



Universitat de Lleida

Document downloaded from:

<http://hdl.handle.net/10459.1/65358>

The final publication is available at:

<https://doi.org/10.1075/sar.1.2.01cot>

Copyright

(c) John Benjamins, 2016

Studying in a 'multilingual university' at home or abroad: perspectives of home and international students in the Basque Country, Catalonia and Wales

Josep M. Cots¹, Peter Garrett², David Lasagabaster³

¹ University of Lleida, ² Cardiff University, ³ University of the Basque Country

The relatively recent phenomenon of the internationalisation of higher education (HE) in European non-English speaking universities has resulted in more linguistically diverse student bodies and has forced universities in bilingual territories to reconsider their language policies. In this paper, we adopt a student perspective in order to explore the notion of a multilingual university in the bilingual territories of Catalonia, Wales and the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC). This also includes looking at how the students view the relationship and possible tensions between internationalisation (and its concomitant student mobility) and the language policies. In order to investigate the attitudes and beliefs of the students (both home and international) in connection with the notion of a multilingual university, we asked them to complete an open-ended questionnaire item regarding the advantages and disadvantages they see in such an institution. The results of the analysis point, in the first place, to different perceptions among students of a multilingual university depending on (i) whether English is the main or even sole means of instruction, and on (ii) the perceived status of the minority language. Secondly, the analysis suggests the need to approach students' attitudes towards a multilingual university by considering the ways in which the sociolinguistic context (in official, academic and experiential terms) may have an impact on their perception of the process of multilingualisation in universities.

1. Introduction

Internationalisation in higher education (HE) is relatively recent in non-English speaking universities. In Europe, it has accelerated in the last 20 years with the establishment of the ERASMUS programme. A global survey conducted in 2009 by the International Association of Universities found that student mobility was the most important priority for European HE institutions and that Europe was in fact the only region in the world in their survey where HE institutions "rank inward and outward mobility as the first two priorities for internationalisation" (Woodfield, 2010: 175). European HE institutions were found to have a higher proportion of international students than the other regions in their survey, and the drive to increase student recruitment had introduced a more competitive edge to HE internationalisation (Woodfield, 2010: 177).

The resulting more linguistically diverse student bodies have meant that universities, especially those in bilingual territories, have had to reconsider their language policies (whether or not their policies had ever been made explicit). In this paper, we adopt a student perspective in order to explore the notion of a multilingual university in the bilingual territories of Catalonia, Wales and the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC). This also includes looking at how the students view the relationship and possible tensions between internationalisation (and its concomitant student mobility) and the language policies in three universities. All three territories, in part as a feature of

the process of political devolution, are engaged in reversing language shift away from their respective minority languages (Catalan, Welsh, and Basque). However, these three universities also need to form part of the globalised HE environment and respond to the linguistic pressures involved in this process.

The research we report here is based on the premise that the success or failure of the implementation process of a particular university policy cannot be fully understood without taking into account the attitudes and practices of the members of the academic community. Here, our primary focus is on the attitudes of the students. In terms of Spolsky's (2007) view of language policy comprising beliefs, practices and intervention, we situate our paper within the beliefs component. Specifically, this paper is about student perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of a multilingual university. Our data comes from a three-year project (2009-2012) on multilingualism and internationalisation in bilingual universities in Europe, during which we collected a range of data-types, including questionnaires, interviews, observation, and the examination of university websites and documentation. Here we report findings from an open-ended item on the questionnaire: 'What advantages and disadvantages do you see in a multilingual university?'

2. Multilingual universities and minority languages

According to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001: 4), multilingualism refers to "the knowledge of a number of languages, or the co-existence of different languages" in an individual, institution or society; therefore an educational institution like a university may attain multilingualism simply by offering and encouraging students to learn different languages. Plurilingualism, on the other hand, emphasises the complementariness and interaction among different languages and the development of "a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place" (p. 5). Although the CEFR focuses its definition of plurilingualism on the individual, there seems to be no reason why it cannot be applied to an institution or a society in which members are expected to resort to their diversified, and not necessarily balanced, linguistic repertory in order to participate fully in the life of the institution or society. In this sense, we could suggest that the main difference between a multilingual and a plurilingual university would be that, whereas in the former knowing more than one language is optional and monolingual speakers of one of the 'official' languages of the institution can fully participate in the ordinary life of the institution, a plurilingual university requires its members to use all of its 'official' languages at higher or lower degrees of competence depending on the situation and the socio-communicative function.

Multilingual institutions in the European Union are fully justified through the widely accepted principles of protection of linguistic diversity, language equality, and the right to equal access and representation (Baaij, 2012). However, it is also true that the co-existence of different languages in an institution is not free from tensions and ambiguities, which are mainly due to the fact that they may have different degrees of symbolic value and they may pose a special challenge for non-plurilingual individuals in order to participate fully in the life of the institution. This is the sense in which Risager (2012) comments that universities, especially in postgraduate programmes, tend to respond to the pressures of internationalisation with the first of three main types of language policies: (i) a monolingual policy of using English more or less exclusively, (ii) a bilingual policy where English is used with the national language, (iii) a trilingual policy where English is used with the

national and the regional language. The second option is still compatible with a high level of internationalisation, especially in those cases in which the 'national' language has a high symbolic value and therefore is widely studied as a foreign language. However, as Kuteeva (2014: 333) comments, even in the case of a national language like Swedish, the policy of 'parallel language use' at university, which involves the use of two or more languages side by side, has proved to be incompatible with internationalisation, as it "is only possible when both students and teachers have adequate language competences in English and in the local language". The challenges for a plurilingual institution aiming at internationalisation become even more complex when there is yet a third language which is a minority language in the nation-state in which the university is located, as is the case of Wales, the Basque Country or Catalonia.

In this article, we rely on the working definition of minority languages provided by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Council of Europe, 1992) as those "(i) traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State's population and (ii) different from the official language(s) of that State." (This definition does not include the languages spoken by migrant populations.)

Universities play a paramount role in the revitalisation process of minority languages. Importantly, employing a minority language as a means of instruction at university level can transmit a positive image of the language by being present and supported at the highest level of the education ladder. Language policies implemented in higher education in the last two decades have helped to improve the status of minority languages in several European contexts, Spain being a very good case in point.

