a cura di
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Il ruolo dei Centri Linguistici nell'internazionalizzazione delle università italiane

The role of language centres in the internationalization of Italian universities

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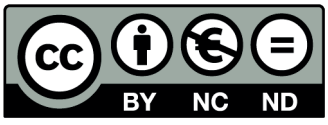

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Internazionalizzazione degli atenei ed educazione linguistica: un processo in evoluzione

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L'educazione linguistica rappresenta oggi una leva strategica per l'innovazione e la sostenibilità delle università italiane. I Centri Linguistici di Ateneo (CLA), sostenuti dall'Associazione Italiana dei Centri Linguistici Universitari (AICLU), si configurano come attori chiave nella costruzione di una cultura accademica, cooperativa e aperta, in grado di affrontare le sfide e i cambiamenti del sistema universitario internazionale. La competenza linguistica e comunicativa si afferma infatti come diritto di cittadinanza accademica e come risorsa strategica per l'inserimento nel mondo del lavoro. Allo stesso tempo, la diversità culturale diventa valore aggiunto e stimolo continuo al dialogo e alla cooperazione interculturale.

In questa prospettiva, i percorsi di studio linguistico-interculturali e l'English-Medium Instruction (EMI) non costituiscono binari paralleli, ma dimensioni convergenti di un'unica visione educativa, fondata su partecipazione, qualità e internazionalizzazione. Tale visione non riduce la competenza linguistica a mero strumento tecnico, ma la riconosce come base essenziale di costruzione del sapere e di formazione integrale della comunità studentesca e su queste basi si innesta il ruolo dell'AICLU.

1. La missione dell'AICLU come comunità di buone pratiche

Fin dalla sua fondazione nel 1997, l'AICLU ha contribuito a creare reti di collaborazione, promuovere ricerca applicata e garantire qualità nella formazione

linguistica. L'Associazione si configura dunque come una vera e propria *Community of Practice*, ossia una comunità che mette in dialogo docenti, ricercatori e ricercatrici, CEL e personale tecnico-amministrativo attorno a protocolli operativi, modelli virtuosi, strumenti di valutazione e politiche linguistiche. Il confronto scientifico e operativo si concretizza nei seminari e nei convegni annuali, che costituiscono momenti fondativi della vita associativa: occasioni in cui il dibattito accademico si intreccia con la condivisione di esperienze didattiche e formative e con la progettazione di strategie istituzionali condivise.

L'adesione alla *Confédération Européenne des Centres de Langues de l'Enseignement Supérieur* (CERCLES) colloca infine l'AICLU in un network internazionale che promuove la didattica e la ricerca linguistica per un'Europa plurilingue. Di conseguenza, questo legame profondo con la realtà oltre confine rafforza la capacità dei Centri Linguistici universitari italiani di coniugare radicamento territoriale e apertura transnazionale.

2. Innovazione didattica e qualità della formazione

In quasi tre decenni, i Centri Linguistici hanno vissuto un'evoluzione significativa: da strutture prevalentemente di servizio si sono trasformati in centri di ricerca applicata e di innovazione glottodidattica, sviluppando pratiche avanzate di testing, tutoraggio e autoapprendimento. Le attività oggi spaziano dalla formazione di studenti e docenti alla promozione della mobilità internazionale (incoming e outgoing), dallo sviluppo di percorsi specialistici e integrati fino alle azioni di terza missione rivolte alla dimensione socio-istituzionale.

Queste esperienze hanno contribuito a consolidare l'identità dei CLA come spazi di innovazione educativa, capaci di integrare tecnologie, metodologie e attenzione ai bisogni formativi dei discenti.

In questa cornice, la prima parte del volume «Il ruolo dei Centri Linguistici nell'internazionalizzazione delle università italiane - The role of language centres in the internationalization of Italian universities» documenta le esperienze che intrecciano linguistica e interculturalità. Gli studi sull'apprendimento linguistico degli studenti internazionali (Ballarin, Scolaro), i progetti per la competenza globale attraverso la Positive Education (Cambosu), le ricerche sulla mobilità e sulla pluralità delle esperienze formali e informali (Costa, Ghia) e le pratiche di peer mentoring bilingue (Mair) confermano come i Centri Linguistici non siano soltanto spazi di insegnamento, ma luoghi di mediazione interculturale.

Attraverso tali percorsi, l'università si configura come comunità educativa plurilingue, nella quale gli studenti e le studentesse apprendono a costruire identità flessibili e aperte al dialogo internazionale. In questo senso, i Centri Linguistici diventano poli di competenza interculturale, fondamentali per l'«*Internationalization at home*», ossia per garantire anche a chi non partecipa a mobilità oltreconfine un'esperienza formativa di respiro internazionale.

La seconda parte del volume è dedicata all'English-Medium Instruction (EMI), fenomeno in rapida espansione che pone sfide di ordine linguistico, pedagogico e istituzionale. I contributi raccolti ne illustrano la complessità: dall'analisi critica delle politiche EMI (Clark) alla formazione e accreditamento dei docenti (Molino, Spencer), dalle pratiche innovative per la gestione della didattica in inglese (Borsetto et al.) alle esperienze di supporto agli insegnanti (Galasso), dai processi organizzativi che un Centro Linguistico esprime attraverso l'attenzione ai bisogni, obiettivi ed emozioni di una comunità accademica (Argondizzo, Calabrese, Cimino, Sasso, Vitelli) fino alle riflessioni sullo sviluppo professionale (Ting, Lopriore), completando infine con attente riflessioni sulle dinamiche interattive che si creano in una classe EMI (Lasagabaster).

In questo quadro, i CLA assumono un ruolo cruciale: non solo preparano linguisticamente docenti, studenti e tessuto sociale, ma agiscono come mediatori metodologici e culturali, promuovendo la consapevolezza che l'EMI non si riduce all'uso di una lingua veicolare, ma implica un ripensamento complessivo delle pratiche didattiche, delle interazioni in aula e delle linee di intervento di ateneo.

3. Politiche linguistiche e responsabilità istituzionale

L'internazionalizzazione non è un obiettivo statico, ma un processo dinamico che richiede consapevolezza scientifica e responsabilità educativa. In questa prospettiva, i Centri Linguistici universitari sostenuti dall'AICLU si affermano come attori di elaborazione e implementazione di politiche linguistiche in grado di incidere sulle strategie istituzionali: dalla definizione di approcci didattici e di ricerca sul campo all'elaborazione di standard di qualità per il testing linguistico e di documenti di indirizzo sulle certificazioni.

Le iniziative associative - quali ad esempio le borse di studio destinate ai giovani ricercatori - testimoniano la volontà di sostenere un approccio integrato, in cui l'eccellenza linguistica non sia privilegio di pochi, ma diritto condiviso.

In questa stessa ottica, i convegni AICLU costituiscono tappe fondamentali del percorso collettivo: non semplici momenti di confronto, ma spazi di generazione di progettualità scientifiche e istituzionali che contribuiscono a consolidare il profilo accademico dei Centri Linguistici e a rafforzare la collaborazione tra università italiane ed europee. Ogni edizione rappresenta un osservatorio privilegiato per monitorare l'evoluzione delle pratiche didattiche, discutere l'impatto delle trasformazioni digitali e ridefinire le strategie di internazionalizzazione.

In tal senso, la tradizione dei convegni AICLU va non soltanto ricordata, ma valorizzata come luogo di costruzione collettiva di orientamenti e saperi, in cui il pluralismo delle esperienze si traduce in linee guida comuni e in un impegno condiviso verso la qualità.

Attraverso il mosaico di studi, esperienze e riflessioni presentati in questo volume appare evidente che i Centri Linguistici sono divenuti motori di trasformazione educativa e culturale. La loro azione, sostenuta dall'AICLU e intrecciata con i processi di internazionalizzazione, non si limita a rispondere a esigenze linguistiche, ma concorre a ridefinire il ruolo stesso dell'università come comunità inclusiva, caratterizzata da varietà linguistiche e protesa al rinnovamento. La loro capacità di coniugare ricerca glottodidattica, innovazione metodologica e sensibilità istituzionale da ulteriore impulso alla missione dei Centri Linguistici di Ateneo italiani, offrendo un esempio concreto di come il dialogo tra il contesto accademico e il territorio possa generare percorsi di crescita condivisa.

In questo quadro, un riconoscimento particolare va a **Cristina Mariotti**, presidente del CLA dell'Università di Pavia, che con dedizione e visione scientifica ha guidato il lavoro del Centro e ha accolto con generosa ospitalità la conferenza da cui il volume trae origine.

Questo volume è dunque anche testimonianza della forza propulsiva di chi, come Mariotti, ha saputo interpretare il ruolo dei Centri Linguistici come autentici presìdi di innovazione culturale e di sviluppo di pratiche formative di qualità, capaci di coniugare ricerca, didattica e internazionalizzazione in una prospettiva partecipativa e sostenibile.

Language Centres as strategic agents in the internationalisation of Italian Higher Education

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1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, the internationalisation of Higher Education has contributed to reshaping the sociolinguistic landscapes of many universities. In Europe, universities have historically emerged as hubs for the exchange of knowledge across borders, fostering intellectual mobility long before the term «internationalisation» entered institutional discourse (Guri-Rosenblit, 2015). In more recent decades, the signing of the Bologna Declaration (European Ministers of Education, 1999) marked a pivotal moment in the creation of the European Higher Education Area in 2010 (EHEA), serving as a catalyst for the internationalisation of Italy's university system (de Wit, Deca & Hunter, 2015). Integration into the EHEA framework fostered greater academic mobility for both students and faculty, while simultaneously enhancing graduate employability, particularly through the development and certification of language proficiency. As a result, linguistic competence has become increasingly central to the academic and professional trajectories of university lecturers, graduates, and, more broadly, the entire academic community. In current Higher Education discourse, internationalisation refers to both degree mobility and credit mobility. Degree mobility refers to students undertaking an entire cycle of study—such as a Bachelor's, Master's, or PhD programme—abroad, with the goal of earning a full qualification. This contrasts with credit mobility, in which students remain formally enrolled at their home institution while spending a limited period abroad to earn individual credit points (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System - ECTS). Beyond mobility, internationalisation also includes cross-border education delivery and various forms of 'internationalisa-

tion at home', such as the integration of international perspectives into curricula, the internationalisation of teaching and learning practices, and the development of internationally oriented learning outcomes.

With this backdrop, the aim of the current chapter is to offer joint reflections on where Italian University Language Centres (*Centri Linguistici di Ateneo*, henceforth CLAs) stand in terms of supporting the internationalisation process, and to provide some possible pointers for future directions that are necessarily adaptive, critical, and attuned to the evolving needs of university communities. In what follows, we first outline a series of reflections that emerge from recent literature and professional practices concerning the role of CLAs in multilingual and internationalised Higher Education. We then present the main themes explored by the contributors to this volume, whose perspectives enrich the discussion and point to innovative ways in which Language Centres can respond to current and future challenges.

2. The pivotal role of University Language Centres in Italy

The globalisation of the labour market and the evolution of internationally-oriented professions have underscored the value of international competences in Higher Education. Preparing students for a transnational employment landscape now requires a stronger emphasis on the acquisition of global skills, including linguistic and intercultural competences, alongside the ability to access and process knowledge through the language of instruction (Schleppegrell, 2008). This transformation has occurred in parallel with the growing prominence of English-Medium Instruction (EMI) and Study Abroad (SA) programmes, both of which pose new challenges and opportunities for university communities (Hunter, 2015).

The integration of intercultural and multilingual competences is widely acknowledged as a cornerstone of Higher Education internationalisation. According to Deardorff (2006), intercultural competence involves not just knowledge of other cultures but the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately across cultural boundaries. In the multilingual and multicultural university environments that are emerging in Italy, this competence is essential for both students and staff. Language Centres, with their dual focus on language and pedagogy, are uniquely positioned to nurture this dimension of internationalisation.

The literature emphasises the need for inclusive practices that support Internationalisation at Home (IaH), that is, the intentional integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum without requiring student mobility (Leask, 2015). CLAs can play a critical role here by developing peer learning initiatives, intercultural workshops, and multilingual learning communities. Such efforts not only build students' communicative and intercultural repertoires but also foster a sense of belonging among

international students. Programmes rooted in these principles help institutions move beyond tokenistic internationalisation and instead promote deeper cultural engagement.

University Language Centres have emerged as pivotal actors in addressing these challenges, providing a range of services that support both staff and students in their approach to increasingly multilingual and multicultural academic environments. The term *process* is deliberately used here to convey that internationalisation is not a static goal but rather an ongoing, evolutionary effort. It denotes a developmental quality that underscores the need for sustained institutional engagement. However, it must also be acknowledged that the concept of 'internationalisation' is highly polysemic and, at times, nebulous and prone to fostering myths and misconceptions (Knight, 2011). This semantic complexity can contribute to a sense of uncertainty or even resistance, especially when attempting to translate the term from theory into practice within university contexts.

Within this evolving scenario, University Language Centres in Italy have played—and continue to play—a crucial role in advancing the internationalisation of Higher Education, regardless of how broadly or narrowly the concept of internationalisation is defined. This contribution is readily visible to those directly engaged in institutional academic life. Yet, despite the clear relevance of language training across various domains—students, administrative and academic staff, and institutional communication—its importance is often underrepresented or only implicitly acknowledged in key policy documents on internationalisation, such as the Bologna Process Implementation Report (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2020). As this volume demonstrates, however, Language Centres are fundamental enablers of internationalisation *in practice*. They operate on multiple fronts: by providing extracurricular language courses that prepare both incoming and outgoing students to manage the linguistic challenges of mobility programmes such as Erasmus; by supporting university staff in the development of professional language skills; and by offering specialised training for lecturers delivering content through English (such as EMI contexts).

At the same time, though, the strategic role of Language Centres in the internationalisation of Higher Education cannot be fully realised without supportive institutional language policies. Yet, as Wächter and Maiworm (2014) note, many European universities —including those in Italy— still lack coherent policies that address the linguistic dimensions of teaching, learning, and administration (Hunter, 2015). This policy gap often results in fragmented or reactive practices, where language support is seen as remedial rather than integral to academic quality and inclusivity. This lack of institutional commitment significantly limits the capacity of CLAs to contribute proactively and systematically, preventing them from realising their full potential.

CLAs, however, are well positioned to act as catalysts for the development of more coherent and forward-looking language policies. Spolsky (2003) defines language policy as comprising language practices, beliefs, and management decisions — three areas where CLAs have growing influence. By collecting data on language needs, piloting multilingual initiatives, and advising university leadership, CLAs can help embed language considerations into broader institutional strategies. This evolution — from operational support to strategic partnership – may mark a key transformation in the role of CLAs. As we know, language policy is not only a technical or administrative issue, as it also embodies institutional values. Decisions about which languages are taught, supported, and used for communication reflect underlying ideologies about knowledge, identity, and inclusion (Shohamy, 2006). Amid this complexity, it is important to foreground the dual role of CLAs in supporting both global and local dimensions of internationalisation.

While much attention has been devoted to EMI and the expansion of English language provision, the teaching of Italian as a second language also plays a critical role. Italian L2 courses offered by CLAs are essential in enabling communication and inclusion on campus, especially for incoming international students and researchers. Far from being a peripheral activity, Italian language instruction actively contributes to the construction of shared academic spaces and intercultural dialogue. In this sense, it functions as a key agent of internationalisation, supporting social integration and academic participation within the Italian university system (Zuaro, Soler, & Björkman-Nylén, 2022; Carloni & Sisti, 2019).

Alongside this, however, the adoption of EMI brings to the fore a number of structural tensions. As observed by Lasagabaster (2022), «At a time in which internationalization has become a mantra in the discourse of Higher Education institutions, EMI represents one of the most preeminent tools in university language policy in order to achieve the aforementioned internationalization-related objectives» (p. 1). Indeed, over the last decade, EMI has expanded rapidly across European Higher Education, and Italy is no exception. As universities seek to attract international students and bolster their global reputations, EMI has become a strategic priority. However, its implementation has often outpaced the development of adequate training frameworks. This is confirmed by Dearden and Macaro (2016), whose study highlights how EMI often spreads faster than the institutional support needed to ensure effective pedagogical delivery. EMI teaching requires not only advanced English proficiency but also pedagogical strategies suitable for linguistically diverse classrooms. Macaro (2018) and Wächter and Maiworm (2014) stress that successful EMI delivery hinges on systematic training that integrates linguistic, methodological, and intercultural dimensions.

University Language Centres have increasingly assumed a key role in delivering such training. Unlike ad-hoc or externally imposed models, many CLAs

are developing tailored programmes grounded in institutional contexts and disciplinary specificities. According to Costa and Coleman (2013), context-sensitive approaches are crucial in EMI settings, where lecturer needs differ substantially depending on the academic discipline and student cohort. In line with this, Dafouz and Smit (2020) emphasise the need for integrated, institution-wide frameworks that align language policy, pedagogy, and internationalisation goals. In this light, CLAs act not only as language service providers but as strategic pedagogical hubs, where research-informed practices are translated into training formats that align with institutional goals.

EMI also calls for a rethinking of assessment, classroom discourse, and student engagement strategies. Studies by Airey (2012) and Ball and Lindsay (2013) show that disciplinary lecturers often struggle with the shift from monolingual to multilingual classrooms, especially in promoting student interaction. EMI training facilitated by CLAs can thus bridge a critical gap—equipping lecturers with tools to manage classroom discourse, scaffold learning in a second language, and foster inclusive participation. This points to the evolving identity of CLAs as professional development agents that support the institutionalisation of EMI with a grounded and comprehensive approach. English is often positioned as a neutral, even invisible, vehicle for academic content, with language proficiency frequently taken for granted or viewed as easily attainable (Costa & Mariotti, 2020). Yet, this invisibility masks deeper issues: the assumption of a universal English competence ignores disparities in access, preparation, and linguistic confidence. At the same time, English tends to be seen as a «killer language» — a global lingua franca that tends to marginalise other languages and absorbs disproportionate institutional resources — and is seen as overshadowing multilingualism in universities. Phillipson (2009) and Jenkins (2014) critique this linguistic hegemony and advocate for more equitable language policies that recognise and promote linguistic diversity. In Italy, the use of English in Higher Education has often been seen as a threat to Italian, sparking a debate about domain loss (Campagna, 2017; Molino & Campagna, 2014; Santulli, 2015). These contradictions call for careful reflection, particularly in the design and implementation of EMI-related training and support structures. While policy gaps and institutional complexities undoubtedly persist, CLAs continue to play a pivotal role in the implementation of EMI. At the same time, they actively promote the use of multiple languages in academic contexts by raising awareness of the pedagogical and cognitive benefits of multilingualism. This dual function is especially important in the creation of multilingual and multicultural learning environments, which have been shown to improve educational quality and foster deeper engagement among diverse student populations (Lauridsen & Lillemose, 2015). Through targeted language support and inclusive initiatives, CLAs can thus contribute to building a Higher Education landscape that embraces linguistic diversity and intercultural sensitivity as key components of academic excellence.

3. Structure and content of the volume

The present volume brings together a range of original contributions that shed light on the evolving role of CLAs in supporting internationalisation, multilingualism, and intercultural development in Higher Education. The first part, *Percorsi linguistici e interculturali nella formazione universitaria* (Linguistic and intercultural pathways in Higher Education), focuses on the intersections between language education, intercultural competence, and multilingualism. The second part, *Prospettive e sfide dell'EMI nei Centri Linguistici Universitari* (Perspectives and challenges of EMI in University Language Centres), explores the strategic and pedagogical role of CLAs in the implementation and support of EMI.

Elena Ballarin and Silvia Scolaro open the volume with a case study from Ca' Foscari University of Venice, illustrating a co-teaching model in Italian L2 courses for international students that integrates linguistic and disciplinary expertise. The hybrid format blends CLIL principles with academic Italian, encouraging metalinguistic reflection and addressing the epistemological challenges of disciplinary language use. This contribution exemplifies how CLAs can move beyond traditional language teaching to support students' disciplinary integration in a multilingual university context.

The next three chapters in Part I highlight different approaches to integrating intercultural and multilingual dimensions into university life. Francesca Caterina Cambosu explores how internationalisation can be enriched through Positive Education. By promoting socio-emotional development alongside language learning, her chapter advocates for a more holistic approach to fostering global competence. Costa and Ghia investigate students' experiences of Study Abroad, revealing the importance of informal multilingual practices and intercultural encounters in shaping linguistic development. Their data support a dynamic view of language learning beyond formal instruction. Olivia Mair complements this perspective with a concrete example of Internationalisation at Home: a bilingual peer-mentoring programme that fosters intercultural communication and informal language learning through student collaboration.

Part II shifts the focus to English-Medium Instruction as an increasingly central element in internationalisation strategies. The section opens with David Lasagabaster, who provides a classroom-based analysis of interactional practices in EMI lectures across disciplines. His findings point to a lack of dialogic engagement and highlight the need for training in interactional competence. From a policy and institutional perspective, Caroline Clark offers a reflective account of the challenges and ambiguities of EMI implementation in Italian universities, arguing for more coherent and strategically integrated language policies where CLAs are involved in governance decisions.

The next set of contributions turn to EMI lecturer training. Molino and Spencer present the structured EMI certification pathway developed at the University of Turin, grounded in research and tailored to local institutional needs. Borsetto, Vescio, Hartle, and Facchinetti expand the discussion by analysing questionnaire data from multiple contexts, showing how CLAs can act as sites of pedagogical innovation, particularly through the integration of intercultural competence and digital tools. Raffaella Galasso focuses on the ACLAIM project at the University of Padova, offering insights into how structured support can address the evolving needs of EMI lecturers through collaborative and reflective training processes.

The final two chapters offer broader institutional perspectives. Argondizzo, Calabrese, Cimino, Sasso, and Vitelli reflect on the organisational and emotional dimensions of internationalisation at the university language centre of the University of Calabria. Their chapter captures the complexities of managing change and fostering engagement across the academic community. Ting and Lopriore conclude the volume by highlighting the centrality of methodology and disciplinary discourse in EMI professional development, arguing for approaches that foreground lecturer cognition and promote sustainable institutional change.

Together, these contributions underscore the evolving identity of University Language Centres as pedagogical innovators, intercultural mediators, and institutional actors, committed to shaping inclusive and research-informed responses to the internationalisation of Higher Education.

4. Conclusion

Taken together, the contributions to this volume show that CLAs are not peripheral service providers but central agents in the internationalisation of Italian universities. They play a multifaceted role: as trainers, mediators, researchers, and innovators. They support the development of EMI programmes, foster intercultural and multilingual competences, pilot new pedagogical models, and engage with institutional policy-making.

Nonetheless, several challenges remain. First, there is a need for more systematic research on the impact of CLA initiatives, particularly regarding student outcomes. Second, collaboration between CLAs and disciplinary departments should be further institutionalised to ensure sustainable and interdisciplinary approaches. Finally, Italian universities must develop coherent and inclusive language policies that recognise the centrality of languages in Higher Education internationalisation.

Mindful of the words spoken by AICLU President Carmen Argondizzo during the national AICLU conference at the University of Pavia on 20 June 2024: *I Centri Linguistici sono fatti da tutti coloro che vi contribuiscono con il loro*

impegno e passione («Language Centres are made up of everyone who contributes with their dedication and passion»)— this volume highlights the often-overlooked yet essential contributions of University Language Centres to the internationalisation of Italian Higher Education.

Despite the growing significance of internationalisation, there is a noticeable gap in research specifically focusing on language-related initiatives and their direct impact. Further exploration is needed, particularly in terms of assessing the outcomes of CLA-led programmes for students and enhancing collaboration between CLAs and disciplinary departments to foster sustainable and interdisciplinary approaches. Additionally, it is crucial for Italian universities to develop comprehensive and inclusive language policies that recognise the central role of languages in internationalisation efforts. Through a critical engagement with these themes, this volume adds to the expanding literature on EMI, language policy, and internationalisation in non-Anglophone contexts. It asserts that, when properly supported and integrated into institutional structures, CLAs can become powerful agents of linguistic, pedagogical, and cultural innovation.

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Parte I
Percorsi linguistici e interculturali nella formazione universitaria – Linguistic and intercultural pathways in higher education

1. Studenti internazionali all'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia: il processo di produzione linguistica tra CLIL e italiano accademico. Uno studio di caso

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Presso la *School for International Education* dell'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia l'insegnamento della lingua italiana a studenti internazionali in scambio universitario prevede l'affiancamento e la collaborazione fra una Docente e una Collaboratrice Esperta Linguistica e l'azione didattica comporta l'insegnamento dell'epistemologia linguistica affiancato dall'insegnamento comunicativo della lingua. Si attua, perciò, una metodologia di tipo CLIL *sui generis*, poiché si pongono a stretto contatto lingua e disciplina linguistica.
Ai fini del presente studio, è stato esaminato, con una *mixed method research,* il processo di produzione linguistica, scritto e orale, su un campione di 8 studenti internazionali di livello B1.
Questa sperimentazione è stata guidata da alcuni interrogativi: in presenza di un *input* linguistico di tipo disciplinare e dal carattere epistemologico può progredire la produzione linguistica dello studente? Il processo di produzione è influenzato dalla diversa provenienza etnica e dal plurilinguismo degli studenti? È incrementato dall'azione collaborativa svolta all'interno dei gruppi? In quale modo la cooperazione fra il docente di epistemologia linguistica e l'insegnante di lingua favorisce il processo glottodidattico?
I primi risultati, seppur parziali e bisognosi di ulteriori conferme, evidenziano che le domande di ricerca hanno individuato nodi importanti nella riflessione metalinguistica.

Keywords: italiano accademico, CLIL, italiano L2, studenti internazionali in Italia, internazionalizzazione degli atenei italiani

[1] Nonostante il lavoro sia frutto della collaborazione di entrambe le autrici, i paragrafi 1, 2 e 3 sono da ascriversi a Elena Ballarin; 4 e 5 a Silvia Scolaro.

Nota: nel presente contributo, quando possibile, è stato utilizzato il linguaggio di genere. Tuttavia, per non appesantire la lettura, si è ricorse al maschile sovra esteso intendendo inclusivamente soggetti di genere maschile e femminile.

1.1 Introduzione

Il fenomeno dell'internazionalizzazione degli atenei anche in Italia è ormai una realtà consolidata e si manifesta attraverso

> la natura multilingue e multiculturale delle aule scolastiche e universitarie, l'incremento della mobilità (in entrata e in uscita) di studenti e docenti, l'uso veicolare delle lingue straniere [...], la crescita di programmi internazionali di scambio, di studio e di ricerca e, non ultimo, la nascita, soprattutto ma non solo a livello universitario, di 'politiche d'internazionalizzazione' al fine di ottimizzare e valorizzare il fenomeno. (Coonan 2017: 11).

In questi contesti universitari dal carattere internazionale si sono venute a creare nuove condizioni e nuove esigenze in ambito educativo: si sono manifestati bisogni di competenze linguistiche culturali e interculturali per interagire dentro e fuori le aule di studio, necessità di studiare le lingue per comunicare con il luogo di studio e di vita e per studiare le discipline curricolari (Hughes 2008; Mezzadri 2016). «In questo scenario la lingua riveste un ruolo chiave, in quanto facilitatrice di scambi tra paesi» (Turbanti 2017: 9) e, in virtù di questo, essa favorisce la presenza di docenti e ricercatori stranieri nelle università e favorisce, altresì, la presenza di studenti internazionali in mobilità (Gazzola 2010).

Sebbene questo contesto favorisca l'uso di *Academic English* a scapito di altre lingue, è certo che la lingua parlata nel paese ospitante è necessaria per la vita quotidiana fuori dell'ambito universitario, ma anche per le relazioni quotidiane e di studio che si instaurano dentro l'ateneo ospitante (Ballarin et al. 2021).

Questo contributo non si concentrerà, tuttavia, sul dibattito a proposito dell'importanza dell'uso della lingua nazionale nelle università (a questo proposito, si vedano, fra gli altri, Maraschio e De Martino 2012; Robustelli 2015; Cabiddu 2017), ma tenterà una riflessione sul ruolo che la lingua italiana ricopre nello studio di una disciplina curricolare e, per farlo, si è scelto di osservare una realtà particolare emergente da uno studio di caso presso l'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia.

La letteratura scientifica consultata ha preso in esame contributi che abbracciano l'arco temporale del più recente quarantennio, circoscrivendo la consultazione soprattutto nell'ambito dell'italiano accademico (Ballarin 2017; Baglioni e Mastrantonio 2024), del rapporto fra insegnamento e fenomeni di internazionalizzazione (Hughes 2008; Gazzola 2010; Robustelli 2015; Cabiddu 2017)

e delle strategie glottodidattiche che si sviluppano in ambito CLIL e EMI (Coonan 2002 e 2008; Macaro 2018; Scolaro 2022).

In questo contributo è stato esaminato, con una *mixed method research* (vedi sezione 4), il processo di produzione linguistica, scritto e orale, su un campione di otto studenti internazionali di livello B1 a cui è stata richiesta la presentazione di una ricerca di tipo epistemologico, affiancata da un'azione di tipo strettamente linguistico, mediante la collaborazione fra piccoli gruppi di studenti.

Questa sperimentazione è stata guidata da alcune domande di ricerca, che hanno interessato il processo di apprendimento e di insegnamento: in presenza di un *input* linguistico di tipo disciplinare e dal carattere epistemologico può progredire la produzione linguistica dello studente (Ballarin 2017; Borro e Scolaro 2021)? Il processo di produzione è influenzato dalla diversa provenienza etnica e dal plurilinguismo degli studenti? È incrementato dall'azione collaborativa svolta all'interno dei gruppi? In quale modo la cooperazione fra il docente di epistemologia linguistica e l'insegnante di lingua favorisce il processo glottodidattico (Ballarin 2014)?

Nei paragrafi che seguiranno verranno illustrati il contesto in cui è stata ospitata la sperimentazione, le strategie glottodidattiche che hanno guidato i processi di insegnamento e apprendimento, verrà illustrata la metodologia della ricerca e verranno esposti e analizzati il campione e i dati ottenuti.

1.2 Il contesto della ricerca

L'Ateneo veneziano ha assunto negli anni una vocazione sempre più internazionale, sino a raggiungere, nel 2023, il primato di primo Ateneo di grandi dimensioni per l'internazionalizzazione[2]. Tra le strutture vocate a questo scopo, di cui Ca' Foscari si avvale, è stata costituita dal 2015 la *School for International Education*, che è chiamata a promuovere attività didattiche dedicate agli studenti stranieri e favorisce l'esperienza internazionale degli iscritti[3]. Tra le varie attività proposte, si colloca in questa sede l'offerta dei corsi di italiano destinata agli studenti stranieri, con particolare riguardo agli studenti in mobilità internazionale. La *School for International Education* offre corsi destinati a varie categorie di studenti stranieri:

[2] Questo è quanto emerge dall'edizione 2023/2024 della Classifica CENSIS delle Università italiane, pubblicata il 10 luglio.
Cfr. https://www.censis.it/formazione/la-classifica-censis-delle-universit%C3%A0-italiane-edizione-20232024/gli-atenei-statali.Ultima consultazione: 03/01/2025.

[3] Si vedano i principi costituenti e il regolamento della Scuola in https://www.unive.it/pag/8190/. Ultima consultazione: 03/01/2025.

a. corsi aperti a tutti e rivolti a chiunque sia non nativo – iscritto o non iscritto a Ca' Foscari, studente o non studente – e abbia necessità o desiderio di imparare la lingua italiana;
b. corsi ideati per gli studenti internazionali immatricolati/e presso Ca' Foscari;
c. corsi ideati per gli studenti internazionali in scambio presso l'Università Ca' Foscari. Ogni corso prevede l'assegnazione di un totale di 6 CFU/ECTS che gli studenti possono aggiungere al proprio *Learning Agreement*.

La ricerca di cui qui si relaziona ha, dunque, trovato la sua sede di sperimentazione nei corsi offerti agli studenti internazionali di scambio. Questo tipo di corsi ha una struttura complessa e composta da due sezioni: un modulo linguistico generale, condotto da un docente, in cui vengono trattati gli aspetti sociolinguistici, strutturali, culturali e storici della lingua italiana, in linea con il livello linguistico del corso; un modulo di esercitazioni, condotto da un collaboratore esperto linguistico (CEL), in cui vengono trattate le competenze comunicative della lingua italiana, la grammatica e le abilità linguistiche (interazione, ascolto, lettura e scrittura).

Modulo linguistico generale e modulo di esercitazioni, come già detto, procedono coerentemente tra loro in relazione al livello linguistico, in base a quanto stabilito dal QCER (Consiglio d'Europa 2020/Italiano LinguaDue 2021), ma affrontano lo studio della lingua italiana seguendo due approcci diversi: il primo, di carattere epistemologico, insegna la natura della lingua italiana attraverso vari aspetti, ne spiega i principi scientifici e teorici dal punto di vista della linguistica e della sociolinguistica. Il modulo linguistico si approccia allo studio della lingua in quanto disciplina scientifica, oggetto di studio curricolare. Alla fine del modulo generale gli studenti devono superare un esame. Il secondo, invece, affronta lo studio della lingua mediante un approccio comunicativo e guida gli studenti all'apprendimento, potenziando competenze e abilità proprie degli scambi linguistici internazionali. Il modulo di esercitazioni ha un carattere fortemente interattivo e considera lo studio della lingua in quanto strumento volto a favorire la comunicazione e lo studio. Al termine del modulo di esercitazioni gli studenti sono sottoposti al superamento di un test. Questa struttura composita porta, inevitabilmente, al confronto continuo fra docente e CEL, poiché gli aspetti epistemologici e comunicativi si intrecciano nello studio della medesima disciplina, sebbene considerata da prospettive diverse.

L'aspetto che più ha interessato questa ricerca, dunque, riguarda l'azione svolta dalla lingua nei due moduli: nel modulo di linguistica generale, infatti, la lingua assume le caratteristiche di lingua veicolare, poiché trasmette concetti disciplinari non in lingua madre. Nel modulo di esercitazioni, invece, la lingua non è veicolare, ma L2, perché è oggetto del percorso di apprendimento linguistico nel paese dove viene usata (sebbene in contesto internazionale, dove, a volte,

assume le caratteristiche di LS). Nel modulo di linguistica generale, dunque, chi studia è esposto a un doppio processo di apprendimento: disciplinare e linguistico, mentre nel modulo di esercitazioni il processo di apprendimento riguarda esclusivamente la lingua.

In generale, quando si verifica questo doppio processo di apprendimento tra una disciplina scientifica diversa da una lingua e la lingua veicolare, il docente ha conoscenza specialistica e didattica della disciplina, ma non necessariamente della lingua veicolare e della sua didattica. Nel caso della ricerca che qui si è condotta, invece, si osservano i ruoli di due soggetti - docente e CEL - che hanno entrambi conoscenza specialistica della disciplina (lingua veicolare e L2) e della sua didattica. Docente e CEL, dunque, espongono i loro studenti a un'immersione linguistico-disciplinare in lingua straniera e questa realtà ben si armonizza con l'idea espressa dal CLIL, che prevede, appunto, l'apprendimento di una disciplina attraverso una lingua non nativa e che, conseguentemente, provoca l'apprendimento sia di contenuti linguistici che di contenuti non linguistici.

1.3 CLIL, EMI, lingua dello studio, italiano accademico

Come è noto, l'acronimo CLIL (*Content and Language Integrated Learning*) sintetizza quanto avviene quando si verifica un apprendimento integrato di contenuti disciplinari in lingua straniera veicolare (Marsh 1994). Si espone, infatti, l'apprendente a contenuto non linguistico, veicolato attraverso una lingua straniera e, sebbene l'obiettivo didattico sia costituito dal processo di insegnamento e apprendimento di contenuti disciplinari, inevitabilmente l'apprendente impara anche contenuti squisitamente linguistici (Coonan 2002 e 2008).

La ricerca che qui si è condotta sembrerebbe, dunque, essere vicina a questo ambito educativo, ma nel modulo disciplinare di cui qui si tratta, sono oggetto di studio contenuti linguistico-disciplinari veicolati in una lingua straniera. Gli apprendenti, perciò, sono esposti a contenuti linguistici propri di una determinata lingua - l'italiano in questo caso - veicolati attraverso la medesima lingua in un contesto L2/LS[4]. Il contesto educativo, dunque, espone lo studente a un apprendimento integrato del medesimo soggetto disciplinare e veicolare: la lingua italiana insegnata a non nativi.

L'insegnamento a non nativi di una lingua straniera intesa come disciplinare e come veicolare sembrerebbe, perciò, più in sintonia con i principi teorici espressi dall'acronimo EMI (*English Medium Instruction*), che prevedono *the use*

[4] Sono state adottate entrambe le sigle L2 e LS, dato il contesto marcatamente internazionale in cui questa ricerca si inserisce. Le caratteristiche dell'italiano per stranieri, in questo caso, si avvicinano sia all'italiano L2, quando gli apprendenti interagiscono fortemente con la comunità locale e assumono, invece, le caratteristiche di LS quando la comunicazione quotidiana avviene in inglese e all'interno della comunità studentesca internazionale.

of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions in which the majority of the population's first language is not English (Macaro 2022: 534). Nel caso di studio esaminato in questa sede, tuttavia, si riscontrerebbe una differenza sostanziale con tali principi: mentre nel caso di EMI la lingua è considerata solamente come un mezzo, uno strumento per apprendere contenuti disciplinari e non è affatto coinvolta nel processo educativo (a differenza del CLIL), in questo caso, invece, essa è protagonista dell'azione didattica, sia come disciplina che come strumento per apprendere la disciplina.

La specificità in merito ai contenuti e alla didattica di questa offerta formativa dell'Ateneo veneziano trova alcune rispondenze nella didattica dell'italiano dello studio, poiché i soggetti coinvolti sono chiamati a elaborare contenuti disciplinari e linguistici e l'obiettivo dello studio è proprio la lingua (Balboni e Mezzadri 2014). La lingua dello studio, naturalmente, varia la sua complessità in relazione all'ordine e al grado del sistema di studi nel quale è utilizzata e diventa sempre più complessa, se si considerano contesti di studio superiore come quello universitario.

Quando, però, il contesto educativo è quello universitario, si presume che chi apprende utilizzi la lingua anche in quanto accademica, per studiare, per veicolare il sapere, ma anche per comunicare fuori dall'aula, quantunque sempre in ambito universitario (Ballarin 2017). La comunicazione accademica nel suo complesso, infatti, è trasversale alle discipline scientifiche e si differenzia dalla lingua della comunicazione quotidiana, conservando un registro formale (Desideri e Tessuto 2011; Mastrantonio 2022).

In questo caso, uno degli obiettivi che il docente di lingua – inteso sia come docente di disciplina, sia come insegnante di lingua – persegue, è guidare i propri apprendenti a raggiungere la competenza linguistica di tipo accademico, la competenza di tipo CALP[5], così definita da Cummins (1979), mediante la padronanza sia dei contenuti sia della capacità di esprimerli. Questa competenza può essere raggiunta solamente a condizione che il parlante padroneggi già le abilità linguistiche di base (definite BICS[6] da Cummins) e che abbia già elaborato i contenuti disciplinari relativi in L1.

Tradizionalmente il QCER pone l'acquisizione della CALP a partire dal livello B2. In contesti L2, tuttavia, in cui l'esposizione alla lingua è maggiore, il processo di acquisizione si può verificare anche un po' prima, già nel conseguimento del livello B1, oltrepassando così il limite posto dalla suddivisione in livelli linguistici e dalla loro definizione (Favata e Nitti 2019). Questo tipo di comunicazione e la sua didattica costituisce l'oggetto di sperimentazione di questa ricerca e lo scenario è costituito da un corso di lingua italiana di livello B1, come si vedrà nel dettaglio nella sezione 4.

[5] *Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency.*
[6] *Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills.*

1.4 Metodologia e descrizione della ricerca

La ricerca ha visto protagonisti otto studenti che hanno frequentato un corso di livello B1 presso la *School for International Education* di Ca' Foscari nel secondo semestre dell'anno accademico 2022-2023. Gli apprendenti con età fra i 20 - 25 anni erano studenti internazionali e seguivano altri corsi accademici erogati in lingua inglese in campo umanistico[7].

Le domande che hanno mosso la ricerca sono le seguenti:

a. l'insegnamento di contenuti base di linguistica e sociolinguistica della lingua italiana in lingua italiana può favorire lo sviluppo del linguaggio accademico anche a un livello inferiore al B2 del QCER? (RQ1)
b. se ciò avviene, è possibile percepirlo e in quale misura? (RQ2)

Per rispondere a questi quesiti, si è optato per utilizzare la *mixed method research* (MM) (Dörnyei 2007; Creswell e Plano Clark 2011; Creswell 2014), in quanto essa prende in considerazione gli assunti epistemologici, che guidano il metodo di raccolta dati in modo scientifico, permettendo di utilizzare i dati quantitativi per la loro obiettività e, al contempo, dando la possibilità ai dati qualitativi di aggiungere e integrare i dati quantitativi (Creswell e Plano Clark 2011; Tashakkori e Teddlie 2003).

In primo luogo, si sono analizzate le autobiografie linguistiche redatte dagli apprendenti durante il corso metalinguistico; successivamente si è esaminato il prodotto orale finale del corso: una presentazione a coppie su un argomento a scelta fra quelli trattati. Inoltre, dopo la fine del corso ci si è avvalse di un ulteriore strumento diagnostico: un questionario che intendeva raccogliere un *feedback* sull'attività di presentazione orale proposta.

Lo scopo dell'analisi longitudinale di questi tre diversi tipi di *output* degli studenti ha permesso di vedere uno sviluppo nell'utilizzo dell'italiano di tipo accademico.

Di seguito si riportano separatamente le analisi di tipo qualitativo e quantitativo effettuate per ciascun tipo di testo e successivamente quelle in forma aggregata.

[7] Tutti gli apprendenti che hanno preso parte allo studio sono stati informati della ricerca in atto e hanno dato il proprio consenso affinché le informazioni da loro fornite e le loro videoregistrazioni fossero usate in forma anonima ed aggregata ai fini di ricerca scientifica come previsto ai sensi dell'art. 13 del D.Lgs 196/2003 e s.m. che comprende le disposizioni di attuazione della direttiva (UE) 2016/680 del Parlamento europeo e del Consiglio, del 27 aprile 2016.

1.4.1 L'autobiografia linguistica

Dagli anni Settanta del secolo scorso la narrazione autobiografica sconfina dal campo delle scienze umane per entrare in quello della linguistica applicata (Bailey 1980 e 1983; Pavlenko 2007; Schumann F. 1980; Schumann F. e Schumann J. 1977). La narrativa del sé permette di accedere al mondo privato di chi scrive costituendo una valida fonte di informazioni per ricerche di tipo sociolinguistico (Nekvapil 2003). In questo senso essa permette di riflettere sulla propria identità in modo più consapevole (Bamberg e Georgakopoulou 2008: 378). In Italia questo strumento è stato prevalentemente usato nelle zone di contatto linguistico, come in Alto Adige (Cavagnoli 2014), nelle scuole primarie e secondarie per esplorare le biografie linguistiche degli studenti con *background* migratorio (*inter alia* Cognini 2014; Carbonara e Scibetta 2019*)* e anche in ambito universitario (Polselli e Flatone 2021). Occorre ricordare, inoltre, il fatto che il narrante «sceglie» cosa e come raccontare le sue esperienze relazionandosi con altri fattori, tra cui l'influenza del momento presente rispetto all'asse temporale della vita, così come al destinatario e allo scopo percepito in cui si inserisce la narrazione (Franceschini 2003).

In questa sede l'attività di scrittura della propria biografia linguistica è stata inserita a metà del corso di italiano dopo aver trattato l'argomento della variazione linguistica in diatopia, diacronia, diastratia, diafasia e diamesia con riferimento al modello di Berruto (2012) e dopo aver letto e analizzato in classe un esempio di autobiografia linguistica di una studentessa universitaria italiana. Al fine di svolgere questo compito, agli apprendenti non sono state fornite griglie o domande di riferimento.

Per l'analisi di tipo qualitativo ci si è avvalse dell'utilizzo del *software* MAXQDA, dove sono stati caricati i testi redatti dagli apprendenti e, successivamente, sono stati contrassegnati con codici, identificando i temi ricorrenti. Dall'analisi emerge che la lingua materna è legata al contesto familiare mentre le lingue straniere sono apprese a scuola o a lezione in contesti formali. Alcuni casi riportano emozioni negative legate allo studio delle LS in contesto scolastico: i voti negativi, sono considerati lo specchio del (non-)apprendimento e sono legati a emozioni di fallimento. Successivamente, tuttavia, avviene un cambiamento per cui tali lingue sono «riscoperte» grazie ai *social media* e/o per merito di esperienze personali più gratificanti legate al piacere dell'autopromozione.

Gli studenti dimostrano, inoltre, attraverso le loro scritture di avere ben chiari i concetti che si rifanno alle diverse varietà linguistiche quali quelli di lingua standard, di dialetto e di lingua informale. Essi, inoltre, riconoscono i luoghi preposti per l'utilizzo di una varietà linguistica rispetto ad un'altra e comprendono che i contesti di utilizzo della lingua sono quelli che, grazie all'interazione fra parlanti, permette e favorisce l'acquisizione linguistica (*inter alia* Ellis 1984 e 1991; Long 1981 e 1996; Lightbown 2015; Nuzzo e Grassi 2016).

1.4.2 La presentazione orale

Per la valutazione è stato richiesto agli studenti di preparare un'esposizione orale su un argomento fra quelli trattati nel corso metalinguistico, valutata da entrambe le docenti: rispettivamente la forma dall'esperta linguistica e i contenuti dall'altra docente. Gli studenti hanno lavorato a coppie e preparato una presentazione orale di circa dieci minuti utilizzando un supporto *power point* o simili seguendo una scaletta predefinita: titolo, metodologia della ricerca, presentazione, conclusione e riferimenti.

La modalità CLIL qui viene adoperata per lo studio dell'italiano in italiano, ovvero per lo studio di contenuti relativi alla lingua, quali basi di linguistica, sociolinguistica e storia dell'evoluzione della lingua, fatti attraverso la lingua stessa. Essa, tuttavia, non rimane legata al solo *input* dato dalla docente, ma viene richiesta agli apprendenti in *output* (Gass 1997; Northbrook e Conklin 2019; Nuzzo e Grassi 2016; VanPatten 2003) lavorando su più livelli: su quello delle conoscenze implicite e delle conoscenze esplicite (Ellis 2017) per mezzo del *task* assegnato (*inter alia* Cortés Velásquez e Nuzzo 2018; Ferrari e Nuzzo 2010; Nunan 1989). Fra le coppie formatesi, solo una era formata da studenti della stessa nazionalità; negli altri tre casi, i componenti della coppia erano di nazionalità diversa, il che potrebbe avere facilitato l'utilizzo dell'italiano come lingua veicolare[8].

Tutte le presentazioni si prestano ad essere analizzate come esempi di «interlingua» verso l'italiano accademico. Esse sono già caratterizzate dal fatto di essere in forma monologica, in cui lo scambio in presenza di destinatari è unidirezionale (Bavieri *et al*. 2005): gli ascoltatori vengono interpellati, ma con domande retoriche dalle quali chi parla non si aspetta una risposta vera e propria. La varietà accademica, inoltre, è marcata dall'utilizzo di forme passive e impersonali, da un lessico più ricercato costituito spesso da elementi greco-latini, utilizzando mezzi come la prefissazione e/o la suffissazione nonché la nominalizzazione, dal ricorso ad altre lingue e dalla presenza di citazioni di altri studi o autori che si occupano di uno specifico campo di ricerca (*inter alia* Balboni 2018; Ballarin 2017; Desideri 2011). Oltre a questo, entrano in gioco anche elementi extra-linguistici, legati alla cinesica, alla prossemica, alla vestemica, nonché alla gestione del tempo.

Analizzando le presentazioni secondo gli aspetti menzionati sopra, si può notare che la prima coppia usa il presente storico in alternanza con passato prossimo e imperfetto in modo corretto ed equilibrato, fanno uso di forme passive e di nominalizzazioni. Utilizzano, inoltre, il lessico microlinguistico della letteratura e ricorrono a connettivi tipici del discorso accademico. Per quanto riguarda

[8] Dalle risposte ai questionari finali, si veda il paragrafo successivo, si rileva come l'inglese sia anche stato usato come lingua di comunicazione durante la progettazione e la realizzazione dell'attività.

la prossemica: lo studente 01 nella nostra ricerca si alza in piedi indicando il *ppt* ai compagni: azione questa tipica del docente durante una lezione frontale.

La seconda coppia fa un grande utilizzo di diverse lingue e varietà linguistiche attraverso *code switching* e *code mixing* tipici dell'italiano neo-standard, descrivendoli con gli opportuni termini microlinguistici della linguistica. Anch'essi si avvalgono di si passivanti e congiuntivi con verbi di opinione e utilizzano espressioni tipiche della descrizione di analisi di risultati e descrizione di grafici. In aggiunta, propongono una riflessione metalinguistica sull'uso della lingua da parte dei giovani indicando le differenze con quanto visto in classe, il che è indice della rielaborazione dei contenuti avvenuta alla luce della ricerca effettuata. Anche in questa presentazione si assiste all'utilizzo della lavagna per spiegare i dati ottenuti tramite il sondaggio fatto per la ricerca. Nondimeno i linguaggi non verbali, anche in riferimento ai modelli culturali accademici nel Paese di origine, potrebbero essere aspetti da indagare ulteriormente con altri studi su campioni più numerosi.

Gli stessi comportamenti linguistici relativi all'uso dell'italiano accademico si ritrovano nella presentazione della terza coppia.

Per quanto riguarda la quarta coppia, rispetto alle precedenti, si riscontra una maggiore enfasi nel segnalare riferimenti a studiosi e linguisti italiani sul tema presentato. Si fa, inoltre, un ampio uso di esempi esplicativi mettendo così in atto una riflessione metalinguistica, tramite la revisione di quanto appreso in classe per mezzo di un raffronto con la propria lingua materna.

Da quanto emerso, si può vedere come stia avvenendo il passaggio da BICS. a CALP. (Cummins 1979) dove l'italiano viene usato come una vera e propria lingua accademica. Ciò si riscontra non solo nel linguaggio ma anche nel *modus presentandi* degli attori coinvolti: si evince dall'ordinamento degli argomenti nelle *slide* delle presentazioni, da come sono effettuati i passaggi dei turni di parola, dai molteplici riferimenti con domande retoriche al pubblico atti a mantenere viva l'attenzione (Ciliberti e Anderson 1999).

