Motivation and investment

Exploring the choice of English-medium instruction for mid-degree undergraduates in Catalonia

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The purpose of the present study is to offer insights into how Spanish undergraduates, who were mid-way through an English-medium programme at a university in Catalonia, articulate their past decision to study an academic subject in English. Economics students (34 in total) completed an oral elicitation task and the monologues yielded were analysed using thematic analysis. Three dominant themes emerged: (1) *The right fit for me*; (2) *To practise my English*; and (3) *English comes with benefits*. Each of these themes is presented as a composite description of the students' ideas about their past choice from the temporal position of the here-and-now, and explored through distinct but complementary social psychological and sociological lenses. The present study finds threads running through the students' narratives of a near effortlessness to choose to learn in this way, as well as an understanding of the capital value of English. For some, their sole stated motive was to develop and preserve this linguistic asset.

Keywords: investment theory, L2 self, linguistic capital, narrative identity, EMI in Spain

Introduction

The dominant conceptualisation of Englishisation, and the associated implementation of English-Medium Instruction (EMI), is as a top down, policy-led process (Lanvers & Hultgren, 2018). This raises the question as to the appeal for student stakeholders to choose the English-taught tertiary level programmes offered to them. To shape the learning experience and to address demands in what is a com-

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petitive market, higher education institutions may find it useful to know more about the student standpoint.

Wächter and Maiworm (2014, p. 17) reported that EMI provision in southern Europe "very much lags behind."[1] Nonetheless Spain – the setting for the present study – is considered to have positively welcomed EMI in the wake of globalisation and to improve foreign language learning (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2018). Our particular locus of research is Barcelona, the capital of the autonomous bilingual Spanish-Catalan community of Catalonia, where the regional language, Catalan, is the language of instruction at state primary and secondary schools. We explore how the past choice of an English-mediated education is accounted for by students, and the extent to which those motivations still apply. For our data collection, we target undergraduates in the middle of their degree, thus avoiding the potential "honeymoon period" of the early stages of an EMI programme, when the challenge of instruction in a second language[2] (L2) "might not yet have crystallized" (Henry & Goddard, 2015, p. 268).

Student perceptions about their past EMI selection were viewed through the lenses of two distinct but complementary theoretical constructs, which together offer "bifocality" (Darvin & Norton, 2021, p. 9): *motivation* (in particular, the framework of the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009)), and *investment* (Darvin & Norton, 2015). The intention behind the duality of this approach is that a sense of both the temporal and spatial nature of the motivational profiles of the students experiencing EMI might be revealed, and insights gleaned into the role played by the self and identity in the language choice for undertaking academic studies. Our pathway to understanding the past decision to enrol on an English-mediated programme, a choice made prior to crossing the educational threshold from school to university, is through the prism of meaning-making in the present. In this regard, we also refer to the additional notion of "narrative identity" (McAdams & McLean, 2013). It is these theoretical constructs to which we now turn.

1. With the exception of Cyprus.

2. For the purposes of the present study, second language (L2) includes an L3, L4, Lx, unless otherwise stated.

Motivation and investment

The L2 self and the L2MSS

The L2MSS may help to approach what moves an L2 learner to act from an internal, or self, perspective. The "possible selves" (Markus & Nurius, 1986), "cognitive bridges between the present and the future" (p. 961), have been successfully deployed within the field of Second Language Acquisition, with the "L2 self" the term used within the L2MSS, a tripartite framework comprised of:

- the *ideal L2 self* (a desired future L2 self-image),
- the *ought-to L2 self* (an imported self from the expectation of others, as well as to avoid negative outcomes), and
- the *L2 learning experience* (situated motives related to the immediate language learning experience, including the experience of success).

