

EMI and Translanguaging: Student Language Use in an Italian English-Taught Programme

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Abstract

Italian universities are striving to enhance their internationalization policies through the implementation of English-Medium Instruction (Costa & Coleman, 2013) and the University of Padova is no exception, with a total of 49 fully English-taught programmes (ETPs) now on offer. Yet this phenomenon is problematic, with ongoing concerns about guaranteeing quality (Beccaria, 2015; Wilkinson, 2013) and ensuring the role and status of the local language, in this case Italian, along with its academic culture (Motta, 2016; Phillipson, 2006). Yet many of the discussions around EMI in Italy fail to take account of its relationship with multilingualism, focusing instead on the implications of teaching and learning in a non-native language. This chapter will attempt to address this gap by looking at EMI in the context of the multilingual university and investigating the impact that this has on student language practices in the classroom. Studies have shown that, even if not officially encouraged, the practice of translanguaging may be adopted in EMI amongst student populations (see for example Goodman, 2017; Guarda forthcoming). Translanguaging in this context refers to “any practices that draw on an individual’s linguistics and semiotic repertoire” (Mazak 2017, p. 5), covering not only code-switching but also cases in which, for example, students speak their native language while writing texts in English.

The aim of this article is thus to explore the extent to which students make use of translanguaging during EMI classes, for example during class discussion or collaborative tasks, and their perceptions of their own language use. It will focus on one ETP at the University of Padova, a bachelor’s degree in Psychological Science, which was first introduced in the 2015–2016 academic year. To collect data, an online questionnaire was administered to two cohorts of students, receiving 66 answers, and a quantitative and qualitative thematic analysis was then conducted. Overall the students’ answers appear to indicate that the use of two or more languages can help

them in verbalizing their content knowledge and may thus enhance their learning process. At the same time, there was great sensitivity to the issue of inclusion, with students always careful that their language choices did not exclude any peers from the interaction. My analysis aims to uncover some of the motivations behind language choices, relating these to the concept of translanguaging agency. It will conclude by reflecting on how translanguaging in EMI relates to issues of diversity in multilingual university settings.

1. EMI and the Multilingual University

Monolingual ideologies have traditionally been prevalent in higher education institutions (Carroll & van den Hoven, 2017, p. 142; Mazak, 2017, p. 7). Exceptions are to be found in those areas traditionally characterised by bilingual populations or sizable language minorities, such as the University of Fribourg (Switzerland) or the University of the Basque Country. The Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, for example, is officially trilingual (German, Italian and English) and also offers some courses in Ladin. Much has been written about the increasing superdiversity of society as a result of increased globalization and migration flows, leading to the ever developing phenomenon of multilingualism, which according to Blommaert (2010, p. 102) “should not be seen as a collection of ‘languages’ that a speaker controls, but rather as a complex of *specific* semiotic resources” and which, as King and Carson argue, is “a resource to be cultivated” (2016, p. 11). This process has been mirrored in university settings where the drive towards internationalisation has led not only to rising student mobility within projects such as the ever popular Erasmus Programme, but also to universities going to great lengths to attract international students to enrol on their undergraduate and post-graduate degree programmes. The result is the appearance of the multilingual and multicultural learning space where “students and teachers represent diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, but have to operate within given academic cultures of the HIE in question” (Lauridsen & Lillemose 2015, p. 16).

In the non-English speaking world, it is this process which has given rise to the exponential growth of EMI, as the use of English (or in some cases,

other languages) as an academic Lingua Franca has made it possible for universities to host international students with insufficient competence to study on courses in the local language. However, there are I feel a number of elements which have led to a certain neglect of the relationship between EMI and multilingualism. One is the perseverance of English-only policies, in which use of the local language (or other languages) is avoided or even actively discouraged (Goodman, 2017; Carroll & van den Hoven, 2017). This may be related to the desire to ensure the inclusion of international students, but also to enhance the language proficiency of both home and international students. After all, it should not be forgotten that amongst the many factors inducing students to choose an EMI course is that of improving their language skills in the hope that this may give a boost to their career prospects in the global market (Macaro, 2018; Wilkinson, 2013). In the Italian context, although figures vary according to the degree course chosen, the vast majority of EMI students are Italian, and have specifically chosen to study in English rather than in their native language (Guarda, forthcoming).