Appare, quindi, che la parte di corso di italiano metalinguistico abbia in qualche modo stimolato la curiosità degli apprendenti che hanno impostato la ricerca su uno dei contenuti che più li aveva colpiti in classe per la vicinanza con la propria esperienza linguistica e di vita. Ogni coppia ha, inoltre, dimostrato una forte collaborazione, concretizzata attraverso il rispetto dei turni di parola e gli espliciti riferimenti a quanto detto dall'altro partecipante. L'interazione a coppie ha probabilmente favorito la motivazione e il desiderio del successo comune, permettendo un abbassamento del livello di ansia rispetto a quanto sarebbe potuto avvenire in una *performance* in solitaria. La collaborazione tra pari per un obiettivo comune, infatti, rafforza e sostiene la motivazione (*inter alia* Comoglio e Cardoso 1996; Johnson *et al*. 1996; Pavan ed Ellerani 2004).

Questo lavoro sembra, quindi, aver favorito non solo lo sviluppo di competenze metalinguistiche ma anche quello di abilità di comprensione e produzione in una varietà diafasicamente alta di italiano e di abilità trasversali quali

critical thinking, *problem solving*, *team working* che sono indispensabili per attivi cittadini del mondo (Fragai *et al*. 2017).

1.4.3 Il questionario finale

Successivamente si è chiesto agli apprendenti di rispondere a un questionario in lingua italiana con un duplice scopo: attivare una riflessione di tipo metacognitivo sul percorso fatto e raccogliere un *feedback* per poter migliorare il progetto nelle edizioni future.

Probabilmente, essendo il questionario diffuso dopo la fine del corso e in concomitanza con il periodo di esami, solamente una metà dei discenti ha espresso le proprie opinioni tramite il questionario.

Esso era composto da 18 domande, di cui otto sotto forma di Scala Likert, mentre le rimanenti erano domande aperte. Gli *item* indagavano su quanto fosse piaciuta l'attività di presentazione orale; sulla loro percezione in merito all'utilità della presentazione per l'apprendimento linguistico in generale, sullo sviluppo della capacità di esposizione orale, sull'apprendimento lessicale, sul miglioramento della comprensione della composizione morfo-sintattica della frase italiana; sulla collaborazione; su quanto, a loro parere, la propria competenza plurilingue avesse apportato benefici nell'apprendimento della lingua italiana e infine si chiedevano chiarimenti sulle risposte date al punto precedente. Le successive due domande interrogavano sulla percezione dei vantaggi portati dal plurilinguismo di ciascuno nella progettazione e nella realizzazione dell'attività di presentazione orale in modalità CLIL. Le altre indagavano sulla motivazione che li aveva spinti a scegliere l'argomento della presentazione, sulla modalità di realizzazione del *task*, su cosa avessero imparato da questa attività, su cosa fosse piaciuto maggiormente e, viceversa, su cosa fosse piaciuto meno, su cosa si sarebbe voluto modificare di questo progetto. Si chiedeva agli studenti di esprimere un giudizio sulla propria *performance* durante la presentazione orale e infine si lasciava lo spazio per eventuali ulteriori commenti.

I quesiti sotto forma di Scala Likert hanno riportato risultati decisamente positivi.

Le risposte aperte che spiegano le scelte del quesito precedente indicano come il fatto di conoscere una lingua romanza, nello specifico il francese, possa essere un fattore coadiuvante (Fiorenza e Bonvino 2011; Fiorenza *et al*. 2018), ma altri indicano che lingue come il tedesco e l'inglese siano state altresì influenti perché talvolta nel lessico si ritrova la stessa radice semantica. Tale aiuto a livello di intercomprensione è reso più facile dalle varietà di lingua scritta rispetto a quelle che fanno riferimento all'oralità. Anche gli studenti che hanno come madrelingua lingue dell'Estremo Oriente sostengono che la conoscenza dell'inglese li ha aiutati nell'apprendimento dell'italiano (a tal proposito si veda Cherici 2021). Altri, invece, parlano dell'inglese sia come influenza per l'apprendimento dell'italiano, sia come lingua ponte in caso di *impasse* comunicative e

come possibilità di accedere a più fonti per la ricerca. Dalle risposte aperte, inoltre, emerge come il fatto di trovarsi in un contesto di immersione linguistica sia stato d'aiuto.

Il questionario, nonostante raccolga i dati di pochi informanti, fornisce comunque un *feedback* significativo sull'attività di presentazione orale in modalità CLIL proposta dalle docenti al termine del corso di italiano. Si possono ritrovare, infatti, i punti di forza come la collaborazione con persone provenienti da Paesi, culture e lingue diverse; il plurilinguismo come fattore che andrebbe ulteriormente esplorato per una maggiore valorizzazione dell'individuo e dell'arricchimento che ne può derivare per tutto il gruppo classe al fine di un apprendimento più effettivo e duraturo; la possibilità che si presenta con *task* di questo tipo di solleticare la curiosità degli apprendenti, di lasciarli liberi di «esplorare» la lingua che stanno apprendendo, con attività che favoriscono il *critical thinking* e il *problem solving*, oramai indispensabili per i cittadini del mondo. I punti che, al contrario, andrebbero rivisti sono più legati alle tempistiche che questa tipologia di progetti richiede: andrebbero quindi proposti in anticipo e lasciato maggior tempo per la presentazione.

1.4.4 L'analisi collettiva degli output

Dopo l'analisi singola dei tre diversi *output (*autobiografie linguistiche, presentazioni orali e risposte aperte al questionario di *feedback)*, se ne è fatta una collettiva, per poter capire in che modo si fosse sviluppata l'interlingua degli apprendenti durante il percorso fatto.

Si è prima fatta una ricerca quantitativa basata sul lessico (vedi sezione 4.4.1) e successivamente una di tipo qualitativo (vedi sezione 4.4.2) in modo da poter avere uno sguardo il più ampio possibile su quanto i dati raccolti offrono.

1.4.4.1 L'analisi dei testi con AIWL[9]

Per quanto riguarda la descrizione dell'italiano accademico scritto sono state redatte finora due liste lessicali: rispettivamente da Ferreri (2005) e da Spina (2010)[10]. Nonostante si sia consapevoli del fatto che tali liste siano insufficienti a determinare «l'accademicità» di un testo, sia esso scritto od orale, si ritiene che un'indagine basata su di esse possa comunque permettere di fare un'analisi del discorso quantitativa e fornire un indice di quanto la lingua utilizzata si avvicini alla varietà dell'italiano accademico, anche nell'ottica per cui la competenza les-

[9] *Academic Italian Word List*.

[10] In una fase successiva della ricerca sarà da considerare il contributo di Mastrantonio et al. (2025) che non era ancora stato pubblicato nel momento in cui è stata sviluppata la ricerca di cui si tratta in questo contributo.

sicale di uno studente non italofono è il mezzo grazie al quale egli può rispondere a determinate funzioni comunicative nel più appropriato dei modi per il contesto in cui la comunicazione avviene.

Nella fattispecie, per il presente studio si è fatto riferimento alla lista di Spina denominata *Academic Italian Word List* (AIWL), verificando la presenza dei lemmi e delle collocazioni dell'AIWL per mezzo del software MAXQDA nel seguente *corpus* di testi:

a. 8 autobiografie linguistiche degli apprendenti facenti parte dello studio;
b. 4 trascrizioni delle presentazioni orali[11];
c. 1 documento che raccoglie tutte le risposte aperte fornite al questionario di *feedback* dell'attività di presentazione orale

per un totale di 13 documenti.

Nelle autobiografie linguistiche il numero di lemmi appartenenti alla AIWL è ancora esiguo se non addirittura assente, mentre, nelle presentazioni essi aumentano in modo vistoso e permangono, anche se in misura minore, nelle risposte date alla *survey*. La maggior quantità di lemmi e collocazioni dell'AIWL nelle presentazioni orali potrebbe essere favorita dal genere testuale dell'atto comunicativo richiesto agli studenti. Ciononostante, rispondendo qui, anche se in modo parziale, alle domande di ricerca, è possibile vedere come gli apprendenti si avvicinino all'uso di una terminologia propria dell'italiano accademico e che esso cominci ad essere riutilizzato anche in altri contesti meno formali e con minori richieste performative.

1.4.5 L'analisi delle funzioni comunicative

Come si è notato in precedenza, un'analisi per mezzo di liste di parole può dare solamente dei risultati parziali. Proprio per questo motivo si è deciso di sottoporre i 13 documenti di cui sopra a un'ulteriore indagine di tipo qualitativo tramite il *software* MAXQDA. Facendo riferimento a Mastrantonio (2021, 2022, 2023) e a Baglioni e Mastrantonio (2024), è stata compiuta una ricerca su quali parole ed espressioni siano state adoperate dagli apprendenti coinvolti nello studio per esplicitare gli aspetti funzionali e logico-argomentativi legati ai temi trattati. Ciò è stato fatto allo scopo di verificare le domande di ricerca (vedi sezione 3) e valutare se e in quale modo ci sia un avvicinamento all'italiano accademico negli *output* scritti e orali dei discenti.

[11] Per le trascrizioni delle presentazioni orali degli ci si è avvalse del software Transkriptor (https://transkriptor.com/it/). I testi prodotti dal software sono poi stati revisionati manualmente dalle autrici insieme alle registrazioni video per evitare la possibilità di errori di trascrizione da parte del software utilizzato.

Nei documenti selezionati si è scelto di ricercare come fossero esplicitate le seguenti funzioni:

a. i rapporti di causa-effetto e fine: nella maggior parte dei documenti si usano «*per, perché, così*» e altri sinonimi con 79 ricorrenze distribuite nei testi uniformemente; forme anaforiche di sostituzione più consone al registro accademico si ritrovano solamente tre volte e solo nelle trascrizioni delle presentazioni *(*«*la motivazione è…*», «*per sostenere la nostra ricerca…*»*;* «*a causa di…*»);
b. le connessioni logico-argomentative sono sostenute da connettivi testuali generalmente avversativi, concessivi o ipotetici ancora legati al livello A2 e si ripropongono 45 volte nelle forme di «*ma*», «*però*», «*anche se*», «*se*» e simili; tuttavia, è necessario menzionare il fatto che cominciano ad apparirne altre, per un totale di 9, che mostrano un'evoluzione dell'interlingua degli apprendenti verso un lessico appartenente a livelli più alti come «*ciononostante*», «*tuttavia*», «*comunque*» e simili;
c. per quanto concerne l'esemplificazione, è spesso utilizzata l'espressione «*per esempio*» (con una ricorrenza di 12 volte); tuttavia si intravede, attraverso il ricorso ad espressioni anaforiche di sostituzione, il passaggio verso un registro di italiano più formale e diafasicamente più alto. Tra esse sono presenti le seguenti: «*per essere preciso*», «*come il poeta dice*», «*come vediamo in un momento*».

Inoltre, si riscontra, a partire dai testi delle trascrizioni, l'inizio dell'utilizzo di connettivi testuali come «*prima di tutto*», «*riassumendo*», «*in sintesi*», «*siamo giunte alle conclusioni*» e così via, tipici marcatori del discorso accademico. Altre caratteristiche peculiari della varietà dell'italiano accademico possono essere ricondotte alle espressioni per introdurre il tema attraverso l'uso del modo condizionale (a titolo esemplificativo: «*Vorremmo presentarvi la nostra ricerca…*») e, specificatamente per le presentazioni orali, sono presenti riferimenti al compagno («*come 02 ha detto*», «*come 07 ha già spiegato*») e al pubblico («*conoscete…?*», «*come abbiamo visto…*», «*osserviamo*», «*come potete vedere*»).

Ad aggiunta di ciò, si è riscontrato un solo caso in cui viene espressa la propria opinione in modo esplicito e ciò avviene in una delle autobiografie linguistiche. È interessante notare come nelle presentazioni orali siano quindi seguite le regole del registro accademico che preferiscono le forme impersonali e passivanti per rimandare a un senso di oggettività e scientificità dell'argomento trattato.

A completamento di quanto scritto sopra, nei documenti presi in considerazione per la ricerca si sono annotate 44 collocazioni formali che potrebbero essere parte del linguaggio accademico. Mentre sono totalmente assenti nelle biografie linguistiche, esse iniziano a essere presenti nelle presentazioni orali;

tuttavia altre quattro appaiono nelle risposte aperte date al questionario di *feedback* finale, il che potrebbe indicare, se non un'acquisizione in senso proprio di terminologia e costruzioni tipiche del linguaggio accademico, quantomeno una sensibilizzazione a forme di italiano di livello intermedio-alto che porterebbe al loro riutilizzo in modo sempre più frequente anche in contesti testuali «meno accademici» rispetto a quello di una presentazione orale su un tema di linguistica, sociolinguistica o storia della lingua italiana. Di seguito, a titolo esemplificativo, si riportano alcune delle espressioni reperite nei testi delle presentazioni e nelle risposte al questionario finale: «*entrare in contatto con...*»; «*si tenga presente che…*»; «*caratterizzato da…*»; «*un dibattito molto sentito*», «*mettere … al di sopra di…*»; «*...accelera questo fenomeno*»; «*è un filo conduttore*»; «*tenere conto di…*»; «*questo risultato implica che…*»; «*con connotazione…*».

Concludendo, si può vedere che le due analisi condotte, quella di corrispondenze con AIWL e quella sulle funzioni testuali portano a giungere ai medesimi risultati: appare un cambiamento nelle produzioni degli apprendenti che li porta ad usare gradualmente, per mezzo delle attività svolte, una varietà della lingua italiana che si avvicina a quella di tipo accademico. Si osserva, quindi, quello che Franceschini (2003) chiama *unfocussed language learning*, ossia l'apprendimento linguistico «passando» solo attraverso l'esposizione e senza un focus specifico.

1.5 Conclusioni

Dalle analisi condotte e descritte è possibile notare come l'utilizzo di MM renda la ricerca più completa grazie alla presenza di metodologie di tipo qualitativo e quantitativo che portano a confermare in modo analogo i risultati emersi.

Nel presente studio si assiste a un cambiamento nelle interlingue degli apprendenti per quanto concerne il lessico e le strutture morfo-sintattiche che porta a un avvicinamento precoce alla varietà diafasicamente alta dell'italiano accademico. Ciò è dimostrato dal fatto che nelle prime produzioni, cioè nelle autobiografie linguistiche degli studenti, non sia rilevata nessuna presenza di tale varietà dell'italiano, mentre nelle presentazioni orali se ne riscontra un uso notevole che persiste, in forma lieve, nell'ultimo tipo di output finale ottenuto per mezzo del questionario di *feedback*. Si assiste a quello che Taguchi e Roever (2017) definiscono come *incidental pragmatics learning*, nello specifico l'abilità di utilizzare la variante diafasicamente alta dell'italiano accademico, quando il target dell'istruzione non è l'italiano accademico, le cui forme, durante le lezioni, non erano state presentate in modo esplicito.

Rispondendo, quindi, alle domande di ricerca, appare che l'insegnamento di contenuti base di linguistica e sociolinguistica della lingua italiana in lingua italiana possa favorire lo sviluppo del linguaggio accademico anche a un livello inferiore al B2 del QCER, in una sorta di i+3 (Ballarin, 2017) e ciò è percepibile, come dimostrato dalle analisi precedenti, nel lessico, nelle collocazioni e nelle

strutture morfo-sintattiche, nonché negli aspetti linguistici e paralinguistici (vedi sezione 3).

Sono d'altronde necessarie ulteriori ricerche per almeno due motivi: in primo luogo, il campione esaminato è molto piccolo e secondariamente sarebbe auspicabile uno studio che chiarisse in che misura un corso di italiano affiancato da un corso di metalinguistica in italiano in modalità simile al CLIL e basato su *task* appropriati aiuti lo sviluppo di varietà accademiche di italiano in questa tipologia specifica di discenti. Interessante sarebbe capire se lo sviluppo dell'italiano accademico sia favorito da input CLIL specifici o dalla metodologia *task-based* o da entrambi e in che misura. Servirebbero inoltre ulteriori simili studi longitudinali sugli *input* degli apprendenti per capire se si possa parlare di vera acquisizione.

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2. Fostering global competence through positive education: The role of internationalization in language learning

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The paper explores the intersection of internationalization and positive education within the context of language learning. With globalization increasingly shaping the interconnectedness of societies, the ability to communicate across languages and cultures has become paramount. Positive education, emphasizing well-being, resilience, and character development, offers a holistic approach to language acquisition that goes beyond mere linguistic competence. Drawing on theoretical frameworks and empirical studies, this paper examines how internationalization initiatives in language education can enhance learners' global competence and socio-emotional skills. Furthermore, it investigates the potential benefits of incorporating positive education principles into language learning curricula, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for learners. Through a synthesis of research findings, practical implications, and future directions, this paper advocates for the integration of internationalization and positive education as a transformative approach to language education in our globalized society.

Keywords: internationalization; positive education; language learning; global competence; socio-emotional skills

2.1 The need for global competence in the 21st century

In an era defined by digital and global ties, the ability to communicate across cultures, navigate diverse perspectives and engage with global issues is more important than ever. Furthermore, globalization has transformed education, business, and social interactions, making global competence a crucial skill for indi-

viduals who seek to thrive in the modern landscape. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2018), therefore, global competence stands for the ability to:

- investigate global and intercultural issues,
- recognize different perspectives and appreciate cultural diversity,
- communicate effectively across linguistic and cultural boundaries,
- take informed and responsible action to improve global conditions.

Consequently, as societies become interdependent language proficiency transcends academic skills to become a key to intercultural understanding, international collaboration, and personal growth. As Mansilla and Jackson (2011) stated, «Globally competent individuals are aware, curious, and interested in learning about the world and how it works […] recognizing multiple perspectives, communicating their views effectively, and taking action to improve conditions» (p. xiii).

As a result, language education plays a fundamental role in developing global competence, by allowing students to engage directly with other cultures, challenge biases, and expand their worldview.

2.1.1 The role of language learning in global education

Admittedly, language learning extends beyond grammar and vocabulary; it is a bridge to cultural understanding that deepens awareness of diverse traditions, histories, and values. Karlik (2023, p. 6) observes that «it's often impossible to fully understand one without also understanding the other», highlighting the intrinsic link between language and culture.

Furthermore, language learning is a fundamental tool for international mobility: proficiency in multiple languages increases opportunities for education, employment, and cross-cultural collaboration. Through immersive courses and exchange programs, students are given the opportunity to improve their knowledge of a language and culture, as well as their global skills, since they are offered the «firsthand experience of linguistic and cultural diversity, fostering empathy, tolerance, and cross-cultural communication skills» (Ro'ziqulovna, 2024, p. 398).

Additionally, language learning provides a cognitive advantage: indeed, bilingualism is linked to enhanced problem-solving, creativity, and adaptability, all essential traits in a rapidly evolving world since, as argued by Kharkhurin (2024), foreign language learners «develop a heightened sensitivity to the environmental cues and subtle nuances available in different linguistic and cultural contexts. This heightened sensitivity can extend to the perception of affordances, boosting their creative capacities» (p. 11).

However, despite the benefits of language education, many traditional approaches fail to integrate intercultural perspectives and realworld applications. Therefore, to truly foster global competence, education systems must go beyond textbooks and incorporate positive education and internationalization strategies to make language learning more meaningful, engaging, and impactful.

2.1.2 Positive education: A transformative approach to language learning

Positive Education is a growing field that integrates well-being, emotional intelligence and academic success. Based on Martin Seligman's PERMA model (2012), also known as «the five measurable elements that make up well-being» (p. 18), Positive Education emphasizes:

- Positive emotions, creating enjoyable and engaging language-learning experiences.
- Engagement, encouraging deep, meaningful interaction with the language and culture.
- Relationships, promoting supportive peer and intercultural connections.
- Meaning, linking language learning to real-world experiences and global issues.
- Accomplishment, building students' confidence in using their linguistic skills.

By fostering a growth mindset and resilience, Positive Education can thus help students overcome language anxiety, stay motivated, and develop a sense of purpose in their studies.

2.1.3 Internationalization: Expanding learning beyond borders

Internationalization is another key pillar of global education since it involves integrating international perspectives, cross-cultural exchanges, and global learning experiences into language education. Study abroad programs, for instance, provide immersive linguistic and cultural exposure, while virtual language exchanges allow students to practice languages with native speakers worldwide. Furthermore, multicultural classrooms encourage collaboration between diverse linguistic backgrounds and interdisciplinary approaches link language learning with global challenges such as sustainability, migration, and digital ethics.

According to Fang (2024), «reflecting on intercultural experiences helps students maximize the knowledge acquired in the standard classroom» (p. 249), steering them away from merely essentializing cultural differences.

2.1.4 Purpose of the study

This paper investigates how global competence, language learning, Positive Education and internationalization intersect to support holistic student development. Specifically, the study aims at:

- examining how language education contributes to global competence,
- analyzing the role of positive education in supporting language learning,
- exploring internationalization strategies that enhance language education,
- providing case studies and best practices for fostering global competence through language learning.

Ultimately, this study argues that language education must evolve beyond traditional methods and embrace a holistic, student-centered approach to prepare learners for an interrelated world.

2.2 Defining global competence

Global competence is a multidimensional capacity that enables individuals, as defined by PISA (2018), to «examine local, global and intercultural issues, understand and appreciate different perspectives and worldviews, interact successfully and respectfully with others, and take responsible action toward sustainability and collective well-being» (p. 4). Similarly, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2018), globally competent individuals are those who:

- investigate local, global, and intercultural issues,
- recognize and appreciate diverse perspectives and worldviews,
- communicate effectively and respectfully with people from different cultural backgrounds,
- take responsible action toward sustainability, equity, and social justice.

In 2014, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) further characterized global competence as the ability to use language effectively in cross-cultural interactions. This includes settings such as classrooms, virtual connections, and everyday experiences. It also involves «demonstrating cultural competence and awareness—recognizing and weighing different perspectives, acquiring and applying disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge, communicating ideas, and taking action». (p. 4).

2.2.1 Why does global competence matter?

As evidence shows, global competence matters not only for its economic and career advantages – since employers prioritize multilingual professionals who can collaborate effectively across cultures - but also for its profound social impact. Understanding diverse perspectives is critical for conflict resolution, diplomacy, and community leadership.

Furthermore, exposure to different cultures fosters personal growth by enhancing empathy, adaptability, and intellectual curiosity. This suggests that global competence is no longer optional but a core skill for the 21st century. As Binkley argues (2011), «the original measure of human capital (years of formal education completed) has been replaced by an individual's level of literacy and their capacity to access, process, evaluate and use information and to solve problems» (p. 4).

2.2.2 How language learning develops global competence

In this context, language learning serves as a gateway to cultural understanding by providing learners with both linguistic tools and cultural insights. The process enhances global competence in several ways. First, it strengthens cross-cultural communication: mastering a second language allows individuals to engage directly with people from different cultures. Moreover, bilingualism fosters greater adaptability in social and professional settings and, not surprisingly, multinational companies and diplomatic institutions prioritize employees with multilingual proficiency.

Indeed, language learning fosters perspective-taking and deepens cultural awareness. Every language is deeply tied to values, traditions, and ways of thinking. Therefore, learning a language helps students understand and appreciate cultural nuances – especially through idioms, metaphors, and historical references that often reflect a society's worldview and priorities. Learning a foreign language further promotes cognitive flexibility and critical thinking, leading students to ask questions, analyze information, and evaluate the true meaning of what they may hear, read or say. Moreover, language switching enhances cognitive agility and strengthens problem-solving abilities, while exposure to different grammatical structures improves abstract thinking.

Overall, research shows that bilingual individuals perform better in multitasking and creative problem-solving. It is thus clear that L2 students tend to reduce cultural bias and stereotyping since the direct exposure to another language challenges ethnocentric views; interacting with native speakers fosters mutual respect and appreciation and, according to the data given by current research, students participating in language immersion programs report greater cultural sensitivity.

2.2.3 Challenges in integrating global competence into language education (Table1)

Despite its benefits, developing global competence through language learning faces several challenges:

Challenge	Proposed solution
• Language anxiety and fear of making mistakes	• Use Positive Education strategies to build confidence and minimize the fear of errors.
• Limited access to immersive learning experiences	• Promote virtual language exchanges and cross-cultural projects to encourage authentic interaction.
• Excessive focus on grammar over communication	• Adopt a communicative approach that emphasizes real-world language use and global issues.
• Lack of teacher training in intercultural competence	• Implement professional development programs focused on cultural awareness and global learning strategies

By addressing these challenges, educators can create more inclusive and effective language learning environments that foster both linguistic and global competence. As Moral (2022) argues, «this development contributes to more tolerance and a shift towards a globalized approach to societal growth» (p. 4).

2.3 The role of educational institutions in promoting global competence

Schools and universities can enhance global competence in language education through:

- Integrating history, literature, and global issues into language courses through interdisciplinary learning.
- Providing immersive experiences that strengthen both language skills and cultural awareness via study abroad and exchange programs.
- Encouraging collaboration among students from diverse linguistic backgrounds in multicultural classrooms.
- Engaging students in community-based language projects (e.g., tutoring refugees, assisting non-native speakers) through service-learning opportunities.

Hence, to prepare students to navigate a cross-cultural global setting, institutions must prioritize global competence, by embedding language learning and cultural immersion programs that foster well-rounded, informed, and empathetic citizens.

2.4 Positive education as a framework for language learning

Nevertheless, traditional language education often focuses on cognitive learning while neglecting the emotional and psychological aspects of language acquisition. Positive Education, which integrates well-being, motivation, and emotional intelligence into academic learning, offers a transformative approach. Admittedly, Positive Education principles such as resilience, a growth mindset, and positive emotions can significantly enhance language learning by reducing language anxiety, increasing motivation and fostering student engagement.

It has already been emphasized that language learning is not merely a cognitive process; it is an emotional and social experience that encompasses a range of emotions varying in intensity and type. As Plonsky et al. (2022, p.1) state, «from the thrill of successfully articulating yourself to the anxiety of navigating a high-stakes encounter in an L2», language learning is deeply multifaceted.

However, many students engaging in second-language acquisition encounter challenges such as frustration, anxiety and self-doubt. In this context, Positive Education, by integrating well-being with academic learning, can play a transformative role. By fostering resilience, motivation, and emotional intelligence, Positive Education not only enhances language proficiency but also promotes global competence.

2.4.1 What is positive education?

As previously indicated, Positive Education, based on Martin Seligman's PERMA model (2012), highlights five key elements of well-being in education:

- Positive emotions, encouraging enjoyment in the learning process.
- Engagement, increasing involvement in meaningful language activities.
- Relationships, building supportive peer and teacher connections.
- Meaning, connecting language learning to real-world experiences.
- Accomplishment, recognizing progress and celebrating success.

Unlike traditional educational approaches that focus solely on cognitive development, Positive Education values emotional and psychological well-being as fundamental to academic success. Research suggests that students who experience positive emotions in learning environments retain information better, engage more actively, and develop stronger communication skills. For example, Sandholm *et al.* (2023) observed that Positive Education contributes to the development of strength and resilience by «creating a learning environment that not only focuses on the traditional school subjects but also supports students' psychological development» (p.238).

2.4.2 Positive education supports language learning

Undoubtedly, Positive Education directly enhances language learning outcomes by boosting intrinsic motivation. Evidence shows that when students perceive language learning as meaningful and enjoyable, they persist longer and engage more deeply. Moreover, Positive Education enables teachers to cultivate autonomy, curiosity and self-directed learning, all of which are essential for mastering a foreign language. In addition, language learning involves understanding diverse cultural perspectives, while Positive Education fosters openness, adaptability, and cultural sensitivity. For instance, World Savy, actively engaged in developing partnerships for K-12 students, suggests that such an approach offers «a transformative lens through which we can reimagine our education system and ensure that every student is future-ready» (https://worldsavvy.org/).

Despite these benefits, many students experience foreign language anxiety (FLA), described as a «complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors» that can strongly impact on corrective language learning process (Horwitz, 1986, p. 128). Research indicates that the feelings of tension or nervousness are particularly pronounced during listening and speaking activities. Concomitantly, Suryani & Argawati (2018) also note that speaking is «the skill by which [students] are most frequently judged, and through which they may make or lose friends» (p. 34).

Panic may arise due to intrinsic factors, such as negative self-perceptions and concerns about peer or teacher evaluations; and extrinsic factors, including language proficiency and varying social and cultural contexts in which L2 learning occurs. Learners often feel more stressed and anxious in classrooms where repetitive tasks do not address their personal communication needs. Moreover, the teacher's central role, as well as oral presentations, can trigger anxiety due to the fear of making mistakes or appearing incompetent. Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) argue that perfectionism drives students to preserve a positive image in the eyes of teachers and peers. Consequently, a positive approach by teachers, including corrective and constructive feedback, can mitigate this anxiety. Indeed, Positive Education promotes a growth mindset, encouraging students to view mistakes as learning opportunities rather than failures. Discussing anxiety openly with the entire class, for instance, can help students understand that such feelings are common among language learners. Furthermore, encouraging students to focus on their strengths and personal traits can build confidence and self-esteem. Therefore, incorporating activities like peer interactions, real-life conversations and digital exchanges reinforce both language skills and interpersonal connections.

2.4.3 Practical applications of positive education in language classrooms

Educators can integrate Positive Education into language learning through several practical approaches:

- Mindfulness and Stress Reduction Strategies: Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is a meditation therapy, originally designed for stress management, and now used to treat various conditions such as depression and anxiety. Breathing exercises, visualization, and gratitude journaling help students manage language-learning stress.
- Gamification and Interactive Learning: incorporating games, storytelling, and project-based learning increases engagement and motivation.
- Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs: SEL programs help both young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals. According to Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/, 2024), teaching students how to navigate emotions, build relationships and set personal goals contributes to enhanced language fluency and confidence.
- Authentic communication opportunities: creating real-world language experiences through cultural immersion, study abroad programs, or digital exchanges, strengthens language retention and global awareness.

Overall, by merging Positive Education with language learning, students not only acquire linguistic proficiency but also develop the resilience, empathy, and global competence necessary to navigate an interconnected world.

2.5 The role of internationalization in language education

In today's globalized world, internationalization in education is more essential than ever. In the realm of language education, it provides opportunities for real-world linguistic engagement, intercultural exchanges, and global collaboration. It encompasses study-abroad programs, virtual exchanges, and interdisciplinary learning, which collectively enhance language proficiency and global competence while also addressing challenges such as accessibility and curriculum adaptation.

2.5.1 Concept and importance of internationalization

Internationalization in education refers to «integrating an international and intercultural dimension into the teaching, research, and service functions of the institution», as Knight (1994, p. 7) argued in one of the first studies on the real meaning of this concept.

In the context of language education, internationalization provides students with exposure to diverse linguistic and cultural perspectives, preparing

them for an interconnected world. Indeed, key objectives of internationalization in language education include:

- enhancing cross-cultural communication skills through authentic interactions,
- developing global competence by fostering an understanding of diverse worldviews,
- increasing linguistic proficiency through engagement with native speakers and real-world contexts.

Therefore, as globalization accelerates, language education must move beyond classroom instruction and incorporate international experiences that enable students to apply their language skills in meaningful, real-world situations. Students realize that the language they are learning is a language they can use in everyday life to interact with people, to share opinions and points of view on current issues. Hence, developing this awareness is crucial since, as Worgan (https://michelleworgan.com/, 2023) notes, «we are setting them on the path towards making English a natural part of their daily life.»

2.5.2 Strategies for internationalizing language education

Educators and institutions can promote internationalization through several key strategies:

- Mobility programs and exchange initiatives, i.e. Study abroad programs (such as Erasmus+, Fulbright, etc.), allowing students to immerse themselves in a language-rich environment; as well as international student exchange programs to promote cross-cultural interactions and language exposure. These strategies, however, pose some challenges, such as financial constraints and accessibility issues that can limit participation. Institutions should thus explore scholarships and virtual alternatives to increase inclusivity.
- Virtual exchange and collaborative online learning: indeed, digital globalization enables virtual language partnerships between classrooms worldwide, including activities such as telecollaboration projects, where students engage in real-time discussions with peers from different countries; or language tandem programs, where native speakers of two languages exchange conversation practice. The benefits are easily recognized: both strategies offer cost-effective, accessible opportunities for authentic language practice.
- Multilingual and culturally inclusive curricula: internationalized curricula emphasize global themes, multicultural texts, and diverse perspectives in language instruction. Besides, incorporating literature, media,

and historical narratives from different cultures enhances cultural literacy. As a result, encouraging bilingual and multilingual education policies prepares students for a globalized workforce. Stein-Smith (2016) argues that «as international educators, we can work together, and with partners in government and business, to raise awareness among young people around the world of the value of multilingualism and of foreign language skills» (p. 2258). He further advocates the need to create more opportunities for experiential learning and internships, as well as more partnerships with prospective employers. Therefore, universities and schools can establish partnerships with international institutions to facilitate knowledge exchange and research collaboration.

To this end, faculty exchange programs will allow educators to gain insights into different teaching methodologies and bring global best practices into their classrooms.

2.5.3 Challenges and solutions in internationalization (Tab. 2)

Despite its advantages, internationalization in language education faces several obstacles:

Challenge:	Proposed solution:
• Limited access to mobility or study-abroad programs	• Expanding virtual exchange programs to provide online global learning experiences
• Language anxiety and confidence issues	• Implementing Positive Education strategies to foster resilience and motivation
• Curriculum rigidity in some institutions	• Advocating for policy changes that integrate international perspectives into curricula
• Lack of teacher training in intercultural education	• Offering professional development workshops on global competence and language pedagogy

2.5.4 The future of internationalized language education

As technology advances and international mobility becomes more accessible, language education must continue to evolve. Embracing these trends will not only enhance language proficiency but also equip students with the intercultural skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world. Future trends include:

- AI-powered language learning tools for personalized and adaptive instruction.
- Expansion of hybrid learning models that blend in-person and virtual exchanges.
- Greater emphasis on transdisciplinary education, where language learning is integrated with global issues such as sustainability, human rights, and digital citizenship.

Educators can thus equip students not only with linguistic skills but also with the intercultural awareness and adaptability needed in today's society.

2.6 Best practices in internationalized language education

Following research and experimentation, institutions worldwide have implemented successful strategies that integrate language learning, global competence, and positive education. The following best practices have shown measurable success in fostering student engagement and intercultural skills:

Best practice	Description	Example institution
Project-Based Language Learning (PBLL)	Students engage in real-world problem solving using a second language.	University of Barcelona, translation projects for NGOs (https://www.inhereproject.eu/universities/university-of-barcelona-es)
Language and culture immersion programs	Short- or long-term programs where students learn in a native-speaking environment	ERASMUS+ (Italy): exchange programs emphasizing cultural adaptation (special projects at the University of Cagliari SMILE NOW, ForMed, Confucio, in https://web.unica.it/unica/it/ateneo_s04_ss020.page).
Technology-Enhanced Learning	Use of AI, VR, and gamification for interactive experiences.	Tokyo University: VR-based simulations for business Japanese learners (https://www.u-tokyo.ac.jp/adm/uci/en/projects/cyber/project_00017.html)
Service-learning in foreign languages	Community-based learning projects for further language skills and social/ cultural impact	University of Cagliari: Spanish students created a service as a digital content for information on current traditions, culture and events in Sardinia (https://iris.unica.it/handle/11584/313380).

Peer language mentorship	Pairing advanced/beginners language learners for learning support	Oxford University: student-led language mentorship programs (https://www.ox.ac.uk/research/using-research-engage/policy-engagement/training-and-development/open-peer-mentoring-scheme)

2.6.1 Positive education in language learning (Geelong Grammar School, Australia)

The Geelong Grammar School is the first and most well-known example of Positive Education impact. Since 2014, the school has pioneered the integration of this approach into their language learning curriculum emphasizing student well-being alongside academic achievement. Growth mindset training was incorporated into language instruction, encouraging students to view language learning as a process rather than a fixed skill. Additionally, mindfulness techniques were used to reduce FLA in speaking exercises. Consequently, engagement strategies were devised, including authentic language tasks (e.g., writing letters to native speakers or real-world simulations). The observed impact was remarkable: students reported higher confidence in speaking and taking language risks; students' engagement and motivation in language learning increased; the dropout rates in advanced-level language courses were significantly reduced (Robinson J., 2022).

2.6.2 Case Study 2: Internationalization through virtual exchange (SUNY COIL Program, USA)

A further significant positive impact of the PE approach is given by the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) model at SUNY (State University of New York), which connected students from different countries to engage in intercultural and language learning projects (https://coil.suny.edu/). In this model, students in Spanish, French, and English courses collaborated with peers abroad to complete assignments and discussions via online platforms. Planning real-time video conferencing allowed students to practice conversational skills in an immersive yet low-pressure setting. This implied that professors started to incorporate global challenges (e.g., climate change, human rights, cultural identity) into projects, requiring students to apply linguistic skills in real-world contexts. As a result, language fluency and cultural awareness through direct interaction with native speakers improved; students' participation and enthusiasm for language learning beyond the classroom increased, while international collaboration opportunities for the faculty expanded.

2.6.3 Lessons learned and key takeaways

Drawing from the case studies, several key insights have emerged for educators and institutions. These include:

- authenticity matters: real-world tasks (e.g., writing, speaking, and collaborating on global issues) increase motivation and retention.
- technology expands access: virtual exchanges, digital language labs, and AI-driven tools enable cross-border learning without the need for travel.
- emphasizing student well-being enhances learning: Positive Education strategies reduce language anxiety and improve self-confidence.
- intercultural exposure deepens language proficiency: language learning must go beyond vocabulary and grammar to include cultural awareness and global engagement.

Collaboration between institutions is key: successful programs often involve partnerships between universities, language schools, and international organizations.

2.7 Enhancing global competence through language education

Empirical evidence suggests that developing global competence requires more than the mere acquisition of linguistic proficiency: it demands an intercultural mindset, critical thinking skills, and the capacity to engage meaningfully with global issues. Language education, when effectively structured, can serve as a powerful vehicle for fostering these competencies. Therefore, to integrate global competence into language learning, educators and institutions can adopt various strategies through curriculum design, pedagogical innovation, and real-world applications.

2.7.1 Key strategies for enhancing global competence

In light of the points described, educators and institutions can take deliberate steps to integrate global competence into language learning through curriculum design, pedagogical approaches and real-world applications.

Consequently, culturally responsive language instruction can be implemented through the following strategies:

- integrating multicultural perspectives into language lessons,
- using authentic materials (e.g., newspapers, literature, films, and podcasts) from different cultural contexts,

- encouraging critical discussions on global topics (e.g., migration, environmental sustainability, social justice) in the target language.

For instance, an Italian language course might include debates on immigration policies in Italy, encouraging students to analyze different perspectives while developing linguistic skills.

Key strategies for experiential and immersive learning include:

- promoting study abroad programs, exchanging initiatives and community-based projects,
- utilizing virtual exchange programs (e.g. Erasmus Virtual) to connect learners with international peers
- designing simulation-based experiences, such as Model United Nations or international business negotiations conducted in the target language.

Similarly, interdisciplinary approaches to language education recommend:

- combining language learning with global studies, history and technology to encourage holistic understanding,
- offering courses that blend language acquisition with international relations, business, or environmental science,
- using project-based learning where students solve real-world global issues using the target language.

For example: a language course incorporating climate change discussions might require students to research and present sustainable policies from countries where the target language is studied.

Similarly, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is critical in Language Education as it equips learners with the skills necessary for emotional regulation, empathy, and effective interpersonal communication (Weissberg et al. 2015). In practice, SEL in language education involves:

- teaching empathy, adaptability, and perspective-taking alongside linguistic skills,
- encouraging self-reflection on cultural biases and intercultural experiences,
- providing opportunities for students to share their linguistic and cultural identities in the classroom.

Notably, language learners could maintain cultural reflection journals, where they document their experiences engaging with different linguistic communities and their evolving perceptions.

Digital technology for global engagement is also increasingly pivotal in fostering it. For instance:

- utilizing AI-driven language learning apps to personalize learning paths (apps like Duolingo, Babbel, or AI-powered chatbots enable students to practice real-time conversations with native speakers, enhancing both fluency and cultural awareness).
- creating international collaborative projects using tools like Google Docs, Padlet, and Flipgrid.
- encouraging participation in online language communities (e.g. tandem learning platforms, discussion forums).

2.7.2 Challenges and solutions in implementing global competence in language learning

Despite its benefits, integrating global competence into language education faces several challenges. The common challenges and their proposed solutions are summarized as follows:

Challenge	Solution
• Resistance to non-traditional teaching methods	• Providing professional development for teachers on innovative language pedagogy.
• Limited access to international learning experiences	• Expanding virtual exchanges and online intercultural projects.
• Overemphasis on grammar-based instruction	• Shifting towards communicative and problem-solving approaches in language teaching.
• Lack of funding for study abroad programs	• Developing scholarship opportunities and virtual alternatives.

Hence, by addressing these challenges, schools and universities can broaden access to high-quality, globally focused language education.

2.7.3 The future of global competence in language learning

As globalization continues to shape education, emerging trends indicate that the future of global competence in language learning will likely include:

- AI-assisted personalized learning: adaptive platforms that tailor language instruction to individual needs, aligning learning objectives with performance reviews and feedback, and utilizing virtual assistants to facilitate professional development (e.g., Deel Engage, Absorb LMS, EdApp, Docebo, ParadisoLMS).

- Augmented and Virtual Reality (AR/VR): creating immersive language environments that, as Okolo (2024, p. 94) suggests, lead to 'a more effortless and environmental experience and a superior understanding of the input, thereby improving communication skills and language proficiency'.
- Greater emphasis on social responsibility: teaching students to apply their language skills in humanitarian and international development contexts.

2.8 Conclusion and future directions

In an interdependent world, global competence, language learning, and positive education have become essential components of the educational process. This paper has explored how language learning fosters global competence by enabling individuals to communicate across cultures, understand diverse perspectives and engage in meaningful international dialogue. It has also highlighted that Positive Education enhances language learning by reducing foreign language anxiety, fostering motivation and creating an emotionally supportive learning environment. Evidence shows that internationalization plays a crucial role in providing students with authentic cross-cultural experiences, whether through exchange programs, virtual collaborations, or globalized curricula. This suggests that by integrating these elements educational institutions can equip students with the linguistic and intercultural skills necessary to thrive in the 21st century. Based on these findings, several actionable steps are recommended to further integrate these elements into educational practice.

To effectively implement global competence through language education, the following steps are recommended:

- Expanding internationalized curricula that incorporate multilingual and multicultural perspectives. These should include global issues (e.g., sustainability, migration, digital ethics) as discussion topics in language courses and promote bilingual and multilingual education policies at all levels.
- Enhancing access to global learning experiences, by increasing participation in study abroad programs and developing virtual exchange initiatives. Establishing partnerships between schools and universities worldwide can facilitate student and faculty exchange programs, and encourage community-based learning, where students apply language skills in real-world contexts (e.g. volunteering with immigrant communities).

- Applying Positive Education in language teaching, training language teachers in growth mindset principles and strategies to reduce foreign language anxiety; implementing social-emotional learning techniques, such as mindfulness exercises, resilience-building activities and positive reinforcement; fostering student-led learning communities that encourage peer mentorship and collaborative language practice.
- Utilizing technology for inclusive global education, by leveraging AI, VR and gamification to create immersive language learning environments; using digital platforms for real-time cross-cultural exchanges, allowing students to practice foreign languages with native speakers worldwide; developing blended learning models that combine traditional classroom instruction with global digital resources.

While significant progress has been made in integrating global competence, language learning, and positive education, several areas require further exploration:

Research focus	Key questions
• Effectiveness of Positive Education in language learning	• How do mindset-based interventions impact student performance and confidence in foreign language acquisition?
• Long-term impact of internationalization	• Do study abroad and virtual exchange programs lead to measurable gains in global competence and linguistic proficiency?
• Equity in global language education	• How can institutions ensure equal access to international learning opportunities, regardless of students' socioeconomic backgrounds?
• Technology in Language Education	• What role will AI and VR technologies play in future language learning models? How do they impact student engagement and fluency?

Expanding research in these areas will help refine educational policies and teaching practices, ensuring that future generations are not only linguistically skilled and culturally aware but also globally competent. By embracing these principles, schools and universities can shape individuals who communicate effectively, think critically about global issues and engage meaningfully with the world.

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3. Study Abroad (SA): Student views on multilingualism, interculturality and formal and informal language learning

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Study Abroad (SA) programmes have gained substantial interest in higher education research. The extent to which they impact proficiency, attitudes towards the linguaculture of the target country, and students' use of English when this is not the main language of communication (Mitchell 2023) remains to be fully explored. This study aims to provide insights into students' experiences during SA stays with particular attention to the perceived learning of a foreign language and of English, the multilingual and intercultural dimension of the experience and informal contact with the target linguaculture and/or with English. In parallel, students' motivations for participating in an SA programme are investigated. The study surveys a sample of 99 undergraduate and postgraduate students from Italian universities who have taken part in SA programmes through a questionnaire with multiple-choice and open-ended items. Results show the highly multilingual and multicultural nature of SA experiences. Students overall perceive the experience as beneficial for improving their language competences in the target L2, which they also engage with extensively in informal contexts. English is often used even in cases when it is not the main language of instruction, and students believe their competence can benefit from informal contact with the language. Multilingualism is an asset of the SA experience, and SA is perceived to have intercultural, linguistic and social advantages in addition to enhancing emotional intelligence, problem-solving and coping skills.

Keywords: Study Abroad (SA), multilingualism, interculturality, formal and informal language learning

3.1 Introduction

Study Abroad (SA) is a well-established practice that offers students the opportunity to complete part of their degree programme through educational experiences outside their home country. Sanz and Morales-Front (2018:1) define it as «an academic experience that allows students to complete part of their degree program through educational activities outside their country […]» (Sanz and Morales-Front 2018:1). Based on this definition, SA can encompass a broad spectrum of educational activities ranging from programmes such as Erasmus in Europe, where students attend courses in a foreign country for one or two semesters, to programmes where, for example, international students are enrolled full-time in a bachelor's or master's degree abroad. In the contemporary era, the link between the internationalisation of higher education and SA is strictly intertwined, as articulated by Tullock and Ortega (2017). Following the pandemic, the concept of SA has taken on new forms, with students participating in SA programmes online from their home countries.

There are, indeed, many classifications of SA programmes, one of which is provided by Isabelli-García and Isabelli (2020), who divide education abroad programmes into two different models, the first of which is generally of short duration. As these international students are required to make a considerable effort to learn new subjects, the host university ensures they are exposed to an academic and teaching structure like that of their home university. The second model is aimed at international students, who can experience studying abroad either in a group or individually for a longer period or an entire study cycle. Unlike the first model, international students taking part in this type of programme attend courses in their field of specialisation and experience university life in exactly the same way as local students do. In most cases, classes are taught in the language of the host country.

From a learning adaptation and psychological point of view, the SA experience is supposed to be structured to unfold across several chronological stages, with an initial highly positive moment followed by more negative ones, culminating in a more balanced perception of the overall experience. Although the SA experience can be inherently destabilising, it is concurrently essential in leading to a change of identity.

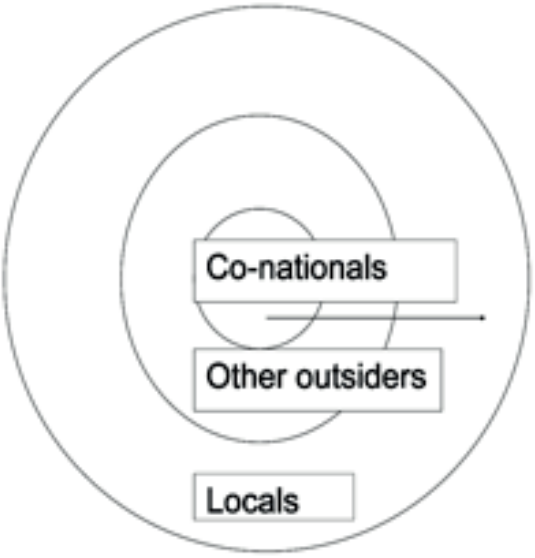
SA offers a particularly interesting multilingual and intercultural context since many students may not only go to English-speaking countries to study abroad but also to countries where both English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) and the local language are used at the university level. These cases are not at all rare, and they allow students to experience university learning and teaching both through English and the local language, which they must use to interact with locals outside of university life. This mix creates a unique multilingual and intercultural context (Martínez-Arbelaiz, Areizaga, and Camps 2017; Mitchell 2023).

For these reasons, SA serves as a setting where both formal and informal learning can take place. While students may explicitly learn the local language, they also interact with peers, local people, and members of the academic community, as explained by Sockett (2023: 116): «[…] the study abroad (SA) context is of particular interest, since mobility candidates may interact with a range of online learning resources in formal, non-formal and informal contexts before, during and after mobility» SA provides the learner with more consistent «access to both formal and informal input than the instructed learner outside the TL community and the naturalistic learner within that community» (Regan, Howard and Lemée 2009: 20).

Coleman (2013, 2015) coined the terms *L2land* and *L2landers* to highlight the significance of intercultural competence in SA. He developed Coleman's concentric circles (see Figure 3.1), a representation of study abroad social networks (2013: 31) that he describes as follows:

> The inner circle, unless an agreement is in force to use the L2, will use the L1: part of the function of the co-national community is to relieve the stress and effort of extensive target language use. The outer circle will use one or sometimes more L2s (French and Wolof in the case of Senegal). The middle circle will use a Lingua Franca or code-switch among Lingua Francas, but the principal choices will be the L2 and/or English (Coleman 2013: 33).

Figure 3.1 Coleman's circles (2015)



Despite the large number of studies on SA, scholars believe that the connection between language learning and study abroad has yet to be fully explored because of the large amount of contextual and personal variability (Block 2007). As Isabelli-García and Isabelli (2020: 3) point out: «Even though the consensus is that study abroad has an impact on language acquisition, research shows considerable individual variation in language gains».

The present study explores student views after participating in SA programmes, following calls for more qualitative approaches that look into the students' experience (Curto García-Nieto 2018: 13). Understanding «if and how intercultural connections are formed, as well as any potential barriers to interaction» is essential as «it may be possible to better assist SA participants in obtaining the maximum benefit from their experiences in a host country» (Smith 2018: 328). Peckenpaugh (2018) further developed the idea that unpacking the SA experience once it is finished represents an excellent way of gaining intercultural awareness through experiential learning: «The unpacking of one's experience upon return can be the crucial step in moving study abroad from a cocurricular endeavor to a meaningful portion of a student's education and life» (p. 476).

3.2 Literature review

Since this study aims to explore student views after participating in SA programmes in terms of their multilingual and intercultural experience as well as their perception of learning the language (whether English or the local language) in both formal and informal ways, the literature review of the paper will illustrate the results from a selection of studies on these topics.

When considering linguistic gains, there are two broad and recent studies on SA: Yang (2016) performed a meta-analysis indicating fluency and vocabulary as the main advantages while Tullock and Ortega (2017) performed a scoping review of 401 publications from 1995 to 2017 that supported gains in oral fluency (see also Juan-Garau 2018). The scoping review highlighted that while SA holds potential for linguistic development, methodological issues and the monolingual bias in research limit current understanding of this phenomenon. Thus, embracing a multilingual framework could offer a richer, more accurate picture of SA's impact.

