Interview with [M3]

M = Ministerial/Agency participant

The following conventions are used in transcription of spoken interviews:

[replacement information in square brackets]

[redacted information in grey in square brackets]

[?] = unintelligible missing word(s); immediately following word = unclear[?]

[#] = redacted numerical information

CAPITALS to signify emphasis in speaking

((Extraneous information in double brackets))

Researcher  
Yeah, OK, so it's really great to be able to talk to you, to someone from [agency]. So I'm I just wondering, to warm up a bit, perhaps you can tell me something about the kind of work you DO at [agency]? [Redacted identifying information]

[M3]   
Uh [agency] is [?] of the Ministry of Universities of Spain. Um and [agency] evaluate bachelor and master's degrees, and PROFESSORS too.

Researcher  
Right. Yeah, yeah, yeah, sure. Um so when I was kind of looking at some information, it was, there are a lot of, it's very complicated, isn't it ((laughing)), the Spanish system?

[M3]   
Yes. It’s very, very difficult, complicated ((laughing)).

Researcher  
Yeah. So I was wondering um for [agency] you also, for example, in the [region] area, [agency] does like evaluation and accreditation of academic programs, but also SOMETIMES it seems to be the autonomous community. So is it the [name of regional body]?

[M3]   
Yes.

Researcher  
So I I was wondering who who does WHAT, or HOW do you work together ((laughing))?

[M3]   
Would you get yet?

Researcher  
Right.

[M3]   
Yes, uh Fundación Madrid, Catalunya, [?] Castilla-León, it it is, is a SMALL [agency]. There are regions having a small [agency] for for example, Castilla-La Mancha, La Rioja, [agency] has to evaluate degrees in in these regions where are are NOT a small [agency].

Researcher  
Ah, OK. But I mean, talking to some people at a university in [regional area], they say they said that SOME of their programs go to [agency] for evaluation, and SOME of the programs go to the [name of regional body]. So what is the difference? Which ones go?

[M3]   
Yes, there are, when program before teach[?] it and and university send project to to [agency] or [name of regional body]. This, this, this, this institution evaluate, it's the same project, then the same, or LATER um when when program carry out during five five years, there are OTHER evaluates evaluation process, the the name is ‘Acredita’. The the first the first project is [name] the same, the second is [name] the same. Different, but when this project want international quality label [agency] ONLY do this evaluation in in in ALL of Spain.

Researcher  
Right, right, right. OK.

[M3]   
It's this is different, and in other in other hand [agency] can can assess[?] ALL teachers.

Researcher  
Right, right. OK.

[M3]   
In a small in a small agency is more agency ONLY can evaluate teacher if to to WORK in [region].

Researcher  
Yeah, right. Right, right.

[M3]   
[agency] ALL all teacher, and people can decide, for example, I want to teach in [region A], maybe only I present my my curriculum in [region A], but I I don't know, maybe I can [region A], [region B] is better [agency].

Researcher  
Uh. I see. Yeah, yeah. So it's a, it's a, it's a a lot of SCOPE that you have ((laughing)).

[M3]   
Um political political.

Alright, well.

Researcher  
Yeah, right. Yeah, yeah.

[M3]   
Umm, because all people want to work in education.

Researcher

So I was wondering for the academic program, supposing you've got a bachelor’s or a master’s and you need to send it to [agency] or the [regional body] um is there any DIFFERENT way you evaluate a program that is say in Spanish or a program that is in English, so NOT say English literature or something, but supposing you have a program about an academic field, but you're deciding that it's the language is going to be English that you teach that program. So is there a difference in the way you EVALUATE it according to LANGUAGE?

[M3]   
((Shakes head)) No, it is. It's the same, it’ the same evaluation. Uh, it's the same CRITERIA, only the program teach in English is necessary speak English expert expert who access, we need uh English because activities exam will be in English, but the process is the same and criteria the same.

Researcher  
Right, right, right. Um so somebody from [agency] in in a brief e-mail exchange told me that when you evaluate programs that are going to be taught IN English, uh, they have to have the right level of language COMPETENCE according to the Common European Framework of Reference, the CEFR of for languages. Um so can you tell me a little bit about THAT, what competence level do they have to show?