Minority languages have traditionally striven to find a balance with the majority language, but this situation is rapidly changing and becoming more convoluted due to the overwhelming position of English as the current academic *lingua franca*. This has brought about a burgeoning of English-medium instruction even in countries in which this language has very rarely been used before, while it has incorporated an additional destabilising factor to an already complex linguistic situation. The result is that "we still know very little about the actual consequences of the spread of English on other *linguae academiae*" (Vila, 2015: 2), despite the fact that it has educational and linguistic consequences, which "have been generally neglected by higher education institutions and research" (Dafouz and Smit, 2014). A side-effect of such multilingual contexts is that some university stakeholders complain about the fact that the minority language plays second fiddle both in postgraduate courses and in the scientific publication sphere (Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2013; Pons, 2015), a situation that can be worsened by the increasing presence of English and may end up festering minority language speakers' attitudes towards both the majority language and English as the current academic *lingua franca* (Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2014a).

In this vein, Darquennes (2011) warns about the compelling need to investigate the language conflicts that may emerge in multilingual contexts, which are far from only being a phenomenon of the past. He claims that the impact of language policy and language planning needs to be closely researched to help neutralise and prevent language conflict. The fragile language ecology achieved in such multilingual contexts can easily be jeopardized through, for instance, policy decisions like the introduction of degree-course programmes in English or the suppression of courses taught in a minority language in order to attract international students. Consequently, the opinions and beliefs

of the stakeholders need to be carefully considered, which is why Spolsky (2008) encourages research into the beliefs and attitudes of the different sectors that make up the university community: (home and international) students and academic and administrative staff.

Below, we give some brief information about the three contexts that we compare in our study. It is worth noting that studies comparing different minority language contexts are relatively infrequent in the literature (Cots, Lasagabaster, & Garrett, 2012); studies generally tend to deal with only one particular setting.

3. The three contexts

The Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) and Catalonia are two of the 17 autonomous communities in Spain. Their respective languages – Basque and Catalan – have co-official status with Spanish. Wales is a nation within the UK, with some autonomy devolved to the Welsh Assembly Government. The 1993 Welsh Language Act and subsequent legislation give some legal support to the Welsh language. It is worth noting that Catalan and Spanish are both Romance languages, and that Catalan therefore shares many features with Spanish, allowing scope for mutual intelligibility. However, such scope is not present in the case of Basque and Welsh with their respective dominant languages. Basque is a pre-Indo-European language, unrelated to Spanish, and Welsh is a Celtic language unrelated to English.

The population of Wales at the last census in 2011 was 3,060,000. While English is dominant in Wales, 19% of the population reported that they could speak Welsh, representing a decline of 2% since the previous Census in 2001. Through the Welsh Language Act and subsequent legal measures, the Welsh language has substantial institutional support both at governmental and at some grassroots levels.

The 2011 population of the BAC was 2,200,000. 32% were fully bilingual, 17% were passive bilinguals, and 51% did not speak Basque. In terms of trends, between 1991 and 2011, there was an increase of almost 8% in fully bilinguals. The highest percentage of fully bilingual speakers were under 35 years old, and indeed 60% of 16 to 24 year olds reported themselves as fully bilingual (Basque Government, 2013).

According to the *Institut d'Estadística de Catalunya (Idescat)* (n.d.), the 2013 population of Catalonia was 7,540,000. 36% reported that they use Catalan as their normal means of expression. 80% reported that they could speak Catalan, and 95% said they understood spoken Catalan. 50% said they used only Spanish, and 7% said they used both languages. The trend between 2003 and 2013 has been a decrease of almost 10% in the use of Catalan, and a slight increase in the use of Spanish (3%) or of both (2%). This trend may be explained by the dramatic increase of an immigrant population that has often adopted Spanish as their most habitual language.

The University of the Basque Country (UBC) is the only public university in the BAC. It has over 45,000 students. Most courses are taught in Spanish, with parallel courses taught in Basque (80% of the core subjects). A very small proportion (5%) of courses (on the university's Multilingualism Programme) are taught in English or French. It is important to note that, in the case of all

compulsory courses taught in languages other than Spanish, students have the option to take the courses in Spanish instead.

The University of Lleida (UdL) has about 9,000 students and is one of the smallest universities in Catalonia. Lecturers use Catalan in 66% of the courses, Spanish in 28%, and English in 3% (if all the courses in the English Studies programme are included). Unlike at UBC, in the case of courses offered in Catalan or English, they are only offered in one of these two languages, and students do not have the option of taking them in Spanish.

Cardiff University (CU) has 26,000 students, including 5,000 international students. Education is primarily in English, but there is some provision for Welsh-speaking students (especially in terms of personal tutor allocation and degree assessments). Balfour (2007: 37) judges English to be the default language at CU, concluding that, with regard to international students, "it is unlikely that students migrate to the UK to study Welsh" (p. 45).

4. Method

The participants were a convenience sample of 'local' (or 'home') students and international students, who filled in questionnaires at the end of lectures or at free moments in laboratory sessions. All students were informed about the nature of the study, and their consent was gained following institutional ethical procedures. To ensure anonymity, they were instructed not to write their names on the questionnaire. The questionnaire contained both open-ended and Likert-scale items, investigating a range of perceptions and attitudes relating to the notion of internationalisation in HE, understandings and judgements of the idea of a multilingual university, along with self-reported language use inside and outside the university.

For the purposes of the results presented here, we focus on responses to one open-ended item in the questionnaire, asking respondents to list what they saw as the advantages and disadvantages of a multilingual university. They were given the headings 'advantages' and 'disadvantages' to write their responses under. Biographical data was also collected, including status as a home or international student, gender, discipline studied, and minority language competence.

