

ENGLISH MEDIUM INSTRUCTION AND THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE MEDIATION

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ABSTRACT • In this paper EMI is addressed from a Translation and Interpreting Studies perspective in order to ascertain whether there is any scope for language mediation practices among non-Anglophone academics (not) using English in their teaching and research activities. The study is based on a survey carried out at the School of Management and Economics (University of Turin) and takes into consideration the opinions and attitudes of respondents towards the increasing anglicization of higher education.

KEYWORDS • internationalization, translation, interpreting, survey, attitude

[il vantaggio] per l'istituzione che eroga la didattica è che è possibile fornire un corso di laurea in inglese e attirare studenti non italiani, la famosa internazionalizzazione whatever that means.
(Respondent 11)

1. Introduction

The English language is being introduced more and more as a medium of instruction in higher education in many parts of the world. In a recent report released by the British Council (Dearden 2015) this is described as “a growing global phenomenon” that is inextricably linked to the notion of internationalization:

The speed at which universities are internationalizing and English is being used as the academic lingua franca is accelerating. Ironically, EMI means that learning in English no longer means going to a UK or US university. In Europe, for example, the number of courses taught in English is increasing rapidly due to the Bologna process and these courses attract international students from around the world. (Dearden 2015: 29)

Ironic as it might be, attracting international students is indeed one of the main factors driving the English-only formula¹ that is also becoming popular in Italy's higher education system (Costa, Coleman 2012; Campagna, Pulcini 2014; Bernini 2015) and it is strictly related

¹ Rather than ironic, this trend has been shown to be paradoxical in that “the more international the programmes become, the fewer languages are used in them” (Haberland, Preisler 2015: 33); in other words internationalised educational settings turn into settings where (only) English is used as a lingua franca.

to quality assessment of universities and fund allocation schemes. However, this spread of EMI programmes at different levels (i.e. BA, MA, PhD, vocational, winter/summer courses) appears to be largely the result of a top-down process in which policies and decisions respond to extrinsic values rather than intrinsic ones (Kaplan 2001). The controversy raised by the *Politecnico di Milano*'s decision to adopt English as the only language of instruction in all its graduate and PhD programmes in 2012 is a case in point (Molino, Campagna 2014; Pulcini, Campagna 2015). I will refrain from presenting the many voices that have taken part in the ensuing EMI debate, as this would go beyond the scope of the present paper and has already been done by other scholars (Maraschio, De Martino 2013). Suffice it to say that the issue remains controversial in many respects, and this is in line with similar debates unfolding in other countries around the world. These include not only those countries with lower levels of L2 performance among EFL learners (as is the case in Italy) or at "the semiperiphery of academic writing" (Bennet 2014), but also countries in which English is currently learnt and used as a foreign language by a greater percentage of the population and with higher proficiency levels (Doiz et al. 2013; Kuteeva 2011; Vila, Bretxa 2015).

Linguistic competence is a key element indeed within this debate and concerns trainers and trainees alike. As reported in the study carried out by the British Council mentioned above:

Teachers in the preliminary study and respondents in the 55 Countries study were unaware of a language level, test or qualification for EMI teachers. They had been nominated to teach through EMI because they had been abroad, spoke well or had volunteered. Teachers would welcome a standard level of proficiency in English for EMI. [...] In most countries there is no standardised English benchmark test for subject teachers teaching through EMI. (Dearden 2015: 27)

If linguistic skills of teaching staff are called into question, their perception of students' skills is not always encouraging either. For example, Costabello (2013, also presented in Pulcini, Campagna 2015) carried out a case study (online questionnaire) on EMI courses delivered at the *Politecnico di Torino* and found that one third of respondents consider students' linguistic skills unsatisfactory. A similar concern was also expressed by some of the respondents who took part in the interview-based survey illustrated in the present paper. The survey encompasses two broad areas of activity, i.e. research and teaching, for which scholars based in Italy are now likely to use English in order to communicate in written or spoken form.

Drawing on selected items included in that survey, this paper looks at EMI from the perspective of Translation and Interpreting Studies in order to ascertain whether there is any scope for language mediation skills and services. By *language mediation* I mean translation (in written communication) and interpreting (in spoken and sign language communication) both as competences, resources or strategies used by individuals in writing and speaking in a foreign language, and as services provided by third parties (e.g. professional translators or interpreters) to aid the same individuals in fulfilling communication tasks.

This dimension of EMI-oriented higher education has received little attention so far. Curiously enough, in the British Council report mentioned earlier, the term *translation* occurs only five times: two times to refer to translation as a subject, and three times to refer to problems in the language transfer of technical terms from or into English. This paper examines a specific higher education setting, i.e. the School of Management and Economics (University of Turin, Italy), through the lens of translation and interpreting in terms of both practices and services. The aim is to open up the debate over EMI and, more broadly, the implications of the anglicisation of academia.

In the next section I describe the setting in which the survey was carried out, with particular reference to the items most relevant to the main focus of the present paper. Then I present and discuss the results obtained regarding language mediation skills, familiarity with

translation/interpreting services, and attitudes to some of the critical issues at the centre of the EMI debate.

2. Exploring the use of English for teaching and research purposes

Within the context of the “English in Italy: Linguistic, Educational and Professional Challenges” research project (University of Turin), a survey was carried out to investigate the extent to which English is used in teaching and research activities by academics based in Italy. This survey was a first step to a subsequent, larger internet-based survey, and was aimed to single out the most significant and controversial issues emerging from the growing pressure on Italian academics to use the English language in their teaching and research activities. In fact, a certain degree of communication in English (be it spoken or written) is now generally required of academic staff for different purposes, and this is true even for subjects with no English language competence at all (e.g. posting the description of modules and syllabuses online, drafting recommendation letters, writing abstracts and peer review reports, and so on).