[M3]   
It just it is NOT compulsory but is RECOMMENDED. In in between competence there are competence to to can work in international situation. But when you need award[?] in international context is necessary English.

Researcher  
Yeah. OK.

[M3]   
Yeah. And in in my, in my project international quality label and there are two two competence is necessary is is compulsory, in in in national accreditation is NOT compulsory and it's recommended speak English.

Researcher  
Right, right.

[M3]   
In in INTERNATIONAL quality label is more important competence in in English because your your program help to work in other countries.

Researcher  
Right, right.

[M3]   
Yeah, English is necessary.

Researcher  
OK. So um and how about if I have, so, sorry, you said TWO evaluations, so the language and and also what was the other competence? Sorry, did you mention two, two areas of competence?

[M3]   
The idea is accreditation, national accreditation with criteria. You recognition recognition in Spain. And other other accreditation is extra accreditation voluntary voluntary accreditation.

Researcher  
Yep.

[M3]   
In criteria on this application is MOST important and you you speak ENGLISH.

Researcher  
Right, right. So supposing I'm I'm in a university in the [region] area and I want to start a program in an academic subject that I'm going to teach in English and I put together a proposal and it's approved by my university. And then we send it to [agency]. Do we need to SHOW that the teachers on the program need to be say B1 or B2 level, or that the students need to show that the students will have B1 or B2 level in English? Do we need to show a certain LEVEL?

[M3]   
In in, in degree, in Bachelor degree it is a recommended B1.

Researcher  
Mm-hmm.

[M3]   
In master’s degree it is recommended B2, B2. Two options or you you have this level level BEFORE to to to START degree or you you FINISH a degree you have to have to pass exam, and if you haven’t got this level, you NOT get degree.

Researcher  
Right, right, right. OK.

[M3]   
In [name of university], did you know [name of university]?

Researcher  
No, but I I saw from your profile [redacted identifying information]? Yeah?

[M3]   
Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, in this university. However it is VOLUNTARY English in all in in, in Spain, in in Spain it’s voluntary you you you GET this this level English when you STUDY in in all EXCEPT [university name], when you FINISH your degree, your bachelor DEGREE, you have to PASS an exam extra extra exam English. And if you NOT pass this exam, you you you don't got a degree bachelor degree.

Researcher  
Yeah, yeah. And that is B2 level, then, at the end you need to have B2 level to get your degree? Is that right?

[M3]   
Yes.

Researcher  
Or not. B2 or B1?

[M3]   
B1 bachelor’s degree, B2 master’s degree.

Researcher  
Right, right, right, right. Yeah, I I worked at the [university name] for a while and of course at that time [region] were saying you have to have B2 level to get your degree so, but it's a bit different ((laughing)).

[M3]   
Yes, um in [region], students can study [redacted identifying information] too?

Researcher  
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. So it's it's very different, isn’t it.

[M3]   
Yes, yes. And other interesting situation is, there are universities you can study ALL degree in ENGLISH.

Researcher  
Yeah.

[M3]   
Eh, you you you can't choose or all Spanish. No [#] choices, ALL Spanish or ALL English or middle in English, middle in Spanish.

Researcher  
Yeah. OK. So it's quite different according to the universities, yeah.

Is there any information like any papers that explain these criteria? Um does [agency] publish any anything that I could look at to see what the language requirements are, B1 or B2? Do you know if there's any kind of report or something I can look at or criteria?

[M3]   
In in English, in English?

Researcher  
No, it's fine. It's fine in Spanish, um any kind of thing where I can see some kind of document that explains this.

[M3]   
Yes, in, in in the original language receipt.

Researcher  
Yeah. Yeah, that's fine. Yeah. Is. Is there something like that on [agency]? Would would it be possible for you to send me this document?

[M3]   
Send document we use in [agency] during assessment?

Researcher  
Um the the the thing that talks about the English level, say B1 or B2 as a recommendation, this kind of thing. I mean ONLY if it's publicly, obviously not, only if it's a PUBLIC document.

