

GLOBALISATION IN THE ACADEMIC WORLD: IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

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Abstract

The paper will investigate the present globalising trends in the academic world, focusing in particular on their main implications for language education and research. The first part of the paper will explore the globalising effects of the use of English in the world of academia and the complex nature of its linguistic realisations, highlighting both its homogenizing and localising trends. Indeed, in spite of the greater similarity deriving from the process of globalisation, academic discourse is not at all uniform but varies according to a host of factors, such as language competence, disciplinary field, community membership, professional expertise and generic conventions, as well as other factors which clearly reflect aspects of local traditions and cultures. The data presented in this part originate from recent research projects on identity and culture in academic discourse, which show that the (native or non-native) Anglophone textual realisations are clearly influenced by their authors' cultural allegiance to their linguistic, professional, social, or national reference groups.

The second part of the paper will be devoted to the analysis of another issue which is highly topical in the academic context at a global level, i.e. the use of English as a medium of instruction in higher education. As part of the internationalisation programmes adopted by many Universities in non-English-speaking countries, the implementation of these 'international' courses have opened up new opportunities for learning the English discourses relating to the specialized disciplines taught, but have also aroused problems connected with language proficiency and the level of content competence acquired. These issues will be investigated with reference to experiences and research projects carried out in various European countries in the last few years.

Keywords: Globalisation – academic discourse – language education – research – English-medium education

1. Introduction

In the last few decades there has been a great increase in the globalisation of pedagogic and research practices in Universities all over the world. As regards education, as part of the internationalisation programmes, more and more academic institutions in non-English speaking countries have promoted courses using English as a medium of instruction. These courses are meant to attract students

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from as many countries as possible all over the world, and the only feasible solution to the language problem is seen in the use of English as a lingua franca. Also in the research field, the wish to be read and quoted as widely as possible at a global level, has induced many scholars to publish using the same lingua franca, i.e. English.

This spread of English has had relevant ideological and ethical implications as it has often been seen as a factor of marginalisation or even obliteration of important existing differences among non-English speaking communities, with the possible risk of a 'colonisation' process preventing the attainment of authentic intercultural discourse (Scollon/Wong Scollon 1995; Canagarajah 1999). As globalising trends commonly rely on covert strategies meant to reduce participants' specificities, they are likely to hybridise local identities in favour of Anglocentric textual models. Globalisation thus offers a topical illustration of the interaction between linguistic and cultural factors in the construction of discourse, both within specialized domains and in wider contexts (Candlin/Gotti 2004, 2007). As language is strictly linked to the setting in which it is used, cultural elements operate as key contextual constraints, influencing both the level of discursive organisation and its range of realisations (Pérez-Llantada 2012). For some scholars (cf. Canagarajah 2002; Kandiah 2005) the considerable success of English in the world of academic research poses a threat not only to the survival and productivity of other languages but also for researchers from non-English-speaking cultures, whose perception of specialized discourse inevitably diverges from the dominant Anglo-American model(s). In this sense, Mauranen (1993) claims that weaker academic discourses deserve attention and protection on a par with vanishing ecosystems, while Swales (1997) describes English as a tyrant in the field.

It is the aim of this paper to investigate the present globalising trends in the academic world, focusing in particular on their main implications for language education and research. The first part of the paper will explore the globalising effects of the use of English in the world of academia and the complex nature of its linguistic realisations, highlighting both homogenizing and localising trends. Indeed, in spite of the homogenizing trends deriving from the process of globalisation, academic discourse is not at all uniform but varies according to a host of factors, such as language competence, disciplinary field, community membership, professional expertise and generic conventions, as well as some factors which clearly reflect aspects of the local tradition and culture. The data presented in this part originate from recent research projects on identity and culture in academic discourse whose data show that the (native or non-native) Anglophone textual realisations are clearly influenced by their authors' cultural allegiance to their linguistic, professional, social, or national reference groups.

The second part of the paper is devoted to the analysis of another phenomenon which is quite topical in the academic context at a global level, i.e. the use of

English as a medium of instruction in higher education in many non-English-speaking countries. The implementation of these 'international' courses have opened up new opportunities for learning the English discourses relating to the specialized disciplines taught, but have also aroused problems connected with language proficiency and the level of content competence acquired. These issues will be investigated with reference to experiences and research projects carried out in various European countries in the last few years.

2. Globalisation in the research field

Academia is a field in which important changes due to globalising trends have emerged (Hyland 2000; Flowerdew 2002), with several cases of language variation linked to the encounter/collision of different cultural frameworks (Benesch 2001; Zamel/Spack 2001). The internationalisation of English academic discourse has not only been observed in Anglophone countries but wherever institutional and professional settings have evolved in ways that transcend the linguistic, cultural and conceptual standards of their local communities (Cotterill/Ife 2001; Candlin 2002). The gradual globalisation or hybridisation of discursive practices that first appeared in English-speaking environments, now significantly affects also smaller languages (Cortese/Riley 2002; Gotti *et al.* 2002), which are subject to standardising pressures in their semantic, textual, sociopragmatic and even lexicogrammatical construction.

