

# The presentation of Catalan universities' linguistic reality to a transnational audience

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## Abstract

This article seeks to explore critically the discourse strategies used by three Catalan universities on their English-medium websites, directed at (prospective) transnational students, investigating how their higher education (HE) linguistic environments are portrayed. In recent decades, Catalan regained its status of *lingua academica* alongside Spanish; the use of Catalan in HE is regarded as vital for its long-term sustainability. In this context, efforts to attract transnational students jar with concerns raised about the hegemonic dominance of English as an academic lingua franca. After reviewing salient themes in the literature on the changing landscape of HE in Europe, we describe the linguistic and sociopolitical context of Catalonia in particular, and adopt Fairclough's three-stage discourse analysis framework to our text analysis. Texts are described and considered in terms of how they can be seen to either reproduce or challenge these emergent themes. Results show that the websites identify English as the world's undisputed academic lingua franca, and a linguistic gateway to international success. Simultaneously, the websites focus on the social and cultural significance of their local language to its foreign audience, trying to escape the risk of cultural and linguistic harmonisation that has been denounced in English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in other comparable contexts.

**Keywords:** Englishization of higher education, language policy and language management, Catalonia, critical discourse analysis, virtual marketing

## 1. Introduction

This study analyses discourse practices of Catalan university websites published in English, and examines how the linguistic environment is represented. The aim is to uncover underlying beliefs related to English-medium instruction

(EMI) in this context, which, in turn, enables us to consider related policy implications.

This topic is particularly pertinent following the “Bologna Process” higher education (HE) reforms of 1999, which have significantly encouraged the internationalisation of HE all over the European continent, with far-reaching effects. One of its most perceptible effects has been the sharp rise in EMI at university level throughout Europe (Costa and Coleman 2013; Smit and Dafouz 2012). The spread of EMI is concomitant, especially following the Second World War, with the progressive establishment of English as the world’s hegemonic academic lingua franca (Gordin 2015), i.e. as the language most frequently used to make scientific communication possible among researchers who do not share the same native language, especially in international contexts such as scientific journals or international symposia (Vila 2015). Historic competitors for the status of academic lingua franca such as French, German and Russian have progressively been ‘debased’ to the position of just *linguæ academicæ*, that is, languages that fulfil most academic functions – medium of university instruction, vehicle of scientific production and discussion, especially in oral terms, language of scientific dissemination, etc. – basically in the (national or international) contexts where the same language is shared (Vila 2015). In the last decades, EMI has been gaining popularity all over Europe. One concern regarding this hegemonic dominance is the potential negative impact on linguistic ecologies and even on the sustainability of many other languages as *linguæ academicæ* (Doiz et al. 2011).

Catalonia offers a sociolinguistic situation which is particularly interesting as far as HE language policies are concerned, given its complex sociolinguistic reality and its long history of language contact and language conflict (Ferrando i Francès and Amorós 2011). In Catalonia, two languages are largely present as medium of instruction in HE: on the one hand, there is Catalan, the autochthonous language, which is spoken by c.10 million people, the first official language of the autonomous administration, and the predominant language of the Catalan educational system. Spanish/Castilian, the official language of the Spanish State, is also widely spoken in Catalonia, and one of the most widely spoken languages in the world (Boix-Fuster and Farràs i Farràs 2013). Both Catalan and Spanish are legally instated as official languages, and widely used as means of instruction at university level (Pons Parera 2015). In the last decades, Catalan universities have embarked on a process of internationalisation, which includes attracting significant numbers of transnational students, and hence increasing the role of EMI. However, this process is not supposed to damage the position of Catalan as a medium-sized academic

language. This study offers a critical analysis of the discourse strategies on Catalan universities' English-language websites, directed at a transnational audience,<sup>1</sup> where presentations of their linguistic environment are concerned, looking at mid-level language-policy texts at universities.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The spread of EMI in European universities and its sociolinguistic consequences

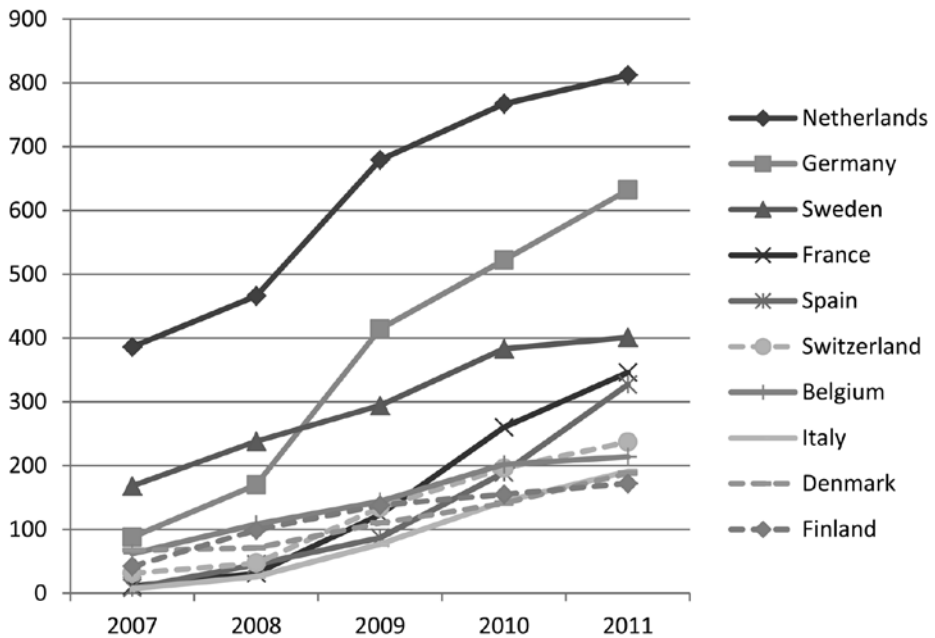
It is widely recognised that the Bologna Process has radically transformed higher education in Europe, and increased internationalisation of the HE sector. In 2014, 1.48 million transnational students were undertaking HE studies in the EU. Percentages were especially high in some countries such as Luxembourg (43.8%) and the UK (18.2%), for example (Eurostat 2016), but figures increase across Europe. In fact, according to a 2009 Bologna benchmark set for the year 2020, at least 20% of students graduating in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) should have had a study or training period abroad ('Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education' 2009). The internationalisation process is strongly connected with the commodification of HE, i.e. the adoption of performance and economic rationality as the sole criteria to evaluate HE. "[I]nternationalization is increasingly characterised by competition, commercialisation, self-interest, and status building" (Knight 2012: 4). The connection between the internationalisation and commodification of HE is apparent in many official documents. For instance, the working group for the internationalisation of Spanish universities commits itself to the following aim: "el atractivo y la competitividad de España en un contexto de competición global por talento [...] se convierten así en imanes capaces de atraer talento y capital ligado al conocimiento" (Grupo de Trabajo de Internacionalización de Universidades 2014: 4).<sup>3</sup> The strong links between internationalisation and commodification of HE on the one hand, and the spread of EMI on the other, have been described before (Rose