[M3]   
Yes, I I have a [?] in my in my documentation, I I have a [?] and there are one question, you can see this explication, what is necessary B1 or when is necessary B2. I can send you, I can send you that. Yes, yes, yes.

Researcher  
Yes, that would be brilliant. Thanks, cause it's quite helpful.

[M3]   
And and and I can send you what competence is necessary English.

Researcher  
Yeah, yeah.

[M3]   
And but [redacted identifying information] is international quality label and no, no, no, not no, not national.

Researcher  
Yeah, yeah.

[M3]   
Not, but a lot of university, Spanish university, and Latin American university WANT this, this, this international quality label. In in a few years [redacted identifying information] they they they they are saying[?] at UK, USA.

Researcher  
Hmm. So, I mean, you're talking about is this the certificate for QUALITY in internationalization? So [name] or?

[M3]

I don't know [name]. I can show [agency] website ((shares screen)).

Researcher  
Ohh I see right, right.

[M3]   
You maybe you you, so in English. Professional label [redacted identifying information] ((shows relevant webpage)).

Researcher  
Ohh brilliant. OK.

[M3]   
Professional quality label.

Researcher  
Ah, OK, OK, that, that's that's fantastic. I'll have, I'll have a look, international quality labels. Um I’ll have a look afterwards. So I I'm interested in what you were saying because you said when a lot of universities want to have this um this LABEL and you said that this often means then teaching in English. Is is that right? Yeah.

[M3]   
Sorry. Sorry, can you repeat me your question?

Researcher  
Um so you said that um now [redacted identifying information] universities and they want to get this LABEL this recognition for to teach internationally. So does it, and you said this means that they're implementing English language programs often?

[M3]   
In in in, in this in the INTERNATIONAL project.

Researcher  
Yeah, yeah.

[M3]   
Um it’s not necessary ALL program in English but it is necessary there are SUBJECTS teach in English because students have to obtain this competence.

Researcher  
Right, right.

[M3]   
But there ARE universities, however, it’s not compulsory and they prefer teach in English or program because the the student learn English BETTER.

Researcher  
OK.

[M3]   
There are a specific TERMS terms in English in this context because when you study one or two subjects, you can speak English, but it's not ENOUGH, because it's it's few TIME study in English. If you study ALL program in English, you you you your English is better, and you you have English SPECIFIC terms in English or medicine or engineering.

Researcher  
Right. But I mean, you also mentioned say South America or that that you have students also within internationalization coming from also Spanish speaking areas? Uh, so does that mean that some of the programs are then SPANISH, even though they're international?

[M3]   
When, for example, a Mexican student when studying in Spain?

Researcher  
Well, for example in from Spanish speaking areas, because you had also mentioned, I think South America as well, so.

[M3]   
Yeah, they can study in [?] program, if Spanish, in Spanish, if it’s in English, in English. I observe, it’s Mexico, for example, speak very WELL English because they close to USA.

Researcher  
Right. So when when a university applies to have this LABEL [redacted identifying information], it would, it would often be ENGLISH rather than Spanish in your experience.

[M3]   
Yes. Yes.

Researcher  
OK. Um so when so for example, if we take this example of the the label [redacted identifying information] um what are, what are the REWARDS for universities for getting this label? Why why do they WANT it? Why do they want this type of recognition for their programs?

[M3]   
Um what, three 300 degrees more, more or less.

Researcher  
And I'm so why, why, why do they want this label?

[M3]   
Because university can get a student from other countries, and they they graduate can get better works in Spain or in other countries.

Researcher  
Better, sorry, did you say WORK or awards? Sorry, I didn't quite hear what you said. They can get better?

[M3]   
Um because they they get competence, international competence or competence, necessary in, in, in, in different countries.

Researcher  
Right, right. So you, you mean like they get a better quality of of STUDENT or better quality of something?

[M3]   
Better better quality, yes, from other OTHER countries.

Researcher  
So, how about are you involved in a staff evaluations or do you mainly do program evaluations?

