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CHAPTER ELEVEN

MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL: WHICH STRATEGIES CAN SUIT THEM ALL?

FRANCA POPPI

1. Introduction

English is nowadays the dominant language in the higher education sector in Europe. Not only is it the preferred medium of communication for scholars at international conferences or visiting professors, but it is also the medium of instruction used in a growing number of degree programmes (Gotti 2014).

Universities in many non-English-speaking countries are indeed embracing the challenges of internationalization, as they believe that teaching disciplinary subjects in English will make study programmes more accessible and attractive to international students, improve the foreign language skills and employability prospects of local students and enhance the international prestige and mobility of academic staff (Coleman 2006; Dearden 2014).

If, on the one hand, this can open up new opportunities, on the other hand, it also poses dilemmas as far as the accreditation and training of teaching staff is concerned. For instance, what language competences and which methodological skills should the teachers deploy in order to teach their subjects through English?

Teacher education courses are being developed and offered in several universities, also in Italy (Costa 2015). However, university teachers seem to display at times "a distinct lack of awareness of a need to change pedagogy in order to help students (whether home or international) to cope with content delivered through a second language" (Dearden and Macaro 2016, 469; Cots 2013).

In fact, research by Guarda and Helm (2017) indicates that a shift in the teachers' perception is necessary if they are to become fully effective when teaching in English. Indeed, alongside linguistic competence, lecturers

should especially hone a range of pragmatic strategy skills which can help them to interact more efficiently with their students.

The present study takes into account three courses that were taught in English at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia in the academic year 2016/17. Under the supervision of the author, a master degree programme student recorded and then transcribed the lectures delivered by three members of the University's teaching staff dealing, respectively, with: international law, service management and marketing strategies. The three lecturers L1, L2 and L3 are all native speakers of Italian and delivered their courses to the students of a master degree programme entirely taught in English which combines foreign languages, economics and legal subjects. Moreover, after the end of their lessons, the lecturers were also interviewed in order to gather their feedback and opinions on their recent EMI teaching experience.

By looking at the transcripts of the lessons, the present contribution aims in the first place to unveil the strategies deployed by the three lecturers during their lessons, in order to introduce new terms or topics and to make the progression of the lecture smoother and easier for the students to follow.

Moreover, by cross-validating the results of the analysis with the information provided by the interviews, the present study plans to establish whether or not a conscious change in the lecturers' pedagogy occurred in order to help students to cope with discipline-related content delivered through a foreign language.

2. English Medium Instruction

Scholars have described EMI using a wide range of descriptions: Dearden (2014, 2) labels it a "rapidly growing global phenomenon", and Macaro (2015, 7) goes on to describe it by using the vivid metaphor of the "unstoppable train". Both definitions help us to understand the momentum that EMI has reached at an international level.

The provision of EMI-taught courses has increased exponentially in Italian Higher Education (HE) in recent times (Santulli 2015, 271). Several arguments have prompted universities to deliver courses and even entire programmes in English. In the first place, English can be considered as a means to make Italy more accessible to foreigners. Moreover, EMI can make didactic methods more innovative and contribute to the renewal of course planning. Finally, since English is a straight-to-the-point language like no other, it perfectly fits the requirements of scientific fields of study (Santulli 2015).

The pressure on European HE institutions to offer a wide range of subjects through English, inevitably raises the issue of whether a sufficient number of teachers are capable of teaching content in a second language. Although recent European survey data revealed that 95% of EMI programme directors rated the English proficiency of their teaching staff involved in English programmes as good or very good (Waechter and Maiworm 2014; O'Dowd 2018), other reviews of current practice have highlighted a need for a more structured and rigorous approach to the language and methodology training of teachers (Dearden 2014; Halbach and Lázaro 2015).

3. Materials and methodology

The three courses under scrutiny were all intensive ones, taught over a single semester. However, the contact hours assigned to them as well as the ECTS credits allocated differed significantly. The law course was the longest, as it involved 72 contact hours (and was allotted 12 ECTS). The course on service management lasted 54 hours (9 ECTS) and the one on marketing strategies 36 hours (6 ECTS). The audience consisted of 80 Italian students and about 10 foreign students who were either enrolled in the Master degree programme or part of an exchange scheme.