Such an unprecedented spread of communicative practices in English across different disciplines is thus having an impact on how teaching and research are performed, not only within the so-called hard sciences but also within social sciences and the humanities. The present study only concerns social sciences (to a large extent) and humanities (to a very limited extent). The setting is the School of Management and Economics (University of Turin), which is briefly described in the following sub-section.

2.1. The setting

The School of Management and Economics (SME) groups together two different departments, namely the Department of Management and the Department of Economic and Social Studies, Mathematics and Statistics (ESOMAS). The School offers a number of undergraduate and graduate programmes, some of which are entirely taught in English. Among these, in academic year 2014-15 the Department of Management offered an undergraduate programme in Business and Management, and a graduate programme in International Accounting, while the Department of ESOMAS offered two graduate programmes, one in Economics, and one in Quantitative Finance and Insurance². The vast majority of faculty members and adjunct professors teaching in these programmes are Italian native speakers, and only occasionally are there visiting professors from other universities abroad (native and non-native speakers of English).

According to data obtained from the University of Turin’s main registry office (November 2014), at the beginning of academic year 2014-15 there were 1,922 first year students enrolled in total at the SME, with a distribution by department and by nationality as illustrated in Table 1 below:

Department of Management		Department of ESOMAS	
Italian students	International students	Italian students	International students

² As of academic year 2015-16 the Department of ESOMAS launched one further English-taught graduate programme in Stochastics and Data Science. The School is also linked to the *Collegio Carlo Alberto* Foundation based in Moncalieri (near Turin). The official working language in all the research and educational activities of this foundation is English.

1383	106	394	39
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Table 1. First year students enrolled at the SME by department and by nationality (a.y. 2014-15).

As can be clearly seen from the figures reported in Table 1, the number of international students³ is fairly limited (below 10% in both departments). This means that bigger efforts need to be made to further internationalize the student population at the SME, and that the majority of students attending EMI programmes are Italian native speakers instructed by lecturers who are Italian native speakers themselves. However, the EMI programmes also attract a number of exchange students (from Erasmus or other programmes), who are not included in the figures above. Most of these come from countries in which English is not the first language, thus confirming the fundamental role of English as a lingua franca for students' mobility in higher education (Mauranen 2012; Szarka 2003).

Access to all undergraduate programmes is guaranteed only to students who pass an entrance examination (within the number of places officially available each year). In academic year 2014-15, this multiple choice admission test was also administered in English for the first time (for students wishing to enrol in the undergraduate programme in Business and Management). The test in English was actually the translation of the test in Italian which had been designed for Italian students. Interestingly, the translation process led the entrance examination committee members to reconsider some questions in terms of content or formulation, and triggered a debate over the appropriateness of some highly specific references to Italian culture, history, economy, and so on. Eventually, the decision was made to keep the same questions in the two language versions of the test, including the more Italian culture-specific ones, on the ground that even international students coming to Italy to attend university should be acquainted with the culture of the host country.

2.2. The survey

Between February and May 2014 my colleague Sandra Campagna and I audio-recorded 50 semi-structured interviews (held in Italian). We first contacted all the members of our own department (ESOMAS) by email and obtained a high response rate (79% agreed to be interviewed, i.e. 45 out of 57 contacts). In addition, four colleagues from the Department of Management were also involved, as well as one from the Department of History (University of Bologna). The subject areas covered by the respondents are summarised in Table 2 below:

Research field / subject	Number of respondents
Economics and Statistics	36

³ More specifically, the nationalities represented in this group are as follows: Albania (25), Argentina (1), Belarus (1), Brazil (1), Cameron (1), China (23), Democratic Republic of Congo (2), Cuba (1), Ecuador (2), Philippines (1), Gabon (1), Germany (1), Iran (1), Kosovo (1), Macedonia (1), Morocco (3), Moldova (3), Nigeria (4), Pakistan (3), Peru (3), Romania (56), Russia (3), Sri Lanka (1), Tunisia (1), Ukraine (4), Vietnam (1). It must be specified that some of these nationalities may also match students who are permanent residents of Italy and were born in migrant families who settled in the country (Italian citizenship is still determined by *jus sanguinis* and not by *jus soli*).

Political and Social Studies	5
Foreign Languages	3
Geography	2
Agriculture and Veterinary Studies	1
Anthropology	1
Law	1
Mathematics and IT	1

Table 2. Number of survey respondents by research / subject area.

The interviews were based on a questionnaire, which is structured into three main sections: general information (personal details); research activities; teaching activities. It consists of 38 items: 29 closed questions and 9 open questions. Only the responses to open questions and any extra comment were fully transcribed for a total of 42,900 words. The two main lines of enquiry revolve around the use of language mediation skills and services, and the experience in EMI, including questions about the opinion and attitude towards relevant issues. It must be specified that not all the respondents have the same level of proficiency in English, and not all of them have actually ever taught in English; therefore in some cases the opinion expressed is not based on direct experience but on more general ideas and personal perception.

3. Results and discussion

The survey provided a wealth of interesting data and opinions, allowing for both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Given the specific focus of this paper on language mediation, a selection of the most relevant data is presented in the following sub-sections: self-assessment of language proficiency (§3.1); EMI experience and/or perception (§3.2); language mediation skills (§3.3); language mediation services (§3.4).