(Dörnyei, 2009; You & Dörnyei, 2014)

Crucially, the L2 self works as a future referent, with the L2 user motivated to close the gap between their actual (here-and-now) and future (desired, possible) L2 self (Dörnyei, 2009; Higgins, 1987). However, the actual L2 self is an underdeveloped part of the model. Dubbed "a missing person" (Thorsen et al., 2017, pp. 586–587), the closest the L2MSS was thought to come to the actual self is the third strand of the model (Ushioda, 2009). The recently proposed re-definition of the L2 learning experience, by reference to "the perceived quality of the learner's engagement" (Dörnyei, 2019, p. 25), arguably, through the involvement of third party (and not self) perception of engagement, moves the L2MSS further away from theorising for an actual L2 self. Nor does the L2MSS theorise for a past L2 self. Nevertheless, the past selves have a place within the conceptualisation of the possible selves, they are "different and separable from the current or now selves, yet are intimately connected to them" (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954). Temporal focus, and the process of meaning-making, are additional factors to consider, particularly given that the L2MSS is lacking an actual and a past self. In fact, as Dörnyei (2017, p. 93) commented: "the novel narrative dimension accounts for a so far overlooked level of the self." It is through a process of reinterpretation of past experiences and future prospects that a person provides themselves with a sense of meaning, unity and purpose, their narrative identity (McAdams & McLean, 2013).

Identity and the investment model

While the L2MSS allows for the notion of socially grounded self-perceptions (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009), a focus of the investment model is participation in

the social practice of language learning (Darvin & Norton, 2021). "Informed by Bourdieu's (1991) theories of capital, language, and symbolic power," the construct of investment provides a sociological complement to the psychological construct of motivation (Norton, 2015, p. 377).

From this poststructuralist perspective, identity is considered integrally related with investment (Norton, 2013). The ability of language learners to claim "more powerful identities from which to speak," reframing unbalanced power relations with others, depends in part on their investment in the practices of a particular classroom or community (Norton, 2015, p. 377). So, a learner may be L2-motivated but have little investment due to, for example, an elitist or racist classroom or workplace (Norton & Toohey, 2011). The construct of investment therefore "signals the tension between agency and structure" (Darvin & Norton, 2021, p. 3), whereby a self-determined agentive act and ensuing struggle may not suffice to triumph over more powerful others. The construct of investment has recently been located within an expanded model where identity, capital, and ideology intersect (Norton, 2015). Symbolic capital, "the form the different types of capital take once they are perceived and recognized as legitimate" (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 4), is considered particularly relevant, with examples suggested by Darvin and Norton (2015) of being pre-equipped with linguistic capital and social networks. It is how the resources we have in the social world are perceived and recognised by those in power that makes them symbolic (Darvin & Norton, 2021).

Motivation and investment in an EMI context

We now consider how the motivation and/or investment of those experiencing EMI programmes have been considered in the literature. With an EMI context as the variable factor, L2 motivation levels have recently been quantitatively investigated. Intrinsic motivation and English learning engagement between 276 EMI and non-EMI students were found significantly different in a study conducted in Taiwan (Chen & Kraklow, 2015). The authors go on to discuss difficulties in determining whether participation on the EMI programme caused the differences found or vice versa, and view signing up for an EMI programme as a demonstration of a difference in motivation. In a Spanish context, a study of 369 students in Madrid found that EMI students are more L2-motivated and have more mature learning strategies than their non-EMI peers (Rivero Menendez et al., 2018). Within the Basque Country, Lasagabaster (2016) examined how L3 English motivation was generated amongst 189 students, concluding that this happened as a result of the "students' aspiration toward an imagined L2 future self, as well as … the EMI learning experience itself" (p. 327).

On the qualitative front, the nature of L2 motivation in an EMI context has also been considered. A shift in the primary motivating source was found on the transition from school-subject English on the Chinese mainland to EMI degrees in Hong Kong (15 of the 22 participants were interviewed on the Chinese mainland and in Hong Kong two years later) (Gao, 2008). The shift was from context-mediated to a variety of self-determined motives, with visions of an ideal self described as "a powerful force" (p. 605). It was suggested that this was in part because the students had left behind social/family networks and gained more control over their own learning. Du and Jackson (2018) explored the same context change. Mainland Chinese EFL learners were interviewed once, post-transition to a Hong Kong EMI environment i.e., retrospectively, either in their second or third year at university. After arriving in Hong Kong, motivational intensity was "greatly enhanced" (p. 162) and sustained over time. Motivational surges due to exams and overseas trips were, however, rarely sustained. Six of the eight participants "became keenly aware of the financial, social and symbolic capital of English in Hong Kong (Bourdieu, 1991)" (p. 163).