1. The label *transnational*, rather than *international*, has been chosen to refer to the individuals concerned, as this may better capture the complex nature of the demographic: "transnationalism refers to population movement between two or more social spaces or locations [...] transnationals, often develop meaningful ties to more than one home *country*, blurring the congruence of social space and geographical space" (Li and Zhu 2013: 517).

2. Mid-level here is used to refer to local, non-governmental (rather than central, governmental) language management practices.

3. The attractiveness and competitiveness of Spain in a context of global competition for talent [...] thus become magnets capable of attracting talent and capital linked to knowledge (our translation).

and McKinley 2017). Subject to a restriction in public funding, and under increasing pressure to seek alternative funding, many universities, including in the public sector, see in the growing market of transnational students a natural way to solve their economic problems. “Englishising the curriculum can be a matter of policy interest, competitiveness and even [a university’s] survival” (Costa and Coleman 2013: 4). Thus, the number of English-medium courses, especially at postgraduate level, is on the increase all over Europe (Figure 1):



**Figure 1.** Total number of English-taught Master’s programmes in Europe listed on Masters-Portal per year (Brenn-White and van Rest 2012)

Whereas one of the basic rationales for the spread of EMI is economic, the spread of the process is accompanied by a number of other discursive clichés that emphasise its benefits (Dearden 2014: 3). Among them, one of the most prominent is the conceptualisation of English as a powerful form of “cultural capital” (Salomone 2015), namely the most valuable linguistic capital since it would be *the* language of science, university, global affairs, etc. Speakers of English are therefore imbued with symbolic cultural capital that includes identity along with language. In this discursive line, “EMI is thought to be a passport to a global world” (Dearden 2014: 3). In the context of English as a lingua franca (ELF), it is perceived to be the key to a “cosmopolitan” identity

and to the condition of being “a citizen of the world” (Kendall et al. 2009). The spread of EMI is also discursively connected to other topics, such as the inherent quality of internationalised and commodified HE (Saarinen 2008).

The spread of EMI poses a number of questions. One of the most obvious is the discussion about the origins and instigators of this process. Dominant discourses about the spread of the English language describe this process mainly as a spontaneous, multifactorial process that was not the consequence of an explicitly designed policy; others view the spread of EMI as another expression of linguistic imperialism (Hamel 2016; Phillipson, 2013). The latter view is, at times, criticised for being an oversimplification (House 2003); others still support the notion that the spread of “global English” may also be regarded as an instrument of social and international justice (van Parijs 2011). This view is in turn refuted by many who warn against the “uncritical hegemonic views of the global appropriacy of English and the benefits that accrue from using the language” (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas 1997: 13).

Whatever the stances towards EMI, the practical consequences of its spread need to be addressed. The hegemony of English is causing many scholars to warn of wide-reaching repercussions, such as loss of global linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as the increase in the dominance of English-speaking nations in the production and distribution of knowledge (Hamel 2016). One of the first debates pointed to the potential risk of “domain loss”, i.e. the retreat of an academic language from a number of domains such as scholar publishing and even teaching (Haberland 2005).<sup>4</sup> The Englishization process might impact on the prestige and power functions of many *linguae academicæ* and eventually lead to academic diglossia (Coleman 2006), i.e. a distribution of functions between English as the sole academic language and many of the other languages now reduced to the status of non-academic languages, i.e., languages which serve no formal functions in HE (Vila 2017). Others dismiss such a risk, arguing that the spread of English as the medium of instruction should not be regarded as a threat to local languages, provided that a functional distinction between language for communication vs. language for identification be implemented (House 2003). But sociolinguists, especially those working in the paradigm of language minoritisation, warn that all languages serve purposes of communication and identification, and that it is therefore important for minoritised languages to (re)gain formal domains

4. In the Netherlands, which in the table appears as the country with the highest number of degrees in English, there’s even a lobby (Beter Onderwijs Nederland <https://www.beteronderwijsnederland.nl/>) that has threatened the Dutch government with legal action in order to preserve the use of Dutch in HE.

if they are to avoid extinction (Vila 2014). The responsibility of universities' language policies would thus be to create a balance between local languages and the academic *linguæ francæ* (Björkman 2014; Doiz et al. 2011). Cots et al. reflect on stakeholders' perceptions of universities "as social institutions one of whose functions is to protect and promote the language and culture of its local environment" (2012: 8). Fear of domain loss has been especially acute in some Scandinavian countries and has prompted the development of the official policy "parallel language use" of English and the national language whenever possible in HE in countries such as Denmark or Sweden (Haberland and Preisler 2015; Hultgren 2018; Hultgren et al. 2014; Saarinen and Rontu, 2018). But the fear of domain loss, and academic diglossia, remains significant (Coleman 2006).

