At the Crossroads of English-Medium Instruction and English-Medium Instruction and Translanguaging

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Abstract
This chapter reports on a study of student translanguaging practices in English-medium instruction (EMI) at an Italian university. Translanguaging is intended here as the strategic use that multilingual speakers make of their entire linguistic repertoire so as to facilitate the effective learning of content. Meanwhile, EMI is defined as the adoption of English to teach academic content in countries where the first language for communication is not English. The data analysed for this chapter have been collected as part of a wider research project, which aims to look at students' experiences of EMI and their language use during EMI lessons at the University of Padova. For this chapter, the authors analysed a selection of EMI classes where students were active participants in group work or oral presentations, in which the spontaneous use of translanguaging practices could potentially be observed. After discussing the communicative functions of student translanguaging practices in the observed lessons, the authors conclude by reflecting on the extent to which these practices might be determined by the local Italian Higher Education (HE) context and whether there should be greater attempts to legitimise and foster translanguaging in EMI.

Introduction

This chapter explores student translanguaging practices in English-medium instruction (EMI) at the University of Padova in northern Italy. EMI can be described as: 'The use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is not English' (Macaro et al., 2018: 37). In line with developments on a national level, EMI has increased rapidly at the University of Padova in recent years, and it now offers fifty-seven English Taught Programmes (ETPs). In this EMI setting, the relationship between English, the local language (Italian) and other languages is not specified; in fact, no guidelines are provided for lecturers regarding classroom language use. Yet despite the common belief in the benefits of an English-only approach (Chellin, 2018), studies have revealed that in many EMI classes both lecturers and students activate translanguaging practices (Guarda, 2018). Translanguaging, as explained below, is intended here as the strategic use that multilingual speakers make of their entire linguistic repertoire so as to facilitate the effective learning of content (Canagarajah, 2011).

The study presented in this chapter involved the observation and audio recording of six two-hour EMI lessons from different disciplines. The authors chose classes in which they had been informed by lecturers that students would be invited to actively engage in group work or oral presentations, so as to unveil the possible use of spontaneous translanguaging practices. This chapter will focus on the following research questions:

1. Which translanguaging patterns emerge in student language practices?
2. Which functions do these instances of translanguaging perform?

After illustrating the communicative purposes of translanguaging in the observed lessons, the chapter will conclude with reflections on the extent to which these practices might be determined by the local Italian HE context and whether there should be greater attempts to legitimise and foster translanguaging in EMI.

An ecology of EMI

A brief overview of the implementation of EMI at a national and local level in Italy is required here as a basis for reflection on translanguaging. In line with an ecology of language approach, we take the view that the context is 'not just something that surrounds language, but that in fact defines language, while at the same time being defined *by* it' (van Lier, 2004: 5). Although its history is not as long as in northern European countries (see for example Hultgren et al., 2015; Wilkinson, 2013), EMI has fast been gaining ground in Italy in recent years. In 2018, a total of 397 Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes taught in English were offered in fifty-nine Italian universities (Universitaly, 2019), as opposed to 245 programmes in fifty-two universities in 2015. These figures provide an indication of the powerful drive towards internationalization characterising higher education in Italy.

The linguistic implications of EMI have been the subject of intense debate in Italy. For example, objections to the decision taken by Milan Polytechnic to deliver all its graduate courses in English reached the Constitutional Court in 2017. One of the fears driving this action concerned the future health of the Italian language, tied to the belief that its exclusion from university courses could ultimately result in severe domain loss. Another concern was the quality of EMI courses and a fall in academic standards (see for example Motta, 2017). Related to this are the findings of Costa and Coleman's (2013) survey of the state of the art of EMI in Italy: for example, both lecturers' and students' levels of English were considered to be a potential problem by 30% of respondents. This issue should be viewed against the backdrop of language competence in Italy, which has still not reached the level of some of its European neighbours. A 2016 EU survey showed that 66.1% of the population of Italy aged between 25 and 64 could speak at least one foreign language; despite being above the average for Europe (64.6%), this figure is well below that of other countries such as Sweden (96.6%) where EMI has a longer tradition (Kuteeva, 2018). The role of Italian and language competence in English are both issues which impact on attitudes to EMI and translanguaging in the Italian context.