The matching of student samples across institutions is seldom 'neat' and there are contextual differences to take on board. Firstly, while most UdL and UBC home students come from the immediate region and have at least some degree of competence, if not full competence, in Catalan or Basque respectively, there is a stronger tradition in the UK that undergraduates study at a university located away from where they went to school. The majority of the home students at CU are not local but come from various parts of England, particularly the south. While most of the students who do come from Wales are not Welsh-speaking, it is safe to assume that virtually none of those from England speak Welsh. This does give rise to a terminological matter, in that 'non-international' students at UdL and UBC are usually referred to as 'local students', whereas those at CU are usually referred to as 'home students'. Below, we use the term 'home students' for both. International students vary too in their status and diversity at these institutions. At UdL and UBC, international students mainly comprise Erasmus and other exchange students, with relatively few from outside Europe. Such students study at UdL and UBC only for a matter of months, and are

registered for their degrees at institutions in their country of origin. The situation at CU differs. International students form a higher proportion of the total student body (about 10% vs. 2.5% for UdL and 1.65% for UBC), and the largest groups of international students come from outside Europe (in particular from China, Malaysia, and India), registering at CU to take a CU degree over a longer period of time.

In pursuing the opportunities that arose for data-collection, we tried to draw respondents from a range of disciplines to gain a general view. Universities inevitably differ in the range of disciplines they offer, and the respondent samples also differed accordingly across the institutions. Table 1 illustrates this with data on the home students, showing the disciplinary spread of the respondents and data-collection in the three universities in the broad terms of science subjects, language-focused subjects, and humanities and social sciences. The table also shows the respondents' competence levels in the respective minority languages, which largely pertains to the broader sociolinguistic environments sketched out above.

Table 1. Characteristics of the home student samples

Respondents	UdL	UBC	CU
DEGREE			
Language	12.3%	4.3%	31.4%
Hums/Soc Sci	53.4%	71.4%	10.6%
Science	33.4%	22.0%	57.0%
MINORITY LANG proficiency levels			
None / A little	5.5%	28.6%	86.5%
Good / Very good	94.5%	70.4%	13.5%

The total database of home students was large (1,612), and so while the entire sample was utilised for statistical analysis of the scaled items, the home student samples were reduced through systematic sampling for the analysis of the open-ended items. The numbers of international students were smaller. Consequently, all of them were included in both the quantitative and qualitative analyses in the cases of CU and UdL, with a degree of systematic subsampling among those at UBC to lessen the differences in numbers. Table 2 shows the respondent total for each institution, with the figures in brackets showing the sizes of the subsamples.

Table 2. Numbers of questionnaires completed by home and international students at each university, with subsample numbers in brackets.

	Home students	International	Total
CU	423 (160)	61 (61)	484 (221)
UBC	495 (165)	83 (73)	578 (238)
UdL	694 (159)	71 (71)	765 (230)

5. Results and discussion

In our analysis of the responses to the open-ended item ‘what advantages and disadvantages do you see in a multilingual university?’, we first divided the questionnaires in four groups: those that left the item blank, those that contained only advantages, those that contained only disadvantages, and those that contained both. We did this to gain an overall view of the positivity and negativity in the student groups. We set out these results in Table 3.

Table 3. Questionnaires containing advantages, disadvantages or both, or leaving the item blank

	UdL Home (n=159)	UdL Inter (n=71)	UBC Home (n=165)	UBC Inter (n=73)	CU Home (n=160)	CU Inter (n=61)
Blanks	17.6%	26.8%	3.0%	13.7%	24.4%	29.5%
Adv	43.4%	32.4%	31.0%	53.4%	33.8%	41.0%
Disadv	6.3%	4.2%	6.1%	4.1%	5.0%	8.2%
Adv + Disad	32.7%	36.6%	60.0%	28.8%	36.9%	21.3%

It is worth noting that this particular item was the last on the questionnaire, as well as being open-ended and therefore likely to require some reflection in formulating responses. Hence, it is possible that the proportions left blank were a result of fatigue effects in some respondents, along with it perhaps being an issue that students had not previously given thought to. That aside, what is clear from Table 3 is that there are very few students who see only disadvantages to a multilingual university, and many more who see only advantages. On this basis, there seems to be a great deal of favourability overall. We also looked at the individual points made in the respondents’ comments and divided them in terms of advantages and disadvantages. Individual respondents could of course write one or two or several advantages and disadvantages. As we can see in Table 4, this appears to tell the same story in terms of far higher proportions of advantages to disadvantages.

Table 4. Proportions of comments expressing advantages or disadvantages

	UdL Home (n=256)	UdL Inter (n=99)	UBC Home (n=367)	UBC Inter (n=133)	CU Home (n=277)	CU Inter (n=89)
Advantages	73.4%	67.3%	67.8%	80.5%	67.0%	76.4%
Disadvantages	26.6%	32.7%	32.2%	19.5%	33.0%	23.6%

We now turn to the themes that we identified in the respondents’ comments to give us a clearer picture of what kinds of advantages and disadvantages these students see, and what aspects of their academic lives they see as being influenced by such a multilingual language ecology. Analysis of the students’ comments sought a balance between reflecting the varied character of the responses on the one hand, and, on the other, reducing the data to manageable proportions in order to allow some broad quantitative comparison. Procedures of content analysis were followed (see for example Krippendorff, 2013) employing emergent coding to organise the data into groupings, with two researchers firstly independently reviewing the data to establish a set of thematic groupings, then jointly reconciling them into a single agreed set, and finally independently using the set for the whole of the data base (e.g. see Garrett, 2010). The following categories emerged from the data.