A second phenomenon often attached to the spread of EMI is what authors have termed as the "paradox of internationalization" (Haberland and Preisler 2015), i.e. the strong connection between Englishization and homogenisation (Fabricius et al. 2016). These authors found that increased linguistic diversity through incoming transnational students led to "linguistic harmonisation" converging on English. In general terms, mobility gives the potential for intercultural exchanges, but it is not guaranteed. Without sufficient thought, planning and structural support, internationalisation may lead to students' reduced experience of meaningful local interactions (Salomone 2015). A very specific consequence is the cultural suppression of local characteristics. Comparing Norwegian and English versions of a university website aimed at a transnational audience, Greenall found that Norwegian cultural items and norms were replaced with target (Anglo-American) cultural items and norms. The author found a lack of plurilingual representations employed in website translations, and concluded that, with the spread of EMI "every city, every university nowadays is internationalized, Englishized, globalized" (Greenall 2012: 84).

Underlying all of the above themes are issues surrounding language policy and planning (Dearden 2014: 5). EMI in HE is spreading, but policies regarding it vary between public encouragement, *laissez-faire* and protectionism of the local languages, and a significant divide between different levels of language policy (Björkman 2014; Haberland and Preisler 2015). Salomone (2015) cautions that university administrators often overlook factors such as programmatic changes, curricular innovation and high-quality teaching in their rush to create the illusion of offering international programmes and reaping the economic rewards, and Hughes (2008) warns of the damage that can be done if institutions lack a robust language policy (Sherman 2015; Vila 2015). Even if policies are in

place, discrepancies between top-down language policies and language practice in universities are well documented (Hultgren and Thøgersen 2014; Björkman 2014; Fabricius et al. 2016); these inconsistencies may affect all levels of language management and all domains of university life. In the Basque country, for instance, EMI teachers were concerned about “the linguistic strains that arise as a result of introducing a foreign language in a bilingual university and how this affects the ecology of languages” (Doiz et al. 2011: 355). At the more micro level, transnational students bring with them diverse linguistic repertoires and resources, but the extent to which these resources are acknowledged and mobilised for accomplishing learning in the university context vary (Li and Zhu 2013; Moore 2016). Many academics underline the advantages of plurilingual practices in the classroom, such as increasing participant confidence and engagement (Creese and Blackledge 2010), maximising learning (Kagwesage 2013), and negotiating power relations between languages (Canagarajah 2011). However, even if universities encourage plurilingual practices, its implementation is far from easy: for transnational students who do not share all of the linguistic resources being used (Fabricius et al. 2016), it can be alienating – other authors underline their positive aspects, such as increasing participant confidence and engagement (Creese and Blackledge 2010), maximising learning (Kagwesage 2013), and negotiating power relations between languages (Canagarajah 2011; Martin-Jones and Heller 1996).

### **3. The sociolinguistic context of HE in Catalonia**

Like other European vernaculars, Catalan started to be used for science and philosophy in the low middle ages, but its position as a formal language has receded since the sixteenth, and very especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The reestablishment of Catalan as a “complete language” (Lamuela 1994), including its use for academic and scientific purposes, became a goal of the Catalan language movement in the second half of the nineteenth century (Ferrando i Francès and Nicolás Amorós 2011; Vila 2015). The goal was achieved with the creation of a number of research institutions in the early decades of the twentieth century (namely, the Institut d’Estudis Catalans in 1907) and the adoption of a bilingual regime by the Autonomous University of Barcelona during the Spanish Second Republic (1931 and 1939). Franco’s military dictatorship implied the banishment of Catalan as an institutional language and attempted to annihilate it as a vehicle of culture. After the dictator’s death, the reestablishment of Catalan as a medium of instruction in HE took place rapidly as a result of a bottom-up initiative led by professors and

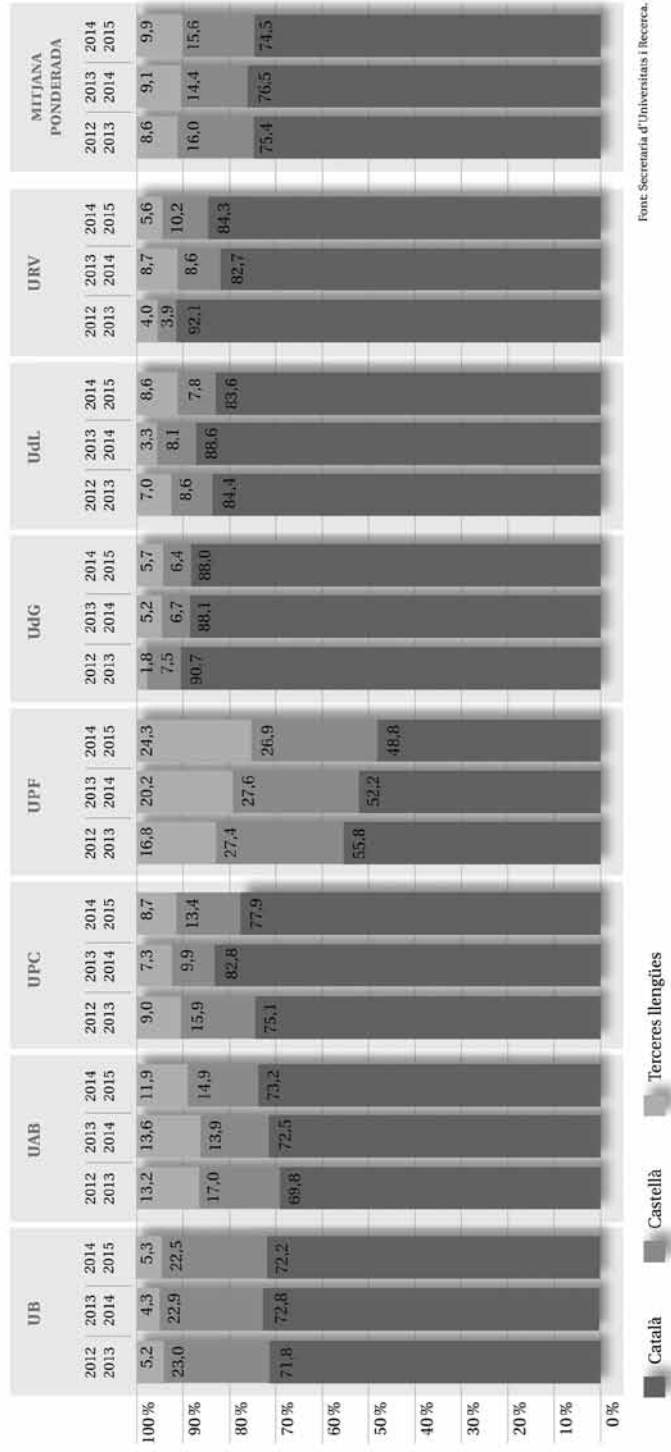
students who started to use it in their language classes even before Catalonia's self-government institutions were recovered in the late 1970s (Pons Parera 2015). In time, all universities established their own language policies and coordinated with each other, keeping the promotion of Catalan as an academic language as a common agenda.