Perceptions about motivation within the EMI context have also been explored in the Basque Country (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2018). With the L2MSS as the main construct, the interaction between the L2MSS and other constructs such as investment and identity were considered. The participants, 15 students and 13 teachers, were found to have strong ideal L2 selves (albeit with differences), and the students' ought-to L2 self was more prevalent (e.g., influenced by parents' opinions about the role of English). On how student motivation was manifested, the researchers linked their data to the prevalence of English in Spanish society, the career advantage of knowing English, friends enrolling, and becoming an Erasmus student. The investment of the students to learn "does not appear to take an important toll on their personal lives" (p. 669). This was in contrast to the personal cost to the lecturers, one of whom felt they had to take time at home to watch the news in English to improve this L2. Both groups recognised a symbolic capital gain, with the students considering their economic capital to have increased too, due to their decision to participate on the programme (95% taught in English).

Finally, in a study which explored whether identity played a role in EMI degree language choice (Henry & Goddard, 2015), Swedish university students were interviewed mid-way through their first term. The majority (nine out of eleven participants) were said to have constructed a hybrid rather than bicultural identity, with the observation made that this choice "appears almost entirely unproblematic" (p. 268). A call for similar studies in different locations is made on the basis that English is possibly more implicated in identity work in a Nordic context, where key cultural experiences may well be English-mediated.

We now turn our attention to the present study context: the Catalan-Spanish bilingual region of Catalonia. While it has been observed that there is an increasing presence of English within Spanish society (Lasagabaster, 2017), Codó (2022, p. 341) groups Spain amongst "countries with the most English-insecure populations." It is against this backdrop that we explore how students explain their choice to enrol on an EMI programme, adopting the social psychological framework of the L2MSS and the sociological model of investment.

Method

Aim and guiding question

The present study seeks to throw light on the following:

> How do undergraduate students, already well established on their EMI programme, account in the here-and-now for what their choice of an English-mediated degree means for them and how they experience this, in terms of the L2 self and investment.

Study context and participants

The present study was conducted at a university in Barcelona, within an established EMI programme taught entirely in English, including all assigned reading and all assignments. The academic subject was Economics. Students enrolled on this programme had made a choice between comparable degree programmes in the same department, one full EMI (420 contact hours per year) and one partial EMI (only 35 EMI contact hours per year), and had chosen full EMI. A Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2001) B2 English level was required, at the time of enrolment for this cohort, to attend the university. There were no L1 English speakers on the faculty staff. The four-year EMI programme included mandatory study abroad, although not exclusively to Anglophone destinations. After informed consent was obtained from each of the participants, for the use of their data for the research purpose, and in accordance with the university's ethics committee for the review of projects, data collection took place in February 2016, halfway through the academic year. Volunteers were provided with a small financial reward of 10 Euros for their participation in the project.

There were 34 participants in the present study, 20 females and 14 males, undergraduates in the age range of 19 to 21 (average age: 19.8). They were settled within the full EMI programme, in their second or third year. As suggested in

the Introduction, this vantage point arguably avoided the potential downside of data collected earlier when attitudes towards the difficulty of learning an academic subject in L2 English might not have "crystallized" (Henry & Goddard, 2015, p. 268). English was actually generally an L3, as the students were, with the exception of four of them, bilingual Spanish – Basque/Catalan/Galician.

A language questionnaire (LQ) was completed by the students which provided additional information about them. Seventy-nine percent had taken extra English classes outside school between the ages 5–18, with an average of six years language school study. They had all obtained an official certificate in English (e.g., Cambridge First Certificate). Seventy-six percent had received most of their pre-university education in Catalan. L2 learning other than English featured Chinese, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Russian. Catalan, the local language, was being learnt by 12%. English communication skills were self-rated as excellent (26%), good (68%), and average (six percent). Nine percent had experienced study abroad in an Anglophone country during their EMI programme. Estimated time spent on various English activities since starting university are listed in the Appendix. Notably, on a daily basis, 24% communicated in English to L1 English speakers or to other friends using English and six percent studied English on their own. The Oxford Quick Proficiency Test placed the participants in the range B2–C1 CEFR.

Data collection: Instruments and procedure

An oral elicitation task was administered, prompting the delivery of a monologue in English. The students were provided with the written instructions set out below on what they were to speak about. Question 2(b) targeted data analysed to address the guiding question for the present study, with the other prompts providing data supplemental to that collected in the LQ:

Please introduce yourself, including the following information:

1. The languages you speak, your English language learning experience.
2. What degree you are taking and (a) why you chose it, (b) why you chose to take it in English.
3. Anything else you feel is relevant regarding language learning that you would like to share with the researcher.

