II Seminar on Best Practices in English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI)

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Servei de Formació Permanent i Innovació Educativa (SFPIE)

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Foreword

This II Seminar on Best Practices in English as a Medium of Instruction has been one of the outcomes of the Innovation Project #PRIDA4ALL: Consolidation of mentoring networks and training in English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) (UV-SFPIE_GER18_8471S6).

We wish to express our sincerest gratitude to all contributors to these seminars and to all teachers involved in the courses, the innovation projects and the ever increasing number of activities that have gained visibility under the auspices of the PRIDA Plan.

We are immensely indebted to you for all your enthusiasm, strength and expertise.

Elvira Montañés and Sergio Maruenda

Table of Contents

Session 1: Critical thinking

Educational debate of animal experimentation in biomedical research: implementing EMI

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Abstract:

Introduction: English as a medium of instruction (EMI) is a theoretical framework specific for teaching and performing research in English in the academic context. Educational debates allow active learning as a strategy designed to engage students in the practice of important cognitive skills, such as critical thinking and deliberation, as well as the development of oral communication skills[1-3]. The objective of this work was to analyse the effect of debating on students´ learning process.
Methods: EMI debate activity was conducted in a reduced group of students enrolled in the High Academic Performance group (ARA group) of Pharmacy Degree. Before the debate´s day, three papers from three different points of view (legislation, public health and toxicology) of a specific topic, were provided to student through "Moodle". The day of the debate, students were randomly assigned to support "FOR" and "AGAINST" scenarios and professors moderated the debate for 40 minutes. The "winner" group was assigned according arguments exposed. Afterwards, students filled out a questionnaire created with the free app "Socrative".
Results: Theoretical questions of the topic were correctly answered by > 75% of students per item. All students declared that the debate was interesting and useful and that it had improved the knowledge about the topic. New topics were also proposed by students for further debates.
Conclusion: The experience was a "win-win" effect either for professors and students. EMI-debates has contributed to develop communication and teamwork skills, to understand the interdisciplinarity of some matters and, to process them from different disciplines.

Keywords: Debate; pharmacy; ARA group; active learning; EMI.

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Outdoor academic debate as a tool to stimulate critical thinking and scientific orientation: an experience with UV professors

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Abstract:

This paper aims to present an experience conducted during the spring of 2019 in the Jardí Botànic (Botanic Garden) of the Universitat de València (UV). The experience brought about 13 UV professors from the different disciplines in the same university. The main goal of the experience was to share with our colleagues our previous experience on organizing transdisciplinary debates with students made outdoors and including students from different academic backgrounds. It was organized in three sessions of three hours each, with a pre-established distribution of roles between moderators and participants. Clear rules of the functioning were also set up. The debate was structured in different parts, the duration of which had been previously established, as well as the time allocated to each intervention. Mutual trust and respect were also promoted and different dialectical positions and arguments were encouraged. At the end the participants assessed the experience and had the opportunity to explain the extent to which the seminar was fruitful and were asked to design a similar seminar to be conducted by themselves.

Keywords: debate; learning tool; critical thinking; interdisciplinarity; innovative and outdoor education

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Using Research Papers in the Classroom as a Pedagogical Strategy

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Abstract:

We propose here an alternative methodology to the traditional class system, based on the use of scientific papers written in English as teaching materials for related subjects. First, the teachers select a few scientific papers related to the contents of the subject. Subsequently, the students have to answer questions and perform activities related to those papers, all designed to assess if the theoretical contents taught in the classroom have been understood. Very importantly, as a transversal competence and besides the specific teaching contents, this strategy allows the students to become familiarized with both historical and current specific scientific literature. It can be implemented at both undergraduate and graduate levels, and even when English is not the curricular language at class. We have cumulated experience on using this approach for several types of sessions, including practical on-site classes, laboratories, seminars, off-site homework, and exams. Recently, we have combined the use of scientific papers in seminars with the jigsaw puzzle strategy, and we will report on the results. As a consequence of the learning process with this methodology, students are able to analyze results and draw conclusions based on logical scientific concepts previously acquired. Although we have applied the methodology in chemistry, it can be certainly extended to different disciplines.

Keywords: scientific paper; critical reading; jigsaw puzzle; evaluation

Using English Texts to Teach Philosophy and Philosophical Skills

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Abstract:

The paper presents my experience in classroom using English texts to develop basic practical philosophical skills. After pointing out the peculiarities of the course within the academic curriculum of the Degree in Philosophy, I begin the presentation by reflecting on the need to adapt the general expectations of the course to the students' knowledge of English and the guidelines adopted for this purpose. Then, I explain the methodology followed in the classroom for students to read and write texts of a philosophical nature in English. The basic methodological principle adopted is the selection of short text fragments, so that they can be read and fully understood in an estimated time of five minutes each, and the proposal of reflective questions on vocabulary, argumentation or textual structure. Then I explain the evaluation criteria chosen and clarify the role of English in the learning process. Finally, I share and comment on the results of a final test on the degree of student satisfaction with the use of English in learning philosophy in general, and the methodology developed in particular.