The great increase in the globalisation of academic practices has strongly favoured English, which has become the preferred medium for international communication in higher education. The adoption of English as a lingua franca has certainly provided a solution of great practical value, but has also aroused fears and complaints in many non-English-speaking academics. The strict English-medium policies adopted by many academic publications and book series have heightened non-English-speakers' awareness that the increasing use of this language in publishing and higher education might greatly reduce the role of national languages for academic purposes. Indeed, as there is a tendency of scholars to publish what they consider to be their best work in English so as to reach a wider audience (cf. among others Gunnarsson 2000 for Sweden, Yakhontova 2001 for Ukraine, Salager-Meyer / Alcaraz Ariza / Zambrano 2003 for Latin America, Giannoni 2008 for Italy, Kachru 2009 for Asia and Ferguson *et al.* 2011 for Spain), non-English-medium publications are often relegated to the status of local scholarly products providing only a marginal contribution to the mainstream because they are unable to disseminate knowledge through a global lingua franca.

Being associated with communities linked to local as well as international conventions, academic discourse has provided fertile ground for the analysis of intercultural variation, both at a textual level and in the communicative strategies embedded in its textualisations. Several research projects have investigated

identity-forming features linked to 'local' or disciplinary cultures, as communicated through English in various academic domains by native and non-native speakers. Three recent projects on this issue are the KIAP Project (*Cultural Identity in Academic Prose*, <<http://www.kiap.uib.no/>>), carried out by the University of Bergen, Norway, the SERAC Project (*Spanish / English Research Article Corpus*), conducted at the University of Zaragoza (<www.interlae.com>), the *Identity and Culture in Academic Discourse* Project, carried out by CERLIS, the research centre on specialized discourse based at the University of Bergamo <www.unibg.it/cerlis>. By exploring the international perspective suggested by major social and academic actors, they have evaluated how far international audiences in key intercultural domains adopt textual reconfigurations that simplify, distort or even remove non-congruent institutional and cultural traits, while enhancing the identities of specific social and professional communities.

The KIAP Project, for example, has carried out a comparative analysis of medical research articles with those of two other disciplines: Economics and Linguistics (Fløttum/Dahl/Kinn 2006). In particular, Fløttum (2006) compared articles written in three different languages: English, French and Norwegian in order to establish whether cultural identities may be identified in academic prose, and, if so, whether these identities are language or discipline-specific in nature. As regards the comparison of medical research articles with those of the other two disciplines investigated, her analysis indicated that medical research articles are normally multi-authored, while most of the articles in the other two disciplines are single-authored, particularly in Linguistics as shown by the following ratios (the first figure represents single-authored articles): Linguistics: 131/19; Economics: 87/63; Medicine: 15/135. Moreover, as regards author presence, medical authors are not very visible in their texts, as compared to their economist and linguist peers. They 'hide' behind passive constructions and impersonal formulations of different kinds. Observations 'present themselves' to a larger extent than in Economics and Linguistics articles.

Another interesting difference concerns the frequency with which authors refer to (parts of) the text itself, with metatextual expressions with which the author guides the readers through the article itself (as *in this article*) or explains what will be done and where (e.g. *In section 4 we analyse ...*). The results of Fløttum's analysis indicate very clearly that this feature is more or less absent in medical articles, while it is present in the other two disciplines particularly in Linguistics articles (with 1,230 occurrences against only 47 in medical articles). Moreover, in medical articles Fløttum did not find much direct argumentation of the type *we argue* or *in this article we have shown*. This does not mean that medical researchers do not argue. Argumentation is not to be found only in personal constructions introduced by personal pronouns. The strategies used by medical authors to convince their readers are commonly realised by the presentation of facts or observations in

'neutral' utterances which at first glance appear as both objective and deprived of personal traces.

Another aspect investigated is the frequency of bibliographical references. Fløttum's study indicates that references in a medical article are listed at its end and are indicated by numbers in the body of the text. In Economics and Linguistics, instead, references are typically introduced (in different ways) in the text itself. As regards the number of references referred to (whether introduced by number or by author name + year of publication), she found that medical authors use more references than economists and linguists. When looking at how authors of cited articles are 'given the floor', a similar interesting differentiation emerges: cited linguists are allowed to *argue* and to *claim* something while cited medical authors (and also to a large extent cited economists) are typically only allowed to *find* or to *show* results and observations.