Improved pronunciation has also been reported as benefitting from SA programmes (Isabelli-García and Isabelli 2020) along with gains in all four skills (reading, listening, writing, and speaking) and in intercultural awareness. Regarding morphosyntax and lexis, the findings are more inconclusive.

> In general, research has shown that study abroad facilitates the acquisition of discrete target language vocabulary in addition to making meaningful associations among lexical items. However, similar to the research on morpho-syntactic features, it is important to highlight here that making conclusions based on these studies is difficult given the different variables present: student proficiency levels, program length, type of program, control group use, data elicitation measures, among other factors (Isabelli-García and Isabelli 2020: 75).

Smith (2018) designed two questionnaires (pre- and post-stay) for 32 international students in New York State, along with journals. The students reported using the L2 regularly outside of class with positive views towards cross-cultural interaction and making friends. Most students realised that such outside use is a good way to progress in the L2.

Llanes**,** Arnó and Mancho-Barés (2016) studied the development of English in an SA context in a non-English speaking country with a sample of 39 Catalan/Spanish students where English was a medium of instruction. The study focused on writing skills and found significant improvement in overall language proficiency together with a growth in lexical complexity and highlighted that increased exposure to English in social and academic settings likely supported lexical development. At the same time, lack of formal instruction and less focus on writing during SA may explain the limited progress in syntactic complexity and subordination.

The importance of the duration of stay abroad as a factor for language gains is supported by research from Serrano, Tragant, and Llanes (2012). Their longitudinal study tracked Spanish university students attending a British university, collecting data at three points over an academic year. While fluency and lexical richness improved during the first semester, gains in oral and written accuracy emerged more slowly, becoming evident only during the second semester.

Lexical and fluency improvements, alongside enhanced sociolinguistic and pragmatic awareness, are frequently observed in SA contexts, as noted by Regan, Howard, and Lemée (2009). Their review on L2 gains also pointed out that listening and speaking skills are often the most developed. In one specific example, Irish students learning French in an SA context demonstrated long-term sociopragmatic gains. Similarly, Churchill and DuFon (2006) noted gains in grammar and pragmatics but also in other aspects of the language in their review of SA literature.

In the early 2000s, Pérez-Vidal (2014b) led the SALA project, exploring the linguistic, intercultural, and motivational impacts of SA experiences following a period of formal instruction (FI). According to the study,

> [f]ollowing the SA period learners show substantial progress in oral skills as measured through integrative tasks, as far as fluency and accuracy are concerned, and also listening, but not in phonological development regarding both production and perception; results for the latter are even significantly better after FI at home. When written abilities are measured there is also improvement in fluency, accuracy and lexical complexity. Similarly lexicogrammatical abilities show significant improvement after SA but not after FI, when measured through discrete point tests. The positive effects found in the short-term are maintained in the long-term. As for the three psychosocial learner attributes explored, motivation and beliefs and intercultural awareness, they seem to benefit significantly from a period spent abroad […] (p. 46).

The discussion above has dealt with the aspects of learning a second language while studying abroad from a mostly linguistic point of view, analysing the development of fluency and language skills, pronunciation, and grammar in both formal and informal contexts. However, study abroad represents another relevant, less immediate, but equally appreciable opportunity: the social and intercultural enrichment for students. Therefore, SA studies should investigate not only purely linguistic gains but also those that emerge as the by-product of language use. For example, Kinginger (2013) highlights that SA enhances social interaction:

> First, overall the research presents an encouraging picture of study abroad; although the gains documented are sometimes modest, study abroad has the potential to enhance students' language ability in every domain. Secondly, study abroad appears to be particularly useful for the development of abilities related to social interaction, precisely those abilities that are least amenable to classroom instruction (p. 4).

The immersion experience of SA encourages students to critically analyse their own cultural identities, understand the concept of interculturality, reflect on their L2 learning both inside and outside the classroom, and build new social relationships. This process often results in greater self-awareness, which can lead to dissonance but ultimately transforms personal identities and adjusts future goals. The term «global citizenry», discussed by Tarrant, Rubin, and Stoner (2014), is associated with these transformations, though its definition remains multifaceted.

At the same time, language plays a crucial role in shaping international social interactions during study abroad, as highlighted by Pellegrino Aveni (2005). Through language, individuals construct and present their personalities to the surrounding world, although limitations in linguistic and intercultural

knowledge can complicate the process. This challenge is particularly evident among students whose primary focus is not foreign language acquisition, such as those studying medicine, engineering, or economics. As students gain experience in L2 interactions, they develop strategies to overcome social threats and improve their attitudes towards their self-image. These naturally acquired strategies, which can also be taught, enhance learners' ability to use the L2 effectively during study abroad. However, the process of developing an L2 self is often conflictual and marked by ambivalence, especially in immersive environments, since exposure to unfamiliar cultural practices may disrupt previously held worldviews, yet it also provides opportunities for personal and intellectual growth.

The reflective diaries of study-abroad students were analysed using a phenomenological approach by Cheung, Tung, and Goopio (2022). This research focused on maximising learning outcomes abroad and preparing students to become global and socially responsible citizens. The findings revealed some key outcomes: increased intercultural intelligence, defined as the ability to understand and adapt to diverse value systems, and enhanced emotional intelligence, which involves recognising, distinguishing, and managing both one's own and others' emotions.

The existing literature underscores the complexity of L2 development in SA contexts, with significant variation in linguistic gains, both formal and informal, together with intercultural advantages across different domains and settings.

3.3 Research questions

As seen in the previous sections, international educational programmes imply fully immersive experiences, where students are required to use a foreign language in both their academic and personal life. For this reason, SA programmes are considered a great asset, favouring the development of both linguistic and intercultural communication skills. Although several studies have investigated the impact of SA on the development of L2 proficiency (Isabelli-García and Isabelli 2020; Tullock and Ortega 2017; Yang 2016; see Section 2), the effect of the experience on different target languages, as well as on English – when the latter is not the official language of the host country – remains unclear, given the unique role of English as a Lingua Franca and the language of international communication. In parallel, only limited attention has been devoted to students' attitudes to both English and languages other than English during and after an SA stay in relation to the different contexts of use of the two languages (academic, transactional, recreational). The present study aims to shed light on these aspects by focusing on two main research questions:

RQ1: What is the perceived impact of SA on students' proficiency in English and in other languages?

RQ2: What was students' perception of English and of the local language(s) during the SA experience?

Additionally, a third research question explores the perceived impact of SA on students' intercultural competences:

RQ3: Does SA have an impact on students' perceived intercultural competence?

In addressing the research questions, the study provides insights into the SA experience, with a particular focus on the contexts of formal and informal use of English and other languages, as well as students' motivations for taking part in an international programme. Overall, the data aims to paint a comprehensive picture of the international experience in terms of its linguacultural richness, complexity, and intrinsic multilingual and intercultural nature.

3.4 Methodology and sample

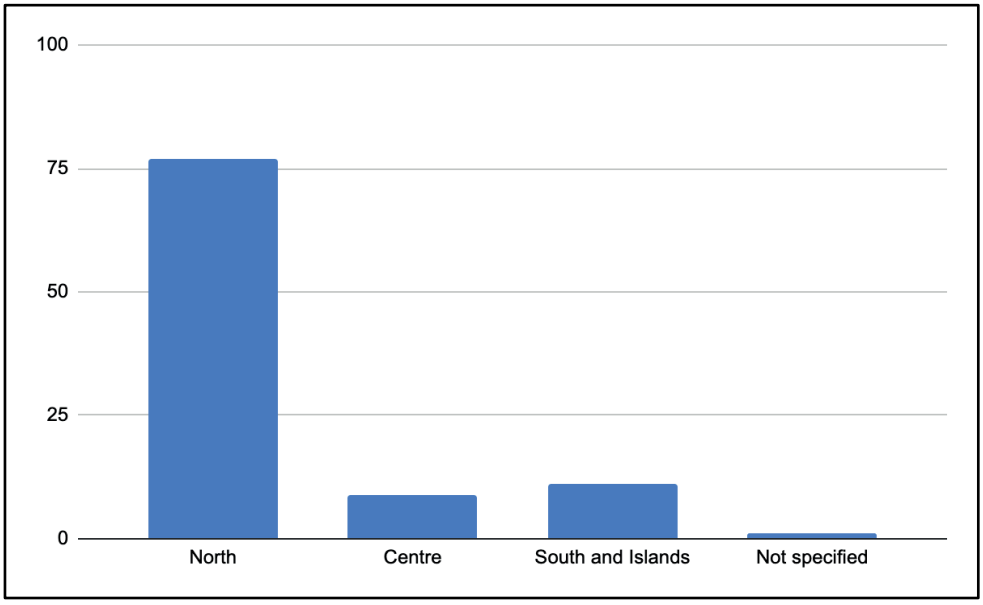
The study is based on a questionnaire consisting of 53 items, organised into six sections: background and biographical data; multilingualism abroad; formal L2 learning; informal L2 learning; intercultural competence; final remarks. Most items were multiple-choice questions, with the addition of a few open-ended questions. Overall, items include background questions gathering general details about the SA experience; attitudinal questions inquiring about participants' motivations for taking part in an SA programme and their assessment of the experience; questions related to self-perceived language proficiency in English and other target languages; questions related to the contexts of use of English and other languages; questions about intercultural competence.

The questionnaire was migrated onto a Google form and was administered from May 2022 to September 2023. Criterion, convenience and snowball sampling were applied (Dörnyei 2007: 98): the survey addressed undergraduate and postgraduate students from Italian universities who had taken part in SA programmes (e.g. Erasmus+ Study, Erasmus+ Traineeship, Overseas Exchange Programme, and Coimbra SEN programme) (criterion sampling). Once the target had been identified, the questionnaire was advertised within the international programmes of two Northern Italian universities (convenience sampling)

and was later forwarded to other students participating in SA exchanges (snowball sampling).

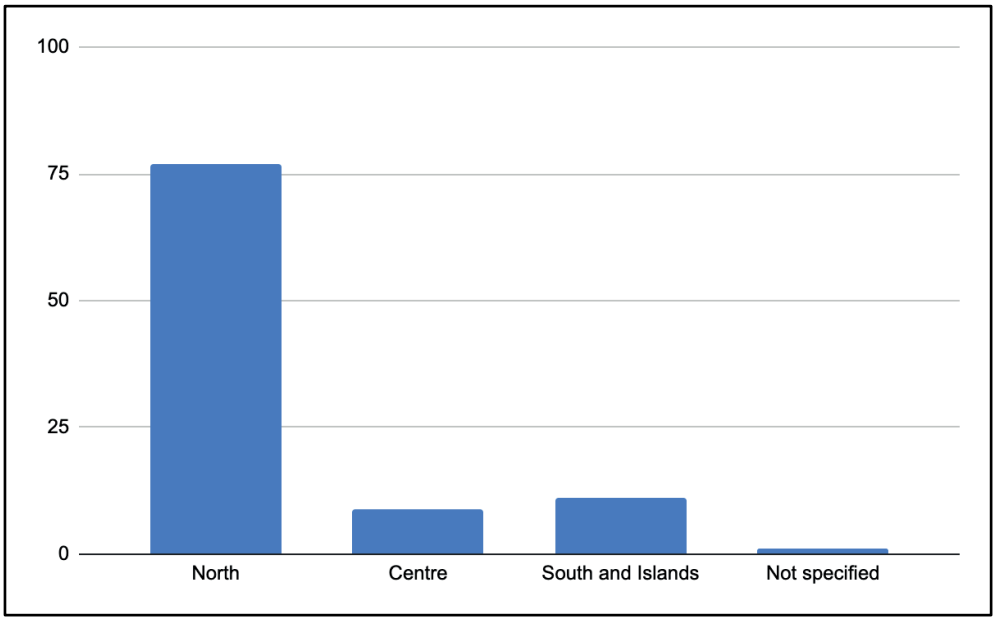
Convenience and snowball sampling account for the skewed distribution of the participants by geographical location of home universities. The final sample consists of 99 respondents distributed as follows among a total of 21 Italian universities (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2 Home university by geographical location (Northern, Central, Southern Italy)



In general, most popular student destinations included European countries, particularly those that are not typically English-speaking, such as Spain, France, and Germany (Figure 3.3). SA stays in destinations where English is the official language accounted for only 5% of the total sample. Non-European destinations made up 10% of all destinations. The sample included a total of 28 different destinations.

Figure 3.3 SA destinations in the sample



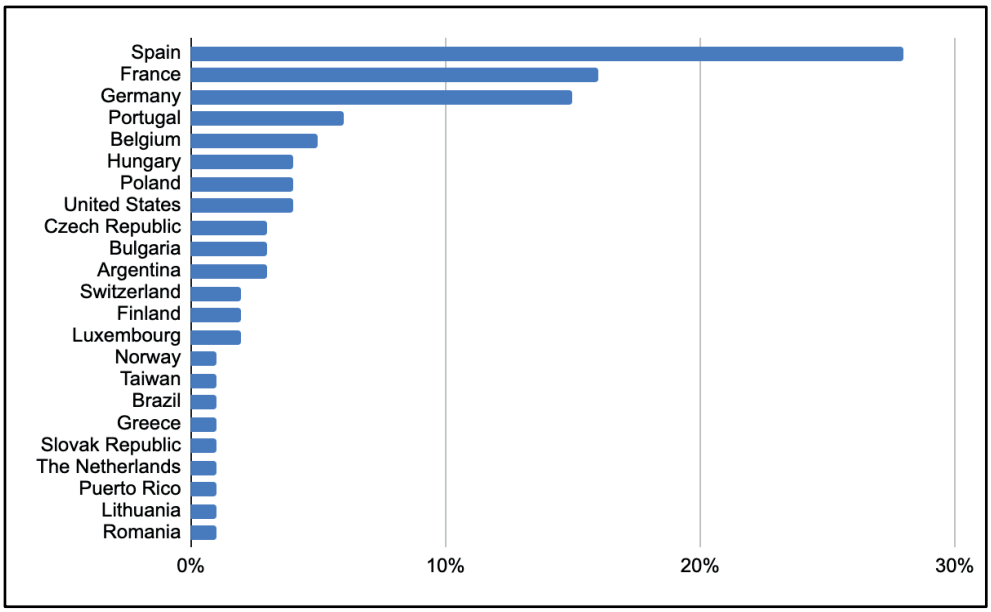
More than half of the students experienced SA early in their academic career, with 52% participating during their Bachelor's Degree and 26% at Master's level. 13% of respondents participated while studying in a single-cycle programme, and 9% had multiple international experiences, at both Bachelor's and Master's levels. The majority of SA programmes lasted between 3 to 6 months (one term, 66%) and the students chose either campus (43%) or private accommodation (56%).

3.5 Results

The main reasons respondents participated in an SA programme are the life experience it offers (58%), the desire to familiarise themselves with a different culture (42%), and the goal of improving their competence in an additional language (37%). The reasons for choosing a specific host university are more varied, including the desire to study curricular subjects from a different perspective (27%), to learn the local language (21%) or improve it (17%), an appreciation of the town/destination (16%), and the available courses (13%). Against the backdrop of both personal and academic factors, the linguacultural component is generally a strong motivator to embark on an SA programme.

SA was a multilingual experience for most of the students in the sample. Although the majority of the respondents visited countries where a language other than English was the official language, English was nevertheless pervasive, both in individual and academic life (Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4 Contexts of use of English abroad

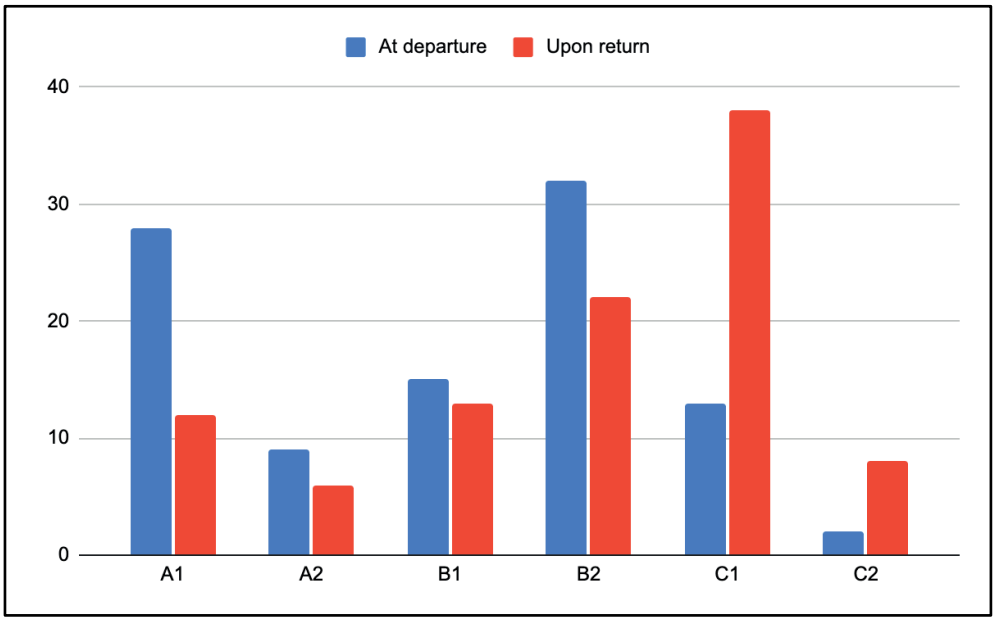


In non-Anglophone countries, English was frequently used as a lingua franca in interactions with fellow SA students and in transactional exchanges in everyday life. English was quite commonly the medium of academic instruction, and, to a lower extent, it was part of students' recreational activities, such as watching films and TV series and listening to music. These settings represent instances of contact with English outside traditional formal contexts of L2 learning, where the primary focus is not on the language or EFL learning itself. Instead, English serves as the medium through which other tasks are performed, ranging from everyday communication and university instruction to leisure activities.

Other widely used L2s during the SA programme were Spanish, French and German – often along with English. These languages were also employed in a variety of settings, including interaction with peers, academic instruction and leisure. Before departure, the majority of the students self-assessed their proficiency level in the host country's target language as intermediate or beginner's level (Figure 3.5). Upon return to their home university, the percentage of respondents self-assessing as advanced level increased considerably.

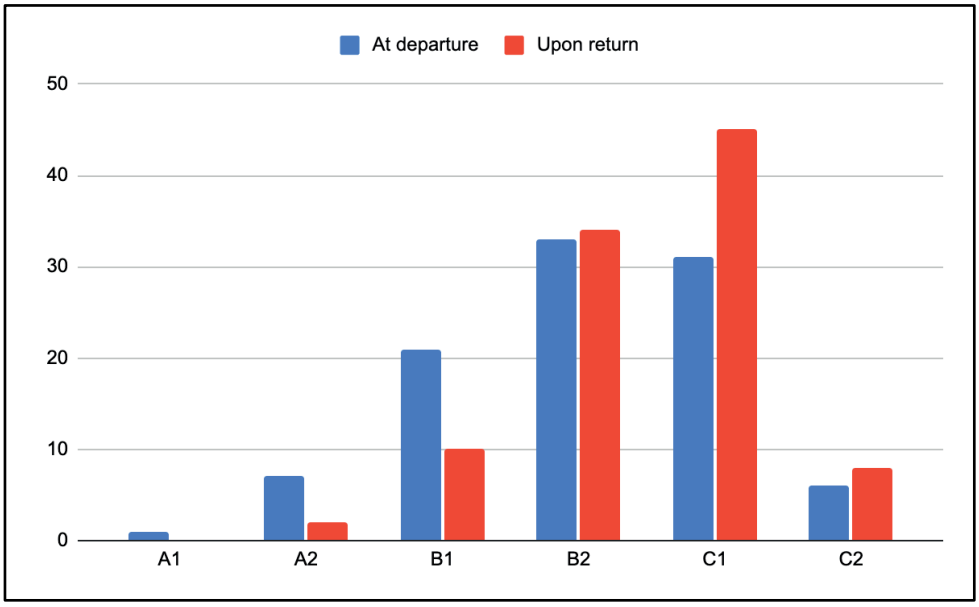
When looking at individual responses and trends, 69% of the participants perceived an improvement in their own L2 competence following the SA experience, whereas 30% felt their level remained stable. Only one respondent reported a decrease.

Figure 3.5 Self-assessed proficiency in the host country's target language before departure and upon return



Students' self-assessed proficiency in English before departure was generally higher, i.e., mostly intermediate and advanced level (Figure 3.6). A higher percentage of students believed their proficiency level in English remained the same after SA (61%), while 39% perceived an improvement. This reflects a trend similar to that observed in proficiency in the host country's target language.

Figure 3.6 Self-assessed proficiency in English before departure and upon return

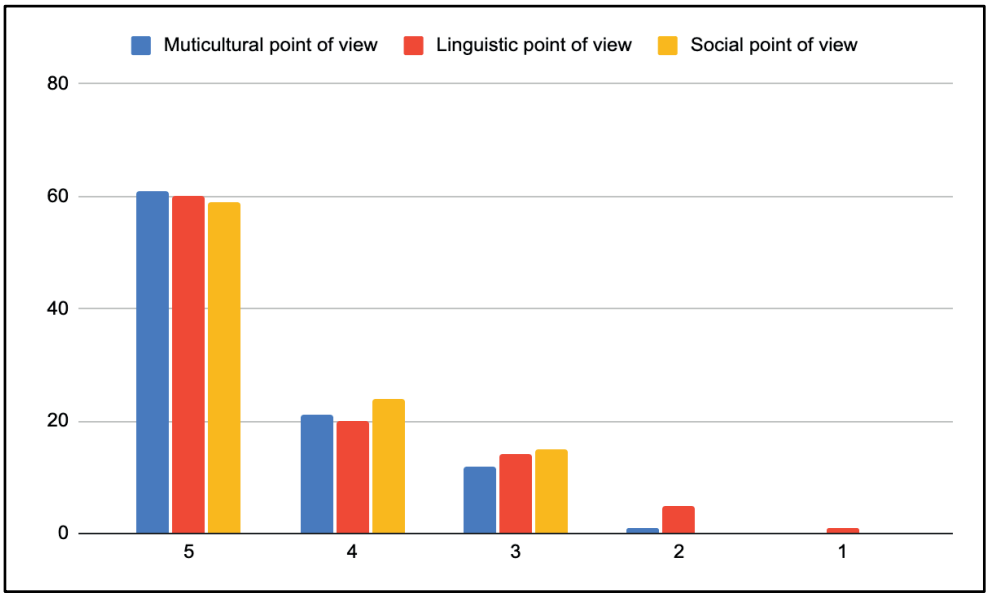


When it comes to specific language skills, phonological, vocabulary and interaction competence in English are believed to remain stable by most participants. The percentage of students who believed their phonology and vocabulary improved after SA is slightly higher (29% and 30% respectively) compared to those who perceived an improvement in their interaction skills (23%) – partially in line with previous research findings (Section 2).

When other L2s were used in different contexts, most students found the experience from quite easy to very easy. More than half of the sample consistently found it very easy, easy or quite easy to communicate in the target language during everyday interactions, when attending classes, when using media, when interacting with peers and in their leisure time. Communication in the host country's target language was instead perceived as complex by more than half of the participants (57%) when dealing with bureaucracy at the foreign university.

Most of the students reported making friends with people outside of the university context (80%) and believed this helped them learn English (55%), and especially the local language (67%). The near totality of the respondents (96%) stated they were able to adapt to the foreign culture and its values. All students were satisfied with the SA experience. On a scale from 1 to 5, 61% gave top ratings to SA as a multicultural experience and 60% in terms of both its linguistic and social impact (Figure 3.7).

Figure 3.7 Rating the experience on a 1-5 scale



The respondents generally believed the SA experience had a positive impact on the development of their intercultural competence. 99% of the participants believed SA positively impacted their creativity and problem-solving skills. 94% perceived an improvement in their emotional intelligence, and 98% felt the programme helped them improve their coping skills. 60% stated SA also had a positive impact on their professional career, although several of the students were still completing their academic programmes and could not yet provide an answer to the question.

3.6 Discussion and conclusions

This study sought to explore students' views on SA programmes. A questionnaire was administered to 99 students from 21 different Italian universities who had studied abroad in 28 different countries. Even though not all students in our sample were specialising in modern languages, they expressed a strong interest in language acquisition from many points of view. In terms of motivation, a key reason for applying to an SA programme was the desire to improve in the target language, a goal the majority of students thought they had achieved. However, when it comes to English, the language that is supposedly used either as a medium of instruction or as a lingua franca in SA contexts, students thought their level remained stable in phonology (in line with Isabelli-García and Isabelli, 2020) as well as in interaction and vocabulary (Llanes, Arnó, E.and

Mancho-Barés 2016). As regards formal and informal contact with both the target language and English, students responded that making friends helped them learn both languages (see also Smith 2018). The respondents highlighted intercultural motivation as an important factor for choosing SA programmes (Pérez-Vidal 2014a), showing a drive towards learning about a foreign culture and studying subjects from a different perspective. Moreover, students showed a very strong interest in SA as a transformative experience, citing gains in emotional intelligence, problem-solving, and coping skills.

Examining the research questions in detail, the first investigated the perceived impact of SA on students' proficiency in English and other languages. SA was generally perceived as beneficial for language development in both English and the host country's target language. However, while the experience primarily supports the maintenance and practice of English, it is believed to lead to actual competence gains in the local language. The trend is also linked to students' proficiency levels at departure, as their competence in English was generally perceived as being higher than their competence in other L2s – languages that were often new to them or ones that they did not master as effectively as English.

As for RQ2, which explored students' perception of English and other languages during the SA experience, findings indicate a positive evaluation of both languages and SA as a generally multilingual experience. English prevailed as the lingua franca, used in several contexts of communication including academic settings, general interactions, and recreational activities. English was thus often perceived as the «safest» option. The local languages were also used in a variety of contexts, often in combination with English, contributing to the multilingual nature of the experience. Students generally expressed positive attitudes towards both English and the host country's target language, as well as towards the target culture. Other L2s were sometimes perceived as quite challenging when dealing with administrative communication and bureaucratic procedures at the host university. The informal learning and language use activities connected with SA were perceived as having a highly positive impact on the acquisition of both English and the host country's language.

Finally, RQ3 investigated the impact of SA on students' perceived intercultural competence. Findings indicate that SA positively influenced students' perceived intercultural competence, with nearly all respondents reporting ability to adapt to the foreign culture and its values. The respondents generally perceived the experience as beneficial for their intercultural competence, particularly for the development of creativity and problem-solving skills, coping skills and emotional intelligence.

In response to RQ1 and RQ2, L2 learning during SA, encompassing both English and other languages, took place across formal, nonformal and informal learning settings (cf. Sockett 2023). During their international experience, stu-

dents attend foreign or English language courses, extracurricular language classes, and English- or L2-taught academic courses; they interact with academic staff and peers; they engage in everyday interactions during their daily life in the host country; they access media in additional languages and engage in several types of recreational activities. Therefore, SA offers a multiplicity of affordances for contact with and learning of additional languages, including English and local languages, and provides opportunities for an immersive experience.

It is the entirety of the SA experience, including both its positive and challenging aspects, that makes students think they have grown during SA stays. Therefore, the pedagogical implications suggest that teachers should support and facilitate students in shaping an experience tailored to their individual needs. At the same time, however, the discomfort associated with cognitive dissonance (Kinginger 2013) also helps students get the most out of a study abroad experience. Being out of one's comfort zone is precisely where SA becomes a transformative and identity-changing experience. Students should therefore be prepared by their SA coordinators to face all aspects of the experience.

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Appendix – The questionnaire

I. L'esperienza di studio all'estero: indagine sul multilinguismo

Lo scopo del presente questionario è di analizzare l'impatto della mobilità internazionale sul multilinguismo ai fini della stesura di una tesi magistrale.

Si precisa che il presente questionario non prevede delle risposte errate o corrette, è del tutto anonimo e totalmente volontario. La scadenza prevista per la sua compilazione è di una settimana.

Si chiede ai rispondenti la cortesia di inoltrare il presente questionario a chiunque di loro conoscenza che abbia fatto un'esperienza di studio all'estero.

Grazie per il vostro tempo e l'aiuto che vorrete offrire.

*Campo obbligatorio

I. Informazioni anagrafiche

1. Qual è la tua università italiana di appartenenza? *

2. Quando sei partito/a? *
   Contrassegna solo un ovale.
   - o Durante la laurea triennale
   - o Durante la laurea magistrale/specialistica
   - o Entrambe
   - o Durante la laurea a ciclo unico

3. Dove sei andato/a? Specifica il paese. *

4. Per quanto tempo? *
   Contrassegna solo un ovale.
   - o Da 1 a 3 mesi
   - o Da 3 a 6 mesi
   - o Da 6 a 12 mesi
   - o Più di 12 mesi

5. Sei partito/a da solo/a o in gruppo? *
   Contrassegna solo un ovale.
   - o Solo/a
   - o In gruppo

6. Per quale tipo di alloggio hai optato? *
   Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Campus universitario
- Famiglia locale
- Alloggio privato

7. La scelta di partecipare al Programma Erasmus+ è stata determinata dalla volontà di: *

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	0	1	2	3	4	5
Migliorare la competenza linguistica	○	○	○	○	○	○
Fare un'esperienza di vita	○	○	○	○	○	○
Conoscere e sperimentare una nuova cultura	○	○	○	○	○	○
Ritornare in un luogo conosciuto in precedenza	○	○	○	○	○	○
Studiare le materie principali del mio corso di studi in un'altra lingua	○	○	○	○	○	○

8. Quali sono i motivi che ti hanno spinto a scegliere l'Università di destinazione? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	0	1	2	3	4	5
Il precedente studio della lingua estera	○	○	○	○	○	○
Mi piaceva la città	○	○	○	○	○	○
È stata una scelta casuale	○	○	○	○	○	○
Il desiderio di apprendere la lingua locale	○	○	○	○	○	○
I corsi offerti erano molto interessanti	○	○	○	○	○	○
Potere studiare in maniera diversa le materie che fanno parte del mio corso di studi	○	○	○	○	○	○

9. Quale livello di competenza della lingua estera veniva richiesta dalla tua Università di destinazione? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- o Nessuno
- o A1
- o A2
- o B1
- o B2
- o C1
- o C2

Il. Multilinguismo durante lo study abroad

1. Qual era il tuo livello di conoscenza della lingua locale quando sei partito/a? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- o A1
- o A2
- o B1
- o B2
- o C1
- o C2

2. Qual era il tuo livello di conoscenza della lingua locale quando sei tornato/a? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- o A1
- o A2
- o B1
- o B2
- o C1
- o C2

3. La tua meta era un paese anglofono? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- o Sì
- o No

4. Se sì, in che misura hai utilizzato altre lingue? E in quali occasioni? Descrivilo brevemente.

5. Se no, in che misura hai utilizzato la lingua inglese? E in quali occasioni? Descrivilo brevemente.

6. Che si tratti di un paese anglofono o meno, qual era il tuo livello di conoscenza della lingua inglese quando sei partito/a? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- o A1
- o A2
- o B1
- o B2
- o C1
- o C2

7. Qual era il tuo livello di conoscenza della lingua inglese da un punto di vista: *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
Fonologico (pronuncia)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Lessicale (vocabolario)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Interazione con gli altri	○	○	○	○	○	○

8. Qual era il tuo livello di conoscenza della lingua inglese quando sei tornato/a? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- o A1
- o A2
- o B1
- o B2
- o C1
- o C2

9. Qual era il tuo livello di conoscenza della lingua inglese da un punto di vista: *

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
Fonologico (pronuncia)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Lessicale (vocabolario)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Interazione con gli altri	○	○	○	○	○	○

10. Considerando l'ambiente multilingue di un contesto di studio all'estero, per quali attività hai usato la lingua inglese? Si forniscano due esempi. *

III. Apprendimento formale della lingua

1. In quale lingua erano tenuti i corsi universitari? *

2. L'Università estera di destinazione prevedeva dei corsi di approfondimento della lingua locale?
Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.
- o Sì
- o No

3. L'Università estera di destinazione prevedeva dei corsi di approfondimento della lingua inglese?
Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.
- o Sì
- o No

IV. Apprendimento informale della lingua

1. Come definiresti il contatto con la lingua locale per: *
Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	Molto difficile	Abbastanza difficile	Difficile	Abbastanza facile	Facile
Svolgere attività quotidiane e trattare con la gente del posto	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Svolgere attività amministrative nel paese	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Accedere ai social network e alle pagine web	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Seguire le lezioni	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Parlare con i colleghi	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Guardare film o serie	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Fare attività nel tempo libero	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

2. Hai partecipato ad attività extracurriculari tramite cui praticare la lingua locale? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Sì
- No
- Altro

3. Se sì, a quale/i?

4. Se no, per quale motivo?

5. Ti è capitato di fare amicizia con gente locale al di fuori dell'Università? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Sì
- No

6. Se sì, ti è stato d'aiuto nell'apprendimento della lingua locale?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Sì
- No

7. Se sì, ti è stato d'aiuto nell'apprendimento della lingua inglese?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.
- o Sì
- o No

8. Se no, per quale motivo?

9. La scelta del tipo di alloggio ti è stata d'aiuto per migliorare la tua competenza linguistica? *
Contrassegna solo un ovale.
- o Sì
- o No

10. Se sì, in che misura?
Contrassegna solo un ovale.

	1	2	3	4	5	
1 minimo	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	5 massimo

11. Se sì, per quale motivo?

12. Se no, per quale motivo?

V. Competenze interculturali

1. Durante l'esperienza di studio all'estero, hai saputo adattarti alla cultura estera e ai suoi valori? *
Contrassegna solo un ovale.
- o Sì
- o No

2. Se sì, in che modo?

3. Se no, per quale motivo?

4. Quanto ci è voluto?
Contrassegna solo un ovale.

	1	2	3	4	5	
1 poco tempo	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	5 molto tempo

5. Hai beneficiato di un vantaggio professionale una volta tornato/a? *
Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Sì
- No

6. Credi che l'immersione in un contesto estero ti abbia aiutato a migliorare le tue prestazioni a livello di creatività e problem solving? *
   Contrassegna solo un ovale.
   - Sì
   - No

7. Se sì, in che misura?
   Contrassegna solo un ovale.

	1	2	3	4	5	
1 minimo	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	5 massimo

8. Se no, per quale motivo?

9. Credi di aver migliorato le tue capacità di adattamento? *
   Contrassegna solo un ovale.
   - Sì
   - No

10. Se sì, in che misura?
    Contrassegna solo un ovale.

	1	2	3	4	5	
1 minimo	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	5 massimo

11. Se no, per quale motivo?

12. Credi di aver migliorato la tua intelligenza emotiva? *
    Contrassegna solo un ovale.
    - Sì
    - No

13. Se sì, in che misura?
    Contrassegna solo un ovale.

	1	2	3	4	5	
1 minimo	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	5 massimo

14. Se no, per quale motivo?

VI. Considerazioni finali

1. Il Programma di study abroad ha complessivamente soddisfatto le tue aspettative? *
   Contrassegna solo un ovale.
   - o Sì
   - o No

2. Come valuti l'esperienza all'estero da un punto di vista: *
   Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	1 male	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5 bene**
Multiculturale	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Multilinguistico	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Relazionale	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

3. Cosa ti sarebbe piaciuto sapere prima di partire? *

4. Rifaresti questo tipo di esperienza? *
   Contrassegna solo un ovale.
   - o Sì
   - o No

5. Vuoi aggiungere qualcosa?

4. Enhancing intercultural communication through a bilingual peer mentoring project

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This paper reports on the first edition of an intercultural peer mentoring project in a Northern Italian university, organised in the context of Internationalisation at Home. Peer mentoring programmes have been used by universities worldwide to support the transition and adaptation of new students to a study programme or university. The project differed from mentoring schemes that are based on a one-on-one relationship by placing students in intercultural teams made up of two Italian students (mentors) and 2-3 international degree-seeking students (mentees) of mixed provenance. It aimed to enhance the intercultural understanding of all students in the project and to improve the socialisation and sense of belonging of the international students using an experiential learning model. It also aimed to provide informal support for international students to speak Italian. Eleven MA students from the language sciences faculty took part in training to become mentors. At the end of the semester-long project, mentors and some mentees completed a reflective writing assignment in which they reflected on their experience and learning with reference to guidelines. This paper presents the results of an analysis of the writing assignments. Reflective thematic analysis was used, with Mezirow's transformative learning theory informing the discussion. Results suggest that the project led to sustained interaction, personal development and a transformative intercultural experience for some students, while also pointing to the need to consider student agency, team formation and equity to a greater extent. The paper concludes with recommendations for language and research centres that wish to set up peer mentoring schemes with international students.

Keywords: English-medium Instruction (EMI), intercultural communication, international students in Italy, Internationalisation at Home (IaH), peer mentoring

4.1 Introduction

Peer mentoring is used in higher education around the world to support the adaptation of new students and promote the development of communication and organizational skills among mentors. Mentoring is an interpersonal relationship that involves a more experienced mentor supporting and guiding a less experienced mentee (Johnson 2016). In university settings, peer mentoring projects pair one or more students, commonly in the first year, with a more experienced student. Mentoring projects designed specifically to promote intercultural learning often involve local students as mentors and newly arrived international students as mentees (Vickers et al. 2017). Most recently, the mentoring relationship has been defined as a reciprocal two-way relationship which promotes quality connections and in which mentors are able to share local knowledge with mentees, while learning about mentees' cultures and languages (Sachpasidi et al. 2024; Wong et al. 2022). This chapter presents the results of a study on the pilot edition of a bilingual (ITA-ENG) intercultural peer mentoring project at a Milanese university in Northern Italy. The project falls within the description of *Internationalisation at Home* initiatives, as it is concerned with promoting intercultural learning for all students through formal and informal curricula. Drawing on reflective assignments written by mentors and mentees at the end of the project, the paper identifies key themes in the assignments as a means of evaluating the project's strengths and weaknesses. The study constitutes a reflexive process of «thinking back and looking forward» (Hua 2019, p. 230) on the part of the researcher, who is also one of the project coordinators, with the aim of improving the experience in future editions. Findings will be useful for language centres, practitioners, policymakers and academic programme coordinators who are looking to support the adaptation of newly arrived international students and to improve intercultural communication among all students.

4.2 The background to the research

4.2.1 English-medium Instruction (EMI) and internationalisation in Italian higher education

Italy is a fast-growing destination for English-taught programs, which are part of an internationalisation strategy to attract international student enrolments, while at the same time offering added value to local students. According to a report by the British Council and Studyportals (2024), English-taught bachelor's and master's programmes (ETPs) outside the so-called Big Four Anglophone contexts (USA, UK, Canada and Australia) have grown 48% world-wide since 2019. Most of the ETPs offered outside the Big Four are found in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). In Italy, there are now over 1000 ETPs

and Milan, with at least 10 higher education providers, is an educational hub as far as ETPs are concerned. Indeed, it is one of the largest hubs outside the Big Four (British Council and Studyportals 2024). Implementing EMI has thus played an important role in higher education internationalisation processes in Italy. Significant numbers of Italian and international students now enrol in English-taught programmes. Given the fast pace of implementation, it is imperative to examine the impact on institutions, academics, support staff and students, as well as on the local community.

Italy tends to be understudied as far as internationalisation research is concerned, and, in spite of the rapid diffusion of EMI and increasing numbers of international degree-seeking students, the experiences of international students and the intercultural dimensions of learning have received little attention in research (Mair and Cantaluppi 2024). Although there is sometimes an assumption about students developing intercultural and global competences in EMI programmes, there is not much evidence about the support that they receive to do so. Moreover, recent studies of international students in Italian universities suggest that more attention needs to be given to promoting exchange and socialisation with local students and improving support for their adaptation and wellbeing (Norton et al. 2022; Cipolletta et al. 2022).

4.2.2 Internationalisation at Home

Internationalisation at Home first emerged in Europe in 1999 and was initially proposed as a counterpoint to mobility-focused internationalisation. The concept emphasized the importance of including the non-mobile majority of students and staff in internationalisation initiatives and of making its perceived benefits more widely accessible. Over time, the binary nature of mobility vs home internationalisation has faded in importance, and at present the focus is on the curriculum and on ensuring that *all* students are part of internationalisation. The most up-to-date and widely cited definition of IaH describes it as «the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students, within domestic learning environments» (Beelen and Jones, 2015, p. 69). The *informal curriculum* encompasses all learning activities that take place as part of university life outside the classroom and beyond the bounds of the formal curriculum.

It is well recognized that in the internationalisation of higher education in Italy, boosting mobility has been a priority, while internationalisation at home and curricular internationalisation initiatives have lagged behind other contexts (Giovannetti and Poggiolini 2018; OECD 2019; Mair 2022). According to a recent analysis of Italian strategy regarding internationalisation, intercultural dimensions are «narrowly articulated», and the priorities have been on «numeric indicators» (Sikorska et al. 2023, p. 67). In Italy, IaH as a research topic has really only gained currency in the last decade, with the earliest appearances of

the term in scientific literature and the participation of an Italian university as a partner in a European project on the topic (ATIAH – Developing Pedagogical Approaches and Tools for Innovative 'Internationalisation at Home' Practice in Higher Education) from 2016-2018. In Italian, IaH is known as *internazionalizzazione a casa*, although the English term is more common.

4.2.3 Defining intercultural communication

As far as students are concerned, intercultural communication takes place in a range of educational settings, from the campus to the classroom, as well as in social life and in everyday activities in the local community. *Intercultural communication* refers to «communication where cultural and linguistic differences are perceived as relevant to the interaction by the participants or researchers involved» (Baker 2024, p. 212). As the project under investigation is based on developing intercultural dialogue and engaging with difference in a higher education setting, this research draws on the concept of interculturality as a «language and culture learning pedagogy» (Hua 2019, p. 219). No attempt in the research has been made to measure intercultural learning and competence in the project, but rather to observe students' capacity to critically analyse the experience and their own beliefs and values. Tsang and Tuan (2022, p. 393) describe intercultural learning as «a dynamic, situated process which can engage students cognitively, behaviorally, and affectively in their sense making and identity (re)construction.» The related construct of *intercultural communicative competence* has been defined in a variety of ways, according to the model, but it is generally associated with «awareness, knowledge, attitudes and skills» and with the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in a range of intercultural settings (Hua 2019, p. 249).

4.2.4 Intercultural peer mentoring at university

Intercultural learning and competence in students can be developed through a range of campus-based experiences. Peer mentoring is one of these options. It is usually based on the principle of reciprocity: both mentors and mentees in the project will ideally have opportunities for intercultural learning and developing communication skills (Wong et al. 2022). However, studies of such projects have tended to focus on the intercultural learning and perceptions of either mentors (Prieto-Flores et al. 2016; Vickers et al. 2017; Connolly 2017; Cui 2020; Sachpasidi et al. 2024) or mentees (Yomtov et al. 2017). Prieto-Flores et al.'s (2016) study measured the intercultural competence of students who took part as mentors in a service-learning programme and found that the activity fostered transformative learning and cultivated openness, curiosity, and critical reflection. Vickers et al.'s (2017) study, based on an intercultural peer mentoring project with international students from refugee backgrounds, found that mentors

indicated a substantial change in their personal understanding of intercultural issues and an interest in sustaining relationships with their mentees. The study highlighted the value of embedding reflection in both training for mentors and in relation to activities.

Training for mentors and provision of resources by project coordinators, facilitators and teachers have been shown to have an important role in developing criticality and meaningful intercultural understandings. For mentors to be effective, they must not only be aware of intercultural concepts but also adept at integrating these ideas into their mentoring relationships (Sachpasidi et al. 2024). This expertise enables mentors to support activities that foster critical intercultural learning among students, thus enhancing their cultural awareness and sensitivity. Mentors often experience personal growth, including increased confidence and maturity, as they navigate their roles (Connolly 2017).

Studies by both Wong *et al.* (2022) and Arco-Tirado et al. (2018) investigate effects of participation in peer mentoring projects on both student cohorts, while Yomtov et al. (2015) focused exclusively on effects for mentees. Yomtov et al. (2015) found students with peer mentors felt more connected to and integrated in their university than non-mentored students. The study used a pre-test and post-test design to investigate mentees' perceptions of benefits and areas for improvement in a mentoring project. It found «students with mentors benefitted from the individualized attention and had more opportunities to be involved on campus» (Yomtov et al. 2015, p. 38).

Although language support has been shown to be highly valued by international students (Ammigan et al. 2020), few peer mentoring projects are intentionally designed around the idea of enhancing informal language learning. One exception is Arco-Tirado *et al.*'s (2018) study of a bilingual mentoring project whose aims included supporting oral and written language learning. The study examined the impact of participation on both mentors and mentees and found that mentees perceived language improvement. Wong *et al.* (2022, p. 21) noted the important role of language in mentoring communication, finding that «without a shared language, ineffective communication may pose a potential threat to the relationship». In the study, language differences and lack of proficiency were a barrier to a successful communication process between mentor and mentee.

4.2.5 Transformative learning and the role of reflection

Embedding reflection in intercultural learning experiences is considered important to avoid superficiality and to ensure that the desired outcomes of intercultural understanding and criticality are achieved (Vickers et al. 2016; Prieto-Flores et al. 2016; Sachpasidi et al. 2024). Particularly since the 1980s, a number of significant learning theories based on reflective models have emerged. Reflection has been defined by Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1985, p. 3) as «a generic

term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciation». The learning cycle at the heart of Kolb and Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (2017, p. 14) is based on the integration of «action and reflection and experience and concept», with action and reflection considered to be part of a dialectic process. Mezirow (1991) identifies different types of reflection and explains that *critical reflection*, as the deepest form of reflection, can lead to changes of mindset and behaviour. Critical reflection involves interrogating our own preconceptions and assumptions. This kind of reflection, Mezirow argues, is necessary for a learning experience to be transformative.

4.2.6 Researcher positionality

As this article aims to present a critical evaluation of an intercultural mentoring project through an analysis of students' written reflections, it is important to recognise my position as both researcher and facilitator in the project and to reflect on how personal experiences have shaped my professional role. My own experiences as an international student in the 1990s and 2000s, initially for short-term language study mobility and later for research as a doctoral student, have inevitably affected my beliefs about the international student experience. My experience of teaching first in an Anglophone setting and later in Italian universities in both Italian and English-taught programmes has also led to the development of my interest, as a researcher, in teaching and learning across cultures. As Merriam et al. (2013) noted, the researcher's status with regard to the subjects and context of a study influences participant responses and the meanings attributed to those responses. My shifting status as both insider and outsider have led me to interrogate my own beliefs and practices as a teacher and facilitator in the project. Throughout the research, I have followed the definition of reflexivity developed by Olmos-Vega et al. (2023, p. 242) as «a set of continuous, collaborative, and multifaceted practices through which researchers self-consciously critique, appraise, and evaluate how their subjectivity and context influence the research processes.» Reflexivity, as will be noted, is also an important part of the kind of reflexive thematic analysis carried out for this paper, which is inherently subjective and interpretative (Braun and Clarke 2023).

4.3 Research context: the intercultural mentoring project

While many first-year university students face academic and psychological challenges at the start of their university careers, international students often face added linguistic, cultural, social and practical obstacles when adjusting to living and learning in a new country (Cena et al. 2021; Chai et al. 2020; Gresham and Clayton 2014; Jindal-Snape and Rienties 2016; Martirosyan et al. 2019; Tavaras

2022). The mentoring project that is the subject of this article was piloted in 2023 on the heels of the university's participation in a European project concerned with improving the adaptation experiences of newly arrived migrants (https://nearproject.eu/). One of the projects' work packages was specifically focused on the adaptation experiences of international degree-seeking students, who are defined as migrants by the OECD. In particular, the targets of the NEAR project were students from BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and countries with high migratory pressure. Focus groups held with international students in Milan as part of the NEAR project showed that they faced challenges with making friends, resolving bureaucratic matters such as obtaining documents and finding housing, and adjusting to an unfamiliar academic culture (Mair 2024). The most significant challenge, which affected all the others, was linguistic in nature. Although the students had moved to Italy to study in English-taught programmes, in many cases their knowledge of English was not enough to ensure effective communication in the local community, or to unlock access to full information about university activities. Not knowing Italian affected all aspects of their experience. The intercultural mentoring project that is the focus of this paper was thus designed with the intention of ameliorating the transitional experiences of international students and supporting their adaptation and informal language learning, while at the same time offering an intercultural learning experience to local students. Following on from the NEAR project, the mentoring project was also designed to enhance students' knowledge of the local community in which the university is situated.

4.3.1 Intercultural teams

Unlike other peer mentoring projects which are based on a one-on-one relationship, this project used intercultural teams, with two mentors and two or three mentees in each team (Figure 4.1). Where possible, attempts were made to place a mentor studying Russian with a Russian-speaking student or attempts to place a mentor studying Spanish with a Spanish-speaking student in the same team. The project was situated at the interface between formal and informal curricula. Mentors were MA students in the languages faculty who could exchange part of their course assessment for participation in the project, while mentees were first-year students from a variety of faculties who had been invited to participate through the International Admissions Office. In addition, international students in the same MA programme as the mentors were invited to take part in the project. Apart from the chance to make friends and participate in social activities, they were also incentivized with the offer of a certificate of participation upon completion of the project.

Figure 4.1 The composition of the intercultural teams.

4.3.2 Training for mentors

Mentors participated in four workshops before meeting their mentees. The workshops offered a space in which mentors could get to know each other and reflect on the experiences of international students. They also proposed practical strategies for developing intercultural communication and for supporting informal (Italian) language learning. The topics of the workshops were:

1. Creating an intercultural work and friendship group. Socializing and cooperation.
2. Planning and organising intercultural activities in the local community.
3. Reflection on intercultural competence. The concept of identity and diversity, communication and empathy, respect for otherness, capacity to include.
4. Language learning activities through images and play. How to promote communicative competence and informal language learning.

Following the workshops, mentors were introduced to their mentees at an *aperitivo*, a small, typically Italian gathering with refreshments. Although presented as bilingual (Italian-English), the project in fact turned out to be a multilingual activity because mentors who were studying Spanish, Russian or Chinese in the Language Sciences and Foreign Literature faculty were able to find mentees with these first languages with whom they could practice.

4.3.3 Activities for teams

Facilitators proposed five activities over the course of the semester, three of which were whole-group activities, while two activities could be carried out by teams on their own, within a specific time frame. In the first activity, students interviewed each other. They were given guidelines for the conversation and had

the option of recording a part of the interview and uploading the audio recordings to the LMS. The activity was based on an IaH activity proposed by Baldassar and McKenzie (2016). Two activities were designed in conjunction with the association Touring Club Italiano whose volunteers are responsible for keeping monuments and cultural sites open to the public throughout Italy. The objective of these activities was to introduce all students to cultural sites of interest in the local community and to highlight the role of volunteers in the cultural life of the city. Mentors acted as interpreters when visiting these sites, one a former convent with Renaissance frescoes, and the other a botanical garden. Prior to each activity they were asked to identify and prepare glossaries to support the mentees' comprehension and to introduce key lexis.