The oral elicitation task was completed individually on campus, within sound-attenuated cabins away from the EMI classroom. Pragmatically, with a group of 34 participants, a time limit of two minutes was set for delivering the monologues. Two of the researchers were present but not in view of the participants.

Unlike an interview, the use of monologues to collect data ensured that there was no interruption to the participants' flow of thoughts, no negotiation of meaning with an interviewer. This helped address concerns about responses tainted by a desire to say what was expected (Block, 2000). Whilst a semi-structured interview would have allowed for attention to be directed to specific issues previously identified in the literature on the choice-to-EMI, monologues are not without precedent as a collection instrument. For example, in relation to hidden stories in the field of psychology (Kuncewicz & Kuncewicz, 2019) and ethnographically, as mobile phone (written) monologues (Vollebergh, 2022).

The LQ and proficiency test referred to earlier provided the two other data collection instruments for the present study. These were completed online, in the participants' own environments.

Analysis

The audio recordings of the monologues were transcribed verbatim. The 34 monologues yielded between 91 and 372 words of data; the average length was 214 words. Whilst we recognise that "analysis is always shaped to some extent by the researcher's standpoint, disciplinary knowledge and epistemology" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 175), we analysed the monologues inductively, adopting an open-coding approach to how the participants articulated their choice.

We used a pattern-based analytic method, the thematic analysis procedure described by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013). This meant that each monologue was read and re-read to begin to notice text units of interest (words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs). A label capturing why a text unit might be useful was applied to units pertaining to our research. Table 1 includes examples of text units and associated labels. Text units dealing with the same issue were collated into sub-themes (our candidate analytic categories) and given provisional names and definitions. The monologues were systematically reviewed and revisited to ensure identification of all relevant sub-themes, and a thematic map of analysis generated (22 sub-themes emerged and were clustered into three themes). Analysis continued with refinement of each theme, with clear labels, accurate definitions, and an exhaustive set of supporting data. All coding decisions were thoroughly discussed amongst the authors and, where there was disagreement, adjustments were considered until full consensus was reached. All relevant data belong to at least one sub-theme. Staying close to the words of the participants, the findings were integrated into a description of the choice-to-EMI according to the patterns identified in the data.

Table 1. Text units and associated label

Selected examples of text units	Label capturing possible usefulness
…I choose this degree because I thought it would be interesting to learn Economics in English and I don't know yeah… (S1)	EMI would be interesting.
…I wanted to study in English because it was my I mean I enjoy to learning it in English more than in other languages… (S27)	EMI would be something I could enjoy.
…and then well I chose the … degree because umm I really wanted to to be studying something in English… (S12)	I chose an EMI degree because it was EMI.
…well umm I what was the question well I decided to study degree in English because ahh English as everyone knows in the world is the most important language and I think it's really important for my future to to have a good degree of it… (S18)	A future where I could speak with anyone (anywhere).

Note. S1–S34 indicate, anonymously, the student expressing their choice-to-EMI in this way.

Findings and discussion

Dominant themes

The students' monologues yielded three dominant themes relating to our guiding question: (1) *The right fit for me*; (2) *To practise my English*; and (3) *English comes with benefits*, as presented in Table 2 (first column). The number (and percentage) of students who expressed each of the dominant themes is provided in the second column. When discussing each theme, we have labelled the students respectively: (1) Aligners; (2) Learners; and (3) Valuers. The third column contains summaries of the sub-themes, which dovetail with our labels. Our sub-themes are presented in the fourth column, with the figures in brackets indicating the number of students who conveyed that same idea.

The ideas expressed by the students generally fell within more than one dominant theme, as in Figure 1. This emphasises the slight overall dominance of the Aligners (*The right fit for me*), and also shows how the themes overlap, most notably at the intersection of Aligners with Valuers. Four (12%) of the students said nothing relevant to our guiding question. They spoke, for example, about their L2 learning experience and/or why they decided on Economics as their degree subject.