EMI was first introduced at the University of Padova during the 2009/2010 academic year. In the academic year 2018/2019, it offered fifty-seven ETPs across all its eight schools and over 700 individual courses taught in English in Italian-language degree programmes. Despite the intent to attract a greater number of international students, the vast majority of students on EMI courses in Padova are Italian. The University thus provides an opportunity for them to have the benefits of 'internationalisation at home', defined by Beelen and Jones (2015: 69) as 'the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments'. For international students, English is a medium enabling them to study a content subject in a country whose native language they most probably do not know; local students instead choose to study on EMI courses to gain better career prospects in today's globalised world by improving their competence in English (Ackerley et al., 2017). If learning English is thus valued by students, one might expect their practices to be linked to commonly held (albeit not necessarily well-founded) beliefs about language learning, such as the avoidance of the students' first language (L1) so as to ensure as much target language input as possible (McMillan & Rivers, 2011).

The issues of domain loss and language competence mentioned above are indicative of one erroneous equation lying at the heart of many EMI discussions. It is often assumed that the only way to reach the objectives of internationalisation is by imposing 'English-only' education (Daryai-Hansen et al., 2017; Philipson, 2003). Yet, as Wilkinson (2017: 41) reminds us: 'Internationalization does not mean that education has to be offered in a single language'. In northern European countries with a longer tradition of bi/multilingual education, the threat of English has often been mitigated by what Philipson (2015) calls 'additive' ways, in other words by preserving the vitality of the local languages, and by seeing English as an additional, prevalent yet not dominant, option. One could thus argue that in an Italian HE context translanguaging could represent a means to reduce the risk of domain loss for the Italian language and at the same time facilitate the acquisition of content knowledge in cases of low English language competence. At this point it is necessary to unpack the concept of translanguaging and reflect on its role in EMI.

Translanguaging in EMI

In line with García (2009), the term translanguaging is intended here as encompassing any practice or 'set of practices' (Mazak, 2017: 5) in which multilingual participants engage in 'flexible bilingualism' (Creese & Blackledge, 2010: 112). In other words, speakers 'shuttle between languages, treating the diverse forms that form their repertoire as an integrated system' (Canagarajah, 2011: 401) extending beyond the 'socially and politically defined boundaries' of the languages involved (Otheguy et al., 2015: 281). In education, translanguaging has been described as encompassing a variety of practices such as transliteracy (Baker, 2011), code-meshing (Canagarajah, 2011) and translation. When there is an underlying ‘principle that deliberately draws on students’ plurilingual competences’ (Daryai-Hansen et al., 2017: 30), one can, as Ganuza and Hedman (2017) suggest, talk about ‘pedagogical translanguaging’. In the case in question, the ultimate goal is indeed knowledge construction, but there are no pedagogical guidelines favouring and encouraging the use of multiple languages. Instead, we could say that when translanguaging occurs it does so spontaneously, and despite a prevailing belief in the merits of an ‘English-only’ approach, as mentioned above. Creese and Blackledge (2010: 113) mention ‘the burden of guilt associated with translanguaging in educational contexts’: while it would perhaps be going too far to call the use of translanguaging as ‘stigmatized’ as in Carroll and van den Hoven’s 2017 study, it is certainly neither acknowledged formally nor encouraged in our context.

Yet, spontaneous translanguaging does occur, and it is this that our study seeks to describe. As the prescribed language of instruction is English and the context is that of an Italian university, our examples of translanguaging almost exclusively involve the use of the Italian language. It is important to clarify that in our investigation, we do not simply take into consideration examples of what is also referred to as ‘codeswitching’, in other words, utterances containing a mix of two or more languages. As the language of instruction is English, we consider any use of Italian or other languages to be instances of translanguaging, including where bottom-up student practices, such as reading a text in English and discussing it with peers in Italian, are reminiscent of pedagogical translanguaging. More specifically, in our study translanguaging encompasses practices such as requesting or providing the translation/explanation of an unknown English term; using Italian and English in what Ljosland calls ‘fringe situations’ (2010: 104), in other words for matters regarding classroom management, socialisation and task organisation; asking questions in Italian after listening to a lecture in English; commenting on course content in a language other than the source language; using Italian to discuss a collaborative writing or oral task.