[M3]   
Staff, staff of [agency]?

Researcher  
Uh, NO, of at university so.

[M3]   
When when you evaluate staff[?] university and students and evaluate employers employers.

Researcher  
So one of the things we're we're looking at on our project is, uh, what FACTORS may LEAD to um universities having MORE English language programs. So we're wondering, like for example, in Spain you have this internationalization strategy. So for example, the project you've just talked about or the certificate of quality in internationalization that you mentioned in in the CHAT. So are there other kind of things that would maybe encourage English language programs at UNIVERSITY that you're aware of through [agency] or otherwise.

[M3]   
Yeah, I don't know.

Researcher  
OK. No, I mean that's great. I'll have a look more closely at the project you were talking about. So that's really, really helpful if if you could maybe send me sends me the the documents you said.

[M3]   
Yeah, yeah, yes, yes.

Researcher

So that I I have the information about language proficiency and and what kind of things uh, things you're looking at to to get this this label. Yeah, OK, so ((laughing)).

Researcher  
Was that was that-

[M3]   
Just even.

Researcher

Sorry, sorry. You were going to say something?

[M3]

NO, in in in conclusion [?], English is very important in in higher higher education. [Redacted identifying information] NOW teenager, we need to study English because they can get better works when study English and university now is necessary for the for the reason increase English in, in, in in the class class in the teaching.

Researcher  
Umm. I mean in the in the [region] um RECENTLY or or or I I don't know exactly when, but you started having BILINGUAL programs at schools as well, didn't you? Maybe [redacted identifying information] schools they do bilingual programs, primary schools, or.

[M3]   
Yes, there are bilingual schools, when when I I study, I I have only one study in English. Now PARENTS can choose a school for children, ALL in English too.

Researcher  
Umm. Do you think that the fact that NOW these children are growing up and starting maybe to enter university that that changes, that it’s going to become MORE English provision, because of the bilingual programs at schools? Do you think that will affect how much, how many English courses there are?

[M3]   
Yes, yes.

Researcher  
Is this ONE reason for a change, perhaps?

[M3]   
Yes, yes, yes.

Researcher  
OK. Do you do you think for when you think about the FUTURE, how do you see the the universities CHANGING from YOUR experience, do you think there's going to be more and MORE English or?

[M3]   
I I hope yes.

Researcher  
OK, alright. Um was there anything-?

[M3]   
However. That that are [?] for SPANISH. I I think the WAY is English, but the last years, there are people write in papers saying SCIENCE in in Spanish.

Researcher  
Mm-hmm.

[M3]   
But I think it's difficult. They want to WRITE more paper in SPANISH, but when when a is is is I want to publish paper paper in, in, in journal with quality, usually this this paper this this journal is write write in English, NO in Spanish but.

Researcher  
And and these are these academics, they say this to [agency]. Or do they, HOW do they voice their opinion?

[M3]   
And no, no, no, [agency].

Researcher  
Just general?

[M3]   
And when when I I I read papers, paper and I saw this, this this news.

Researcher  
OK, like the new- the newspaper in the in the newspaper?

[M3]   
Yes, yes, yes, it's Spanish, Spanish academics want to impose Spanish as a language or science, but it's very difficult. They they WANT, they, they write in, in, in mail, they make event events say ohh SPANISH SPANISH, but I think it's very difficult.

Researcher  
Right, right. What what REASONS do they give? What reasons do they give for WANTING it to be all in Spanish?

[M3]   
Uh maybe they they thinking, especially in philology areas uh because when research Spanish, Spanish, Spanish philology is is BETTER present results in SPANISH than than English.

Researcher  
Right. Yeah, yeah.

[M3]   
I UNDERSTAND, but is is, is, is, is, is, I want I say my results with more people, if write in Spanish, I say few people, and if I write in English my result can will see for, for, for more MORE people.

Researcher  
Yeah, yeah.

[M3]   
More, by civility[?]. Impact.

