"Improvisation is not allowed in a second language": a survey of Italian lecturers' concerns about teaching their subjects through English

Francesca Helm[1]

Marta Guarda[2]

Abstract

English Medium Instruction (EMI) is increasingly being introduced across European universities in countries where English is not a commonly-used language, such as Italy and other central and southern European countries. However the competences and concerns of the lecturers involved are not always considered when such developments are introduced and support or training may not be offered. This paper reports on a survey on English-Medium Instruction (EMI) to which 115 lecturers in a public university in northern Italy responded. The survey was carried out by the university's Language Centre as part of the LEAP (Learning English for Academic Purposes) Project which was developed to support lecturers in EMI. The survey sought to identify what the lecturers perceived as their strengths and weakness in English, their concerns and also their evaluations of the experience of teaching through English if they had had any. The findings discussed in this paper shed light on the needs of lecturers that are involved in EMI, which relate to methodology as well as language issues. The implications of this for European Language Centres intending to support EMI at their universities are discussed in the conclusions.

Keywords: English-Medium Instruction; internationalisation; higher education; needs analysis; academic staff training.

Introduction

University lecturers are key players in the internationalisation of higher education institutions and, as van der Werf (2012) has pointed out, they have to take on new tasks which require a

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[1] University of Padova – francesca.helm@unipd.it

[2] University of Padova – marta.guarda@unipd.it

series of different competences. For lecturers in non-English speaking countries, particularly in areas where English is not commonly used such as many central and southern European countries, one of the most onerous tasks is teaching their subject through the medium of English (EMI). This paper reports on a survey to which 115 lecturers in a public university in northern Italy responded. Before discussing the findings, the paper provides a brief introduction to EMI and looks at the way English has been introduced into the Italian higher education system and at the University of Padova in particular.

Most studies on EMI have been carried out on universities which have a longer history of teaching through English, and which are located in countries where English is a more 'integrated' foreign language (eg Harder, 2009, in Denmark; Mauranen, 2006 in Finland; Söderlundh, 2013 in Sweden; Wilkinson, 2013, in the Netherlands). The Italian context is quite different, as English has only recently begun to be taught throughout primary and secondary education, and it is not commonly used outside of school (European Commission, 2012). The current paper aims to look at the needs of EMI lecturers in a single, large Italian public university, thus responding to the claim that "every institution should carry out its own research, which ideally will lay the foundations of the most appropriate language policy for them" (Doiz *et al.*, 2013: 219). After describing the context of this study, the paper discusses the main findings of the survey which sought to identify what the lecturers perceived as their strengths and weakness in English, their concerns and also their evaluations of the experience of teaching through English if they had had any, as well as their expectations about training for English Medium Instruction.

English-Medium Instruction

The issue of introducing courses taught through English in European universities is complex and requires careful consideration and analysis, particularly in contexts where English is not the medium of instruction or even a commonly used language. In contrast to CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) and ICLHE (Integrating Language and Content in Higher Education), which reflect a "dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language" (Coyle *et al.,* 2010: 1), English Medium Instruction (EMI) principally aims at teaching subject content by adopting a specific vehicle, namely English. EMI thus carries stronger pedagogic and ideological underpinnings, since the choice of delivering content through English gives increasing importance to the language in different sectors of knowledge production and

dissemination. Coleman remarks in his foreword to Doiz and Lagasabaster's 2013 volume, that EMI is "more than a subset of CLIL" (2013: xiv): the increasing social and intellectual status that is associated with English has strongly influenced policy makers and has made it "the inevitable preference in the specific and influential domain of academe" (ibid). Phillipson (2006; forthcoming) contests the inevitability suggested by Coleman, observing that EMI courses are still a minority in many European universities. Though the risk of linguistic imperialism is real, as Phillipson has documented through much of his career, it is not inevitable, and can be countered through the promotion of multi/plurilingual education policies, as some northern European universities have done, offering a "productive balance" between the local language and English. In these contexts, Philippson argues (2006; forthcoming), EMI becomes an opportunity since it provides university students and researchers with academic competences in both the national and in international languages, thus broadening the value of a university's educational offer that responds to local and international needs. What is needed, however, is the awareness of the driving forces behind English and to have language policy at national and supernational levels.