- **Language Learning and Use (LL & Use).** This category contained comments referring to the advantages of exposure to or opportunities to learn languages and disadvantages regarding problems associated with a university requiring students to study in other languages.
- **Cultural Breadth (Cult Br).** These were points referring simply to the breadth and diversity of cultural backgrounds, but not referring specifically to the teaching and learning environment (which comes under 'academic provision'), and the benefits of finding out about different cultures and broadening our understanding of the world. The comments generally fell into three subgroupings. Some simply stated cultural diversity, others referred to the diversity of people and meeting and befriending people from different cultures, and others referred to tolerance and open-mindedness coming from this environment. This large category contained only advantage comments.
- **Language and Communication Barriers / Integration (L&C Barr / Integration).** This category comprises, on the one hand, advantage comments referring to a better understanding among people and more integration, and, on the other hand, points concerning the likelihood of lack of integration and mixing - that is, divisions and barriers arising from diversity, confusion, misunderstanding, and even social isolation.
- **Academic Provision (Acad Prov).** These were points about impact on the quality of the learning environment and learning experience. Advantages generally concerned enrichment of studies (e.g. more / new/ broader perspectives). Disadvantages included how the educational experience or environment might be damaged or hampered (e.g. difficulties for teaching, slower pace).
- **Career Opportunities (Career Opp).** Points relating to better opportunities for employment at home and in other countries. Comments in this category were all positive.
- **International Students (Int Stu).** Points in this category were mainly made by the international students at the three universities, and were also all positive. They concerned greater numbers, their being more attracted to study at the university, and a better environment for them.
- **Resources (Res).** Resource implications primarily regarding money, workloads and time. These are always disadvantages mentioned mostly by the home students.

Although one needs to guard against 'overfitting' data into categories, with the risk of obscuring important or interesting patterns in the data (e.g. see Potter & Wetherell, 1987: 41), comments that were not accommodated by these headings were very few and disparate, and indeed even the last two categories ('Int Stu' and 'Res'), as we shall see below, were rather small, and so we will not give them further attention.

Insofar as these categories emerged from the data set as a whole, we can regard these as the commonalities shared by these six groups of students (i.e. the home and international in each of the three universities). We can now turn our attention to the ways in which these categories also differentiated them. To begin with, we look at how the comments are concentrated across the themes and student groups, after which we turn to what the different student groups mention most within these categories.

The percentages shown in Table 5 are the proportion of the total number of comments made by each group of students. It is clear from Table 5 that there are five categories that account for most of

the data. Implications for 'LL & Use', 'Cult Br' and 'Acad Prov' are salient for all the groups, with comments about 'Career Opp' and 'L & C Barr / Integration' strongly represented for some groups but not others. These five categories are our focus in the rest of this paper. Our goal below is to map the general diversity of discourses employed by the groups of students within these five categories, as they evaluate the notion of a multilingual university. In doing this, and given the number of categories, contexts and student groups, we set our lens on the broad patterns of differentiation rather than the finer quantitative details.

Given the nature of the task, with its focus on multilingual universities, one might well anticipate that most respondents would focus on language in various ways, and it is indeed this LL & Use category that stands out in the students' comments in the case of UdL and UBC. But the story is not so straightforward, since at CU, although LL & Use is a strong category, Table 5 shows that Cult Br is by far the strongest at CU for both the home and international students. For the home students at UBC and UdL, there is a strong association between multilingual universities and Career Opp. However, this is not shared by the CU students. This may mean, then, that home students at non-English-medium universities perceive multilingualism in a clearly more instrumental way than those at an English-medium university. Some support for this speculation can be found in the differences in percentages when adding together the categories LL & Use and Career Opp for each of the three groups (UdL Home = 46.5%, UBC Home = 56.4%, and CU Home = 20.3%). In Table 5, then, we see that, although the student groups are making comments that are in general about similar issues, they attribute different importance and values to them, and we now go on to look more closely at their profiles by considering each category in turn.

Table 5. Differences in prominence of categories

	UdL Home (n=256)	UdL Inter (n=99)	UBC Home (n=367)	UBC Inter (n=133)	CU Home (n=277)	CU Inter (n=89)
LL and Use	30.9%	28.7%	38.7%	26.3%	18.1%	22.5%
Cult Br	16.8%	15.2%	19.3%	27.1%	33.2%	31.5%
L&C Barr / Integration	10.5%	23.8%	2.5%	8.3%	17.3%	29.2%
Acad Prov	22.3%	16.8%	18.5%	16.5%	18.1%	9.0%
Career Opp	15.6%	3.0%	17.7%	13.5%	2.2%	2.2%
Int Stu	1.2%	7.9%	2.5%	6.8%	1.8%	4.5%
Resources	1.6%	0.0%	3.5%	1.5%	4.3%	1.1%

Language Learning and Use (LL & Use)

As we saw in Table 5, this is the largest category for both groups of respondents at UdL. At UBC, it is the largest category for the home students and the second largest for the international students. In fact, the proportion of total comments from the UBC home students (38.7%) is the largest category of all for any of the student groups in these three universities. At CU, it is the second largest for the home students and third largest for the international students.

Table 6. Language Learning and Use (smaller figures in bold show comments mentioning the respective minority languages).

	UdL Home (n=256)	UdL Inter (n=99)	UBC Home (n=367)	UBC Inter (n=133)	CU Home (n=277)	CU Inter (n=89)
Advantages	23.3%	17.8%	22.1% 0.3%	18.1%	14.8%	21.3%
Disadvantages	8.6% 1.6%	10.9% 1.0%	16.6% 7.9%	8.3% 0.0%	3.3% 1.4%	1.2% 0.0%
Totals	30.9%	28.7%	38.7%	26.3%	18.1%	22.5%

In Table 6, we look at the breakdown into advantages and disadvantages. All six groups of respondents see mainly advantages in this category, with the balance in favour of advantages much stronger in the CU respondents than those at UdL, and even more so than those at UBC, where there is a strong presence of reservations mentioned by the home students. This greater mention of disadvantages at UdL (compared to CU) may be due to the difficulties and tensions regarding Catalan that international students report (e.g. Garrett & Gallego-Balsà, 2014), and to low competence in English in the case of the local students (Cots, 2013), which they might see as a barrier to studying at a multilingual university. The greater proportion of disadvantages mentioned by the UBC home students may be in large part attributable to their concerns about the consequences in terms of domain loss for the Basque language, as we will discuss below.

We consider first the kinds of advantages mentioned by the respondents. There is little difference at all in the percentage figures between UdL and UBC. Looking at the comments themselves, we can say that respondents in both places mention learning more languages and also achieving more practice in those they already know (e.g. 'The advantage is that new languages are learnt and we can practice the ones we already know'¹). The only difference that emerges is that the UBC respondents specify English more frequently. Among the CU students, there is scarcely a mention of English, but it is perhaps not surprising that, as an English-medium university, they should associate a multilingual university with languages other than English. About a quarter of the advantages from the CU home students mention the benefit to people at university of being able to use the language they prefer to speak (e.g. 'allows more people to study in their preferred language', 'easier for Welsh students to learn and practise their language'). A possible reason why this type of comment is absent among the UBC and UdL responses is that the minority language has a stronger presence at those two institutions.