Up until now research on translanguaging in English-medium higher education settings has been scarce. Part of the existing literature has looked at translanguaging as activated or perceived by EMI lecturers (see for example Chang, 2019; Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2017; Mazak & Herbas-Donoso, 2014; McMillan & Rivers, 2011), while a limited number of studies have been devoted to translanguaging strategies adopted by EMI students (e.g. Andersson et al., 2013; Kagwesage, 2013). Research conducted at a Ukrainian university (Goodman, 2017) unveiled a variety of examples of translanguaging involving English, Russian, and Ukrainian. Interestingly, in EMI lessons, students tended to use Russian rather than Ukrainian to support their learning, for example, in seeking lexical clarifications. As in our own context, translanguaging here was not part of a pedagogical approach, with both teachers and students attempting to adhere to an English-only approach: 'These multilingual repertoires, intertwined with the students' multilingual identities, emerged despite explicit efforts to keep the task in English' (Goodman, 2017: 63). A study undertaken at Roskilde University in Denmark, instead, investigated the translanguaging strategies of students on a foreign language course in German, which adopted a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach (Daryai-Hansen et al., 2017). Though not strictly speaking an EMI course, as language was not solely used as a means to deliver course content, the authors' findings are of relevance here. With reference to Ferguson's 2003 categorisation (Daryai-Hansen et al., 2017: 34), they found examples of practices related to 'curriculum access', but very few of 'classroom management discourse' or 'interpersonal relations'. The difference in the Danish context was that translanguaging was not only welcomed but actively encouraged as part of the educational approach adopted.

From English-only to translanguaging at the University of Padova

This section will delve into the research already carried out into EMI at the University of Padova in order to provide some background to the present study. For example, a recent survey administered to forty-two Italian EMI lecturers (Chellin, 2018) revealed the prevalence of an English-only approach, with 76% never using their first language in lessons. As regards students' language use, 83% of the respondents had observed students' choice of other languages in class, mostly to speak about topics not directly related to lesson content, to provide peer assistance or in the context of group discussions. Most (69%) believed such practices to be beneficial as 'students feel more comfortable to use both languages' (Chellin, 2018: 88), but only one made a comment that indicated that such use represented in some way an intended pedagogical approach: 'I try to make the best use of polilinguism in class' (Chellin, 2018: 89). Those firmly opposed to students translanguaging in class consider it important for students to 'force' themselves to use English at all times, mostly so as to involve the international students, whose competence in Italian might be low, and to prepare students for their future in 'an English speaking (scientific) society'.

In another small-scale study (Dalziel, forthcoming), classroom language practices in EMI were explored by administering a questionnaire to thirty-four students studying on a BA course in Psychological Science. A total of twenty-six of the students involved were native speakers of Italian, three were English-Italian bilinguals, and of the remaining students there was one native speaker each of Hungarian, Polish, Serbian/Croatian, Spanish and Turkish. Focusing on the language(s) spoken whilst conducting pair or group work, only four students (11.8%), of whom there were international students, answered 'Always English'; the most common answer was 'sometimes only English and sometimes only Italian, depending on the task or situation' (52.9%), followed by 'A mix of English and Italian' (29.4 %). Yet despite their actual practices, it is curious that most of the students (58.8%) felt that students studying in English should use English all the time. In other words, they do not acknowledge their own language practices as being the right ones, mirroring the idea of 'guilt' mentioned above.

Italian students are concerned about excluding international students from the dialogue, yet when asked about the reasons for speaking Italian, one international student refers to the chance to improve her language competence. In fact, as will be discussed below, the total prohibition of translanguaging from the EMI classroom denies international students a valuable language learning opportunity. Overall the students' replies appear to confirm that the adoption of translanguaging practices helps in verbalising content knowledge and thus enhances the learning process. It is worth noting that one Italian student noted that translanguaging is more demanding than holding a monolingual conversation: 'when I'm really tired, I have difficulties alternating between languages, so the language in which we started the conversation will come more naturally' (Dalziel, forthcoming). This would seem to contradict the idea of speakers of two or more languages moving effortlessly between the two. If we take translanguaging as a useful skill, one could argue that rather than discouraging its use students should be given adequate opportunities to develop this skill. For as van der Walt observes (2013: 92), the use of the local language alongside English offers students the 'possibility of quality teaching and learning opportunities as well as increased employability'.