Cenoz and Gorter (2015, p. 2) define multilingual education as “the use of two or more languages in education, provided that schools aim at multilingualism and multiliteracy”. Yet even though EMI by its very name implies teaching through just one language, it always takes place in a multilingual setting, as the overwhelming majority of participants (both teachers and students) are not native speakers of English, but speakers of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), and all of them bring to the learning environment knowledge of and competence in at least one, of not more other languages. Yet rather than exploiting this resource, “English-medium colleges and universities often adopt blinkered and atomistic approaches to the linguistic diversity in their midst” (Preece & Martin, 2010, p. 3). One of the widely-discussed issues in EMI is whether students learning is in any way impeded by the fact that it takes place on a non-native language. It is also, however, necessary to understand 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 learning takes place exclusively in English. As one EMI student explains:

For example, when I study, since all the material we have is in English I can understand that I really got what I'm studying and I'm able to interpret it and to focus on it when I can speak about it even in Italian¹.

In the 2017–2018 academic year I began teaching a course in Academic English for the students studying on the University of Padova's first ever ETP at undergraduate level, Psychological Science. Unlike many other ETPs, the programme developers had decided right from the start that the degree course would include one compulsory English language exam, graded on a pass/fail basis. The final assessment involved the writing of an academic essay, but the course itself, to meet student needs, also included a focus on academic speaking skills. In line with my own teaching beliefs, the aim was to increase student autonomy and foster collaboration in the classroom. For this reason, I proposed a large amount of task-based learning involving collaborative writing (some of which took place in the computer lab). As, apart from this course, all my university teaching takes place on degree courses for students majoring in foreign languages, I was curious to listen to and observe the students' language use while carrying out tasks. I was immediately struck by the fact that many of the groups used Italian, or a combination of Italian and English in their discussions, for example while producing written work in English. These exchanges represented complex examples of hybrid language use involving ELF along with other local (and non-local) languages. This observation led me to the investigation that will be presented and discussed in sections 5 and 6. The lens through which I will analyse student language use will be that of "translanguaging", which will be the focus of the next section.

2. Translanguaging

This section will provide a brief explanation of the term "translanguaging", which I have used frame the students' observations about their language use in EMI classes. First of all, it is important to stress that, as Mazak (2017) reminds us, translanguaging is "an evolving term" and as such, it is hard to take

1 Private conversation.

apply one fixed definition to any study of this phenomenon. Rather, ongoing research into this phenomenon is continually adding to our understanding of it. In the literature it is common to find references to the original use of the term with regard to a pedagogic approach in bilingual education envisaging the “systematic use of two languages within the same lesson” (Baker, 2011, p. 288), for example by reading a text in one language and discussing it in another. Its advocates argue that translanguaging can have a beneficial effect on both the learning of content knowledge and language/literacy, as it “maximises both linguistic and cognitive resources, and helps achievement and progress” (Baker, 2011, p. 229), mirroring the natural tendency amongst bilinguals to resort to both languages in acquiring content knowledge.

This understanding of translanguaging as a pedagogical tool was subsequently expanded and developed to encompass “the complex and fluid language practices of bilinguals” (García & Lin, 2016, p. 118); in other words, its concern is with how bilingual speakers use their languages “to make sense of their multilingual worlds” (García, 2009, p. 140). As translanguaging involves the use of two (or more) languages in interaction, its relationship to the concept of code-switching has been widely discussed (see for example García & Lin, 2016; Jonsson 2017; Otheguy, García & Reid, 2015). The basic difference lies in the conceptualisation of the bilingual speaker’s languages: these are not viewed as separate entities, but rather as a whole, or an integrated system or repertoire. The latter may be related to Blommaert’s idea of repertoires as “the complexes of resources people actually possess and deploy” (2010, p. 102). Thus, when multilinguals interact, they do not simply shift or “switch” between languages, but they draw on their entire repertoire to “make meaning, transmit information, and perform identities” (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 109). As Li Wei (2018, p. 23) reminds us: “Translanguaging is not simply going between different linguistic structures, cognitive and semiotic systems and modalities, but going beyond them.”