In terms of disadvantages, perhaps the most striking finding is the extent to which the UBC home students see disadvantages for the Basque language - 48% of their disadvantage comments (e.g. 'Loss of Basque in favour of international languages'). They mention negative implications for the minority languages far more than UdL and CU students. Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra (2013), reporting on other data from this study, observe that this trend is especially marked among students whose mother tongue is Basque, who are manifestly more negative than those who have Spanish or both Basque and Spanish as their mother tongue. Those with Basque as their mother tongue show concern about Basque being pushed aside if powerful international languages such as English (and Spanish) increase their presence to attract foreign students. Our findings here offer further support for this conclusion and may demonstrate the 'bunker' standpoint (Baker, 1992: 136), referred to in

Lasagabaster, Cots, & Mancho Barés (2013), that is, an attitude of extreme defensiveness of the minority language due to a sense of being under persistent pressure from bigger and more international languages. The rest of the comments for all of the student groups were mainly centred on issues related to lack of competence in foreign languages, difficulty of dealing with too many languages at the same time, or not wanting to be forced to learn foreign languages (e.g. 'More attention to language than to subject content'; 'There may not be much interest in learning other languages').

Language learning seems to be a more important element of a multilingual university for the home students in a non-English-speaking university and for the international students in an English-speaking university. From the point of view of the advantages, this may be due to the fact that a multilingual university represents an opportunity to learn languages, especially English, which will be useful in their future career (we consider career opportunities below). In terms of disadvantages, there is also more concern for non-English speakers at UdL and UBC because they are deterred by the risk of having to study through the medium of another language, a possibility that is already real and increasing, in particular with the English language in schools and universities. In UBC, there is the additional threat of domain loss for the Basque language.

Cultural Breadth (Cult Br)

There are only advantages in this category. It is the most salient one for all the CU students, but in particular the CU home students. It is also the most salient one for the UBC international students, second for the UBC home students and third for all the UdL students. The proportions of comments at CU are almost double those at UdL, with proportions about the same for the home and international students within each of the two institutions. But Table 7 shows a considerable quantitative contrast between the home and international students at UBC.

Table 7. Cultural Breadth

	UdL Home (n=256)	UdL Inter (n=99)	UBC Home (n=367)	UBC Inter (n=133)	CU Home (n=277)	CU Inter (n=89)
Advantages	16.8%	15.2%	19.3%	27.1%	33.2%	31.5%

In Table 8, we show a breakdown of these advantages in thematic subcategories. Firstly there are comments that mention the presence of a diversity of cultures and opportunities to learn about and experience them (e.g. 'get to know different cultures'). We call this subcategory 'Cultural Diversity'. Secondly, there are those that mention the perceived capacity of a multilingual university to accommodate a larger and more diverse student community (e.g. 'makes the university more accessible to a broader and wider range of people'), and the opportunities for meeting and having friendships with them (e.g. 'experience of meeting people and friends of different nationalities'). We call this subcategory 'People Diversity'. Thirdly, there are comments referring to tolerance and open-mindedness stemming from meeting people of different nationalities (e.g. 'create an environment of greater tolerance and respect'), and we call this subcategory 'Tolerance / Open-mindedness'.

Table 8. Cultural Breadth Groupings

	UdL Home (n=256)	UdL Inter (n=99)	UBC Home (n=367)	UBC Inter (n=133)	CU Home (n=277)	CU Inter (n=89)
Cultural Div.	12.1%	13.1%	11.2%	14.3%	20.6%	21.3%
People Div.	3.5%	2.0%	3.8%	6.8%	9.4%	4.5%
Tolerance / Open- mindedness	1.2%	0.0%	4.4%	6.0%	3.2%	5.6%

From this breakdown in Table 8, we can see that Cultural Diversity itself is fairly even across UdL and UBC, and that the higher level of salience for Cultural Diversity at CU stands out, alongside the slightly greater mention of People Diversity among the CU home students. Another item on our questionnaire showed that the CU home students showed a strong overall preference for English only at university, and so it would appear that for the CU home students especially, a university is multilingual if there are lots of students of different nationalities with their different languages, but with English as the dominant language of instruction. It is important to reiterate here a point made above in section 4, that international students at UdL and UBC are predominantly European exchange students, whereas at CU the overwhelming majority are drawn from many other countries outside Europe and Cultural Diversity is much more evident.

For Tolerance and Open-mindedness, it is noticeable that the students at UdL mention it either scarcely (home students) or not at all (the international students). Numbers in this subcategory are generally low, however, and should therefore be treated with some caution. Nevertheless, these lower percentages at UdL might be influenced by the specific multilingual regime, mentioned above in section 3, in which courses are offered in one language only (Catalan, Spanish or English), without the option of taking the same course in another language, which students can do at UBC. The situation may well be particularly problematic for the UdL international students, since data elsewhere in the study showed a dissatisfaction among them about being obliged to study through the medium of Catalan (Garrett & Gallego-Balsà, 2014).

Language and Communication Barriers / Integration (L&C Barr / Integration)

Table 9 shows the far greater salience that this category of comments holds for students at CU compared to their counterparts (home and international) at UdL and UBC. This may be due to the higher diversity among the international students at CU and their proportion of the CU student population. It is also noticeable that this category is more salient in each of the universities for the international students than for the home students. Given the inherent heterogeneity of the group of exchange students in itself, compared to home students, this is perhaps understandable. Also striking in Table 9 is the lack of salience that this category holds for the UBC students (both home and international). We are unable to place a reliable interpretation on these particular UBC findings, and suggest more work on this issue. However, one possibility might be that UBC is a less heterogeneous environment than UdL or CU. It may well be, looking at the patterning in our data, that the more heterogeneous, linguistically and culturally, the environment is, the more salient this category becomes. This speculation can also be invoked to offer an explanation for the higher

percentages of disadvantage comments given by international students compared to home students in all three of the universities. The issue is important in that the presence of international students can affect not only the income of universities (Brown & Holloway, 2008: 233), but also their reputations.