Current language policy at Catalan universities is based on a conjunction model which is deeply plurilingual: the working language of universities is Catalan, but Catalan and Spanish both serve as medium of education, and students and staff have the right to choose which of the two languages they would prefer to use (Vila i Moreno 2011). Catalan is the predominant language of education in Catalan universities, especially as far as degrees are concerned (see Figure 2).

In the last decade, in order to attract international talent and capital, and in response to top-down governmental policies, institutions have been increasingly offering EMI programmes all over Spain. As a result, Catalan is recognised as being under increasing pressure from both English and also Spanish – used to attract students from both Spain and Latin America – especially at master and doctoral levels (Moore 2011). This process is much more evident in some universities than in others.

The increasing internationalisation of Catalan universities poses a number of sociolinguistic contradictions that are shared by many other language communities around the world. How can Catalan be preserved as an academic language? How can transnational students be accommodated into a heteroglossic environment which used to be based on languages other than English? How can a conjunction model, which is based on freedom of language choice and requirement of understanding the other languages, be combined with EMI, which seems to be English monolingual by definition? Some of these problems are addressed via legislation, and top-down language policy, but many of them substantiate at much lower levels of language management, including one-to-one and small group encounters. Thus, it is a demanding task for university managers to find language choice solutions that serve the interests of individuals within the university, the university as a whole and national language policies.





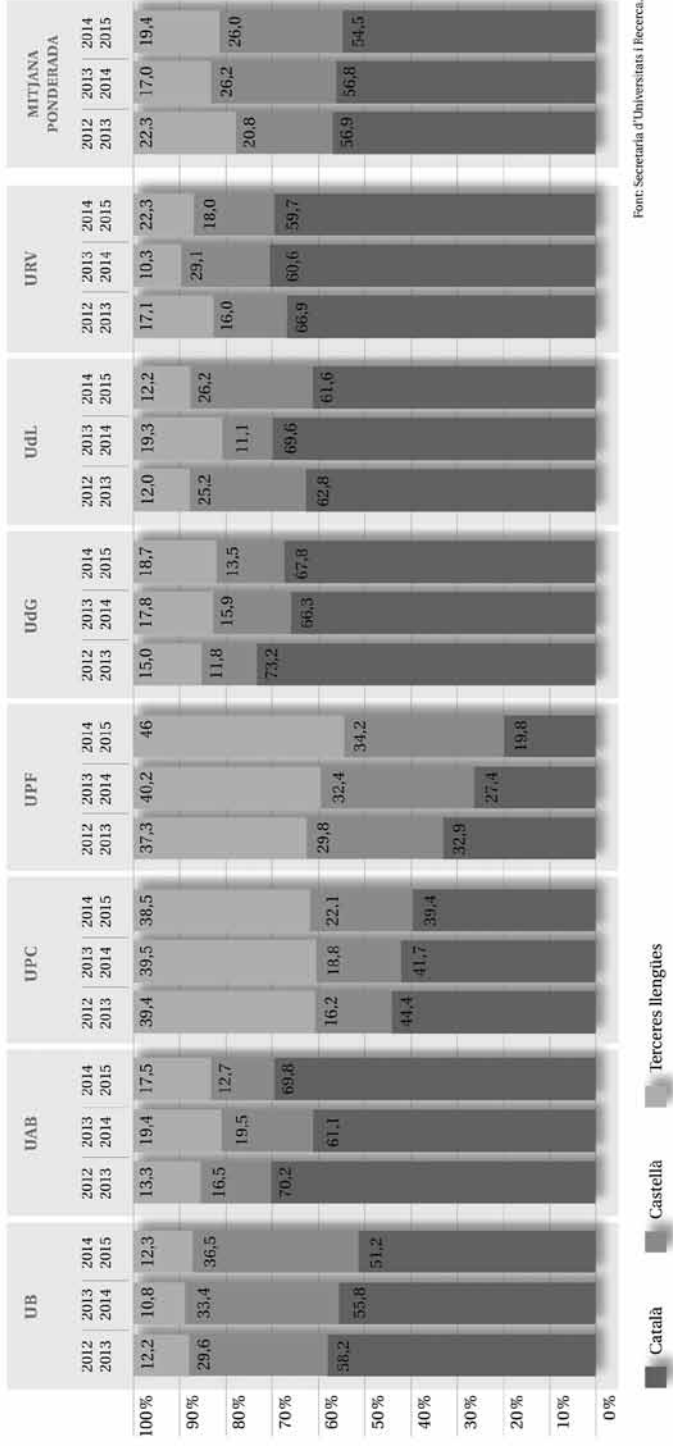
Font: Secretaria d'Universitats i Recerca.