3.1. Language proficiency

In the contact email sent to potential informants we clearly specified that there was no intention to evaluate respondents' language skills, as this might have discouraged participation and was not the purpose of the study. Nevertheless, in the first part of the interview subjects were asked to self-assess their proficiency level in English for the four communicative competences, i.e. reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Since most of the respondents were not familiar with the standards defined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), these were made more explicit. Three levels were proposed, i.e. elementary, intermediate and advanced, and each of them consisted of two sub-levels. The results are summarised in Table 3 below:

Skills	NA	Elem. (A1+A2)	Interm. (B1+B2)	Advanced (C1+C2)
Reading	0	0	11 (4+7)	39 (27+12)

Listening	0	6 (1+5)	20 (9+11)	24 (20+4)
Writing	0	4 (2+2)	20 (7+ 13)	26 (22+4)
Speaking	1	5 (1+4)	26 (9+17)	18 (16+2)

Table 3. Respondents' self-assessment of English language proficiency.

Overall, the majority of our respondents (all of them Italian native speakers but one, who is a native speaker of French) self-rated their English language proficiency between the upper-intermediate and advanced levels for all the skills. This is reassuring if we consider that according to CEFR standards the intermediate level (classed as B1 and B2) is the level of independent users. However, there is considerable variation in the distribution of self-rated proficiency levels by skill, as can be appreciated in Figure 1 below:

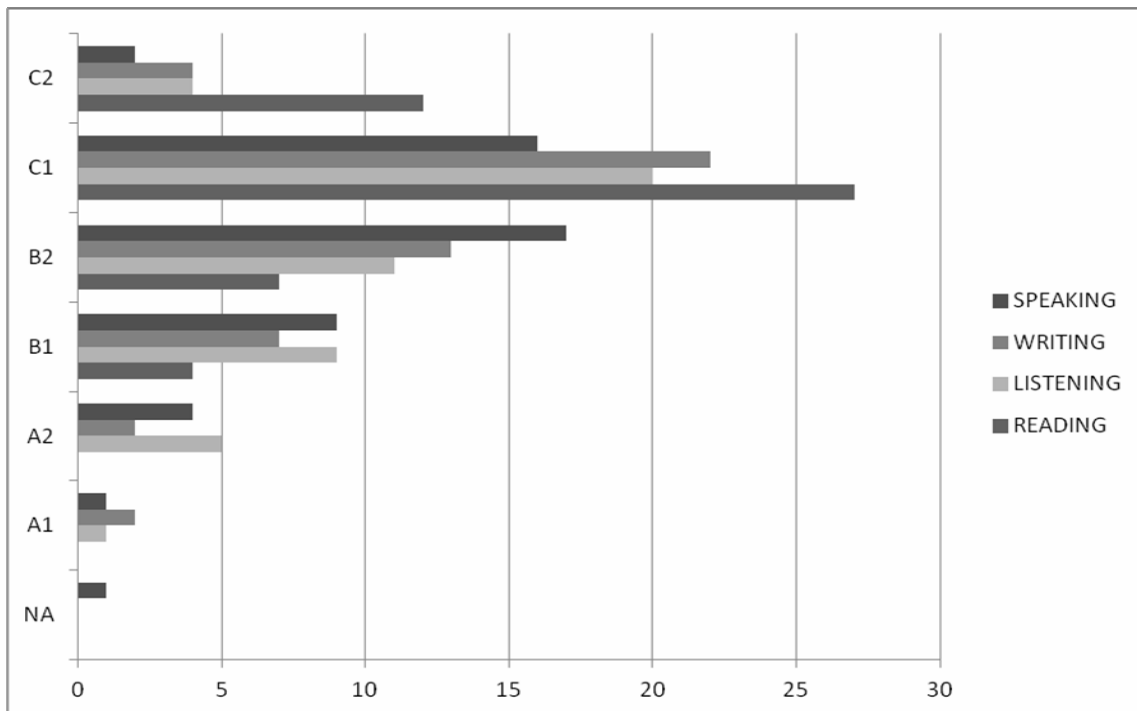


Figure 1. Respondents' self-assessment of their English language proficiency by skill.

As pointed out above, a great number of subjects rate their communicative skills within the upper-intermediate and advanced proficiency levels. Interestingly, in the C1 and C2 range (advanced levels) the most rated skill is always reading (a passive skill) whereas the least rated skill is always speaking (an active skill). This is counterbalanced in the B2 level, where speaking stands out as the most rated skill, in line with the idea of LSP competence in individuals who are familiar with the technical jargon of the subject area at the centre of their teaching and research activities. However, whereas several respondents stated that they had no major challenges when they needed to communicate within their area of specialisation, at the same time they admitted they felt far less fluent when touching upon other areas, including

informal conversation, when taking part in debates or having to make opposing points in a discussion. This partial lack of argumentation skills runs counter to the description of communicative competences provided by the CEFR within the B2 level of independent users, particularly for writing and speaking (the latter is divided into production and interaction):

Writing

I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or *giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view*. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.

Speaking

Interaction: I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. *I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.*

Production: I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. *I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.*

(European Union & Council of Europe 2004-2013, my emphasis)

The same issue was also mentioned in relation to language mediation services (see §3.4). More generally, our informants confirm that a generational gap exists insofar as high proficiency in English has become a must for younger scholars willing to pursue an academic career. The same proficiency is now also required of older scholars, though they could publish their research output and teach in Italian throughout their career and do not actually feel under the same pressure as younger colleagues.