The three lecturers displayed distinctive teaching styles. L3 often asked students to get themselves organized into groups and work together on specific case-studies before reporting on their findings; while L1 and L2 adopted a more monologue-oriented attitude. However, all the teachers tried to elicit questions and contributions from the students.

The lectures were transcribed using the VOICE (Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English) simplified transcription conventions[1]. The lecturers' names were omitted, and the same approach was used for

[1] The transcription conventions in transcribing the lectures were the following:

1. <un>xxx</un> for unintelligible words or stretches of words;
2. (.) for brief pauses;
3. (overlapping), (murmuring), (laughing) for signalling student or lecturer reactions to specific situations;
4. <@>…</@> for words or stretches of words uttered laughingly;
5. ehm.., ah.., uhm.., for hesitation phenomena;
6. Words uttered with emphasis were CAPITALISED;
7. All repetitions, self-repairs, false-starts were transcribed;
8. Unrecognized words or possible alternatives for them were written into round brackets followed by a question mark, e.g. (word ?);
9. No punctuation was used in the transcription process.

students, who were referred to by the symbol S followed by a number (i.e. S1, S2, S3). Altogether, the corpus amounts to 410,249 tokens, i.e. 195,572 tokens for the law course, 161,472 tokens for the management course and 53,205 tokens for the marketing course.

The aim of the present study was to identify the pragmatic strategies most frequently adopted by the three lecturers. According to Dörnyei and Scott, 'strategy' was originally a military term, referring to the implementation of a set of procedures for accomplishing something (1997, 179). In the case under scrutiny here, 'strategy' has been used as an umbrella term for those vital, problem-solving, communication-enhancing solutions that lecturers adopt to teach successfully.

Gotti's (2014) and Björkman's (2011) studies were used as a point of departure for the analysis. Gotti carried out his research at the University of Bergamo and categorized the most common strategies adopted by lecturers in their EMI teaching activities into three broad typologies: explanatory, metadiscursive and cooperative strategies. Explanatory strategies include, for instance: previous knowledge checks, followed by the lecturer's integration of the student's answer; use of direct appeals (*you know*); use of inclusive *we;* presentations of specific cases, to make the explanation more concrete; comprehension checks; reformulations, use of gestures and multilingual translation; display of a supportive attitude (adapted from Gotti 2014, 342-346). As for metadiscursive strategies, Gotti (2014) explicitly draws on Aguilar Pérez and Arnò Macià's (2002) classification. According to their functionalistic approach, metadiscursive strategies, which help students to understand the most salient turning points of the lecture, can be distinguished as textual and interpersonal. The most frequent textual metadiscursive strategies that Gotti (2014, 346-347) was able to find in his analysis are: frame markers, which signal the transitions between different stages, by means of several illocutionary indicators, such as the verbs *show, explain, introduce, review* or *describe*; rhetorical questions, by means of which the lecturer raises an issue which he/she subsequently illustrates; rephrasing (e.g. *in other words*), which also contributes to establishing a friendlier relationship with the interlocutors (Mauranen, 2010). The most frequently employed interpersonal metadiscursive strategies are: emphasising; inserting interactivity in the explanation by anticipating possible objections or comments that the students might want to raise (Gotti 2014, 346-352). Finally, cooperative strategies are meant to enhance comprehension and overcome obstacles by drawing on cooperation between the lecturer and the students. However, the present study did not investigate this third type of strategies.

Gotti's list of strategies was integrated with the insights from a study by Björkman (2011) based on authentic data she collected in a Swedish technical university with EMI courses. Her analysis showed that the most frequently used pragmatic strategies used by lecturers in EMI-taught programmes are: comment on terms and concepts; comment on discourse structure; signalling importance; back-channelling; self- or other-repair (Björkman 2011, 953).

The approach adopted here for the analysis of the transcripts is twofold. The transcripts were at first analysed in full in order to establish possible recurring trends. Then, a set of five lectures for each lecturer was analysed in detail, to identify and label each different strategy deployed.

4. The analysis

The extensive analysis made it possible to collect some general information and to arrange the strategies into two broad categories, depending on whether they were used to introduce new terms or topics, or to make the progression of the lecture smoother and easier for the students to follow.