Exploring student translanguaging in the EMI classroom

The data discussed in this chapter have been collected as part of a wider project currently in progress at the University of Padova with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of student language practices and perspectives of EMI. Part of this project is an ethnographic study which includes the administration of a questionnaire on perspectives of EMI to 367 students and semi-structured interviews conducted with forty of these participants. One finding is that local language use on the part of the lecturers generates mixed feelings among the students as it is often viewed as indicating a lack of competence. On the other hand, in group work or in questions after class, adopting translanguaging strategies is common among students and seen as a way of ensuring understanding of content and negotiation of meanings (for preliminary findings see Guarda, 2018). In the following section, these strategies are explored in greater depth in relation to their communicative functions.

As mentioned above, the data analysed for the present study were collected through the observation and audio recordings of six two-hour EMI lectures from various disciplines. More specifically, while audio recordings aimed at seizing student oral production and interaction, classroom observation with field notes sought to capture any visual aids (e.g. notes, slide presentations or videos projected, etc) as well as the environment in which the oral production and interaction took place. Table 1 below gives an overview of the classes observed[1].

Table 1. EMI classes observed and audio recorded

Degree course	**Students**	**Activity type**
Master's degree (MA) in Cognitive Neuroscience and Clinical Neuropsychology	Sixteen students, of which half with L1 Italian. Other L1s: English, Danish, Spanish, French	Oral presentation: four students deliver a lesson on a topic they have previously chosen, using slideshows and videos.
MA in Medical Biotechnologies	Twenty-three students, of which twenty with Italian as their L1, and two with L1 German	Oral presentation: two groups present a scientific paper to the rest of the class.
MA in Pharmaceutical Biotechnologies	Thirty students, of which twenty-nine with L1 Italian, and one with L1 Moldavian	Group work: divided into groups, students collaborate to extract the most relevant pieces of information out of a scientific paper and then report to the whole class.
MA in Local Development	Twenty-one students, of which eight had Italian as their L1. Other L1s: Persian, English, Arabic, Russian, French, English, Uzbek	Group work: five students lead a discussion and group work on a topic they had presented in a previous lesson.
MA in Animal Care	Twenty-five students, of which twenty-four with Italian as their L1, and one with L1 Russian	Group work: in groups, students discuss a given case study and come up with solutions that they later report to the rest of the class.
MA in Business Administration	Thirty-five students, of which thirty with Italian as their L1. Other L1s: Chinese, German,	Group work: in groups, students prepare so as to perform a role-play

	French, Ukrainian and Russian	

Data from the audio recordings were analysed and triangulated with the field notes originating from classroom observation so as to identify and make sense of translanguaging patterns activated by students to engage 'cognitively and socially' (García, 2009: 158) in the EMI classroom. In order to make translanguaging episodes available for categorization, all lessons were transcribed using an adapted version of the ELFA Transcription Guide (2004). This was deemed to best illustrate language use in contexts, such as EMI, where English is the official academic lingua franca (ELFA). The methodology used for the analysis is qualitative, with thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) adopted so as to pinpoint translanguaging patterns in the data and to categorize them according to their main function. The analysis was inspired by Gotti's (2105) taxonomy of code-switching in EMI contexts. Drawing on Klimpfinger's (2007) and Cogo's (2009) research on English as a lingua franca communication, Gotti's 2015 study investigated the use of code-switching by EMI lecturers to fulfil their communicative efforts, namely to ask for assistance, signal cultural identity, show engagement in conversation, and ensure comprehension. The fact that Gotti's study focused on an Italian setting where English is the academic lingua franca made it a good starting point to analyse the emergence and function of multilingual strategies as activated by EMI students. Yet, Gotti's taxonomy showed some limitations, in that it seems to regard code-switching as a one-dimensional shift between two autonomous codes. Thus, his taxonomy was adapted to the specific context under scrutiny. This was done at two levels: at an ideological level, which meant moving away from a view of language separation so as to embrace a more fluid and heteroglossic view of multilingual practices that extend beyond codeswitching; and at an operational level, with the identification of new categories to best capture the practices emerging in the context under investigation.