In terms of learning strategies and opportunities, most respondents stated that they learnt English at school (39) and while studying abroad (35); about half of them also mentioned university (28), private courses (24) and self-study (24). On the other hand, the least selected options in this respect concern research placements abroad (18), e.g. PhD programmes, and post-graduate education (12). According to some survey participants, new learning opportunities specifically targeted to EMI and academic writing would be most welcome, especially in the form of professional development courses provided by the university itself.

3.2. EMI experience

Considering the attitudes and opinions expressed by survey participants, EMI is seen as an opportunity for lecturers themselves to improve their language skills and practice different teaching approaches and methodologies. Indeed, EMI is often associated with a more interactive way of teaching, in which students' participation is a fundamental part. This is not always the case with the traditional lecturing style in Italian (see e.g. Piazza 2007), which has been the object of strong criticism together with other "continental universities, many of which are a little better than institutions of mass alienation where remote academics pontificate at anonymous students across impersonal lecture theatres" (Kealey 2015: 38). It is worth specifying that the number of enrolled students in EMI programmes at the SME differ considerably from the number of students enrolled in traditional courses, whose larger size would make it hardly possible for a lecturer to be more interactive and organise, for example, group work in class.

Although teaching in English can be a stimulus to improve one's language fluency, with beneficial effects in other areas, such as presenting papers at conferences, there are also challenges due to the current state of EMI programmes. Given the limited presence of international students, some respondents mentioned that they sometimes feel a sense of

embarrassment and discomfort, at least initially, if the class is made up of Italian native speakers only. English is nonetheless used in class and exam situations, but emailing and office hours are likely to be held in Italian, depending on the language used by students in the first place. In fact, students attending EMI programmes are reported to show low competence in English, though international students in some cases seem to display slightly higher skills.

Despite a general increase in English-taught programmes and, more specifically, the provision of EMI courses at the SME, not all respondents had experience in EMI at the time of the survey and within the three previous academic years. Among the participants, 22 respondents had no EMI experience at all in Italy (though 3 of them had taught in English abroad). This must be taken into account when considering the attitude and opinion of respondents. In other cases, EMI experience was present across different educational levels, above all graduate programmes and master courses. It is also worth specifying that the respondents could select more options for this question (e.g. 8 respondents out of the 18 who declared they had had EMI experience in graduate programmes also declared they had had EMI experience in PhD programmes), so the figures reported in Table 4 below may represent the same subjects with experience at multiple levels:

Educational level	Respondents
Undergraduate programmes	13
Graduate programmes	18
Master courses	15
PhD programmes	10
No experience	22

Table 4. Respondents with EMI experience in higher education

Notwithstanding the lack of EMI experience in Italy for almost half of the survey respondents, overall the opinions expressed about the advantages and disadvantages of providing EMI courses pointed to some common features on three different levels, i.e. the institution, the teachers, and the students. These levels were proposed to survey participants during the interview and the main reactions are summarised in Table 5 below:

	Advantages / Opportunities	Disadvantages / Difficulties
Institution	Greater number of international students Higher reputation In line with global trend	General context is not in English (website, administrative staff, forms, notices, etc....) Lack of resources
Teachers	Challenging but rewarding experience Improving one's language proficiency	Not skilled enough No support (economic incentives; training)
Students	Mixed classrooms Broader view	Low language proficiency Small number of international students

Table 5. EMI-related advantages and disadvantages.

Survey participants were also asked to state whether they perceived some critical issues that have emerged from the EMI debate in Europe, particularly in other countries with a longer and more established tradition of EMI in higher education, as plausible (see e.g. Kuteeva 2011). Among the proposed issues⁴, only two are considered in the present paper, namely lower teaching quality (due to simplification of contents) and domain loss in learners' and teachers' L1. The following tables (Table 6 and Table 7) illustrate the results obtained and show the number of respondents who agreed (YES), partially dis/agreed (Y/N), or disagreed (NO) with the proposed issue as an effect of opting for English as a medium of instruction. The total number of responses are also broken down into two sub-categories to further distinguish between participants with and without EMI experience. This distinction is important as the perception of informants without EMI experience is based on a different ground to some extent.

Table 6 below shows the results concerning the possible negative impact of EMI on the quality of teaching:

	Respondents with EMI experience	Respondents without EMI experience	Total
YES	10	11	21
Y/N	5	7	12
NO	13	4	17

Table 6. Opinions on EMI and lower teaching quality.

Looking at the total number of responses, there are mixed opinions about the possible negative effect of EMI on the quality of teaching. However, when considering the two sub-groups of respondents (with and without EMI experience), responses are more polarised in the group without EMI experience. This surely depends heavily on each respondent's language proficiency level and expertise in teaching through the medium of English, and also on the kind of subject under consideration.

Moving to the issue of domain loss, Table 7 displays the results obtained for the two sub-groups of respondents:

	Respondents with EMI experience	Respondents without EMI experience	Total
YES	21	16	37
Y/N	4	5	9
NO	3	1	4

⁴ Five items were proposed to interviewees: a) gradual domain loss in L1; b) greater simplification of contents (with consequent lower quality of teaching); c) loss of cultural identity; d) perception of the English language as a means of power; e) lower performance of students (due to greater learning difficulties). Only the first two items are taken into account in this paper as they are strictly related to respondents' own communicative skills.

Table 7. Opinions on EMI and domain loss.