**Figure 2.** Language of instruction on undergraduate programmes 2012–2015

Source: Generalitat de Catalunya 2015

Note that this data was collected by collating the language of instruction where it constitutes more than 95% of the language of instruction: any courses where, for example, one or two modules are taught in English (or another language) would not be represented as such (Generalitat de Catalunya 2015).

Key: UB = Universitat de Barcelona; UAB = Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona; UPC = Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya; UPF = Universitat Pompeu Fabra; UdG = Universitat de Girona; UdL = Universitat de Lleida; URV = Universitat Rovira i Virgili; mitjana ponderada = weighted mean; font = source; secretaria d' universitat i recerca = Department of Universities and Research; Català = Catalan; Castellà = Spanish; Terceres llengües = Third languages..



Font: Secretariat d'Universitats i Recerca.

Figure 3. Language of instruction on graduate programmes 2012-2015

Source: Generalitat de Catalunya 2015

#### 4. Websites as an object of research

The image of a university is an increasingly high-stakes matter due to the ever more competitive HE market. In the case of transnational students, who commonly cite the institutional website as the most used information source when selecting their HE institution (James-MacEachern and Yun 2017), websites have now become essential to student recruitment practices (Saichaie 2011: 35). Institutional websites are the most accessible way for prospective students to retrieve and compare conditions from different universities and make their choices. Given their status of official interlocutor, “recipients tend to accept beliefs, knowledge, and opinions [...] through discourse from what they see as authoritative, trustworthy, or credible sources, such as scholars, experts, professionals, or reliable media” (van Dijk 2001: 357). Therefore this study will critically review discourses on HE websites pertaining to language choices, addressing a research lacuna on the issue. By investigating institutional practices in this manner, we simultaneously consider the “textual detail, the production, distribution and interpretation/consumption of texts, and wider social and cultural contexts” (Fairclough 1993: 158), in an effort to explore, unpack and interpret these practices in situ.

#### 5. Research question

This study analyses discourse practices of Catalan university websites using English in order to uncover the policy dynamics related to the promotion of EMI of Catalan universities. We address one main question concerning the discourse practices of Catalan universities on their English-medium university websites.

*Through what linguistic and discourse means do Catalan universities represent their linguistic environment to a transnational audience on their English-medium websites?*

Among the issues analysed are which languages are mentioned, in what order, what functions are attributed to each language, and the way plurilingual practices are described. As the website texts are considered to represent socially accepted beliefs and policy enactments concerning EMI, their critical analysis will help to uncover such beliefs. Examining the language in texts pertaining to the practice of EMI at Catalan universities permits us to obtain sociolinguistic

insights into the universities' own depictions of their linguistic environments, how they describe these environments to the transnational readers, and, what implicit structures, beliefs and practices may underlie these depictions.

## **6. Methodology**

### ***Research design***

We qualitatively analysed a number of English-language university websites intended for a transnational audience. Three universities were selected as case studies through purposeful sampling, all based in Barcelona:

1. Universitat de Barcelona (UB): the largest public university in Catalonia, selected due to its dominant size and presence in the Catalan HE environment.
2. Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF): the biggest offering of EMI programmes in Catalonia, selected due to its notable focus on EMI.
3. Universitat Ramon Llull (URL): the biggest private university in Catalonia, selected to provide a private–public contrast.

Data was collected in May 2017 from a number of institutional web pages which were mentioned languages and their functions. These pages were reviewed to sample those that mentioned Catalan, Spanish or English on the topic of language management and/or the university's linguistic environment (see Appendix A for a detailed description of the pages selected for the analysis).

### ***Method of analysis***

The analysis is inspired by critical discourse analysis (CDA),<sup>1</sup> although a more generalised critical stance is adopted, following Fairclough's (2001) three-stage approach which combines textual analysis, process analysis and societal analysis.

In order to ensure systematic textual analysis, a framework for textual analysis was compiled, based on related studies (Fairclough 2003; Machin and Mayr 2012; Saichaie 2011). This framework included categories and sub-categories at the following levels:

- lexical (backgrounding, euphemism, lexical cohesion, metaphor, overlexicalisation, quoted speech, representation of social actors, suppression);

1. See for example, Fairclough (2003); Fairclough and Wodak (1997).

- syntactic (modality, nominalisation, sequencing of information, transitivity and voice); and
- discourse and pragmatics (hyperbole, presupposition and structural oppositions, ideological squaring).

See Appendix B for a detailed description of each subcategory).

Using this framework, multiple pencil-and-paper reviews of the texts were undertaken, describing the linguistic mechanisms in as much detail as possible. Next, specialist discourse analysis software, Dexter,<sup>2</sup> was used to aggregate these analyses electronically.

## 7. Results

### *What languages are mentioned? In what order?*

Three languages were basically mentioned in the websites: Catalan, Spanish and English. Other languages were not individualised. Concerning the frequency of mention of languages, we compiled a count of all mentions of languages within the texts. Catalan was mentioned nearly three times as frequently as Spanish ( $n = 101$  vs  $36$ ), which is referred to only marginally more often than English ( $n = 30$ ).

The prevalent order of listing the main languages named was Catalan, then Spanish, then English (see Example 1). This was true for both vertically presented lists and in-text mentions.

### **Example 1**

In accordance with the principle of linguistic transparency, the websites of the UB schools and faculties indicate which language will be used for instruction in each subject (Catalan, Spanish, English or other languages). (UB5)

One notable exception to this order is UPF, which, as we saw in Figure 3, was also the university offering more English-medium courses. At least in some pages of its website, English was listed before Catalan and Spanish on their language services homepage (Example 2).

2. Dexter software. <http://www.dextercoder.org>; Garretson (2006).

### Example 2

General English, Catalan and Spanish face-to-face and blended learning courses (UPF3)<sup>3</sup>

Also in URL4, where English is discussed before Catalan: in the headings, the additive sequencer “and” suggests a supplementary, rather than fundamental, new topic (Example 3).