Table 2. Overlapping themes in absolute numbers and percentages

Theme cluster	n/34 %	Theme cluster summary	Sub-themes
The Right Fit for Me ("Aligners")	**20** **59%**	The students conveyed feelings about their EMI choice positively, as an interesting prospect which aligned with their ideas of who they were.	It would be interesting for me, an experience (6); It would challenge me (3); It fit my interests (2); For my enjoyment, for the love of the language (2); It fit my vision of me (2); It fit my personality (3); In my opinion, it was for me! (10); I am an English speaker, so it was for me! (5)
To Practise my English ("Learners")	**17** **50%**	The students talked about EMI providing a practice forum within which they could be actively L2 engaged.	To improve my English (10); To avoid losing my English (1); An alternative to academies (2); Language over degree content (3); My L2 pay-offs during EMI (6)
English Comes with Benefits ("Valuers")	**19** **56%**	The students related a value to English, as a linguistic asset for communication and in the job market, and symbolically.	To speak to anyone (anywhere) / world language (6); To travel (6); To engage with other cultures (2); To study abroad / live abroad (2); To study my subject in an international way (2); To get a job (7); To put on my CV (2); To work internationally (2); Competitive edge (5)

Note. The figures in column 4 indicate the number of students with this idea.

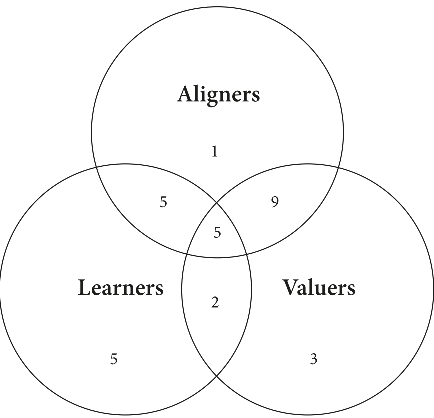

Figure 1. Students ($n = 34$) in absolute numbers per overlapping theme
Note. Four participants said nothing relevant to our guiding question.

Presenting our findings, we provide a composite description of the choice-to-EMI, with data extracts from the students. These extracts are labelled S1–S34 to indicate, anonymously, the individual expressing what that choice means to them. We discuss the findings for each of the three dominant themes after the relevant description, and then discuss our findings as a whole under the heading *The Past in the Present.*

The right fit for me ("Aligners")

Within the theme of *The right fit for me,* the 20 Aligners (59% of the students) described their feelings about the decision to study through EMI positively and as personal to them.

Narrated from the temporal dimension of the here-and-now, EMI had been foreseen as a plausible and interesting prospect, "to experience a new way of learning totally different from from what I previously had that was in my my native or or mother languages that were Spanish and Galician" (S16). This self-belief was also expressed as a prior desire to take on a new endeavour, "to make it a little bit more challenging than than just doing it Spanish or Catalan as usual" (S21). The Aligners had expected the EMI classroom to be a place where their own interests would coincide, and this extended to outside interests. For one, his thought process continued: "umm but I'm also really interested in international things from I don't know European Parliament United Nations" (S2).

Joy associated with the medium of instruction was anticipated too: "I chose it in English because I just love the language" (S14), while, for other Aligners, this was articulated as a deferred desire, a future L2 self which was personified for one by a former girlfriend, "she were from Austria she spoke like million of languages I mean German English Spanish and I were jealous" (S24). Indeed, a connection was made explicit between their EMI choice and identity fit, personally, "really fits with myself" (S13), as it was socially within the EMI community, "umm most of the time the people who choose this type of career well since they are choosing to do it in English it just makes a profile of person and I was interested in that type of people" (S2).

In picking EMI, the Aligners had been confident shoppers in the international university market, able to shape their own educational destinies. As one opined, it was an "excellent programme because it is completely in English" (S27). This made it "perfect for me," said others (S7, S15). They identified EMI as a two-for-one educational bonus, "I would be doing two things at once" (S17). This extended to the Aligners' self-assurance about their pre-EMI English skills. For example, "it didn't suppose a great effort for me because I already had a high level of English" (S15).

