

Linguistic Policy for the Internationalisation of the Spanish University System: A framework document

CRUE-IC Working subgroup on Linguistic Policy

Coordinators:

Plácido Bazo Martínez
Dolores González Álvarez

Members:

Aurora Centellas Rodrigo
Emma Dafouz Milne
Alberto Fernández Costales
Víctor Pavón Vázquez

May 9th 2017



Executive Summary

ISBN- 978-84-697-3660-9

**Translation into English by Charles Bretherton
Jones** (Universidad Francisco de Vitoria) **and Pat
Moore** (Universidad Pablo de Olavide)

Introduction

Objectives and courses of action

For over a decade, higher education, both at national and European levels, has increasingly extended the teaching and use of English and other foreign languages in university campuses. The expansion of university access policies, the founding of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the phenomenon of globalisation and increased migratory movements have created a need to re-think the role that foreign languages play in the international university of the 21st century.

To this end, the document drawn up by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport entitled *Estrategia para la Internacionalización de las Universidades Españolas 2015-2020* (Strategy for the Internationalisation of Spanish Universities), published in 2014¹ recommends, among other measures, initiatives to make our universities more internationally attractive by 'increasing the number of bilingual courses, taught in Spanish and English or other foreign languages at both undergraduate and post-graduate levels' and 'promoting the acquisition of sufficient levels of English for all Faculty members and staff.'²

The implementation of these measures (and others related to internationalisation) has brought to light the general heterogeneity and

lack of coordination that exists among Spanish universities when it comes to identifying, defining and applying criteria related to linguistic policies and internationalisation.

This document's main objective is therefore to propose specific guidelines and recommendations that encompass three main courses of action - accreditation, training and incentives - pillars of a coordinated and shared linguistic policy within a changing and markedly international context. These guidelines and recommendations will facilitate decision-making by the higher education authorities in Spain and the effective implementation of precise and consensual measures which promote internationalisation through foreign languages. This document, commissioned by the Internationalisation and Cooperation sector of the CRUE (CRUE-IC) is the result of the work carried out by the aforementioned working sub-group on Linguistic Policy since November 2015 and has been revised, agreed upon and approved by representatives⁴ from 22 Spanish universities in a meeting held on 3rd March 2016 at the Universidad de La Laguna. Some of the proposals included in this document are based on the previous work of the said working sub-group on Linguistic Policy carried out in seminars held in 2011 and 2014⁵.

Courses of action⁶

A series of specific measures are proposed which encompass three main courses of action – accreditation, training and incentives - thereby addressing the three collectives of the university community: the student body, faculty members and administration.

This structure has been devised primarily for organisational reasons, and therefore, given their transversal nature, some of the measures proposed for each section may also be applied to another or all three.

¹ MECD (2014) *Estrategia para la Internacionalización de las Universidades Españolas*. Disponible en: <http://www.mecd.gob.es/educacion-mecd/dms/mecd/educacion-mecd/areas-educacion/universidades/politica-internacional/estrategia-internacionalizacion/EstrategiaInternacionalizaci-n-Final.pdf>

² Operational objective 2.4 (p. 23) of the aforementioned document.

³ Action 2.4. (p. 23) of the aforementioned document.

⁴ The list of representatives and their corresponding universities may be found at the end of this document.

⁵ I CICUE Seminar on Linguistic Policy (Madrid, UNED 2011) and II Seminar on Linguistic Policy: Teaching in other languages and linguistic accreditation (Madrid, UNED 2014).

⁶ For a more extensive and detailed understanding of the actions, principles and theoretical fundamentals upon which the Executive Summary is based, see *Documento Marco de Política Lingüística para la Internacionalización del Sistema Universitario Español* (Spanish version).

1. Accreditation

➤ In order to avoid the enormous heterogeneity and uncertainty that often affects both the question of levels of attainment in English (and in other foreign languages) and the mechanisms used to this end, it is essential to agree on and to unify criteria. The following measures are suggested for each of the three university community collectives.