Functions of EMI student translanguaging practices

One observation is that translanguaging practices were activated much more frequently when students were conducting group work than when they were performing oral presentations. This may be linked to the very nature of the activities involved. On the one hand, oral presentations required a higher degree of preliminary preparation and were delivered in front of an audience which also included the lecturer. In this type of situation, students may have been more inclined to adhere to the shared language 'policy' of their course, especially since their performance was taken into account for their final evaluation. By contrast, group work as observed in the four lessons illustrated in Table 1 was conducted more freely, without the constant presence of the lecturer and with a lower degree of formality. Despite still perceiving group work as a 'core teaching and learning' task (Ljosland, 2010: 104), the students seemed to feel more free to draw from their linguistic repertoire in flexible ways so as to better achieve their communicative aims, even more so in groups where they all shared the same mother tongue. In the lessons observed, translanguaging was activated to perform a variety of functions, some of which resonate with Gotti's 2015 study: appealing for assistance; ensuring comprehension; verbalising content knowledge; task management; signalling cultural identity; and strengthening cooperation. To present these functions, we draw on Daryai-Hansen et al. (2017) who, inspired by Ferguson's 2003 categorisation, distinguish between three broad functional areas of translanguaging, namely translanguaging for 'curriculum access, 'classroom management discourse' and 'interpersonal relations'.

Appealing for assistance

One of the functions of the translanguaging practices adopted to foster curriculum access consists in asking for help so as to overcome or avoid communication breakdowns due to lexical gaps. According to Gotti (2015: 86), these practices are activated by students who 'rely on the cooperation of other students and even lecturers from their own linguistic background'. The observed lessons unveiled several episodes in which students asked for assistance. In Excerpt 1, one of the students (S5)[2] does not know the English equivalent for *lampadina* (light bulb) and explicitly asks for help ('how do you say light bulb'). A member of the same group tries to offer a creative translation, 'the lighter'. A second student promptly intervenes by providing the right equivalent. The episode ends with a joke on the part of the first speaker ('I can't speak English') aimed at reinforcing engagement in the conversation.

Excerpt :. Pharmaceutical Biotechnologies

Speaker	**Original**	**English translation**
S5	come si dice lampadina	how do you say light bulb
SU	*the lighter*	the lighter
S7	*light bulb*	light bulb
S5	io non so parlare in inglese	I can't speak English

In Excerpt 2, one of the students (S2) struggles to find the English word for *mostra* (exhibition). Instead of performing a direct speech act to ask for assistance, she uses a rising pitch while uttering the Italian word *mostra*. This is enough for her classmate (S1) to provide the right translation. The first speaker thus repeats the English equivalent and is able to continue her report.

Excerpt 2: Local Development

Speaker	**Original**	**English translation**
S2	*in in Gurna there is a project in 2001 that aims to preserve and foster local erm art and tradition so they made a kind of erm* mostra?	in in Gurna there is a project in 2001 that aims to preserve and foster local erm art and tradition so they made a kind of erm exhibition?
S1	*exhibition*	exhibition
S2	*exhibition that regards the local tradition*	exhibition that regards the local tradition

Ensuring comprehension

In Gotti's 2015 study, the category of ensuring comprehension indicated the activation of code-switching on the part of the lecturer with the aim of checking if students had understood a certain concept or lexical term. In the present study, instead, it was found that students used other practices so as to guarantee the full comprehension of the texts (both oral and written) that they were using in class and thus favour curriculum access. In the Pharmaceutical Biotechnologies lesson, for instance, the members of one of the groups were observed reading the assigned scientific paper in English but discussing its main points in Italian only. By activating transliteracy practices whereby literacy input and output are in different languages (Baker, 2011), the students aimed at making sure that all the members of the group could understand the information contained in the assigned paper. This strategy resonates with Williams' early definition of translanguaging (1994 in Baker, 2011) as the pedagogical practice of students' switching the language of input and output 'to maximize understanding and performance' (Baker, 2011: 288).

Another example of this category was detected in the Cognitive Neuroscience lesson, in which one of the students showed the class a video related to the topic she had to present. Since the video was in Spanish and had no subtitles, the student was observed pausing it several times to sum up its contents in English and share them with the class, so as to ensure that all her peers could access the information contained in the video. This episode seems to suggest that students are indeed capable of drawing on all the linguistic resources that are available to them to enhance their communicative potential (García, 2009).

Verbalising content knowledge

Gotti's study (2015) revealed that lecturers occasionally resorted to another language so as to provide more detailed explanations of a concept. It seems, however, that this practice only occurred at the level of single words, to avoid misunderstanding and convey greater nuances of expression. In the context under investigation, it was observed that the students who used their mother tongue to give more specific explanations primarily aimed at achieving a deeper understanding of a specific concept before conveying it to their peers through English. In these situations, therefore, translanguaging was activated because it had a potential cognitive advantage for the speakers themselves, thus promoting a 'deeper and fuller understanding of the subject matter' (Baker, 2011: 289) and guaranteeing better access to course content. By verbalising content knowledge in their mother tongue first, students were then able to reformulate it in English with more precision.