In sum, the Aligners perceived their former future L2 selves as plausible, so meeting one of the L2MSS preconditions for the L2 self to be able to exert motivational impact (Dörnyei, 2014), a reflection of their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). In looking back at their former selves, via the process of meaning-making (McAdams & McLean, 2013), there was a clarity to the Aligners' prior judgment about the language choice for their academic instruction and their pre-existing abilities as English speakers. By illuminating the interests, likes, desires and visions of their past selves, the Aligners demonstrated their here-and-now sense of a positive pull to their prior motivations to choose EMI. With their past choice and present experience aligning, they affirmed their identity and rightful place in the EMI context (Darvin & Norton, 2015). The hopeful selves which had elected EMI in the past had now "sprout[ed] identities in the world" (van Lier, 2010, p. x). Negative emotions, such as fear or anxiety, were not expressed, though only two of the Aligners articulated their EMI choice as a pursuit of enjoyment (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Nor was the decision expressed as led by the ought-to self; in contrast to Doiz and Lasagabaster (2018) there was, for example, no mention of pressure from parents. Indeed, there was a sense of a near effortlessness associated with the choice to learn in this way, which reflects findings in earlier studies (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2018; Henry & Goddard, 2015).

To practise my English ("Learners")

In the second theme cluster *To practise my English*, the 17 Learners (50% of the students) associated their EMI choice with a pragmatic opportunity for language learning.

The Learners had anticipated using the EMI classroom to, variously, "improve," "learn," "practise," and "develop" their English, "so it was a great opportunity to improve my my English which I thought was not good enough" (S26). This expectation of EMI providing a learning environment was also articulated from an L2 maintenance perspective, as a means of "not losing all that I've learn 'til now" (S3). Actually, the EMI option was additionally couched as a substitute for language academy attendance, albeit with an acknowledgement that this would provide a different style of learning, "I wanted…to practise English but without having to go to an academy and study properly" (S7). In general, the Learners credited L2 improvement and sustained learning as only partially implicated in their decision to pursue an EMI degree. However, five students (15%) were transparent about their EMI choice being based solely on the programme being taught in English. In this sense, their motive was one of language over content. One commented "and so the reason why I chose umm … Economics umm

was because it was one of the only degrees umm that they are doing in English here in Catalonia" (S31).

In their second or third year of study, the linguistic strategies of the Learners were ostensibly beginning to pay-off, for example:

> I thought that if I listen to different lessons in English like every day of my life like so my English will improve and I will be very comfortable speaking it and I think that well I almost have achieved it. (S12)

A further Learner conveyed more about the L2 gain, "but you're going to learn a lot you're going to get the fluency you're going to not be ashamed of I don't know speaking to others in front of the class" (S13). Another revealed his ability to communicate conceptually in English, "you find that it's very easy to express your ideas ah with this with this language" (S34).

In sum, the Learners acknowledged their past intentions to engage and invest in the social practice of an EMI classroom environment, recognised EMI as an alternative L2 learning experience, and understood the potential impact of spending their academic study time using English. This investment within an EMI classroom, in order to improve L2 proficiency, resonates with the findings in Sung (2020). Indeed, the choice to embark on an EMI journey as a route to L2 improvement revealed a certain self-discrepancy between the Learners' L2 abilities at the start of EMI and desired gains during the programme (Dörnyei, 2009; Higgins, 1987). As an L2 learning experience, EMI was narrated as an experience of success. However, it is interesting to note that there was no explicit positioning of their lecturers as English language teachers by the Learners, what Block (2021, p. 393) refers to as an "ELT gaze."

English comes with benefits ("Valuers")

In the final theme of *English comes with benefits*, we see the 19 Valuers (56% of the students) associate their EMI choice with a still imagined future, one where they could use English for speaking, as a communication tool, and with yet to be exploited job market advantages.

Linguistically, the Valuers could communicate with "almost everybody in the world" (S12), "anybody" (S25), "as English is international language" (S4). They would "meet new people… and be able to communicate with them" (S6). Other Valuers acknowledged the status of English, "I think nowadays in the kind of world we live it's really important to to have a fluent English" (S25). Their communication skills would allow them to "get used to other cultures" (S4). The EMI degree also paved the way to a future where they could explore: "it helped me to ah will help me to be able to travel more" (S6). Indeed, the EMI

decision included the prospect of living outside Spain, albeit temporarily on an Erasmus programme, and possibly more permanently too, "and I chose it in English because…I want to live abroad hopefully" (S14). The Valuers could also access their academic subject in a broader, more international way. For example, "because ah then you focus on international economy and it's ah I think in a globalised world it's it's better for for everybody" (S23). Specifically in relation to their future careers, the Valuers made comments such as, "and if I study a degree in it in this language I think probably in the future it will be easier to find like my ideal job" (S18). EMI was something that they could mention on their résumés, "this was like something that would really add a lot of value to my curriculum" (S11). Working internationally was also cited, with EMI offering the ability "to work anywhere in the world" (S27). The idea that EMI gave them the edge in a future job market was also formulated, with thoughts such as "it gave me more competitive advantage in front other students" (S6).