➤ 1.1 Student accreditation

1. Recommend that the minimum foreign language level students require in order to obtain an undergraduate degree certificate be B1, in all skills, with each university free to demand an even higher level if it so wishes.
2. Establish a defined linguistic route, with differentiated access profiles and an exit level higher than B1 in bilingual / multilingual⁷ degree courses.
3. Ensure the rigour of accreditation processes, consulting with committees existing within each university for this purpose, the CRUE and ACLES Language Boards and respecting the decisions made by the committees.
4. Facilitate the recognition between universities of the accreditation mechanisms for university access, mobility programs and the granting of titles.
5. Include the graduates' language level, duly certified in the Diploma Supplement (DS) and, in the case of bilingual and multilingual courses, expressly mention the participation of the students in said itineraries, with the aim of highlighting the added value of speaking foreign languages.

➤ 1.2 Faculty Members accreditation

1. Recommend a CEFR level of C1 with reference to the certifications approved by the Linguistic Boards (and/or ACLES) as an advised minimum level for faculty members involved in the teaching of bilingual / multilingual courses.
2. Promote the duly funded procedures so that teaching staff may certify the levels of foreign languages in which they teach.

3. Promote the participation of faculty members in training programmes which will prepare them for bilingual teaching, by including such programmes in their planned, subsidised training schemes.

4. Offer linguistic support to teachers prior or/and during their teaching

➤ 1.3 Administrative staff accreditation

1. Identify and state in the university organigram those administrative positions where the use of English and/or other foreign languages is deemed necessary.

2. Pay special attention to improving the language skills of this group with the aim of certifying an appropriate language level, especially for staff who are in contact with the university's foreign community or involved in internationalisation initiatives.

3. Consider the inclusion of a language requirement (between B1 and C1, depending on the subsequent tasks to be undertaken) when considering individuals for promotion to certain management positions as well as in the recruitment of new personnel.

4. Promote staff participation in mobility and internationalisation at home programmes, with the aim of involving this group in university internationalisation.

⁷ Aware of the linguistic diversity that exists in Spain, this document will use the term 'bilingual' when referring to those courses taught in an official language of an autonomous community and a foreign language (e.g. Spanish/English, Catalan/English) and multilingual for those courses taught in two official languages by the university and one or more foreign languages (e.g. Galician & Spanish/English/French).

2. Training



➤ In order to be able to offer quality training, it is essential to identify the new functions of the various actors involved in the university internationalisation process. In the case of students and faculty members, the objective is to fully understand what the teaching process means - learning in a foreign language, a process that is not merely the changing of the *lingua franca*, but also the manner in which the classes are managed, prepared and taught, with specific training given to the use of materials and a redefinition of the assessment model. In the case of staff members, this training must focus on the necessary linguistic tools for the development of functions of an international nature.

➤ 2.1 Student Training

To obtain quality and practical training which improves university students' communication skills both in the mother tongue (L1) and in the foreign language (L2) and relate them to the methodology and profiles detailed in the CEFR, the following measures are suggested:

1. Promote the teaching of courses which develop the ability to understand and express academic content (both oral and written) in a foreign language.
2. Provide training in order to develop multilingual and multicultural skills with the aim of heightening awareness of language and communication in different linguistic and cultural contexts, and satisfactorily participating in mobility programmes.
3. Focus on developing strategies to help solve potential communication problems and cultural differences which facilitate learning.
4. Prepare students to effectively deal with professional situations in multicultural and multilingual contexts.

➤ 2.2 Faculty Members Training

In order to provide the faculty members with the competences and skills needed to, in turn, provide quality education when teaching in a foreign language, the following measures are proposed⁸:

1. Offer initial and continued training, both of a linguistic and methodological nature, for those who teach in a foreign language.
2. Analyse the linguistic, pedagogical and academic profile of the faculty members and define a level of teaching competence in order to establish the teaching level within said training programme.
3. Adopt teaching approaches which enhance the transmission and construction of content through a foreign language.
4. Encourage and promote stays in foreign universities in order to observe and participate in international teaching experiences and for the creation and development of joint teaching projects.
5. Take advantage of the more experienced teachers in teaching in a foreign language, employing them as mentors in the training strategy.
6. Offer permanent training for teacher trainers.
7. Establish a quality assessment system for the training programs which facilitates mobility.

