

Visibility of English Academic Studies at University Level

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1. Introduction-The increased demand for English as the vehicular language in higher education is the result of the current global educational and economic market. Being able to proficiently communicate in English in the chosen professional career is a must for Spanish graduates in a context of high work mobility and internationalization. The emergence of bilingual secondary school English-programmes (most of them Spanish-English) in Spain have allowed that many students request English-taught higher education and this trend is expected to increase, in the near future. Moreover, English-taught Bachelor's Degree Master and Doctorate courses allow for the best students to attend Spanish universities regardless of their country of origin.

2. Experimental-Reduced visibility of the English academic offer diminishes the power of attraction that English-taught courses can exert in recruiting national and foreign students. The aim of this study is to analyse the Spanish Universities that offer programs in English in order to evaluate visibility strategies adopted by successful Universities, that could be implemented at the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (UPM). Defining weaknesses in the UPM's approach and identifying strategic aspects that have almost not been addressed by competing institutions would result in a competitive advantage when recruiting the best students. Towards this goal, we studied how the English-taught education offer was provided by the institutional websites of 77 chosen Spanish Public and Private Universities, as well as a selection of 68 European Universities. The following aspects were considered: a) general website design and general University information, navigation ease; intuitiveness and attractiveness for students, message directed to prospective students; promotion of the University's core values and activities, (excellence, research, internationalization, sports, cultural activities, etc. b) specific aspects relative to English academic offer: Visibility of the offer; Enrolment instructions; English level credentials of students and professors.

3. Results and Discussion-The data show important differences among the evaluated universities. There was a poor effort on the web presence of the universities analyzed. Just 50% of European universities, and a similar percentage for the Spanish universities, had attractive web sites portraying relevant information for prospective students. The others, including UPM, diluted student-oriented information with institutional information. The visibility of English language courses was similarly poor in Spanish and foreign universities, being difficult to find the English offer in most cases. In general, most of the postgraduate courses in English language were visible, but Under-graduate or Bachelor showed poor visibility, exceptionally low at our host University (UPM). International projection of Spanish and foreign universities showed similar percentages. In most of the evaluated universities, there was a web site link to internationalization, nevertheless, the information was widely dispersed highlighting very diverse aspects (information about mobility programs, language courses, accommodation, etc.). Finally, information on the English level of students and teachers was quite difficult and sometimes impossible to find at analysed Universities. Very few Universities clearly indicate that students are requested to have between B1-B2 English level credentials and even fewer indicated a C1 level requirement for teachers.

4. Conclusions- These survey results provide useful information about successful strategies that will allow the improvement of University communication with present and future students to increase enrolment in these English programs.