In European higher education, the choice of offering programmes and courses through English has mostly been driven by economic forces. Wilkinson (2013: 3) affirms that the growing interest for EMI in recent years has been accelerated by the advent of ranking organizations, which have "generated an atmosphere of competitiveness between institutions". Trying to emulate the world's top universities that are located in the USA and in the UK, an increasing number of institutions in Europe and Asia have adopted English as the vehicle for instruction. In this way, they hope to attract more and better students and lecturers both from within and from outside the country, and thus gain visibility at the international level. From this description it appears clear that Englishising the curriculum is often the result of a top-down approach. According to Costa and Coleman (2012: 3), who carried out a survey of EMI in Italy, "the need for its implementation is not usually felt by the lecturers but rather derived from a solely economic-political choice by the university". The same impression is shared by Shohamy (2013: 198), according to whom EMI is often promoted for economic reasons and not by the concrete interest in maximizing academic knowledge through a foreign language.

The expansion of EMI has, rightly, aroused concerns and doubts among lecturers and academics both on a macro-level and on a micro-level. On a macro-level, English can be seen to be contributing to "the attack on universities as a public good" (Phillipson, 2006: 17) as with this drive towards internationalisation, education, and also English, is increasingly being

commodified; social and economic inequalities are being exacerbated, and there is risk of domain loss and linguistic dispossession. On a micro-level, issues include not only negative attitudes resulting from the perception of English as a threat to the native language, but also the marginalization of the institution's language specialists, "inadequate language skills" by staff and students, unwillingness of local staff to teach through English, loss of confidence and "failure to adapt" of local students, or lack of a critical mass of international students Coleman (2006: 6-7). Looking at teaching staff in particular, Van der Wert (2012) signals that the internationalisation of education has consequences on the competences that lecturers need to develop and put into practice. In his words, teaching staff in internationalized institutions need to undertake a much wider variety of activities that are not limited to teaching through a different language: these include "internationalising curricula aimed at a domestic student population, counselling and supervising (domestic and international) students in preparation for and during study abroad periods, and maintaining collaborative relations with partner institutions abroad" (2012: 1). This variety of tasks may make them feel inadequate to perform their role within the institution and in need of stronger competences.

As regards teaching methodology in EMI, this is mentioned as a key issue by international scholars such as Klaassen and De Graaf (2001), Ball and Lindsay (2013) and Cots (2013) and is problematic. According to the former (2001: 282), switching the language of instruction may affect "the lecturers' didactical skills in the sense that they are less flexible in conveying the contents of the lecture material, resulting in long monologues, a lack of rapport with students, humour and interaction". According to Ball and Lindsay (2013: 49), teaching in a language other than the mother tongue, particularly at advanced conceptual levels, demands a higher focus on methodology and practice than in the past, when pedagogic skills have not been an essential prerequisite to a successful university career. Yet, as noted by Cots (2013), the lecturers' lack of training in language teaching is often accompanied by scarce attention they pay to language for the students. As a result, for many lecturers, the shift from L1 to EMI is reduced to a mere change in the vehicle of communication, and does not take into account that it usually requires an adaptation of the teaching methodology. In Cots' view (2013: 117), such a shift in methodology consists in a "process of decentering of the focus of pedagogic action from the instructor to the students, giving the latter a much more predominant space during the class". This implies that lecturers themselves change the way they perceive their role, moving away from a top-down approach of knowledge transmission and helping students to construct knowledge by themselves (ibid.). In this light, as Klaassen and De Graaf put it (2001: 282),

EMI also requires that lecturers become aware of the difficulties of their students who, being non-native speakers, may need support and guidance to access and negotiate knowledge.

EMI in Italy's higher education system

As in many other Southern European countries (Doiz *et al*., 2013: 96), English Taught Programmes (ETPs) are a recent development in Italy (Costa and Coleman, 2012). Although first introduced in Italian higher education as early as in 1992, ETPs started to develop from 2004 onwards, and were then reinforced by a new law on universities (the so-called Legge Gelmini 240/2010) which called for increased cooperation between universities, more student and lecturer mobility, as well as for the introduction of study programmes taught in a foreign language (Costa, 2012). Today, English is still quite far from being *the* language of higher education in Italy, 142 ETPs are offered in 39 universities, that is 50% of universities, across the country (Universitaly, 2014). Of these, 6 programmes are offered at the Bachelor's level, while the remaining 136 are at the Master's level. Their geographic distribution shows that the South, with 8 institutions offering ETPs, still falls behind the Centre and the North, where the number of universities that have introduced English Medium Instruction (EMI) has increased to 11 and 20 respectively.