Some additional remarks need to be made on translanguaging, which are relevant to my findings and analysis. First of all, translanguaging places emphasis firmly on the speaker: scholars are not so much interested in *what* language is used, but in the choices multilingual speakers make as they draw on their resources, in other words, in their language practices. It is embedded

in the notion of “flexible bilingualism” (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 109), “a view of language as a social resource without clear boundaries, which places the speaker at the heart of the interaction” (Blackledge & Creese, 2013, p. 128). Moreover, it is not limited to utterances in which a mix of languages occurs, but rather takes into account all those communicative events involving the use of more than one language. For this reason, an exchange in a trade union office, where an employee and client look together at a document in Italian and discuss its implications in English could be considered an instance of translanguaging. Finally, as mentioned above, there are number of reasons why translanguaging may not be encouraged in EMI, and yet recent research has shown that even if not adopted as a pedagogical practice, it occurs both in lecturer/student and student/student interaction (see for example Dalziel and Guarda forthcoming). In recent years there has been increasing interest in translanguaging in higher education in general (Mazak & Carroll, 2017) and specifically in EMI (Paulsrud, Tian & Toth, forthcoming). The study presented below, albeit small-scale and related to one specific ETP, hopes to add to this growing body of research.

3. Context and Methodology

Since the introduction of English-Medium Instruction in the 2009-2010 academic year, the number of ETPs available at the University of Padova has risen rapidly. In the 2020-2021 academic year it offered two first-cycle degree programmes (Animal Care and Psychological Science), one single-cycle programme (Medicine and Surgery) and 25 second-cycle programmes². Following in the footsteps of the School of Psychology’s second-cycle ETP Cognitive Neuroscience and Clinical Neuropsychology, the first-cycle Psychological Science was launched by the in the 2015/2016 academic year. It is described as follows:

² Information available at: <https://www.unipd.it/en/english-degrees> (last accessed August 2020).

An international course of study held entirely in English that offers students the basic knowledge related to the main areas of psychology including, general, social, and dynamic as well as methods of scientific investigation. Students who want to study in an international environment, or if you are a foreign student who wants to train at the University of Padua, you will benefit from a network of strategic partnerships between institutions in the training sector that offer a valid based training path towards the international job market. Students will be able to pursue professional activities within public and private structures in the areas of psychometric, psychosocial and development assessment, in educational institutions, in companies and in third sector organizations, as well as in the management of human resources³.

It is worth noting that both the first and the present director of the degree programme had previously attended the EMI support courses provided by the University Language Centre (CLA) as part of its LEAP project (Ackerley, Guarda & Helm, 2017) and the CLA was directly involved in curriculum decisions regarding the English language. It was decided that two English courses would be incorporated into the curriculum, Basic English in Psychology (6 credits – optional first-year course) and Academic English (5 credits – compulsory third-year course). Academic English is a 36-hour course, running in the first semester, with lessons divided between the classroom and the computer lab. It is attended by 35–40 students, around 30% of whom are international students.

The two identical online questionnaires on which this study is based were completed by two cohorts of students, one attending the course in the 2018–2019 academic year (34 responses) and the other in the 2019–2020 academic year (32 responses). The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions, of which the first asked respondents to state their native language(s), and the remaining nine questions were related to spoken language use in student-student interaction during EMI classes, in other words during pair work or group work discussions. Of the 34 students who completed the first questionnaire,

³ Information available at: <https://www.unipd.it/en/educational-offer/first-cycle-degrees/school-of-psychology?tipo=L&scuola=PS&ordinamento=2015&key=PS2192> (last accessed August 2020).