Surprisingly, in this case there is shared consensus on the negative effect of EMI on learners' and teachers' retention of L1 terminology. Both groups of informants confirm that EMI may lead to domain loss in the disciplinary fields that are taught and learnt exclusively in English to the detriment of the Italian language⁵. More specifically, the following questions were raised during the interviews: what kind of professionals are we training/educating? How can they work in Italy if they are not familiar with the industry jargon in Italian (provided that such jargon exists)? Can this sort of global workforce do without specialised L1 competence if they wish to remain in the country where they have received their higher education or go back to their country of origin?

3.3. Language mediation skills

Part of the survey investigated the role of language mediation skills, i.e. translation and interpreting, as fundamental strategies that may be used to deal with the increasing need to write and speak English in academic settings, not only in EMI and other teaching activities but also in research. In fact, even if EMI is not performed by all the respondents, there are different forms of communication that have become mandatory in English regardless of one's language competence. This is especially true in the case of communication between faculty and students, both international and domestic ones. Furthermore, given the strong ties EMI has with the internationalization process of universities, the extent to which English is used in research may also have an important bearing on individuals' ability to meet the needs and the challenges posed by EMI.

All survey participants with few exceptions acknowledge that over the last 10-15 years English has become an extremely important communicative tool in their research field, and it is now a must for younger generations of researchers willing to enter academia (for 15 respondents this trend is not so recent). Only 7 respondents have no publications in English (in the form of books, chapters, papers or other text types such as encyclopaedia entries): three of them are researchers in foreign languages (other than English), while the remainder belong to the elder generation (in office for more than 22, 36, 40, and 44 years).

The spread of English is also having an impact on editorial policies of many domestic scientific journals, which have recently opted for either a full switch to English-only or a mixed approach, thus accepting contributions in both English and Italian. In some instances the Italian title has been maintained, as in the journal *Rivista di Politica Economica*, the *Bollettino dell'Unione Matematica Italiana* (in both journals many papers are in English), and the journal *L'Industria* (with most papers still in Italian). However, in other cases even the title has been replaced with a new one in English. For example, as reported by some of our informants, *Economia pubblica* has been changed into *The Italian Journal of Public Economics*. Similarly, *The Italian Economic Journal* (ItEJ) has merged two well-established journals that used to bear an Italian title, i.e. the *Rivista Italiana degli Economisti* and the *Giornale degli Economisti*. In fact, the former also had an English title (namely *The Journal of the Italian Economic Association*) and has always published papers in both Italian and English. By checking the titles of papers available online (until 2014), the latest papers to be published in Italian appeared in

⁵ An extreme consequence of this would be diglossia, in other words "the division of functions between two languages, with one of them used as an official formal language while the other is an everyday vernacular" (Gunnarsson 2001: 312).

issue 2011/1 and they were all preceded by an abstract in English. In previous issues there is a mixture of papers written in Italian and English, with some instances of issues entirely published in Italian (e.g. the 2005/1 supplement, 2005/1, 2004/2, 2004/1).

It seems that the de facto language used for publication in these journals has always been English, at least over the last two decades. Against this background, it might sound unbelievable that, as mentioned by one of our informants, in previous years presenting papers in English used to be almost forbidden, or a sort of taboo, at the Italian Society of Economists. The Italian language is still used in publications written in a simpler form and directed to a wider audience, especially local policy makers, administrators, and the general public. An example is the online journal *lavoce.info* that presents itself as an alternative source of information to mainstream media.

As regards agricultural economics, our informant mentioned that two separate schools or associations have been created: on the one hand, there is the *Società degli economisti agrari italiani* (SIDEA), with a more traditional approach and many publications still written in Italian; on the other hand, there is another association, which is more Anglophone and has higher standards. Possibly, these two different approaches are reflected in the two outlets advertised on the SIDEA website, namely the *Rivista di economia agraria* (REA) and the *Agricultural and Food Economics* journal.

As mentioned earlier, in addition to scientific papers, chapters and so on, some other text types must be written in English regardless of one's language proficiency level. Such texts include course syllabuses (to be posted online), recommendation letters for students applying to other EMI programmes in Italy and abroad, abstracts in response to calls for papers, peer review reports, and research grant applications (especially EU funding schemes)⁶.

When having to write in English, our informants reported that they use monolingual dictionaries (20), bilingual dictionaries (12) and online resources (24). As for the latter, in particular, in addition to the online version of monolingual dictionaries, such as Merriam-Webster, Cambridge, Oxford, and Dictionary.com, many respondents mentioned multilingual tool *wordreference*, Google search engine (to check the presence of specific word strings, also in Google books) and Google translator (though some respondents are strongly against it). One respondent in fact uses Google translator to translate his texts from English into Italian, for example in the case of calls for research grants to be submitted both in English and Italian, as it is faster for him to revise the output into Italian (instead of typing the whole text again), and it is an alternative way to check the English source (if the translation into Italian sounds too weird, there must be something wrong with the English source text). Moreover, there are specialised dictionaries with a specific focus on certain disciplines (e.g., sociology) that are mentioned as extremely useful to avoid mistranslations of technical terms and expressions. Only one respondent (a linguist) mentioned the use of terminological databases (e.g. the EU's inter-institutional terminology database IATE). Besides spell checkers and other in-built linguistic support functions that are sometimes available with word processors, another tool reported by one informant is grammar checker *WhiteSmoke*, which is considered very useful especially for syntax control and sentence construction.