Since the UBC students commented so little, and given the higher proportions of disadvantage items, we look here at the kinds of disadvantage comments made by UdL and CU respondents. Most were relatively general, pointing to language barriers, confusion, and difficulties in understanding and communicating (e.g. 'Might get confused between languages. Difficult to understand complicated principles in a foreign language'). But it is worth drawing attention to the fact that the CU home student comments went further and referred to isolation, segregation, feelings of displacement, divisions and national groupings (e.g. 'From friends I have seen that these cultural differences make living together in halls difficult', 'Cultural isolation – foreign students and home students don't integrate mainly due to difficulty in communication', 'Everyone feeling out of place because of the diversity around them').

Table 9. Language and Communication Barriers / Integration

	UdL Home (n=256)	UdL Inter (n=99)	UBC Home (n=367)	UBC Inter (n=133)	CU Home (n=277)	CU Inter (n=89)
Advantages	7.0%	10.9%	1.4%	3.8%	1.1%	10.1%
Disadvantages	3.5%	12.9%	1.1%	4.5%	16.2%	19.1%
Totals	10.5%	23.8%	2.5%	8.3%	17.3%	29.2%

Academic provision (Acad Prov)

In terms of total percentages, it is clear from Tables 5 and 10 that this is a salient area for all groups except the CU international students. While it is the fourth largest category for the international students at CU (9.0%), it is the second or third largest for the other students (ranging from 16.5% for the UBC international students to 22.3% for the UdL home students). The quantitative difference between the home and international respondents is marked at CU.

Table 10 also shows that, while the CU home students see a greater proportion of advantages compared to disadvantages (11.6% compared to 6.5%), the UBC and UdL home students give a greater weighting to disadvantages. This is especially the case at UBC: 13.4% disadvantages to 5.2% advantages. The UBC international students stand out in contrast to the UBC home students by seeing far more advantages than disadvantages, and this also distinguishes them from the other two groups of international students. It is the UBC international students and the CU home students who are most positive about effects on academic provision. We note finally that the similar percentages of disadvantage comments made by UdL and UBC home students are clearly higher than those for the CU home students. This might be due to the fact that the UdL and UBC students already have some experience of studying through another language, unlike their CU counterparts.

Table 10. Academic Provision

	UdL Home	UdL Inter	UBC Home	UBC Inter	CU Home	CU Inter
--	-----------------	------------------	-----------------	------------------	----------------	-----------------

	(n=256)	(n=99)	(n=367)	(n=133)	(n=277)	(n=89)
Advantages	10.2%	8.9%	5.2%	11.3%	11.6%	5.6%
Disadvantages	12.1%	7.9%	13.4%	5.3%	6.5%	3.4%
Totals	22.3%	16.8%	18.5%	16.5%	18.1%	9.0%

As regards the comments themselves, we can say the following about the advantages. For the CU home students, almost all of their advantage comments point to the enrichment of learning coming from the diversity and breadth of people's backgrounds – cultural and linguistic - associated with a multilingual university (e.g. 'advantages in different perspectives'). Just under half of them had a clear focus on the student experience, pointing to the benefits for international students and being able to study in one's preferred language. Of the UdL home student advantage comments, just over half comment exclusively on the benefits for the students' training, whereas the remainder comment on matters such as co-operation programmes and international competitiveness, and general enrichment for the entire community. The international students' comments were mainly about student experience. The UBC home students' comments followed a very similar pattern (e.g. 'That your cv looks better once you get the degree'; 'More international students are attracted and the richness this entails'.) The UBC international students were more optimistic than the home students. Their largest theme referred to the impact on classes available, allowing a greater range of classes and the study of some subjects through foreign languages.

In terms of disadvantages, the CU home students' comments took a different focus from their more numerous advantage comments. Well over half referred explicitly to language – e.g. 'difficult to teach in a number of different languages'. The small number of comments by the international students also pointed to these matters (e.g. 'Having to provide multilingual opportunities to students complicates courses on an organisational as well as application level'). The teaching-focused comments themselves (about half) varied from a perceived threat to teaching standards arising from the prioritizing of knowledge of several languages over the quality of teaching and research (e.g. 'It could detract from the quality of teaching if a lecturer is made to teach in a language that is not their own'). The student-focused comments (also about half) mainly concerned the detrimental effects on students in terms of some not understanding their studies and an anticipated slower speed of provision (e.g. 'Not everyone receives the same education if they don't understand the language the lecturers use'). About two thirds of the UdL home students' comments referred to concerns about not being linguistically prepared for a multilingual university, encountering difficulties from this and not following their classes, and this placing them at a disadvantage. UdL international students' comments were evenly divided between the difficulties of running a multilingual institution with several languages of instruction, and being able to follow their studies. The UBC home students (the most sceptical of all the groups in this category) commented primarily on the additional workload – more difficulty and the need for more time and work – and to being a distraction from the degree itself (e.g. 'The disadvantages are clear. We, as students, have to make more effort because we would have to learn not only the subject content but also other languages'). The international students referred mainly to the need to ensure that everyone (including academic and administrative staff) has sufficient competence in the relevant languages, and to the threat to quality of teaching and learning through the use of other languages.

Career Opportunities (Career Opp)

As in the case of Cult Br, this category contained only advantages. In Table 11, we can see that results are evenly balanced across the groups of CU home and international students and UdL international students. None of these groups makes much association between career opportunities and multilingual universities. In contrast, the UdL home students along with the UBC home and international students appear to share an opposing view, and for them this category is the fourth largest. Our best interpretation of this is that, in terms of career opportunities and language, these latter three groups of students may see a multilingual university as providing an opportunity for them to develop their English (or their Spanish in the case of UBC), which they see as important for their careers. CU home students would not see the same need, of course, and CU international students are likely already to know more English overall, also taking into account that most of them are not EU exchange students and have to satisfy the university that they possess adequate English language skills in order to be admitted to the university. That still leaves the UdL international students. This is not an easy finding to interpret. However, it may be due to their experience of multilingualism at UdL, where the expectation of international students to learn Spanish is frustrated by the overwhelming presence of Catalan in their courses, without there being the parallel courses through the medium of Spanish that students at UBC can take. Their difficulty with regard to Catalan is something that we see in other data in this study (Garrett & Gallego-Balsà, 2014).