26 of declared that they were native speakers of Italian, there were 3 English-Italian bilinguals, and of the remaining students there was one native speaker each of Hungarian, Polish, Serbian/Croatian, Spanish and Turkish. Of the 32 students who completed the second questionnaire, 22 were native speakers of Italian, 2 were native speakers of Turkish, 3 described themselves as bilinguals (one each of Italian-French, Spanish-English and Twi-English) and there was one native speaker each of Arabic, English, German, Indonesian, Persian and Portuguese. A quantitative analysis was conducted on seven of the questions, while the remaining two (the open question and a question where the "Other" option produced a wide range of answers) were investigated by means of a thematic analysis.

4. Findings and Analysis

As regards Question 2, "If you have to do pair work, group work or have discussions with other students during your university classes, which language(s) do you speak?", the results varied between the two cohorts. Therefore, in the table below, I have decided to show the results of the two cohorts both separately and combined.

Table 1 – Answers to Question 2: If you have to do pair work, group work or have discussions with other students during your university classes, which language(s) do you speak?

Choice	Cohort 1 (34 responses)	Cohort 2 (32 responses)	Cohorts 1 + 2 (66 responses)
Always English	4 (11.8%)	10 (31.3%)	14 (21.2%)
Always Italian	0	0	0
Sometimes only English and sometimes only Italian, depending on the task or situation	18 (52.9%)	10 (31.3%)	28 (42.4%)
A mix of English and Italian	10 (29.4%)	11 (34.4%)	21 (31.8%)
Other	2 (5.8%)	1 (3.1%)	3 (4.5%)

It is however necessary to see how the answers corresponded to the students' native languages. In the first cohort, of the four students who replied "Always English", three were international students, while in the second cohort, 9 of the respondents who only use English in class discussions were international students. In other words, in each cohort, only one native speaker of Italian answered "Always English". As mentioned above, since the lessons and materials were in English, I have considered using only Italian in class discussions as a form of translanguaging, as well as using a mix of languages. Thus overall, one can see from these answers that the majority of Italian students in these two classes do resort to some kind of translanguaging during student-student class interaction. Of those who chose the option "Other", one student answered "a mix and depending of the situation", while the comments below introduce the idea of inclusion and interlocutor sensitivity, which will be dealt with below. The second comment also appears to reflect the notion that "languages do not fit into clear bounded entities" (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 112):

Italian if only Italian people are present, English if there are no native speaker. And when I talk in Italian if the task has to be in English I talk a mix of them

Sometimes only English and sometimes only Italian, depending on the nationality of who I'm talking with. *the "Italian" I come to use is some comfy mix with english though

In the light of the answers above, which bring to the fore the students' flexible language use, it is interesting to see that this is not always in line with their beliefs about how they ought to behave. When answering Question 3, "Do you think that students studying in English should use English all the time in class?" in both cohorts, most of the students answered "Yes" (58.8% and 59.4%) rather than "Not always, it depends on the situation". In other words, they do not seem to acknowledge their own language practices as being the right ones.

A recurrent concern is that of not excluding international students from the dialogue, which emerged in particular from the answers to Question 4 "What are your reasons for speaking English during group work discussions? You can choose more than one answer". Combining the answers of the two cohorts, the fact that "Some members of the group have difficulties with Italian" was a motivation for 55 of the 66 respondents. The other answers chosen were that using English is easier (42), they want to practice their English (25) and that their professors wish them to use English (8). The issue of English language practice relates to the students' reason for choosing an EMI course, as mentioned above, and the extent to which they perceive the ETP as an instance of CLIL, rather than simply a means to acquire content knowledge (for a discussion of the relationship between CLIL and EMI see Macaro, 2018, p. 15–43). The desire to "practice" English may relate both to proficiency in the language and to other opportunities students have to engage in ELF interaction outside class. A recent study revealed that international students enrolled on psychological Science were less interested in receiving extra language support than home students (Brian, 2020).