Keywords: keyword work, philosophical texts, philosophical skills, English, argumentation.

Promoting critical thinking among pre-service teachers by planting crops in the classroom

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Abstract:

Critical thinking attempts to make reasoned judgments based on relevant criteria and therefore is essential in science. In this paper, we focus on an experience carried out with pre-service teachers involved in the subject "Didactics of the Sciences: Environment, Biodiversity, and Health". It is a compulsory subject of the fourth year of the Degree in Primary School Education. We focused on pseudoscientific issues and in particular in the fascinating powers granted to the Moon. Students were asked to design the methodology to try to test the hypothesis of whether the Moon phases influence plant growth. The participants specified the research question and the starting hypothesis. In addition, they established the experimental design jointly, establishing the dependent variables, independent and constant, the necessary material, and the sequence of the sessions. The strategy followed was to plant seeds of three different crops (radish, green beans and spinachs) in each of the phases of the Moon and, once a lunar cycle was completed, to measure their growth. The whole experience lasted two months. With this experience, we specifically wanted to promote a deeper engagement and understanding of students, a greater independence and self-regulation in their work and a stronger competence with scientific inquiry skills.

Keywords: critical thinking, inquiry, pseudoscience, scientific education

Final project in the class of Psychology of Thinking

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Abstract:

Psychology of Thinking is a theoretical and practical subject worth 6 credits. It is a core semester-long subject taught in the third year of the Bachelor's Degree in Psychology.

The course contains, within its theoretical and practical program, the main scientific theoretical and methodological core elements used in the study of Psychology of Thinking. Contents include the main contributions made by psychological studies from different approaches and treatments that address thought processing within the complex cognitive system of Psychology of Cognition, such as mental representation, categorization, reasoning, problem-solving or decision-making. At the beginning of the semester, all students will be involved in a small group project (3-4 students per group). All groups will be randomly assigned to one unit of the syllabus and they will need to prepare a poster presentation. The last day of the course, students must present it in a poster session, simulating a conference session. Thus, students must have printed a scientific poster and have it fix it on the wall by order of the units (near 12). One member of the group must give a short presentation (5-8 minutes). The rest of the members must ask to his own member group a question related with the unit presented. My personal appraisal, alike the students, is that it has been a very useful activity. In one day, they can have a brief general overview of the most important content of each unit of the course.

A holistic approach to key (economic) questions and challenges using EMI

Author: Jose R. Hernandez-Carrion

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Abstract:

An introductory and general vision of Economics and its main achievements of this discipline is our path. From the philosophy initial steps to the mathematical approach to explain the logic of the economic system, a world understood through the main revolutions along history. Economics versus political economy, in an introduction to the creation of the discipline along the history of economic thought including the main authors from an holistic perspective as Adam Smith, Alfred Marshall, John Maynard Keynes, and some relevant authors for other purposes as Karl Marx, John Kenneth Galbraith or Paul Krugman with a more systems science vision. Complexity, systems science and economics in a digital world is the holistic perspective to connect all sciences in teaching using English as a medium of instruction as we understand that modern crises, such as high inflation, unemployment, energy crisis, crisis in health care, pollution and other environmental disasters, as well as a rising wave of violence and crime, are all connected and philosophy of economic approach could be our reference in order to understand the whole holistic perspective of the complexity of global challenges.

Keywords: holistic perspective; economics; complexity; global challenges; EMI.

Session 2: Observation / Mentoring

Teacher peer classroom observation in higer education

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Abstract:

Teacher or classroom observation is a technique aimed to provide feedback to the teaching process given by a peer/a colleague to identify the strong and weak points about his/her teaching practice and emphasize potential improvements. It is relevant to point out that the feedback offered by the observer focuses both in the positive and negative aspects observed; that is to say, it does not focus only on aspects that can be improved, but also on the best teaching practices delivered in order to take advantage of both points of view and on the observer and practitioner's comments. This paper is devoted to present a teaching observation experience carried out this academic year in the Faculty of Economics (University of Valencia) within statistics subjects (1st and 2nd). Specifically, we concentrate here on two aspects of the classroom observation: the form we have designed as a material to simplify both, the classroom observation and the note-taking by the observer, and also the feedback for the teacher-practitioner. In addition, we reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of this strategy to provide guidelines for its implementation.

Keywords: classroom observation, peer review, English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), teaching assessment, teaching observation, teaching feedback form.