Another issue investigated was how authors present their final results, in particular how explicitly they present them. The analysis showed that the word *result* with the meaning 'final result' is more or less absent in Linguistics articles, but quite frequent in medical and especially in Economics articles. However, when *result* is used to refer to 'final results', the cotext is typically a 'neutral' one, with few or no colouring personal or evaluative elements:

- (1) The results of this study demonstrate a number of such potential mediators. (Fløttum 2006: 262)

On examining the verbs combined with first person pronouns, Fløttum has found that these verbs indicate that the authors assume various roles when referring to themselves by the pronoun *we*. Linguists play at least three different roles, i.e. arguers (*we argue*), writers or readers' guide (*in section 3 we will present*) and researchers (*we analyse, we find*). Economists generally take on only the researcher or the writer roles, while medical authors stick to the researcher role. A further illustration of this is that the three most frequent verbs combined with *we* in the multi-author articles studied in KIAP are *find, assume, use* in Economics, *find, argue, see* in Linguistics, *find, use, examine* in Medicine. This difference may be explained with epistemological reasons: medical research is more cumulative and need not discuss basic conceptual systems in the same way as Linguistics often does. Moreover, in Medicine, the reported research is typically presented as completed when the writing of the article starts; in Linguistics, the research is often presented as if it is part of the writing process itself. Furthermore, by adhering strictly to the IMRD article structure, medical authors need not guide the reader or make explicit transitions from one section to another in the same way as linguists and economists do in their often much more heterogeneously structured articles.

In general, Fløttum's findings show that for cultural identities, discipline has greater influence than language. This means that, for example, there are more

similarities between Norwegian and French medical articles than between Norwegian medical and linguistic articles. Statistically both discipline and language have an effect on the frequency of all the six main phenomena studied. However, for most of them, discipline seems to be more important than language.

2.1 The CERLIS Project

In the CERLIS Project special attention has been given to the relationship between socioculturally-oriented identity factors and textual variation in English academic discourse, focusing in particular on the detection of identity traits typical of different branches of learning. Within such domains, we have investigated to what extent the cultural allegiance of (native or non-native) Anglophone discourse communities to their linguistic, professional, social, or national reference groups is affected by the use of English as a lingua franca of international communication. As corpora constitute a remarkable tool for the study of discourse, a specific corpus (Corpus of Academic Discourse, or CADIS) was assembled as the core and foundation of this line of research. In view of an in-depth analysis of variation in intercultural communication, we have selected a range of texts produced by scholars and academic institutions in various parts of the world. To identify textual variants arising from the use of English as a native language or as the lingua franca of science, we have used a corpus formed by English texts for academic communication. The corpus also comprises some Italian texts for comparative purposes. Besides including two different languages, CADIS represents four separate disciplinary areas: Law, Economics, Applied Linguistics and Medicine. For each disciplinary area, various textual genres have been considered: abstracts, articles, book reviews, editorials, posters. The structural complexity of CADIS reflects its contrastive orientation: it is designed to be internally comparable, so its texts can be analysed not only by disciplinary area, genre, language and culture, but also historically. This is possible because the corpus covers a time frame of over thirty years, from 1980 to 2011. Including all language groups – native speakers and non-native speakers of English, and native speakers of Italian –, a total of 2,738 texts (from 635 to 739 per disciplinary area) – have been inserted in the corpus so far. The corpus includes over 12 million words.

2.1.1 Textual variations in journal editorials

Our research project has dealt with identity traits across languages and cultures, as the use of a given language affects the writing of a scholar, especially when it is not his native language. This is particularly evident in the case of English, whose recurrent use by non-native speakers requires a degree of adaptation of their thought patterns and expressive habits. These issues have been dealt with by various members of the CERLIS team. Giannoni (2012), for example, has

investigated local vs. global identities in medical editorials. His analysis of Anglo-American journals, English-medium Italian journals and standard Italian journals suggests a considerable extent of intradisciplinary variation, both within and across languages / cultures. The data investigated thus allow for the observation of the writing behaviour of three different kinds of scholars: native-speaker English (NEng), non-native (i.e. Italian) English (ItEng) and native-speaker Italian (NIt). Since medical editorials (henceforth MEDs) are signed by only one or two authors, native-speaker status is relatively easy to determine, based on the author's name and affiliation.

A quantitative overview of the material (Table 1) shows interesting differences between the three sections in terms of average length, with NEng texts less than half the size of their NIt counterparts and ItEng somewhere in between. Discoursal complexity, as measured by average paragraph length, is instead greatest in NEng (44% higher than NIt). These figures suggest that while Italian MEDs are lengthier than their native English counterparts, they organise the discourse into far shorter units. For both parameters, the ItEng group occupies the middle ground between the two.

Table 1. Average size of texts by section

	Length (Tokens)	Range	Tokens/Paragraph
NEng	1,046	619 - 1,809	125
ItEng	1,882	609 - 3,637	113
NIt	2,429	1,154 - 5,222	87

Giannoni's analysis shows that editorialists employ three types of MED, whose prominence and microlinguistic traits vary across the corpus:

- *Advice editorials* are authoritative reviews of medical issues providing guidance for practitioners;
- *Comment editorials* are opinionated interpretations of developments affecting the medical community, with recommendations for action;
- *Message editorials* reinforce the journal's relationship with its readers, keeping them informed of its initiatives and developments.

While the orientation of the first subgenre is mainly teleological – i.e. driven by the need to shape medical practice – the second is evaluative and the third is phatic. A rough indication of the respective weight of these subgenres across the corpus is given in Table 2, which includes a fourth column, due to the presence in NIt of three spurious text types presented as *editoriale* (namely a review article, an essay and a conference talk). Interestingly, the three subgenres are documented across the corpus, with the sole exception of comment editorials. These are indeed the most variable subgroup, accounting for 80% of texts in NEng but none in ItEng. On the

other hand, advice editorials are used far less, proportionally speaking, in NEng (10%) than in the two groups authored by Italians.