Researcher  
So if if I'm in a Spanish academic and I for example have this-

[M3]   
Few, fewer Spanish academics but maybe you later you listen oh Spanish academics want Spanish in studying[?], but few.

Researcher  
Yeah yeah. So um at [agency], you have the six year review of staff don't you, it’s voluntary, but staff can submit their profile and their work to [agency] to review them. So it is is it more evaluated more POSITIVELY if you have English language publications, do you think?

[M3]   
[?] of [agency]?

Researcher  
Uh, yeah. So for example, if I'm supposing I'm a an associate professor, or supposing I'm a I'm an academic at university in Spain, and you have this six year review, don't you, every six years, the research period of six years where I I can submit my work to [agency], and [agency] will EVALUATE my work, and then maybe I can apply for a promotion at university um with this evaluation. So does it help my evaluation if my papers have been published in an English language journal, do you think?

[M3]   
Maybe, maybe, perhaps.

Researcher  
OK. But not DIRECTLY, maybe just because it's international?

[M3]   
But CRITERIA is are established by GOVERNMENT, GOVERNMENT of Spain and there are those chains. And maybe one president and or teams WANT these criteria and others want other other criteria. Maybe focus in national criteria, other international criteria.

Researcher  
Right, yeah. OK. So the criteria change.

[M3]   
Yes, at the moment. And and the the it’s very important INTERNATIONAL activities at the moment, but I remember another another time a focus in NATIONAL criteria.

Researcher  
Right, right.

[M3]   
First Spain and later other other other countries; NOW it is globalization.

Researcher  
Right, right. And that that's to do with which party is in government.

[M3]   
Yes, yes, it's and the the ideology ideology of parties.

Researcher  
So I mean, [redacted identifying information], so have you seen this CHANGE at [agency] because the criteria change also?

[M3]   
Yes, it can can change, the criteria are reviewed each year.

Researcher  
Oh, really? OK. Every year?

[M3]   
Yes, usually when they review criteria, people say OK, no no change. But we have indication of government because there are a new law. In in this case we can change criteria, but no no every every year, but with necessary continuous improvements. If for the reason we will review all years but some a lot years not is necessary change.

Researcher  
Does it, does the national government um kind of monitor [agency]?

[M3]   
Monitor?

Researcher  
Yeah. Do you have to, are you REVIEWED by the national government?

[M3]   
[agency] is not dependent because awarded with independence. But when ministry a ministry write a law, [agency] it has to follow this law.

Researcher  
OK. So you're you're not REVIEWED by them, but you have to follow laws.

[M3]   
Directly, no.

Researcher  
OK, OK.

[M3]   
No, no, no, no control. [agency] sends results every years. But [agency] works with independence because it set[?] [?], it speak with university, and no no ministry or control every day, only when finished year [agency] sends results, and when ministry writes law [agency] has to follow follow these this this law.

Researcher  
OK. Are are these results that [agency] sends to the ministry, are they published? Are they public? Can people like myself, for example, read them or they are they confidential.

[M3]   
Public.

Researcher  
They’re public?

[M3]

Yeah.

Researcher

OK, this is really really helpful.

[M3]   
Thank you. Thank you.

Researcher  
Thank you so much for taking the time to explain all these things to me. Like I say, it's very, very complicated system in Spain ((laughing)).

[M3]   
Yeah, I will send documentation, but you need more information and I I was pleasured to send more information.

Researcher  
Ohh that's so kind of you. Yeah, I I'll, I'll have a closer look myself because I haven't looked so closely at ALL of the [agency] website, and if there's something I can't find and maybe because I'm not looking very well, maybe maybe if if possible, I would ask you. And that would be fantastic. But yeah, if you can send me the the ones you already talked about that would be brilliant, because then I can get some understanding.

But yeah, now this has been really, really helpful. So I really appreciate you taking the time to to talk to me about all of these, about all of these things. So thank you so much.

[M3]   
Thank you. Thank you so much. You see, you see you see.

Researcher  
Thank you. Thank you. Bye then. Bye.

[M3]   
Have a nice weekend. Thank you.

Researcher  
You too. Yeah. Thank you. Bye.