



On the way towards school multilingualism: Misgivings over EFL-medium instruction

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The Basque Country is a bilingual community located in the north of Spain wherein both Basque (minority language) and Spanish (majority language) are official languages and therefore taught at school from the outset. As is the case in most European western countries with a minority language, education has been the main force when attempting to boost the Basque reverse language shift. As a result of this, the Basque educational system has undergone an enormous change in the last two decades, a change or evolution that is clearly depicted in the ever increasing enrolment figures of the bilingual linguistic models. However, the Basque educational system has clearly gone for multilingualism, which has led to the implementation of several programmes in which English as a foreign language (EFL) has also become a language of instruction.

In this context some voices have raised doubts about the ever increasing presence of English in the curriculum, on the grounds that the EFL-medium instruction may negatively affect both the development of the other two languages present in the curriculum (especially in the case of Basque) and student's attitudes towards the minority language. Thus, this paper, based on evidence gathered in the Basque Country, intends to answer the following three questions:

1. Does EFL-medium instruction significantly increase students' English competence?
2. Does EFL-medium instruction negatively affect the development of Basque and Spanish?
3. Does EFL-medium instruction negatively affect student's attitudes towards Basque and Spanish?

Time:	3:15pm
Date:	Friday 15 May 2009
Location:	Room 509, Arts Centre, University of Melbourne