The other two activities were intended to have a team-building function and to raise awareness of the wider community in which the university is situated. In one, intercultural teams took part in an art-themed 'treasure hunt' in the area surrounding the main campus, while the second activity took place during Milan Design Week, a contemporary design event that takes place in spring each year and sees private homes, businesses and courtyards all over the city opened to the public. The teams had the task of photographing design displays and settings during the five-day period of the event. None of these activities involved financial outlay for students. In addition to the planned activities, mentors could propose museum visits or social events to mentees in their own time.

4.3.4 Reflective learning instruments

Different instruments for stimulating critical reflection were integrated into the project from the outset, from the workshops for mentors with dialogic, group reflection, to the final assignment for mentors in which participants prepared a short reflective essay. For the assignment, students were given guidelines about reflective writing and were asked to make reference to literature on mentoring projects, intercultural learning and internationalisation at home. During the semester in which the project was run, students also had access to a dedicated section in the Learning Management System (LMS). This section was set up as an academic course, reflecting the project's status as activity at the interface of the formal and the informal curriculum. The LMS page was used to share photos and short written reflections on activities by both the facilitators and students, as well as to provide information about activities and a reading list.

4.3.5 Facilitators

Three teachers took part as facilitators in the project. The role of facilitators in intercultural learning projects is crucial, both to propose educational topics and activities and to stimulate critical reflection (Mezirow 1991; Vickers et al. 2017). Facilitators designed the workshops and activities and provided feedback on

students' comments on experiences in the course blog. They were attentive to any communication breakdowns among teams.

4.4 Method

4.4.1 Sample

In total, the sample is made up of 12 assignments, 9 completed by mentors and 3 by mentees. All students who completed the assignment were female first-year students in the same MA programme in the Language Sciences and Foreign Literature faculty. While the mentees in the project were all first-year students in either a bachelor's or master's programme in a variety of faculties, the three mentees who completed the assignment were enrolled in the same English-taught MA programme as some of the mentors and were therefore also given the opportunity to exchange a course assessment task for completion of the assignment. Two of the three mentees in the sample were international degree-seeking students, while the third was an Erasmus student. All assignments were written following the end of the project, between July 2023 and January 2024. As outlined above, students received full instructions about how to complete the assignment, information about critical reflection, and a folder with articles from scientific literature. Following submission of the assignment, students discussed the project and their reflection on it during the final oral exam at the end of the course. Students gave their informed consent for data from the project and visual documentation to be used for research purposes. Each assignment was given a code, MR1, MR2 (and so forth for the mentors), and ME1, ME2 and ME3 for the mentees to ensure anonymity.

4.4.2 Qualitative thematic analysis

Analysis began with multiple readings of the assignments. In the instructions, students were asked to respond to specific prompts regarding their expectations for the project and whether these were met, what they learned from the project and their role in the project. In particular they were asked three questions:

- What challenges and opportunities are faced by international degree-seeking students in an Italian university?
- What can local students learn from interacting with international students?
- How can intercultural mentoring be used to improve the learning experience and communication of all students?

Despite having the same starting point, the resulting assignments varied considerably. Some students focused their attention more on the training workshops for mentors, others on the nature of the activities or on one particular activity, and still others on relational and intercultural learning aspects. Following close readings of the text, first and second-cycle coding (Saldaña 2021) was carried out with the support of Nvivo. Reflexive qualitative thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2023) was used when identifying themes, acknowledging that researcher subjectivity inevitably influences interpretation of the data. The themes were considered critically, in relation to transformative learning theory (Mezirow 1991) and theories of intercultural communication.

4.5 Results of analysis /Findings and discussion

In the short reflective essays, students could choose which aspects of the project and the experience to reflect on, but they were required to draw on at least two of the articles in the critical literature, all of which were made available through the LMS. While some students reflected more on the design of the activities and the project and whether the intended outcomes were achieved, others focused their discussion on relational aspects and reflected on what they had learned from the experience. Distinct patterns of meaning were observed in the analysis.

4.5.1 Reciprocity or us versus them?

Firstly, reciprocity was a strong theme, suggesting that students perceived the project's theoretical underpinning. Some mentors viewed the project as «a continuous exchange of different points of view» (MR5) and «a two-way dialogue» that can «mutually transform and enrich our interrelated lives» (MR1). One student summed up the experience like this: «We faced and overcame various hurdles together, including the language barrier, which gradually diminished through consistent effort and frequent interactions. This experience provided an opportunity for both parties to improve language skills and embrace a new culture.» (MR6)

This view of the project offering learning opportunities and exchange for both student cohorts was more widespread among the mentors. Not all students perceived mutual benefits and equal learning affordances in the project, with some noting the risks of an «us versus them situation» developing if just the mentors have access to training in the form of workshops and have got to know each other before meeting the mentees. Indeed, one of the mentees reported «isolation from one another», with separation of mentors and mentees during whole group activities, while another observed that in spite of the team-based structure, «in practice most of the activities were carried out in the big group in which Italians and

internationals did not mix that much» (ME2). One mentor drew attention to the need to work on the creation of a «common space» (MR3) in which categories of «we» and «they» are broken down, while another mentor found commonality with mentees by reflecting on her own position as a student from southern Italy who faced similar challenges to international students in Milan. This mentor referred to the project as an «Erasmus at Home» experience, with intercultural exchange taking place in a different region within one's own country.

4.5.2 Intercultural interaction through activities

Intercultural interaction through activities was also a significant theme in students' reflections. This theme emerged from a grouping of all codes relating to interaction and exchange during structured and spontaneous activities. «Interview» was the most frequent code because the interviewing activity attracted the most reflection, but students also reflected on how they interacted with each other through the other activities. Although one mentee considered that the mentors had carried out the interview half-heartedly, another appreciated the chance to share more «about the struggles we faced when moving here and the ways we wish the university would support us more» (ME2). Mentors welcomed the opportunity to find out more about the mentees' backgrounds, perceptions and experiences of an Italian university through the interviews:

> There was a risk of it being perceived as an imposition, but conducting a two-way dialogue worked well. The issues of our international students were primarily related to language and the constant feeling of being treated as «the other.» They had difficulty understanding some aspects of the local culture, so they tended to look for other internationals who could understand them in their «otherness.» (MR1)

In the assignment, some shared details of what they had learned through intercultural dialogue and drew attention to «the importance of actively listening to others» (MR7). This suggests that intentional intercultural activities with support from facilitators are considered potentially meaningful sites of intercultural learning by both mentors and mentees. Overall, in the words of one of the mentors, the activities «made us work together, letting us develop our organisational and teamwork skills, boosting our communicative, social and multicultural knowledge.» (MR9)

4.5.3 Student agency

This theme was identified from students' critical analysis of the project and their suggestions for improving it and «owning» it. In this case, «agency» is most similar to Biesta and Tedder's (2007, p. 135) conceptualisation of agency as one's «ability to exert control over … one's life». Several students suggested mentors should be given greater agency in planning and organising activities. This also related to the suggestion of changing the timetabling of the activities to reduce the number of whole group activities and allow teams greater freedom and flexibility through asynchronous activities. Students tied the idea of greater agency in designing and planning activities, as well as decision-making, to feeling more 'active' and 'engaged' in the project.

4.5.4 Personal development

Both mentors and mentees cited numerous areas of personal development as a result of the experience. Codes relating to linguistic and intercultural skills development were grouped with codes relating to friendship and perceived character traits under the theme of personal development. The most frequent codes were enhanced intercultural competence and increased linguistic competence in English and other languages such as Russian and German (mentors) and Italian (mentees). The perceived improvement in intercultural competence was manifested across a range of dimensions, from becoming more self-aware and open-minded, to developing empathy and cultural humility, and appreciating diversity and different perspectives. One mentor identified cultural humility as «a fundamental tool to learn how to live together to face global challenges» (MR8).

For some mentors, the responsibility of starting conversations with strangers and planning meetings led to changes in confidence and making friends:

> I was able to get out of my comfort zone and make new friends, something I had always struggled with. My leadership skills also had a great boost, I started taking initiative more often and organize the activities with my team, instead of remaining silent in my corner and wait [sic] for someone to make decisions for me. This also increased my sense of responsibility, since me and my colleagues were in charge of the well-being of the international students. (MR4)

Forming new friendships was thus tied to the idea of developing the self and changing habits.

4.5.5 Sentiment analysis

In addition to thematic analysis, manual sentiment analysis of all assignments was carried out, showing a high degree of positive sentiment about the project,

although one of the mentees found that it did not meet her expectations, while another found that the project «exceeded my expectations in some ways but fell short in others» (ME2). Mostly, students said that they would take away new knowledge and new competences. One mentor wrote: «I have developed a deep understanding of the emotions, feelings, melancholy, and fears that students face when far from home.» (MR6) In general, «these experiences fostered greater flexibility and open-mindedness» (MR6).

4.6 Discussion and recommendations

Writing is, by nature, a reflective act. Students' critical reflective writing assignments point to many successful aspects of the project and show evidence of personal growth and the capacity to reflect on themselves and others. They indicate that in some cases, meaningful friendships were established. Analysis of the assignments revealed that the majority of students believed that through participation in the project, they had developed some of the attitudes, knowledge and skills associated with intercultural competence (Byram 1997; Hua 2019), such as curiosity and openness, and the ability to reflect critically on personal perspectives and practices as well as the international students' experiences. For the mentors, particularly, the experience appears to have been transformative, leading them to interrogate their mindsets and in many cases step outside their comfort zone. Some mentors believed the project had led them to become more outgoing and open.

Other studies have shown the importance of language in intercultural peer mentoring projects (Arco-Tirado et al. 2018; Wong et al. 2022). In this project, uneven levels in either Italian or English sometimes made group interaction less fluid. Despite citing an improvement in Italian, one of the mentees also explained the challenges of communicating in a team: «For example, one international student spoke Italian much better than English; for another group member, it was the other way around. As a result, it was often unclear in which language we could talk together. Unfortunately, this often resulted in one-on-one conversations between those who spoke the one particular language best» (ME3). Language is critical to developing intercultural communicative competence and so focusing during training on strategies like accommodation, active listening, negotiating and interpreting would be useful.

Not all participants in the project were as positive or as engaged as others, and their assignments helped facilitators reshape some aspects of the project design for the next edition, in particular, with regard to giving more autonomy and agency to students in organizing asynchronous activities in their teams and to considering the recruitment process and team formation carefully. Agency, as noted by Inouye et al. (2023) in their systematic literature review, is often

under conceptualised, but it is an important concept with regard to international students. In this study, it is a key finding and relates to students' decision-making capacity and desire to have an active role in co-designing their experiences and to become agents in the intercultural learning process.

Although the question of gender and participation in intercultural initiatives was only remarked on by one student, it is a significant topic to reflect on given that other studies have shown that participation in such projects tends to be dominated by female cis-gender students. In Wong et al.'s (2022) study, the mentors were all female, and the authors called for further research on gender factors in intercultural mentoring programmes. It would be good to understand why women are more inclined to participate in such initiatives, particularly as mentors.

It is imperative to avoid enhancing inequalities as an unintentional outcome of intercultural learning initiatives. One mentor raised the question of why mentors had been offered training in the form of workshops, but mentees had not, while a mentee felt excluded by not being required to write a critical reflection on the project: «it was only home students that could initially use this as a curricular activity [so] I felt a bit side-lined – it was harder to dedicate myself to it, to engage.» This student was subsequently given the opportunity to write the assignment and to have her participation in the project assessed as part of the formal curriculum. This points to the need to move beyond binary distinctions between international and home students, as Spencer-Oatey has argued (Spencer-Oatey 2019, p. 1039) and perhaps between mentors and mentees. Ensuring that both student cohorts have access to the same resources, training and support from the outset would be a way of avoiding binaries and ensuring inclusivity. Embedding the project as an activity in the formal curriculum and the credit system for all students would be likely to make the project more motivating. All the same, some students seem to have perceived the project as a symbolic third space (Hua 2019) and «happy intercultural microclimate» (MR1) achieved through successful interaction.

It should be recognized that designing such initiatives requires bureaucratic support, investment of time and alignment across faculties, which is not always easy to achieve due to lack of human resources, funding and the facilitators' multifaceted roles in universities. Time has been confirmed as an important factor in ensuring the success of peer mentoring projects (Vickers et al. 2016; Wong et al. 2022), and research on this project confirmed that all parties (facilitators, mentors and mentees) need to be able to dedicate time to building rapport, establishing dialogue and scheduling meetings in order for learning and intercultural communication to be meaningful. For this reason, it is important to offer transparent communication of the time and effort needed by participants to ensure that both mentors and mentees understand what they are signing up for.

While a semester is considered a suitable timeframe in which to develop successful mentoring relationships (Vickers 2017), it could also be useful to build online encounters into future editions of the current mentoring project before the intercultural teams meet in person. This would allow students to form connections before meeting and enable mentors to support mentees immediately after their arrival. It would also avoid the challenge of finding compatible face-to-face meeting times. In any case, the initial activities planned in mentoring projects should be close enough together to avoid disengagement from the project and to stimulate continuity of intercultural dialogue. Moreover, a final face-to-face debriefing session for all participants could be a way of stimulating deeper reflection and projecting that reflection into the future, looking back and looking forward.

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Parte II
Prospettive e sfide dell'EMI nei Centri Linguistici Universitari – Perspectives and challenges of EMI in university Language Centres

5. A multiperspective approach to classroom interaction in English-medium instruction classes

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Teachers who embark on English-medium instruction (EMI) courses often show concern about their students not being interactive enough in their classes. EMI literature seems to confirm this claim, as research findings indicate that the degree of interaction tends to be lower in EMI than in L1-medium classes. Since questions and metadiscourse markers play a key role when teachers strive to transmit knowledge and to ensure students' good comprehension of subject matter, in this chapter particular heed will be paid to how questions and metadiscourse markers are tackled in EMI classes in different specializations during whole-class discussions. Although questioning practices exert a great influence on student-teacher interactions, as well as on the level and quality of students' classroom participation, the number of studies on the impact of questions in EMI settings is remarkably low. In addition, the focus will also be placed on the use of spoken metadiscourse markers by EMI non-native teachers by delving into how teachers organize and construct knowledge through metadiscourse in their classes. The participants in the study were nine EMI university teachers from three disciplines, namely history, economics and engineering. Specifically, I will analyse whether there are general tendencies in the type of questions posed, the linguistic complexity of their questioning practices, the use of interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers, and whether teachers' questions and metadiscourse differ depending on the discipline. Taking into account the results obtained, the chapter wraps up by drawing some pedagogical implications aimed at fostering more interactive EMI lectures.

Keywords: English-medium instruction, EMI, interaction, questions, metadiscourse

5.1 Introduction

The widespread implementation of English-medium instruction (EMI) programmes and courses has undoubtedly turned into one of the most outstanding

changes undergone by universities all over the world in the last two decades, but this is especially so in the European and Asian contexts (Lasagabaster, 2022; McKinley, Rose & Curdt-Christiansen, 2023). The rise of Englishisation —the adoption of English in educational settings where local languages previously dominated— has become a global phenomenon and, in fact, EMI programmes are now present even in countries with limited tradition of foreign language teaching, such as China, Italy, Japan or Spain. In China, for instance, Hu and Lei (2014) assert that English proficiency has become a most coveted form of cultural capital. One of the reasons recurrently put on the table by advocates of EMI lies in the fact that it provides favourable conditions for interaction to take place in English, which purportedly helps to develop and hone the foreign language while the learning of content is not hindered.

However, authors such as O'Dowd (2018) point out that higher education institutions appear eager to adopt EMI practices but prioritising the prestige associated with these programmes over a genuine commitment to fully fledged and well-supported initiatives, especially as regards teacher professional development. Frequently, the desire to align with the global EMI trend outweighs the actual support provided to those teachers who start teaching their courses in English. And this is worrying if we bear in mind that EMI presents numerous challenges, chief among them the need for teaching staff to deliver —and for students to grasp— complex, high-stakes content in an L2 (a second or additional language).

This situation has spurred a growing body of research proposing strategies to ensure high-quality bilingual and multilingual practices in higher education (Rubio-Alcalá & Coyle, 2021; Ruiz-Madrid & Fortanet-Gómez, 2022), with special heed having been paid to the input provided by EMI teachers (Costa & Mariotti, 2023). However, although much research has been focused on classroom interaction in primary and secondary education, little is known about what is actually happening in tertiary level classes (Ismailov, 2024). In this chapter, I intend to focus on this question by summarising the results of a number of studies that are part of a research project which is aimed at analysing how classroom interaction is mediated by questioning practices and the metadiscourse used by teachers in EMI classes, which I label as multiperspective approach.

5.2 Classroom interaction: A focus on questions

Tang (2021) defines classroom interaction as a pattern of classroom discourse that focuses on the analysis of the conversational exchanges taking place between the teacher and the students, their roles during such exchanges, the kind of questions posed, and the use of discourse strategies (including metadiscourse) to engage students in the meaning-making process. Based on Sociocultural The-

ory's key tenet of the social nature of learning, interaction has long been established as a vital mechanism for both language and content learning (An & Thomas, 2021), to the extent that Ismailov (2024) affirms that it is the most important pedagogical resource when it comes to fostering learning in the classroom.

In her review on studies on classroom discourse and interaction, Riordan (2024) points out that research reveals that classroom interactions usually tend to have a similar format which follows the so-called IRF pattern of discussion between the teacher and the learners: «To be more precise, most interactions consisted of an initiation (I) from the teacher, response (R) from the students, and feedback or follow-up (or evaluation) (F) from the teacher based on the response» (p. 3). In addition, teachers control most of the talk in the classroom irrespective of the context under scrutiny, input-based instruction and teacher-centeredness being in fact the default main features of most EMI lectures (Ismailov, 204). Unfortunately, most of the times practitioners have little time to reflect on how they boost interaction due to the many chores that they need to face in their everyday professional lives.

Nowadays there is great interest in the role of interaction and dialogue in education, and this is especially so in EMI settings, as research has shown that, in many EMI classes, exchanges are often limited to a few words or short sentences, which is why dialogic lectures are conspicuous by its absence (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2023). Since questions have a triggering effect on classroom interaction and different types of questions cause different types of interaction (Riordan, 2024), in this section special heed will be paid to the literature on EMI teachers use of questions. Despite the dominance of traditional lectures at the undergraduate level (Lammers and Murphy, 2002; Sánchez-García, 2020), limited research exists on the role of questions in teacher-fronted classes in which the teacher guides the classroom through lectures. Nevertheless, some studies on EMI have explored the significance of questions in discourse and teaching. For example, Dafouz et al. (2018) analyzed disciplinary reasoning episodes (DREs), highlighting the benefits of question-and-answer formats for enhancing disciplinary reasoning, aligning with findings from L1 science education. Suviniitty (2010) found through a questionnaire that lectures with more interaction and questions were perceived as easier to understand by EMI students.

However, students' limited English proficiency often discourages them from asking questions. Engin (2017) noted that university students feel uncomfortable contributing orally in class, especially in an L2. Tsou (2017) observed that Taiwanese students frequently avoid asking questions in front of peers, preferring private consultations with teachers during breaks. Similarly, Airey (2009) found that fewer questions were asked in EMI classes compared to Swedish L1 settings, despite students claiming to learn equally well in both lan-

guages. In Spain, Sánchez-García (2020) examined teaching practices in Spanish-medium and EMI business lectures. Two categories of questions were identified (more on this in the description of our project below): instructional (content-related) and regulative (classroom management-related). While the overall number of questions was similar across languages, EMI lectures featured more regulative questions, reflecting concerns about students' understanding of lecture organization. But self-answered questions were more prevalent in Spanish, suggesting that EMI lecturers have yet to fully integrate such techniques into their English repertoire. Sánchez-García emphasized the need to raise teachers' awareness of how questions can support learning.

Interestingly, Chang (2012) explored disciplinary influences on questioning patterns in small-class lectures across three fields, namely Humanities, Social Sciences and Physical Sciences. The study revealed more similarities than differences, indicating that the lecture format itself outweighs disciplinary culture in shaping questioning practices, although it has to be noted that all the lecturers participating in this study were native speakers of American English, which is not very habitual in most EMI settings. To our knowledge, this is the only study that has delved into potential differences between disciplines, which is one of the issues that we will analyse below.

When it comes to professional development, those studies that have analysed EMI teacher training programmes have observed that when EMI teachers reflect on their questioning practices, they come to realize that they have to ask more questions in their lectures (Guarda & Helm, 2017; Morell, 2020). After participating in such courses, EMI practitioners tend to be more willing to bolster students' participation not only by bringing up questions themselves but also by encouraging students to pose their own questions, results which highlight the importance of EMI professional development.

Not only should our focus be placed on the types of questions posed in EMI settings, but also on their frequency and their degree of complexity, as the complexity of teachers' questions has an impact on classroom interaction in the sense that the higher the level of complexity, the higher the degree of interaction (Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2024). In fact, the aforementioned studies do not consider the degree of complexity of EMI teachers' questions regarding grammar, vocabulary, subordination or type of clauses. In this vein, the potential differences between disciplines need to be considered, as the language of science tends to show a higher level of abstraction and technicality, whereas the language used in disciplines related to humanities tends to be more concrete and specific (Kuteeva, 2023; more on this below). This approach may contribute to shedding light on plausible differences that may remain hidden and may go unnoticed if only the number and the type of questions are compared.

5.3 Classroom metadiscourse

Metadiscourse makes reference to the linguistic tools employed by speakers (our focus in this chapter) or writers to structure their discourse, interact with their audience, and express their attitudes toward both the content and the listeners or readers (Hyland & Tse, 2004; Hyland, 2018). A great deal of research on metadiscourse is available because its analysis may help to shed light on «the comprehension needs of university lecturers during lectures» (Molino, 2018: 937). However, the way EMI teachers manage spoken metadiscourse is an area that requires further investigation, especially if we take into account that, in order to communicate clearly and effectively, EMI teachers must make a conscious effort to negotiate topics, signal local organization, and use metadiscourse thoughtfully (Bondi & Nocella, 2024; Wu, Mauranen & Lei, 2020). In fact, it can affirmed that the use of metadiscourse resources is essential in university classes, where complex contents are put forward in a foreign language in real time (Ädel, 2010; Mauranen, 2010).

Although research studies on the use of discourse markers tend to show that there is not much variety in the most habitually used discourse markers among teachers (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2022; Riordan, 2024), the potential impact of the disciplinary culture is worth looking into. As Kuteeva (2023) points out, academic disciplines construct knowledge in different ways. Disciplines are usually classified into four categories: pure hard (e.g. chemistry and physics), pure soft (e.g. anthropology and history), applied hard (e.g. engineering) and applied soft (e.g. education). Whereas pure hard knowledge is concerned with simplification and tends to be more quantitative, pure soft knowledge is holistic and has a qualitative bias, as such disciplines are often of an individual and interpretative nature, while they also tend to value creativity and fluency of expression to a greater extent. In the more applied sciences, hard applied knowledge is more pragmatic and more concerned with practical applications, which is why hard applied teachers prefer explanatory and descriptive types of teaching to argumentative ones (Molino, 2018), whereas soft applied knowledge lays emphasis on personal growth and professional practice (see Kuteeva, 2023, for more on disciplinary differences). Interestingly, Kuteeva and Airey (2014) affirm that academic disciplines' different knowledge-making practices and educational goals have an impact on the use of English in EMI courses, to the extent that the natural sciences would have the most use of English, while the humanities would show the least use of English (see Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 Predicted use of English across disciplines (Kuteeva & Airey, 2014: 539).

Kuteeva and Airey (2014) analysed data that confirmed that the use of English decreases from the sciences to the humanities (literature, history or theater), with the social sciences being placed in between. Based on the specific features of the aforementioned four categories of knowledge (pure hard, pure soft, applied hard and applied soft), differences in the use of discourse markers could be expected between academic disciplines.

Hyland's (2005, 2018) framework categorizes metadiscourse into two primary types: interactive and interactional markers. Interactive resources have to do with the writer's or speaker's management of information in order to anticipate their audience's needs and reactions. Interactive resources contribute to the organization of the text by relying on conjunctions (nevertheless, thus) and markers to sequence material (first, second, last), for instance. Interactive markers assist in organizing the discourse and include Transition markers (e.g., but, thus, and), Frame markers (e.g., first, second, third, to conclude), and Code glosses (e.g., namely, in other words). On the other hand, interactional resources refer to the comments and evaluation of the materials while involving the reader/hearer in the development of the text (Thompson, 2001). They help to build relationship with the reader (you can see that), express the speaker's or writer's attitude to the text (I disagree, fortunately) or withhold their commitment to a proposition (may, probably). Interactional resources include Attitude markers (e.g., important, surprisingly), Boosters (e.g., actually, certainly), Engagement markers (e.g., remember, let's), Self-mentions (e.g., I, me, my), and Hedges (e.g., almost, maybe).

Interestingly, however, there is much research (Cao & Hu, 2014; Hyland, 2018; Wei & Duan, 2020) on written metadiscourse (research articles, business genres, news articles and editorials), whereas classroom interactions have been largely overlooked, which is why little is known about EMI teachers' use of metadiscourse (Wu & Yang, 2022). It is also important to note that researchers have explored interactive metadiscourse markers in greater depth than interactional metadiscourse markers.

With all this in mind, in our study we intended to analyse classroom oral interaction through the study not only of interactive but also of interactional metadiscourse markers and how their use may be conditioned by the disciplinary culture of EMI teachers.

5.4 Research questions

Based on the studies carried out within the aforementioned project on classroom interaction in EMI settings, in this chapter the findings of two general research questions will be summarized.

RQ1: Is there any general trend in the questioning practices of EMI teachers and are there differences between different disciplines?

RQ2: Is there any general trend in the types of spoken metadiscourse markers used by EMI teachers and are there differences between different disciplines?

5.5 The project: participants, methodology and procedure

The study was undertaken in four public universities in Spain that have incorporated EMI courses in many undergraduate and graduate programs. Twelve lecturers from three different academic fields (history, economics and engineering) participated in the study. All the participants reached C1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in English because this was the language requirement established by their universities in order to be allowed to teach EMI courses. Each of the lectures lasted approximately two hours, and the corpus consisted of a total of 251,754 words. All the lecturers were male except for one in economics. Twelve lectures per academic discipline were analysed for a total of 36 lectures. The selection of the lectures was based on two main factors so that their duration turned out to be similar: first, they had to be teacher-fronted and, second, they should not be focused on students' presentations nor should they include the watching of extended videos or movies.

The number of students per class was small (less than 20 students), except for two groups that had between 30 and 40 students. As is usually the case in EMI university settings (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2021; Guarda & Helm, 2017), students' proficiency in English was rather heterogeneous, although most of the students' English level would correspond to the B2 level of the CEFR. By contrast, the groups were fairly homogeneous from a cultural background point of view, as more than 90% of them were Spanish and came from the very region in which their universities were located.

Following the approval of the ethical committee to conduct the study, and the subsequent acquisition of informed consent from both lecturers and students for the recording of classes, the lectures were observed and video recorded. The recordings were then transcribed *verbatim* by a research assistant. Any inaccuracies, ungrammatical expressions, and repetitions were retained in their original form, that is, without modification. The transcriptions were subsequently reviewed for accuracy, with particular attention given to identifying any gaps in

the interactions between lecturers and students that may not have been fully captured by the research assistant.

To analyse the types of questions posed by EMI teachers, our working definition of a question considered those cases in which the teachers' intonation of an utterance or its syntactic pattern was that of a question. We relied on the taxonomy proposed by Sánchez-García (2020), which is presented in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1 Taxonomy of questions (Sánchez-García, 2020, p. 32).

Instructional questions (related to content)	
Display	Those to which the answer is known by the teacher.
Referential	Those to which the answer is not known by the teacher.
Repetition	Those seeking repetition of the last word, idea, utterance, etc.
Language	Those seeking assistance as regards language matters.
Confirmation Checks	Those aimed at ensuring understanding of the topic/lecture.
Retrospective	Those which require the students to recall previous information.
Self-answered	Those which are immediately answered by the teacher.
Rhetorical	Those to which no answer is expected.
Indirect	Those which are not uttered to get a response but to exemplify some situation.
Regulative questions (related to classroom procedures)	
Procedural	Those which refer to the development of the lesson and do not focus on the content/language, but on the lecture itself or a particular activity.
Off-task	Those which refer to a topic that departs from the main subject.

Two researchers analysed the questions individually to guarantee inter-rater reliability and confirm that questions performed the assigned function. In the case of the referential, repetition, language, confirmation check, retrospective, rhetorical, procedural and off-task questions no significant discrepancies were found. However, on some occasions it turned out difficult to determine whether some questions that were answered by the lecturers themselves should be classified as display questions (that is, «those to which the answer is known by the teacher») or self-answered questions (that is, those which are *immediately* answered by the teacher). With a view to sorting out this potential discrepancy, wait time (e.g. the time the teacher waits for the student or students to provide an answer) was taken into account. As pointed out by Mujis and Reynolds (2011), three seconds or more were regarded as the ideal wait time for students to provide an answer. After viewing the extracts in which these questions took place, we included the wait time in the transcripts themselves. The question was classified as self-answered whenever the teacher answered his or her question without allowing any wait time. On the contrary, if the lecturer answered the

question after the wait time was observed –due to a lack of response on the part of the students–, the question was labelled as display.

In the case of questions normality tests (Kolgomorov-Smirnov) were carried out with a view to checking the statistical significance of the distribution of the data in each of the categories proposed by Sánchez-García (2020). Since the analyses revealed that data was both normally (in the case of total number of questions, display, self-answered, repetition and retrospective questions) and not normally (in the case of confirmation check, referential, procedural, indirect, off-task, rhetorical and language questions) distributed, both parametric (ANOVA) and non-parametric (Kruskal-Wallis) tests were performed. Subsequently, the one-way between-groups analysis of variance allowed us to analyse the impact of each discipline on the number and type of questions (Tukey HSD was used for post-hoc comparisons).

As for the analysis of EMI teachers' metadiscourse, the coding process was based on Hyland's (2005, 2018) framework. The procedure involved several stages. Initially, interactional metadiscourse markers were identified in the transcripts using NVivo 14 and classified into different metadiscourse categories (see more on the differences between interactive resources and interactional resources in the Findings section below). Each occurrence was then manually retrieved and reviewed to confirm it fulfilled a specific interactive or interactional function within its contextual use. Given that some items may function as markers in more than one category (e.g., Attitude and Engagement markers), each occurrence was carefully analysed in context to determine its correct classification and avoid overlap. The data was quantified by counting the number of tokens in each category and in order to ensure the reliability of the coding process, 10% of the interactional metadiscourse markers corpus was re-coded by a research assistant, the inter-rater agreement analysis being satisfactory (Kappa = 0.96).

To address our two research questions, both raw frequencies and normalised frequencies per 1,000 words of the various types of questions and interactional metadiscourse items in our corpus were calculated. This normalisation technique, widely used by researchers in the field (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2022; Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2023; Zhang & Lo, 2021), allows for comparisons while taking into account differences between disciplines.

To examine the influence of discipline on the quantity and type of interactional metadiscourse markers used by our EMI teachers, non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis tests were performed. To delve into the specific differences between the three disciplines, follow-up Mann-Whitney U tests were performed between pairs of disciplines.

5.6 Findings

We will start by analysing our first research question, which considered whether there was any general trend in the questioning practices of EMI teachers and whether there were differences between the three disciplines under scrutiny.

The results (see Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2023, for further details) revealed that confirmation checks (30.66 questions per 1,000 words or 30.66‰) clearly outstripped the other categories due to EMI teachers' concern about students understanding the content delivered in English. Thus, expressions like «eh?», «OK?» or «yes or no» were recurrently present in their discourse as filler expressions to which no answer was expected from EMI students and, therefore, they did not actually boost interaction. The second place was occupied by display (4.63‰), referential (1.90‰) and self-answered (1.52‰) questions, but their presence was far less habitual. Display questions produced limited responses from the students, as this type of questions tests students' knowledge of only specific aspects of the subject matter and usually require short answers that range from a single word to a simple sentence. Referential questions were rare and students' answers also tended to be limited, whereas self-answered questions were answered by the lectures themselves. The percentages of the rest of the question types (repetion, retrospective, procedural, indirect, off-taks, rhetorical and langauge) were below 0.5‰, which indicates that they were hardly ever used and their presence in the EMI teachers' discourse was negligible.

Interestingly, when it comes to the impact of the discipline on the types and frequencies of questions posed by EMI teachers, the statistical analyses showed no significant differences when the three disciplines were compared. Although some minor differences were found, the same pattern was observed in all disciplines, as confirmation checks were the most habitual type of questions, followed by display, referential and self-answered questions.

Serna-Bermejo and Lasagabaster (2024) carried out a comparative study of teacher questions in two different languages of instruction, namely EMI and BMI (Basque-medium instruction). With this objective in mind, they videotaped and analysed 29 lessons delivered by two teachers of economics which amounted to a corpus of 39 hours. The authors concluded that the language of instruction did not have any impact on the types of questions posed, as no statistically significant differences were detected. In fact, in both languages lower-order questions were far more predominant than higher-order questions, results with tally with those obtained by Lasagabaster and Doiz (2023) and summarized above. Very similar findings have been reported in other contexts (Genc & Yuksel, 2021; Hu & Duan, 2018; Hu & Li, 2017).

Lasagabaster and Doiz (2024) embarked on the comparison of the linguistic complexity of EMI teachers questions, as the vast majority of the previous studies on EMI had analysed only the type of questions but without considering their linguistic complexity. The reasoning behind this decision lied in the

fact that not all referential questions, for instance, display the same degree of complexity in terms of vocabulary, grammar, type of clauses or subordination. In this vein, it is important to note that, as mentioned above, while the language used in disciplines related to humanities tends to be more concrete and specific, the language of science usually shows a higher level of abstraction and technicality, a difference that justifies such analysis. Nonetheless, when the focus was placed on the lexical and syntactic complexity of the questions posed in the three disciplines (history, economics and engineering), no statistically significant difference was found either. The majority of the words used in the three disciplines belonged in the B level –or independent user level– of the CEFR, followed by the words in the A level –or basic user level–, whereas, worryingly, language at the C level –or proficient user level– was very rarely found.

We will now focus on our second research question, which was aimed at examining whether there was any general trend in the types of spoken metadiscourse markers used by EMI teachers and whether there were differences between different disciplines. As mentioned above, the literature on metadiscourse has traditionally distinguished two types of resources, namely *interactive* and *interactional* metadiscourse resources. I analysed both type of metadiscourse resources in collaboration with colleagues in two studies. In the first study (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2022), we explored the use of spoken interactive metadiscourse markers by Spanish EMI non-native teachers and compared our results with those obtained by Zhang and Lo (2021) in the Chinese context. The two studies followed the same methodology and, although teachers in both contexts displayed a similar general trend in the use of metadiscourse patterns, the teachers' L1 exerted a significant influence on specific linguistic realizations. Whereas transition markers were the most habitual metadiscourse markers, code glosses, frame markers and reminders turnet out to be the least common in both China and Spain. In addition, the two contexts showed significant differences in the linguistic realization of specific metadiscourse markers, which revealed that different cultures seem to display variation in spoken metadiscourse. The conclusion to be drawn is that further research is needed to explore the impact that the teachers' L1 may have on their use of interactive metadiscourse resources.

In the second study (Lasagabaster & Bier, 2025), the authors compared the use of spoken interactional metadiscourse markers by Spanish EMI teachers from three different specializations (history, engineering and economics). The authors examined more than 29000 interactional metadiscourse markers found in 36 lectures of the aforementioned three different disciplines and found that engagement markers happened to be the dominant category by far, followed by self-mentions, hedges, boosters and attitudes markers. Importantly, statistically significant differences were found across the three disciplines, as engineering and economics teachers employed significantly more engagement markers than their history counterparts, which indicates that knowledge is built differently depending on the academic discipline (Kuteeva, 2023). Our results tally with

those obtained by Hyland and Zou (2021) and Qiu and Jiang (2021) in their examination of the use of metadiscourse markers in 3-Minute Thesis oral presentations aimed at engaging non-specialist audiences, since these authors also found that hard science presenters relied on engagement markers more often than those in the social sciences.

Although prior research on written genres had shown social scientists to use more metadiscourse markers, our findings and those by Hyland and Zou (2021) and Qiu and Jiang (2021) suggest that rhetorical patterns vary between spoken and written academic communication, which is why it can be concluded that spoken practices seem to exhibit different patterns. In any case, it is interesting to note that EMI practitioners seem to prefer indirect methods of interaction and, thus, try to engage students through the use of interactional markers rather than through questions.

5.7 Discussion and conclusions

This chapter focused on two main aspects of EMI teaching, namely questioning practices and metadiscourse markers. In the case of the former, our results revealed that two of the most frequently used types of questions (i.e. comprehension checks and self-answered questions) did not foster any interaction at all, whereas those question types (e.g. display and referential) that triggered some interaction led to very limited answers from the students. Interestingly, the disciplinary culture did not exert any influence on EMI teachers' questioning practices, since the same general trend was observed in the three different specializations.

If EMI classroom interaction is to be boosted teachers should ponder the possibility of reversing their role from authority and turn-allocator and adopting a co-learning approach, while making students draw on their experience and inviting them to express their feelings and thoughts, so that conversation actually becomes knowledge co-construction (Noda & Zhu, 2022). It may be the case that if EMI students are asked low-order display questions, they may feel unwilling to answer them because they find this type of questions unchallenging (as they usually require only one or a few-word answers). By contrast, referential questions may turn out to stimulate student participation to a greater degree because they are more challenging and, therefore, require a greater cognitive effort. Yet, our results indicate that students' responses to referential questions also tend to be rather brief, which is why teacher training courses should make teachers aware of the need to require full sentence answers from their EMI students and demand more elaborate answers (An, Macaro & Childs, 2021).

The results regarding the linguistic complexity of the questions brought up by EMI teachers (Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2024) would help to fathom why studies on the potential positive impact of EMI courses on English proficiency

are far from being definitive (Lasagabaster, 2022). In this regard, previous studies (Aguilar & Muñoz, 2014) have reported that only students with the lowest level of proficiency benefitted from EMI, whereas no linguistic progression was observed among those who had a higher level of proficiency. These findings could be attributed to the fact that EMI lecturers may not provide rich input and, subsequently, only those students below the intermediate level may take advantage of the EMI experience. In fact, Lasagabaster and Doiz (2024) conclude that, unless students are constantly exposed to language at the C level (also in the oral mode), EMI will not provide the best conditions to bolster language development, which is why professional development courses should also made EMI teachers aware of the need to pay more attention to the type of linguistic input that they provide to their students (Mariotti, 2023).

Unlike in the case of questions, our analysis of metadiscourse markers did find significant differences between disciplines. Our results confirm thus the importance of taking into account that the way academic disciplines build knowledge is differentiable (Kuteeva, 2023; Kuteeva and Airey, 2014) and that such differences have a noticeable influence on the use of metadiscourse markers in EMI courses.

Some pedagogical implications can be drawn from the aforementioned research studies on EMI practitioners' questioning practices and use of metadiscourse. As far as the latter is concerned, it has to be noted that code glosses, frame markers and reminders are not very usual in EMI teachers' metadiscourse (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2022), despite the fact that they contribute in a vital way to the transmission and construction of knowledge (Hyland, 2005; Zhang & Lo, 2021). Therefore, EMI development courses should pay special heed to this question, while they should also make teachers reflect on the need to incorporate them in their classroom talk. Since EMI teachers seem not to be aware of their lack of attention to these specific metadiscourse markers, their awareness needs to be raised in this regard. The collaboration between content and language teachers could thus pave the way to bolster a more efficient use of metadiscourse markers by EMI lecturers. As Lasagabaster and Bier (2025) point out, EMI teachers could be invited to watch videos of their teaching and helped to consider their use of both interactive and interactional discourse markers. Through collaboration, language teachers could provide constructive feedback to content teachers with a view to fostering student engagement. Such collaborative reflective practice could help to foster classroom dynamics by making EMI lecturers more language aware while improving their intentional use of metadiscourse. In this way, through evidence-based reflective practice EMI teachers will be given the chance to ponder «what they do, how they do it, why they do it, and what the impact of their teaching is on student learning» (Farrell, 2025: 21). This process will help them to reduce the discrepancy between what they actually do in their classes and what they think they do.

In the case of questions, particular heed should be paid to the fact that display questions are used more than double than referential questions, which affects teacher-student interaction, since the former do not foster students' participation, as they demand only short questions. Display questions are low-order questions that usually require a very few words to be answered and that students might find unchallenging. On the contrary, referential questions trigger more complex questions and can boost students' willingness to participate in class to a greater extent, as they are high-order questions that cannot be answered in a few words. Display questions are thus similar to closed questions in the sense that they require short and limited answers, which is why they are often classified as convergent questions, whereas referential questions are more open and demand longer and more varied answers, which is why they are labelled as divergent questions. In professional development courses EMI teachers should therefore be made aware that they need to try to find a balance between the two most habitual types of questions (with the exception of confirmation checks), but giving preference to referential questions if they wish to foster clasroom participation, because they are the type of question that results in more and longer student responses. In this vein, Morell (2020) also underscores that training courses should help teachers to distinguish among the different types of questions, but with a focus on how to formulate referential questions. The available empirical evidence supports the idea that the implementation of a more dialogic approach in EMI settings will contribute to the development of students' higher-level thinking and will lead to more productive learning interactions (Wegerif et al., 2019).

The research summarized in this chapter carries ecological validity because the data was gathered in intact classrooms whose teachers and learners engaged in activities embedded in regular EMI classes. Nonetheless, the main limitations lie in the fact that our results are based on a single country and focused on the oral mode, which leads us to discuss how researchers could endeavour to overcome such weaknesses.

Future studies should delve into how multimodality affects teaching practices while also paying attention to non-verbal interactions (such as gestures, eye contact, etc.) and how they impact on classroom interaction. Teaching strategies do not rely only on ways of talking, as teachers habitually make use of other modes of communication (figures, charts, pictures, graphs, mathematical symbols, etc.), which is why the analysis of classroom discourse should also include these other modes of making meaning (Costa & Mair, 2022; Morell, 2020; Tang, 2021). Likewise, since our results (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2022) indicate that differences are found between different contexts, studies should also aim at carrying out comparisons between EMI courses and programmes in diverse countries. Another course of action for further research could be to explore students' beliefs about the most effective types of questions and metadiscourse markers, as their perspective would contribute to providing a more complete picture of

the most useful strategies to promote classroom interaction. In this vein, Sato and Storch (2022) found that students' attention to form during communicative tasks as well as their beliefs were different in the Chilean and Australian contexts, which led these authors to conclude that other variables that could potentially moderate context-specific interactional behaviours should also be considered. Last but not least, an interesting course of action is the one proposed by authors such as Doiz and Lasagabaster (2025), Kimura et al. (2018), Molino (2018) and Sert (2019), who suggest that teacher training programmes should include the transcripts of specific interactions alongside video extracts with a view to increasing teachers' awareness about their classroom interactional practices. The analysis of the impact of the use of transcripts could thus also be worth looking into.

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6. A CLA reflection on EMI policy, performance and possible pitfalls

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In most Italian universities, the publication of the Bologna Declaration in 1999 led to a proliferation of English-taught programs (ETPs), English medium instruction (EMI) and language courses in general, with a pronounced effect on academic life, procedure, and personnel. However, while many of the goals of the Declaration have been reached, recognition of language as an integral part of the teaching/learning process and as an essential factor in internationalisation has been somewhat slower to be realised, as has the need to implement language policies which encompass the wide-ranging issues relevant to successful internationalisation. University language centres (henceforth CLA) are key to the success of internationalisation in promoting, supporting and maintaining high quality language training in EMI for students and staff, both academic and administrative, and therefore should be at the forefront of many of the issues.
This paper reflects on some of the implications of internationalisation as regards the CLA of the University of Padova, and the relationship with university governance regarding the internationalisation process, and EMI in particular. Questions such as recognition of the need to implement a language policy which encompasses the wide-ranging issues relevant to successful internationalisation, and the role of language management are discussed.
The aim is to look back on the past quarter century of internationalisation, and 10 years of EMI, to consider the state of the art now in terms of the University Language Centre.

Keywords: English-medium instruction; internationalisation; language policy

6.1 Introduction

On June 19, 1999, the Bologna Process agreement, named after the University where it was signed by the Ministers of Education of 29 European countries, came into being and officially marked the start of the Bologna Process (Bologna Process and European Higher Education Area, online). It seems an appropriate

moment to look back on the implications and effects of this agreement (also known as the Bologna Declaration) as regards the CLA, especially since the AICLU conference in Pavia, 20-21 June 2024, took place exactly 25 years after the declaration, almost exactly to the day!

The Bologna Process refers to the agreements undersigned by various European countries (there are now 49 members) to ensure that standards and quality of higher-education qualifications can be compared, thus leading to the institution of the European Higher Education Area and promotion of the European higher-education system around the world. This, in turn, leads indirectly to increased international competitiveness, and the capacity to attract international students and scholars that we are seeing today, and which was possibly underestimated 25 years ago.

In the context of these massive changes within Higher Education that resulted from the Bologna Process agreement 25 years ago, this paper will look at some of its effects on the CLA, from the management point of view in particular. In fact, one of the first things we notice is that terms such as 'internationalisation' and 'English-medium instruction' (EMI) were not foreseen in the original document and evolved from other decisions made. EMI has been offered for over 10 years now, and the number of international students undertaking full-time courses in English is increasing constantly. At the University of Padova, for example, of the nearly 71,000 students enrolled in the 2024/25 academic year 7,300, or over 10%, were international.

The Bologna Process paved the way for a trans-European recognition of credits and student mobility, and was also expected to lead to some tangible quality assurance and alignment between European universities as regards language, teaching, courses and proficiency. It is in this area that the role of the CLA should be underlined.

In 2010, that is 11 years after the Agreement, Law n. 240 (Legge 30 dicembre 2010, n. 240, online), devised by the then Minister for Education Mariastella Gelmini and known as the *Legge Gelmini* (Legge 30 dicembre 2010, n. 240, online), was promulgated announcing the reform of the Italian education system. Formally, the law expressed a certain openness toward mobility of academic staff and students, cooperation among universities regarding study and research, and internationalisation including offering courses in languages other than Italian. The *Legge Gelmini* effectively paved the way for EMI without actually specifying this aim.

Like the Bologna Declaration before it, it is interesting to note that there was no specific mention of the language issues underlying all the proposed objectives. The determining role of language capabilities, and language teaching, in order to bring about the proposed changes to the University system was not mentioned. Nor do the documents explicitly mention - or promote - EMI. In fact, EMI was not an initiative of the *Legge Gelmini* itself since the push toward EMI programmes was already happening thanks to the Bologna Process 1999

after which many universities, mainly in northern Europe, began introducing EMI as part of a top-down strategy to improve their international profiles and curricula.

What did the Bologna Agreement and *Legge Gelmini* mean for internationalisation, and by implication the CLA? This is not a straightforward question, and may be answered by taking a step back to look at where EMI came from. EMI is not new, in fact in medieval times, foreign students and academics were an indispensable part of the earliest western universities (Welch, 2005). Courses taught in English had been offered especially in France and Germany, although the numbers and locations were obviously very limited until recently (Liddicoat, 2016; Welch, 2005). Italy has attracted many fewer international students over time, as outlined by the OECD report on student mobility (OECD, 2024).

It is clear, however, that it is unlikely that there will be a reverse of interest in EMI courses. As mentioned above, EMI was not prescribed by the Bologna Agreement nor by the subsequent Gelmini reform 10 years later; there was no explicit recognition of language as an integral part of the teaching/learning process by either document, and in fact there is no mention of language preparation or teaching at all. Instead, it developed inevitably, almost naturally, since English is the most economical and least problematic way of approaching the goal of attracting international scholars and students. As with many things that evolve in this almost serendipitous way, there are often unforeseen issues to be met along the way. As Célio Conceição (2020) argues, very often it is the economic impact of internationalisation that takes priority in university policy-making and governance, rather than the academic.

It has been noted (Grin 2010) that originally EMI did not appear to serve a particular student demand as the original documents might lead us to presume. Interest evolved after the offer, not before. Regarding Italy, one of the contentious issues is that there is not a particular demand for English language skills on the Italian labor market (Gazzola 2012). Instead, it can be argued that EMI allows Italian students to be more employable outside of Italy.

EMI programs have also been introduced because of their ability to attract non-Italian students. This is an important performance indicator for Italian Universities, and is an essential economic factor which allows universities to compensate for the effects of the declining birthrate in Europe - a point which regards Italy especially. However, even the most basic principles of statistics tell us that given a reduced number of university-aged young people, success in attracting international students will automatically mean that other universities will be in difficulty if unable to attract students.

6.2 The CLA and internationalisation

One would expect the CLA to be taking a pivotal role in the internationalisation process in the various universities, since language is an obvious factor in the

process, even if not explicitly recognised by either key document. However, it would seem that the dynamics are such that the CLA is very often caught between two forces. On one hand, there are 'top-down' forces which see University governance and stake-holders (including industry, and political elements) needing to compete in international markets, both academic and economic. That is, internationalisation has a utilitarian aspect, which may often lie outside of academia. English proficiency expectations, and enticing international students to enrol is clearly an interest, and an extremely powerful factor behind funding and rankings.

On the other hand, there are also 'bottom-up' factors which impact the CLA. These forces see the need for increased language requirements of lecturers and staff in order to be able to successfully compete in the new international scenario, as well as student needs. In this new equilibrium, the CLA finds itself in the middle. Policy decisions on the part of university governance have been made with limited consultation with language experts and the CLA. The driving forces for offering ETPs are economic (ranking and funding), and the CLA is clearly not seen to be part of this area. Yet, there is a lot at stake with policy-making regarding internationalisation which has a direct impact on the CLA, and conversely the CLA could also be in a position to contribute to some of these positions. Other essential factors have been slower to be realised, like the role of offering Italian L2 to all international students.

6.3 Responding to internationalisation

How have the CLA been affected by this changing environment? Neither the Bologna Process, nor the *Legge Gelmini* made explicit reference to language learning, language level or preparation, and there has been little consultation from university governance in the last years regarding these factors at the University of Padova. While consultation and recognition of the CLA's expertise in language-related issues is certainly welcome, the CLA has been able to develop an approach which has turned out to be very successful. This has mainly been in the form of a very comprehensive support structure for lecturers, English language courses aimed at administrative staff, and continuing the languages offered to students.

This generalised need to expand English language services to cope with the increased demands of internationalisation and EMI is just one important factor in a wider question of language policy. While language and communication are recognised as a fundamental part of any teaching/learning process, the question of language becomes more complex in EMI. This underscores the need for a coherent language policy which encompasses the many wide-ranging and relevant issues regarding learning languages, teaching languages, languages in academia, the use of languages in the university itself, and the linguistic identity of the single university as perceived externally. At the University of Padova, like

in all AICLU member universities, the CLA English teachers, the CEL (Collaboratori ed Esperti Linguistici), have exercised their agency and expertise in designing materials, and their awareness of not just English language, but global Englishes. As well as teaching English within degree courses, in Padova the CEL also train lecturers in classroom management, cultural issues, and teaching practice, not just language per se, as recognition that successful lecturing is not simply a case of eliminating an accent, and avoiding mistakes.