➤ 2.3 Staff Training

In addition to generic foreign language courses designed in line with services rendered, the following measures are proposed:

1. Offer specific courses for telephone communication, international student reception, interaction and care of visiting lecturers, etc.
2. Promote written communication courses: academic information via email, administrative and academic documentation in foreign languages, the creation of informative material regarding the university in a foreign language, web content, etc.
3. Promote and encourage stays abroad at collaborating universities and take part in administrative tasks associated with internationalisation processes.
4. Prepare the staff to effectively deal with professional situations in multicultural and multilingual contexts.

⁸ For a detailed list of the specific courses that may be adopted, please see the Spanish version complete document (section 4. Training for language development).

3. Incentives

The implementation of a linguistic policy which encourages the promotion of language learning for internationalisation is logically based on a comprehensive incentive scheme, according to the resources of each institution, which includes the entire university community. The following measures seek to encourage the university community to participate in the internationalisation and provide an incentive for their efforts.

> 3.1 Incentives for Students

1. Offer subsidised foreign language courses or, this failing, a discount for students that enrol in language courses offered by the university itself during their undergraduate degree course.
2. Offer free courses to students who are going to follow bilingual or multilingual programmes or those taught solely in English at the university, so that they can take full advantage of the programme.
3. Reduce the fees charged for language level testing that leads to accreditation of linguistic competence in a foreign language, preferably B1 or higher.
4. Give priority to those students receiving bilingual or multilingual education that wish to take part in an Erasmus+ scheme or other similar student mobility programmes.
5. Give students with a certified CEFR C1 level or higher the opportunity to do work placement as language assistants.
6. Promote the granting of ECTS credits for the successful completion of foreign language courses in university language centres⁹.
7. Ensure that incoming foreign students participating in mobility programmes have the necessary linguistic support in the official language(s) of the autonomous community, with courses and timetables adapted to their needs and suitably funded.
8. Organise linguistic exchanges such as “tandems” or “buddy programmes” between foreign and home students.

> 3.2 Incentives for Faculty Members

1. Enable the accreditation of linguistic competence of faculty members in the universities themselves.
2. Offer specific subsidised courses as well as a linguistic support service to lecturers who teach in a foreign language.
3. Reduce fees for language learning and language level accreditation tests, preferably for B2 level and/or higher.
4. Include the possession of a certified language level (B2-C1-C2) as a definite plus when recruiting new lecturers and in the promotion of faculty members
5. Allow lecturers who teach in a foreign language a lighter workload.
6. Ensure the commitment of the faculties and departments (and all interested parties) to maintaining those lecturers assigned to teaching in a foreign language in the course(s) for a minimum of 3 consecutive years.
7. Promote language refresher courses as well as actions to improve skills needed for oral and written presentations, in order to extend the production and dissemination of research findings in the international arena.
8. Establish linguistic mechanisms for faculty members’ lecturing, allowing for the recognition of excellence.

> 3.3 Incentives for Administrative Staff

1. Offer language courses with content aimed at improving communication in staff members’ daily functions: the writing of emails, understanding and management of specific documentation (European announcements, projects, memoranda of collaboration with other institutions, etc.), dealing with foreign students, etc.
2. Reduce fees for language learning and language level accreditation tests, for B1 level or higher.
3. Promote the accreditation of linguistic competence of staff members within the universities themselves.
4. Include the possession of a certified language level (B2, C1, C2) as a definite plus when considering the recruitment of new staff members and internal promotion to new positions.
5. Give priority to those staff members who have a certified level in a foreign language in their work if they apply for grants, courses or international mobility programmes managed by the university.
6. Enable staff to attend language courses for level accreditation (preferably B2 or higher).