Excerpt 3: Animal Care

Speaker	**Original**	**English translation**
S12	*I mean maybe veterinarian and the teacher are not are not being the same ... the teacher gave the information and the veterinarian doesn't want to give the information*	I mean maybe veterinarian and the teacher are not , are not being the same ... the teacher gave the information and the veterinarian doesn't want to give the information
S9	il veterinario non voleva dare le informazioni mentre il , il *pathologist* sì ... *I would say just the teacher and not the veterinarian*	the veterinarian did not want to share the information while the the pathologist did want to ... I would say just the teacher and not the veterinarian

Excerpt 3 above originates from a lesson in bioethics, in which students were discussing a controversial case study with several stakeholders involved. While negotiating the role of each stakeholder, S9 first addresses the issue in Italian ('the veterinarian did not want to share the information while the pathologist did want to'). It may be noted that S9's opinion on the role of both veterinarian and teacher (the pathologist) is in line with what S12, an international student, has just said. Yet, S9 feels the need to articulate the concept in Italian. Only after doing this is she ready to sharing her ideas with the rest of the group in English. This example suggests how translanguaging is linked to the speaker's ability to 'break boundaries' between languages (Li Wei, 2018: 25) so as to articulate views and participate in meaning negotiations with deeper awareness of the subject matter.

Task management

Belonging to the functional area of translanguaging for classroom management (Daryai-Hansen et al., 2017), the task management function characterises translanguaging practices that are activated to give suggestions or instructions to other students in order to effectively perform a given task. In our study, this function occurred mostly when students were collaborating in groups, as in the following example.

Excerpt :. Pharmaceutical Biotechnologies

Speaker	Original	English translation
S4	*low bio-availability*	[dictating] low bio-availability
S6	sì okay	[writing on the blackboard] yeah okay
S5	io aggiungerei mhm ... *LOW oral bio-availability*	I would add mhm ... LOW oral bio-availability

In Excerpt 4, the students have to agree on the most salient points of a paper. While speakers S4 and S6 are negotiating which points are worth writing on the blackboard and then reported to the class, speaker S5 intervenes by suggesting an improvement to the text ('I would add mhm … LOW oral bio-availability'). In this case Italian is used to perform the pragmatic speech act of advice, in order to better achieve the final aim of the performed task. The noun phrase in English in the same utterance, on the contrary, marks the speakers' return to the contents of the task, and thus to the language associated with it.

Task management strategies also emerge from Excerpt 5 below, in which one of the students leading the group discussion intervenes to encourage his peers to ask for support if they have doubts about the task they have to perform ('if you have any questions please ask'). His invitation is welcomed positively by a fellow student, who thanks him using the same linguistic code.

Excerpt 5: Local Development

Speaker	Original	English translation
S14	se avete domande potete chiedere	if you have any questions please ask
S13	grazie	thanks

Signalling cultural identity

The use of unplanned exclamations, tags, conjunctions and pause fillers in another language while speaking English reveals the speaker's complex and fluctuating cultural identity. According to Klimpfinger (2007), the occurrence of these episodes represents unintentional code-switching which, as Gotti also specifies (2015), is often linked to the speaker anxiety. In the lessons observed, only a few episodes of such translanguaging practices were found. They all occurred in the Medical Biotechnologies class, in which the students were being evaluated on their performance in an oral presentation. The following excerpt exemplifies them.

Excerpt 6: Medical Biotechnologies

Speaker	Original	English translation
L	*okay what is the function of this in the medium*	okay what is the function of this in the medium
S3	*well they use this amount of insulin with transferee to differentiate this immortal line of mouse myoblast into myotype myotube myotypes erm* boh	well they use this amount of insulin with transferee to differentiate this immortal line of mouse myoblast into myotype myotube myotypes erm I don't know

In Excerpt 6, the lecturer (L) asks the student (S3) a question about the amount of insulin used in the study presented in class. The student seems unsure of her answer and does not know whether to use the word 'myotube' or 'myotype'. After some repetition and hesitation, she unintentionally uses a typical Italian exclamation ('*boh*'), normally associated with uncertainty, thus revealing her cultural identity. Unlike in Gotti's study (2015), in which the occurrence of this type of translanguaging episode was commonly activated by students with a lower degree of competence in the language, the instances we observed seemed to be linked more to the students' emotional state than to their language knowledge.