Table 11. Career Opportunities

	UdL Home (n=256)	UdL Inter (n=99)	UBC Home (n=367)	UBC Inter (n=133)	CU Home (n=277)	CU Inter (n=89)
Advantages	15.6%	3.0%	17.7%	13.5%	2.2%	2.2%

The Career Opp comments themselves are quite consistent, regardless of which of the respondent groups is making them. They concern the enhancement of their ability to pursue employment opportunities at home and abroad (e.g. 'It facilitates access to the ever more globalised job market').

6. Further discussion and conclusions

6.1 Summing up comparisons

For UdL and UBC home students, the notion of a multilingual university represents a greater opportunity than for CU home students for learning another language. But the higher number of disadvantages in the area of LL & Use mentioned by the UdL and UBC home students indicates that along with this enhanced opportunity comes a greater challenge from an academic and personal perspective. For the UBC home students, the tensions indicated by the high percentage of LL & Use disadvantage comments may be linked to a 'bunker' attitude (Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2013), which may be connected with the lower presence of Basque at UBC compared to Catalan at UdL.

Among the CU students, Cult Br as well as L & C Barriers / Integration are clearly more relevant. This is most likely connected with the greater linguistic and cultural diversity of the student profile at CU, compared to the other two universities in this study. While responses showed much positivity regarding cultural diversity, universities may increasingly need to look for more ways to address the barriers and isolation that may accompany it.

With regard to Career Opp, UdL and UBC home students show similar percentages, much higher than at CU. The strikingly higher percentage of such comments from the UBC international students compared to UdL international students may be related to the greater opportunities to learn Spanish that UBC offers them, since Spanish is a much more dominant language at UBC and in its sociolinguistic context than at UdL, where Catalan is more dominant than Spanish.

6.2 Going multilingual – from where to where?

To understand better these different views expressed by the students about the impact of multilingualism on academic life, we clearly need to take account of the particular sociolinguistic contexts in which we pose the question. This is what is represented in Table 12 as “point of departure,” for which we take into account the officially bilingual context, the academic language (we indicate the most dominant language in capitals), the students’ experience of multilingualism, and the potential ‘target’ situation that they may envisage in the university turning into a multilingual institution.

Table 12. The different sociolinguistic contexts and their impact on what is entailed in going multilingual

University	Point of departure			Target
	<i>Official context</i>	<i>Academic Language</i>	<i>Experience of multilingualism</i>	
CU	English + Welsh	English	‘Hear’ several intl. students’ languages	Less English + <i>dejà vu</i> multilingualism
UBC	Spanish + Basque	SPANISH + BASQUE + English (sporadic)	Optional bilingualism	More English + not yet experienced trilingualism
UdL	Spanish + Catalan	Spanish + CATALAN + English (sporadic)	Complementary bilingualism	More English + not yet experienced trilingualism

We see that for most CU students, multilingualism is ‘heard’ outside the instructional activity in the university classrooms. For the most part, this is conducted in English only. Multilingualism does not necessarily affect their ordinary academic or social life. Therefore, for the students, the idea of a multilingual university may be connected with a decrease in the presence of English and with a ‘*dejà vu*’ non-academic linguistic diversity, which is ‘hearing’ people speaking other languages. This situation would appear to be common in UK universities, and has recently motivated a seminar series funded by the Economic and Social Research Council to consider ways to make more use of the multilingual resources in higher education staff and students “for the enrichment of all those in the sector” (The Multilingual University, n.d.).

At UBC, although, in general, Spanish tends to be more frequent than Basque as a medium of instruction, the latter language nevertheless has a relatively important presence in the classroom, especially in the fields of humanities and social sciences. However, the students are always given the alternative of following compulsory subjects in a Spanish-speaking group. English is used as a medium of instruction in a small percentage of subjects (around 5%). In this sense, we can view these students' experience of multilingualism as 'optional bilingualism'. Thus, the concept of a multilingual university for UBC students may involve in the short run an increase in the presence of English and, therefore, an academic trilingual situation which they have experienced only very sporadically (thus, the use of 'not yet experienced trilingualism' in Table 12).

Finally, the UdL context differs from the other two in that the official language at the State level (i.e. Spanish) has very little presence and subjects are only offered in one of the two co-official languages. This bilingual situation can therefore be seen as 'complementary bilingualism'. As in the case of UBC, English is only present as a medium of instruction in a few subjects. Therefore for UdL, a multilingual university also means an increase in the presence of English and an academic trilingual situation which the majority of students have experienced only occasionally (i.e. 'unexperienced trilingualism').

6.3 Some limitations

We should re-state that of the three components of Spolsky's theory of language policy (beliefs, practices and intervention), our study has set its focus on beliefs. Only students' conceptualisations and evaluations of the shape a multilingual university might take on have been explored. However, we have gained some insights into students' preferences and concerns – for example, regarding the language profile of such a university-type. And we have found how these differ for different groups of students at different institutions and locations. Notwithstanding the risk of social desirability bias in any such self-report data, such findings can nevertheless contribute to a body of knowledge that can help to inform policymakers of the potential opportunities, tensions and risks. Successful negotiation of such factors can ultimately help to secure students' commitment and motivation to engage.

Students' interests are only part of the picture, however, and we need to be mindful of the interests of other stakeholders, such as administrative and academic staff. Having said that, the broader research from which this paper derives does extend its reach to such other parties in some areas (see for example, Doiz et al., 2014a, Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2014b; Llurda, Cots, & Armengol, 2014).