4.1 Introducing new terms or topics

Different strategies—and notably questions—were used to pave the way for a new definition or a new topic.

4.1.1 Rhetorical questions

In the corpus it is possible to find several instances of rhetorical questions, i.e. questions which were not really meant to be answered by students but which, on the contrary, just served as a pretext for introducing some kind of information.

(1) L1: *what are commodities? [rhetorical question]* commodities are *raw materials raw products* [*rephrasing*] so sugar milk flour oil raw materials [*provision of new/additional information*]

(2) L2: what is entrepreneurial orientation? *have you ever heard* about this concept? *[rhetorical question]* entrepreneurial orientation is *how can I say* risk non-adversity *[rephrasing]* of a main entrepreneur of a firm *is a sort of pro-activeness towards innovation [rephrasing]* and many times is quite connected to the fact that entrepreneurs have some kind of previous experience into foreign markets also in terms of background

in terms of university studies or in terms of connections friends so this kind of experience *[[provision of new/additional information*]

Examples no. 1 and 2 clearly prove that the lecturers were not expecting the students to provide an answer to their question. In fact, the question is used as a stepping stone for introducing new information. In other words, the lecturers do not limit themselves to answering the question, but expand on it by providing extra information. Moreover, we can also notice that L2 is fully aware of the need to try and convey the new disciplinary contents in the most accessible way. Therefore, he provides alternative renditions for the concept of entrepreneurial orientation (see the two instances of rephrasing).

4.1.2 Checking previous knowledge

In most cases, before introducing a new concept or topic, the lecturers ask for the students' contribution, implicitly checking their previous knowledge, and then start off from the students' answer, to provide further details on the topic at hand. This is for instance the case in example no.3:

(3) L2: What does it mean that my manufacturing process in not saturated? (.)(.)(.) *What is saturation? [previous knowledge check*](.) (.)
S: when you are producing much more than is needed
L2: much more? (.)(.) No it's not connected to the demand, saturation is connected to my facility my *factory [rephrasing] [personalization]* as *you* said in the beginning *[direct appeal]*
S: they cannot produce more products
L2: *yeah [backchannelling]* basically I'm ehm.. the level of production is the maximum *with my actual system of production with my actual factory*
[rephrasing] [personalization]

Differently from the rhetorical questions, the above-mentioned example shows that the lecturer actually pauses for a few seconds in order to let the students collect their ideas and provide an answer to the question. So, this is indeed a real question. At the same time, the example also proves that several strategies are used at the same time during the lecture. In fact, besides providing new and additional information, the lecturer directly addresses the students to engage them in a closer dialogue, backchannels are used to express attention and agreement, and synonyms are provided in order to facilitate the students' comprehension. Moreover, he also employs the possessive adjective *my*, to make the examples more personal and therefore more engaging and meaningful.

4.1.3 Chains of questions

On some other occasions the lecturers pose a series of questions designed to trigger and guide the students' own answers:

(4) L3: disparities in terms of economic wealth are something new so why that? I mean why income disparities are something new? [*rephrasing*] what can *we* consider *[inclusive we] I mean* what is the main driver the main factor explaining these differences right now? *[rephrasing]* (.) any idea?
S1: technology
L3: technology is part of the story but there is something more specific than
S2: the colonization process
L3: yeah *[backchannelling]* but this does not explain why some countries have grown richer colonization again is one side of the coin there is something much simpler
S3: industries
L3: industrialization so the idea is that ehm.. since the beginning of the industrialization process divergences economic divergences at global scale have widened and this is the key *[provision of new/additional information]*

The example above shows that chains of questions were employed to provide students with useful hints that they could take advantage of in order to find the most appropriate answer to a specific question (e.g. "technology is part of the story, but there is something more specific"; "there is something much simpler"). Many of these strings of questions succeeded in prompting an appropriate answer and also when the answer was only a tentative one, it served the function of stimulating the students to intervene and add to what other students had just said. Once again, alongside the strategies deployed to provide new/additional information, the lecturers also tried to facilitate the students' understanding and involvement by providing alternative renditions of different terms (rephrasing), backchannelling and using the inclusive first person plural personal pronoun.