### Example 3

Do you speak English?

...

AND WHAT ABOUT CATALAN? (URL4)

### *Language functions: orientation and socio-academic value*

In general terms, and contrary perhaps to expectations, the quantitative presence of English is not overestimated. In fact, in some texts the presence of English was (slightly) underestimated or backgrounded under collective, generic nouns. This is the case, for instance, in Example 4, where the percentage of courses in English is lower than that provided by the university’s official figures, which were 6% of instruction in English alone, and 3.1% of instruction in “other languages”. In other cases, English is not mentioned explicitly but rather subsumed under labels such as “international languages”, as in Example 5.

### Example 4

less than 5% [of instruction hours] are taught in other languages (UB4)

### Example 5

The UB’s strategy of excellence at international scale means that it also promotes knowledge and use of international languages at different levels among members of the university community (UB5)

The texts analysed establish a clear functional difference between English (and, to a certain extent, Spanish) as languages with an international projection (see Examples 6 and 7), and Catalan, which is not mentioned in these contexts. It is also interesting to note that they claim that the language in itself (English) is associated with “more competencies”. It is unclear whether they mean that

3. Unless explicitly mentioned, the underlining is ours.

more competencies are associated with English (as if competencies were language-dependent) or whether language is one “more competency” to be learned as they take EMI subjects. The wording certainly seems to suggest that “they’ll learn more competencies because it is in English”.

### **Example 6**

Estudiar un grado cursado en inglés es un rasgo diferencial que otorga más competencias y una clara proyección internacional

Studying a degree in English is a distinguishing feature that provides students with greater skills and a clear international outlook (UPF4)

### **Example 7**

[The Language Services] attends to the needs of multilingual communication across the university [...] the use and development of Spanish and English as working languages in the European Higher Education Area (UB3)

Example 6 is a relevant example of functional hierarchisation of the three languages here under study. This text, actually a headline, was obviously addressed at underlining the importance of English, but it was actually provided in both in Spanish and English, the two languages used for internationalisation purposes, but not Catalan.

In the context of internationalisation, English is systematically singled out as important cultural capital often immersed in a business-related metaphor, as in Examples 8 and 9:

### **Example 8**

mastery over new information technologies and key languages (English fundamentally) (URL5)

### **Example 9**

[W]e believe that studying a bachelor’s degree in English can be a selling point and add greater skills to the curriculum of the graduate, which will allow them to be better positioned to look for work (UPF4)

When describing their motivations for undertaking certain courses of action related to EMI and internationalisation, presupposition and nominalisation were frequently used for both cause and result, therefore producing the effect that opinions included in the paragraphs were just facts (Examples 10 and 11):

### Example 10

Given the increasing internationalisation and mobility of teachers and students at our university, together with the multilingual aim of the UPF (UPF3)

### Example 11

The desire for Catalan universities to be international in outlook, which has led to an increasing number of exchanges with other universities around the world, and in the general context of the globalisation of modern society, means that Catalan universities are becoming increasingly multilingual (URL4)

The texts included multiple examples of authors' making strong commitment to internationalisation and related language processes (examples 12 and 13). The use of deontic modal structures and lack of hedging ("who *need* [international] languages" rather than "who may/sometimes/often use...") renders an impression of authorial authority, compelling and instructing others (Machin and Mayr 2012, 187). In these cases, they reproduce the assumption that English (and/or other foreign languages) is "essential".

### Example 12

[The UB] also promotes knowledge and use of international languages at different levels among members of the university community who need languages (UB5)

### Example 13

the ability of Teaching and Research and Administration and Service staff to communicate in English and other foreign languages at an advanced level has become essential (UPF3)

Catalan was repeatedly described as important in cultural and historical terms, and as a tool for social integration (Examples 14 and 15).

### Example 14

the linguistic policy of Catalan universities is now aimed at guaranteeing the growth of Catalan as a language in social contexts, while also promoting knowledge of other languages and their use in certain environments (URL4)

### Example 15

Methodology and support courses for the delivery of academic content in a foreign language; Courses for writing academic articles in English; Courses for preparing and delivering academic presentations in English (UPF3)



In contrast to the relevance attributed to English in connection with internationalisation and as an academic language, Catalan was less connected in an explicit way to the role of *lingua academica*. Some of the references to this function point to a status that may be threatened.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Example 16**

[T]he University must put in place measures safeguarding and fostering the use of Catalan in all spheres of teaching, non-teaching activities and research, including the reading of theses. In consequence, the treatment given to the two languages is asymmetrical with the aim of helping Catalan to advance in these sectors of the University's activity (UPF5)

#### **Example 17**

Pompeu Fabra University has always had a policy of using Catalan normally in its administration and teaching and, in view of this, established in its Statutes that Catalan is the University's specific and official language [...] the University must put in place measures safeguarding and fostering the use of Catalan in all spheres of teaching, non-teaching activities and research (UPF5)

#### ***How are plurilingual practices dealt with?***

Catalan universities are not only plurilingual, but even extremely heteroglossic (García 2009) in the sense that Catalan and Spanish are frequently used side by side, with frequent code-switching. We reviewed how plurilingual practices were modelled by the texts themselves, and/or mentioned plurilingual practices explicitly. All texts, though, were English monolingual, with the only notable example of plurilingual practice within the main text of the web page itself being that of the bilingual headline in UPF4 (Example 10).

In the texts, languages are referred to as separate entities with teaching being given either in one language or another. As far as courses and academic activities, no reference was found in any of the texts suggesting that plurilingual practices would even take place, not to say be encouraged in the classroom. In this respect, EMI courses are depicted as monolingual in the universities here analysed as elsewhere. In fact, this (presumed) English-monolingualism of EMI is not only applied to courses primarily designed for transnational students. EMI courses more directed at local students are also depicted as English-only, as in the case

4. Indeed, these excerpts come from the UPF, a university where the use of Catalan has significantly reduced in the last years compared to Spanish and English (see Figures 2 and 3).