Reflecting on 25 years of the Bologna Agreement and 10-15 years of EMI, it seems that, as language experts and language centre managers, we are on a type of threshold in the process of internationalisation. From a management perspective, this position allows us to look back on the consolidation of work done in both language teaching and management over this period, and to look to the future. Overall, the results until now have certainly been positive, considering the increasing numbers of students and staff accessing our services, rankings, and feedback received. However, the issues remain numerous.

Many of the first moves towards EMI were based on hypotheses, not evidence. In this massive movement there was, and unfortunately there still is, little explicit recognition of language expertise or language teaching within EMI. This omission is certainly not deliberate but appears to be born from a more economic view of success than a linguistic one. It can also be seen in some of the prevailing thoughts of EMI, especially when it was still a novelty. Initially it was thought that EMI had to be 'a good thing' because everyone was doing it, and there was an underlying notion of 'the more English the better' with little consideration of other European languages (Grin, 2010).

At the same time, there was little planning and evaluation of 'how to do' EMI on the part of university governance. The CLA of the University of Padova, like many others, navigated the changes as best they could, often with excellent results. As CLA management, we share the view that the question of language use and the implementation of language in modern universities is not a small point of detail, but an issue that carries vast and important consequences including social, cultural, political, economic, pedagogical and linguistic ones. For this reason, the CLA should be an important participant in the internationalisation process, not just providers of language services.

EMI does not exist successfully in isolation, so 25 years after the Bologna Process may be a good opportunity for a thorough investigation and evaluation of the needs and uses of various fields which EMI encompasses, that is:

- EMI for curricular, academic subjects (such as degree courses)
- Languages of research activities and publications
- Languages of internal administration, (i.e. staff, stakeholders)
- Languages of external communication, (i.e. stakeholders, public, media)

The word 'languages' is used deliberately, rather than 'English'. It has been noted that EMI does not serve a particular student demand or a particular demand for English language skills on the Italian labor market (Gazzola 2012). Instead, EMI programs are introduced because of their ability to attract non-Italian students, which is an important performance indicator for Italian universities and is closely linked to funding. English is the language of academia, and as such it is an obvious and natural shift. The economic impact is limited and there are few obstacles; generally, there is widespread acceptance that English is the language of internationalisation.

However, discussion of EMI (especially in Italy), usually «fails to take account of its relationship with multilingualism» (Dalziel 2012, p193), focussing instead on the implications of teaching and learning in English as a non-native language. We have seen that 'English-only' tends to be promoted, irrespective of the languages actually present in the classroom, and there are numerous examples of EMI courses where the students and the lecturer all share the same L1, which is not English. Normally, EMI takes place in a multilingual environment with English becoming a shared vehicular language creating a teaching/learning environment which is a linguist's treasure trove! This huge and rich resource is waiting to be explored, and not subdued.

While recognising the value of ETPs, it is important not to forget the role and status of Italian language and culture. As a CLA, we need to be aware of the three-dimensional reality of EMI classes, which can include:

- international English-speaking lecturers and international students
- Italian-L1 lecturers and domestic students (where the classroom can be entirely Italian)
- International or Italian-L1 lecturers with a class that includes students speaking multiple second and third languages.

This scenario cannot be liquidated as simple EMI; it requires training and expertise on the part of the CLA, and Language Diversity management is essential.

It is common to find the local language (e.g., Italian) suppressed, or dissuaded, leading it to be perceived almost negatively, or as a second-rate language - an unfortunate but widespread view. The promotion of EMI comes at the cost of discouraging local language(s). The CLA (as well as the university) must uphold the role and status of Italian and its academic culture. In fact, while there may be a desire to ensure inclusion of international students, the great majority of students are in fact L1 Italian speakers.

6.4 Quality control

This period of reflection after the first stage of EMI allows us to contemplate also the question of quality control in its various facets. Concerns persist about guaranteeing quality teaching, as well as educational quality, which in the case of EMI means being able to guarantee that these courses have the same outcomes in terms of knowledge acquisition as a course taught in L1. Quality tends to be measured in quantitative terms, such as the number of students, courses, pass rates, exam marks, percentages, etc. This type of review can give an accurate picture of numbers, but it does not take into account the many other factors which are an integral part of the quality control of internationalisation.

Some of the questions which do not lend themselves to a quantitative analysis are the merits of the EMI classroom and whether it contributes to better educational outcomes, as well as the learning capacity of EMI. Controlling the numerous variables and typology of participants is extremely complex and does not lead to satisfactory results.

Whether students learn better in the EMI classroom raises questions such as: who monitors the experimental and control groups, how to balance groups for age, levels, previous knowledge, type of materials, and whether they are translated or not. The list is long. Stakeholders from industry and future employers are probably justified in being concerned about this aspect, as there are many repercussions. And who responds in case of shortcomings? Until now, this question has not been raised loudly, but it needs evaluating seriously nevertheless. Research in this regard has been carried out by Dafouz et al. (2014, 2016) with students of accountancy in Spain, although the authors reported limitations in their research. Similarly, other studies of the learning outcomes of EMI compared with an L1 class have shown the same limitations, and at times different results, for example Zuaro (2013) and Airey (2012).

One of the widely-discussed issues in EMI is whether students' learning is in any way impeded by the fact that it takes place in a non-native language. Research in this area is not without its problems, and until now has been inconclusive. It is also necessary to understand and recognise the role of other languages in the construction of content knowledge. The fact that classroom teaching, background reading and exams are conducted in English does not mean that the learning process takes place exclusively in English, and in fact in many cases it does not. (Dalziel 2012)

A further reason for considering the present as a period of reflection is the question of the preparation, usually by the CLA, of EMI lecturers. We have seen an interesting development in the courses offered by the CLA and the needs of the lecturers. There was an initial enthusiasm for EMI on the part of many academic staff members, with great interest in the courses, especially the teaching methodology. These first groups of lecturers were keen to follow many types of seminars, extra activities, and even a 'breakfast club' voluntarily and with

great enthusiasm. As we move towards a decade of EMI, those attending the courses are mainly lecturers and researchers who are obliged by the university to have a C1 level of English before taking on teaching in any type of degree course. This level can be demonstrated by international certification (IELTS, TOEFL or Cambridge), by passing the C1 level TAL test developed by the CLA at Padova University, or by following one of the CLA courses. It is fairly clear that this latter possibility allows great flexibility, and maybe even tolerance. On the other hand, those interested in the quality of EMI might suggest that an alternative would be to allow lecturers the possibility to opt out of EMI, rather than making it almost obligatory for some degree courses.

6.5 Language policy

Grin (2010, p10) notes that «[a]vailable documents suggest that authorities merely go ahead with all kinds of language-related decisions taken with only the most tenuous grasp of their implications», with the result being a very partial approach to language choices in university governance. In internationalisation/EMI, there is little recognition of language expertise and language teaching. This is not deliberate but is born from a more economic view of success than a linguistic one. A language policy can be an effective way to confront these issues and in the case of the University of Padova, the CLA worked together with the university governance to draw up a policy.

Internationalisation has underlined the need for an effective language policy which should outline the aims, ideas, rules and practices of language use, while at the same time avoiding being prescriptive and limited, especially in its recognition and understanding of true multilingualism. Spolsky (2004) distinguished three essential components of a language policy, that is, the language practices, which includes the varieties which make up the linguistic repertoire, language ideologies, which includes beliefs about language and its use, and efforts to modify or influence these practices, which may be by intervention and/or management practices.

As far as the CLA is concerned, the language policy reflects both the work of the CLA and the process of internationalisation within the university, and keeps in mind the five main uses of languages: languages taught as subjects; language as a medium of instruction, language as used in research, languages used by administration, and that of communication, as outlined by Grin (2010). The same areas are echoed by Liddicoat (2013) and are expanded slightly by Lauridsen (2013) to include language support for lecturers, researchers, librarians, administration staff, and go further to include languages of the wider community.

Perhaps, it is now time to introduce Linguistic Diversity Management (Darquennes et al, 2020), an area which is rapidly evolving and is now significant in internationalisation, and is equally important also for CLA as a reference for languages (and therefore internationalisation). Although not originally

contemplated, benefitting from the experience of the last 10 years Linguistic Diversity Management would also make a valuable contribution to quality assessment. In the context of increased student and staff mobility, information exchange, research, and EMI, the languages used by the university community and stakeholders in a wide range of contexts has grown steadily over the past decades.

Linguistic Diversity Management refers to the language planning dimension of internationalisation which goes beyond satisfying requests for courses, and tailoring content for particular users. The aim is to capture and recognise the complex sociolinguistic nature of universities as a whole, rather than a collection of parts.

There has been much written about pedagogical questions in EMI and language teaching principles and methods. However, until now there has not been a comprehensive overview of the different levels, stakeholders, and contexts of language use in higher education. Much less attention has been devoted to the study of linguistic diversity management in higher education as a process that covers the design, implementation, and evaluation of language policies aimed at (re)affirming or changing the language dynamics in a variety of domains within a particular institution of higher education in a certain geographical setting, for example Italy. In the context of the CLA, linguistic diversity management could be an interesting area to develop, especially in relation to language policy and governance.

6.6 The CLA and research

Most scientific research into language, and in particular English language, as regards internationalisation has been devoted to pedagogical questions and applied linguistics. Less emphasis has been placed on issues regarding governance, political questions, and decision-making processes. Studies in Italy have generally fallen into four thematic areas: institutional policy, the training of lecturers, preparing students, and the perceived outcomes of EMI. Policies have been mainly examined through surveys, and perception analyses. The CLA is well placed to be able to contribute to research into language aspects of internationalisation/EMI and management of language teaching, yet, as we know, the mandate of the CLA does not include developing research projects. This is unfortunate since over the last years, the CLA has become a hub for EMI preparation and the lecturers involved. More importantly, the many CEL involved in the preparation of lecturers have accumulated great expertise in the field of applied linguistics, language, communication, language assessment, and research into EMI will remain limited unless this expertise can be tapped.

6.7 Conclusions

Most members of university communities would agree that internationalisation and EMI are a positive shift, offering rewarding experiences and objective results. What is less clear is why, and on what grounds, this assumption can be made. The CLA of the University of Padova, for instance, is in fact a service centre for the University, functioning as part of the Administration area. It therefore receives indications from the University governance, yet it has a limited voice in decision-making processes regarding wider-ranging language questions. The CLA is a passive participant in the process of internationalisation and is limited in its contribution to more long-term planning, policy-making, and research regarding the language elements of internationalisation. Indications often come from non-language experts with both pedagogic and linguistic implications. However, the CLA, thanks to its collaboration with highly expert CEL, does have the expertise in training lecturers for EMI; this training goes beyond language training to include teaching methodology in the EMI classroom. The CLA is in a position to contribute to research in this field, particularly in the development of effective language policy and in monitoring how the policy is regulated and constantly updated in order to keep pace with the process of internationalisation.

University language centres are key to the success of internationalisation in promoting, supporting and maintaining high quality language training in EMI for both students and staff, including academic and administrative staff.

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7. Enhancing EMI teacher education through research-informed training and accreditation at the University of Turin's Language Centre (CLA-UniTO)

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This paper describes an English-Medium Instruction (EMI) training programme launched by the University of Turin's Language Centre (CLA-UniTO) in collaboration with the Department of Foreign Languages, Literature and Modern Cultures. The programme offers a teacher professional development course leading up to the Open Badges «Certificate of Competence in EMI» (B2 or C1 level). The course consists of six three-hour meetings focused on language, teaching methodology, multimodal communication, and intercultural awareness, and concludes with participant-delivered mini-lectures that are formally assessed. Before the launch of this programme, EMI training at the University of Turin had developed in a relatively fragmented manner, with limited coordination across initiatives. The University had a four-year agreement with an external provider, The British Council, for EMI training. This was followed by one-to-one tutoring for lecturers organised by CLA-UniTO. The language centre also organised EMI training courses on request for individual departments. Meanwhile, the Department of Foreign Languages, Literature and Modern Cultures was involved in the international projects TAEC (Erasmus+) and EMILC (Grant for Internationalisation, University of Turin) and periodically offered workshops and seminars. The initiative described in this article brings the department and the language centre together, meaning that training and accreditation are now provided exclusively in-house. We will suggest that this approach is preferable because it is more cost-effective, allows for more flexibility and adaptability to the specific needs of the university at a local level, enables ongoing progress tracking and awareness, and facilitates a research-informed approach to classroom practice.

Keywords: English-medium instruction; teacher education; training; university language centre

7.1 Introduction[1]

In the present article, we will outline and discuss an EMI teacher education programme for in-service content lecturers launched at the University of Turin's Language Centre (*Centro Linguistico di Ateneo,* CLA-UniTO) in the academic year 2023-2024. The course is a combined venture between the language centre and the EMI research group based at the Department of Foreign Languages, Literature and Modern Cultures, bringing together the experiences acquired by both partners in the field over an eight-year period[2]. The programme makes use of in-house digital accreditation through Open Badges which, we will argue, are more suited to this kind of training than standardised international certifications. At the time of writing, we are nearing the end of our fourth session, and we will discuss how we are continuing to learn from practice, adapting the syllabus based on classroom experience and feedback from participants.

This paper is structured as follows. Section 7.2 introduces EMI as a key internationalisation strategy for non-anglophone universities and provides an overview of its implementation at the University of Turin. Section 7.3 reviews studies on EMI professional development at European universities. Section 7.4 examines past teacher support initiatives at the University of Turin, with a focus on the role of CLA-UniTO. The discussion then shifts to the *EMI Lecturer Certification (EMILC): New Horizons for Quality Assurance and Capacity Building* project, involving members of the EMI research group at the Department of Foreign Languages, Literature, and Modern Cultures. This initiative offered valuable research insights that informed the development of the training programme presented in this paper. Notably, a blended workshop organised as part of EMILC served as a blueprint for the syllabus of the current EMI teacher education programme, which is outlined in Section 7.5. Section 7.6 discusses future directions, while Section 7.7 concludes the paper with reflections on the benefits of in-house training initiatives.

7.2 EMI: A key internationalisation strategy

EMI is seen by universities as a key internationalisation strategy. Over the last 20 years, the internationalisation of European universities, stemming from the Bologna Process (1999), has led to an increase in EMI courses, stimulating lecturer and student mobility (Block & Khan, 2021; Macaro, 2018; Wächter & Maiworm, 2014). Globalisation, too, promoted EMI and academic mobility,

[1] Both authors have equally contributed to the conceptualisation and the overall drafting of the paper. Alessandra Molino is responsible for Sections 7.2, 7.3, 7.4.2, 7.5.2, 7.5.3 and 7.6, while Alice Edna Spencer for Sections 7.1, 7.4.1, 7.5.1 and 7.7.

[2] The teaching team includes, in addition to the authors of this paper, Stefania Cicillini and Nesrine Triki.

attracting people from outside Europe, namely from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America (Teichler, 2009; see also Hultgren et al., 2015). Strengthening exchange programmes and creating a more international environment helps universities to become more visible internationally and acquire prestige, thus competing in the global knowledge economy (Phillipson, 2009). For example, university rankings often list international faculty and student ratios as measures of quality, and institutions that aim at reaching top-level positions see EMI as an indispensable tool (Jenkins & Mauranen, 2019; Rose & McKinley, 2018). EMI is also offered to local students to give them a competitive edge on the international market (e.g., Campagna & Pulcini, 2014; Molino et al., 2022). Finally, EMI has a fourth – often implicit – aim, namely to strengthen students' language skills in English. This goal aligns closely with that of «internationalization at home», which focuses on developing international and intercultural competencies in all students, particularly those who do not participate in mobility programmes (Beleen & Jones, 2014; Leask, 2015; Triki, 2022).

The EMI educational scenario is highly complex: advanced disciplinary content is taught and learned in what is a foreign language for most participants, often in a multilingual and multicultural context. It comes, therefore, as no surprise that several challenges arise. From the perspective of EMI content teachers, who are the stakeholders upon whom the present article is focused, the most frequently-mentioned challenges include: dealing with different levels of language proficiency among students (e.g., Pawlak & Papaja, 2023); understanding and, when possible, adjusting to the cultural backgrounds and perspectives on teaching and learning among international students, which often leads to intercultural communication challenges (see Aguilar, 2018; Kling, 2015); facing different levels of student preparedness within disciplines and having limited or inadequate support for teaching in EMI (e.g., Drljača Margić & Vodopija-Krstanović, 2018; Guarda & Helm, 2016; O'Dowd, 2018); lacking resources to support students' language acquisition in both English and the local language – an issue that is particularly critical in fields like medicine, where internships occur in local hospitals (Drljača Margić & Molino, 2022); and, lastly, in some fields, ensuring that students develop the necessary terminology in their native language (e.g., Dafouz, 2018).

For EMI to be successful, it is necessary to implement appropriate quality assurance mechanisms that guarantee good educational standards and help to face the challenges mentioned above. Some of the most common policies across Europe to assist EMI lecturers and their professional development include 'flexible' forms of support, such as individual tutoring (e.g., Borsetto & Schug, 2016). Broader professional development programmes are also increasingly emerging, focusing on various aspects of teaching methodology, language skills, or intercultural communication. In some cases, these foci are combined in a single training programme, while in others, they are covered distinctly (for an over-

view, see Deroey, 2023). Finally, in some EMI settings, targeted language certifications are being used to prove that lecturers have the language resources needed for teaching through English (e.g., Dimova, 2017).

The University of Turin became keenly aware of the need for EMI quality assurance policies from the outset. Today, support for EMI is considered ever more central, in line with the constant expansion of EMI programmes over the last 10 years. In the 2024-2025 academic year, there are 27 programmes (either entire degree courses or curricula) fully taught in English[3], two of which are at the undergraduate level and one of which is a 6-year postgraduate course. The macro disciplinary sectors with more EMI courses are the Social Sciences and Humanities (SH), followed by the Life Sciences (LS) and by some programmes that also involve the Physical Sciences and Engineering (PE). Students with a foreign nationality amount to 7% of the total student body (i.e., ca. 5,800) and come from 130 foreign countries. In Section 4, we illustrate the initiatives that the University of Turin has undertaken over the years to support EMI lecturers and the role of CLA-UniTO in this process. Before that, Section 7.3 provides an overview of the EMI professional development scenario in Europe, offering a broader context to the programme described here.

7.3 EMI teacher professional development in Europe

Professional development for EMI teachers is becoming an increasingly important area, both in practical terms and within EMI-related research (see Karakaş & Kırkgöz, 2025a; Ruiz-Madrid & Fortanet-Gómez, 2023). Dereoy (2023) provides a review of EMI lecturer training initiatives worldwide and highlights the need for a systematic examination of these practices. The study offers a useful framework for their analysis based on 1) course content, 2) delivery methods, 3) training challenges, and 4) recommendations. This framework will be employed here to review the literature and, in the next sections, to report on the experience at the University of Turin.

This literature review, which is necessarily selective due to space constraints, focuses on European higher education institutions, highlighting the specific needs and strategies of universities in this context (see also O'Dowd, 2018). One such important feature is the European multilingual policy and its interplay with EMI. In addition, as Costa (2015) noted, EMI teacher education programmes may «freshen up old methods of teaching which are still present in many European countries» (p. 219). Accordingly, this overview will examine the role of EMI professional development programmes in this renewal.

Starting with course content, despite the extreme diversity of the European scenario, Costa's (2015) survey found two main priorities in EMI teacher

[3] https://en.unito.it/studying-unito/programs/degree-programs/degree-programs-english

professional development across Europe: training for better English competences and for enhanced teaching methodologies (p. 129). This situation has remained substantially unchanged over the years, as these two foci continue to be the core of the professional development initiatives reported in the subsequent literature on this topic (also see O'Dowd, 2018). Notable examples include a language development programme at the University of Rijeka in Croatia (Drljača Margić & Vodopija-Krstanović, 2018); a programme to support EMI teachers in their shift from Italian-medium to English-medium instruction at the University of Padua in Italy (as part of the project 'Learning English for Academic Purposes', LEAP) (Guarda & Helm, 2016); and the extended programme CLIC@unizar (Content and Language Integrated Competences) at Universidad de Zaragoza in Spain (Gil & Mur Dueñas, 2023) aimed at supporting lecturers' communicative abilities and their pedagogical skills.

Drljača Margić and Vodopija-Krstanović (2018) report that the main perceived advantages of their language development programme were the possibility for participants to practice the use of English for teaching in a controlled environment, receive feedback, and engage in self-reflection. Teachers reported becoming more aware of the importance of high-level proficiency for both teaching effectiveness and self-esteem. On the other hand, both Guarda and Helm (2016) and Gil and Mur Dueñas (2023) underscore the importance of EMI lecturer professional development going beyond language and helping teachers adapt their methodology to the new reality of EMI. Guarda and Helm (2016) highlight the need for more student-centred, interactive approaches, in line with the (2013) European Commission's report on improving the quality of teaching and learning at university level, which emphasises that while student-centred learning is widely accepted in theory, its practical implementation remains limited in formal education. In a subsequent report, Klemenčič et al., (2020) note that although some elements of innovation have started to emerge, «for the most part, we are still living in a teacher-centred paradigm» (p. 11). To better support the integration of language and content in tertiary education, Gil and Mur Dueñas (2023) stress the importance of embedding digital competences in EMI lecturers' pedagogical toolkit to improve teaching and promote student engagement. The significance of technology-enhanced teaching is also underscored in Klemenčič et al. (2020) as a means of fostering more inclusive, high-quality higher education.

Other initiatives at universities in Europe reporting a focus on language and communicative skills include those described in Long (2017) and Costa and Grassi (2022), while programmes offering a combination of language and teaching methodology – albeit with varying proportions and emphasis – are illustrated in Hartle (2020) and Morell et al. (2022). More recently, research on professional development experiences in European universities has highlighted the complex, multidimensional nature of EMI and emphasised that support programmes must also incorporate intercultural awareness components (e.g.,

Borsetto & Bier, 2021; Gustafsson, 2020; Maíz-Arévalo & Orduna-Nocito, 2021).

Moving to delivery methods, most of the reported professional development programmes offer in presence, face-to-face classes. Initiatives which include online activities are also reported (e.g., Morell et al., 2022) as well as proper blended programmes (Hartle, 2020). Classes are normally taught to mixed groups of participants although sometimes admission criteria are established such as the language level (e.g., C1 in Long, 2017) or the disciplinary field (e.g., medical sciences in Gustafsson, 2020). Hands-on, experiential approaches are favoured to complement formal teaching moments, while microteaching and peer feedback are frequently employed and widely recognised as effective practices in teacher training (e.g., Borsetto & Bier, 2021; Costa & Grassi, 2022; Long, 2017). Overall, most teacher education programmes offer opportunities for reflective practice, that is, they encourage EMI teachers to «subject their philosophy of practice, principles, theories and practices to a critical analysis so that they can take more responsibility for their actions» (Farrell, 2019, p. 277).

As regards training challenges, a major issue is the absence of a unified framework for EMI teacher competencies, their certification and accreditation (Macaro et al., 2020). As O'Dowd (2018) points out, there is the need for an «agreement on common guidelines which can be adapted across the whole European higher education area» (p. 10). Another challenge concerns EMI lecturer attitudes, which are shaped by local contexts and policies, and significantly influence engagement and participation in professional development initiatives. A third challenge is the limited institutional support for EMI teacher development. Dafouz (2018) observes that for teacher education programmes to «become transformative» (p. 11), they need first and foremost to be «fully integrated in the institutional structure of HEIs in the form of continuous teacher professional development» (p. 11). The lack of institutional integration often coincides with limited recognition or career incentives for engaging in EMI or attending professional development programmes. Another recurring theme is the need to build «a community of practice that meets and shares experiences» (Gil & Mur Dueñas, 2023, p. 1020; see also Lauridsen & Lillemose, 2015's Recommendations for European Actors on multilingual and multicultural universities). While teacher education programmes often succeed in giving lecturers a space for «collaborating together, building relationships, and learning from each other» (Guarda & Helm, 2017, p. 184), the goal of a stable and sustained community of practice is not always easy to achieve, especially in the absence of institutional support, as mentioned above; therefore, this aspect represents an additional challenge for professional development initiatives.

Finally, for an overview of the most pertinent recommendations at present, we refer to the recent contribution by Karakaş and Kırkgöz (2025b) who offer «Future directions for professional development in EMI settings». The au-

thors suggest that more research is needed on EMI teacher competencies to attain a clearer definition of what these may encompass. They also point out that, in addition to promoting language skills, teaching strategies and intercultural awareness, professional development programmes should address discipline-specific issues and assessment literacy to ensure fairness and validity in EMI settings (Karakaş & Kırkgöz, 2025b; Mair, 2021). Other recommendations in the EMI-related professional development literature include providing opportunities for lecturers to reflect on the ideological and identity implications of teaching through English (Dafouz, 2018). Professional development should further support teachers in creating inclusive, multilingual learning environments using translanguaging and other bi-/multilingual pedagogies (Karakaş & Kırkgöz, 2025b, pp. 162-163; O'Dowd, 2018). While this latter recommendation supports student learning and academic success, it also aligns with broader goals related to European integration and language values. Lastly, it is essential for teacher trainers and educators to explore how best to integrate ESP (English for Specific Purposes) approaches and technological tools, such as video analysis and AI (Artificial Intelligence), into EMI teacher education (Karakaş & Kırkgöz, 2025b, pp. 162-163).

The following Sections describe past and current EMI professional development initiatives at the University of Turin, focusing on how recent training and accreditation opportunities have addressed some of the challenges identified in this brief literature review. In particular, we underscore a shift in institutional strategy toward a more stable, in-house, and structured professional development framework, better suited to addressing local needs.

7.4 EMI training at CLA-UniTO: Towards a synergetic, research-driven, in-house approach

7.4.1 Past training initiatives at CLA-UniTO

The language centre's involvement in EMI training began in 2017. The first EMI training courses offered at the University of Turin were outsourced to the British Council (*Academic Teaching Excellence*) but supported by fifteen hours of one-on-one follow-up tutoring provided by CLA-UniTO. Over this four-year period, the language centre's tutors worked with 71 lecturers teaching in English, gaining some invaluable insights into the complexities of EMI teaching in our university. However, it became increasingly apparent that the 'one-size-fits-all' standardised training then offered was not fully meeting the complex local demands of our university departments.

In 2019 and 2020, CLA-UniTO began to develop the first in-house training programmes, offering thirty-hour courses to EMI lecturers teaching at the Departments of Management and Veterinary Sciences. These courses saw the

introduction of the first version of our digital accreditation for EMI lecturers, the B2 and C1-level «Certificate of Competence in EMI». These certificates were in the form of Open Badges, namely visual images and a set of embedded metadata which indicate the skill gained or objective reached, the learning process and method of assessment, also providing information about the issuer. They are endorsed by the institution which issues them and are recognised on an international level. The information packaged within the badge image file is provided in an open-source format and can be shared on social media platforms such as LinkedIn, as part of an online e-portfolio, as a link on an electronic file of the candidate's CV, and on the platform which hosts the Open Badge. As argued by Bussi and Spencer (2020), Open Badge certifications have the advantage of being 'glocal' forms of accreditation, documenting training programmes designed to meet localised needs on an internationally standardised and accessible platform (pp. 427-428). They are particularly suited to the fields of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Professional Purposes because the metadata contained can document soft and paralinguistic skills in combination with hard language skills (pp. 425-426) and provide a detailed overview of specialised training experiences (pp. 424-425). Whereas a conventional certificate would simply specify a course title and a CEFR level, the Open Badge format details the full range of professional competences developed, and the highly specific innovative training provided in what is still a relatively new (and therefore not necessarily familiar) field.

The «Certificate of Competence in EMI» forms part of the «Open Badge@CLAUniTO» project on the BESTR platform[4], meaning that the Open Badges for EMI lecturers appear on the same page as ESP accreditations for students and technical administrative staff, Italian L2 language accreditations for international students and certifications in CLIL and intercomprehension awarded to local secondary school teachers as part of public engagement projects run at CLA-UniTO. Bussi & Spencer (2020) point out that the use of this single platform reinforces the image of the university as a cohesive community of educational practice (p. 428).

After COVID-19, the training initiatives at CLA-UniTO stopped and remained at a standstill until the EMILC project. Thanks to the new experiences from this project and the synergy with the expertise acquired at CLA, the new training programme presented in this paper was born.

7.4.2 The EMILC project

With the consolidation of EMI, quality assurance mechanisms in support of teaching and learning are progressively implemented. Within this context, Direc-

[4] https://bestr.it/project/show/115?ln=it

torial Decree No. 2711 of 22-11-2021 was issued by the Italian Ministry of Education and Research, requiring universities to verify the language skills possessed by lecturers teaching in a foreign language for those degree courses that aim to be accredited as 'international'. To respond to the Decree, the University of Turin initiated a series of interventions divided into two phases, the first dedicated to the assessment of EMI lecturers' language competences and the second to teacher professional development. The desire to establish research-based quality assurance principles that can be applied to specific local contexts, and behind, led to the EMILC project[5]. Funded by the Grant for Internationalisation of the University of Turin and running from September 2022 to December 2023, the project involved, in addition to this university (coordinator), three other European institutions, i.e., the University of Copenhagen (Denmark), Universitat Jaume I (Spain) and Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour (France).

The project had three goals. The first was to validate the online administration of an existing test for the certification of the language competences of EMI lecturers: the *Test of Oral English Proficiency for Academic Staff* (TOEPAS). Developed in 2009 at the University of Copenhagen, TOEPAS was conceived for the assessment of face-to-face interaction in a physical classroom. To ensure greater flexibility in test administration – following COVID-19 but also the need to reduce time and costs for test takers and institutions – the project aimed to examine to what extent sitting the TOEPAS remotely would yield valid results (initial findings have been disseminated by Dimova 2023a and 2023b; Molino & Dimova, 2024). This goal also allowed the partners to consider the introduction of TOEPAS as a standard procedure at their institution. Specifically, the University of Turin now offers this opportunity to its EMI lecturers and an Open Badge is now available referring to the TOEPAS test as well as certifying a preparatory blended course focused on language for teaching: EMI-TOEPAS@claUniTO[6].

The second goal of the EMICL project was to investigate face-to-face teaching in English, examining discourse and teaching practices through classroom observation. The purpose was to obtain data that could be compared with the TOEPAS performances to determine the extent to which the online test can 'predict' language use in face-to-face teaching. The analysis of classroom teaching has also provided data on best practices to inform the design of a blended EMI teacher training workshop offered during the project.

The third goal of EMILC was precisely the development of such a workshop (Ruiz Madrid & Bernad Mechó, 2023), which consisted of four online meetings and one on-campus class. The online sessions were addressed to EMI lecturers across partner universities, who thus had the opportunity to exchange experiences with foreign colleagues. The on-campus class, on the other hand, offered

[5] https://www.dipartimentolingue.unito.it/do/progetti.pl/Show?_id=gzpk
[6] https://bestr.it/badge/show/3579?ln=en

participants more targeted support to face the challenges of their local setting and was taught in-person in the various partner universities by the local research team.

The project activities contributed to the development of a medium-term policy at the University of Turin to support EMI teachers, a policy which will be in place until 2026 and which includes the training programme presented in the following Section.

7.5 The new EMI training course at CLA-UniTO (a.y. 2023-2024)

When, towards the end of 2023, the University of Turin prepared to re-launch EMI training, the CLA and the EMI research group from the Department of Foreign Languages, Literature and Modern Cultures decided to join forces in formulating a new project. We founded our proposal on the argument (e.g. see Karakaş & Kırkgöz, 2025b) that an in-house training programme would not only be more cost-effective but also more tailored to the unique needs of the University of Turin. We also argued that the language centre, as an interdepartmental language-learning hub, was the most obvious venue for a university-wide language training initiative.

7.5.1 Aims, duration, and format

This in-person course provides a general introduction to EMI practice, aiming to raise awareness of its challenges and equip participants with strategies to address them. When possible, we invite guest lecturers from other Italian or international universities to enrich the discussion with their insights and expertise in specific EMI-related topics[7]. The course is an eighteen-hour programme divided into six three-hour-long meetings. The «Certificate of Competence in EMI» (at B2 or C1 level) has been updated, and participants now receive an Open Badge that includes detailed information about the current course. To be eligible for an Open Badge, participants must attend at least 80% of the lessons. At the time of writing, four groups from diverse academic fields (on average, 10 participants per session) have attended the course:

- Session 1, February-March 2024 (natural sciences)
- Session 2, May-June 2024 (humanities and social sciences)
- Session 3, October-November 2024 (natural sciences)
- Session 4, January-February 2025 (mixed group)

[7] Over the course of the programme's initial four sessions, the invited experts were Claudio Bendazzoli (University of Verona), Maria Noelia Ruiz Madrid (University Jaume I, Spain), Edgar Bernad Mecho (University Jaume I, Spain), and Branka Drljača Margić (University of Rijeka).

The programme integrates fronted teaching with interactive and experiential learning methods, «by putting teachers in the position of learners» (Gil & Mur Dueñas, 2023, p. 1020). Furthermore, peer learning fosters collaboration and mutual support. Ample time is allowed for discussion, so attendees can critically engage with the material, share experiences, and clarify doubts. These discussions aim to encourage community building (Guarda & Helm, 2017) and reflective practice (Farrell, 2019). Microteaching and other practical activities offer hands-on practice and occasions for feedback. We make it clear in this course that we do not provide any ready-made recipes for EMI and that effective teaching in this context is the result of the interplay between adequate language abilities for teaching, appropriate didactic strategies, and intercultural communication skills. Throughout the course, we hold on to the idea that EMI teachers should promote the 'classroom as a safe space' to encourage student interaction, foster dialogue, and allow for the negotiation of meaning. Finally, we discuss the role of English, the local language (Italian) and the students' native language(s), encouraging reflections on the advantages and challenges of bi-/multilingual teaching and learning strategies.

7.5.2 Syllabus

The syllabus is outlined in Table 7.1. During the first class, we propose a critical reflection on EMI. This lesson aims to get the group to know each other through activities related to self-presentation, focusing in particular on the participants' teaching experiences in their first language and English. We then discuss the challenges of EMI, based on existing studies, but also asking the participants to provide and share their own insights.

Table 7.1 Certificate of competence in EMI course syllabus.

Classes	Topics
Class 1	Critical reflection on EMI: EMI and its drivers, experiences and challenges of EMI, the local context, language policies (institutional, classroom), language-content continuum, lecturer's attitudes and disciplinary differences.
Class 2	Language for teaching purposes: Comprehensible input through intelligibility (pronunciation, word stress, prosody), explicitness (structuring, signalling, marking transition) and language adjustment (vocabulary and reformulation).
Class 3	Multimodal communication: EMI teacher's multimodal discourse (embodied and disembodied modes). Intercultural communication: communication styles, intercultural sensitivity, experiences and challenges.
Class 4	Teaching practices: Teaching styles, 'integration' (bilingual terminology, internationalising the curriculum), student engagement (through language and technology), assessment.
Class 5	Mini-lectures, peer feedback, classroom discussion
Class 6	Mini-lectures, peer feedback, classroom discussion

In Class 1, we also explore the drivers of EMI to provide attendees with a broader context. We then discuss the forms that EMI can take and ask participants how they would describe their own way of teaching. For example, EMI may be implemented as a simple change of language, or it may involve a change in teaching approach due to different learning objectives and/or different student populations (*TAEC EMI Handbook*, 2019). By referring to Airey (2016), we highlight where the practice of EMI sits on the language-content continuum. We encourage discussion about whether participants position themselves more towards the content-only end of the continuum or whether they believe that their teaching is, or should be, more of an integration of content and language. This allows us to discuss disciplinary differences in lecturers' attitudes, a very stimulating topic that generates a lot of discussion.

The second class focuses on language for teaching purposes. We build on the concept of «comprehensible input» (Krashen, 1982; Long, 1983; see also Costa, 2023; Vraciu & Curell, 2022), which in our approach is achieved through intelligibility, explicitness, and the ability to adapt language to the needs of the audience. Accordingly, we work on pronunciation, word stress, and prosody, but also on structuring, signposting, and making transitions. As for language adaptation, we resort to the concept of 'mediation' (Council of Europe, 2020; see also Molino, 2023); we pay particular attention to how vocabulary and sentence structure can be adjusted, i.e., how the same concept can be reformulated and mediated for different types of audience. Interaction is another essential aspect of input presentation and comprehensibility (Mariotti, 2007). This topic is addressed in Class 4 as part of instructional strategies for engagement that require the use of language.

The third lesson focuses on multimodal communication (embodied and disembodied modes), a theme that is generally unknown to the participants, but which tends to be received as an eye-opener. Participants often report that they would like to dig deeper into this topic and start paying more attention to their multimodal discourse practices, planning certain aspects of their teaching more proactively and consciously. Class 3 also deals with intercultural communication and the need to address different levels of preparedness within disciplines in an international classroom. Reflection on intercultural communication has implications for the choice of examples to be used in class, how students are addressed, the level of detail of information given, and the importance of not taking received ideas about teaching and learning for granted.

Teaching practice is the subject of lesson number four. This lesson is based on two key themes. The first is what we call 'integration', which refers to activities that promote disciplinary literacy, such as supporting bilingual terminology acquisition. The 'internationalisation of the curriculum' (see Leask, 2015) is also discussed, and examples are given of how content can be made more relevant to EMI students. An often-debated issue is to what extent the internationalisation of the curriculum is a requirement in situations where students are exclusively

local. The second issue discussed in Class 4 is that of student engagement. We cover this aspect by examining how content teachers can encourage greater interaction and participation using questions and clear instructions for in-class or homework assignments. We also discuss how technology can help, especially when teaching in large classes and as a way of overcoming potential barriers due to students' insecurities about contributing to class discussions. Finally, in Class 4, we look at assessment, encouraging participants to share their best practices.

The last two classes are dedicated to microteaching. Participants are required to prepare mini-lectures based on real lectures that they have given in the past or that they will give in the future. Each mini-lecture lasts 20 minutes per participant and is followed by a 5-minute discussion where peers can ask for clarification and offer feedback. Participants are encouraged to prepare mini-lectures using the suggestions and strategies discussed during the course. Details of how formal feedback is given by trainers based on the mini-lectures, and therefore how the Open Badge is awarded, are provided in the following Section.

7.5.3 Individual written report

Course participants are assessed based on a mini-lecture delivered in-person during the closing lessons of the programme. We ask participants to ensure that the mini-lecture is self-contained, meaning that it includes a clear introduction, a development, and a conclusion. A key component is the presence of an assignment, which can be either a task for students to complete as homework or an in-class activity. Participants are welcome to use notes and visual aids, but the lecture should not be read directly from a script, maintaining a natural and engaging delivery. After their mini-lecture, participants receive informal feedback from their peers during class, followed by formal written feedback and an Open Badge (B2/C1). Upon requests from the participants, the mini-lecture can be video recorded and the video sent to them together with the report.

The individual written report is very detailed and focuses on the aspects discussed during the course, namely teaching practices, language use, multimodal communication and intercultural communication (when relevant). We highlight points of strength and offer suggestions for improvement. Here follow are some examples taken from a selection of reports that comment respectively on teaching practices (example 1), language use (examples 2 and 3), multimodal communication (example 4), and intercultural communication (example 5).

1. You gave clear instructions on how to complete homework and encouraged students to use Moodle. One suggestion is to write instructions on the slides. By providing written instructions, you ensure that all students have a clear understanding of their tasks and a reliable reference to use at home.
2. At times, the tone was perhaps a little too flat, and when you asked rhetorical questions, it was not quite clear that they were questions. Make sure you

use a rising intonation when asking questions and pause briefly at the end. This gives the audience time to process the question and its implications.

3. You sometimes have problems distinguishing long and short vowel sounds, which can affect intelligibility, especially for any non-native speakers of Italian in your class (e.g., «deed» has a long vowel: /di:d/). We also suggest that you pay attention to the pronunciation of vowel sounds in important key words. For example, the word «sale» should be pronounced with a diphthong (/seɪl/), whereas you pronounce it with a single vowel (/sel/), which has a different meaning (i.e., «cell», «a cell in an organism»).
4. As for the disembodied modes, your slides are clear and engaging as you successfully highlight key words and ideas in different ways: colours, size, font, upper and lower case, bold, italics, and as you include diverse illustrative figures and tables. One suggestion would be to subdivide the content of some dense slides (e.g., Slides 7, 8, 15) into more slides or to use animation features so that you introduce the points one at a time to guarantee a progressive and smooth flow of content.
5. A minor note on intercultural communication regards Slide 5, which uses a popular meme to explain clothing and identity. Although intended as a humorous reference, it may be sensitive for international students from cultures where relationships are not openly discussed or given current concerns about sexual harassment[8].

7.6 Future directions and recommendations

One of the main comments made by participants, already at the end of the first session of the course, was that the duration of the training programme was too short. This observation aligns closely with what Drljača Margić and Vodopija-Krstanović (2018) reported about their 30-hour programme: more time was needed for participants to «learn, integrate and practice the material that has been taught» (p. 36). However, unfortunately, it was not possible for us to offer a longer course in subsequent sessions of this first experimental year. Any structural change would have had an impact on the Open Badge certification, not only creating inequalities between participants, but also affecting the format approved and funded by the university. On the other hand, session by session, we were able to introduce several modifications to improve the effectiveness of the course and make it more relevant to participants' needs.

First of all, we included new occasions for peer assessment to further support learning. For instance, we designed a more structured sequence of home-

[8] The comment was referred to the use of an image representing catcalling, which the professor presented as a shared cultural practice, without acknowledging its implications or providing a critical analysis.

work assignments, enabling participants to build on their reflections progressively and demonstrate their learning in the final mini-lecture. Specifically, starting from the third session of the course, the homework given at the end of Class 1 consists in analysing the student population (through interviews, questionnaires, departmental or course documentation) so that EMI teachers can reflect on how such population might affect their teaching and whether they can do anything to better respond to the students' needs. The assignment criteria are intentionally flexible, allowing participants to choose the 'data collection' method they find most suitable and feasible within a week. This activity provides material for discussion in Class 2 and has been well received by participants since its first implementation, as teachers engage in a form of 'action research' that allows them «to discover specific problems or challenges in their classrooms» (Pusey, 2020, p. 11).

The homework assigned in Class 2 is a video recording of a short presentation based on one of the participant's regular classes, which is examined by a peer and the trainers in terms of language use and according to a specific observation protocol. This homework represents a first occasion for feedback and self-reflection. The assignment given at the end of Class 4 (which also covers the topics discussed in Class 3) is the design of a lesson plan that demonstrates awareness of multimodal communication and the integration of specific teaching practices. For some participants, this may involve incorporating technology, such as student polls, questionnaires, bulletin boards, or word clouds; for others, it may involve including bilingual terminology activities or group work; and for others still, it may mean revising examples, tasks, or assignments to make them more international and relevant to both local and international students.

The feedback received on all tasks provides the participants with relevant information to prepare the mini-lecture (preferably an extended version of the video recorded as homework) and to better exploit the training course as an opportunity to experiment with strategies they have never used before but would like to implement in their teaching.

In sessions 3 and 4, we offered participants the possibility of being video recorded while delivering their final mini-lectures, thus allowing them to review their practice and reflect on their performance at home after receiving the trainers' written feedback. Being video recorded is an option that participants can reject. So far, none has done so. This suggests that while this solution does not fully compensate for time constraints in class, it is perceived as a useful additional resource for self-assessment and improvement.

To summarise, based on our experience and participant feedback, we suggest that EMI teacher training courses should offer participants substantial contact hours, especially during the teaching semester, so that they can try out in the classroom what has been suggested in the course. However, we recognise that different university settings may favour different solutions. The proposed 18-hour format was initially seen as a reasonable option to fit into the busy

schedules of university professors. However, it is likely that those who do manage to carve out time for the course will want a more impactful experience, given their level of effort and strong motivation. A longer and more spread-out course would not only provide more chances to discuss topics but also allow for a more comprehensive syllabus. For instance, a theme that could only be touched upon during our course is assessment. Given the importance of the subject, a more thorough exploration of its implications in EMI would be desirable. Similarly, intercultural communication would deserve more time and examples. Additionally, although the training course was designed to provide a balanced perspective on EMI issues, the professors in our local setting expected a stronger focus on language skills. Therefore, an increase in the number of hours devoted to language for teaching purposes is also a necessary development.

7.7 Concluding remarks

The experience at the University of Turin has been varied and has always recognised the need for an integrated approach. The University has thus tried to respond to bottom-up needs while also addressing top-down governmental indications. The collaborative EMI training programme described in this paper is continuing to grow and develop with each new session, with the team making adjustments on the basis of classroom experience and participant feedback.

Choosing in-house training over outsourcing offers several benefits. First, it provides increased flexibility to meet specific needs. This approach better enables the tracking of progress, making it easier to assess effectiveness and make relevant adjustments. In-house training also plays a crucial role in raising awareness of EMI within the local academic community. Moreover, it is more directly informed by locally-relevant research. Hence, our experience corroborates Pusey's (2020) claim that «it is essential that EMI programs, as well as teacher education for pre-and in-service EMI instructors, take local constraints and affordances into consideration when designing curricula and training programs» (p. 11).

Individual tutoring has been suspended for the time being. Comparing teacher training courses with one-to-one tutoring, we can say that the former offers a broader perspective, covering language and teaching skills as well as intercultural communication. A training course encourages the dynamic of peer learning, which contributes to community building (Gil & Mur Dueñas, 2023; Guarda & Helm, 2017). In addition, training courses allow us to compare local practices with other settings. Of course, individual tutoring is not ruled out, and we remain open to assessing evolving needs.

As we have seen, in addition to the obvious economic advantages, the shift to in-house training allows for increased flexibility and adaptability, facilitating a closer monitoring of progress and outcomes over a longer period and an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders. The new collaboration between CLA-UniTO

and the EMI research group at the Department of Foreign Languages, Literature and Modern Cultures has led to an enriched, constantly evolving research-informed classroom practice. This has also been possible thanks to a shift in institutional strategy, promoted and supported by the university leadership, which is increasingly aware of internal strengths and resources and committed to capitalising on them. The «Open Badge@CLAUniTo» platform has facilitated the development of a range of 'glocal' accreditations, which are at once tailored to local needs and internationally recognisable. The platform's grouping together of language certifications for a broad range of actors from across the university fosters a sense of belonging to and investment in the broader academic community, also making EMI support and certification a standard and visible opportunity.

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8. The role of Language Centres in the development of EMI: Pedagogical procedures and perspectives

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EMI (English-Medium Instruction) refers to the use of English to teach academic subjects in contexts where the first language is not English. As one of the consequences of the internationalisation process of higher education, EMI can improve the global visibility of universities, attract a diverse student body and prepare graduates for their future careers. Despite its potential, EMI poses challenges to both lecturers and students, including language barriers, increased complexity in dealing with intercultural settings, and the need to make pedagogical adjustments to lecturers' teaching styles. At the academic level, Language Centres have become increasingly important in providing support to teachers and students, in the form of training programmes and language courses, to help them meet these challenges. Drawing on recent research and informed by both literature and practical experience, this article explores how Language Centres may support teachers and students by providing practical tools to improve their pedagogical effectiveness and self-awareness. It also considers the importance of integrating elements of intercultural communication and adopting technologies to facilitate classroom interactions in increasingly multicultural contexts. For these reasons, two structured self-assessment tools are proposed as a systematic and accessible means for lecturers and students to engage in continuous reflection, increasing both linguistic self-monitoring and pedagogical awareness. The study concludes with recommendations for building inclusive learning ecologies and outlines future research directions in the evolving field of EMI.

Keywords: English-Medium Instruction (EMI); internationalisation; language centres; self-assessment checklist; training programmes.

8.1 Introduction

The vehicular use of English to teach in higher education has become a global phenomenon, both as a driver and a consequence of internationalisation (Dafouz and Gray 2022; Galloway and Rose 2021). English-Medium Instruction (EMI) refers to the use of English to teach academic subjects in contexts where the native language of the majority of the student population is not English (Macaro 2018). Universities worldwide have increasingly adopted EMI to enhance their international competitiveness, attract a more diverse student body, and improve students' English language proficiency (Dearden 2015; Richards and Pun 2023). While EMI is widely promoted as a means of fostering internationalisation, its pedagogical implications, sociolinguistic issues, and impact on educational equity remain subjects of ongoing debate (Dafouz and Gray 2022; Lasagabaster 2022a; Macaro et al. 2018).

As EMI continues to expand globally, research has highlighted both its advantages and its limitations. While it seems that EMI can benefit students' employability in global markets and strengthens institutional prestige (Dearden 2015; Richards and Pun 2023), critical perspectives caution that EMI is often implemented without sufficient attention to pedagogical adaptation, raising concerns about student comprehension, lecturer preparedness, and the dominance of English over local languages (Galloway and Rose 2021; Phillipson 2015). These insights suggest that the effectiveness of EMI depends not only on participants' linguistic proficiency but also on the ability of lecturers and students to cope with communicative needs in intercultural and international contexts.

In response to these challenges, a number of scholars have called for targeted training initiatives that tackle both the linguistic and pedagogical dimensions of EMI (Lasagabaster 2022a, 2022b; Macaro et al. 2018; O'Dowd 2018; Richards and Pun 2022; Sánchez-Pérez 2020). Studies have highlighted the linguistic demands placed on EMI instructors, emphasising that while many lecturers are experts in their academic fields, research indicates that they also need the necessary communicative skills to teach effectively in EMI contexts and to foster student interaction (Ball and Lindsey 2013; Dubow and Gundermann 2017; Lasagabaster 2022a). Without suitable training, lecturers may find it difficult to adapt their teaching strategies to support diverse learners and engage them effectively, particularly in contexts where English is not the first language for either the instructor or the learners (Macaro 2018). However, training programmes across Europe are not evenly provided, and while some countries have made significant efforts to support EMI lecturers, others lag behind (Costa 2015), which can result in disparities in the quality of English-Medium education. In fact, there is still a significant gap in the training of language educators, particularly in the context of EMI (O'Dowd 2018), where lecturers are often expected to teach content in English without adequate pedagogical preparation

(Airey 2011; Lasagabaster 2022a). This lack of training can hinder the quality of instruction and limit the potential of internationalisation efforts (Richards and Pun 2022).

To understand the complexity of this scenario, the concept of learning ecologies, which views learning as a process that occurs across diverse contexts and interactions (Barron 2006; Siemens, 2007), offers a valuable framework for reconceptualising EMI classrooms as dynamic, multilingual, and multicultural spaces. Rather than viewing EMI solely as an internationalisation strategy, this approach can be expanded through intercultural and transcultural awareness (Baker 2022), to emphasise the ways in which linguistic and cultural diversity can enhance learning outcomes. Scholars such as Baker (2015) and Byram (2021) state that fostering intercultural competence is essential in educational settings to create inclusive environments where students can critically engage with different perspectives. This shift—from simply delivering subject content in English to actively promoting intercultural awareness—aligns with contemporary discussions on plurilingual education and the intercultural dimension of internationalisation (Beelen and Jones 2015; Knight 2011). The promotion of transcultural dialogue (Baker 2022) and peer collaboration can enhance students' language development, but it also supports the broader goals of building inclusive and student-centred learning environments.