⁹ The Royal Decree 1393/2007 amended by the Royal Decree 861/2010 in article 12.8 stipulates that students may obtain academic recognition in credits for having participated in university cultural, charity, solidarity, sports and student representation activities. With this in mind, the curriculum should include the possibility of each student obtaining recognition in the form of at least 6 ECTS credits.

Conclusions

In this framework document we have covered three courses of action -accreditation, training and incentives- around which a linguistic policy of quality for the internationalisation of the Spanish university system can be developed. Aware of the enormous diversity and heterogeneity that exists regarding virtually everything related to the accreditation of foreign language levels for obtaining a university degree or qualifying for courses taught in a foreign language, this document has proposed a series of recommendations regarding the language levels that are required, as well as the mechanisms employed to these ends. Furthermore, detailed measures for the linguistic training of students, lecturers and staff have been put forward, with the hope that the training actions necessary for quality foreign language teaching and learning will be adopted. Finally, a range of specific incentives has been proposed for all university members, thereby promoting and supporting efforts to adapt to and improve the internationalisation of our universities.

The recommendations proposed herein require the manifest support and coordination of all those most directly involved in the decision-making processes at the Spanish universities and also the various organisms and institutions whose responsibility is making these recommendations a reality. We also feel it necessary that all universities devote a specific part of their budgets to the three areas described in this document to ensure the viability, sustainability and success of the Spanish university internationalisation process.



The authors

(in alphabetical order)

B

Plácido Bazo Martínez
(Universidad de La Laguna)

C

Aurora Centellas Rodrigo
(UDIMA, Universidad a Distancia de Madrid)

D

Emma Dafouz Milne
(Universidad Complutense de Madrid)

F

Alberto Fernández Costales
(Universidad de Oviedo)

G

Dolores González Álvarez
(Universidad de Vigo)

P

Víctor Pavón Vázquez
(Universidad de Córdoba)

Acknowledgements

The Sub-working group responsible for drafting the present document acknowledges the collaboration, comments, contributions and support of the following people who attended in representation of their universities to the meeting held at the University of La Laguna on 3rd March 2016 (in alphabetical order): Alejandro Alcalá Sintés (Universidad de Jaén), Charles Bretherton Jones (Universidad Francisco de Vitoria), Antonio Bueno González (Universidad de Jaén), Carmen Caballero Navas (Universidad de Granada), María Luisa Capón Mouriz (Universidad de La Laguna), Reinhard Dlugay (Universidad de La Laguna), Cristina Escobar Urmeneta (Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona), Mar Fernández Sainz (Universidad de Valladolid), Ana Fe Gil Serra (Universidad de Almería), Isabel Jaschek Corbalán (Universidad de Salamanca), Nuria Mendoza Domínguez (Universidad Antonio de Nebrija), Amaya Mendikoetxea (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid), Flor Mena Martínez (Universidad de Murcia), Isabel Pascua Febles (Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria), Cristina Pérez Guillot (Universidad Politécnica de Valencia), Esme Prentice Chapman (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid), Elena Romero Alfaro (Universidad de Cádiz), Francisco Rubio Cuenca (Universidad de Cádiz), Teresa Susinos (Universidad de Cantabria), Milka Villayandre Llamazares (Universidad de León).

After the meeting at La Laguna, this document was subsequently reviewed by and received additional and valuable written comments from Inmaculada Fortanet (Universidad Jaume I), Mireia Trenchs and Mireia Calm (Universitat Pompeu Fabra), Carmen Caballero and Dorothy Kelly (Universidad de Granada) and representatives of the CRUE Language Boards. The working sub-group would like to thank all of these people for their suggestions and contributions.

Finally, we thank most sincerely María Callejón (Universitat de Barcelona) and M^a Ángeles Serrano (Universidad de Salamanca), chairs of the sub-group of CRUE-IC Linguistic policy, for their continued support and unconditional confidence placed on us.

