

# Introduction

## EMI Stakeholders and Research in the Italian Context. Moving Towards ICLHE?

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### 1. Updates on EMI in the Italian Context

In 2010, the Gelmini Law (240/2010) was promulgated in Italy, partially reforming the Italian university system. This law increased the mobility of professors and students and called for more cooperation among universities regarding study and research and the initiation of degree programmes in a foreign language. The law thus represented, at least from a formal point of view, a certain openness toward mobility, cooperation, internationalisation as well as teaching in a foreign language, which in reality almost always translates into English. This push toward teaching in English (Macaro et al., 2018) was not actually an initiative of the Gelmini law: it was already under way throughout Europe thanks to the Bologna Process. The Bologna declaration was signed in 1999, after which many universities instituted English-Medium Instruction (EMI) courses as a top-down strategy to improve their international profiles and curricula (Kuteeva & Airey, 2014).

Internationalising curricula in higher education suggests the need for purposeful planning in syllabus design and delivery to reflect the diversity of learners and mobility of knowers and of knowledge in the twenty-first century (Smit & Dafouz, 2012). The central role language and culture play in the process of generating and disseminating knowledge, the core mission of universities, highlights the need for greater research into forms of integrating language and literacy training into disciplinary content for coherent internationalisation of academic curricula.

In Italy, EMI has given rise to a great internal debate that erupted when, in 2012, the Politecnico of Milan and the Academic Senate voted for Master's and PhD courses to be taught in English starting in 2014. At that point, a group of professors who did not want to adhere to that decision appealed to the Administrative Tribunal (TAR), an appeal they won in 2013, thanks only in part to an old Royal Decree, R.D. 1933, that established Italian as the language to be used in universities, but mostly because of principles of the Italian Constitution. The Politecnico, along with the MIUR, undertook an appeal, and in 2017 a decision by the Constitutional Court<sup>1</sup> upheld by the Council of State in January 2018, mandated parallel language use, a principle under which any educational programmes offered in English, or any other foreign language, must be offered to students in Italian.

In fact, the Italian Constitution protects all languages, even minority languages, and has very specific articles regarding freedom of teaching and autonomy of universities declaring that:

- A language represents a principle of equality (Art. 3 of the Constitution) even as regards education. Under article 34, the Italian Republic has to guarantee the highest levels of education to those who are capable, even if they should lack the financial means;
- Freedom of teaching should be guaranteed to teachers (under Article 33), in recognition of the fact teaching should be carried out by adopting various methods;
- The autonomy of the university is recognised and protected by Article 33.

The decision of the Council of State<sup>2</sup>, which draws on the decision of the Constitutional Law and was, in fact, based on the above mentioned and other constitutional principles, states: "these constitutional principles, 'if incompatible with the option that entire courses should be provided exclusively in a language different from Italian [...] certainly do not prevent the possibility for those Universities that see fit to do so, of coupling the supply of university

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1 <https://www.cortecostituzionale.it/actionSchedaPronuncia.do?anno=2017&numero=42>

2 <https://www.giustizia-amministrativa.it/portale/pages/istituzionale/ucm?id=6RRRYBGTYVS7DABC5SMNSYVZUQ&q>

courses in Italian with courses in a foreign language, especially in consideration of the specificity of certain scientific and disciplinary areas'. In view of this, 'a syllabus offer which provides for some courses to be held both in Italian and foreign languages' is certainly not against the aforementioned principles, 'nor does such an offer sacrifice such principles, given how it allows, at the same time, the pursuit of internationalisation'''.<sup>3</sup>

This very intricate legal case demonstrated that many questions regarding EMI in Italy remain unresolved. Fortunately, field studies addressing this matter are on the increase, which helps, or should help, in debunking false beliefs on both sides in order to advance the decisions taken at the institutional level.

This introduction will summarise the EMI/ICLHE studies carried out in Italy to date and will present an overview of the studies undertaken for this much-needed volume.

## 2. Studies in Italy

In this eventful context, there has been no lack of studies on the use of a foreign language for university courses. It should be noted, however, that these studies do not always use consistent terminology, oscillating mainly between two terms: EMI (English-Medium Instruction) and ICLHE (Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education), the latter sometimes referred to as CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) at the tertiary level. While the former in theory refers only to English and sees language only as a means or vehicle of instruction, ICLHE instead entails all languages and considers language itself as an objective of teaching/learning and not merely as a delivery system for content. The term CLIL is a synonym of ICLHE as both imply a counter-balanced approach to the integration of content and language. CLIL is used more often in primary and secondary education while ICLHE is used in the tertiary context. The two main terms used in reference to tertiary teaching in a foreign/additional language - EMI or ICLHE - in reality often overlap,

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<sup>3</sup> Translation by author.

and it is the actual experiences more than the nomenclature that underline the difference.