Table 2. Proportion of MED subgenres across the corpus sample

	Advice	Comment	Message	Other
NEng	10%	80%	10%	–
ItEng	60%	–	40%	–
NIt	50%	10%	10%	30%

These data warrant the hypothesis that Italian editorialists: (a) are less likely to comment on current affairs and issues of a (non-)medical nature, whether writing in their first language or in English; and (b) understand the ‘Editorial’ not only as a genre but also (in NIt) as a slot for publishing other genres that deserve editorial sanction. Moreover, unlike their NEng counterparts, Italian writers are likely to incorporate references to their own work – a self-promotional strategy observed in all the ItEng texts and in 40% of the NIt sample. Italian scholars appear therefore to be freer in their use of the MED genre, with no clear-cut distinction between the role of editorialist (knowledge validation) and that of researcher (knowledge construction). The high rate of self-citations in ItEng indicates that the two functions are particularly blurred when editorialists address an international audience through the medium of English.

One notable difference between the NEng texts (e.g. quotation 2) and the other two groups (e.g. quotations 3 and 4) is (with only one exception) the absence among the latter of direct appeals to the medical community. When a course of action is advocated, as in (4), its wording is both impersonal and indirect. Viewed contrastively, this difference may reflect the more tentative orientation of NIt MEDs (rhetorical interference) but also – more intriguingly – greater interpersonal distance in the ItEng sample, where local (Italian) academics address a global community of which they are, linguistically speaking, only peripheral members.

- (2) We still have hurdles of ethics, immunology and biology to conquer, and until we do, we must remain on guard against donor scotoma. (NEng, MEED494)
- (3) Therefore, we believe that right insula activation has a significant role in the perception of chest pain in syndrome X (the insula is known to receive cardiopulmonary inputs). (ItEng, MEED511)
- (4) Tale strategia può contribuire a ridurre in maniera significativa il rischio di reazioni avverse a farmaci idrosolubili e i costi sanitari ad esse correlati [This strategy may help to significantly reduce the risk of adverse reactions to hydrosoluble drugs and their associated healthcare costs]. (NIt, MEED916)

Comment editorials were the second most common type of MED but also that with the greatest range of variation across the corpus, accounting for 80% of NEng, 10% of NIt and none of the ItEng texts. Interestingly, all the NEng instances come from the oldest, most firmly-established publication in the corpus (*Journal of Clinical Investigation*). This suggests that critical commentaries are more likely to originate from Anglo-American contexts, where the editorial stance of certain journals allows a high level of ‘militancy’.

The purpose of message editorials is essentially phatic, insofar as they seek to forge/ maintain a strong relationship with the readership by keeping it informed of editorial decisions and policies. Consequently, editorialists act here in an institutional as well as an individual capacity. Altogether, this was the least common MED subgenre observed in the corpus, accounting for only 10% of texts in NEng and NIt. The figure rises to 40% in the ItEng group – which suggests that the effort to engage readers overtly is greatest for English-medium publications originating from the periphery. In ItEng, however, message editorials are always metatexts introducing / promoting the journal’s advice editorials. The different use of message editorials across the CADIS sample is clearly observable in their macrostructure. The two texts in NEng/NIt are essentially unstructured narratives bringing to the attention of readers important developments in the journal’s life (and/or that of its affiliates). Such MEDs span events in the past, present and near future, as shown by the following excerpts:

- (5) The wind of change is in the air again. *The British Journal of Plastic Surgery* is a great and almost a venerable title, but it seems that BJPS can never stand still. [...] Many of our readers are discovering the benefits of Science Direct, which carries the full text of BJPS from the very first issue, available on line and fully searchable through hypertext links. [...] Now, from January 1st 2006, our journal will become JPRAS, *The Journal of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery*, and will be published every month. (NEng, MEED498)
- (6) Con questo numero, *l’Italian Heart Journal* diviene organo di stampa anche della Società Italiana di Chirurgia Cardiaca. [...] È ormai nei fatti della nostra attività clinica quotidiana il sempre più stretto legame e la proficua integrazione di competenze tra specialisti cardiologi e cardiocirurghi. [...] *L’Italian Heart Journal* avrà un compito importante ed impegnativo nel sostenere le sempre più numerose iniziative che le Società di settore stanno cercando di portare avanti. [With this issue the *Italian Heart Journal* becomes an official publication of the Italian Heart Surgery Society. [...] Our daily clinical practice already bears witness to the ever closer link and fruitful integration of competences between heart specialists and heart surgeons. [...] *The Italian Heart Journal* will face the important and challenging task of supporting the increasing number of initiatives that medical societies are attempting to conduct.] (NIt, MEED907)

Giannoni's analysis thus shows that, as a consequence of the composite generic profile of the medical editorials analysed and of the co-existence of no less than three distinct subgenres (Advice, Comment, Message), editorialists are keen to adapt their voice to the specific communicative purpose text, taking on a different identity and evaluating a different target, as summarised in Table 3:

Table 3. Generic profile of medical editorials

Subgenre	Voice	Target
Advice	Expert	Disciplinary Knowledge
Comment	Journal	World
Message	Editor	Journal and Editor

Moreover, the multilingual and multicultural environment in which scholars are working within a globalised context implies the fact that editorialists are faced with the challenge of reconciling two 'small cultures' (their local academic community and lingua-cultural affiliation) with a 'large culture' (the discipline as a global, translinguistic community). The easy option is to concentrate on the latter, forgetting that it can only emerge through a negotial process involving the former. Italian scholars appear to be avoiding this risk and draft English editorials that do not merely incorporate elements of the Native English / Native Italian repertoire but do so in innovative and at times creative ways.

2.1.2 Textual variations in book reviews

In her analysis of book reviews (BRs) written in English and Italian by native (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs), D'Angelo (2012) has investigated how reviewers of different nationalities, within the disciplines of Applied Linguistics, Economics, Law and Medicine, express positive and negative appraisals (respectively PAs and NAs) of their peers' work. The comparison of the English and Italian sections of the corpus has shown that in all the disciplines considered in the study, BRs written in English are generally much longer than BRs written in Italian (Cf. Table 4). One factor of a quantitative nature could account for the greater variation in length observed in Italian and English BRs: in every discipline different journals impose different word limits on BR writers. However, there seems to be different cultural norms and traditions when it comes to producing BRs for Italian journals. In the discipline of Applied Linguistics, Economics and Law, all of the Italian journals limited the amount of words (and therefore the space and depth) of BRs. The biggest difference in the average length of texts is found in the discipline of Law, where Italian BRs are ten times shorter than the English ones, and in the discipline of Applied Linguistics, where Italian BRs are four times shorter than the English ones. In Medicine instead, BRs are found to be of the same

length, and therefore the ‘cultural’ trend of limiting the use and space of BRs does not seem to apply to this discipline.

Table 4. Corpus size

	ENGLISH			ITALIAN		
	<i>Running words in subcorpus</i>	%	<i>Average length of BR</i>	<i>Running words in subcorpus</i>	%	<i>Average length of BR</i>
Applied Linguistics	48,521	24.7	1,617.3	4,842	19.8	372.4
Economics	36,173	18.4	1,205.7	6,074	24.8	467.2
Law	89,322	45.6	2,977.4	3,635	14.8	279.6
Medicine	22,016	11.3	733.8	9,964	40.6	766.4
Total	196,032			24,515		

The second aspect is rhetorical and consists in the fact that English-speaking book reviewers tend to expound their own views, including, of course, their discrepancies not only with the book they are reviewing, but also with certain beliefs held by the scientific community at large. An example of such rhetorical device found in a BR written by a NS is provided hereafter:

- (7) A&C’s appeal to ‘identity’ misrepresents the language-ideological climate in contemporary Wales. Coincidentally, *colleagues and I have substantial recent data (e.g., Coupland, Bishop, Evans & Garrett, in press) showing that Wales already benefits from strongly positive and widely distributed pro-Wales and pro-Welsh ethnolinguistic subjectivities.* (ALBR614, emphasis added as in all the other quotations in this paper)

In this case the reviewer does not only express his opinion on a subject, but also offers his own research findings and data to sustain his comment, a typical feature taken over from the research article genre. Italian BRs instead are very often just a brief summary of the book itself and contain very brief comments from the reviewer.

If we concentrate on BRs written in English (Table 5), an interesting finding is that in all four disciplines considered, NNSs seem to produce slightly longer BRs than NSs.

Also Rowley-Jolivet and Carter-Thomas (2005: 45) found that clauses in NNS texts (research articles and paper presentations) are considerably longer than in NS texts, something accountable to the more frequent use of the passive form by NNSs than by NSs, which leads to the production of longer, more articulated sentences.

Table 5. Running words in BRs written in English by NS and NNS

		Average length of English BRs	%
Applied	NS	1,568.4	12.3
Linguistics	NNS	1,666.2	12.9
Economics	NS	1,016	7.9
	NNS	1,397	10.8
Law	NS	2,843.2	22
	NNS	2,945.5	22.9
Medicine	NS	652	5
	NNS	790	6.2

D'Angelo's analysis has revealed that in general, in English and Italian book reviews, PAs are much more frequent than NAs. More specifically, in the English book reviews analysed, NAs amounted to only 36.2%, whereas PAs amounted to 63.8%. As far as the Italian corpus is concerned, NAs only amounted to 16.5%, whereas PAs amounted to 83.5%. The fact that in Italian BRs there are many more PAs (85.5%) than in the English BRs (63.8%) seems to indicate that Italian book reviewers are not very critical and judgmental towards their peers. Rather, they tend to favour collegiality instead of trying to strike a balance between praise and criticism, as their English colleagues do. Their texts are, in most cases, plain summaries of books and seem to be more neutral and objective descriptions of the contents than critical analyses.