In sum, the Valuers associated their choice to study through EMI with preparing them to do something in their future lives that involved a wider world than it might otherwise have done. They expressed the practical benefits of learning a language i.e., to communicate, to travel, to study abroad, to get a job, and this resonates with the construct of promotional instrumentality (Higgins, 1987; You & Dörnyei, 2014). Indeed, in relation to the job market, this is consistent with Pan and Block's (2011) finding, in China, of the instrumental value of global English, as well as Sabaté-Dalmau's (2016) study of Catalan students in higher education, who saw English as an asset for employability. Moreover, for some of the Valuers, English came with benefits beyond mere usability. By tapping into wider perceptions of the status of English as the lingua franca, they invoked the notions of linguistic and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991; Darvin & Norton, 2015). They would have the means – a global L2 connectivity – to meet new people and to communicate with "anyone," or "almost everyone," thereby arguably providing an opportunity to reframe their relations with others, giving them "more powerful identities from which to speak" (Norton, 2015, p.377). Although this Bourdieusian aspect of the Valuers' choice-to-EMI might be viewed as the regurgitation of a neoliberal ideological dream sold to them since childhood, the Valuers did recognise the convertibility of their linguistic capital into economic capital (Bourdieu, 1991; Darvin & Norton, 2015). When they talked about the job market, this did not always include the sense of international, implying they valued their linguistic capital at home. Finally, they imagined access to a community (Norton, 2001), though their descriptions were of generic places, rather than to a specific L2 group. Only one Valuer mentioned another culture, and this as a desire to travel to Australasia. Indeed, the lack of territorial or cultural markers, this neutral future L2 identity, ties in with how they spoke about English as an international lan-

guage and brings to mind the construct of international posture, "a tendency to relate oneself to the international community rather than any specific L2 group" (Yashima, 2009, p. 145).

The past in the present

Through the voices of these students, in the midst of their degree studies, we have heard about their past decision to take their Economics programme wholly taught in English. In general, we might wonder if these undergraduates would have identified with EMI more or less if they had presented their monologues during what Henry and Goddard (2015) perceived as a potential "honeymoon period" (p. 268), the first term of the first year being the collection period for their study. However, we do get a genuine sense of what their past EMI choice means to them now, as they reach their full English-speaking potential.

We are privy too to the drives related to their EMI election which are still in motion. Indeed, we gain insights into the motivation and investment of undergraduates who are fully engaged on an EMI programme. For these students, the psychological L2 journey and the real-world identity struggle/alignment appear to be nearing completion. While half of the students spoke as Learners about being motivated to improve or maintain their linguistic asset, most of them, 25 (74%), either portrayed being able to make the choice to study through EMI on a because-I-believed-I-could-basis (our theme: *The right fit for me*) and/or on the grounds that I know the value of my asset (our theme: *English comes with benefits*). The reasons given by the students in their monologues for choosing an English-mediated degree were quite factual and often bereft of specific social and cultural connotations. This does not necessarily imply that how these undergraduates experienced their EMI choice was as a thin veneer of identity.

Whilst the possible selves are about the possibility of becoming (Markus & Nurius, 1986), there was a sense, running through the monologues, of an added layer, one of hoped for belonging. This was a belonging to a community of L2 peers, one that piqued the curiosity of these undergraduates. This is particularly evident in the statement "since they are choosing to do it in English it just makes a profile of person and I was interested in that type of people." This was a belonging to, a coming closer to, not so much a language community (as per Gardner's (2001) integrativeness/integrative motivation), but more with anyone with whom this linguistically-educated elite wished to communicate, anywhere on the planet. In an age when external identity and liked profiles are perceived to matter, their choice to pursue an EMI degree could be described as an anticipated fulfilment of this global flexible identity. In fact, this sense of community and fluidity in a digital age resonates with the extended construct of investment, in which the "spaces

of socialization and information exchange continue to multiply, in both face-to-face and virtual worlds, locally and globally" (Norton, 2015, p. 379). It is also a finding which is consistent with Henry and Goddard's (2015) study where, for the majority of their participants, an English-mediated education was felt to have provided "a passport to a future where they can be more fully enacted" (p. 270).