### Example 18

[T]he degrees in ICT Engineering by Pompeu Fabra University will have one group in each subject of the Curriculum in which all teaching [...] will be entirely in English (UPF4)

## 8. Discussion

This section discusses the results in the light of the above-described sociolinguistic context. In terms of frequency, we saw above that Catalan was mentioned far more frequently than Spanish or English. This abundance of references to Catalan is possibly due to the necessity of explaining to transnational students the very existence of this language, its prominence in the local (academic) life, and the need to promote and protect it, which is not necessary for the other languages. As Catalonia's *llengua pròpia* (literally Catalonia's 'own language', to be understood as Catalonia's national language: see Woolard 2016: 41), Catalan was almost always listed before Spanish, which was mentioned both in connection with local life but also as a language of internationalisation. English normally appeared in a third position, basically connected with internationalisation. Finally, "other languages" – a label which sometimes included English and sometimes did not – appeared more randomly distributed and not directly connected to any clear function. The consistent presentation of languages could be interpreted as representing two underlying hierarchies, posited in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Emergent hierarchies

Hierarchy 1: frequency-/sequencing-based	Hierarchy 2: role-based
1. Catalan	English (+ Spanish): internationalisation
2. Spanish	Catalan: culture, identity and local academic life
3. English	Other languages: no clear role
4. "Other languages"	

Hierarchy 1 disconfirms the idea that the local linguistic singularities are being hidden from the eyes of foreign readers in order to discursively create an English-predominant environment. On the contrary, a good deal of information about Catalan, its social reality and its presence in Catalan universities is provided. The fact that Catalan is presented as having a high cultural value, as well as the very fact that it raises the topic of the local culture and environment, challenges findings elsewhere of the homogenisation of the internationalised HE environment. Thus, in our corpus, "[l]anguage can become a differentiating feature for singular universities in a more

competitive context” (Pons Parera 2015: 177). Our findings differ from those reported from some Nordic universities, where local languages appear to be suppressed, and which may result in university experiences for transnational students that lack engagement with any local culture (Fabricius et al. 2016; Greenall 2012).

However, it is also crucial to consider the role that is associated with specific languages, represented in Hierarchy 2. From the analysis above, we have seen Catalan presented predominantly as a language of culture and social integration, with its *lingua academica* function only being asserted in the explicit linguistic policies (such as UB5, UPF5). On the contrary, deontic modal structures and presupposition present English as an unquestionable, essential need in the academic domain, whereas lexical cohesion devices reinforce collocations of the English language with academic functions and reproduce discourses of the power and prestige of English as a dominant *lingua academica*. In Example 6, for instance, the use of comparatives (“greater skills”, “better positioned”) suggests that studying in English gives more advantages than studying in other languages. Instances that questioned or challenged the use of English, and the legitimacy of this, were not found in any texts. The hegemonic position of English not only as academic *lingua franca*, but also as *lingua academica par excellence*, is underlined by discourses of competition and commodification reproducing the recontextualisation of marketing discourses found, for example, by Fairclough (1993). Example 6 illustrates this at the linguistic level, with studying a degree in English described as a commodified quality (“a selling point”) and one which will give the individual a competitive advantage over others. The symbolic capital of a “cosmopolitan” identity might also be commodified by this discourse, reiterated by repeated references in the texts to mobility and competitiveness at a global level.

Thus, both quantitative and qualitative data from Catalonia challenge the hypothesis of academic diglossia (Coleman 2006), which is characterised by domain loss for the home language, and its replacement as academic language by a more “international” language. With the exception of one university, Catalan does not seem to be marginalised as a means of instruction in Catalan universities. Nevertheless, some citations suggest that what we could call a diglossic ideology may be gaining ground, at least in some circles. In the long run, such diglossia could lead to functional rearrangements between a reinforced academic *lingua franca* and a weakened *lingua academica* (Vila 2015).

Finally, the analysis has shown that whereas multilingualism was generally regarded in a positive way – especially when it included English – no examples of code-switching or translanguaging were detected in the texts. Indeed, EMI was routinely connected to English monolingual practices.

## 9. Conclusion

This study has investigated the ways that the linguistic environment of three Catalan universities is represented on English-medium websites, in order to identify emergent ideologies concerning the hierarchy of languages, and their roles in the academic domain. These universities are currently experiencing the apparent contradiction of, on the one hand, promoting Catalan as a fully-fledged academic language, while simultaneously, encouraging EMI, especially as a form to attract foreign students (Moore 2016).

Quantitative data reveals that Catalan is the predominant means of instruction in these universities, especially at undergraduate level, and that the second most used language is Spanish, rather than English. EMI is (still?) far from hegemonic in Catalan universities, in spite of its significant inroads in some universities and at postgraduate level. At the universities we investigated, at least, the danger of domain loss to English as language of instruction seems remote, although data from one university might show some signs of a move in that direction. As mentioned before, this finding is in contrast with countries like the Netherlands where domain loss is hotly debated – whether a reality or not.

The websites analysed here make abundant references to Catalan, with the main purpose of presenting it to the transnational audience who might know little about the importance of Catalan in this area of Spain. The websites insist on the cultural value of Catalan and its significance for social integration into the Catalan society. They do not background or suppress this language (Greenall 2012), and seem to avoid the risk of harmonisation. At the same time, though, the texts take for granted the value of English as the academic language *par excellence*. English is framed as *the* main avenue to an international career and economic success. This is not totally unexpected: the texts analysed were written with the explicit goal of attracting transnational students to Catalan universities who are probably not expected to remain in the country once they finish their studies, but rather continue an international career. Thus, neither Catalan, the local language – nor Spanish – is supposed to interfere with their EMI courses. Besides, the website creators probably experience extra pressure to conform to the hegemonic discourses in these sort of websites. In fact, that the legitimacy and use of English as the academic lingua franca is presupposed in the texts analysed for this study, and the resulting power relations, with discourses seeming only to encourage, rather than question or manage, its growing use.