The analysis also reveals that a difference exists between NS and NNS in their use of appraisals. Specifically, NS seem to use PAs slightly more than NAs (49.2 vs 31.3), whereas NNS use twice as many PAs as NAs (40.4 vs 20). More important is the fact that in general, NS seem to make a much more frequent use of appraisals: the number of NAs found in texts written by NS is 31.3, whereas the number of NAs found in NNS texts is only 20; along the same line, the number of PAs found in NS texts is 49.8, while the number of PAs found in NNS texts only amounts to 40.4. These results suggest that although reviewers in general prefer giving positive feedback, NNSs are less likely to judge another colleague's work negatively and express less evaluation than NSs do.

The investigation of different disciplines has shown that the use of PAs and NAs is surprisingly consistent: PAs are always used at least twice (if not three times) as often as NAs. What is interesting to note is that in Law, English reviewers evaluate a book negatively much more frequently than in other disciplines (cf. Table 6). Reviewers in Economics also use NAs frequently in comparison with other disciplines, whereas in Medicine, they do so much more rarely. When we consider the use of appraisal in Italian, we cannot but notice that the only reviewers that try to reach a balance between positive and negative evaluations are the ones working in the field of Economics (7.3 NAs vs. 13 PAs). On the contrary, the authors who

use NAs the least and are undeniably much more prone to positive peer reviewing, are the ones writing in Law (2.8 NAs vs. 37.5 PAs).

Table 6. Occurrences of NAs and PAs in different disciplines

		NA	PA
APPLIED LINGUISTICS	ENG	10.1	15
	ITA	7.7	28.9
ECONOMICS	ENG	12.8	22.6
	ITA	7.3	13
LAW	ENG	22.9	36.4
	ITA	2.8	37.5
MEDICINE	ENG	5.5	16.2
	ITA	4.4	27.3

If in every discipline we further differentiate between native and non-native reviewers, we notice that the use of NAs and PAs follows a clear pattern: every discipline considered sees NNSs consistently using almost twice as many PAs as NAs (cf. Table 7). These data further validate the hypothesis that NNSs, in every discipline, tend to use evaluation less frequently and, most of all, they tend to prefer evaluating positively rather than negatively.

Table 7. Occurrences of NAs and PAs in different disciplines, by NS and NNS

			NA	PA
APPLIED LINGUISTICS	ENG	NS	8.1	10.1
		NNS	4.9	6.7
ECONOMICS	ENG	NS	8	15.2
		NNS	4.7	7.3
LAW	ENG	NS	11.3	16
		NNS	6.8	25
MEDICINE	ENG	NS	3.6	12.5
		NNS	1.8	3.6

If we consider how hedged NAs are used in BRs, relevant differences appear among the writers depending on whether the author is an Italian or English speaker. Specifically, hedges are more frequent in NS English than in Italian, the former totalling 13.1 instances, the latter merely 9.3. However, an even wider difference is detected when considering the use of hedges by NS and NNS of English, the former using five times more hedges (13.1) than the latter (2.6). These results are probably related to the fact that in general Italian and NNS reviewers use

evaluation much less frequently than English L1 speakers. In the English texts, the mitigation of negative evaluative acts is realized in various ways. The following are examples of some of the strategies found in the corpus: the labelling of a criticism as a personal opinion (8), the attribution of critical comments to an abstract reader (9) or a general audience (10) and the use of metadiscourse to announce the presence of criticism in the text (11).

- (8) Given M's focus on social class, *I would have appreciated* more discussion of class in Scotland by M, and more analysis in chapter 10 of the ideology of social class. (ALBR698)
- (9) *One gets the impression that* Estrada is focusing more on Sonora usage, than on Arizona. (ALBR683)
- (10) These sections are rigorous, yet *the reader* is left wondering why the other three approaches are included at all as they seem almost superfluous. (ALBR683)
- (11) The authors rightly acknowledge that journal articles reporting on qualitative studies do not always include details of the coding process. *Nevertheless, it is odd* that one such study was selected as the example. (ALBR657)

In the Italian texts, the instances of hedging found in the corpus see the use of the conditional and contrastive transitions:

- (12) *Nonostante* le ottime citazioni presenti nel volume, esso *avrebbe potuto* contenere maggiori esemplificazioni. [*Despite* the excellent citations in the volume, it *could have provided* more examples.] (ALBR823)
- (13) *Tuttavia* l'elenco *avrebbe potuto essere sfronato* di molte forme derivate, quali smartelà 'martellare' (p.165), la cui etimologia non è diretta, ma mediata dalla forma base martèl, e magari arricchito con la trattazione di altre parole esclusive del bergamasco. [*However*, the list could have been stripped of many derivative forms, such as smartelà 'hammering' (p.165), the etymology of which is not direct, but mediated by the basic form martèl, and *perhaps enriched* with the treatment of other words exclusive of Bergamo's dialect.] (ALBR836)

D'Angelo's study confirms the great evaluative value of book reviews, as these provide an important forum for discussion as well as a particularly fertile ground for research. Moreover, her analysis shows that critical speech acts tend to be language / culture dependent and that a reviewer's pragmatic-rhetorical choices are indeed influenced by his/her cultural identity.