4.1.4 Comprehension check questions

After introducing new and difficult concepts, the lecturers frequently asked the students direct questions so as to check their understanding. The students' reactions to these questions helped lecturers to decide whether or not new or improved explanations were needed before moving on to a new

topic. This strategy was employed in different ways, through a variety of questions addressed to students:

(5) L1: is it clear? Should I recall it?

(6) L2: domestic company is OUR exporter is OUR parent company so is our focus parent company is our exporter so is our Italian SME OK?

(7) L3: any question? Any doubt? Is everything OK?

4.1.5 Personalization

Besides questions, another strategy used as a pragmatic facilitator is represented by personalization. The three courses analysed in this study dealt with a very wide range of theoretical and subject-specific contents. While the lecturers tried hard to provide students with the clearest definitions possible and to trigger their involvement in the explanatory phase, in many situations they also resorted to personalized examples, to help students to better visualize what they had just been told.

(8) L1: it could be the case *if I live in Sicily* and there is one meter of snow probably something unpredictable in May but *if I live in Norway* one meter of snow in May could be predictable so the impediment is not valuable itself but it's valuable if is unpredictable an heavy snowing in a sunny place in a summer season is unpredictable an heavy snowing in ehm.. a north country during the winter is a predictable event may not say[2] ehm.. I am a Scandinavian manufacturer there is snow I am not in a position to deliver there is snow 200 days a year so this is not that event that may prevent you for delivering or providing due performance of your obligations so this is a general principle intended at least to release the stringency of exact performance of obligations under an international sale but there are limitations to that principle

By using vivid examples and drawing on real situations, lecturers succeeded in helping students to understand better the concepts and the terms they had just introduced.

[2] The structure of the lecturers' lessons was reproduced verbatim. Only capitalization, when required, was added in the transcription process.

4.2.1 Facilitating students' comprehension

The strategies deployed to introduce new terms and concepts were not used in isolation, but rather in combination with other types of strategies aimed at facilitating students' understanding. In fact in examples (1), (2), (3) and (4) we have already seen examples of *rephrasing*, *direct appeals*, *use of inclusive 'we'* and *backchannelling* which were employed to engage the students and make sure that the contents of their lectures were properly understood. Indeed, differently from the explanatory strategies described above, these strategies do not focus on content but rather on the way content is conveyed.

4.2.2 Frame markers

Frame markers are used by lecturers to organize their discourse in such a way that it becomes more easily understandable for students. They can take the form of retrospective signalling (Björkman 2011), which helps the lecturers to remind the students of the last topic they had dealt with, and sometimes serve the purpose of combining the newest topics with the oldest ones:

(9) L3: yesterday we moved from the idea I am just recapping the lecture so we moved from the idea that the economy as a whole and the environment are characterized by tight connection

(10) L1: I will recall to your mind an example we had long long time ago at the very first lesson of our course

They can also be employed for prospective signalling, which is used, on the contrary, to anticipate future topics:

(11) L3: today I will discuss with you the importance of studying such topics so why economic development can be important as a subject matter

(12) L2: so tomorrow we will start focusing on the business model design so tomorrow we will not talk about international markets but we will talk about how firms create value

It is evident from the examples listed above that frame markers can vary a lot and can serve very different purposes. Examples (10) and (11), for instance, are characterized by the use of the first person singular. While in example (9) the lecturer shifts to the use of the first person plural "we". By

using an inclusive "we" instead of simply "I" the lecturer places himself at the same level as the students, seemingly implying that he is undertaking this process of discovery of new contents together with them. It follows that this seemingly unimportant shift from "I" to "we" is in fact very significant, as it actively involves the students in the cognitive structuring and scaffolding of the lecture.

4.2.3 Self-repairs

Self-repairs were also quite frequent in the corpus. When lecturers realized they had just uttered something wrong or potentially confusing, they recurred to a self-repair strategy in order for the message to be reformulated properly.

These self-repairs are often related to minor or unimportant deviations that would probably not have hindered the students' comprehension. However, once again they prove that the lecturers were keenly aware of the need to try and be as clear and understandable as possible.