In conclusion, some of our findings echo those from other parts of Europe, but the specifics of the Catalan linguistic ecology, and future implications for the dynamic relation between all three languages involved, are particular to

this context. Policy makers need to be sensitive to both this linguistic ecology and real language-in-use practices. In our context, in order for policy makers to uphold the purpose of preserving Catalan as a full-fledged lingua academica, a much stronger focus on policy dynamics and language practices might need to be considered. It is hoped that this study has provided some indication of what that might involve in the context of HE in Catalonia.

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## Résumé

Cet article cherche à explorer de manière critique les stratégies de discours utilisées par trois universités catalanes sur leurs sites web en anglais, à l'intention d'étudiants transnationaux (prospectifs). Il étudie la manière dont les environnements linguistiques de l'enseignement supérieur sont présentés. Au cours des dernières décennies, le catalan a retrouvé son statut de *lingua academica* aux côtés de l'espagnol; l'utilisation du catalan dans l'enseignement supérieur est considérée comme essentielle pour sa viabilité à long terme. Dans ce contexte, les efforts déployés pour attirer les étudiants transnationaux suscitent des inquiétudes quant à la domination hégémonique de l'anglais en tant que *lingua franca academica*. Après avoir passé en revue les principaux thèmes de la littérature sur l'évolution de l'enseignement supérieur en Europe, nous décrivons le contexte linguistique et sociopolitique de la Catalogne en particulier et nous adoptons le cadre d'analyse du discours en trois étapes, élaborée par Fairclough. Les textes sont décrits et considérés en fonction de la façon dont ils peuvent être perçus comme reproduisant ou contestant ces thèmes émergents. Les résultats montrent que les sites Web identifient l'anglais comme la *lingua franca academica* incontestée du monde et la passerelle linguistique vers le succès international. Simultanément, les sites Web mettent l'accent sur l'importance sociale et culturelle de la langue locale auprès de leur public étranger, en essayant d'échapper au risque d'harmonisation culturelle et linguistique qui a été dénoncé dans des études de l'anglais comme moyen d'instruction (EMI) dans d'autres contextes comparables.

**Mots clés:** Anglicisation de l'enseignement supérieur, politique linguistique et gestion des langues, Catalogne, analyse critique du discours, marketing virtuel



## APPENDIX A

	Page title	Rationale/topic	Code	#Words
<b>UB</b>	International students at the UB	International students' homepage	UB1	132
	Life at the UB	About the university	UB2	84
	Introduction to the Language Services	UB's language services homepage	UB3	297
	Welcome to the UB!	Introduction for non-Catalan-speaking students	UB4	575
	The UB's language policy	Statement regarding linguistic policy	UB5	439
			<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,527</b>
<b>UPF</b>	International students	International students' homepage	UPF1	109
	Study at UPF	About the university	UPF2	289
	UPF Training Programmes	UPF's language services homepage	UPF3	384
	Studying a degree in English is a distinguishing feature ...	News release regarding a new EMI offering at the university	UPF4	350
	Regulation and promotion of the use of Catalan at UPF	Statement regarding linguistic policy with reference to Catalan	UPF5	322
			<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,454</b>
<b>URL</b>	Institutional information	About the university	URL1	368
	General information	International students' general information	URL2	29
	URL language services	URL's language services homepage	URL3	128
	80 Tips: A pocket guide to enjoying your stay ("Languages" section)	Included on the general information page (above): a guide for international students	URL4	1,073
	EHEA and our pedagogical model	Statement regarding internationalisation, based on the Bologna Process	URL5	233
			<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,831</b>

## APPENDIX B

Textual category	Subcategory	Description
LEXICAL	backgrounding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a term is included in some places, but has to be inferred in others</li> </ul>
	euphemism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>hides negative actions or implications</li> </ul>
	lexical cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>created by synonymy, antonymy, repetition, collocation</li> </ul>
	metaphor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use of metaphor to produce distinct representations of the world: particular combinations of different metaphors can differentiate discourses</li> </ul>
	overlexicalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an abundance of particular words and their synonyms</li> <li>excessive description</li> </ul>
	quoted speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>direct speech / indirect speech</li> <li>connotations of reporting verbs</li> </ul>
	representation of social actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>noun (personal / impersonal; specific / generic; named / classified)</li> <li>pronoun (inclusive / exclusive; othering; (non-) sexist; choice of person)</li> </ul>
SYNTACTIC	suppression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>omission of terms we might expect to find in a text</li> </ul>
	modality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>social authority and degrees of uncertainty</li> <li>types of modality: epistemic / deontic / dynamic</li> <li>hedging expressions</li> </ul>
	nominalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a process is turned into a thing or an event without participants or tense or modality</li> </ul>
	sequencing of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>setting up cause and effect</li> <li>use of conjunctions: additive (and, in addition), causal (because, so, therefore), adversative (although, yet), temporal (when, while, after, before)</li> </ul>
	transitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>types of verb processes: material / mental / behavioural / verbal / relational / existential</li> <li>actors or actions as adjuncts</li> </ul>
DISCOURSE AND PRAGMATIC	voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>active and passive voice constructs participants as actors or as reactors to actions</li> <li>passive voice allowing for the deletion of the agent</li> </ul>
	hyperbole	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>exaggerated representations</li> </ul>
	presupposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>what is 'unsaid' in a text but taken as given</li> <li>assumptions of collective knowledge / understanding</li> </ul>
	structural oppositions; ideological squaring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>opposing concepts are implied through comparison against opposites / activation of associated concept clusters</li> </ul>