2.1.3 Textual variations in research articles

Maci (2012) has compared the argumentative strategies employed in medical research articles (RAs) written by native speakers of English with those written by Italian non-native speakers of English in order to identify any cross-cultural differences in terms of argumentative devices employed by their authors. Analysing the *Discussion* section of 50 articles from two important journals of cardiology – the *Italian Heart Journal* (published in English) which, in 2006,

changed its name to the *Journal of Cardiovascular Medicine*,² and the American journal *Circulation* –, she has identified several differences between the textual organisation of English medical research articles written by native and non-native speakers, which seem to be linked to their authors' linguistic and cultural identity. The main differences are rhetorically realised through hedges and other argumentative strategies, such as the use of connectives. Indeed, NSs of English tend to exploit more fully modality expressed by modal auxiliaries (such as *may*, *would*), verbs (such as *appear*, *suggest*), and adverbs (such as *likely*). The modal verb *may*, in particular, frequently appears in the NSs corpus, to such an extent that it can be regarded as a keyword with high keyness (*may* occupies position 15). This is not the case in the Italian NNSs subcorpus, where *may* occupies position 95.

The minimal use of hedges in the Italian NNSs subcorpus seems to be counterbalanced by other grammatical devices: whenever the outcome conforms to the expected results and is thus validated, Italian authors tend to interpret outcomes with the use of the present tense of such boosters as *confirm*, *find* and *show* rather than using hedging devices. If hedges are used, there is a preference for *might*, which may be perceived by NNSs as carrying a stronger connotation of probability than *may*, or *should*, employed whenever a suggestion about the correct scientific procedures and/or treatment is made. This occurs especially whenever the results do not confirm the initial hypothesis, or whenever there is a gap in the existing literature filled by the present research. In these cases, NNSs of English seem to prefer the use of hedges and modal expressions to indicate probable interpretations or possible implications:

- (14) In our opinion, aortic plaques are those *the most likely to be responsible* for recurrent cerebral events. Furthermore, aortic atheromatosis *should be considered* as a clinical entity itself and should be related to different vascular districts than the cerebral one.

² Since, in Italy, Italian journals, despite their in-depth analyses, are regarded as second-class research tools by the local medical community, and since medical journals are regarded as being serious only if they are published in English, either in the UK or in the US, the Italian scientific board of the *Italian Heart Journal* decided to conceal the Italian-like quality of the journal by assigning it an English name (*Journal of Cardiovascular Medicine*) and an American publisher, whilst maintaining an Italian editorial and scientific board.

This was demonstrated in a study by Pandian et al. [46], who affirmed that [...]. (MERA242)

- (15) Although no complications occurred in any patient implicating the safety of cryoenergy, these results are slightly inferior to what can be expected with RF energy in terms of acute success. In 17 patients (nine AVNRTs, eight APs) out of 126 patients (13%) with acute successful ablation, recurrence of the arrhythmia and/or AP was observed. The percentage of recurrence is therefore higher than that usually reported with RF energy [...]. The high rate of recurrences in this series *may be ascribed* to a possible more limited lesion created by cryoenergy, which *can even further* decrease in dimensions in the early post-ablation phase owing to tissue healing. (MERA250)

The scarce use of hedges is mitigated by the presence of supporting evidence provided by previous studies in the same field, with quotations employed so as to establish academic credibility. References are inserted as matter-of-fact, thus making them more certain and strengthening the case made. Results are therefore made meaningful because researchers refer to previous accounts of formal research. Furthermore, quotations are not listed as anonymous numbers; rather, they are *personified* by quoting the surname of the author(s) of previous studies.

A further differentiation can be seen in the use of connectives. There is a lower frequency of connectives in RAs written by NNSs of English, which seems to reflect the trend already established by Italian authors as far as the use of hedges is concerned: whenever the claim is confirmed and supported by scientific literature in the field, Italian researchers seem less keen on exploiting argumentative strategies, as, apparently, reference to the literature becomes the objective evidence supporting the author's reasoning. For instance, the concordance list of *also* shows a different distribution of the connective: in the NSs subcorpus it is mainly used to underline the findings resulting from the investigation, which may confirm the researcher's hypothesis; in the NNSs subcorpus, *also* is found in connection with reference literature supporting the researcher's data:

- (16) [...] the immediate postoperative period also demonstrated that the combination of clopidogrel and aspirin was more effective than aspirin alone in reducing MES. (MERA204)
- (17) Moreover, BNP is a strong predictor of mortality not only due to heart failure progression³⁵⁻³⁷ but also to sudden death.³⁸ (MERA228)

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(18) [...] the immediate postoperative period also demonstrated that the combination of clopidogrel and aspirin was more effective than aspirin alone in reducing MES. (MERA204)

(19) Moreover, BNP is a strong predictor of mortality not only due to heart failure progression^{35,37} but also to sudden death.³⁸ (MERA228)