As to how our findings inform the field of EMI at large, for those stakeholders who seek to understand why students choose to enrol and their profile – university policy-makers, teachers on EMI programmes and prospective students alike – the present study offers some insights. Through the process of re-interpretation of their past in the present (Karniol & Ross, 1996), our participants narrated their choice-to-EMI as a successful agentive act, rather than due to, for example, parental pressure. They also articulated positive hopes and desires, rather than anxieties. There was a sense of "alignment" (Atkinson, 2010, p. 611; Wenger, 1998, pp. 178–181), of a desire to position a nascent or existing L2 English identity within a broader social role of, for example, economist or global communicator, and to capitalise on the wider benefits they perceived came with the knowledge of English.

There were also thoughts about how the process of studying within the educational setting of EMI had impacted positively on maintaining and/or improving their L2 English. Indeed, the L2 English goal was being achieved, pointing to the "communities of practice" (Wenger, 1998) potentialities EMI has to offer. This having been said, lecturers on EMI programmes might be disheartened were they to discover that the sole purpose of some of their own students, as was the case in the present study, was the preservation or enhancement of their L2 linguistic asset. Indeed, the restricted choice of academic discipline available as an EMI option, which was vocalised by some of the participants, foregrounds the career and broader life-limiting implications of narrow EMI investments by higher education institutions. Our findings have also added to the EMI identity work Henry and Goddard (2015) carried out in the Scandinavian context, addressing instead a group of students in southern Europe, an area identified by Wächter and Maiworm (2014) as underdeveloped in EMI provision.

Conclusion

The present study explored student reasons for crossing the threshold into a perceived new language learning context, one where academic content learning occurs via English. The focus was on what that choice means to Spanish-speaking undergraduates settled in year two or three of a four-year EMI degree programme. An oral elicitation task, during which the participants delivered mono-

logues, yielded three dominant themes: (1) *The right fit for me*; (2) *To practise my English*; and (3) *English comes with benefits*. When discussing these themes, we assigned the labels: Aligners, Learners, and Valuers. A number of Learners revealed their sole motive for choosing EMI as L2 linguistic proficiency, and for others this was a factor. Given the limited range of EMI degree programmes, if the trajectories of future careers are being determined more by a desire to pursue English skills than academic studies, then this would indicate a policy need to shape and diversify EMI offerings to meet demand across disciplines. This would have to be weighed, of course, against the possible concomitant costs of further Englishisation.

A limitation of the present study is that we considered only one academic subject. Students pursuing a different degree under EMI conditions may not have expressed their choice-to-EMI in the same way as those on an EMI Economics programme. Also, the participants were self-selecting volunteers, and therefore potentially more enthusiastic about their EMI decision. Nonetheless, staying close to these students' words, we have heard that, for the majority, there was both a valuing of their linguistic capital and a sense of an emergent identity, a reframing of themselves, which empowered them to believe they could participate in communities, anywhere, at home or internationally, in person or online.

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Appendix. Estimation of time spent on English activities by number of students

English activity	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	A few times a year	Never
Watch English language television	10 (29%)	8 (24%)	5 (15%)	7 (21%)	4 (12%)
Read English language newspapers or books	12 (35%)	13 (38%)	4 (12%)	4 (12%)	1 (3%)
Read English language magazines or browse the web in English (visit English sites)	22 (65%)	7 (21%)	2 (6%)	3 (9%)	0 (0%)
Listen to English language music	30 (88%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)
Watch films or television in the English language	12 (35%)	13 (38%)	5 (15%)	2 (6%)	2 (6%)
Write emails, messages, online chats, communicate through writing in English	15 (44%)	16 (47%)	3 (9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Study English on your own	2 (6%)	6 (18%)	7 (21%)	10 (29%)	9 (26%)
Speak to native English speakers or to other friends through English	8 (24%)	13 (38%)	10 (29%)	3 (9%)	0 (0%)

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