The studies in Italy have generally followed four thematic areas: institutional policies, lecturers, students, and outcomes. Policies have been mainly examined through surveys: Anderson (2019), Brogгинi and Costa (2017), Campagna (2017, 2015), Costa (2016), Pulcini (2015), Pulcini and Campagna (2015), Bendazzoli (2015), Santulli (2015), Campagna and Pulcini (2014), Costa and Coleman (2013), and the CRUI study (2012). All these studies show an increase in institutional policies even at the individual university level regarding courses delivered through English, with an increase from 74% to 85% from 2012 to 2017, including universities in the South, with a greater increase for private universities. Broggini and Costa (2017) replicated the 2012 study (Costa and Coleman, 2013) showing that the EMI context in Italy is changing. Universities have implemented EMI courses mainly to improve their international profile and attract foreign students. Among the major difficulties are limited cooperation among the teachers and the insufficient level of English among both Italian students and their teachers. Some of the other findings of the study are that EMI is more frequently found at the Master's and PhD levels, with the largest number of courses in economics and engineering; there has been an increase in the number of lecturers who volunteer to teach in the second language (L2) (from 26% to 38%); lecturers teaching in the L2 rely heavily on the use of PPTs (increase from 26% to 71%); and linguistic certification is more required for students enrolled in private than in public universities (67% for the latter compared to 86% for private universities). Although EMI courses have increased overall, Italian is still the most widely used language of instruction in Italian universities.

The second thematic area concerns lecturers. These studies were carried out mainly in the form of case studies, interviews, and questionnaires: Long (2018), Guarda and Helm (2016), Costa (2016, 2013), and Helm and Guarda (2015). The studies highlight a majority population of native-speaking Italian lecturers and show that they generally have a positive view of their EMI experience, though some problems emerge related mainly to the language (Bendazzoli 2015; Campagna, 2016; Pulcini and Campagna, 2015).

These problems include, for example, a more limited ability to improvise during the lesson and the lack of correct pronunciation. The studies on lecturers were discursive, taking the form of transcriptions: Costa and Mariotti (2020), Brogginì and Murphy (2017), Bowles (2017), Costa (2017, 2016, 2012a,b), Gotti (2015) and Molino (2017, 2015, 2018). They reveal that a slower pace is normally used when lessons are given in English and signal specific discourse patterns used during exams. They also highlight the use of input presentation strategies known as Q-DRESS along with some more creative practices by lecturers.

In general, EMI lecturers in Italy are non-native speakers (Costa, 2013), as is the case in other Southern European countries. Both Francomacaro (2011) and Bowles (2017) highlight that the argumentative function is a fundamental one for EMI lecturers. Unfortunately, it must be noted that the training of lecturers is still spotty in Italy (Long, 2017; Guarda and Helm, 2017). Even though there is a certain awareness on the part of many lecturers of the need to set a good linguistic example for their students (Costa, 2013; Mariotti, 2012), their teaching styles do not always match their teaching beliefs (Picciuolo and Johnson, 2020). There is also a certain unconscious attention to language, mainly as a focus on form (Costa, 2012a). In addition, some studies on EMI lectures have highlighted interaction even during traditional lectures (Veronesi, 2009), the use of paralinguistic and extralinguistic strategies (Costa, 2017; Costa and Mariotti, 2020), the use of defamiliarising categories, such as pre-emptive focus on form, (mainly typographical), input enhancement, codeswitching, humour (Costa, 2017), the use of interrogative discourse markers and repeats (Molino 2015, and 2017; Brogginì and Murphy (2018), and metadiscourse as strategies for teaching in a foreign language (FL).

The third area of general concern in studies to date is students' experience, which has mainly been investigated by surveying students through questionnaires: Doiz, Costa, Lasagabaster, Mariotti (2019), Ackerley (2017), Clark (2017), and Costa and Mariotti (2017). These studies generally show a positive assessment by students (Argondizzo and Laugier, 2004) regarding courses delivered in English, even though they are not sure these courses have led to improved language skills (Costa and Mariotti, 2020; Ricci Garotti, 2009,

for German). Ackerley (2017) and Clark (2017) investigated student perceptions through questionnaires that indicated fear on the part of students that they would not understand the lectures, although there was also significant interest in EMI courses. Clark (2017) and Costa and Mariotti (2020) have noted differences between international and local students in their attitudes toward instruction in a FL. Costa and Mariotti (2017b) surveyed 160 students to produce a language profile regarding interest in foreign languages, travels abroad, and whether formal language learning is viewed in a positive light. Student responses show they consider their listening and writing skills better than their ability to speak in English. Degano and Zuaro (2019) examined oral examinations in EMI with a focus on students' interactional patterns.