A survey study conducted by Costa and Coleman in 2012, which is the most recent and complete study of the state-of-the-art in Italy. For the purposes of their study, the authors sent a questionnaire to all 76 Italian universities, both private (14) and public (62). The answers that they received from 38 universities (of which 7 private and 31 public) shed light on the main issues that characterize today's EMI across the country. Of the responding institutions, 74% delivered entire programmes and/or individual courses through English. Interestingly, however, one of the findings reported in the study was that language is viewed simply as a different vehicle for delivering the same subject content and using the same methodological approach as in the past, predominantly lectures. In Italy, as in many other contexts (Saarinen and Nikula, 2013; Phillipson, 2006), it seems that internationalisation is largely equated with EMI, yet paradoxically, the issue of language mastery, on part of both lecturers and students, has not been problematized. Costa and Coleman's study did not directly address lecturers, but rather obtained data through administrative offices such as international relations and university language centres and departments, hence - as the authors state - it is not possible to say whether these views are shared by lecturers or not. According to the findings of the survey, economic needs provided "stronger reasons for implementing ETPs than more didactic and

cultural reasons" (2012: 9). This has an impact on the way English is seen and used in such programmes, and explains why universities attach little importance to the language aspect of EMI: as the authors found, improving language proficiency in English ranks 4th in the list of reasons for introducing ETPs in public universities, and follows economic-based reasons such as improving the university's international profile, preparing students for global markets and attracting foreign students. With not even one Italian institution among the world's 200 top-ranking universities (The Times Higher Education, 2014), it thus appears that the choice to give the curriculum an increased international flavour has been driven mostly by economic and competitiveness reasons. The marginal role of the language in Italian EMI appears to be reinforced by the fact that, in Costa and Coleman's study, the lecturers involved in ETPs – 90% of which had Italian as their mother tongue – were often "forced to teach through English regardless of their target language competence" (ibid.:11). Interestingly, 30% of the responding universities affirmed that the greatest difficulty in implementing ETPs was the lecturers' insufficient English language competence (ibid.: 13). Yet hardly any universities saw a need to offer support or training courses for lecturers, with 77% of the institutions answering that they provide no teacher training (ibid: 12), 15% of respondents saying that they provide lecturers with one language course, and 8% answering that they provide methodological training. Looking at the issue from a teacher's perspective, authors such as Costa (2012) in Italy and Aguilar and Rodríguez (2012) in Spain remain sceptical as to whether university lecturers would accept any form of training, be it methodological or English language training.

As for methodology in EMI, Costa and Coleman report that formal, monologic lectures were the most common form of teaching in 71% of the Italian universities that responded to their study, and conclude that "changing the language of delivery has not led to any change in teaching style" (2012: 12). Similar comments can be found in international studies such as those of Miller (2002) in Hong Kong and Dafouz *et al.* (2007) in Spain. What emerges here is that spoken language, often in the form of lecture-based sessions with little interactivity, is rather dominant in EMI even outside Italy.

In the face of the expansion of EMI across the country, some Italian academics have adopted what has been defined as the 'bunker attitude' (Baker 1992: 136 in Cots 2013), which involves the perception of majority languages like English as 'language predators', and have thus adopted a defensive attitude against it in order to protect the minority language. This was the case, for instance, in 2012, when the Politecnico of Milan – one of the country's top-ranking universities – announced that from 2014 all its 34 graduate courses would be taught in English

only. At that time, the rector Giovanni Azzone claimed that such a choice would attract more foreign students and lecturers, thus providing the students with the chance to widen their cultural awareness within an international setting, and to become more competitive in the job market (Corriere della Sera, 2012). The announcement sparked a furious debate among Italy's policy makers and scholars: while the former higher education minister Francesco Profumo supported the reasons for the introduction of EMI and hoped that other institutions would soon follow the example set by the Politecnico, several scholars and lecturers were among the opponents of this choice. The well-known linguist Tullio De Mauro, for instance, insisted that excluding the Italian language from university programmes would eventually have effects on the students' intelligence (Corriere della Sera, 2012). Another linguist, Luca Serianni, claimed that internationalisation should be promoted as long as it does not represent a danger for the language spoken in the country (ibid). Of the same opinion were the 150 lecturers from the Politecnico who filed an appeal in the regional administrative court: in their view, obliging students and lecturers to adopt English would limit their freedom as well as marginalize the national language (La Repubblica, 2013). The court accepted their view and condemned the decision of the Politecnico by affirming that EMI requires "deep knowledge of the foreign language, something which sacrifices the cultural values conveyed by the Italian language in the name of internationalisation" (ibid). Consequently, the Politecnico had to maintain its educational offer in the two languages: of the 34 second-cycle degrees that are currently offered in the Milanese university, 9 are held entirely in English, 21 are offered both in Italian and English, and 4 are exclusively in Italian (Politecnico, 2014). This episode reflects the perception of English as a threat to the national language, which naturally leads to efforts to "neutralise the threat" (Phillipson, forthcoming). In the case of the Politecnico, this was done by ensuring that English be integrated in what Philippson (ibid.) calls "additive" rather than "subtractive" ways, in other words by preserving the vitality of Italian as a medium of instruction, and by seeing English as an additional, non-threatening, opportunity. There is not as yet, a national policy on this issue, but this ruling has certainly made an impact on decision makers at universities.