The issues of inclusion and interlocutor sensitivity also appeared in motivations added under the heading "Other":

There are international students, plus we should try to speak English rather than Italian anyway

Some people are not Italian they might not understand Italian. We should speak in a language everybody understands, so English is the answer

I think it's impolite to use a language only some people in the class can understand

The answers reveal that in the EMI classroom, students spontaneously set the rules for interaction on the basis of the language repertoire of their peers: as there may be some international students with low proficiency in the local language, the latter is avoided so as to ensure understanding and to make international students feel that they belong to this international community of students. It should be underlined that the students' concern with inclusion is entirely in line with the conceptualization of translanguaging in bilingual education, which highlights its inclusive nature. As Rubinstein (2020, p. 247) writes:

The prefix "trans" in translanguaging refers not only to creatively and critically transgressing social boundaries between languages and with other semiotic systems, but also to deliberately advocating for transformation towards more inclusive and socially just educational approaches that promote more and better opportunities for students.

In response to Question 5, "What are your reasons for speaking Italian (or another language) during group work discussions?", of the choices provided, the most popular was "It comes more naturally" (35 responses), followed by "It's easier" (31), "Our professors allow us" (5) and finally "I get tired of speaking English all the time" (2). However, 20 students offered additional answers to this question. Two of these were eliminated from the analysis as they contained general reflections rather than answers to the given questions. Of the remaining 12, the most common emerging theme is one which I have labelled Facilitating Communication (with 10 manifestations), which includes filling lexical gaps, avoiding misunderstanding and ease of expression. Some examples are provided to illustrate these points:

Most students are Italian. Speaking Italian *speeds up the discussion and reduces the possibility of miscommunication* (my italics)

When there are difficulties in *expressing some words or concepts in english* with other italians it's better to use Italian (my italics)

Speaking in English is a bit more draining, and it takes some slight "warm up" to feel natural. But that's really no big deal. It's just that with nothing forcing you otherwise, you always tend to choose the path with the least resistance. And between "italian w/ english words fallback" and "just english" of course the former wins

If I have to explain something again to an *Italian friend who didn't understand*, I'm probably going to do that in Italian as I tend to talk faster and *he or she is probably going to understand me better* (my italics)

Another theme appearing in three responses, in connection with Facilitating Communication, is that of Helping Peers, as can be seen in the following examples:

If all the members of the group are Italian it is easier to explain or discuss something specific in Italian rather than English and/or *some students may have some difficulties with English* for some topics of the discussion (my italics)

If I have to explain something again to an *Italian friend who didn't understand*, I'm probably going to do that in Italian as I tend to talk faster and *he or she is probably going to understand me better* (my italics)

The two themes Facilitating Communication and Helping Peers point to the collaborative nature of translanguaging (Moore, Bradley & Simpson, 2020) and its role in facilitating the acquisition of content knowledge (Dalziel & Guarda, forthcoming). This is of utmost importance given the criticisms that EMI cannot guarantee the acquisition of academic knowledge in the same way as study in one's native language (Beccaria, 2015; Motta, 2016; Wilkinson, 2013).

Two of the international students also mention using their native languages (German and Persian), signalling the Establishment of Other Linguistic Communities within the EMI context, as this example illustrates: “If my group members are Iranian we can have a bit of privacy in our own language”. On a different note, one international student mentions Improving Language Competence as a reason for speaking Italian. Here it is worth mentioning that the use of Italian in the EMI classroom gives international students the chance to practise the local language, which they may wish to acquire during their three-year stay in Italy. This is related to Baker’s claim that translanguaging “may help students develop oral communication and literacy in their weaker language” (2011, p. 290).

Finally, three answers have been labelled as Attitude, as they regard both the emotive implications of speaking English in an all-Italian group and the idea of target language use authenticity. The three comments are reported below:

I find it really awkward to speak English in a group of native Italian speakers only.

It might be embarrassing to speak English in a group of Italian people.

It makes me uncomfortable to speak English to someone who wants to speak Italian.

I feel like I’m showing off when they want to keep it simple.