In addition, there is a need to explore more fully the various parameters of a multilingual university. By this we mean, what constitutes a multilingual university in terms of its ecology of languages as well as its quality in terms of education and research? One way to proceed in this direction would be adopting Cenoz's (2009: 34) notion of "continua of multilingual education." She distinguishes three sets of continua: educational, sociolinguistic, and linguistic, both at macro and micro levels. Within each set, she identifies individual continua along which the degree of multilingualism can be judged. For example, within the educational set, she operates with the four continua of the number of

languages taught as subjects, the number of languages used as medium of instruction, the number of languages spoken by teaching staff, and the languages spoken in the school locality.

Lastly, we would like to conclude that the distinction between multilingual and plurilingual universities made above is well worth considering, as the former (CU in this study) are more likely to pay lip service to actual multilingual practices, whereas the latter (UdL and UBC) have to overcome the difficulties that the actual use of different languages as means of instruction entails. The main conclusion to be drawn may thus be that the sociolinguistic context exerts an enormous impact not only on the language policies implemented in each university context, but also on their students' perceptions and beliefs of what the advantages and disadvantages of a multilingual university are, the greater importance attached to language learning by students in non-English-speaking universities representing the epitome of this situation.

Acknowledgment

This study was funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation through projects FFI2008-00585/FILO and FFI2012-35834.

Note

1. For this paper, comments written in languages other than English have been translated into English.

References

- Baaij, C. (2012). The EU policy on institutional multilingualism: Between principles and practicality. *Language & Law*, vol. 1. (urn:nbn:de:0009-30-33384)
- Baker, C. (1992). *Attitudes and language*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Balfour, R.J. (2007). University language policies, internationalisation, multilingualism, and language development in the UK and South Africa. *Cambridge Journal of Education* 37, 35-49.
- Basque Government (2013). *Fifth sociolinguistic survey 2011*. Vitoria-Gasteiz: Basque Government.
- Brown, L., & Holloway, I. (2008). The adjustment journey of international postgraduate students at an English university: An ethnographic study. *Journal of Research in International Education* 7, 232-249.
- Cenoz, J. (2009) *Towards multilingual education: Basque educational research from an international perspective*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Cots, J. M. (2013). English medium instruction at the University of Lleida: policy, beliefs and practices. In A. Doiz, D., Lasagabaster, &, J.M. Sierra (Eds.), *English-medium instruction at universities: Global challenges* (pp. 84-105). Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Cots, J.M., Lasagabaster, D., & Garrett, P. (2012). Multilingual policies and practices of universities in bilingual regions in Europe. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 216, 7-32
- Council of Europe (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Council of Europe (1992). *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*. European Treaty Series no. 148. Brussels: Council of Europe. <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168007bf44> (accessed on 28th July 28 2015).

- Dafouz, E., & Smit, U. (2014). Towards a dynamic conceptual framework for English-medium education in multilingual university settings. *Applied Linguistics*. doi:10.1093/applin/amu034
- Darquennes, J. (2011). The contribution of academia to the further development of European language policy: Some reflections based on an analysis of the European Commission's communications on multilingualism of 2005 and 2008. *European Journal of Language Policy* 3, 141-162.
- Doiz, A., Lasagabaster, D., & Sierra, J.M. (2013). English as L3 at a bilingual university in the Basque Country, Spain. In A. Doiz, D. Lasagabaster, & J.M. Sierra (Eds.) *English-medium instruction at universities: Global challenges*. (pp. 84-105) Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Doiz, A., Lasagabaster, D., & Sierra, J.M. (2014a). Language friction and multilingual policies in higher education: the stakeholders' view. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 35, 345-360.
- Doiz, A., Lasagabaster, D., & Sierra, J.M. (2014b). What does 'international university' mean at a European bilingual university? The role of language and culture. *Language Awareness* 23, 172-186.
- Garrett, P. (2010). Meanings of globalization: East and West. In N. Coupland (Ed.), *The handbook of language and globalization* (pp. 447-474). Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Garrett, P., & Gallego Balsà, L. (2014). International universities and implications for internationalization for minority languages: views from university students in Catalonia and Wales. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 35, 361-375.
- Institut d'Estadística de Catalunya (Idescat) (n.d.) <http://www.idescat.cat/en/> (accessed on 15 September 2015)
- Krippendorff, K. (2013). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kuteeva, M. (2014). The parallel language use of Swedish and English: the question of 'nativeness' in university policies and practices. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 35(4), 332-344.
- Lasagabaster, D., Cots, J.M., & Mancho Barés, G. (2013). Teaching staff's views about the internationalisation of higher education: the case of two bilingual communities in Spain. *Multilingua*, 32, 751-778.
- Llurda, E., Cots, J.M., & Armengol, L. (2014). Views on multilingualism and internationalisation in higher education: administrative staff in the spotlight. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 35, 376-391.
- Pons, E. (2015). The position of Catalan in higher education in Catalonia. In F.X. Vila & V. Bretxa (Eds.), *Language policy in higher education: The case of medium-sized languages* (pp. 153-180). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Potter, J. & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Discourse and social psychology: Beyond attitudes and behaviour*. London: Sage.
- Risager, K. (2012). Language hierarchies at the international university. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 216, 111-130.
- Spolsky, B. (2007). Towards a theory of language policy. *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics*, 22, 1-14.
- Spolsky, B. (2008). Investigating language education policy. In K.A. King & N.H. Hornberger (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of language and education* (2nd edition, volume 10: Research Methods in Language and Education) (pp. 27-39). New York: Springer.

- The Multilingual University (n.d.) *The Impact of Linguistic Diversity on Higher Education in English-dominant and English Medium Instructional Contexts* *The Impact of Linguistic Diversity on Higher Education in English-dominant and English Medium Instructional Contexts* (ESRC funded seminar series). <https://multilingualuniversity.wordpress.com> (accessed on 27th November 2015)
- Vila, F. X. (2015) Language policy in higher education in medium-sized language communities: An introduction. In F. X. Vila and V. Bretxa (eds.) *Language Policy in Higher Education: The case of Medium-Sized Languages* (pp. 1-14). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Woodfield, S. (2010). Europe. In E. Egron-Polak & R. Hudson (Eds.), *Internationalization of higher education: Global trends, regional perspectives* (pp. 170-178). Paris: International Association of Universities 3rd Global Survey Report.