EMI at the University of Padova

In 2009/2010 the University of Padova started to introduce individual EMI courses so as to attract foreign students and promote the internationalisation of the institution. To encourage lecturers to embrace EMI, a financial incentive was approved by the Senate. In 2011/2012 the

Senate promoted the introduction of entire programmes to be taught in English, alongside the already existing individual courses. The reasons given for fostering the introduction of courses and programmes held entirely in English are not unfamiliar to the scenario of Italian universities as described in Costa and Coleman's 2012 survey, and include: the need to attract more foreign students and lecturers; provide the students of the university with the opportunity to gain international experiences, and promote international mobility among the lecturers who are already teaching in Padova (Martin, 2013). By targeting these goals, the university aims at improving its overall educational offer, thus increasing its competitiveness at the international level (Martin, 2013).

Currently (academic year 2013/2014), the University of Padova offers 8 second-cycle degrees entirely held in English, 9 ETPs at the PhD level, 3 first-level Master programmes, and 6 second-level Master programmes. In addition to these post-graduate programmes, the School of Economics and Political Science also runs a Bachelor's degree in Economics and Management, whose 3-year curriculum is entirely in English. Besides entire ETPs, the university also offers a rich number of individual courses held in English. Table 1 sums up the number of entire ETPs as well as of additional individual EMI courses that are run at each School of the University of Padova (academic year 2013/2014).

SCHOOL	Number of ETPs	Number of individual EMI courses
School of Agronomy and Veterinary Sciences	0	45
School of Economics and Political Science	9	9
School of Engineering	7	88
School of Human and Social Sciences and Cultural Heritage	2	25
Law School	0	7
School of Medicine	5	21
School of Psychology	1	13
School of Science	3	67
Tot.	**27**	**275**

Table 1. Number of ETPs and individual EMI courses run by each School of the University of Padova

Of all the Schools that form the University of Padova, the School of Engineering and the School of Economics and Political Science are the ones which offer the highest number of entire ETPs (9 and 7 respectively). In addition, the School of Engineering holds a wide range of individual English-taught courses, which appears to be in line with the results of Costa and Coleman's survey (2012). Interestingly, the Law School and the School of Agronomy and Veterinary Sciences do not currently have any ETP, but run individual EMI courses as part of their various Italian-taught programmes.

The Leap Project

Before the beginning of the academic year 2013/2014, the Language Centre (CLA) of the University of Padova, in collaboration with the International Relations Office, launched the LEAP (Learning English for Academic Purposes) Project. Before that time, the CLA had received a significant number of enquiries from professors involved in EMI asking for language and pedagogic support. In the academic year 2011-2012, therefore, the CLA had organized an experimental course for a small group of lecturers teaching or preparing to teach through English. The feedback on the course was extremely promising, and the CLA established itself as an effective partner/centre to provide EMI support. This led to the design of the LEAP project which was developed as part of the university's internationalisation activities, and aimed at ensuring high quality and effective EMI. The project had three main objectives: firstly, it aimed at identifying the needs, concerns and expectations of lecturers involved in EMI at the University of Padova. Secondly, it aimed to design and offer training and support for lecturers who held/were going to hold courses in English in the same academic year, and finally it was to assess the quality of the training and support in order to develop a long-term support programme. The training options to be offered by the CLA consisted of: an International Summer School to be held in July 2013 at Venice International University on the island of S.Servolo; an intensive Summer Course at a university in Dublin, Ireland; a 100-hour Blended Course (60 hours face-to-face; 40 hours online) to be held at the CLA over a 5 month time-span; and individual, personalized Language Advising held by the CLA teaching staff.

 A mail was sent to all the university's lecturers through the university's official mailing list informing them about the four options available, and those interested in participating were required to complete a survey. The survey served to support the Language Centre in the selection of participants, as well as to meet the CLA's first objective of identifying the lecturers' needs and expectations about EMI. The lecturers had two weeks in which to respond