EFL teachers are used to hearing students in a monolingual ELF setting making comments such as these, and are familiar with some groups sticking assiduously to the target language, whilst others shift into their native tongue. It is beyond the scope of this article to explore the role of the L1 in language learning, suffice it to say that in an EMI setting, where the ultimate goal is the acquisition of content knowledge, such an attitude can easily be understood. As in the EFL classroom, there may be a conflict between this “awkwardness” and the desire to practise the target language. The final answer above adds another dimension to the discourse. When teaching the Academic English course, I became aware of a great amount of peer pressure, perhaps due to the selective nature of the course (the limited number of places on the course make entry highly competitive). For example, after a module on academic speaking skills culminating in giving a 3-minute presentation, a number of students specifically asked to give

their presentation in private rather than in class in front of their peers. In the comment, the student appears to be aware of such a situation and very keen not to cause any uneasiness on the part of his/her peers.

The following four questions of the Questionnaire specifically regard the mixing of languages. The two tables below show the answers to Question 6, “If you are having a discussion in class in English, how often do you use words in Italian (or another language)?” and Question 8 “If you are having a discussion in class in Italian, how often do you use some words in English (or another language)”.

Table 2 – Answers to Question 6: If you are having a discussion in class in English, how often do you use words in Italian (or another language)?

Choice	Cohort 1 (34 responses)	Cohort 2 (32 responses)	Cohorts 1 + 2 (66 responses)
Frequently	0	0	0
Occasionally	5 (14.7%)	2 (6.3%)	7 (10.6%)
Rarely	20 (58.8%)	14 (43.8%)	34 (51.5%)
Never	9 (26.5%)	16 (50%)	25 (37.9%)

Table 3 – Answers to Question 8: If you are having a discussion in class in Italian, how often do you use words in English (or another language)?

Choice	Cohort 1 (34 responses)	Cohort 2 (30 responses)	Cohorts 1 + 2 (64 responses)
Frequently	11 (32.4%)	9 (30%)	20 (31.3%)
Occasionally	10 (29.4%)	5 (16.7%)	15 (23.4%)
Rarely	8 (23.5%)	9 (30%)	17 (26.6%)
Never	5 (14.7%)	7 (23.3%)	12 (18.8%)

The table below summarises the reasons for the participants' choices, combining the answers of both cohorts.

Table 4 – Summary of answers to Questions 7 and 9

7. If you are speaking in English, when do you use words in Italian (or another language)?		9. If you are speaking in Italian, when do you use English words?	
When I don't know the English word	33 respondents	When I don't know the Italian word	28 respondents
When the word in Italian (or another language) expresses the concept better	29 respondents	When the English word expresses the concept better	48 respondents
When the concept relates to the Italian (or other) context	23 respondents	When the concept relates to an English-speaking context	39 respondents
I never use any words in Italian (or another language)	15 respondents	I never use any English words	3 respondents

First of all, the answers reveal the advantages of being in a multilingual context, in which lexical gaps can be filled when required. It is not surprising that when speaking Italian, the students tend to use English words to better express a concept or because they relate to an English-speaking context. As they constantly encounter scientific terminology related to their field in English, in some cases they may not even be familiar with the Italian terms. Interestingly, the same is also true, but to a lesser extent, of the use of Italian. Despite studying in English on an international course of study, references to the Italian context are inevitable. The following additional comment offered by one student explains this point very well, but also reveals the vitality and creativity of the meaning-making multilinguals can achieve thanks to translanguaging:

When the Italian word has the *precise meaning* par excellence (omertà, chiaro-scuro, vaporetto). Otherwise (when an English equivalent doesn't come to my mind) I'd rather try to describe the term's meaning in whatever convoluted unorthodox way I can manage to pull out.

Further insights were gleaned by means of the final open question asking: "If you mix/alternate between English and Italian, what determines your language choice?", answered by 27 students in the first cohort and 27 in the second. All these answers were analysed qualitatively and the following themes were identified:

1. Interlocutor Sensitivity
2. Power of Expression
3. Language Competence and Performance
4. Present State

One of the keywords in the answers was "context", immediately indexing the flexibility and hybridity of language use in EMI classes, and contradicting the idea of these settings representing an "English-only" environment. The respondents' awareness of how the context determines their language choices is an indication not only of the complexity of the multilingual classroom, but also of their agency in the language work going on there. As in Toth and Paulstrud's study of translanguaging in Swedish schools (2017, p. 203), such agency may appear even when flexible language use is not actively encouraged by school language policy. In the case of the University of Padova, there are as yet no official guidelines for classroom language use, although a language policy document is at present being developed.