(13) L1: at the end of the time at the end of the day

(14) L2: next answer? Next question sorry and answer too

(15) L3: the industrial sector do not follow does not follow such ehm.. such a pattern

(16) L3: so the gap is expected to bridge be bridged

4.2.4 Emphasis

Emphasis was frequently used in the corpus. In particular, the lecturers tended to stress particular terms so as to make them stand out:

(17) L1: European Union relies a lot over it relies a lot over it and SO MUCH over it that (seems?) this is a general principle of law that cannot be derogated by the parties

(18) L2: diversification? PRODUCT diversification not market diversification product diversification?

By doing so they were able to stimulate the students' attention and make them focus on a specific concept. In addition, another feature that can be noticed is the choice of particular words and collocations—charged in

emotive connotation, figurative meanings or sematic markedness—still aimed at attracting the students' attention:

(19) L1: you may understand this has *dramatic impact* over our case

(20) L1: so it is one of the *pillars* of our course

(21) L2: Japanese firms are big or not?
SS: big
L2: are *super big*

(22) L3: India has *a very a huge number* of highly educated people

Moreover, content words and grammar words were also repeated, so as to facilitate understanding and make given contents easy to be retained:

(23) L1: in UK court procedure are very very very costly

4.2.5 Pre-empting students' queries

In the corpus there were also a few situations in which the lecturers managed to include the students' (possible) doubts or unasked questions in their explanations. Gotti (2014, 351) points out that this strategy helps lecturers to "make their lectures more dialogic", as they express "possible objections or comments that the students might want to raise". Here are a few examples from the corpus:

(24) L1: OK *you may say but how this all this deals with us*? It deals a lot

(25) L3: this is what the neoclassical model should expect to happen so in the end you have economic forces that narrow the wage differential and these are the economic forces behind such a narrowing process of wages in this case between a developed and a lagging behind region after migration (.) *you don't agree because and I know there are other economic forces* that may occur in both regions and in particular the Myrdal model suggests that there are actually other kinds of forces in act

By using this strategy, lecturers manage to anticipate and provide a suitable answer for the questions students might have been willing to ask, but also to stimulate their interest in a given subject:

(26) L1: one very risky business is to deliver for example to deliver products never deliver to Miami *you say why*? because in Miami there are several

> arrests through the years there is a system according to which all the containers coming from Europe are requested to be ehm.. unpolluted by possible mouses and whatever so they say there may be insects inside that are not known in the US so it's called fumigation meaning we put poison inside with a special way and this cost 2000 3000 euro per container

5. An overview of the lecturers' opinions

To complement the results of the analysis, the lecturers were involved in a semi-structured interview. The aim of the interview was to establish whether or not their perceptions matched the results of the analysis. The interview included several questions (listed below) which were meant to make the lecturers reflect on their personal experience (questions I-III), methodological choices (questions IV-VI) and adopted communicative strategies (questions VIII-X), as well as to elicit their needs and opinions (questions XI-XIII).

I. How long have you been using English as a medium of instruction?
II. Do you feel comfortable in using English as a medium of instruction?
III. In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of using English as a medium of instruction?
IV. Do you think your teaching methodology has changed as a result of using English as a medium of instruction? Why? How?
V. Are there any aspects of your L1 teaching methodology you feel you have improved by means of EMI?
VI. Are there any strategies you consciously use in your EMI teaching methodology?
VII. Compared to your L1 lectures, do you think your EMI lectures are more student-oriented? Why?
VIII. Compared to your L1 lectures, do you think your EMI lectures are more cooperative? Why?
IX. Do cooperation and negotiation of meaning play a role in your EMI lectures?
X. Do you ever use your L1? Why?
XI. What type of support should EMI lecturers get to develop their EMI teaching techniques?
XII. How do you think a lecturer can become good enough to use English as a medium of instruction?
XIII. How would you rate your recent EMI teaching experience on a 1-10 scale?

It was decided to use open-ended questions in order to let the lecturers speak at length about their experiences and needs. The analysis of the answers

provided valuable insights into some of the phenomena observed during the corpus-based analysis.