8.2 Research gap and purpose

While research on EMI has extensively examined its linguistic and pedagogical dimensions (Lasagabaster 2022a; Macaro et al. 2018; Macaro 2020; Richards and Pun 2023), the specific role of Language Centres in supporting lecturers and students within EMI contexts remains underexplored. Given the substantial demands EMI places on educators—many of whom may not be native English speakers—there is a pressing need to investigate how Language Centres can offer structured support and resources to enhance teaching effectiveness and student participation. Language Centres have played a role in providing this support, offering tailored training programmes that equip lecturers with the skills needed for tackling the challenges of EMI (Deroey 2023; Morell and Volchenkova 2021). These centres can serve as hubs for developing EMI-specific teaching strategies, equipping lecturers with linguistic scaffolding techniques, intercultural communication training, and technological tools that facilitate more interactive and inclusive classroom experiences (Sánchez-Pérez 2020).

This article aims to propose how Language Centres can contribute to the success of EMI by fostering intercultural competence, enhancing pedagogical preparedness, and integrating inclusive teaching practices aided by technology. It begins with a review of existing literature on EMI, focusing on the intersections between language and professional development. Building on insights

from institutional experiences and reflections gathered through engagement with EMI lecturers and students in international contexts, the article suggests practical strategies for Language Centres to assist EMI practitioners in reflecting on and developing their skills. In particular, in response to emerging needs identified in practice, the article introduces two preliminary self-assessment tools which are designed to help practitioners develop critical self-awareness regarding language proficiency, intercultural competence, and teaching and learning strategies. The first of these tools is intended to guide lecturers in identifying areas for improvement and promoting more effective engagement with students, while the other is designed for students to help them become more aware of their learning process.

8.3 Linguistic and pedagogical challenges in EMI

One of the most prominent challenges in EMI research is the linguistic barrier faced by non-native-English-speaking (NNES) lecturers. Teaching in English, particularly in academic settings, requires a high level of linguistic proficiency, including the ability to explain complex concepts, manage classroom interactions, and provide feedback effectively (Macaro 2020). However, many NNES lecturers struggle with these demands, which can impact their confidence and teaching effectiveness (Macaro 2018).

For these reasons, language proficiency has long been regarded as crucial in the overall delivery and comprehension of EMI lectures (Lasagabaster 2022b; Macaro 2018, 2020), because it can have an impact on other aspects that contribute to the success of EMI learning environments. For instance, Airey (2011) found that lecturers teaching in EMI settings often experience reduced fluency and flexibility compared to their native-language instruction. This limitation affects their ability to improvise, incorporate humour, and engage in spontaneous interactions with students, which can hinder classroom dynamics. The lack of interactions and questions in class has also been found in other studies (Dafouz Milne and Sánchez García 2019; Macaro 2018).

Similarly, Helm and Guarda (2015) examined the experiences of Italian EMI lecturers and found that many were less concerned about their academic English proficiency and more apprehensive about their communicative competence in informal settings. This suggests that EMI training programmes should not only focus on academic language use but also incorporate communicative strategies that facilitate spontaneous and interactive discussions with students.

From a pedagogical perspective, many EMI lecturers lack formal training in teaching strategies for multilingual and multicultural classes. As Lasagabaster (2022b) notes, EMI lecturers often prioritise content delivery at the expense of student engagement. Richards and Pun (2022) argue that EMI courses should

adopt student-centred approaches to foster deeper learning, moving away from top-down knowledge transmission.

The role of student language proficiency in EMI classrooms is another key factor because limited English proficiency among students can impede engagement and comprehension in EMI courses (Richards and Pun 2022). While EMI is often promoted as a means to enhance students' English skills (Dearden 2015; O'Dowd 2018), traditional lecture structures and reduced interaction may limit linguistic development opportunities. Addressing this requires pedagogical strategies that encourage student participation, integrate formative assessment, and provide linguistic scaffolding to support comprehension.

8.4 EMI lecturer training programmes and institutional support

While language proficiency has long been regarded as a crucial element for delivering effective EMI lectures (Macaro 2020), recent studies (such as Aguilar-Pérez and Arnó-Macià 2020) demonstrate that effective lecturing is grounded in communication strategies and teaching presence that transcend the language of delivery. This underlines the necessity of EMI training programmes that address not only English proficiency but also teaching effectiveness and student engagement. There is growing recognition that lecturers also need training in communication strategies, pedagogical methodologies, and technology integration to succeed in multilingual and multicultural classrooms (Morell and Volchenkova 2021; Sánchez-Pérez 2020).

EMI lecturer training has gained prominence as institutions aim to equip instructors with the necessary linguistic, methodological, and intercultural competencies. Studies have been conducted on professional training experiences that can improve the integration of language elements and content delivery in EMI contexts, such as those described in the book edited by Sánchez-Pérez (2020). In fact, as Fortanet-Gómez (2020) notes, effective EMI implementation requires not only language training but also the development of pedagogical strategies that prepare lecturers for future, increasingly diverse international classrooms. Training programmes must be both research-informed and context-sensitive, aligning with institutional internationalisation goals while supporting lecturers' evolving professional identities (Aguilar-Pérez and Arnó-Macià 2020). Moreover, Valcke and Båge (2020) argue that successful EMI requires moving beyond traditional disciplinary silos to build collaborative Continuing Professional Development (CPD) models for both lecturers and educational developers. This collaborative, systems-based approach reinforces the role of Language Centres as key facilitators in training design and implementation.

At the European level, several programmes have been implemented to prepare university lecturers for EMI (Costa 2015). The various forms of EMI

training held in different universities highlight the increasing institutional recognition of the need for structured teacher training programmes and provide insight into the pedagogical approaches employed across different higher education institutions (Morell and Volchenkova 2021; O'Dowd 2018). Several international organisations and university networks have developed EMI lecturer training courses to address these needs. For instance, the *Transnational Alignment of English Competences for University Lecturers (TAEC) Project* has been instrumental in promoting EMI training alignment across European institutions (TAEC 2019). The TAEC Erasmus+ project developed a common framework for EMI quality assurance and support, aiding partners in adapting local EMI training and certification instruments for language assessment for transnational use (2019).

Additionally, the EQUiiP – Educational Quality at Universities for Inclusive International Programmes – project (2020), an Erasmus+ initiative, provides modules for educational developers and university lecturers to cultivate inclusive and intercultural learning environments. The EQUiiP project (Sánchez-García and Dafouz, 2020) offers a strong model for how internationally oriented educational developers can facilitate inclusive EMI environments through reflective training programmes that prioritise quality in teaching and learning. Language Centres, operating in a similar capacity, can act as institutional anchors for promoting pedagogical innovation and intercultural awareness. In the United Kingdom, the «Academic Teaching Excellence course» and the «Certificate in EMI Skills» offered by the British Council and Cambridge English (discontinued in 2023), respectively, have targeted support for language and pedagogy. These training programmes highlight the commitment to enhancing EMI teaching quality and emphasise the importance of standardising EMI lecturer competencies to ensure consistency in instructional quality across different European and British universities.

A recent systematic review of EMI teacher training provision (Deroey 2023) identified common themes across various programmes, including pedagogical training, communication strategies, and EMI awareness. Her comprehensive survey of 25 initiatives for the training of EMI lecturers across 18 countries provides valuable insights into effective training practices. The study identifies four core components common to successful programmes: language proficiency, pedagogical skills, communication strategies, and EMI awareness. Notably, Deroey observes a shift from earlier findings (e.g., Jiménez-Muñoz 2020; O'Dowd 2018) that highlighted a neglect of pedagogical training, indicating a growing recognition of its importance. The study also shows the benefits of integrating EMI training into broader CPD programmes, fostering collaborations among language and didactic experts, EMI professionals, and disciplinary content experts.

Despite these advancements, there is still a gap between institutional policy goals and the actual methodological and linguistic support provided to lecturers (Lasagabaster 2022a, p. 23). This gap reinforces the need for comprehensive, research-informed EMI training initiatives that cater to the evolving demands of international higher education in different contexts (Aguilar-Pérez and Arnó-Macià 2020), and the need for in-service training models that are responsive to the realities of EMI classrooms and grounded in reflective practices. Through the provision of tailored training programmes, institutions can ensure that their EMI offerings are not only policy-compliant but also pedagogically sound and responsive to both educators' and students' needs.

8.5 Previous research on EMI students' perceptions and learning experiences

Over the past decade, research has increasingly turned to the experiences and perceptions of students as a key factor in evaluating the effectiveness of English-Medium Instruction (EMI) in higher education. Surveys and mixed-methods studies have offered valuable insights into how students experience language challenges, intercultural communication, classroom dynamics, and their own learning development in EMI environments.

Research shows significant variation in how EMI is experienced across different institutional and cultural contexts, reflecting disparities in pedagogical practices, language support, and student engagement (Dearden 2015; Macaro et al. 2018). For instance, Macaro et al. (2018) conducted a systematic review highlighting that students often struggle with understanding content delivered in English, especially when instructors lack fluency or rely heavily on lecture-based formats. A similar issue was identified by Ament and Pérez-Vidal (2015) in a Spanish university context, where limited classroom interactivity and the absence of corrective feedback were found to diminish students' opportunities for linguistic development.

Further studies (e.g., Dafouz Milne and Sánchez García 2019; Lasagabaster 2022a) have shown that students value clear instructions, active engagement, and culturally responsive teaching practices—elements that are often missing in EMI environments. Language proficiency remains a decisive factor in shaping student outcomes; in particular, formal and technical vocabulary may be problematic. Evans and Morrison (2011), for instance, found that Hong Kong students experienced difficulties with discipline-specific terminology and academic discourse, which placed additional cognitive demands on their learning process. These findings suggest «the importance of language provision in the form of discipline-specific classes aimed to meet the specific needs of students in specific programmes» (Galloway and Rose 2021, p. 35).

Another study, which was conducted in the 2022-2023 academic year, examined the experiences of international students enrolled in English-Medium

Instruction (EMI) courses at two universities: Taichung University in Taiwan and the University of Verona in Italy (Hartle et al. 2024). The study findings revealed that cultural factors influenced how students valued their contributions within group activities, underscoring the need for EMI lecturers to cultivate inclusive classroom practices. Moreover, learners' responses to our questionnaire revealed that their EMI experience was hindered by linguistic and organisational factors, limiting their ability to interact as expected. The direct impact this had on the level of transcultural interactions and collaboration in class was clearly expressed by the Taiwanese participants of the study who, despite displaying motivation and interest in the subject, were more focused on the comprehension of the content rather than socialising and working in groups, thus possibly undermining the inclusiveness of the EMI learning ecology (Hartle et al. 2024).

Although initiatives to accommodate the demands of EMI students have grown in recent years, many universities still do not employ structured mechanisms to systematically collect student feedback in EMI settings. This lack underlines the value of incorporating tools such as self-assessment checklists and formative assessment methods that are easy to implement and adapt to local contexts. It also suggests the importance of structured support from Language Centres to guide lecturers in designing and delivering EMI courses and the necessity of adopting several strategies to enhance the classroom ecology in EMI settings. In this respect, Language Centres are well-positioned to offer the support needed to address the linguistic, communicative, and technological challenges associated with EMI, because they are the institutional hubs where language and educational tools can be created and disseminated, ensuring that EMI courses meet students' needs and experiences.

8.6 EMI curriculum pedagogy: practical steps and support from Language Centres

The evolving landscape of English-Medium Instruction (EMI) necessitates a shift from traditional language support roles towards more integrative and facilitative approaches, also on the part of the teaching staff in university Language Centres. Traditionally, one of the tasks of university language experts has been to curate repositories of linguistic and methodological resources for autonomous access by students and faculty (Stickler 2022). However, the role of language instructors has evolved from resource providers to facilitators who guide learners in selecting and exploring appropriate educational tools tailored to specific learning contexts, such as EMI environments. As Stickler (2022, pp. 31-32) notes, this 'pedagogy of exploration' requires instructors to help learners identify tools that best suit their individual needs. Building on insights from both

literature and institutional practice, it becomes increasingly evident that fostering inclusive and effective EMI environments requires a multi-dimensional, strategically coordinated approach. Language Centres, as institutional actors positioned between academic departments and university strategy, are uniquely equipped to support this process. They can offer targeted interventions, enhance pedagogical awareness, and provide tools that align with the communicative, cognitive, and intercultural demands of EMI.

This section presents practical recommendations derived from both previous research and initiatives developed within our Language Centre, reflecting on the dynamic interconnections and outlining specific steps that can enhance curriculum design, teaching practice, and student engagement in EMI settings. The findings of our previous study were the starting point to identify three main elements to consider when seeking to understand how university Language Centres can support both teachers and learners in creating transcultural learning ecologies:

1. Teachers' communicative effectiveness: Students reported that clear and engaging communication from lecturers significantly enhanced their understanding of course content and positively shaped their overall learning experience.
2. Students' self-improvement and learning effectiveness: Students valued opportunities for self-assessment and the use of tools that helped them monitor their progress. Encouraging student reflection and engagement can increase confidence and motivation, particularly in culturally diverse classrooms.
3. Transcultural interactions in the classroom: Inclusive classrooms that encourage interactions among students from different cultural backgrounds were associated with more dynamic and engaging learning environments.

These results emphasise the necessity for Language Centres to adopt a comprehensive approach by providing targeted training for lecturers to develop inclusive classroom practices, implement self-assessment tools to encourage student reflection, and integrate technology to enhance content delivery. For instance, the 2019 pilot mentoring programme at the University of Verona demonstrated the efficacy of blended learning approaches in combining face-to-face interaction with digital tools to create flexible and accessible learning environments (Hartle 2020).

One of the specific aspects to which attention needs to be drawn is that of teacher discourse. The reason is two-fold: on the one hand, in teacher talk, students have to face complex discourses both from a conceptual (disciplinary) and a linguistic (foreign language) perspective; on the other hand, it is essential

to raise awareness, especially amongst the content specialists, of how teacher discourse can be used pedagogically to support students in their learning process (Dafouz Milne and Sánchez García 2019, p. 2). Moreover, maximising classroom management in an EMI setting can enhance critical reflection and support the implementation of EMI classes. In our previous study (Hartle et al. 2024), students' perception of participation and interaction in the class seemed to confirm that lecturers who lack effective teaching skills and multimodal strategies may cause passive learning among students. Studies confirm that interaction should play a key role in the EMI classroom (Lasagabaster 2022a; Macaro 2018) as well as in other learning contexts, since learning is viewed not only as an individual cognitive learning process but also as a social one, and learning occurs during the interactions that take place between individuals. Thus, it is important that teachers promote student participation and foster negotiations of meaning in the classroom so that learners are provided with opportunities to develop their cognitive ability, improve their linguistic skills and boost their learning process (Dafouz Milne and Sánchez García 2019, p. 5).

These elements are strongly supported by broader research in the field of intercultural competence, which highlights the centrality of inclusive pedagogy and student engagement (Baker 2015, 2022), where diverse perspectives are valued and encouraged. According to student feedback, classroom practices that emphasise peer support, group discussions, and valuing individual contributions can help overcome linguistic barriers and foster intercultural growth. To ensure that negotiation of meaning occurs, the creation of intercultural learning ecologies (Baker 2022) is another essential aspect which should be developed for both novice and experienced EMI lecturers. For instructors new to EMI, gaining familiarity with its underlying framework and methodology is crucial to fostering student engagement and inclusivity. At the same time, more experienced EMI lecturers can benefit from continuous professional development that provides further insights into evolving best practices.

Our findings (Hartle et al. 2024) seem to indicate that successful learning ecologies are founded on the principles of inclusivity, leveraging both intercultural and individual diversity. This objective can be achieved through the implementation of strategies that encourage class participation and enhance students' motivation. For example, learner-centred methodologies, such as flipped classrooms, blended learning models, and collaborative group work, can be adopted to accommodate different learning styles and encourage active participation (Hartle 2020). Supported by educational technologies, such practices allow lecturers to personalise tasks, monitor progress effectively, and foster ongoing student reflection and self-assessment (Tao 2025). Through

strategic support, reflective practices, and the promotion of intercultural competencies, Language Centres can act as catalysts for the creation of truly inclusive EMI learning environments—ones that empower both lecturers and students. Ultimately, effective communication within and beyond the classroom fosters a more dynamic and responsive learning environment (Biggs et al. 2022).

8.7 EMI lecturer preliminary self-assessment checklist

Self-awareness plays a crucial role in effective EMI instruction, particularly for lecturers teaching in a non-native language. Farrell (2015) highlights the importance of reflective teaching practices, suggesting that self-assessment can provide a structured way for instructors to evaluate their pedagogical effectiveness and linguistic competence. For instance, Farrell's framework for reflecting on practice (2020, p. 279) emphasises the importance of systematic reflection in improving teaching practices. Applied to EMI contexts, these approaches suggest that lecturers benefit from regularly examining how language use, cultural responsiveness, and teaching strategies interact to shape students' learning experiences. In this vein, streamlined self-assessment tools—drawing inspiration from comprehensive frameworks like the TAEC Erasmus+ project (2019) and Rubio-Alcalá and Mallorquín's (2020) grid of CLIL teachers' competences—can offer scalable and practical means for lecturers to reflect on and enhance their teaching practices. By distilling complex competency models into concise checklists, educators can more readily engage in self-evaluation and identify areas for professional growth.

The tool developed in this study (cf. Table 8.1) draws upon principles of established reflective frameworks and directly addresses key challenges identified in our previous research (Hartle et al. 2024; Hartle 2020). The preliminary self-assessment checklist proposed in this study serves two primary functions. Firstly, it actively engages instructors in identifying their strengths and areas for development across key domains, including language proficiency, classroom management, and integration of technology, thus fostering greater self-awareness. Secondly, it provides valuable insights into the intersection of linguistic competence and instructional effectiveness, both of which are critical for creating inclusive and dynamic EMI learning environments. Its use also aligns with broader trends in formative assessment and reflective professional development.

Table 8.1 EMI lecturer preliminary self-assessment checklist

EMI lecturer preliminary self-assessment checklist			
Linguistic competence	Yes, I can do this confidently.	No, not yet.	Unsure / Can't say.
I feel confident explaining complex concepts in English.			
I use the language effectively when giving instructions for group work or other activities.			
I feel confident when using the language to interact with students.			
I adapt my language to accommodate students with varying proficiency levels.			
Pedagogical Strategies and Intercultural Awareness	Yes, I can do this confidently.	No, not yet.	Unsure / Can't say.
I use a variety of methods to encourage student interaction.			
I value and build upon students' contributions during class.			
I acknowledge and integrate students' diverse cultural backgrounds.			
I address communication barriers that may arise in multicultural settings.			
Classroom management	Yes, I can do this confidently.	No, not yet.	Unsure / Can't say.
I manage time effectively to allow for discussion and reflection.			
I regularly invite student feedback and adapt my teaching accordingly.			
I use appropriate assessment methods to evaluate students' understanding.			
Technology skills	Yes, I can do this confidently.	No, not yet.	Unsure / Can't say.
I incorporate visual aids or technology to support student comprehension.			
I use specific IT tools to monitor student performance and participation.			

This checklist is designed to help EMI lecturers reflect on their current teaching practices, linguistic proficiency, and classroom strategies. It can be used at the beginning of EMI training programmes to identify areas of strength and areas for development, thereby informing personalised professional support. Administering the checklist at an early stage in EMI professional development programmes enables Language Centres to gather baseline data, provide tailored support and guidance, and assist EMI instructors in selecting appropriate resources and tools to maximise teaching effectiveness.

Encouraging lecturers to engage with structured self-assessment tools can help develop deeper self-awareness and continuous professional growth, thereby enhancing overall instructional quality. This is particularly relevant for the creation of inclusive learning ecologies, where formative assessment mechanisms—including those enhanced by AI technologies—can play a critical role. The integration of AI-driven formative assessment technologies allows lecturers to monitor student progress in real time, adapt teaching strategies, and implement data-informed instructional decisions (Tao 2025). These technologies support the same goals as traditional self-assessment frameworks: fostering greater responsiveness, inclusivity, and targeted pedagogical intervention. Effective assessment should evaluate both linguistic proficiency and content comprehension, as inadequate language skills can impact both instructors' ability to deliver content and students' engagement. AI-powered platforms, such as adaptive learning platforms and intelligent tutoring systems, provide highly customisable resources, allowing lecturers to create personalised learning tasks while systematically collecting feedback to refine their instructional approaches (Tao 2025). When coupled with human-led reflective practices, such technologies can significantly enhance EMI course effectiveness. By systematically linking reflective practice with both formative assessment and technological innovation, Language Centres can contribute to building more inclusive, learner-centred, and effective EMI environments that better meet the needs of increasingly diverse academic communities.

8.8 Supporting students' self-awareness and learning development

Alongside lecturers' communicative effectiveness, students' perception of their own improvement and learning development is another key aspect to consider, monitor and support. When designing an EMI course, it is important to consider how students assess their progress, and which tools can be set up to assist them in overcoming language barriers, while engaging with the content of the course. Incorporating reflective mechanisms into the learning process not only values students' personal contributions but also provides ongoing feedback that

lecturers can use to adjust instructional practices and classroom dynamics. Students might want to assess their improvement by answering questions on their command of the language and their engagement in group work.

As our previous study suggested (Hartle et al. 2024), students who felt more confident in their use of English were more likely to be actively engaged in class activities, highlighting language proficiency as a barrier influencing participation and interactions in transcultural classrooms. Notably, students enrolled in degree courses where languages are commonly used (e.g., Foreign languages, Linguistics, and Journalism) were more likely to view EMI classrooms as inclusive learning spaces. One of the findings from our previous study shows that, according to students' perceptions, a successful EMI lecture experience is the result of encouraged interactions, which can be achieved so as to provide a more inclusive and fruitful learning ecology for both lecturers and students (Siemens 2007).

These findings align with broader research on learner engagement and social learning ecologies. Siemens' (2007) connectivist theory of learning underscores the importance of interaction and collaboration as central to knowledge construction, suggesting that learning environments which promote peer dialogue and networked participation are more likely to foster inclusive, dynamic learning experiences. Similarly, Deardorff (2006) emphasises that intercultural competence development is intricately linked to opportunities for meaningful interaction, reflection, and feedback in diverse settings.

In order to systematically support students' reflective processes within EMI courses, we propose a second checklist (cf. Table 8.2), designed for Language Centres to implement and customise according to specific institutional contexts, so as to diversify curricula and foster inclusive learning. This tool focuses on capturing students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the EMI course they are attending, their self-assessment of language improvement, and their evaluation of the support provided throughout the course. For this reason, administering the student checklist during the course, rather than at the end, offers a formative evaluation mechanism that enables lecturers and Language Centres to monitor the effectiveness of practices initiated in the preliminary stages of course design. One key area addressed by the checklist is students' perception of transcultural interactions (cf. Baker 2022), which can play a significant role in shaping their overall EMI experience and contribute to the development of inclusive EMI learning environments that are responsive and participatory.

Table 8.2 Checklist for students' feedback

Checklist for students' feedback			
Language Confidence	Yes	No	Can't say
I understand the main points of lectures in English.			
I feel comfortable expressing my ideas in English during class.			
I can interact with my teacher and classmates without fear of making language mistakes.			
I am confident in using English for academic reading and writing tasks.			
Learning support and technology use	Yes	No	Can't say
I know how to access academic resources and ask for help when needed.			
I feel that the learning materials provided are accessible and user-friendly.			
I use tools (e.g., glossaries, recordings) to support my autonomous learning.			
I can use technology responsibly to enhance my understanding of course content.			
Transcultural interactions	Yes	No	Can't say
I feel that my personal contributions are valued and encouraged.			
I feel included and respected during class discussions.			
I actively engage with peers from diverse cultural backgrounds during collaborative tasks.			
I enjoy collaborating with peers from different cultural backgrounds.			

This student-focused checklist is designed to support learners in reflecting on their language development, classroom engagement, and intercultural experiences throughout the course. The checklist prompts learners to assess their confidence in using English, their participation in group work, and their comfort in interacting with peers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In turn, this reflective process empowers students to take greater ownership of their learning and enhances transparency between students and instructors. Aggregated responses may also help identify shared challenges or overlooked needs, offering valuable insights for instructors aiming to adjust course delivery. When used systematically, it becomes possible to embed student reflection into the design and delivery of EMI courses, which can enhance language development and transcultural awareness and help Language Centres and instructors shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred pedagogy.

8.9 EMI teaching techniques: final considerations

Recent studies across diverse institutional contexts (Fortanet-Gómez 2020; Sánchez-García and Dafouz 2020) have consistently emphasised the need for teacher development programmes that are research-informed, competence-based, and context-responsive. These initiatives often focus on professional development strategies that address both language proficiency and pedagogical preparation. Deroey (2023) further underscores the necessity of tailoring training to personal and contextual needs, cautioning against a one-size-fits-all approach. She advocates for needs assessments through surveys, consultations, teaching observations, and peer mentoring to ensure relevance and effectiveness. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of addressing affective factors such as lecturers' self-image, confidence, and sense of self-efficacy, recommending the creation of safe training environments that avoid remedial connotations. To evaluate the impact of training, Deroey (2023) suggests incorporating real-life teaching practices and establishing rigorous assessment criteria, which could facilitate EMI accreditation and certification processes. Finally, the study calls for flexible, modular training approaches and institutional incentives to motivate lecturer participation and engagement.

The reflective tools proposed in this study contribute to that goal by offering practical reference points for Language Centres to support EMI lecturers in navigating linguistic, pedagogical, and intercultural complexity. Considering the pedagogical insights provided so far, some teaching strategies are proposed that EMI experts could introduce in their training course activities. For instance, to make communication more effective, lecturers could develop classroom management techniques that enable them to clearly define expectations, give instructions and deal with transcultural interactions. This can be achieved by using accommodation strategies (Jenkins 2010), explaining complex jargon (Woodward-Kron 2008), and through subject-specific glossaries for technical terms, which allow students to fully comprehend the content being conveyed and engage in productive exchanges with their classmates (cf. Biggs et al. 2022).

Encouraging group activities and providing language scaffolds can support student engagement across proficiency levels. For instance, assigning multilingual study groups or peer support sessions could boost confidence and foster interaction. Additionally, creating glossaries for technical terms and offering targeted feedback may alleviate language anxiety, particularly for students of non-linguistic subjects, who are less used to reflecting on their language competencies. Finally, integrating cultural exchange activities as a core component of EMI courses can help students appreciate and leverage diversity in classroom interactions, fostering an inclusive environment conducive to both academic success and meaningful transcultural experiences.

Students' personal contributions should be valued and stimulated with the overall aim of delivering content in a structured manner. To this end, EMI lecturers might want to consider implementing scaffolding strategies to boost class participation by explaining hands-on to their students how a task is intended to be carried out and have them execute it in smaller groups and, only at the end, ask them to perform it individually (cf. Rubio-Alcalá and Mallorquín 2020). Indeed, our previous findings suggest that implementing peer support sessions might boost their confidence and foster cooperation (Hartle et al. 2024).

Interactive assignments which involve the use of technology and visual aids might help to outline the work and guide students throughout the activity. Lecturers can design, organise and monitor progress by relying on presentation tools to deliver content through visuals and organisation tools to upload handouts and materials. They might also promote a more inquisitive approach to the subject content thanks to their linguistic support. Also, making materials and handouts available beforehand – in a blended learning environment – offers opportunities for interactions and great accessibility which, in turn, can favour a more inclusive learning setting where students and teachers are motivated to share knowledge, targeting both academic success and meaningful interpersonal experiences (Hartle, 2020). For example, in flipped classrooms, students can acquire knowledge before the class and use classroom time to implement the content-related skills needed to support teacher and peer interaction (Baig and Yadegaridehkordi, 2023).

Moreover, as learning environments extend beyond physical classrooms to embrace more inclusive and dynamic scenarios, the role of technology in designing and implementing EMI curricula becomes increasingly critical. Inclusive learning settings can be achieved by promoting personalised learning pathways, which, in turn, might be fuelled by a mindful integration of technology. Drawing on our experience mentoring professors in the University of Verona's internationalisation programme in 2018, we found that equipping lecturers with the expertise to implement AI tools is a strategic priority, as it has also been emphasised in a recent document of the European Commission (2022). Given the fast-paced nature of Artificial Intelligence and the contingent need for EMI lecturers to fully comprehend its applications, future research should broaden to include the study of AI-driven developments in EMI. To design and deliver successful EMI curricula that take into consideration students' understanding of content and participation in classroom activities, it is essential to address their specific needs through personalised instruction. Learning analytics, for instance, uses individualised data to tailor instruction to each learner's needs, preferences, and abilities (Tao 2025). This aligns with the findings of our study, which emphasises the importance of fostering inclusive learning environments through high levels of communication and personalised learning settings (Hartle et al. 2024).

8.10 Conclusion and future directions

In conclusion, this paper has explored the challenges lecturers face when teaching their courses within the ongoing internationalisation process of universities, with particular reference to the role that Language Centres might undertake to support them. It has proposed a series of practices, i.e. self-assessment tools, which can be implemented to build on lecturers' self-awareness to foster productive EMI environments grounded in transcultural interactions and effective communication.

The findings of our previous study served as the starting point to outline three main trends to be considered before formulating support strategies: teachers' communicative effectiveness, students' self-improvement and learning effectiveness, and transcultural interactions in the classroom. Based on the literature, our previous research findings and through practical experiences, it appears that EMI initiatives can be best supported when all three areas are addressed.

Language Centres can work at different levels and stages to ensure lecturers are familiarised with the unique learning ecology which inspires the concept of internationalisation of universities, whilst providing structured learning spaces and practical tools for designing engaging lectures. A viable approach for Language Centres is to support teachers in addressing potential shortcomings in their EMI courses by administering self-assessment tools early in their training, to help identify strengths and challenges across a range of variables: their command of the language, their familiarity with educational technologies, and their ability to foster student interactions and value personal contributions. For the students, the checklist provides support in reflecting on their learning experiences in EMI courses. It encourages awareness of linguistic development, participation, and intercultural engagement. Its results can guide adjustments to teaching strategies and learning support mid-course.

In this scenario, the choice of tailor-made self-assessment tools must target both content and language competencies to be effective, as not only the lack of language proficiency, but also of teaching methodology, may hinder teachers' content delivery on one end and learners' understanding on the other. In fact, both our findings and research in the field of EMI suggest the importance for lecturers, especially those using a vehicular language to teach their academic subjects, to implement specific strategies (Richards and Pun 2022) and to increase research on EMI (Lasagabaster 2022a), which can be used to gather relevant information to be processed with the support of Language Centres. The tools proposed in this study aim to address the need to integrate EMI instructors' teaching skills with the support of specialised language trainers who can help lecturers build critical self-awareness and develop their competencies (Dafouz 2021).

Future research should explore the practical applications of these tools within EMI training programmes, identifying optimal moments for their administration and assessing their impact on both lecturers and students. Action research initiatives could investigate how self-assessment and feedback mechanisms influence teaching practices, engagement levels, and overall course effectiveness. The integration of these tools at the beginning of an EMI course, for instance, could provide valuable data on lecturers' preparedness and inform tailored support strategies throughout the academic term.

As universities continue to expand their EMI offerings, the role of Language Centres in providing structured, tailor-made language support will become increasingly significant. By combining evidence-based pedagogical strategies with the thoughtful integration of technological tools, universities can design more inclusive and effective EMI frameworks that meet the diverse needs of students and lecturers. Further investigation into how self-assessment and AI-enhanced formative assessment can contribute to effective EMI pedagogy will be essential for advancing teaching and learning in internationalised higher education.

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9. Supporting EMI lecturers at Padova University: Insights from the ACLAIM project

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The growing internationalisation of Padova University highlights the importance of diversifying and enhancing linguistic support for lecturers engaged in English-medium instruction (EMI). The ACLAIM (Academic Language for Internationalisation and Multilingualism) initiative, an extension of the successful LEAP project, is housed within the University's Language Centre (CLA) and provides tailored professional development for EMI lecturers. This study explores the design and implementation of the *Teaching and Communicating in English* course, part of the ACLAIM project, focusing on improving participants' academic linguistic and pedagogical competencies in multicultural classrooms. Central to the course is an innovative course mirroring methodology, where participants experience teaching practices they are encouraged to adopt. This approach is further enriched by the integration of project-based learning (PBL) within the course, enabling lecturers to refine instructional strategies and enhance linguistic capabilities through collaborative and individual practical projects.
Empirical findings derived from a course participant survey reveal significant improvements in linguistic confidence and teaching efficacy. Participants reported advancements in English language clarity, classroom interaction, and the ability to implement new teaching strategies and responsive lesson plans. Quantitative data show participants gained confidence in EMI while finding the PBL approach highly effective.
The study underscores the value of experiential learning frameworks in bridging theoretical knowledge with practical application, offering a model for professional development in EMI. Future directions include advanced training modules, mentorship programs, and longitudinal studies to evaluate long-term impacts on teaching practices and student outcomes. Therefore, the ACLAIM initiative can represent a critical step in equipping lecturers with the tools for effective internationalised education and fostering a globally inclusive academic environment.

Keywords: EMI lectures support; internationalization; peer feedback; project-based learning; teaching practices.

9.1 Introduction

The globalisation of higher education has profoundly influenced the dynamics of teaching and learning, with English-medium instruction (EMI) emerging as a pivotal strategy for universities aiming to attract a diverse international student cohort. EMI not only serves as a tool for academic internationalisation but also facilitates the exchange of ideas and cultures, enhancing the global visibility and competitiveness of universities. Padova University, an institution with a rich academic legacy, has embraced this trend, experiencing a substantial increase in its international student population in recent years. This evolution underscores the pressing need for robust training initiatives designed to equip lecturers with the linguistic and pedagogical acumen required to thrive in diverse international and multicultural academic settings.

In response to this challenge, the ACLAIM (Academic Language for Internationalisation and Multilingualism) project emerged as an extension of the LEAP (Learning English for Academic Purposes) initiative, which previously laid a foundational framework for supporting EMI lecturers (Dalziel et al., 2016; Ackerley et al., 2017). The LEAP initiative addressed key challenges such as enhancing language proficiency through an intensive programme to foster culturally responsive teaching practices. As observed by Dalziel *et al*. (2016):

> The reason for the inclusion of a focus on methodology was partly the fact that, in line with communicative approaches to language teaching and learning, the context of language use is fundamental. (...) However, it should be stressed that this focus did not involve any kind of prescription of what methodologies should be adopted, but rather the fostering or reflection on and discussion of how a change in language might also imply a change in methodology, especially in the case of groups including international students. (p. 68).

Building on this legacy, one of the ACLAIM program's flagship courses, *Teaching and Communicating in English*, was developed to meet the evolving demands of internationalised academic environments. This 30-hour intensive course emphasises linguistic competency, cultural sensitivity, and pedagogical strategies to empower lecturers to engage effectively with a diverse student body.

EMI poses unique challenges, particularly in ensuring that lecturers can convey complex subject matter in English while fostering active participation among students from varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In addition, responses from the survey conducted by the University of Padua as a needs analysis for the above-mentioned project (LEAP) acknowledged that the type of challenges lecturers recorded in their EMI classes were not only posed by the language gap but also by the methodology. Indeed, lecturers with previous ex-

perience in teaching in English responded to the survey describing their experience «as challenging, not easy, time-consuming and difficult. Two respondents also expressed their concerns about offering EMI to an audience of mostly Italian students: one respondent in particular explained that, after delivering the first two courses in English, the third time he decided to switch to Italian since there were no foreign students among the audience.» (Guarda, Helm, 2015 p. 12) Amongst the difficulties they encountered in EMI teaching, respondents also highlighted «the need to improve their language skills and/or teaching methodology (...). Finally, four respondents also identified the students' different levels of English as a further cause of the difficulties they had encountered while teaching through EMI.» (Guarda, Helm, 2015 p. 12).

Acknowledging these complexities, the ACLAIM program integrates methodologies to provide holistic professional development. Central to its approach is the concept of course mirroring, a strategy that immerses participants in the very teaching practices they are encouraged to adopt. This experiential methodology allows lecturers to engage with active learning, collaborative techniques, and inclusive pedagogies firsthand, ensuring they are equipped to replicate these methods in their classrooms.

Another cornerstone of the program is project-based learning (PBL), which aligns theoretical instruction with practical, real-world applications. Indeed, PBL is defined as «a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging, and complex question, problem, or challenge.» (Larmer et al, 2015 p.2) Through PBL, participants undertake tasks such as simulating note-taking during lessons, sharing knowledge on formative assessment tools, and delivering peer-reviewed lectures. These activities not only enhance confidence in linguistic fluency but also help with the refining of teaching practices, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and its application in diverse classroom settings. Such a hands-on approach ensures that lecturers are better prepared to meet the expectations of an internationalised educational framework.

Feedback from participants underscores the transformative impact of the ACLAIM program. A survey reveals that participants reported increased confidence in EMI delivery, with many citing improvements in linguistic precision, teaching skills, and the ability to create interactive teaching and learning environments. Additionally, most respondents lauded the PBL approach as instrumental in developing practical skills that translate seamlessly into real-world teaching scenarios. These findings highlight the program's success in fostering both linguistic competence and pedagogical innovation.

By addressing the intertwined challenges of linguistic proficiency, cultural adaptability, and innovative pedagogy, the ACLAIM initiative, along with the *Teaching and Communicating in English* course, integrates a lecture support ser-

vice, conversation sessions and short courses into its overall program, potentially positioning itself as a model for EMI support in higher education. Its replicable framework offers valuable insights for institutions as they navigate the complexities of internationalisation. As global education continues to evolve, programs like ACLAIM play an essential role in fostering inclusive academic environments and advancing the success of internationalised education.

9.2 Course Design and Objectives

The *Teaching and Communicating in English* course is designed with two primary objectives in mind: first, to refine the lecturers' teaching approaches for an increasingly diverse, multilingual, and multicultural academic audience and second, to enhance the linguistic confidence of lecturers in approaching an international classroom, where most students are themselves non-native English speakers. Therefore, the course goals are not directly focused on participants reaching language proficiency; indeed, the course itself offers little grammar insights, while the main focus is on developing the pedagogical strategies that allow educators to engage effectively with students from a wide array of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This course is especially relevant in the context of higher education, where the academic environment is becoming more globalised, and English is often the medium of instruction for students from different parts of the world.

The first objective of the course is not aimed at language teaching in the traditional sense. Instead, it focuses on increasing participants' confidence in their English language skills. The course achieves this by improving their language awareness and ensuring that they can apply it in real-life teaching scenarios. This approach is particularly important because lecturers may possess a high level of expertise in their subject areas but may feel less confident in their English language abilities when teaching in a foreign language. By fostering a deeper understanding of language mechanics and providing opportunities to practice language use in authentic academic contexts, the course helps lecturers improve their teaching and communication skills without necessarily turning the course into a language-learning programme.

In a multilingual and multicultural classroom, lecturers face numerous challenges that go beyond the mere use of language. One of the most pressing issues is the variety of language skills and levels that students bring with them to the classroom. Students may have different levels of proficiency in English, which affects their ability to understand lectures, participate in discussions, and complete written assignments. Additionally, lecturers often encounter students who are more comfortable with particular language skills, such as reading, writing, speaking, or listening, while others may struggle with certain aspects of the language. This diversity in language abilities requires lecturers to adapt their teaching styles and methodologies to cater to the varied needs of their students.

Another challenge in multilingual and multicultural classrooms is the difference in students' learning approaches. Students from various cultural backgrounds often have different expectations and learning strategies based on their previous educational experiences. These differences can lead to misunderstandings and hinder effective communication in the classroom. For example, students from more passive learning environments may find it difficult to engage in active discussions, while those from more interactive education systems may struggle with traditional lecture-based teaching. This course helps lecturers recognise these variations and adjust their teaching methods to create an inclusive learning environment that accommodates diverse learning styles.

Ultimately, the goal of the *Teaching and Communicating in English* course is to enhance communication effectiveness in the classroom. The course encourages lecturers to rethink their teaching methods and find ways to maximise their communication with students, ensuring that language does not become a barrier to learning. In doing so, the course helps participants to move beyond simply delivering content in English. It enables them to create an environment where all students, regardless of their linguistic or cultural background, can engage with the material and succeed in their academic pursuits.

In addition to improving teaching practices, the course also aims to generate practical guidelines that can be adapted for use in English Medium Instruction (EMI) courses. These guidelines will serve as valuable resources for lecturers who are teaching in English in contexts where it is not the native language of the students. By equipping lecturers with both the linguistic skills and the pedagogical strategies they need, the course helps to foster an academic environment where all students can thrive, regardless of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

9.2.1 Linguistic Objectives

EMI lecturers frequently encounter challenges stemming from non-native English proficiency, such as maintaining pronunciation clarity, overcoming vocabulary limitations, and managing spontaneous classroom interactions. The course addresses these challenges through:

- Emphasis on pragmatic communication skills tailored to academic contexts, including the delivery of clear explanations through the use of signposting, effective handling of student inquiries, and effective use of feedback and discussion sessions.
- Provision of individualised feedback on participants' teaching in English strategies and materials, facilitated through peer reviews and teacher guidance.
- Utilisation of role-play scenarios that replicate real-world classroom challenges, enabling participants to rehearse and refine their responses.

9.2.2 Pedagogical Objectives

Effective EMI teaching transcends linguistic competence, requiring innovative strategies to foster student engagement and comprehension. The course integrates the following pedagogical components:

- Implementation of scaffolding techniques to facilitate the assimilation of complex content by students with varying levels of English proficiency.
- Deployment of methods to stimulate active participation in culturally heterogeneous classrooms.
- Development of strategies for assessing student comprehension through both formative and summative evaluations.
- Stress on the use of interaction in EMI lectures as a tool to foster collaborative learning while improving content retention and students' communication skills;

9.3 Methodology: Course Mirroring and Project-Based Learning

One of the most distinctive aspects of the ACLAIM initiative is its adoption of a «course mirroring» methodology. This innovative approach positions participants as both learners and educators, enabling them to experience and evaluate the teaching strategies they are encouraged to adopt.

9.3.1 Course Mirroring

Participants engage in interactive workshops that replicate the practices recommended for EMI classrooms. For instance, instructors model methodologies such as collaborative learning and multimodal instruction, prompting participants to reflect on their efficacy and adaptability. This experiential approach is instrumental in bridging the theoretical and practical dimensions of EMI pedagogy (Ackerley et al., 2017).

9.3.2 Project-Based Learning (PBL)

Project-Based Learning (PBL) plays a central role in the course, promoting the integration of content and language acquisition. By engaging in collaborative projects, participants gain hands-on experience in designing and executing English Medium Instruction (EMI) courses. For instance, each participant, regardless of their previous experiences in EMI settings, is encouraged to work on the ideal design of a module for multiple EMI lessons, with most participants presenting a hypothetical 'start of the course lesson' to their peers well before the end of the course. PBL encourages lecturers to develop and refine their teaching

practices dynamically and practically, before experiencing a real-life EMI scenario in the classroom.

One key activity involves crafting lesson scenarios that vary from course presentations and simplified subject explanations, ensuring that students can better comprehend the material, to sharing knowledge on new interactive teaching tools, such as the use of Moodle forum or workshop functions, use of Wooclap, Perusall, etc. Participants share and discuss responsive learning tools tailored to accommodate the diverse linguistic and learning preferences of students from various backgrounds. These experiences are created to enhance subject comprehension and ensure that all students have access to learning resources that meet their needs.

Another crucial aspect of PBL is the delivery of sample lectures to peers. These mock lectures are followed by structured peer feedback sessions, where participants can reflect on their teaching and receive constructive advice from their colleagues. While giving feedback, a specific focus is placed on letting colleagues know whether their communication of course content to a hypothetical audience of non native speaker students was effective and also on the use of interactive activities and tasks to break teacher talk flow. This process not only allows lecturers to practice their teaching skills in a supportive environment but also helps them identify areas for improvement in communication and presentation.

Indeed, a significant component of the course is the individual final project, where each participant delivers a mini-lesson to the class. During this exercise, participants actively engage in the learning process, taking on the role of students and experiencing the lesson from their perspective. Afterwards, a peer feedback session is held, allowing both the lecturer and students to provide insights into the lesson's effectiveness.

These activities foster a student-centred teaching approach, encouraging lecturers to prioritise student engagement and actively enhance their communication skills. Through PBL, participants refine their abilities to teach, collaborate, and adapt to diverse learning environments.

9.4 The Mini Lecture

The mini-lecture is an individual project that each participant presents as a final outcome for the *Communication and Teaching in English* course. It lasts between 5 to 10 minutes and is designed to provide a focused, effective sample lesson using English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). It incorporates a well-organised slide presentation to support the content and engage the audience. The lecture is aimed at an ideal target group, ensuring the material is appropriate for their level and needs. Real teaching materials are integrated to provide practical context, while acquired teaching tools are effectively utilised to enhance the learning experience.

The session emphasises real interaction, encouraging active participation from learners. Peer feedback is an integral part of the lecture, fostering collaborative learning and helping learners reflect on and improve their understanding. Trainer feedback is also provided to guide participants and reinforce key concepts. Throughout the session, only English is used, ensuring full language immersion and supporting learners in developing their skills in a practical, real-world context.

9.4.1 Participant Feedback and Survey Insights

The effectiveness of the course was systematically evaluated through surveys administered to participants post-course completion. Key findings are outlined below:

9.4.2 Enhanced Linguistic Confidence

Participants overwhelmingly reported heightened confidence in their ability to deliver lectures in English. Notable improvements were observed in pronunciation clarity, lexical precision, and the capacity to manage spontaneous interactions. One participant remarked, «I feel more confident addressing students' questions without the need for exhaustive preparation. The ability to articulate complex ideas on the spot is particularly valuable.»

Another participant elaborated, «The course not only improved my pronunciation but also gave me the tools to navigate unanticipated classroom discussions effectively. These skills are invaluable for maintaining student engagement.»

9.4.3 Practical Applicability

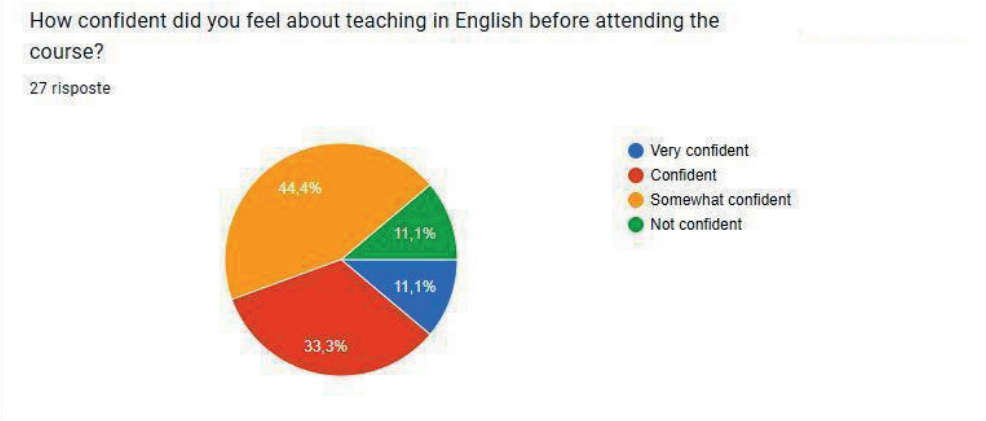
The course focus on real-world teaching scenarios, was appreciated by lecturers attending it. Participants underscored the utility of strategies such as PBL and scaffolding, emphasising their positive impact on student engagement and understanding. One lecturer noted, «PBL transformed my teaching approach, enabling me to foster a more collaborative and engaging classroom environment. This method allows students to take ownership of their learning, which significantly enhances their motivation.»

9.5 Quantitative Results

A survey involving 160 participants, conducted after course completion, provided valuable insights into the challenges and benefits of transitioning to English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in educational settings. The survey not

only identified the difficulties faced by educators but also highlighted the effectiveness of the course they participated in, as well as their desire for further professional development.

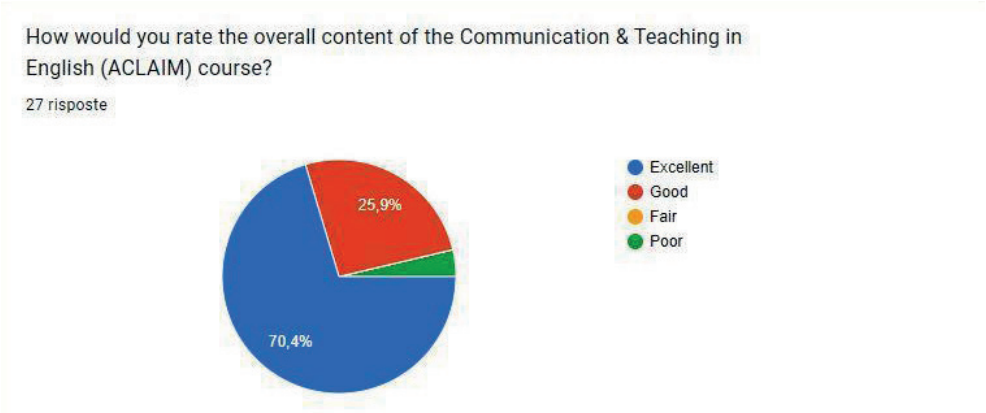
Among the key challenges revealed in the survey, respondents, most of whom were native Italian speakers, highlighted issues related to teaching in English within multilingual and multicultural classrooms. Many participants expressed concerns about managing their confidence when teaching in a language that was not their first [cf. Figure 9.1].



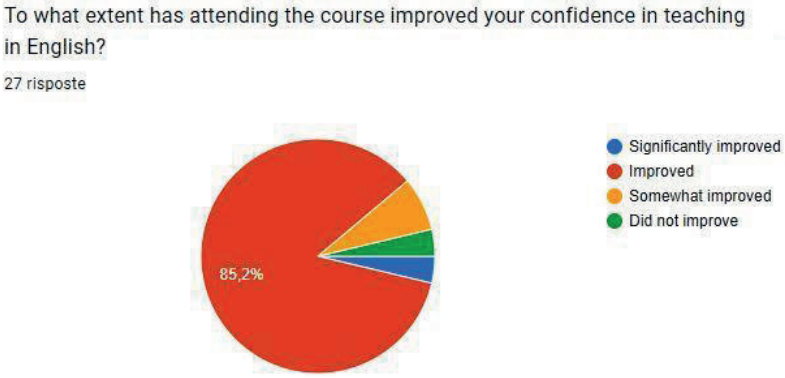
Specifically, educators faced difficulties balancing linguistic clarity with content depth—an issue that is crucial in ensuring students grasp the material while also benefiting from the language immersion experience. These findings underscore the importance of providing tailored support to help teachers navigate this balance and boost their confidence in EMI settings.