to the call. Selection criteria had been established by the International Relations office, and these were made clear in the invitation which clearly stated that precedence would be given to those who were already teaching courses in English within the existing ETPs, subsequently those teaching individual courses, and last came those who had not yet had any EMI experience. The rationale behind these criteria was to start by focusing on the quality of courses which are already held in English. A total of 115 lecturers responded to the questionnaire, from across the university's eight main Schools. The distribution of respondents across the schools (see Graph 1) reflects quite closely the number of courses and ETPs each school offers.
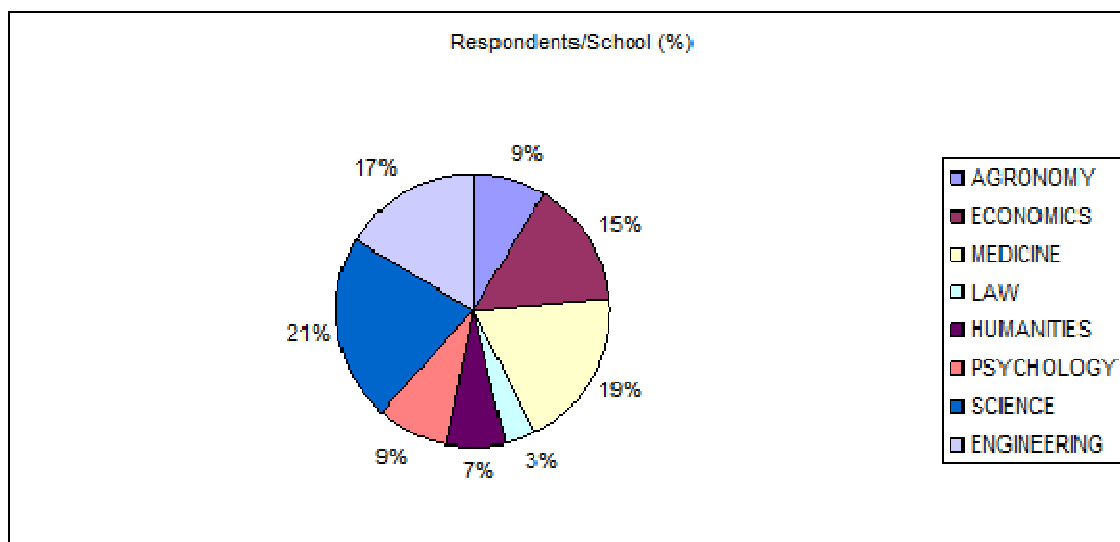
Graph 1. Distribution of respondents across Schools

The current paper focuses specifically on the CLA's first objective, and looks at the needs analysis that was conducted at the preliminary stage of the LEAP project.

Research questions and methodology

The questions we sought to answer in this study were the following:

1.   What are the lecturers' main concerns when having to teach their subjects through English?

2.   What do lecturers perceive as their strengths and weaknesses in English?

3.   What expectations do they have regarding courses offered by the University Language Centre to support them in this task?

In order to investigate these issues, a <u>questionnaire</u> was drawn up and was made available in electronic format through Google Forms to all the lecturers who were applying for the CLA's training options. The questionnaire consisted of closed, Likert scale items and also a few open questions. Descriptive statistics are used to describe the responses to the closed questions. The open questions were analysed and coded using a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The choice of drawing on grounded theory lies in the potential of its inductive process, which promotes a constant making of comparisons throughout the research project so as to explore and identify patterns across texts by various types of actors. As this analysis relied on the exploration of data and the development of categories and codes, the software package NVivo (QSRInternational, 2013) was adopted to support the qualitative side of the research project. The open-ended answers to the questionnaire were imported into NVivo and coded so as to identify recurring themes and patterns. In NVivo, codes are stored in nodes, in other words "points at which concepts potentially branch out into a network of subconcepts and dimensions" (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013: 75). For the purposes of this research, nodes were created inductively for each theme that was identified and coded while analysing the texts. As most of the themes that emerged from the analysis appeared to be composed of interconnected concepts, the main nodes mentioned above were organized into a hierarchical structure, thus including subcategories that captured all the nuances of each particular theme. A presentation and discussion of the findings can be found below.

Lecturers' previous experience with EMI

Of all the 115 lecturers who answered the questionnaire, 86 taught at second-cycle degree level, 19 at undergraduate and 11 at doctoral level. Nearly half (48) had taught several courses through English, 27 had taught just one course and 40 had never taught through English. However the majority (86) were going to be teaching through English in the following academic year, that is 2013-2014. Asked to outline their previous experiences, the lecturers who had already taught in English pinpointed both positive and challenging aspects of EMI: in particular, 21 asserted that their experience with EMI was completely positive, 21 pointed out both negative and positive aspects, and 6 admitted that EMI was a fully negative experience for them.

Those who described the experience of teaching through English in positive terms used adjectives such as e*xciting, stimulating, rewarding, interesting* and *positive.* In addition, EMI

was seen as having beneficial effects on the university's internationalisation process and visibility. A few lecturers also observed that teaching through English offered a fruitful experience to students (see Table 2).