The last area of commonality concerns student outcomes and consists of studies carried out mainly through a statistical comparison of the results of students who do quantitative EMI (Costa and Mariotti, 2017a, 2017c). These studies show a difference between the marks obtained in subjects taught in English and those in Italian, especially at the Bachelor's level and with regard to scientific subjects, where there seems to be slightly lower marks for those enrolled in courses taught in English.

On the basis of this summary, the areas concerning all stakeholders engaged in tertiary learning in a FL have been well investigated. However, specific studies highlighting the actual outcomes (both linguistic and disciplinary) of students enrolled in degree courses taught in a FL would be desirable at this point to enable an analysis of the effectiveness of EMI in tertiary education in Italy.

### 3. Towards ICLHE/Multilingualism

It is also clear from the acronym that EMI views English as "the most cost- and hassle-free choice" (Coleman, 2013 XIV) at the tertiary level. House (2003) holds there is no threat to multilingualism, claiming that "co-languages function not against, but in conjunction with, local languages" (House, 2003:19). However, for many this choice to move towards EMI is dangerous and could lead to a domain loss of Italian in some areas of knowledge (see the case of the

Politecnico). Some Italianists even see EMI as a form of soft power and a threat to multilingualism. In fact, De Mauro emphasises that “we should do the same with English as we do as Europeanists: bring to it all the rich variety of cultures of meanings and images from different languages, without abandoning them, and incorporate into our languages the taste for conciseness and clarity that English has” (De Mauro, 2014:83). At present, Italian is clearly still the language most commonly used in university courses.

This book tries to take a positive view by focusing on the fact that Italy has always been a multilingual country (think of the different dialects in Italian or minority languages in the regions of Val d’Aosta and Trentino Alto Adige). At the University of Bolzano there is even a fully trilingual model of education, with courses offered in three languages (German, Italian, and English) across faculties and degree programmes; in the Faculty of Education, a fourth language, Ladin, a Romance language with official status in the Dolomite region, is also part of teacher education (see also Zanin, 2018). Therefore, the use of other languages can serve to complement English as the first foreign language in Italy, as long as the ‘political’ will exists to champion this.

Perhaps what is most alarming is that not enough attention is paid to language in tertiary teaching in FLs. Regardless of the language adopted, this aspect is not regarded as being of central importance. For this reason, it would be desirable to move towards a teaching approach closer to the concept of ICLHE in which, alongside the disciplinary course objectives, there are also some secondary linguistic goals. Moreover, ICLHE does not refer only to the English language, but could be applied to any language. As Wilkinson (2004) points out, when language teaching is reduced to a programme not incorporated into the teaching of the content, there is a risk the language will be considered as purely instrumental.

#### 4. Structure of the Volume

The papers in this volume examine the effectiveness of English Medium Instruction as part of the internationalisation strategy and engage with alterna-

tive content-and-language-integrated models that support meaningful international and intercultural learning. This book is divided into two sections: Part 1 – English Medium Instruction (EMI) in Italian Universities (first five articles) and Part 2 – Beyond EMI: Multilingual and Multicultural Approaches in Italian Universities (last five articles).

This volume includes ten articles, an introduction and a conclusion section, which contribute to the growing body of research on EMI, ICLHE and Internationalisation. It presents articles from a wide range of contexts (Ca' Foscari University of Venice, the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, The University of Trento, the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, the University of Padua, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore and many African Institutions), mainly in the north of Italy where most EMI courses take place (Costa and Coleman, 2013; Brogginì and Costa, 2017), and with very different methodological designs (questionnaires, focus groups, action research, classroom observation and video-stimulated recall).

The first chapter entitled “Innovative ESAP Syllabus Design: A Means to Address English-Language Problems in EMI Programmes” by Jemma Prior discusses process approaches to syllabus design of an English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) course for undergraduate Economics students at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano. The methodology used is a three-year action research involving both lecturers and students. The study led to the development of a new syllabus design revealing how inclusion is enhanced through a process-oriented approach. In this approach, learning aims and outcomes are collaboratively defined with students to maximize the effectiveness of EMI and empower diverse learners in the language classroom.

The second chapter entitled “Aligning Policy and Practice: Linguistic and Pedagogical Strategies for the EMI Classroom” by Emma Quick investigates teaching practices at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano by means of semi-structured interviews, classroom observation, and video-stimulated recall. The results show some areas of weakness in tertiary teaching such as lecturers’ linguistic competence, lack of cultural awareness and limited pedagogical knowledge, as well as areas of strengths, such as the alignment between classroom practice and language policy. The article addresses how best to sup-



port lecturers in developing communicative strategies and designing disciplinary content to favour a critical alignment of pedagogical principles with professional practices when internationalising curricula in a trilingual setting.