When it comes to spoken communication, the survey investigated the possible use of English to present research papers at conferences, seminars, and other similar communicative situations (besides teaching in EMI programmes). Only 8 respondents have never presented any papers in English (5 of them are among the informants with no publications written in English)

⁶ While having English as a working language for these applications offers a number of advantages, this factor is not in line with the principle of multilingualism so dear to (a part of) EU officials (Fox 2010: 24); see also Ammon (2006) and Phillipson (2008) for a critical discussion.

and 11 subjects used it the least in their conferencing experience. On the other hand, 21 respondents presented their papers in English most of the time while for 10 subjects English is the only language they used. Some informants specified that even for presentations held in Italian, the slides are now likely to be written in English.

Once again, there is variation depending, among other things, on disciplinary areas and academic tradition. However, according to some of our informants, there is a growing spread of spoken communication in English even at local, domestic events with an exclusively Italian audience. In these situations sometimes presentations may be given either in Italian, but with support materials (e.g. slides, handouts, etc.) written in English, or just in English as technical terms are mostly available and commonly used in this language.

In preparing a paper presentation, survey participants reported some strategies to improve their performance. For example, they check pronunciation of words in monolingual dictionaries or, in case of full sentences, they paste the text onto Google translator in order to take advantage of the “listen” function. This is also done by means of similar functions already available in computers such as Mac that are able to read written text with considerable accuracy. The use of slides (typically PowerPoint) is extremely common and it is also a way to ease one’s presentation flow. An additional strategy consists in having the paper read and recorded by a native or quasi-native speaker to practise pronunciation and delivery. However, this strategy was reported by 4 informants only (though a few more stated that they would consider this idea for future occasions). In fact, some respondents pointed out that they are not too worried about their (mis-)pronunciation, since most participants in scientific gatherings are non-native speakers and they mostly value the possibility to exchange ideas – it is actually native speakers that may be harder to understand (or have a hard time trying to understand the other participants).

The role of language mediation in spoken language is more significant in the area of services, which is presented in the following section.

3.4. Language mediation services

In addition to the language mediation skills of respondents themselves, the survey investigated the possible use of translation and interpreting services provided by third parties, be they professionals in the translation industry or just highly proficient in English. Translation services are related to written texts, whereas interpreting services are related to spoken language, with particular reference to paper presentations at conferences and teaching. Let us begin with translation services.

Only eight informants declared that they sometimes hired a professional translator when they needed to write a research item in English. In most cases, they resorted to professionals that are also known personally and for other professional reasons, which is why they are considered trustworthy at all levels. Translation services might also be used by subjects who would be able to write in English but need to have the text ready in a very short time (and are too busy to translate it themselves and meet the deadline). In the case of other text types, e.g. syllabuses to be published online or abstracts in response to calls for papers, the respondents with low competence usually ask for assistance to language instructors (native speakers) or other colleagues with higher proficiency from the same department. Surprisingly, some respondents pointed out that rather than translating from Italian into English, sometimes papers that have already been published in English are translated into Italian for greater dissemination (e.g. for educational purposes in Italian-taught programmes).

Rather than translation per se, proofreading is a much more required service, even by subjects who feel perfectly at ease with their language competence⁷. Depending on the funds available, different kinds of services may be utilised, ranging from professional editors (in the case of research outputs for top-ranked outlets) to native students and online (cheaper) proofreading services (e.g. *Academic Proofreading* was mentioned by some respondents in this respect, though at times the result was unsatisfactory). Furthermore, among alternative strategies respondents mentioned co-authorship with colleagues who are native speakers, or support from colleagues in the same research field who are better skilled in English writing even if they are non-native speakers. However, experts in the field are not always the best option as they may indeed be familiar with specific terminology but not at all with academic writing and the layout of papers or chapters.

Apparently, the two departments involved in this research project have drafted a sort of official list of professionals that can be hired for language mediation services. These include translation agencies, some of which have well-established business relations with university departments, online services (not always reliable) and in-house proofreading services offered by journals. The latter have been classed as expensive but reliable and highly professional. When hiring translators, also for proofreading tasks, many informants experienced a problem due to the translator's lack of acquaintance with economics or other subjects; thus they did not have sufficient command of the LSPs involved. In fact, during our interviews it was not always clear what kind of notion of *translator* respondents had in mind, as native language proficiency was generally assumed to be equal to translation competence from Italian into English. While many survey participants do have a strong command of LSP and their research field-related terminology, they need support to streamline syntax and to create sentences that do not rely excessively on their L1. A particular strategy was pointed out in this respect, i.e. writing (or devising) the sentence in simplified Italian first to favour the translation process.

All in all, a general attitude of mistrust towards translation service providers could be perceived during the interviews, and this was even stronger when addressing interpreting services. It must be clarified that according to our informants the use of interpreting services at scientific conferences is fairly rare. This would be due not only to financial limitations but also to the fact that academic conference participants in general share the same knowledge base, and this makes it easier to run communication in a single working language, i.e. English. Among survey participants, 21 subjects have never had the chance to present a paper at a conference in which an interpreting service was provided, whereas those who did (29) confirmed the exceptional nature of such occasions (and 17 preferred to speak in English anyway). On the other hand, 40 subjects stated that they had had the chance to attend interpreter-mediated conferences at least once in their academic experience, though 33 reported that they did not listen to the interpreter.