In describing the difficulties they had encountered while teaching a course through English, the lecturers adopted adjectives such as *challenging, not easy, time-consuming* and *difficult*. Two respondents also expressed their concerns about offering EMI to an audience of mostly Italian students: one respondent in particular explained that, after delivering the first two courses in English, the third time he decided to switch to Italian since there were no foreign students among the audience. In response to the same question, 10 lecturers attributed their difficulties with EMI to the need to improve their language skills and/or teaching methodology: interestingly, such an awareness was expressed by 8 respondents who had taught in English several times, but only two who had taught once, thus suggesting that a growing involvement in EMI may lead to an increased awareness of one's abilities or limitations. Finally, four respondents also identified the students' different levels of English as a further cause of the difficulties they had encountered while teaching through EMI.

	EMI once	EMI several times	Total	Examples of coding reference
POSITIVE EXPERIENCE				
Exciting Stimulating Rewarding Interesting	12	15	27	"I found this experience interesting and rewarding" (B18)
Good for the internationalization of the university	4	5	9	"…it is a good way to open our University to international students and help to build a reputation in teaching abroad" (D06)
Productive for students	3	3	6	"Students need practicing their professional competences in English. English is considered the vehicular language that will allow them studying and working abroad" (SS17)

CHALLENGING EXPERIENCE				
Challenging - not easy - difficult - time consuming	6	5	11	"it is an hard work and it takes much more time than an Italian course" (D06)
Difficulties or drawbacks related to internationalization	1	1	2	"…there were few foreign students" (B21)
I feel I need to improve language skills and/or teaching methodology	2	8	10	"I realized that my lesson organization was not good enough." (B11)
Students had different levels of English	0	4	4	"…the english level of the students was not the same for all so to avoid any problems for some to follow the lessons I decided to repeat in Italian the most relevant concepts of each lesson" (B23)

Table 2. Lecturers' experience with EMI

Concerns about EMI and strengths and weaknesses in using English

In the questionnaire, the lecturers were asked to respond to three questions which centred around their **concerns** about EMI ("Do you have any concerns about teaching in English? If so, what are they?"), as well as their perceived weaknesses and strengths in using the language ("What do you feel are your strengths and weaknesses in English?"). In response to the first question, quite a wide variety of concerns emerged, though 10% of respondents stated they had none. Interestingly, the most frequently mentioned concern relates to teaching methodology, and indicates therefore an awareness of the challenges and different approaches that teaching in English may entail. For some it is the loss of spontaneity and perhaps fear of not being in control which is a great concern, as reflected by the statement made by a respondent and used in the title of this paper "improvisation is not allowed in a second language**",** that is the inability to improvise when teaching through English as one would when teaching in one's usual language. A considerable number of lecturers identified aspects related to oral skills – both while lecturing and interacting with students at a more informal level – as cause of concern and difficulty. This finding seems to be in line with previous studies on EMI: Lehtonen *et al.* (2003), for instance, found that instructors generally felt confident using

English except with conversational episodes in class and formal writing. This informal exchange with students was also found to be a concern for Danish lecturers (Tange, 2010) who were also worried about the students' criticism of their communicative competence and the results this would have on their status within the faculty. More in terms of language skills, the answers to the questionnaire show that the lecturers' main concerns about teaching in English relate to vocabulary, attention to standard form and grammar, pronunciation, the students' English level, and the lecturers' uncertainty about their own level of English.

In the questionnaire, the lecturers were asked to outline their **weaknesses** in English: unlike the previous question, which focused specifically on teaching through a foreign language, this question aimed at identifying what the lecturers perceived as their weak points in their overall knowledge and use of English. In the responses, several aspects emerged that were felt as problematic: in particular, the use of English in social and informal situations was confirmed as one of the main issues the lecturers felt unsure about. Fluency, too, appears to be considered not only as a cause of concern in EMI but also as a personal weakness in English. The same can be said for vocabulary, as well as for inadequate knowledge of standard form and grammar. The responses to the questionnaire also pinpointed further perceived weaknesses, including: speaking skills, oral comprehension, pronunciation, lack of specific methodology for teaching through English, writing skills, accent, and lack of self-confidence.

What for some lecturers was a weakness or source of concerns for EMI, for others represented a **strength**. Thus, for instance, vocabulary was considered by some respondents as something they felt confident about while, as seen above, it was seen by many others as a problematic issue. A similar observation can be made in relation to oral comprehension and speaking abilities, which were indeed felt as weaknesses by many lecturers but for some they represented a strength. A further interesting aspect is that quite a few lecturers felt their knowledge of academic English and its use in conferences or for research purposes as a strength. This seems to complement and counterbalance the findings outlined above, which indicated that interaction in social and informal contexts was seen as a weakness and a cause of concern by a number of respondents. In the questionnaire, the respondents pinpointed further aspects of language use that they felt as non-problematic: among these, writing is certainly the activity that the lecturers seem to be more confident with. In addition to this, the respondents also mentioned reading skills and motivation as strengths. Self-confidence, attention to standard form and grammar, fluency and pronunciation appear to be felt as non-problematic for

a more limited number of respondents, which seems to confirm the findings illustrated above, according to which these aspects were mostly described as weak points or sources of concern.