The third chapter entitled “Intercultural English as a Medium and Outcome of Instruction: The Case of the University of Trento, Italy” by Chiara Polli focuses on a survey sent to EMI lecturers in this university, conducted by the Interdisciplinary Laboratory for the Quality and Innovation of Didactics (LIQuID). The role of English in its various functions as EMI, ELF and ESP is thoroughly discussed in the paper.

The fourth chapter entitled “EMI Professional Development in Italy: An Assessment Focus” by Olivia Mair focuses on assessment in EMI and international class contexts. The aim is twofold: it presents the results of a lecturer survey on assessment in EMI and describes a professional development course focused on assessment issues. The results shed light on the underdeveloped issue of teacher cognition in assessment and provide ideas for activities to raise awareness on EMI lecturers’ assessment practices.

The fifth chapter entitled “Learners’ Views of EMI: Non-Native Speaker Teachers’ Competence and ELF in an Italian Master’s Degree Programme” by Marco Bagni explores students’ opinions of EMI and Internationalisation at home by means of semi-structured interviews. Results show an overall general satisfaction on the part of students, but at the same time highlight instances of uneasiness mostly towards NNS lecturers.

The second part of the volume begins with the sixth chapter entitled “The Intercultural Dimension and BELF in the English Course Curriculum of Business Schools: Proposal for an Integrated Model” by Elena Borsetto who investigates the role of the English language and of intercultural features in the EMI Business Schools Curriculum. To do so, a Business Intercultural Communicative Competence (BICC) model is proposed and suggestions regarding the effectiveness of the strategies employed and of intercultural aspects being dealt with are further discussed. The model is constructed around four interrelated dimensions: domain-specific business terminology, intercultural competence, competence in BELF, and business know-how.

The seventh chapter entitled “EMI and Translanguaging: Student Language Use in an Italian English-Taught Programme” by Fiona Dalziel investigates students’ use of translanguaging at the Department of Psychology at the University of Padua where EMI programmes are steadily growing. Data were collected by means of a student questionnaire and focus group discussions. Findings indicate overall that students seem to value translanguaging and see it as a gateway to the preservation of multilingualism.

The eighth chapter entitled “South Tyrol and the Challenge of Multilingual Higher Education” by Lynn Mastelotto and Renata Zanin focuses on the South Tyrol context and its educational policies, which swing from monolingual modes to plurilingual ones. The Free University of Bolzano has responded to this with a strong plurilingual education and support for higher education students. Its trilingual model – with German, Italian and English – make it a unique example in the Italian context. Both the entry and exit levels of students are assessed in all three languages of instruction and institutional policies have been put in place to support students in reaching the expected results. This is achieved by means of general language courses, language for specific purposes courses and by using an ICLHE approach to teaching. In particular, the Faculty of Education has developed the implementation of a multilingual curriculum which shows a bottom-up approach to multilingualism.

The ninth chapter entitled “CLIL: Internationalisation or Pedagogical Innovation?” by Federica Ricci Garotti focuses on CLIL implementation and its pedagogical dimensions in the Trentino region of Italy where a trilingual policy, “Trentino Trilingue” is in effect. The article, which presents the results of a very comprehensive study in schools in Trentino, shows how the CLIL school reform implemented in Trentino for both English L2 and German L2 is effective, especially because it starts at the primary school level. The chapter further outlines success factors (a judicious use of the L1, continuous teacher training, institutional support and official recognition of CLIL teachers’ efforts) that may contribute to positive results.

The tenth and final chapter entitled “Collaborating across Continents – The Challenges of Intercontinental Academic Partnerships” by Amanda Murphy investigates an innovative model of transnational education through the academic franchising of an international MBA on social entrepreneurship

in Africa, developed by the graduate business school ALTIS at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, a programme in which Italian and African academics collaboratively design and deliver curricula in English, Portuguese or French, specifically adapted for the local realities of seven African countries. This model of transnational education leads to an MBA or a certificate and is currently developed in Kenya, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Nigeria, and Mozambique.

The wide range of topics investigated in these works – transnational education, quality standards, pedagogical and epistemological issues, use of translanguaging, multilingualism, assessment, students' views and syllabus design – mirror the ongoing scientific interest in the connection between CLIL, ICLHE, EMI, and Internationalisation in/of higher education. The studies suggest that internationalisation in HE is more successfully realised when international and intercultural content is purposefully planned and integrated into disciplinary courses with contextualised learning aims and outcomes. Such curricula may extend beyond the home campus and formal learning contexts to include other intercultural/international learning opportunities within local communities or may involve the virtual mobility of learners and lecturers through technology-assisted programmes that facilitate engagement in collaborative learning communities and transnational networks of knowledge.

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**Part 1**

**English Medium Instruction (EMI)  
in Italian Universities**