Strengthening cooperation

This refers to episodes in which interactants make use of translanguaging to maintain interpersonal relations (Daryai-Hansen et al., 2017) and reinforce the sense of solidarity within the group. Several instances of this function were observed in the lessons in which students were asked to collaborate to achieve a common goal.

Excerpt 7: Pharmaceutical Biotechnologies

Speaker	**Original**	**English translation**
S5	fai la L strana comunque	by the way you have a funny way to write L
S6	la L?	the L?
S5	sì	yes
Ss	[laugh]	[laugh]

In Excerpt 7, S5 uses the group's mother tongue to comment on her peer's handwriting ('by the way you have a funny way to write L'). Her comment does not contribute to the task carried out by the students, yet it plays a social function by shifting the focus of the interaction from the academic activity itself to the interpersonal relationships at play. The fact that her comment is welcomed with laughter from all the interactants seems to suggest that S5's communicative and social purposes have been met.

In the group discussions we observed, the reinforcement of positive social relationships was also sometimes promoted by the use of humour through translanguaging. The example reported in Excerpt 8 below is taken from the Business Administration class in which the students had to discuss the best strategy to ask for a salary increase. As can be noticed, the interactants embrace humour by suggesting exaggerated strategies their fictional persona should activate to ingratiate himself with the Human Resources manager. As in Excerpt 7, these turns do not contribute to the task and the students are well aware of the inappropriateness of using such exaggerated tones in a formal negotiation. Their use of humour, instead, plays a social role in the group discussion.

Excerpt 8. Business Administration

Speaker	**Original**	**English translation**
S19	*we love you* mettiti a piangere [laugh]	we love you start crying [laugh]
S17	che bei divani che c'ha	what lovely sofas he has
S16	dì che noi siamo il sindacato degli ingegneri iniziamo a fargli paura [laugh]	tell him we belong to the union of engineers let's start scaring him [laugh]

Discussion

This study reveals common threads in translanguaging practices in EMI. Students adopt translanguaging for a variety of functions, for instance to ask for assistance and thus avoid potential communication breakdowns due to language gaps. In this light, translanguaging has the potential to activate student-student cooperation and, as Li Wei (2018) puts it, to facilitate meaning-making. This is particularly relevant in contexts such as EMI, in which negotiation of knowledge and co-construction of meanings among speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds are the key to enhanced learning of both content and language.

Translanguaging is also adopted to ensure full comprehension of the resources that the students use in class, for example through the activation of transliteracy practices whereby the students' linguistic repertoire is used flexibly and interchangeably for literacy input and output. As described above, students juggle between languages pushing and breaking boundaries between them (Li Wei, 2018), for instance by reading written texts in one language and discussing their contents in another language. Judicious use of the linguistic repertoire that multilingual students have at their disposal, therefore, may allow them to successfully navigate the complex waters of cognitively-demanding academic tasks, thus giving them better access to course content. This seems to confirm findings from previous research in higher education settings (e.g. Andersson et al., 2013; Chang, 2019; Daryai-Hansen et al., 2017; Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2017; Kagwesage, 2013), which show that translanguaging practices have great potential to drive forward the learning process and lead to fuller acquisition of content.

Deeper understanding of subject-related concepts (Baker, 2011) is also promoted by translanguaging practices in which students verbalise content knowledge in one language — typically their first language — before reformulating it in another language, English in the case of EMI. This practice can have two main advantages: on the one hand, processing concepts in both (or all) the multilingual speaker's languages might help the speaker to grasp them in greater depth; at the same time, it may serve as reinforcement and scaffolding for other interactants.

The study revealed that translanguaging was also used as a means of signalling cultural identity through the insertion of exclamations, conjunctions and pause fillers taken from another language. In our data, such use was triggered by the speaker's emotional state and went generally unnoticed by interactants. Yet, it helps reveal the fluidity with which multilingual speakers shuttle across both fuzzy language boundaries (García, 2009) and fluctuating multicultural identities (Celic & Seltzer, 2011).