Table 3 shows the frequency of occurrence and provides examples for each of the themes mentioned above. The difference in frequency for concerns and weaknesses is justified by the fact that, as suggested above, the former relate to any problematic issue in the specific context of EMI, while the latter focus more on the respondents' knowledge and use of English in general. Thus, for instance, oral comprehension does not represent a main concern about EMI - which appears to confirm the monologic nature of most lectures, where little interaction takes place - but it is perceived by the lecturers as one of the main weak points in other situations outside of the classroom.

	Concern	Weakness	Strength	Example
Vocabulary	12	23	16	"lack of vocabulary and ways to express solmething precisely as in my own language" (B06_weaknesses)
Teaching methodology	32	6	0	"lacking formal training in teaching in English" (R37_weaknesses)
Correctness of form and grammar	11	22	8	"Being not a mother tongue, both my accent and my grammar could be improved a lot" (B18_concerns)
ORAL SKILLS, including:				
Oral comprehensio n	3	21	19	"I'm very good at understanding people talking" (R04_strengths)
Pronunciation	9	20	6	"I have a poor pronunciation" (SS01_weaknesses)
Social English and informal interaction	16	21	7	"I have limited experience with 'social' English" (B14_concerns)

Fluency	15	12	7	"…my English (…) is not as fluent as I would" (R09_weaknesses)
Speaking skills	4	22	9	"my strength in English is speaking" (B17_strengths)
Accent	0	5	0	"I feel I have to (…) correct my accent, which is definitively not good" (D10_weaknesses)
Writing skills	0	6	24	"I can write well in English" (R38_strengths)
Reading skills	0	0	13	"There are no problems with reading" (B12_strengths)
Academic English	0	0	21	"I would say that my 'scientific English' is rather good" (LA01_strengths)
Lack of self-confidence	4	4	0	"I am supposed to assess [students'] level without having ever had my level of English assessed formally. I feel quite embarassed by this" (D08_concerns)
Self-confidence	0	0	8	"I can manage a class I need just to improve few details" (R14_strengths)
Motivation	0	0	13	"…my strength is my wish to speak and learn English" (R35_strengths)
Students' level of English	7	0	0	"The concers about teaching Inglthh are represents by (…) [t]he Inglish level of the students that will face a course in Inglish" (R30_concerns)

No concerns	18	0	0	"No concerns" (LA05_concerns)

Table 3. Concerns about EMI, as well as perceived weakness and strengths in English

Expectations about English language courses

After delineating their strengths and weaknesses with the language and outlining their concerns about EMI, the lecturers who responded to the questionnaire also indicated their **expectations** about the language courses they were applying for. In line with the findings illustrated above, teaching methodology represented the aspect that most lecturers expected to improve through the courses offered by the CLA. This seems to mirror Klaassen and De Graaf's observation that most of the lecturers participating in one of three EMI training workshops organized at a Dutch university expected, first of all, "to learn more effective teaching skills" (2001: 285). Interestingly, of the 47 respondents from Padova who expressed such an interest, 20 had taught several EMI courses before, 10 had taught through English once, and 17 had no experience with EMI. This appears to suggest not only that there is a strongly felt need to modify teaching style when teaching through English, but also that this increases in those who already have some experience with EMI. Furthermore, this finding also confirms that the lecturers who responded to the questionnaire were indeed willing to learn about different teaching approaches which, as suggested above, appears to contrast with Costa's (2012) observation that university professors are not interested in any methodological training.

 Besides mentioning teaching methodology, some respondents expressed their wish to improve their overall English skills, without actually specifying the set of abilities they wanted to focus on most. Other respondents made it clear that they had a specific interest in improving their oral skills including, in particular, speaking abilities, fluency, the ability to use English in informal situations, pronunciation, and oral comprehension. In addition to these results, other lecturers wrote that they had a specific interest in vocabulary, others wanted to improve their grammar of to become more confident with the language, while a few were interested in developing their writing skills. Table 4 sums up the findings cited above, and provides examples for each of the coding categories:

		Expectation	Example
Teaching methodology		47	"It would be very important for me to receive guidance on how to organise my lectures (…), on the way I can involve

			more the students in the course (I am trying to implement a more active and participating modality of teaching)" (D04)
English skills in general		21	"To improve my English" (B13)
ORAL SKILLS, including:	Oral comprehension	5	"I expect to improve my Inglish in general, the level of communication and the comprehension" (R30)
	Pronunciation	5	"Improve my pronunciation" (R27)
	Social English and informal interaction	13	"…greater awareness in using English in social situations and in interaction with students" (B15)
	Fluency	20	"Improving my English in order to be more fluently during conversation" (R01)
	Speaking skills	21	"An improvement in spoken language" (LA08)
Correctness of form and grammar		17	"To increase my skills in the correct use of English" (SS08)
Vocabulary		11	"..to enhance my vocabulary and phrasing" (LA11)
Self-confidence		10	"…most of all I expect the course will much increase my confidence and therefore my fluency in English" (D08)
Writing skills		6	"Improve my written english" (R39)
TOTAL		**155**	

Table 4. Lecturers' expectations about English language courses

CONCLUSIONS

Though this study presents a very specific local context, we believe that the number of respondents in the survey and the different disciplinary areas they represent mean that some of the findings may be of relevance to higher education institutions and university Language Centres, particularly in countries where English is not commonly spoken and where EMI is a new phenomenon.

Our findings indicate that lecturers perceive their language competence, particularly their spoken fluency and informal interaction skills, as a weakness and a cause for concern with

regard to their teaching through English. Our findings also reveal that many lecturers with experience of EMI are aware that it entails more than foreign language competence, and mention some of the other competences mentioned in van der Werf's International Competences Matrix. It is interesting to note that there was no significant difference in the responses between lecturers in different disciplines. The fact that many respondents recognise the need to adapt their teaching methodology to their EMI context, and were expecting to learn more about this in the language courses they were applying for reflects a recognized need on the part of lecturers to develop didactic competences in an international context and an openness to training courses. This seems to stand in contrast to the notion that lecturers see EMI as merely being a change in the vehicle of communication and not requiring an adaptation of methodology (Cots, 2013) or the view that lecturers would not be open to development or training for teaching through English (Costa, 2012; Aguilar and Rodrìguez, 2012). Whilst we do not wish to suggest that all lecturers would be open to methodological and/or language training, particularly if it were to become a requirement, our findings reflect a perceived need on the part of some lecturers, particularly those working in a context where EMI has recently been introduced and English is not a commonly spoken language.

 It is important to point out also some of the important issues in EMI which respondents' did not mention at all in their responses, such as the relationship between the national language(s) and the language of instruction and their possible combinations in teaching (Phillipson, forthcoming). Another key omission is mention of the students' needs or difficulties of the students, or indeed the issue of assessment, both in terms of student learning through EMI, language choice in formal assessment and the weight given to language competence in assessing students' learning. Also lacking are references to competences mentioned by van der Werf (2012) such as academic counselling for foreign students, understanding of education systems of different countries or competences linked to the international labour market. These omissions are no doubt partly due to the survey design and context of this study, but they may also be a reflection of the fact that EMI at the University of Padova is still very much in its early phases and lecturers' immediate concern is with the practicalities of their own teaching and with the switch to English, rather than the relationship between English and the national language, and also between teaching through English and student learning. This is also no doubt a reflection of the survey that was administered, and this brings us to some of the limitations of the study.

The study is limited in various respects. First of all the questionnaire was part of an application form lecturers had to fill in when applying for support and language courses which were part of a pilot project. Whilst the aim of the researchers in drawing up the questionnaire was to explore the lecturers' concerns, strengths and weaknesses, this was necessarily directed towards the need to design suitable training and support services. Clearly this entails a bias in the respondents who are only those lecturers who were interested in receiving support and professional development at that particular time, it does not include those who feel they do not need support or do not have time for it. Also the exploration is on a superficial level, it does not further explore the lecturers' views. This was done in a follow-up to the questionnaire when lecturers who were selected for the pilot courses were interviewed before the courses and subsequently surveyed after the courses, the research on this is still underway. There were a few issues in the design of the questionnaire which led to a degree of ambiguity, such as including strengths and weaknesses in the same open question. This was dealt with by the researchers as they coded the data through comparisons and discussion. Finally this study is limited to one particular context with all its specificities hence the findings cannot be generalized. However we feel that the number of respondents indicates that teaching through English is an important concern for lecturers in contexts where English is not commonly spoken, and that there is a strongly felt need for support in this endeavor. Though most university language centres' activities are focused on students, they are well placed within universities to offer support to lecturers in EMI, indeed they may be the lecturers' first port of call. It is important for them to gain an understanding of lecturers' needs and their perceived strengths and weaknesses in order to offer appropriate support which, as we have found, may regard not only language but also pedagogic approaches and teaching methods and not necessarily academic language but also language for informal interaction with students and colleagues.

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