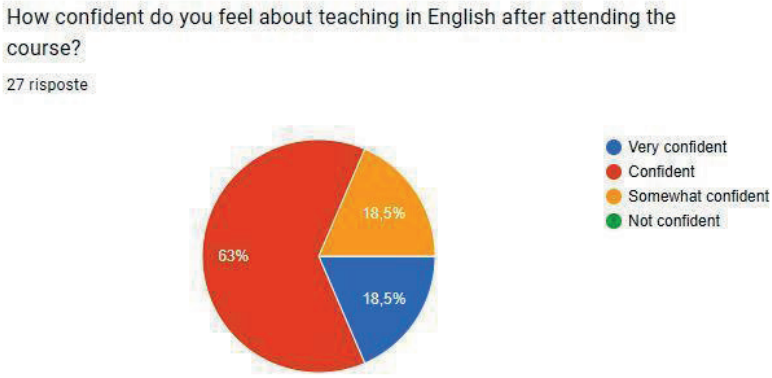
In addition to these challenges, the survey also revealed the types of support and resources that participants felt would be most beneficial. Respondents overwhelmingly expressed a need for additional training workshops and online resources. This feedback suggests that educators are eager for continued professional development, particularly in the form of accessible, practical tools that could help them enhance their teaching practices and improve their English language proficiency in the classroom. This desire for further training indicates a strong commitment to improving both their teaching skills and their ability to deliver high-quality education in English.

Survey data on the course itself demonstrated its effectiveness in addressing these concerns and contributing to educators' growth. An impressive 70.4% of respondents rated the course as excellent [cf. Figure 9.2], reflecting the quality and relevance of the content.



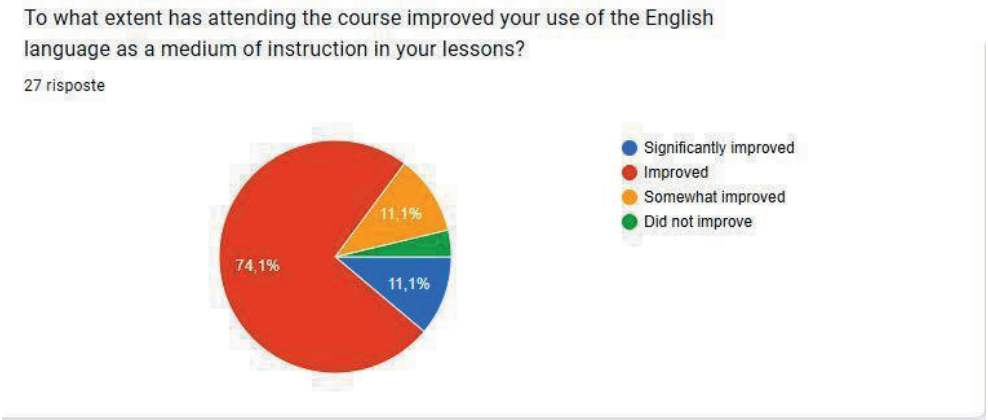
Furthermore, 85.2% of participants reported feeling more confident in teaching in English after completing the course. [cf. Figure 9.3], while 18.5% felt very confident and 63% felt confident. [cf. Figure 9.4] after course completion.



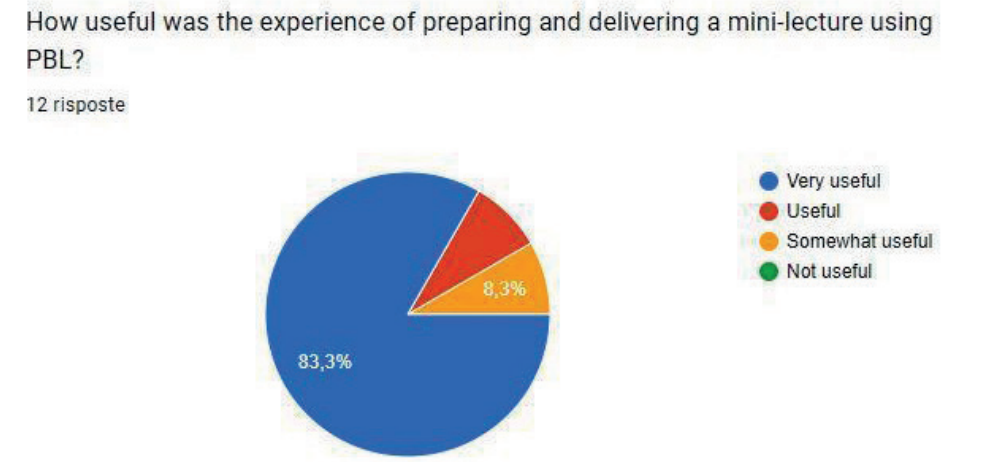


This significant increase in confidence suggests that the course was successful in helping educators feel more competent and comfortable using English in their teaching practices.

The course's linguistic focus was also evident in the responses, with 74.1% of participants affirming that it helped enhance their use of English as a medium of instruction. [cf. Figure 9.5].



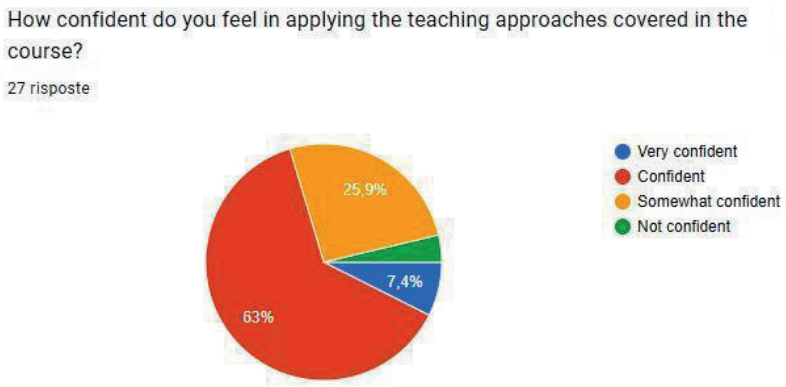
This highlights the course's impact on improving not just language proficiency but also the ability to teach effectively in English. Furthermore, the PBL approach, which was integrated into the course, received strong praise. A remarkable 83% of respondents found PBL highly effective, with many emphasising its practical relevance to their teaching environments. [cf. Figure 9.6].



The hands-on nature of PBL allowed participants to engage directly with the concepts and methodologies they were learning, which reinforced their teaching confidence.

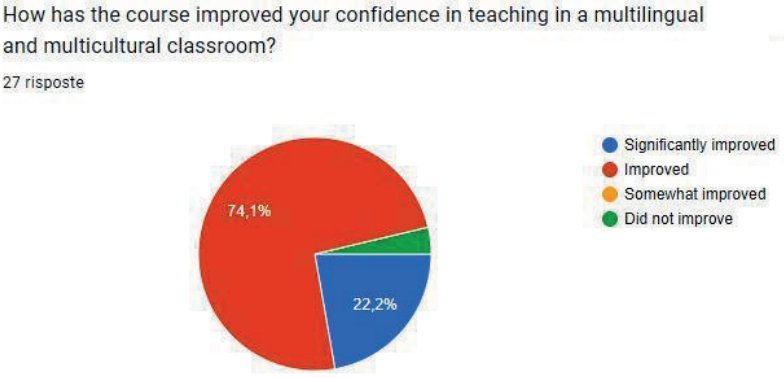
Perhaps most telling of all, participants expressed that delivering a PBL mini-lecture was a transformative experience. Respondents unanimously indicated that this exercise strengthened both their teaching confidence and their English language skills. One participant reflected, «Delivering the PBL lecture was a turning point—it helped me see myself as both an effective teacher and a confident communicator in English.» This statement captures the essence of the course's impact: it not only enhanced language skills but also empowered educators to view themselves as capable instructors in an English-speaking environment.

Finally, 63% of survey participants expressed confidence in applying the teaching methodologies introduced during the course [cf. Figure 9.7].



This high percentage indicates that the strategies taught were perceived as practical and applicable to real-world teaching scenarios, reinforcing the course's success in providing educators with tools that could be directly implemented in their classrooms. In addition, a significant percentage felt that PBL also improved English language skills [cf. Figure 9.8].

Lastly, the survey highlighted how the course programme seems to be an effective tool for improving lecturers' confidence in teaching in multilingual and multicultural classrooms [cf. Figure 9.9].



Overall, the survey findings highlight the effectiveness of the course in improving educators' confidence, teaching methodologies, and English language skills. However, they also point to ongoing needs for additional resources and tailored support to help teachers continue to thrive in EMI environments.

9.6 Insights from the survey

The ACLAIM project is closely aligned with existing research that highlights the need for comprehensive support for lecturers teaching in English Medium Instruction (EMI) environments. A key finding from Macaro et al. (2018) is that linguistic proficiency, though critical, is not sufficient on its own for effective EMI delivery. They argue that pedagogical frameworks must be adapted to meet the diverse needs of international students. This observation is mirrored

by Fedeli et al. (2020), who emphasise the importance of reflective practices in nurturing teaching excellence. Both studies underscore the complexity of teaching in EMI contexts and the necessity of a multi-faceted approach that goes beyond language skills alone.

The ACLAIM project takes these insights into account by integrating linguistic training with innovative pedagogical strategies. This dual approach helps to address the intertwined needs of language proficiency and effective teaching methods. Sahan (2021) similarly finds that experiential learning is highly beneficial in EMI contexts, supporting the idea that learning by doing can significantly improve lecturers' ability to navigate the challenges of multilingual classrooms. The overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants in the ACLAIM project further validates the efficacy of these experiential approaches, showing that they successfully bridge the gap between theoretical training and practical teaching application.

However, while the initial feedback is highly encouraging, it also highlights some important areas for improvement, particularly regarding the sustainability of professional development. Although 83% of participants praised the PBL methodology, a smaller but still significant proportion of lecturers (16.9%) reported challenges in transitioning to EMI. These participants identified areas where additional support is needed, particularly in the areas of cultural competence and adaptive teaching strategies. This suggests that while PBL and other innovative methods are effective in the short term, continuous and sustained professional development is essential to ensure lasting improvements in EMI teaching practices.

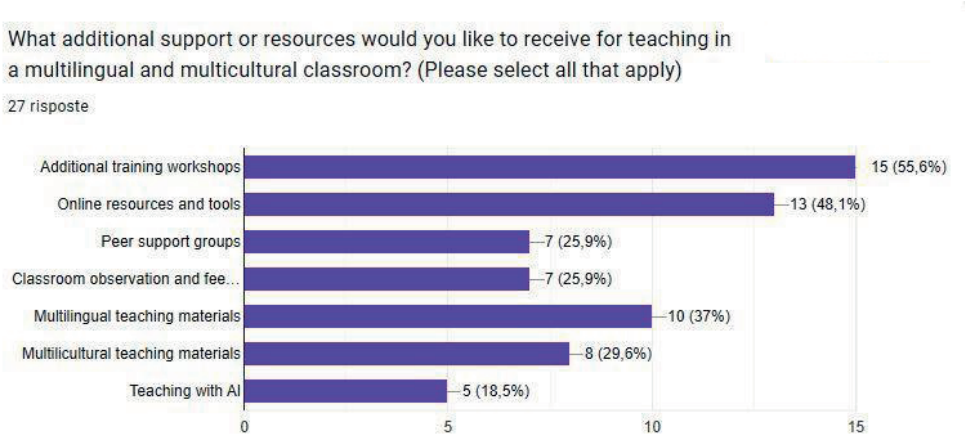
The challenges highlighted by a minority of participants point to the need for long-term strategies to support lecturers in their ongoing development. Training that focuses on cultural competence is particularly important, as EMI often involves students from diverse cultural backgrounds who may approach learning differently. Moreover, adaptive teaching strategies are crucial for lecturers to respond effectively to the varied linguistic and academic needs of their students. Providing ongoing support in these areas will help ensure that the positive impact of projects like ACLAIM extends beyond the initial stages of training.

In conclusion, the ACLAIM project successfully integrates linguistic training with innovative pedagogical strategies, addressing the dual imperatives of language proficiency and effective teaching in EMI contexts. By emphasising PBL and experiential learning, it aligns with contemporary research and offers a practical solution to the challenges faced by EMI lecturers. However, the feedback from participants also underscores the importance of sustained professional development, particularly in areas like cultural competence and adaptive teaching strategies, to ensure the long-term success and effectiveness of such initiatives.

9.7 Future Directions

Building upon its initial achievements, the ACLAIM project can therefore aim at broadening its scope by taking into account new needs emerging in the university community, such as the ones highlighted by the survey [c.f. 9.10] and additional ones such as:

1. **Advanced training modules**: Introducing specialised workshops on topics such as academic writing, research communication, and intercultural strategies.
2. **Mentorship programs**: Establishing mentorship networks to facilitate peer learning and support among EMI lecturers.
3. **Digital resources**: Developing an online repository of teaching materials, recorded lectures, and best-practice guides tailored for EMI contexts.
4. **Longitudinal studies**: Conducting extended research to evaluate the long-term impact of the training on instructional quality and student outcomes.



9.8 Conclusion

The ACLAIM project represents a significant step forward in supporting EMI lecturers at Padova University, addressing the multifaceted challenges they face in transitioning to teaching in English within increasingly diverse academic environments. By focusing on both effective communication skills and pedagogical development, the *Teaching and Communicating in English* course offers a comprehensive framework to help lecturers thrive in EMI settings. This approach is particularly important as the university continues to embrace internationalisation and seeks to provide high-quality education that meets the needs of a diverse, global student body.

The project's core objective is to assist lecturers in overcoming the linguistic and pedagogical barriers inherent in EMI. While English proficiency is essential for teaching in such environments, it is equally important for lecturers to adapt their teaching methods to ensure that students not only understand the content but also benefit from the immersion in English. The ACLAIM project seeks to strike a balance between these two elements, providing educators with the skills and confidence they need to deliver their subject matter effectively in English while maintaining academic rigour.

The course is designed to address several key challenges faced by EMI lecturers. One of the most critical concerns is managing the language barrier, both in terms of fluency and clarity. Lecturers are often tasked with explaining complex concepts and delivering content in a language that is not their first language, which can present difficulties in maintaining the depth of the material while ensuring it is accessible to students. By focusing on language skills in the context of teaching, the ACLAIM project helps educators strike the delicate balance of communicating complex ideas clearly and effectively in English, ensuring that students are both engaged and able to understand the material.

Another challenge faced by many EMI lecturers is the cultural and linguistic diversity within their classrooms. As universities increasingly attract international students, lecturers are required to teach in a multicultural environment where students may have varying levels of English proficiency. The ACLAIM project recognises the importance of equipping educators with strategies to address the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of their students. By fostering an understanding of how to tailor instruction to different needs, the course enables lecturers to create an inclusive learning environment that promotes engagement and academic success for all students, regardless of their language background.

Moreover, the project emphasises the significance of pedagogical approaches that are both effective and relevant in the EMI context. The course integrates a variety of teaching methods, including Project-Based Learning (PBL), which has proven to be highly effective in developing practical teaching skills. By engaging in PBL activities, lecturers can apply what they have learned in real-world scenarios, simulating the kinds of challenges they will encounter in their classrooms. This hands-on approach allows participants to build their teaching confidence while improving their English language skills in a meaningful and impactful way. In this sense, the ACLAIM project goes beyond language acquisition, emphasising the importance of practical, application-based learning that directly benefits both educators and students.

The success of the ACLAIM project is further demonstrated by the positive feedback from participants who have reported increased confidence in teaching in English. Many educators have shared that the course has been transformative in terms of their ability to communicate effectively in English, as well

as their ability to teach in a way that is engaging and accessible to students. This highlights the course's emphasis on not only improving language skills but also on enhancing the overall teaching experience. The confidence gained through the course is critical, as it enables lecturers to approach their teaching with greater assurance, ultimately benefiting their students and enhancing the overall quality of education at Padova University.

However, despite the success of the program, there are still areas where further support and development are needed. For example, many lecturers continue to face challenges in balancing linguistic clarity with content depth, particularly when teaching complex academic subjects. This suggests that while language proficiency is important, there is also a need for ongoing professional development in terms of pedagogical strategies that can help lecturers navigate these challenges more effectively. Providing additional workshops, training resources, and tools will be essential to ensuring that lecturers continue to improve their teaching practices and remain confident in their ability to deliver high-quality education in English.

Furthermore, the demand for more resources and support materials points to the need for the university to continue investing in the professional development of its lecturers. As the global demand for EMI programs grows, it is crucial that Padova University remains committed to providing the necessary tools and resources to help its faculty succeed in this increasingly complex teaching environment. Whether through online resources, workshops, or peer collaboration, there is a clear need for continuous, accessible support that allows lecturers to keep improving their skills and adapting to new challenges in the EMI landscape.

In light of these ongoing needs, it is clear that initiatives like the ACLAIM project are essential for the long-term success of EMI at Padova University. The university's commitment to internationalisation and the provision of high-calibre education hinges on its ability to support lecturers in effectively teaching in English. By equipping educators with the tools, strategies, and confidence they need to succeed, the ACLAIM project not only enhances the professional development of individual lecturers but also contributes to the overall quality and inclusivity of the university's educational offerings.

Looking ahead, the ACLAIM project should continue to evolve in response to the feedback and needs of its participants. Expanding the range of resources and offering more targeted support will be crucial in ensuring that lecturers can continue to meet the demands of teaching in English while delivering content that is both linguistically accessible and academically rigorous. As Padova University continues its journey of internationalisation, the ACLAIM project will remain a vital component in fostering an inclusive, high-quality educational environment that serves both educators and students, ultimately strengthening the university's reputation as a leader in global higher education.

In conclusion, the ACLAIM project has proven to be a critical initiative in supporting EMI lecturers at Padova University. By addressing both linguistic and pedagogical challenges, it provides educators with the tools and confidence they need to teach effectively in English. The positive impact on teaching confidence, language skills, and pedagogical practices demonstrates the value of the program, but it also highlights areas for continued development. As Padova University moves forward with its internationalisation efforts, initiatives like ACLAIM will be essential to ensuring the continued success and inclusivity of its educational programs, benefiting both lecturers and students in an increasingly globalised academic world.

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During the preparation of this paper, LLMs have been used to improve language flow and readability. The author has reviewed and edited the content and takes full responsibility and accountability for the content of the whole paper.

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10. Towards Internationalization at a University Language Centre: Organization, needs, objectives, actions, and emotions of an *Italian* academic community

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Università della Calabria

In the early 2000s, as in many other European countries, Internationalization gradually became the core mission of the Italian university system. Based on multifaceted objectives, this process unveiled the desire of academic institutions to encourage intercultural experiences and exchanges of knowledge and best practices within the Higher Education dimension.
The University of Calabria (UniCal) accepted the challenge since the very beginning, and Internationalization promptly became a key feature within its academic curriculum, fostered by innumerable international agreements with other universities and students' mobility programs. As a result, increasing numbers of international students have sparked the need for university professors to deliver lectures in English. Within this scenario, through the University Language Centre, UniCal has organized English for Academic Purposes and EMI (Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2021) courses for University Professors to support them while facing a twofold challenge: (1) to comply with the national guidelines of the Italian Ministry of University and Research, and (2) to align with the academic quality provided by Italian universities.
Based on these premises, this paper will offer an outline of the organization that welcomed 120 professors, and an in-depth and multifaceted discussion of the topics, methodologies and teaching strategies that helped build proficiency and confidence in the subject specialists involved in the courses. Short video-interviews with stakeholders, professors, and English instructors were carried out in order to encourage reflection on the many didactic, linguistic,

[1] Although the authors pleasantly cooperated in planning and writing this article, they individually devoted more time to different sections. In the specific, Carmen Argondizzo: Sections 1 and 5, Elvira Calabrese and Marina Vitelli: Section 4; Alessandro Cimino: Section 3; Maria Sasso: Section 2.

intercultural and, above all, emotional issues that are so meaningful for the educational growth of academic communities.
Analysis of the data collected demonstrate how the results obtained closely correlate with the participants' own perceptions of their learning and provide theoretical and practical implications for other national and international University Language Centres.

Keywords: Internationalization, EMI, motivation, challenge, academic needs, fears, emotions, different mindset, being a student again, academic communities.

10.1 Introduction

In an increasingly globalized academic landscape, English has become the Lingua Franca of Higher Education. For university professors, proficiency in English has become essential for teaching, publishing research and participating in international conferences. However, many non-native English-speaking professors face the challenge in achieving the level of fluency required for these academic tasks. This paper describes a project tailored for the implementation of English language courses that were designed to address these challenges and were aimed at enhancing university professors' academic communication skills. The project was structured considering the specific teaching needs of an academic environment that, due to the ever-evolving Internationalization process, encourages the integration of Italian students with international students coming from all over the world. In the specific, the University of Calabria has been offering 10 Masters' courses and 2 full curriculum courses totally delivered in English, as a medium of instruction (EMI). The courses involved four scientific sectors: 1. Socio-economic (Finance and Insurance); 2. Science (Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics); 3. Engineering and Technology (Artificial Intelligence and Computer Science, Sustainable Management of Natural Resources, Robotics and Automation Engineering, Telecommunication Engineering: smart sensing, computing and networking); 4. Health (Health Biotechnology, Nutritional Science).

University stakeholders have considered this organization a welcoming format and an effective strategy to encourage international students who want to have a study experience abroad and need to use English for their instruction. The following excerpt, that reports an interview to the Deputy Rector of the University of Calabria[2] highlights the university government's willingness to promote the development of the Internationalization sector and, consequently, all the actions related to it:

[2] We wish to express our thankfulness to Professor Francesco Scarcello, Pro-Rettore, Università della Calabria, for his availability at being interviewed and for his constant support, throughout time, to the actions implemented at the University Language Centre, Università della Calabria.

> … [grazie] alla strategia di internazionalizzazione, abbiamo ricevuto un grandissimo numero di domande da parte di studenti provenienti da oltre 100 paesi. Nello specifico, oltre 1300 domande per i Corsi di Laurea Magistrale, di cui oltre 600 per il corso di Artificial Intelligence and Computer Science. Quindi, una grandissima opportunità che offriamo agli studenti di altre nazioni e una grandissima opportunità per l'Ateneo di crescere, diventare sempre più internazionale in un ambiente di accoglienza, come il Campus dell'Università della Calabria. In questo contesto, è necessario avere un'adeguata preparazione da parte di tutti i professori. Noi facciamo ricerca in lingua inglese perché è la lingua più utilizzata, ma insegnare è un ulteriore step. Da qui, l'importanza di dare molta attenzione a questo aspetto. […] Abbiamo organizzato un corso per i professori che insegnano nei corsi erogati in lingua inglese. La risposta è stata straordinaria da parte dei colleghi. Abbiamo avuto oltre 150 richieste di partecipazione su un totale di 800 docenti di ruolo e di questi abbiamo potuto accogliere, in questa prima edizione del progetto, circa 130 partecipanti che sono stati suddivisi per livelli, con l'obiettivo di potenziare il livello C1, così come richiesto dalle indicazioni ministeriali. [….] Abbiamo sfruttato questo corso non solo per insegnare al meglio la lingua inglese, come mezzo di comunicazione, ma è diventato uno strumento per fare innovazione didattica. Quindi, alcuni di questi corsi, rivolti a partecipanti con i livelli più avanzati, sono stati dedicati anche ad aspetti metodologici della didattica, utilizzando in contemporanea la lingua inglese[3].

Thanks to this support and requests received from the university governors as well as previous experiences already carried out at the University of Calabria

[3] Thanks to the internationalization strategy, we have received an enormous number of applications from students coming from over 100 countries. Specifically, over 1,300 applications for the Master's degree programs, with more than 600 for the Artificial Intelligence and Computer Science course. This represents a huge opportunity for students from other countries and a great chance for the university to grow, becoming increasingly international in a welcoming environment, such as the University of Calabria campus. In this context, it is essential that all professors have the proper preparation. We conduct research in English because it is the most widely used language, but teaching is another step. Hence, the importance of paying close attention to this aspect. […] We organized a course for professors teaching in English-taught programs. The response from colleagues was extraordinary. We received over 150 requests for participation out of a total of 800 tenured professors, and in this first edition of the project, we were able to welcome around 130 participants, who were divided by proficiency levels, with the goal of enhancing the C1 level, as required by ministerial guidelines. […] We have used this course not only to teach English as a communication tool but also as an instrument for educational innovation. Therefore, some of these courses, aimed at participants with more advanced levels, were also dedicated to the methodological aspects of teaching, simultaneously using the English language.

(see: Argondizzo, De Bartolo, Ting 2007; Argondizzo, De Bartolo, Ting, 2009), the University Language Centre promptly organized a tailored-made project that the Centre's personnel, who was entitled to design the project, called *English for Academic Skills and EMI strategies.* The paper will specifically offer a description of the global organization, the objectives the project wanted to reach for the benefit of the academic staff and, consequently, of the students, the methodologies adopted and their related didactic actions, and the outcomes of the program. While describing these issues, we will also consider the emotions of this *Italian* academic community involved in the project, from the perspective of both the English and EMI Instructors and this specific typology of learners, made up of academic Professors.

10.2 The organization and the data

The English language training program was held from February to December 2023. The goal of the program was to help the Professors use English in a more accurate way within their academic and professional work. This includes using English to teach university courses, join international projects, and communicate with international students and colleagues.

A total of 130 Professors joined the project. Out of these, 124 answered the first call, and 105 took a placement test to assess their level. Among them, 62 teachers completed the course. The training was divided into two sessions, with the second one offered, at a later time, due to a further demand from the Professors involved in disciplinary courses delivered in English. Table 10.1 shows the most relevant figures.

As the Table shows, 62 participants completed the language training. Although this number is much lower than the number of Professors who answered the call, we would still consider this as a meaningful figure that shows a successful response to the project call. In fact, it is important to consider that this typology of learners is made up by professionals who are intensively busy. They very often travel to other countries for research and, therefore, despite their very high motivation in improving their competences, they were not able to complete the course.

Table 10.1 Number of participants

Beginning of project End of project	**Feb** 2023 **Dec** 2023
Number of respondents	**130**
Number of admitted participants	**124**
Number of participants who took PT Number of participants who completed the required training	**105** **62**
Number of groups: 6 Class schedule: 5h/week	4 intermediate groups **(40h)** 2 advanced & EMI groups **(30h)**

Table 10.2 shows the overall organization of the project and includes the number of groups (n° 6) that we created, the number of participants in each group, the entry and exit CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference, Council of Europe, 2001, 2020) levels.

The Beginner and Intermediate groups (A to D) attended 40 hours of lessons. The Advanced groups (E and F) attended 30 hours. Each group attended classes for 5 hours per week.

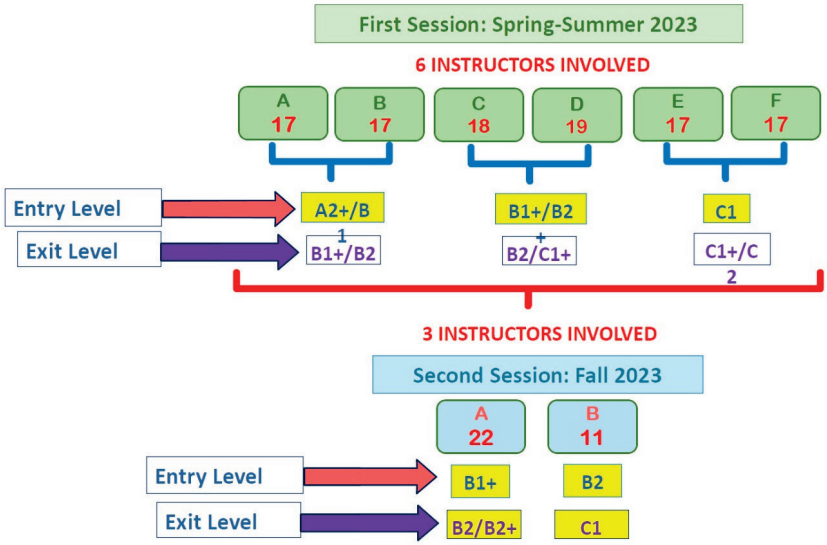
The lessons focused on the integration of speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in English. Special focus was also given to English for Academic and Special Purposes aspects, such as vocabulary and expressions necessary for university and academic life. The two most advanced groups, instead, attended classes based on the English Medium Instruction (EMI) approach (see note 3).

The program demonstrated strong engagement and completion rates, particularly considering the demanding schedules of the academic staff. The participants stated the course was useful and reported increased confidence and improved communicative competence in English, both in general professional contexts and in discipline-specific teaching.

Table 10.2 The overall organization of the project

First Session – Spring/Summer 2023

Second Session – Fall 2023-Winter 2024



The structured, level-based approach allowed for targeted instruction aligned with CEFR standards, enabling measurable progression across proficiency levels. This training model provides a replicable framework for similar initiatives aimed at capacity building and the internationalization of a university context. The current paper will focus on the outcomes from four groups (A, B, C, D), as the following sections will highlight[4].

10.3 Theoretical background on methodologies and teaching strategies

Instructors were tasked with selecting topics and conversational prompts of interdisciplinary interest that would appeal to a diverse academic audience with varying educational and professional backgrounds. The materials chosen required high levels of language proficiency and the ability to articulate ideas clearly and coherently, emphasizing the importance of a strong command of the

[4] As for information about groups E and F, see the paper EMI Professional Development: Foregrounding Methodology, Cognition and Disciplinary Discourse by Lopriore & Ting, which appears in this Volume.

English language, particularly for the most advanced groups. The focus on English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and, partly, on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) required the teaching staff involved to be eclectic and broad-ranging in the selection of the disciplinary discourses to incorporate. Additionally, the Instructors faced the challenge of simultaneously building linguistic knowledge and competence while also deconstructing participants' expectations of what English language courses for faculty members might, or possibly even should, entail.

In fact, the linguistic educational component of the courses naturally intertwined with the social-emotional and cognitive shift in preconceptions about the scope and nature of the language tutorials. At various points, an ambivalent reluctance and inclination toward participating in an EAP course was manifested. Instructors were thus indirectly entrusted with a twofold project of being the resources of cultural and linguistic content, as well as being the facilitators in assuring emotional compliance with a language requirement mandated by the Italian Ministry of Education. The deconstruction of the distress felt by some participants highlighted the need for a new SEL (Social and Emotional Learning) pact (Weissberg et al., 2015) between the Instructors and course recipients. As the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2020) argues, this requires acknowledging and being self-aware of any negative prejudices, managing these emotions (whether individually or collectively), understanding the feelings of others, and making responsible decisions about adapting or finding ways to cope (Weissberg et al., 2015).

Planning and preparing sessions, as well as creating materials and activities for the academic learners, became an opportunity to anticipate and address any potential negative reactions, whether related to the perceived difficulty of the tasks/activities or the chosen topic. To this end, ideas, themes, reading excerpts, and discussion points were carefully selected to appeal to a broad range of cross-disciplinary interests (see Section 4). These topics were designed to initiate formal and semi-formal conversations and debates, allowing all participants the chance to interact with the Instructor and amongst themselves. None of the chosen topics required technical expertise from the subject specialists, ensuring the course would not be viewed as content- or context-specific.

Our goal of fostering spoken interaction, group work, and emotional engagement within the groups paved the way for lively, dynamic, nurturing and animated debates, harmonized and enriched by the diverse perspectives shared by the course participants. This investment in a humanistic discussion- and feedback-driven approach, led many academics to begin recognizing and appreciating the Instructors' efforts. This shift was seen as a sign that the new SEL pact, metaphorically signed by all parties, was proving successful. Indeed, the Instructors took on the role of educational and emotional gatekeepers (Jones & Roe,

1975), cultivating a micro-environment where discontent transformed into a desire for inclusion, participation, and social bonding among the subject specialists, and between the group and the Instructors.

Building rapport and liaising with course participants became a central aspect of the language sessions. Over time, Instructors were able to recognize that much of the initial resistance to the program stemmed from apprehension about being judged on a personal or professional level, rather than simply being assessed. The reassurance provided, along with the inclusive nature of the topics and materials introduced in the classroom, helped alleviate some of their concerns and fostered a positive, welcoming and supportive learning environment. The decision to implement a diversified syllabus also aligned with current trends, moving away from a «one-size-fits-all» approach (Fitzpatrick & O'Dowd, 2012), and addressing a range of attitudinal, educational, and professional needs. Nevertheless, at various points, participants continued to express concerns about their roles as content Instructors teaching in a second language (Kling, 2019), reflecting a common unease about their ability to support students linguistically (Airey, 2012) and provide linguistic feedback (Macaro, 2015). Despite some lingering self-doubt, course participants managed to incorporate the language tutorials into their schedules and fully engage with the opportunity they were offered. Eventually, they expressed regret when the sessions came to an end and recognized the positive impact on their linguistic confidence.

The need for Internationalization and the ever-expanding diversity of student audiences calls for more language training possibilities and for recurrent, or even permanent, occasions for continued practice. All academics involved in the EAP classes strongly endorsed the need for language practicums to be «integrated into systematically planned and implemented university strategies» (Prieto-Gutiérrez, 2024). The use of workshop-style tutorials, which were both task- and activity-oriented (Nunan, 2004) as well as humanistic in approach (Stevick, 1990), effectively engaged participants and facilitated the delivery of content and language instruction in a positive and supportive manner. Furthermore, this approach contributed to the development of metastrategies within a second language context. According to Oxford (2011), metastrategies encompass four key aspects: cognition, affect, motivation, and social interaction (Khongput, 2020). Faculty members were similarly guided on a language journey of self-expression and self-discovery through the acquisition of metastrategic abilities in a second language, aided and facilitated by the socially interactive nature of the sessions.

Designing and delivering EAP courses to established groups of subject specialists ultimately helped build greater confidence with the target language, while also offering opportunities for academic networking, and fostering socio-emotional connections within the learning environment. All learners were provided with equal support in enhancing their linguistic competence, boosting

their confidence in their language abilities, and in learning to trust the educational process as outlined by the instructors. As the path to Internationalization continues, similar situations may become more common, highlighting the need to further explore strategies for supporting academics and scholars in gaining greater self-assurance when communicating in a language other than their native tongue. In the meantime, the experience at the University of Calabria's Language Centre offers an initial perspective on how negotiating a SEL pact can reduce disruptions and provide learners with the support needed to progress at their own pace and according to their individual learning styles (Cansiz, Griffiths, 2015).

As Section 4 will highlight, many participants advocated for such opportunities to continue on a long-term, indefinite basis; others commented on how their initial skepticism was quickly replaced by a sense of urgency to partake; others, still, highlighted how they were led to re-think their own teaching strategies after their involvement in the language tutorials. The next section will provide insights into more detailed evidence and information regarding the impact of the topics selected and group interaction.

10.4 Topics and participants

Focusing on the courses offered to the four groups – A, B, C and D –, it is implicit that the level of English knowledge was uneven among the groups. Generally speaking, all participants felt more confident when dealing with content and vocabulary related to the disciplines affiliated to the subjects they taught. As a matter of fact, at a lower level of competence (i.e., Group A) in situations where participants were to interact with others (colleagues) on non-academic topics of relevance – such as talking about lessons cancellation and rescheduling – communication was seriously hindered. Similarly, in groups with a more advanced command of the language (i.e., Group D), participants felt somehow less confident when asked to discuss academic topics they were not familiar with.

Therefore, the most relevant challenge in developing materials and activities, including verbal communication on academic subjects, was represented by the identification and selection of topics of interest, also based on the linguistic necessities of all participants.

For these reasons, the first step was to collect academic materials that were of cross-curricular interest to all course participants, i.e., psychology, environmental issues and sustainability, global challenges and opportunities, the impact of technology on human lives, and social issues. This approach would have ensured the need for course participants to employ a variety of registers characterized by linguistic features beyond their scientific fields of expertise and to practice with English for Academic Purposes (EAP).

On the other hand, the most significant challenge for course participants was to recognize and employ both general and content-specific vocabulary, to

work on complex and non-complex structures, and apply language and functions in order to foster interaction among colleagues on specific topics, as well as the ability to convey information.

The approach used in class activities focused on communicative strategies, specifically relying on peer-to-peer interaction described as the «interaction and collaboration between participants in a shared project or activity that is characterized by network-based organizational structures, a shared common resource base, and an assumption that all participants have the potential to make constructive contributions» (Bruns, 2016: 1). As a consequence, special emphasis was placed on Cooperative Learning (CL) (Johnson & Johnson, 1998), which proved to be more functional in situations where the individuals' vocabulary skills and communicative ability were uneven. Indeed, research evidence supports the effectiveness of CL since it raises the standards of educational learning, enhances learning outcomes and allows communication skills in non-native speakers' classes (McCafferty & Jacobs, 2006). Cooperative Learning could be considered as a social process where knowledge is acquired through the successful interaction between group members (Cohen, 1994). Moreover, it fosters a non-threatening learning environment which encourages learners to lower their emotional barriers when communicating and expressing their opinions in a foreign language (Slavin, 1995). In fact, it can be said that course participants experienced several crucial aspects during their learning path, such as:

- Individual Accountability, as each individual is «accountable for their individual contributions to the group, […] and that everyone must contribute». (Gillies 2007: 4-5);
- Social Skills, in terms of effective communication aiming at successful cooperation; and
- Face-to-face interaction in small groups.

10.4.1 Emotions, Motivation and Feedback

Emotions and learning are profoundly intertwined; the former can either enhance or negatively affect the learning process, based on the positive or negative emotional states that drive or colour the whole experience (Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2016). In fact, in the learning environment, being emotions contagious, they play a pivotal role in supporting or undermining the brain functions of learning and teaching. They are linked to and have an impact on cognitive skills such as attention, memory, executive functions, decision-making, critical thinking, and problem-solving (Tyng, et.al. 2017).

In addition, it is worth highlighting that motivation is seen as the propeller behind learning. Williams and Burden (1997) suggested that motivation is a «sustained, intellectual and/or physical effort» so that the person can achieve some «previously set goal» (1997: 120). The strength of any motivation depends

on how much value learners place on the outcome they wish to achieve (Williams and Burden, 1997). Zoltán Dörnyei affirmed that «the human mind being a highly integrated neural network, motivation constantly interacts with cognitive and emotional issues […]» (Dörnyei 2014: 519)

In the study outlined here, Instructors did not need to further develop motivation stimuli, as participants' intrinsic motivation was outstanding since they were well aware of the importance of taking part in the course for the reasons outlined above. However, during the course, negative emotions occasionally affected the learning outcomes, in particular among low level groups. Indeed, participants felt afraid and insecure about expressing their opinions due to their lack of vocabulary and limited language structures that prevented them to communicate effectively. These events triggered a negative emotional cascade that diminished their confidence, motivation and engagement. On the other hand, in the more advanced groups, strong competitiveness sometimes disrupted the learning environment, making the learning process more difficult. Learners tended to hesitate to express themselves for fear of being judged by their colleagues, also due to the diverse nature of their personalities.

Along with emotions and personalities, other key factors were also critical for the instructors during the course. Multisensory learning (visual, auditory), diverse intelligences of learners (Gardner 1993), as well as additional ways of learning, had to be addressed during the courses. In this circumstance, the role of the Instructors was to «de-suggest» the negative emotions of these 'unconventional learners' by removing their emotional barriers characterized by embarrassment, anxiety, stress, worry and fear. All these factors negatively impacted on the following skills:

- the logical-critical skill, which is based on logical reasoning, and
- the intuitive-emotional skill, which influences confidence and trust.

Therefore, instructors had to organize classes based on «rhythmization,» that is the pacing of the lesson in alternating phases of relaxation and various types of activations (Ferencich, 2010). Stevick (1996), who extensively explored the impact of emotions on language learning, in his seminal work, Memory, Meaning and Method, emphasized the «power and the pervasive role of emotional factors» in the foreign language learning process, and stated that «just how these emotional factors influence the process of memory is still the subject of some discussion» (Stevick 1996: 7).

Besides the attentive search for materials to be used in class through the selection of academic topics – going beyond the field of specialization of learners – the stress-relieving approach played a fundamental role. In fact, it provided participants with the right relaxing atmosphere at the time when they were experiencing frustration and embarrassment of displaying their skills and confronting themselves with their colleagues or, even, the fear of being judged by

both instructors and their peers. In line with Stevick (1980), «success depends less on materials, techniques, and linguistic analyses, and more on what goes on inside and between people in the classroom» (1980: 4).

Another key issue was providing suggestions and feedback to course participants. Instructors had to be very cautious, as the participants were high-level academics, and the goal was to prevent them from «rebuilding» the affective barrier that had successfully been de-constructed.

Overall, it was essential for the instructors to be discreet and recognize participant's intellectual authority, thus providing them with feedback of dialogic nature to foster professional conversations promoting interaction, reflection, and active engagement (Hattie and Timperley, 2007)

Indeed, the tone of the feedback has a significant role in how it is received. According to Sadler (2010), feedback should avoid being excessively directive or judgmental and should, instead, emphasize opportunities for improvement and reflection. Therefore, feedback to university professors implied a delicate balance of professionalism, respect for their expertise and status, and clear, constructive input that fostered growth. Approaching feedback with sensitivity to power dynamics, offering it as part of a collaborative dialogue, and framing it as a tool for continuous professional development contributed to its positive reception.

The following section presents insights from the learners' perspectives, reflecting on their completed learning path in terms of both language acquisition and personal engagement.

10.5 Reflections and conclusions, while looking ahead

This final section presents the voices of some protagonists who intensively participated in the project. The aim is to give readers a more immediate sense of the comments, emotions, fears, growing self-trust, and future hopes that emerged. As project organizers, we shared these moments over the course of several months with this special typology of learners, who spent a large amount of time within the premises of the University Language Centre. Indeed, the halls, the classrooms of the Centre became places where they met, they knew each other better, they informed each other about the research they carry out, they shared daily teaching experiences, emotions and laughs. In other words, they experienced moments for socialization, which is an aspect that academic communities very often miss, due to the many commitments everyone is involved in.

The two comments below, reported by two language Instructors, show the uncertainties and fears that even academic professors experience when exposed to second language learning.

[Elvira, Instructor]
The were afraid of being judged [pause] not assessed but judged and they were hiding behind lots of excuses: it's too hot! Of course. It's June, Calabria!!! [laughs]

[Alessandro, Instructor]
It was just a matter of trusting the process enough, until they opened up to do it. They needed that extra moment for them to say «OK. I'm not being judged and I'm not under the microscope». Once we got to that step, everything else was sincerely and smoothly done on their own.

Once again, the two comments show that the participants needed time to develop their self-confidence and self-esteem in this new role as language students.

From a different perspective, the following excerpts report reflections offered by four participants[5], all of them with leading roles and strong teaching and research-oriented experience within the academic community.

[Francesco, Full Professor of Physic, Head of Department]
… about two years in the US as post doc, and I was research fellow at the University of California San Diego. After this period, I was able and I am able to speak and to understand English. I'm able to present data in English … but it was challenging as I was saying I tried one of these activities online to simulate the test and the result was really embarrassing. I wanted to take this intensive English course to get ready for the test, and I have to be honest at the beginning I was skeptical because, you see two months is such a short period, but it was a very intense course, 6 hours per week. But then when you ask which word you have to use in this particular sentence, and you know you have to pick among five of them … for me the all five meant the same thing. But, in fact, you have to pick the correct one and you have to understand the logic behind. […] I've been teaching in this university for 25 years now and I realized that this course gave me the opportunity to come back to be a student again and I realized that I had almost forgot[ten] the perspective and the point of view of a student. I used this experience to modify the way of my teaching with the students. I also realized that, as a student, I was really a bad student since I was chatting all the time and the teacher had to scold me all the time but it was really fun and I'm grateful for this experience because […] and especially one of the last meetings in the academic Senate I pointed out again that this should be a structured course that everyone of us should take constantly in

[5] We wish to say Thank you to Professors Francesco Valentini (Department of Physics), Francesco Ricca (Department of Mathematics and Computer Science), Evelin Meoni (Department of Physics), and Damiano Silipo (Department of Economics, Statistics and Finance) who accepted to be interviewed with the aim to share their comments and emotions related to their experience while participating in the English course, held at the University of Calabria.

time […] even when we go to conferences, we are scared, not of giving a presentation that you can study and present as a poem but then … at the question and answer section […] If we want to become an international university and we can play our role in the international scenario, we need English.

[Francesco, Full Professor of Computer Science]
It was quite an interesting experience because we not only studied English and it was useful because we need a little bit of English to teach but, at the same time, from the human perspective, all the contacts that we got with teachers, with colleagues, at the end of the experience it was very interesting and opening to discussion. We were not only studying English, we were socializing quite a lot and this is important, understanding to share our thoughts. At the bottom line it was a very interesting experience, breaking the usual routine of an academic context.

[Evelin Meoni, Full Professor of High Energy Physics]
It was a way for me to improve my English while having fun. I need to speak English because I work at the Atlas experiment at CERN and this really is an international environment.

[Damiano Silipo, Full Professor of Economics]
I had the chance to be on the other side, I mean to understand how students can have problems and what I should do to be more effective in my teaching. This kind of experience should be permanent, in the sense that every year once a month all the professors who teach in English should be able to attend this course.

Interestingly, the key concepts discussed throughout the paper appear in these excerpts: motivation, challenge, academic needs, emotions, different mindset, the challenge of being a student again, the awareness of considering the challenge from a different perspective. But, and again, what clearly appears are the encouragement and request, coming from leading professors and addressed to the university government, to invest on such academic endeavor that includes the process of Internationalization and consolidated EMI experiences, at present and in the future. This is also our hope, and University Language Centres remain the key university sectors that can support this important process. However, at this point, our reflection shifts to a different perspective. We all agree that English is the language for academic and professional communication. University governments and highly competent professors encourage students from all over the world – especially from areas that experience severe economic difficulties – to join us, to grow academically, to invest in their professional future. This is something the academic community should feel proud of. Yet, we cannot neglect the cultural experience that we offer to these very welcomed students who, while benefiting from their final academic aims, thanks to the use of the English language, often live for months and even years in our country but do

not master or learn the fascinating Italian language. Consequently, they miss so much of the Italian culture they have been immersed for a long time. This is an issue university governments seriously need to reflect upon. As for our more specific disciplinary and scientific competence, as language professors, it will be the topic of a future study.

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11. EMI professional development: Foregrounding methodology, cognition and disciplinary discourse

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As English Medium Instruction (EMI) is increasingly normalized across tertiary institutions, University Language Centres become crucial for *internationalizing tertiary instruction*, providing language-training for those incoming, outgoing, and *in situ.* However, beyond *teaching English*, EFL-experts should consider EMI as an opportunity to work alongside STEM-colleagues to improve EMI-STEM instruction at their institutions. To start, EFL-experts, being savvy designers of student-centred instructional-tasks, possess the know-how STEM-colleagues need for designing instructional methods needed for teaching complex STEM-content. In addition, both STEM and EFL instruction value *students' ability to use language well, be it L1 or English, to speak and write about discipline-specific notions in age-appropriate and content-relevant ways, academically.* Although EMI content-experts may welcome student-centred methodologies, they are generally hesitant about building students' *disciplinary discourse skills*, often equating it to *teaching language*. We suggest shifting focus from *Language* towards *Literacy & Discourse*, particularly *academic/discipline-specific discourse* which interest both EFL-teachers and content-instructors. Here, we report on the materials and results of EMI-Methodology Workshops which were part of EMI-Language courses at the University of Calabria. These workshops were novel in that they (1) adopted a science-based approach to training EMI-STEM instructors; (2) used instructional-tasks which were explicitly designed for building STEM students' *academic/disciplinary discourse*. Written reflections of attendees (n=35) generated a corpus of 28,749 words: thematic analyses were undertaken using researcher-led deductive analysis plus AI-conducted inductive analyses. Data triangulation confirmed that, by expanding the notion of *Language-learning* to *Literacy-building*, content-instructors willingly embraced their role as experts of not only subject-specific content, but also the specific discourse within which such content is embedded.

University Language Centres with strong traditions of innovative instructional methodologies should embrace EMI as an opportunity for improving campus-wide subject-instruction, thus ensuring that graduates have mastered not only subject-specific notions, but also the discipline-relevant language skills needed for seamlessly entering and succeeding in their chosen global disciplinary professions.

Keywords: University EMI STEM Instructors & Professional Development; AI Thematic Analysis; EMI Methodology & Cognition; Designing EMI Instruction & Materials; Disciplinary Discourse.

11.1 Introduction

This timely volume contributes to the rapidly expanding body of research on English medium instruction (EMI) at universities worldwide (Curle *et al*., 2020; Curle, Rose, Yuksel, 2024; Wang *et al*., 2025), a practice which Macaro (2018) called «an unstoppable train that has already left the station» (2018, p. 13). This high-speed train seems to be fuelled by a «just do it in English» attitude, since, if offered professional development (PD) courses «primarily focused on improving English language skills rather than developing competencies to teach academic subjects in English [and, in some cases] respondents stated that there was no need to offer support for EMI teachers because their English language proficiency was generally high» (Sahan *et al*. 2021, p. 47; Volchenkova & Kravstova, 2021). The underlying idea is that EMI success depends on EMI instructors who are sufficiently proficient in English to «employ appropriate discourse-specific language usage at lexical, syntactic, semantic, and other related levels that align with the academic conventions of a particular discipline (Richards & Pun, 2022)» (Wang *et al*., 2025 p. 3; Mouton & Rootman-Le Grange, 2020).

However, equating successful EMI-instruction to EMI instructors' English language fluency ignores the elephant in the room: even if an Italian-born physics professor uses flawless C2-level Italian to teach physics to Italian-born students at an Italian university, tertiary-level physics remains inherently difficult, even in one's L1. An English-fluent physics professor lecturing about physics in English to non-Anglophone students may actually render what is already difficult, extremely challenging. In fact, Wang (*ibid*) notes that «since academic disciplines contain various language features and discourse practices (Lasagabaster, 2018), even instructors with high levels of general English proficiency may not be able to use appropriate instructional language or discipline-specific language to explain complex concepts (Zwiers *et al*., 2014; Halliday & Martin,1993)». An important concern, therefore, is to ensure that EMI does not become an inadvertent guise for dumbing down tertiary-level learning (Altbach, 2007; Song, 2021; Mackenzie, 2022).

In addition, if the primary objective of offering EMI programmes is to «improve students' career prospects» (Sahan et al., 2021 p. 37), maybe EMI-PD

courses should worry less about whether EMI-professors can «explain complex concepts through discipline-specific language» and focus more on EMI-students' ability to communicate complex concepts through discipline-specific discourse, in English. Mastery of academic and discipline-specific discourse is what EMI graduates need, alongside their degrees, to successfully enter the global workforce in their chosen field. Research that identifies strategies for shifting the mindsets and practices of EMI-instructors towards more effective methods cannot come speedily enough.