The first theme identified was that of Interlocutor Sensitivity: students noted that their language use choices were influenced to a great extent by the language background of the peer they were talking to:

I take into account if the person to which I'm speaking knows or not English/Italian

The people I'm talking to (if they're only Italians then I will speak Italian, but even if only one English speaker is present I switch to English)

This is an important consideration as it highlights awareness of the fact that translanguaging should ideally represent an inclusive practice, as mentioned above.

Yet, as long as one was not excluding anyone from the interaction, the use of more than one language appears to enhance the Power of Expression, making it possible to have the best of both worlds. As two respondents note:

the effectiveness of some linguistic structures themselves: some words, to me, represent their meaning more effectively in English, some others in Italian

Sometimes it depends on what I am trying to say. For example sometimes I use the expression "virtue signalling" while speaking Italian [...] I use this English expression because there is no Italian word or expression that captures and describes this kind of behavior

Another theme emerging from the respondents' descriptions of the factors influencing language choice is Language Competence and Performance. I have chosen this term since the students mention both lexical knowledge and spontaneous language use:

Depending on whether the person(s) I'm talking to are more comfortable with English or Italian, and *whether my original knowledge of the topic is principally in one language* (my italics)

a word doesn't occur to me in one language so I either use its equivalent in the other language or switch entirely the language of the conversation

Another factor that affects my language choice is the content of the discourse. If I need to talk about things related to a topic that I've recently studied in English, then it will be more likely for me to use the English language

Finally, I coded two replies with the theme Present State, as they show that EMI students' language use varies not only on the basis of context and interactants, but simply how they are feeling that day, for example:

when I'm really tired, I have difficulties alternating between languages, so the language in which we started the conversation will come more naturally

Overall I would argue that the Questionnaire findings shed light on the fact that multilingual speakers have choices at their disposal, and that their agency and sensitivity allows them to draw on their linguistic repertoires in accordance with their own pedagogical and communicative needs and those of their interlocutors.

5. Conclusions

In his discussion of translanguaging, Macaro (2018, p. 8) questions the use of translanguaging in EMI as he argues that it would be hard to “arrive at a principled system of using two languages to teach”. Yet even without the introduction of translanguaging as pedagogy, the EMI lecturer is most likely to encounter flexible language practices on the part of students, which I feel should be accepted and acknowledged, rather than discouraged. First of all, even without giving precise guidelines, as this small study has shown, EMI students appear to be capable of being responsible and sensitive agents in their dynamic language practices. Their translanguaging agency means that they can adapt their language use so as to enhance their content learning, whilst ensuring the inclusion of all participants in the communicative event, for example international students with low competence in the local language. While “the teaching and learning of content is brokered through complex, bi- and multidirectional exchanges” (Carroll & van den Hoven, 2017, p. 142), participants appear to be aware that translanguaging “is a communication strategy for involving others” (Creese, 2017, p. 8).

For the students studying Psychological Science, as with any ETP, the ultimate aim is the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge and competence in order for them to further their undergraduate studies or enter the world of work. Their language competence must necessarily be of a level to ensure adequate content learning, but their engagement in their language learning will vary. For example, there may be students whose competence in English is of

a high enough level at the start of their university careers for them to focus solely on academic content. There will also be those who view their chosen university degree course as a CLIL experience, keen to achieve greater mastery of the English language. Yet even if they wish to “learn” the language, in the everyday interactions in the EMI classroom all students are language users, who rather than “struggling to use language in order to participate in specific speech communities” (Helm 2018: 24), are already using English in their own speech community with its own features and norms of use. To conclude, internationalization is leading to the transformation of university education, allowing students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds to come into contact. In the world today, cultural diversity goes hand in hand with multilingualism, which is seen as a rich and vital resource. It may therefore be considered desirable for universities to give EMI students not only the chance to practice English but to practice translanguaging and to gain enhanced awareness of inclusive multilingual practices, which could also be a valuable skill for the 21st century.

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