In the first place, the lecturers confirmed many of the observations collected during the corpus-based analysis. It is clear, in fact, that when it comes to introducing new terms and topics the lecturers consider resorting to questions, rephrasing and examples very effective:

(27) L1: "I now put greater attention on law texts so my lessons are focused on having slides containing the official text and relying on that teaching so I will *repeat* the sentences we are going to look at the *keywords* of the article being projected"

(28) L1: "I always pray for *questions* because this is my teaching strategy (…) questions are not a problem are very encouraged because they allowed me to have just better *clarifications* on issues or points that may have been not in a good explanation possibly or obscure for them"

(29) L2: "what I tried to do last year was to involve students to enhance their *involvement* through the use of exercises and also through the introduction of *questions* open questions"

(30) L3: "I tended to make different *examples* as well yeah probably in the way you apply the theoretical background to empirical basis teaching in English versus teaching in Italian has an impact an effect in the choice of examples of practical examples"

As we see, while organizing their lectures, the teachers are aware of the need to repeat, rephrase, use keywords and emphasis and try to involve the students.

The answers provided shed light on some of the most debated topics concerning EMI, but most importantly they proved that the adoption of EMI has made the lecturers change their pedagogy, from simply translating courses and their contents from Italian into English, to reorganizing, restructuring and redesigning them:

(31) L1: "I have redeveloped the contents of the course according to English contents it's much better (…) the major failure was that in the first year I simply attempted to translate contents from the Italian course to the English course I have spent a lot of time in redrafting the contents in order to have them fulfilling EMI requirements and now the course runs much better"

(32) L2: “in the new lecture this year I will restart from how can I say not from the basics but I will try to make it simpler but with the same approach I don’t want to change the approach but I want to make it simpler”

(33) L3: “it’s a kind of cross-fertilization from both sides teaching in Italian and teaching in English may benefit as well”

(34) L3: “you have to think more carefully about what you are referring to and the examples and so on so probably it’s a kind of effort also for the teacher that have to deal with OK the same topics you already know but in a slightly different way which is just based on the different language adopted”.

As we see, all the lecturers agree in defining EMI as being quite demanding, precisely because it requires complete and careful restructuring of the contents and of the strategies to be deployed.

6. Conclusion

The spread of EMI at European level has been met with contrasting reactions. On the one hand, it is possible to find ardent supporters of the introduction of EMI courses in the European higher education system. Their appreciation is based on a purely scientific interest in EMI or they indeed appreciate the unifying role that English can play in European academia. On the other hand, however, there are scholars who maintain that EMI may represent a threat in the long run. Indeed, by increasing the offer of EMI-taught courses, universities tend to reduce or dramatically alter the didactic role that the national language spoken in a given country used to play before the introduction of EMI-taught courses. Despite these different reactions, over the last decade EMI has consolidated its role as an important pedagogical tool in higher education.

The present contribution investigated the role of pragmatic strategies in EMI lectures by looking at a corpus made up of three different courses. On the basis of the data collected, we have observed that the main strategies deployed by the lecturers are the following:

Strategies to introduce new terms/topics	Strategies for making the progression of the lecture smoother
rhetorical questions	rephrasing
checking previous knowledge	direct appeals
chains of questions	inclusive 'we'
personalization	backchannelling
comprehension checks	frame markers
	self-repairs
	emphasis
	pre-empting students' doubts

Table 11.1: Pragmatic strategies

By drawing on the lecturers' views it was possible to have many findings of the corpus-based analysis confirmed and explained on the basis of their teaching experience. Pragmatic strategies in EMI contexts are not just adopted on a spur-of-the-moment basis or, in other words, they do not simply represent a response to a single communicative necessity. Lecturers use pragmatic strategies consciously and carefully as they are well-aware of the beneficial role that properly deployed strategies can play for the transfer of relevant contents in their courses. Moreover, the lecturers seemed to be particularly keen on eliciting the students' interest and participation. In general, students were not simply meant to be mere recipients of the lecture, but they were required to be actively involved in the discussion and negotiation of the contents. Their participation during the lectures, whether spontaneous or triggered by means of questions, was a fundamental feature of all the lectures and possibly an indication of the fact that, when teaching in a language different from their own, lecturers had to re-think and re-organize their own syllabuses (see 35), since EMI cannot be reduced to translating from Italian to English (see 32).

These observations, however, simply refer to the findings yielded by the analysis of the three courses. Given the limited extent of the research, it would not be possible make generalizations and consider the trends observed here as those of EMI in higher education. In other words, these final remarks apply only to the corpus and to the interviews which were under scrutiny here, and would need further research and investigation to see if they are representative of the EMI phenomenon at large.

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