Evaluating the impact of "Innovating for Interculturality in Higher Education Project" by the Language Mentoring Group (LMG) "GRUPAL"

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José Vidal Mollón (Presenter)

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Abstract :

Nowadays, graduate students often cross borders to study or work abroad. However, how well prepared are those students? Have do they ever encounter academic and professional experiences in which they need to speak, interact in different languages and being intercultural sensitive in diverse contexts?
According to Guilherme (2007, p. 87), intercultural citizenship entails 'the control of the fear of the unknown (at the emotional level), the promotion of a critical outlook (at the cognitive level), as well as the enhancement of self-development (at the experiential level)'. In that sense, through education and international experiences it is possible to cultivate the understanding (e.g. cultural knowledge, open mindset) and skills (e.g. culture-sensitive behaviors, culture-learning strategies) that characterize intercultural competences and intercultural citizenship (Alred, Byram, & Fleming, 2006, Guilherme, 2002; 2007). Higher education students do not always have the opportunity for living abroad or contact with people from different cultures in academic or professional settings (Lee, Williams, Shaw, & Jie, (2014). Therefore, the internationalization at home (Knight, 2008) could be an open opportunity to include internationalization from an intercultural perspective in the curricula and programs, in the teaching / learning processes, and in academic extracurricular activities. In that sense, the main objective of this presentation is to show the results of two years of "Grup d'Acompanyament Lingüístic" (GRUPAL) carrying out specific activities in different subjects that encourage students and teachers to develop intercultural understanding through different topics using innovative methodologies in the classroom.

Keywords: intercultural understanding; internationalization; competences; innovation; languages.

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Virtual Mentoring of graduate and postgraduate final dissertations: previous experiences results and future perspectives

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Abstract:

One of the tasks that has had the greatest impact on the implementation of the European Framework of Higher Education has been the mentoring and supervision of graduate a postgraduates' final dissertations. The lack of initial understanding of the objectives and competencies to be developed, along with the volume of work assumed by each teacher, has generate working dynamics that usually are, in one hand, difficult to manage by the teaching staff and in the other hand, has generated in some cases not desired results by the students. Nonetheless, it is considered that Learning and Knowledge Technologies (LKT) can be an enabling environment for the implementation of methodologies that promote autonomous learning and optimize time management.

As a result of these premises, a method of virtual mentoring has been developed, which allows the consolidation of a virtual interaction system based on the use of four contact channels: Moodle® platform, email, Skype® and Facebook ®. By using these tools, it is intended to ensure the exchange of resources, the correction and the feed-back of the process as well as the formal and informal communication systems.

Having said this, the aims of this communication are threefold: explaining the dynamics and operations of the virtual mentoring, bringing some results of previous experiences and inviting attendees to evaluate and provide ideas for a method which is permeable to new proposals.

Keywords: Virtual learning environments; Didactic experience; Mentoring; Information and communication techniques; Moodle.

Poster session

Development and evaluation of an accessibility kit: an activity to introduce university students to users with diverse needs for the subject “Human Computer Interaction (HCI)”.

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Abstract:

Accessibility in the context of human-computer interaction is defined as the possibility of impaired people to interact with a computer or equivalent system and gather information and services from it with substantially the same results as for a not-impaired person. This can be done by modifying the design of the interface, by adding some special means, or both.

The special needs of impaired people are frequently not taken into account by system designers who consequently do not implement the universal design principles from the very beginning. This situation is to be addressed by proper introduction in the computer science and information systems curricula of suitable material.

With this aim, we present the development and evaluation of persona cards, an accessibility kit created to introduce users with diverse needs to college students and to motivate them to adopt accessibility guidelines. The cards created include 16 profiles of users with visual, hearing, motor, cognitive and multiple impairments. To assess the effect of the intervention on the students' knowledge about accessibility, three in-class interventions with 76 students were conducted in the United States and in Spain. The intervention aimed at encouraging the discussion about how future designers can make interactive solutions more accessible for users with diverse needs. The statistical analysis of the results using Mann-Whitney tests indicates that the usage of personas during the intervention was effective to improve the students' understanding about accessibility. The intervention increased the students' interest and motivations to apply accessibility principles in their work practices and employ universal design in their lives.

Keywords: accesibility; universal design principles; computer science curricula; persona cards; learning assesment.

“Materials Science Literature Club” for Master and PhD Students

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Abstract:

Critically reading a paper, playing the role of a referee of a scientific peer-reviewed journal, can be a daunting prospect for Master and PhD students, who may feel under-prepared due to a limited specific education on evaluating primary scientific literature. However, the ability to appraise an academic paper is a required competency. The first three meetings of the “Material Science Literature Club” (MSLC), held in May 2019 at the Campus of Burjassot-Paterna, aimed to provide pedagogical tools to evaluate scientific writing. In particular, a series of recomendations for making an unbiassed assesment report was given. The fluid interaction between trainees and senior reseachers during the sessions gave rise to fruitful discussions on the structure, contents, and language of real published material. As a result, we also discussed about scientific ethics including data manipulation and plagiarism.

Given the success of this initiative, further sessions of the MSLC will be monthly held to discuss selected articles of hot and interdisciplinary materials science—but also science in general—topics. Although the aimed audience is focused on Master and PhD students from different areas of chemistry and physics, advanced undergrads and junior postdoctoral candidates are also welcome. Among the benefits for partipants in the meetings, we highlight: (i) the development of critical appraisal and debate skills, (ii) keep abreast of current literature, and (iii) networking between colleagues. We believe that the experience could be potentially extended to other disciplines.

Keywords: scientific paper; scientific writing; peer-review; networking