both students and teachers, as well as the methodology used, will determine the specific measures to be taken in implementing the programme: training teachers in language and bilingual methodology, coordinating the teaching of academic content and language needs, and improving students second language competency. To achieve the desired results, bilingual programmes need to involve dedicated teachers and interested students, and they need to be supported by university administrators and programme leaders that understand the management and pedagogical principles involved.

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