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INTEGRATING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN ESP AND EMI: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Abstract

As internationalisation policies like English-medium Instruction (EMI) are increasingly implemented in European higher education, EMI and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classrooms become small international spaces where local students' intercultural skills can be developed. I suggest that the internationalised higher education poses challenges also to non-mobile students, who find themselves in culturally diverse classrooms where English is used as the medium of instruction. The aim of this study is twofold. It first attempts to provide a research-based framework that accounts for the reasons why Intercultural Competence (IC) should become a learning outcome in ESP and EMI courses, with an emphasis on ESP. Second, it explores two ways in which this integration could take place drawing on Holmes & O'Neill's ethnographic model (2012). The seminar genre is proposed to showcase IC integration, as participation helps students practice their English skills and provides them with opportunities to develop disciplinary knowledge while debating on a specific topic. In brief, this study suggests that both ESP and EMI courses have the potential of preparing students for a future professional career in a globalised world and that ESP lecturers, in particular, emerge as the best prepared professionals for teaching intercultural skills.

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Key words

intercultural competence, English for specific purposes, English-medium instruction, internationalisation at home.

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