We suggest that a constructive way forward is to recognize that EMI is much more than «teaching in English»; it offers a valuable opportunity for EFL specialists to support STEM-colleagues and improve EMI content instruction in at least two ways. To start, EFL instruction is renowned for dynamic, student-centred, active, and interactive instructional methods – elements that are urgently needed in STEM-classrooms, which are often criticised for their heavy reliance on the famously inefficient, teacher-fronted explanatory lecturing (Moje, 2008; Short, 2017). Secondly, EFL-experts are often savvy designers of tasks and instructional processes which explicitly build students' academic language skills, exactly the know-how content-colleagues need for helping STEM-students speak and write about discipline-specific notions correctly, in academically- and age-appropriate ways. Indeed the «ability to use language well to speak and write about discipline-specific notions academically, in age-appropriate and content-relevant ways» (Corson, 1990) was the objective of the so-called 'Language across the Curriculum' (LAC) movement in the 70s, led by teachers and educationalists who stressed that successful language learning is sin qua non for successful content learning (Bullock Report, 1973; Livingston *et al*., 2022). Initially a foreign language teachers' initiative, the movement was soon joined by teachers of science and other subjects: «We felt sure that language was a matter of concern for everyone, that if children were to make sense of their school experience, and in the process to become confident users of language, then we needed to engage in a much closer scrutiny of the way in which they encountered and used language throughout the school day» (Barnes *et al*., 1970, in Parker, 1985, p. 173; Vollmer, 2006).

Unfortunately, these attempts to instil «language across the curriculum» left it to teachers to interpret the implications of ideas about language, thinking and learning, rather than exemplifying how these principles regarding teaching could be translated into specific learning tasks or materials (Parker, 1985, p. 174). Even in their L1, most content-experts feel that 'language' is not their business (Childs et al., 2015; Wellington & Osborne, 2001), a stance that is accentuated in EMI contexts, particularly when 'teaching language' is associated with teaching grammar, pronunciation, or even «Focusing on Form» (e.g. Tedick & Lyster, 2019). We therefore suggest a shift in focus from 'language' to 'literacy' (Ting, 2024), where being «discipline-literate» means not only understanding discipline-specific concepts but also having the ability to *language about* those

ideas using discipline-appropriate discourse; heuristically speaking, to 'sound like you know what you're talking about'.

Here, we describe an EMI-PD course which invited STEM-instructors to reflect on their EMI practice from three distinct perspectives, *Methodology*, *Cognition* and *Language Use & Literacy Development*. These three perspectives converged on an agreed understanding: ultimately, to be globally competitive professionals, EMI-graduates must be able to use discipline-appropriate discourse in English to write and speak about STEM concepts [*Language Use & Literacy Development*]. There are, however, three challenges which immediately come to mind. First, as will be discussed in more detail below, although STEM experts expect students to communicate discipline-specific understandings through very discipline-specific discourses, the same STEM teachers often believe that «language is not their business» (Hillman, 2021). However, if a chemistry teacher does not support students in learning to speak and write like a chemist, who will? The second challenge regards the fact that STEM-professionals often lack training in pedagogical and didactic theories (Costa & Coleman, 2013; Costa & Mariotti, 2023; Cicillini & Triki, 2024; McGuire, 2015, 2018). As such, STEM-instructors often struggle to abandon traditional instructional habits of «expository lecturing» for more EMI-suitable student-centred practices. These culminate in the third challenge, which is the fact that STEM-professionals are encultured to favour concrete and tangible evidence over purely theoretical propositions. As such, suggestions regarding pedagogy, didactics and teaching methods, especially presented with the intention of changing their instructional habit of lecturing, must be grounded in scientifically valid research findings and *proof of concept.* A driving principle was, therefore, that any pedagogical and didactic theories about learning that was being presented should involve instructors in doing tasks which not only conveyed the theory, but also allowed them to experience the theory in practice.

11.2 Context, Content & Method

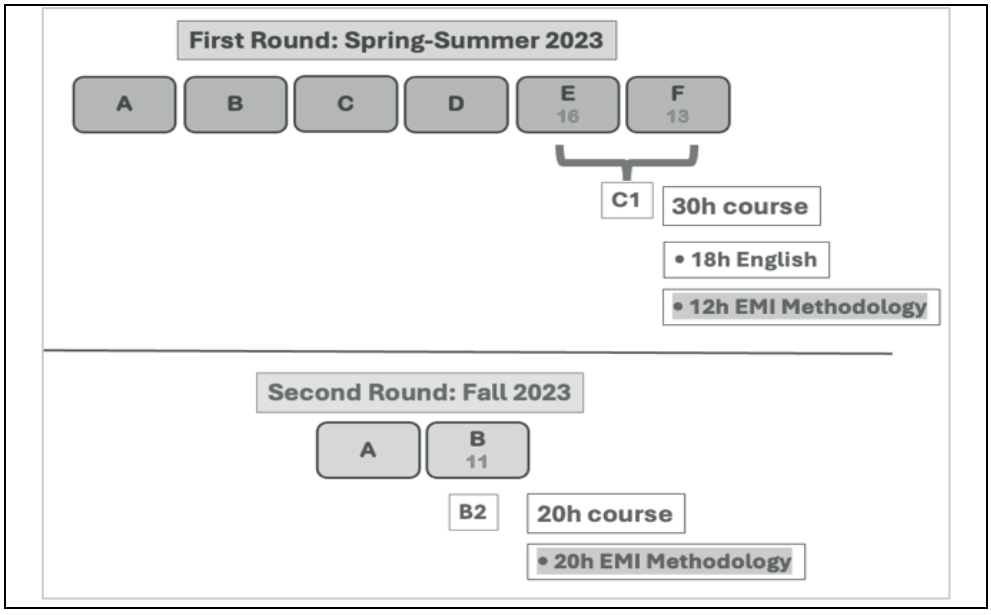
11.2.1 Context: Motivation and Organisation

The University of Calabria (UniCAL) offers 11 International Master Degrees taught in English (https://www.unical.it/internazionale/intenational-students/international-course-catalogue/), attracting not only international students, but also providing 'internationalization at home' experiences for Italian students (Costa & Coleman, 2013; Costa & Mariotti, 2023; Triki, 2022; Cicillini-Triki, 2024). The Project '*English for Academic Purposes for Faculty Members*[1]'

[1] Professor Carmen Argondizzo (Scientific Coordinator); Dr Maria Sasso (Administrator).

was launched in the Spring of 2023 and organized at the *Centro Linguistico di Ateneo* (CLA), with the purpose of providing English language coursework to subject-instructors teaching in these Master's Degree courses. A placement test assigned the 130 EMI instructors to six Groups, labelled A to F (Figure 11.1). During the first Spring-Summer Round of the Project, the two C1-Level groups (E and F; n=29 participants) followed 30 hours of «English for Academic Purpose» Coursework, consisting of 18 hours of English language instruction plus four EMI-Methodology Workshops (3 hours each). Groups A-D received only English language instruction. In the second Round, held in Fall 2023, instructors (n=11) who had been placed in B2-level groups during Round 1 had the opportunity to follow 20 hours coursework which consisted exclusively of only EMI-Methodology Workshops.

Figure 11.1 Organization of EMI-Methodology Course within the two rounds of the University Project «English for Academic Purposes for Faculty»



11.2.2 Content: Learning Objectives and Course Content

The EMI-Methodology workshops sought to achieve the four objectives below and address the 10 concepts listed in Table 11.1; the concepts regard the three macro-areas of *Methodology*, *Cognition*, *Language Use & Literacy Development*.

Objective 1. To invite faculty members to consider more innovative instructional methodologies.

- Although most instructors had been teaching for many years, EMI presented an opportunity to provide such training.

Objective 2. To provide instructors opportunities to personally experience the challenge of learning new discipline-specific notions through a foreign language.

- The Workshops addressed a range of EMI-relevant notions, ranging from cognitive neuroscience research on how the brain processes – or fails to process – information (Table 11.1 [Cognition]), to the challenging but necessary and often neglected issue of helping students master «the language of our discipline», i.e. discipline-specific discourse (Table 11.1 [Language Use & Literacy Development]).

Objective 3. To help instructors feel comfortable with adopting and using otherwise unfamiliar learning theories and instructional methods. All learning moments were designed for instructors to personally experience the theoretical notion(s) being covered.

- As illustrated in Section 2.2.1 below, the didactic proposal of «intercalated lecturing» (Table 11.1 [Methodology]) used intercalated lecturing (Table 11.1 [Method]) to teach not only the concept «working memory» (Table 11.1 [Cognition]) but also provide STEM-instructors the discipline-specific discourse needed to correctly organize their understanding of this education-related concept (Table 11.1 [Language Use & Literacy Development]).
- Likewise, Section 2.2.2 illustrates how «multimodality» could support «student-centred learning» (Table 11.1 [Methodology]), using a task that prompted participants to work collaboratively and personally experience learning through a multimodal task.

Objective 4. To help instructors embrace their role as not only experts of discipline-specific concepts, but also experts of discipline-specific discourse. In fact, discourse is the way language is used to structure areas of knowledge:

> «We are all teachers of discourse because when a student undertakes a program of study, part of that journey is learning the discourse of the discipline. […] All students benefit from the explicit learning of discipline-specific discourse because it enhances the learning of the content of the discipline and helps them to communicate that content in professional life» (Hoadley & Wood, 2013: 4).

- However, subject-experts, rightly so, do not wish to become language-instructors.
- Tasks were therefore designed to explicitly develop STEM-instructors' acquisition of the discipline-specific discourses around novel education-related concepts, such as cognition, learning, language and education, without turning them into «language lessons». In this way, STEM-instructors experienced different task types they could use for «teaching disciplinary discourse» while working within their comfort zone and without taking on the role of language teachers.

Table 11.1 The EMI-Methodology Workshops addressed the following 10 concepts which concern the three macro-areas of Methodology, Cognition and Language Use & Literacy Development. Many of these are also relevant when teaching through the L1. Note that the code in [square brackets] serves to discuss the results presented below.

Methodology
EMI is about methodological change; multimedia & multimodality; EMI-relevant pedagogic and didactic practices would also benefit L1-instruction. [M1]
More student-centred EMI instruction might consider the design and use of «instructional tasks» and strategies that provide for «controlled input». [M2]
Cognition
Working Memory; its limitations; it is easily overloaded; it precedes Long Term Memory (LTM); general notions of how the brain processes information. [C1]
Input is not always Intake: students struggle to understand all that we teach, especially if we are lecturing; potentially worse in a foreign language. [C2]
Experts suffer from «the Curse of Knowledge», preventing them from distinguishing between «a core concept» and «its supporting details». [C3]
Misalignment between expert and learner domain-knowledge and cognition leads to the fossilization of misconceptions – a concern for even L1-content instruction. [C4]
Language Use & Literacy Development
Disciplinary Discourse is essential for the community of practice - the right language of correct thinking. The Language Dilemma of Content Instruction (Ting 2022) [LL1]
Academic Language is not one's mother tongue and thus requires explicit instruction (Bourdieu & Passeron 1994). [LL2]
BICS vs. CALP and the need to ride down but also back up the semantic wave (Maton, 2016). [LL3]
Content Instruction must integrate Content with the Language of that Content (CLIL). [LL4]

In both Rounds, the learning achieved from the EMI-Methodology Workshops was evaluated in three different moments. Moment-1 involved a take-home exam whereby instructors had 10 days to write a 600-to-700-word essay on one of three topics, all of which relate to insights they had gained from the Workshops. Moment-2 involved a «Final Written Exam» where each instructor

brought a printed and anonymized version of their EMI-essay, which was randomly assigned to another colleague whose task was to provide, within 60 minutes, feedback on both the content and the language of the anonymized essay. The final Moment evaluated «Speaking Skills»: instructors were organized into groups of 4-5 colleagues and given 60 minutes to produce a poster which they, as a group, would use as a prop for providing 10-min explanations, in English, of «What you need to know about EMI-Methodology» to colleagues from the English-only Groups.

In this section, we report analyses of the Moment-1 essays written by the 35 EMI-instructors who had followed the EMI-Methodology Workshops in both Cycle-1 and Cycle-2, asking the following question: Can brief EMI-Methodology Workshops raise subject-experts' level of appreciation of «the language of learning», and thus prompt them to take ownership of teaching not only «their» complex disciplinary concepts, but also the complex discipline-specific discourse which belongs to «their» discipline?

With regard to selecting the content of these EMI-Methodology Workshops, we considered a series of challenges: all faculty members taught pragmatically oriented STEM-disciplines, were highly successful researchers (average H Factor of 25), and had been teaching for many years (15 years on average). Given that the main message of the EMI-Methodology Workshops questioned their instructional habits and called upon them to adopt unfamiliar instructional strategies that were well outside the familiar comfort zone of «lecturing», it was necessary to not only situate pedagogic and didactic theories of learning within scientific research, it was also necessary to explicitly exemplify the transformation of «theories of learning» into concrete «materials for learning».

The EMI-Methodology Workshops therefore merged neurocognitive research findings on how the brain learns - or fails to learn - with pedagogical and didactic theories of learning, and presented these through instructional-tasks which provided participants hands-on experiential learning of such theories in practice. Learning sequences were designed to address a range of theories, from Sweller's Cognitive Load Theory of learning (Sweller, 2011) to Maton's Legitimation Code (Maton, 2016), to how peer-to-peer interactional tasks can be adapted for tertiary-level subject-instruction (Mazur, 2009).

11.2.3 Method: Exemplifying Theory in Practice

Here, we present two sets of tasks used in the workshops to illustrate how STEM-instructors learnt about education theories by completing tasks that were designed to engage them in the theories themselves: the lesson about «using intercalated lecturing to teach complex concepts» provided instructors an intercalated lecture about cognition while the lesson about «designing multimodal input for comprehending complex text» involved instructors negotiating how images support the information within a complex text on education theories.

11.2.3.1 Exemplification of Intercalated Lecturing

As illustrated in Figure 11.2, the *learning sequence* was designed to accomplish three objectives: (1) teach participants the *content* (i.e. working memory, speed of information processing, off-line information processing); (2) have participants personally experience the *methodology* (i.e. intercalated lecturing) and; (3) enable participants to acquire the *discourse* needed to first internalize and then communicate their knowledge about the content. To enable readers to gain an approximate experience of this *learning sequence* within the space limitations, the textual information below is linked to the content and images contained in a video on intercalated lecturing[2]. References to specific sections in the video will be indicated by a time indicator (t), which invites readers to listen to certain parts of the video before proceeding or refers readers to particular figures in the video. Please use this link or the QRCode in Figure 11.2 to access the video before proceeding.

Figure 11.2. Intercalated lecturing

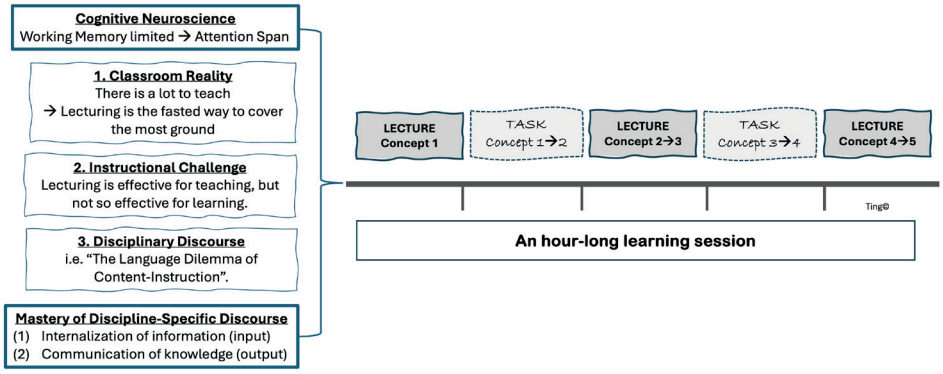


Figure 11.2. *Intercalated lecturing* (right) is a concrete strategy to address some basic challenges regarding content-instruction (left). The classroom practices and concerns shown in rectangles 1 to 3 often overlook research from cognitive neuroscience (top rectangle) which clearly show that working memory limits attention span, especially when listening to a lecture about unknown information (Informational listening, Field, 2011). Likewise, subject-instruction often overlooks the need to help learners master disciplinary discourse

[2] This video** was produced as part of the University of Calabria participation in Human Resources Strategy for Researchers - HRS4R: https://www.unical.it/ricerca/human-resources-strategy-for-researchers/. ***Blending Lectures and Tasks: Learning Complex Concepts & Complex Discourse.*

(bottom rectangle). *Intercalated lecturing* can be organized to limit LECTURE-moments to ca. 10 minutes, reducing the likelihood of overloading working memory; TASK-moments can be designed to provide students opportunities to collaboratively work through discourse-focusing tasks that simultaneously move concept-learning forward, thus building students' disciplinary-discourse skills without compromising content-learning.

Learning-Moment-1 was a LECTURE-moment, involving a 5-min explanation of working memory given by Researcher 1, which readers can experience by watching part of the video (time (t):0.48-5.58). During this short LECTURE, course participants participated in a traditional expository lecture on the following: working memory and its relationship with long term memory (image t:1.39); how working memory limits the amount of *unfamiliar* information that can be processed (t:2.00); how a stream of unfamiliar input requires off-line processing which is likely to compromise how well an entire block of information is subsequently understood (t:3.15-5.58).

Learning-Moment-2 (ca. 10 min) was a TASK-moment whereby instructors collaboratively worked through two texts presenting a scenario that was created (Ting 2022) to exemplify three features of working memory which are relevant to classroom instruction: i.e., it is (i) limited in capacity, (ii) limited in duration and (iii) highly volatile. These two texts can be accessed via QR-Codes 2 and 3. Working in groups of 3 to 4 colleagues, instructors first worked individually to identify the text they preferred before discussing their choice with others. Since both texts explain the same limits of working memory but present information in a slightly different order, it is actually irrelevant which text is preferred. What is important is that the processes of (1) in reading both texts to decide which one prefers, (2) discussing their preferences and then (3) justify and/or agree with others, obliged the instructors to revisit the information numerous times, thus learning content. And, since the content-notions are presented through a written text rather than «teacher-talk», participants have ready access to the exact discourse they need for (1) internalizing the information (input) and (2) supporting their discussion about content (output). The process of working through these two moments within an intercalated lecturing sequence allowed instructors to personally experience how a TASK-moment easily expanded their understanding of content beyond that gained through the preceding LECTURE-moment. Most importantly, STEM-instructors saw how literacy-focused tasks facilitated their own assimilation of a discourse belonging to the discipline of education without the «lesson about content» becoming a «lesson about language».

Learning-Moment-3 (ca. 5 min) used a «Let's All Monologue» Activity (see BOX 1) that engaged all instructors in a deeply cognitive yet spontaneous speaking task where the entire group collectively reviewed the relationship between working memory and long-term memory. More importantly, since Moment-2 provided learners content information explained through academic disciplinary discourse, much like a textbook, it is necessary to provide learners a moment of oracy where language is used to not only interact, but also «interthink» (Littleton & Mercer, 2013; Howe et al., 2019). Tasks eliciting spontaneous verbalization using less formalized discourse allows teachers to evaluate how well learners can reason through and communicate their understanding of content: by personally experiencing this task, instructors saw how they could apply it to verify that learners are not simply «reading off the page» or «parroting their textbooks» (Mercer, 1995; Mercer & Dawes, 2018).

BOX 1. 'Let's All Monologue'

This whole-class activity invites everyone to pretend they are one person, speaking about what has just been learnt, i.e., "monologue". However, each person can utter 6 words and must raise a finger for each word and, after the last word, randomly point to another person to continue the monologue. To start, by obliging speakers to raise their fingers for each word uttered, speech is slowed and everyone can follow the message being constructed. Secondly, the limit of 6 words means that most utterances must stop mid-sentence, midway through a grammatical construction, a syntactical phrase, a conceptual notion, etc. which must be continued in this "collective monologue". Since one cannot completely foresee what a speaker will utter, where they will stop, and who they will point to, to correctly pick up where the previous speaker has left off and continue the monologue correctly, everyone, regardless of whether they have been indicated to speak, must listen carefully and think quickly yet correctly about not only the content, but also the language (Ting, 2018).

11.2.3.2 Exemplification of Multimodal Knowledge Co-Construction

This section shares a task which provided the instructors experiential learning of a multimodal task that was designed to engage learners in active/interactive knowledge co-construction of many key notions, while building disciplinary discourse. Participants received a handout containing a 352-word text (QRCode-2) which was intentionally lexically dense (Gunning Fog Index of 18.36; Flesch-Kincaid Readability Level 17.8), simulating a university-level textbook. The task required instructors to collaboratively work together to match images which they could access via their devices (QRCode-3), to the text. The process required numerous re-readings, collaborative re-evaluations, discussions and negotiations. This task thus provided instructors a way to personally experience how this multimodal instructional strategy transformed the reading of an otherwise tedious expository text into a learner-centred task which

QRCode-2 TASK-TEXT

QRCode-3 TASK-IMAGES

naturally engaged them in the active and interactive co-construct of understandings about key notions in education research. At the same time, the process also allowed the instructors to naturally assimilate the education-pertinent *discourse* needed to properly *language about* such education-notions, without feeling that they were attending a «language lesson».

While such text-image association tasks requiring students to interactively co-construct information are common to foreign language classrooms, these are uncommon in traditional STEM-instruction, which are often based on long expository texts, be that pages of textbooks, or long lectures by teachers (Costa & Coleman, 2013; Molino *et al*., 2023). In addition, images in textbooks or presented by teachers while they lecture are rarely used to catalyse student-centred active learning.

11.3 Data Analysis

Essays written by the 30 EMI-instructors (see Section 1.1), formed a corpus of 28,749 words which was analysed deductively, involving researcher-coding, and inductively, using a suite of Generative AI Natural Language Processing (GenAI-NLP).

11.3.1 Deductive Analysis via Researcher-Coding

While inductive thematic analyses is often used to identify emergent patterns and themes from a corpus (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Altameeni & Altamini, 2023), here, we were interested in understanding whether, and how much, participants of the EMI-Methodology Workshops appreciated each of the 10 main concepts covered. As such, the «themes» contained in the corpus were pre-defined by the content of the course. The step-by-step inductive systematic coding model proposed by Naeem, Ozuem, Howel and Ranfagni (2023), was therefore adapted to deductively characterise the thematic profile of this corpus, i.e. understand how important the cohort of 30 instructors found each of the 10 concepts. A constant-speed-read-aloud protocol was developed, whereby Researcher 1 read the corpus aloud, using a metronome set at 1-tick/sec to establish a constant reading speed. For *every second of reading*, one tally was assigned to one of the 10 thematic concepts listed in Table 11.1. In cases where an instructor elaborated on a single concept over several sentences, that particular concept would receive many tallies. By contrast, where essay-segments contained none of the 10 concepts, no tallies would be assigned to any of the themes during the reading of that segment. This protocol allows us to capture a thematic-density profile for each of the 10 concepts addressed (Table 11.1) and thus a way to gauge the relative importance of the concepts, as evaluated by the cohort.

11.3.2 Inductive Analysis via Generative AI

Inductive thematic analyses of the corpus were undertaken using free versions of three GenAI-NLP tools, *ChatGPT*, *Cluade.AI* and *Perplexity*. Contrary to the deductive analysis process discussed above, in line with an inductive analysis, these tools received no prior indication of expected thematic categories. However, to achieve consistency between analysis tools, all three AI-tools were given the same prompt (see BOX 2).

BOX 2. Prompt given to each of the GenAI-NLP tools.

NOTE: this was used for *ChatGPT*; for the other two tools, the greeting to «Chat» was substituted accordingly.
Hi Chat! I have a very long text, written by 35 university subject lecturers who, after following a course on English Medium Instruction (EMI) Methodology, reflected on the salient points of the course. Collectively, their reflections total about 28700 words. It would be great to know which concepts on EMI Methodology these professors found most interesting. How could you help?

Additional prompts used to direct these tools to perform inductive thematic analyses of the corpus can be found in the Appendix.

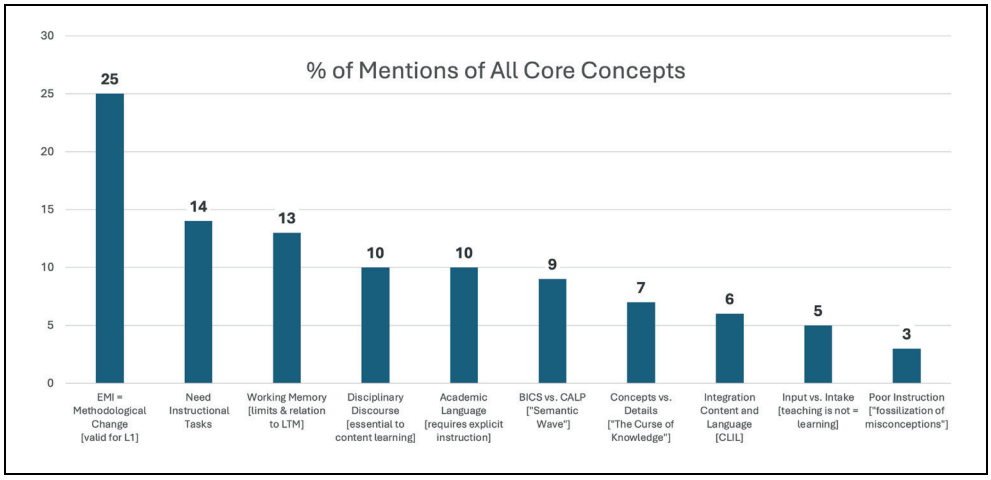
11.4 Results & Discussion

While the deductive analysis allowed us to gauge the relative importance that the cohort gave to each of the 10 concepts, the inductive analysis allowed us to triangulate and verify the deductively derived results and confirm whether the cohort had indeed focused on these concepts, i.e., no other themes were identified. In addition, since three AI-tools were used, it was also possible to compare across inductive analyses to understand whether the instructors had gained a holistic appreciation of the concepts covered.

11.4.1 Results 1. Deductive Researcher-Coding for Relative Thematic Densities

Results from the deductive researcher-coding analysis described above generated a total of 485 tallies across all 10 concepts covered (see Table 11.1). Figure 11.3 shows the percentage-frequency with which each of the 10 concepts were mentioned in the corpus.

Figure 11.3. Distribution of the deductively coded frequencies of the 10 concepts listed in Table 11.1, as percentage of the total 485 mentions of these concepts within the corpus



The concept that «EMI calls for methodological change and that EMI-relevant methodologies would also benefit L1-instruction» was the most frequently mentioned concept, accounting for 25% of all deductively tallied instances (n=120), almost double that of the second-most weighted concept, that «EMI needs to design and use instructional tasks» (14%, n=67). Interestingly, these top two most-mentioned concepts both regard the macro-area of *Methodology*, i.e., [M1] and [M2] in Table 11.1. The second macro-area, regarding *Cognition*, accounted for 28% of the total concepts tallied, indicating instructors' awareness of the following four interrelated notions: (1) subject-experts often suffer from «the curse of knowledge», forgetting that their learners cannot easily discern between a core concept and its corresponding supporting details ([C3]; n=33); therefore (2) when lectures present a flow of information, we easily «overload students' working memory» ([C1]; n=61); which explains why (3) our intended «input often does not become intake» ([C2]; n=23); and even worse (4), incomplete and inaccurate comprehension of explanatory lectures risks «the fossilization of misconceptions» ([C4]; n=15).

Of particular interest is these subject-instructors' attention to the third macro-area regarding *Language Use & Literacy Development*, accounting for the most numerous (35%) tallies, addressing the following four interconnected concepts: (1) to understand discipline-specific concepts correctly, subject-instruction must ensure students *also* master the language within which those concepts are embedded: i.e. «Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)» ([LL4]; n=42); (2) since «disciplinary discourse is essential to learning and com-

municating discipline-specific knowledge» ([LL1]; n=49); however, (3) this «academic language requires explicit instruction» ([LL2]; n=48); (4) calling upon subject-instructors to be aware of the «BICS-CALP Language complexity continuum (Cummins, 2013) while they consciously ride down and then up the semantic wave» ([LL3]; n=42).

It should be noted that, given the average adult read-aloud speed of approximately 3 words per second (Brysbaert, 2019), the generation of only 485 tallies across the entire corpus of ca. 28,000-plus words averages 59 words per second, clearly not possible. This discrepancy can be explained by the fact that essays sometimes contained filler texts (BOX 3) which, although discussing the workshops, did not directly address any of the 10 concepts: deductive read-aloud coding of such texts would therefore result in null tallies. AI-tools were therefore used to carry out an inductive thematic analysis of the corpus both to confirm the deductively derived findings and verify if other themes were present.

BOX 3. Example of filler texts

Essays sometimes contained interesting texts that, although contributed to the word count, did not regard any of the concepts addressed in the EMI-Workshops and were therefore not coded into any particular "theme", be it deductively or inductively.

1. I started this English course enthusiastically, expecting that it would improve my knowledge of English grammar as well as my vocabulary, pronunciation, mastery of idiomatic expressions, and the overall quality of the English of my lectures at the Master's Degree in Physics. I felt a bit disoriented the first day of the course, when I first heard the acronym "EMI". Before that moment, in my mind "EMI" was the name of a famous British record company.
2. The increasing phenomenon of university courses designated as English-medium-instruction (EMI), strictly linked to the growing internationalisation of educational offer, presents new challenges for non-native-English-speaking educators. Apparently, it may seem that teaching content subjects through EMI boils down to simply translating class content into a different language, but there is more than meets the eye. Actually, an adequate preparation is required and a professional learning support to teach content subjects in English, such as the course we are about to finish, should be at least advisable. Truth be told, most of the problems and of the strategies to solve them that we have been dealing with in this course, apply not only to lectures for students learning in a foreign language but also to L1 ones!

11.4.2 Results 2. Inductive Thematic Analysis Using AI Natural Language Tools

While this is no place to discuss the strengths and limitations of each tool, it was necessary to shift *Perplexity's* default tendency to «review literature» towards the explicit analysis of only the raw 28,749-word corpus provided (see example in Appendix 1). That said, all three tools provided very clear inductively derived themes from the corpus, which then allowed us to first identify emergent themes common to all three tools and then compare these with results from the deductive analysis.

Table 11.2 shows the emergent themes that were inductively identified by each of the three tools in response to the prompt shown in BOX 2. While *ChatGPT* automatically generated a quantitative profile of five key notions mentioned by the EMI-instructors, it was necessary to prompt *Cluade.AI* and *Perplexity* to do likewise: *Perplexity* automatically generated the five most frequently appearing themes (Table 11.2A) and *Cluade.AI* the most frequent seven themes (Table 11.2B).

Table 11.2. Thematic categories identified by *ChatGPT* (A), *Perplexity* (B) and *Cluade.AI* (C), the respective percentage of each thematic category and how each inductively derived theme relates to the 10 concepts addressed in the course (see Table 11.1)

A. *ChatGPT*				
Disciplinary Discourse	Working Memory	Challenges & Teacher Development *	Student-Centred Learning *	Flipped & Interactive Teaching Strategies *
41%	26%	16%	14%	3%
[LL1]	[C1]	[M1]	[M2]	[M2]

B. *Perplexity*				
Disciplinary Discourse	Semantic Waves	Working Memory Overload	Peer Instruction / Tutoring	Curse of Knowledge
28%	24% *	20%	17% *	12% *
[LL1]	[LL3]	[C1]	[M2]	[C3]

C. *Cluade.AI*						
Active Learning*	Working Memory Limits	Disciplinary Discourse	Input vs. Intake	Semantic Wave*	Curse of Knowledge	Content & Language Integration
28%	20%	16%	12%	12%	8%	4%
[M2]	[C1]	[LL1]	[C2]	[LL3]	[C3]	[LL4]

11.4.3 Triangulation Between and Across Analyses and Intelligences

11.4.3.1. Correlation Between Inductive and Deductive Analyses

To start, all the thematic categories derived from all three inductive AI-analyses referred to the 10 concepts addressed in the EMI-Methodology Workshops. In addition, all three tools identified thematic categories representing at least one notion from each of the macro-areas of *Methodology, Cognition*, and *Language Use & Literacy Development* (see Table 11.1).

In light of the fact that STEM-instructors tend to believe that «language is not my business», it is noteworthy that concepts in the macro-area of *Language Use & Literacy Development* were ranked by all three tools among the most frequently appearing themes. For example, *ChatGPT* identified «disciplinary discourse» [LL1] as the most frequently appearing theme in the corpus (41%). While *Perplexity* also identified «disciplinary discourse» as the most frequent theme (20%), this tool also identified «semantic waves» [LL3] as the second-most frequent theme (24%); the sum of these, 44%, indicates that, like *ChatGPT*, *Perplexity* also found that the STEM-instructors recognized the importance of *Language Use & Literacy Development* in EMI-instruction. Although Cluade.AI identified «disciplinary discourse» as the third-most frequently appearing theme (16%), this tool also classified «semantic wave» [LL3; 12%] and «content and language integration» [LL4; 4%] as frequently appearing themes, confirming that the instructors recognised that *Language Use & Literacy Development* must be part of EMI-STEM instruction.

«Working memory» emerged as a theme in all three inductive analyses, with both *ChatGPT* and *Cluade.AI* identifying it as the second-most frequently appearing theme (26% and 20% respectively), and *Perplexity* identifying «working memory overload» as the third-most important theme (20%). Only *Cluade.AI* identified additional themes related to the macro-area of *Cognition,* i.e. «input vs. intake» [C2].

With regard to the macro-area of *Methodology*, in the case of *ChatGPT* and *Cluade.AI,* the relative weight of these inductively derived themes was comparable to the findings from the deductively derived analysis reported above. For example, while concepts mentioning «EMI calls for methodological change» and «the use of different instructional tasks», accounted for 39% of the deductively-derived concepts, inductive analysis with *ChatGPT* also delineated three themes which call upon instructors to substitute traditional and familiar lecturing with more student-centred paradigms: e.g., «challenges & teacher development» [M1], «student-centred learning» [M2] and «flipped and interactive teaching strategies» [M2], which together account for 33% of what *ChatGPT* identified as «the five main themes» within the corpus. Likewise, *Cluade.AI* actually identified «active learning» [M2] as the most frequently mentioned theme among its top seven, accounting for 28% of thematic instances in the corpus and *Perplexity* found «peer instruction / tutoring» [M2] accounting for 17% of its thematic instances.

11.4.3.2 Emergent Themes Common Across AI-Tools

Interestingly, inductive analyses by all three AI-tools identified the same themes, which can be organized into the four common inductive thematic categories listed below. The subscripts $_{(CH),\,(P)}$ or $_{(Cl)}$ indicate how these themes were categorised by *ChatGPT*, *Perplexity* and/or *Cluade.AI*, respectively:

- Common Inductive Thematic Category 1. EMI calls upon methodological change (CH) away from traditional teacher-fronted lecturing towards more student-centred and active (Cl) learning strategies (CH) (e.g., Flipped & Interactive Teaching Strategies (CH); Peer Instruction & Tutoring (P)).
- Common Inductive Thematic Category 2. Experts often forget that students, being learners, may not yet reason with the domain-knowledge we experts possess (i.e. we suffer the «curse of knowledge» (P) (Cl)) and as such, expository lecturing easily overloads students' working memory (CH), (P), (Cl), which explains why perfect instructional input does not always lead to perfect intake (Cl).
- Common Inductive Thematic Category 3. Students learn better through student-centred paradigms (CH) when they are active (Cl), such as through peer instruction and tutoring (P), flipped & interactive teaching strategies (P) CH)
- Common Inductive Thematic Category 4. Content-instruction should also attend to the development of students' disciplinary discourse skills (CH) (P) (Cl), which means the systematic integration of content with language (CLIL) (Cl) as instructor «ride the semantic wave» (P) (Cl).

11.4.3.3 Triangulation Across Intelligences

Finally, to help readers appreciate how these inductively derived findings using «artificial intelligence» triangulated with deductively derived results performed by «humanoid intelligence», Table 11.3 presents some interesting commentaries provided by these AI-tools regarding the concepts of «disciplinary discourse» [LL1] and «BICS vs. CALP» [LL3]. In addition, although Table 11.1 lists categories of concepts addressed in the workshops, and while such listing might be useful for gauging whether learners have grasped the concepts teachers wish to address, net demarcations between subject-specific concepts is an artificial endeavour since successful learning means that learners have not only understood each notion, but more importantly, are able to link and merge these into a holistic appreciation of the subject. The purpose of the EMI-Methodology Workshops was, of course, to help participants gain a holistic understanding of how these notions work together to facilitate EMI-instruction. Below, we present excerpts from essays of two participants to illustrate how they were able to merge the notions of «disciplinary-discourse», «BICS vs. CALP», and the fact that «EMI calls for methodological change» into harmonious reflections on «the complexity of EMI teacher-education», using a discourse that is appropriate to the discipline and professionals in EMI-education.

Table 11.3. Commentaries from the AI-tools regarding disciplinary discourse (A) and BICS-CALP (B), and an excerpt from the essays of two participants (C); Note that the conceptual notions listed in Table 11.1 are indicated in [square brackets].

A. Disciplinary Discourse

- Perplexity: Instructors expressed significant interest in understanding and applying the concept of disciplinary discourse [LL1], recognizing its importance in making academic content accessible to students [LL2]. They discussed strategies for "unpacking" and "repacking" disciplinary language [LL2].
- ChatGPT: A consistent theme in the reflections is that disciplinary discourse needs explicit instruction [LL2] not only in EMI contexts but also in L1 teaching [M1].
- Claude.AI: The semantic wave metaphor for unpacking complex disciplinary discourse (going down the wave) and then helping students repack it in appropriate academic language (going back up the wave) was frequently mentioned as a powerful framework [LL3].

B. BICS vs CALP

- ChatGPT: These reflections emphasize teaching BICS as a stepping stone to CALP [LL3], illustrating the role of informal communication skills in helping students transition to mastering academic language [LL2].
- Claude.AI: The distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency appears frequently [LL4], with professors recognizing the importance of explicitly teaching academic language [LL2].
- Perplexity: The distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) [LL4] was frequently cited. Lecturers reflected on their role in helping students move beyond conversational English to mastering the academic language needed for their disciplines [LL2].

C. Excerpts from participant essays

Excerpt 1.

"I will consider the importance of both CALP and BICS languages, riding the 'semantic wave' [LL3]. Now, I know that BICS refers to conversational fluency in a language while CALP refers to students' ability to comprehend and articulate concepts and ideas that are essential for academic success, both orally and in writing. Although BICS are relatively easy to acquire, it is essential to develop the ability to communicate effectively in professional and academic settings [LL1]. This requires cross-cultural communication skills, including an understanding of different traditions and customs. Failure to acquire these skills can result in miscommunication, misunderstandings, and even conflicts. As a professor, I would like to avoid communication issues, and I think that teaching both BICS and CALP is essential [LL3]. Thus, I will unpack and repackage concepts, striving to prevent the fossilization of misconceptions [C4]. Performing tasks will enable me to gain a true understanding of the student's abilities and requirements and that will give me feedback on students' prior knowledge and learning [M2]. In that way I'm sure to track the student progress within and between lessons and identify where there are gaps in students' knowledge. In particular as future EMI teacher, I will design tasks by using visual supports, images, illustrations, multiple-choice quiz, and by challenging students to complete all the activities [M2]."

Excerpt 2.

"As an academic professor I have a great responsibility because I should help [students] develop their skills. In this regard, the learning process can be considered as a semantic wave: [descending the wave] indicates that abstract and complex concepts should be unpacked by content teachers using simple language (BICS) and referring to concrete real-life examples [LL3]. In this phase I usually do my best, the problem is that I have ignored the ascending part of this wave so far! [This means] repacking, i.e. the use of CALP to link back to the previously explained concepts, this is an essential step for teaching disciplinary discourse [LL1]. In the next term I'd like to be more active in the repacking phase [M1]. In particular, I might try to apply some of the learned strategies to my Italian students who struggle with statistics. I'd also like to avoid teacher-fronted lecturing and experiment the use of student-centered learning strategies [M1]. Now I know that students' attention spans only [last] a few minutes (10-12) [C1], so it would be better to explain for about 10 minutes and then schedule short breaks [M2]. During [breaks], students should be engaged in active tasks that are very useful for memorizing new basic concepts and acquiring disciplinary discourse [M2; LL1]. The cycle of lecturing/active tasks should be repeated for the entire lesson. I should prepare different tasks, including rearranging disorganized sentences (which will contain the main concepts), filling gaps, matching sentences and pictures, reading sentences written in different languages (BICS/CALP), and ask students to underline the same concepts in all provided texts [M2]".

11.5 Conclusions

It is no surprise that «preparing graduates for a globalised workforce» is among the top motivations universities around the world propose to justify EMI programmes (Bowles & Murphy, 2020). As such, the students' ability to use English well, i.e., to speak and write about discipline-specific knowledge using academic and discipline-appropriate discourse, should be as important as the discipline-specific degree itself. In addition, to correctly organise discipline-specific notions into complex and holistic disciplinary understandings, students need to be explicitly taught the complex disciplinary-discourse within which those concepts are embedded (Tsui & Macaro, 2024; Airey, 2024) It is therefore odd that language educators should need to convince content-experts that «mastering the language of the discipline» is part and parcel of «learning the discipline» (Macaro, 2024; Cruz *et al*., 2025)

Here, we brought together insights from STEM[3] and EFL[4] to design EMI-professional development workshops characterised by two features: first, guided by collaboratively constructed understandings gained from a trans-European Action[5], we shifted our attention from «language» towards «literacy», particularly «disciplinary discourse». Therefore, since STEM-instructors were learning about educational theories and were unfamiliar to the discourse of this discipline, all EMI-tasks were designed to help instructors assimilate the discipline-appropriate discourse they need for *languaging about* (and thinking about)

[3] Ting (PhD in Neurobiology; BSci Biology & Psychology)
[4] Lopriore (PhD & MA TEFL)
[5] https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA21114/

education. Secondly, we adopted a scientific approach to the training of STEM-instructors. Therefore, theoretical propositions from education research, such as attention span, working memory, the efficacy of student-centred learning, etc. were always presented through concrete student-centred tasks that instructors worked through, thus learning about, and also personally experiencing, the theoretical notion being proposed. Both deductive and inductive thematic analyses of the 28,000-plus word corpus of final essays written by the 35 EMI-STEM instructors indicated their realisation that, beyond simply «teach in English», EMI is first and foremost, an opportunity to «teach better» along three axes, Methodology, Cognition and Language Use & Literacy Development. Since tertiary-level EMI involves the learning of complex content through a foreign language, a cognitively challenging endeavour [Cognition], to ensure that students are indeed following, we should consider providing them with tasks which establish EFL-like learning environments whereby students communicate and collaboratively co-construct understandings [Methodology]. If EMI-tasks are also designed to explicitly reinforce students' mastery of disciplinary discourse in English [Language Use & Literacy Development], we move closer to fulfilling the purpose of EMI, i.e. enabling our graduates to seamlessly enter the international workforce of their chosen profession.

There is a growing body of literature on how to support EMI-instructors, ranging from raising intercultural awareness to improving instructors' English language skills, and even «developing language identity» (Wang et al., 2025, p.9). Here, we report on «developing EMI-teacher identity» through EMI-Methodology Workshops designed to alert STEM-instructors to their role and responsibility as experts of both discipline-specific concepts and discipline-specific discourses. In sharing the contents covered, instructional strategies implemented, and materials used in these workshops, we hope that readers can adopt and adapt the suggestions and materials for supporting other EMI-instructors. EMI is an opportunity for instructional change across universities in Italy and worldwide: To optimize this opportunity to the benefit of our university students, university language experts should not only develop university instructors' «English-language-identity», but also their «EMI-methodology-identity».

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Appendix

Following the prompt shown in BOX 2, ChatGPT responded with insightful suggestions regarding he information it could provide (A) while Perplexity's response seemed to be informed by the literature on EMI (B), bringing in issues such as assessment strategies, linking "language scaffolding" with "student engagement" and various other notions which were not only not addressed in the course, did not appear in the corpus. This reflects Perplexity's strong tendency and capacity to undertake literature reviews. It was therefore necessary to direct Perplexity towards the performance of an inductive thematic analysis of the corpus provided, explicitly indicating that it should not make reference to any existent literature on EMI courses for university instructors.

From *ChatGPT*

To identify the most interesting concepts on EMI Methodology from the lecturers' reflections, I can use text analysis to extract key insights. Here's how I would approach it:

1. Content Analysis:
- Analyze the text to identify recurring themes, concepts, and points of interest.
- Use keyword extraction and grouping to identify synonyms and related ideas.

2. Frequency Count:
- Count the occurrences of these key concepts to determine their prominence in the text.

3. Contextual Insights:
- Examine how these concepts are discussed (e.g., positive reflections, challenges, or recommendations).

4. Visualization:
- Present the findings using bar charts, word clouds, or summaries to highlight the most mentioned and emphasized concepts.

5. Suggestions for EMI Trainers:
- Based on the findings, suggest how trainers can enhance their courses by focusing on these key concepts.

If you share the text file, I'll begin by analyzing the reflections and providing a detailed summary of the most discussed concepts and their relevance.

From *Perplexity*

Here's how I can analyze your corpus of EMI lecturer reflections to identify key concepts without referencing existing literature:

1. Data-Driven Text Analysis Approach

Upon receiving your text file, I'll perform a purely inductive analysis focusing exclusively on the lecturers' own words using:

- **Contextual Term Frequency Analysis**
  Identify most repeated EMI-related terms/phrases (e.g., "classroom interaction", "assessment strategies") while examining their surrounding context to understand perceived importance.
- **Semantic Network Mapping**
  Create visual maps showing how lecturers connect concepts (e.g., linking "language scaffolding" with "student engagement").
- **Sentiment-Loaded Concept Identification**
  Pinpoint concepts with strong emotional markers (words like "crucial", "transformative", or "challenging") indicating high lecturer interest.

Note biografiche – Bionotes

Carmen Argondizzo, is Honorary Professor of English Language and Linguistics at the University of Calabria (Italy), where she currently teaches students majoring in Primary School Education. Until October 2022, in her role of full Professor, she taught students majoring in Business Administration, Finance and Insurance, Cooperation and Development, Political Science and International Relations, Pedagogical Studies, Linguistic Mediation. She was President of the Language Centre at the University of Calabria until March 2023, where she coordinated award-winning European projects aimed at enhancing students' autonomous language learning in the academic and professional sectors. She devotes a considerable amount of her professional life to AICLU, Associazione Italiana dei Centri Linguistici Universitari, within which she has been covering several roles: Secretary General (2010-2013), President (2013-2016, 2019-today). Since September 2016 she has been Vice-President of CercleS, within which she takes an active part in the decision-making process of this European community of practice. She is currently Co-Editor-in Chief of Language Learning in Higher Education (De Gruyter), the CercleS Journal. Her research interests focus on discourse analysis in the field of Language for Academic Purposes and the related pedagogical implications, considered from a humanistic perspective.

Elena Ballarin è laureata in Lettere con indirizzo classico presso l'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, dove ha anche conseguito il Dottorato di Ricerca in Scienze del Linguaggio con indirizzo glottodidattico. È membro di redazione di riviste scientifiche, fra cui alcune di fascia A. Fa parte del Centro di Didattica delle Lingue presso il Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Culturali Comparati dell'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Dal 1995 insegna italiano a stranieri presso il Centro Linguistico dell'Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia, concentrando la sua attività didattica verso studenti dei progetti di scambio, studenti adulti provenienti da tutto il mondo. Dal 2014 conduce seminari e laboratori di italiano accademico presso l'Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia. Ha all'attivo numerose pubblicazioni scientifiche, tra cui una monografia sull'italiano accademico. Partecipa regolarmente a convegni nazionali e internazionali.

Elena Borsetto received her Ph.D. in Educational Linguistics from Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy. Her research focused on the use of English-Medium Instruction (EMI), in higher education, specifically the linguistic and communicative challenges that lecturers face. She is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Verona, where she conducted a thematic analysis of the CEFR Companion Volume (Common European Framework of Reference, 2020), as part of a national research project called «European Language Centres as a multilingual community of practice: A multimodal discourse analysis of academic, cultural and social growth conveyed through the language of websites». She also works as a trainer in professional development courses for academic staff, and as an English lecturer.

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Francesca Caterina Cambosu, laureata in Lingue e Letterature Straniere, ha pubblicato diversi articoli inerenti alla pratica didattica della lingua inglese (tra cui «The learner-centred syllabus in Medical English: experiences and practice», «Teaching Medical English: what students really need vs. what they really learn», «Sfide traduttologiche dei regionalismi»). Attualmente preparatore linguistico e formatore nei corsi di specializzazione e aggiornamento organizzati da enti locali, possiede una pluriennale esperienza nel campo dell'insegnamento della Lingua Inglese in svariati settori e ambiti professionali. Dal 2009 collabora con il Centro Linguistico di Ateneo dell'Università di Cagliari nei settori della didattica della lingua e della traduzione, in particolare nell'ambito dei linguaggi specialistici.

Alessandro Cimino is an English Language Instructor at the University of Calabria where he teaches courses at undergraduate and postgraduate level. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Modern Languages and Cultures, a Master of Letters in English Studies and a Master of Arts in Foreign Languages and Translation. His research interests include accent reduction strategies for ESL speakers and redesigning programs and assessment criteria for adult language learners with Selective Mutism.

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Francesca Costa is Associate Professor in English Language and Linguistics at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore of Milan. She taught English Linguistics at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan from 2002 to 2017, Scientific English at Università di Pavia from 2006 to 2014 and English for Primary Education at Università degli Studi di Bergamo from 2017 to 2019. Her area of research focuses on the teaching and learning of the English language at all levels of education with a particular focus on translanguaging, Bilingual Education, CLIL, ICLHE and EMI.

Roberta Facchinetti is Full Professor of English Language and Linguistics at the University of Verona, Italy. Her main research interests, which are supported by the use of computerized corpora of both synchronic and diachronic English, focus on the language of journalism, English for Specific Purposes, and the language of negotiations and diplomacy. She is co-editor of the Class A journal Iperstoria and serves as an editorial board member of international journals. She has been responsible for and participated in the proposals for several research and teaching projects at national and international level that have received funding and grants. She has received two international awards: First Prize «Artemisia Gentileschi» for Academic excellence, given by the International Students Union (2005) and «Premio por la alta calidad de su trabajo», awarded by the Minister of Science, Technology and Environment of Cuba (2015).

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Cristina Mariotti is Associate Professor of English Language in the Department of Political and Social Sciences at the Università di Pavia, Italy. Her research focuses on the cognitive processes underlying second language acquisition, with particular attention to the role of motivation and learner agency in English language development. She has a strong interest in content and language integrated learning, especially ICLHE (Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education) and EMI (English-medium Instruction), exploring how students acquire disciplinary knowledge while developing language skills. Cristina combines theoretical research with applied perspectives, investigating classroom interaction, language policy, and instructional practices that support effective EMI delivery.

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