As mentioned earlier, it is now increasingly common to attend seminars and other local events that are held in English but with Italian native speakers only among presenters and the audience. Interpreting services were reported to be used for events open to the general public or involving local authorities. For example, at the time of the survey I had the chance to attend the inauguration ceremony of the 2014-2015 academic year at the *Collegio Carlo Alberto* Foundation. In this case a professional simultaneous interpreter had been hired. However, despite the presence of the interpreter, the three presenters indicated in the programme (all of them Italian native speakers) delivered their speeches in English. This is in line with the general attitude of most of our informants, who would prefer to give their paper presentations in English

⁷ As pointed out by Murphy (2013), editing skills are now crucial even for L2 learners.

should an interpreting service be available as outlined above. Despite this tendency to do without interpreting services even when these are provided, many informants admitted that they would welcome the assistance of an interpreter during debates, Q&A sessions, when listening to particularly difficult accents⁸, fast speech delivery, and in the case of high level events. Once again, the need to support one's argumentation skills prevails over terminological accuracy, which interpreters are actually found to be lacking in the opinion of some survey participants. Other reasons behind the tendency to speak English are personal satisfaction, academic prestige, and the fact that direct communication is generally preferred over mediated communication in terms of both delivery and reception.

3.4.1. Interpreter-mediated EMI?

One of the last open questions addressed to survey participants is about the use of interpreting services in EMI settings. Interviewees were asked to give their opinion on the possibility to involve professional interpreters in translating their lectures from Italian into English and whether this would be a viable solution to expand the number of EMI programmes. Table 8 below summarises the responses obtained in total, broken down by subjects with and without EMI experience:

	Respondents with EMI experience	Respondents without EMI experience	Total
YES	1	9	10
Y/N	7	2	9
NO	21	10	31

Table 8. Viability of interpreter-mediated instruction.

The majority of respondents believe that interpreter-mediated EMI is not a viable option. This negative response is particularly marked in the group of respondents with EMI experience. Apart from financial constraints, which were mentioned even by subjects in favour of this possibility, the main drawbacks reported by survey participants are linked to a general preference for direct communication, the assumed lack of expert (terminological) knowledge by interpreters, the fact that interpreters are perceived more as an obstacle, lack of trust towards interpreters, and technical difficulties. Frequently occurring epithets registered in these reactions include “impossible”, “unfeasible”, and “nonsense”.

Whereas this result might be expected, there are at least three arguments that could lead to reconsider the idea of pursuing interpreter-mediated EMI.

The first argument concerns the issue of domain loss, which was acknowledged by most survey participants regardless of their EMI experience status (see §3.2, Table 7). The anglicization of academia apparently has a negative impact on the retention and development of

⁸ Survey respondents display contrasting views in this respect, as for some interviewees native speakers are particularly challenging, while others find some non-native speakers more difficult to follow (e.g. native speakers of Asian languages). Albl-Mikasa (2010, 2013a) reports the opinion of professional conference interpreters, who complain about the extensive use of ELF at international conferences and the consequent constraints on both source text reception and target text production.

specific terminology in one's L1, to the point that some subjects admitted to experiencing difficulties when having to talk about their research field in Italian. Wouldn't greater emphasis on translation and interpreting skills be helpful to counter this problem? Furthermore, the expectations of respondents towards translation and interpreting service providers appear to be at odds with the contradictory stance the same respondents have with respect to their "expressability" (Albl-Mikasa 2013b). As illustrated above, survey participants feel competent in managing LSP but not so much in keeping style and rhetorical devices under control. Interpreters are thus seen as a solution to this dimension of communication. However, if one considers the Italian interpreting market, many interpreters are Italian native speakers and have English as an active working language (i.e. they can translate from and into that language)⁹. According to the definition of interpreters' working languages established by the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC), an active language "is more suited to interpretation of technical discussions where lexical accuracy is more important than style or very discrete shades of meaning" (AIIC 2004). Ironically, there seems to be a clear mismatch between users' expectations and professionals' prescriptions on working languages, in that lexical accuracy is the part of communication that respondents are seemingly able to manage more effectively than interpreters. Perhaps awareness-raising initiatives could help position potential service users and providers on a shared ground.

The second argument is linked to the use of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in EMI settings such as the one considered in this paper. To what extent is comprehension achieved by non-native students listening to non-native lecturers who are likely to rely heavily on their L1 when speaking in English¹⁰? Of course there can be an L1 "shared language benefit" (Albl-Mikasa 2013b: 105) as well as a number of strategies that favour mutual understanding among ELF speakers (Seidlhofer 2011; Jenkins 2014). However, EMI classes typically consist of a mixed audience with a variety of L1s, and it is highly probable that the same audience have learnt English according to a traditional native speaker standard, which is still prevalent in ELT and is the kind of objective many learners aspire to achieve (Groom 2012; Kuteeva 2014). Reithofer (2010, 2013) carried out an experimental study on audience comprehension involving 58 business students (German native speakers). Half of them were exposed to a marketing lecture delivered in English by a non-native professor, while the other group could follow the same lecture via simultaneous interpreting into German. At the end of the lecture, the students were asked to fill in a comprehension questionnaire (with a maximum score of 19 points). The result obtained in this study is quite revealing: "the group listening to the interpretation into their L1 understood the content significantly better than the group listening to the non-native original speaker, even though the subjects were highly proficient users of English with relevant subject-matter expertise" (Reithofer 2010: 152).

Finally, the third argument concerns the feasibility of interpreter-mediated teaching as such. Our respondents did not find this option really attractive, quite the opposite, and yet it is more common than one might expect in professional and academic settings alike. The former range from corporate events for professional development to refresher courses and professional training in a variety of industries, e.g. the beauty industry, particularly hairdressing, the motor industry, fashion and design. Turning to academic settings, in some countries there is a well-

⁹ Data retrieved on 5th June 2015 from the online directories of two Italian professional associations in the interpreting industry: in ASSOINTERPRETI, English as an active working language accounts for 59% of its members (i.e. 81 out of 138); in AITI, English as an active working language accounts for 68% of its members (i.e. 50 out of 73 simultaneous/consecutive interpreters).