Two further functions of translanguaging were identified, namely managing tasks and strengthening cooperation among students. Both refer to the flexible use of a multilingual speaker's repertoire in 'fringe situations' (Ljosland, 2010: 104), in other words for matters that are not strictly related to the core teaching and learning activity. As in Ljosland's study (2010), in which multilingual patterns were observed when students were performing collaborative tasks, our data revealed that speakers were able to select features from their full linguistic repertoire in giving suggestions or instructions to other students so as to achieve a given task and communicate appropriately. In Excerpt 4 reported above, for instance, the speaker shows she can flexibly move from one language to another, using her L1 for task management-related communication and English for content-related utterances. This seems to be in line with Creese and Blackledge's recognition that 'languages do not fit clear bounded entities' and that, for multilingual speakers, all languages are useful and 'needed' to communicate and negotiate meanings (2010: 112).

In so-called fringe situations, the 'social side of translanguaging' (Chang, 2019: 33) emerges as a way to enhance the affective atmosphere among speakers and thus create a safe place for everyone to express their ideas. As illustrated above, the use of translanguaging in expressions that do not apparently contribute to the academic task being performed, as well as in humour and jokes, helps shift the focus to the interpersonal relationships among interactants. As such, translanguaging offers multilingual speakers a fluid space to perform their identities (Li Wei, 2018) and achieve interactional and social aims (Daryai-Hansen et al., 2017), which in turn reinforce cooperation. This seems to confirm García's (2009) claim that translanguaging can be a powerful resource for multilingual speakers to engage both cognitively and socially in an increasingly complex society.

Some final reflections

Overall, the findings presented here reveal that students on EMI courses adopt translanguaging not only to to ensure understanding and avoid possible misunderstanding by filling possible lexical gaps, but also in the co-creation of communicative events in which two languages complement each other. This seems to resonate with the comment of one Psychological Science student (Dalziel, forthcoming), according to whom language choice may depend on: 'the effectiveness of some linguistic structures themselves: some words, to me, represent their meaning more effectively in English, some others in Italian'. There are also signs of positive interdependence, with translanguaging used to make sure that one's peers have fully understood elements of a lesson.

However, as mentioned above, these practices occur despite the belief on the part of both lecturers and students that English should be the sole language of the EMI classroom. Returning to the van Lier quote about context defining language (see section 2), it should not be forgotten that the Italian students studying on this degree programme have specifically chosen an EMI course rather than one taught through Italian. Against the background of national levels of language competence lagging behind other European countries, these students wish to be immersed in the English language, which might not have been the case in their school careers, in order to improve their proficiency. Another determining factor in English-only choice in our context is the presence of international students, with English deemed to be the language of inclusion. This points to a conception of English as an Academic Lingua Franca, fostering collaboration and the co-construction of meaning in an international context, and belonging to its users rather than to its native speakers. Such a view could in part allay the fears of EMI sceptics who see the use of English as an imposition, rather than a tool for international collaboration.

Yet as this study suggests, in spite of potential contextual constraints on translanguaging practices, the phenomenon is clearly present in this EMI environment. What appears to be absent is any conception of the pedagogical and communicative advantages of parallel language use (see for example Källkvist & Hult, 2016). As Cummins (2005: 22) observes, 'bilingual instructional strategies can usefully complement monolingual strategies to promote more cognitively engaged learning'. Instead, the ideology of parallel monolingualisms is prevalent, with a view to the fact that in their future lives, students will most likely need to be able to communicate in English proficiently. This however overlooks the possible advantages in a plurilingual society of being able to switch effectively between languages and to participate in ‘dynamic and creative linguistic practices’ (Li Wei, 2018: 15). As regards international students, although they may initially have limited language skills in the local language, by means of translanguaging and negotiation of meaning with their peers, they could be helped in their attempts to become part of the host society, albeit for a limited period of time. Paulsrud and her colleagues (2017: 16) talk of ‘processes of transformations through the creation of spaces in which multilinguals can use and expand their linguistic repertoires’. Perhaps the judicious and systematic adoption of translanguaging practices in EMI could itself reshape the context, turning the English-only bubble in an Italian university into a truly multilingual learning space.

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[1] All the students observed were informed about the aims of the research project and were asked to sign a consent form in order to participate in the study. They were also assured that their anonymity would be guaranteed

[2] For ethical reasons, students' names have been substituted with identifying tags