¹⁰ The same issue is also relevant to ELF students attending EMI lectures imparted by native speakers, see e.g. Littlemore et al. (2012) on the use of metaphorical language.

established tradition of educational interpreting in favour of deaf students and lecturers (Knox 2006; also consider Gallaudet University in Washington D.C. as a paradigmatic example in the case of non-signing visitors), though further empirical research has been called for to measure the actual benefits of this service which is not always provided by adequately skilled interpreters (Marschark et al. 2005). When it comes to interpreting between spoken languages, some South African universities experimented academic interpreting as an alternative to parallel language teaching (Pienaar 2006) across different educational levels, from primary to higher education. Examples include the University of Stellenbosch (Berning 2014) and North West University (Scheppel 2011; Sennheiser 2013; Verhoef, Blaauw 2009). Obviously, in the South African context there are also strong historical and socio-political reasons behind the attempts made to offer alternative solutions to parallel language education, which would keep students separate into different groups depending on their language background (e.g. Afrikaans vs. English or other official languages). Thus language mediation, in the form of academic interpreting, is also used to promote multilingualism and foster mutual relations. In Italy, interpreter-mediated EMI is successfully performed in a particular setting, which actually involves both academic and professional communication. The *Istituto Mediterraneo per i Trapianti e Terapie ad Alta Specializzazione* (ISMETT, i.e. Mediterranean Institute for Transplantation and Advanced Specialized Therapies), based in Palermo (Sicily), relies on a team of in-house “multifunctional interpreters” (Favaron 2009: 439). These provide both translation and interpreting services in different situations, including “educational settings, i.e. during on-the-job training courses organized principally for ISMETT nursing staff” (*ibid.*). As demonstrated by Favaron (2009) in her analysis of a specific training session, the participants (trainers, trainees, and interpreters) display a cooperative attitude and interpreters are actively involved in the co-construction of meaning and in the co-production of the interaction.

4. Conclusions

Whatever the meaning of *internationalization* might be, in higher education it currently goes hand in hand with the provision of educational programmes entirely taught in English, the so-called English medium instruction (EMI), and the desire to increase the number of international students attending such programmes in countries where English is not the first language. In this paper, EMI has been discussed with a language mediation focus in mind, i.e. considering translation and interpreting. The aim is to open up the current debate on EMI and the anglicization process of universities, exploring the role of translation and interpreting skills and services in academic settings. In particular, the study analysed the responses provided by 50 academics who took part in a semi-structured interview-based survey carried out at the School of Management and Economics (University of Turin) in 2014. Selected items cover the following areas: language proficiency, EMI experience, language mediation skills, and language mediation services.

The spread of English as a language used in both teaching and research activities is raising controversial reactions. Universities’ internationalization policies are among the main drivers of this unprecedented diffusion, together with ever stronger pressure due to research quality assessment initiatives and funding allocation programmes. These processes appear to be largely top down, with consequent problems linked to the lack of resources and support to staff who may not have sufficient command of the language to cope with current requirements. A greater effort on the part of academic central authorities is called for in order to assure a comprehensive EMI setting which entails not only professors able to teach in English (thus counting on adequate support when needed) but also other communication channels (e.g. administrative staff and documents issued at different levels). Nevertheless, EMI is also perceived as an opportunity

to take on the challenge of pushing one's language competence to the next level, despite a general consensus on the real risk of L1 domain loss and the tremendous impact on domestic journals' editorial policies and setup.

The attitude of respondents towards translation and interpreting service providers reveals that there is a serious lack of awareness (from both sides) on how to best meet the needs of this particular group of language users. Similarly, translation skills are not (yet) so pervasive in the EMI discourse, whereas I contend that they can play a fundamental role in order to redress the epistemological balance and "ensure that all cultures are valorized for what they are, all languages will be respected and non-Anglophones can retain their native tongue as a tool for thinking, conceptualization and expression, no matter how well they can master Global English" (Chan 2014: 23).

As has been highlighted at the beginning of this work, the more international a university becomes, the smaller the number of languages used to communicate in its programmes. However, overcoming the paradox of internationalization is possible. In research publishing this can be achieved via translation. Making the same contribution available in different languages would enable researchers from different linguistic backgrounds to draw on a shared basis, without restricting their choice to the Anglophone tradition. The latter is being internationalized indeed, but with different levels of language proficiency. Language proficiency plays a key role insofar as one can really make the (communicative) difference, i.e. assuring that successful communication of complex notions and specialised fields of knowledge is achieved "in a sophisticated manner" (Chan 2014: 21). Surely ELF is a powerful communicative tool and a valuable group-building resource, and yet "it seems plausible that ELF speakers may appear successful when looked at from the point of view of (mutual) intelligibility, but are less so when looked at from the point of view of express-ability" (Albl-Mikasa 2013b: 119). That is why language mediation services offered by highly competent professionals may contribute to filling this gap even in EMI settings. Interpreter-mediated instruction is currently performed in several training and educational contexts, including universities. However bizarre this option may sound, increasing professors' and students' awareness of the potential of language mediation at least in terms of skills and practices is likely to result in a better understanding of internationalization while, at the same time, preserving the status of the languages and cultures involved in higher education.

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