The more frequent use of *although*, *furthermore*, *hence*, *in contrast* and *therefore* in the NSs subcorpus is indicative of the presence of a textual organisation in which scientific information is offered in a coherent and convincing way. Here, the problematizing proposition is introduced by *although*, which positions the reader in the correct reasoning path: *although* presupposes the presence of a second part of a sentence which the reader expects to carry the right type of information necessary to decode the semantic value offered by the researcher's investigation:

(20) Although sharing a common familial environment may inflate the estimates of heritability, we found low to moderate heritability for BMI, which in turn represents the maximal possible contribution of additive genes. (MERA209)

In the NNSs subcorpus, the extremely high frequency of such connectives as *on the contrary* and *on the other hand* seems to suggest a preference for a type of argumentation in which the author plays with a twist: first there is the introduction of common shared knowledge (and reference literature); then there is a counterclaim, from the author's research, supported by other cited literature. This is further emphasised by a list of evidential elements (and relevant literature), introduced by *first*, *second*, *third*, etc. which support the results of the researcher's investigation, as in (21):

(21) First, with respect to infero-posterior AMI, where sympathetic activation may follow transient signs of vagal hyperactivity,^{20,21} anterior AMI is constantly followed by strong and stable signs of enhanced adrenergic tone;²⁰ thus, we avoided any potential flaw in the interpretation of the changes in vagal and sympathetic effects. In addition, the effects of cardiac rehabilitation have been extensively studied in patients with anterior myocardial infarction and reduced ejection fraction in whom concern for adverse ventricular remodeling has been expressed.^{22,23} (MERA234)

Italian authors seem therefore to prefer the use of an *ipse-dixit* strategy: whenever a claim finds confirmation in the existing literature, they tend to adopt rhetorical strategies less frequently because the established knowledge is deemed to be sufficient to confirm their hypothesis.

3. Globalisation in the pedagogic field

In the process of internationalization of their teaching programmes many universities all over the world are now offering courses in English (Wächter/Maiworm 2008; Hellekjær/Räsänen 2010). Sometimes the lecturers remain the local ones, who adopt English as a means of instruction although they are not native speakers of that language. In other cases the teaching of such courses is assigned to foreign lecturers (often non-native speakers of English), who are not chosen specifically for their language competence but rather according to their expertise in the subject they are supposed to be teaching. As they are taught in English, these courses attract many students from other countries. This is part of a large process of “international marketization of HE [higher education]” (Coleman 2006: 3), in which universities are fully involved at a global level.

In linguistic terms, the result is a typical English as a lingua franca (ELF) situation in which most lecturers and students – although they are not native speakers of English – use this language as a common means of communication and instruction. Indeed, in the last few years, several studies have taken into consideration the use of ELF in English-Medium Instruction (EMI) courses organized by universities, some of them investigating formal aspects (Ranta 2006, 2009; Jenkins 2007; Björkman 2008a, 2008b, 2009) while others focusing on pragmatic issues (Leznyák 2002; Mauranen 2003, 2006a, 2006b; Cogo 2009; Kaur 2009; Smit 2009; Suviniitty 2010). As regards the latter, Mauranen (2003) has pointed out the adoption of ‘self-regulation’ strategies, by means of which speakers tend to adapt their way of speaking to the interlocutors’ assumed linguistic competence. Another strategy commonly employed is the recourse to ‘self-repairs’, which takes place when words or expressions previously formulated are proposed in a different way by the same person to facilitate the hearers’ comprehension. A further way to promote understanding is by means of ‘self-repetitions’, which occurs when the lecturer repeats something said before to make his concepts clearer (Mauranen 2006b).

The clarification of meaning also implies the adoption of cooperative strategies and ‘interactive repairs’ by both the speaker and the interlocutors whenever difficulties or non-understanding occur (Gotti 2014a, 2014b). Hearers, in particular, recur to ‘minimal incomprehension signals’ (Mauranen 2006b) or direct questions when they encounter comprehension problems. By means of ‘utterance completions’ (Seidlhofer 2011) and ‘overlaps’ (Cogo 2009) they manifest their willingness to cooperate in the fulfilment of the communicative act. Sometimes, instead, minor points of non-comprehension are not raised by the interlocutor, who prefers to adopt a ‘let it pass’ strategy (Firth 1996) in order not to create unnecessary breaks in the interactive flow, on the assumption that the unclear word or expression will either become clear or redundant as talk progresses.

Other studies instead, have discussed the political and pedagogic value of these courses. As more and more universities in non-English speaking countries are opening up degree programmes entirely taught in English, several people concerned with educational policies wonder whether it is really useful and appropriate to adopt English monolingualism in university courses in non-English speaking countries. This policy seems particularly odd when curricular courses held in English address monolingual/quasi-monolingual audiences, as seen in certain universities, where the offer of entire degree courses taught exclusively in English mainly serves to boost academic prestige and merely to recruit more students – not necessarily foreign, but often coming from other areas of the same country, who are attracted by this ‘internationalisation’ policy.

Moreover, the Anglicisation process carried out in many European universities implementing EMI courses has been perceived by some as a ‘European paradox’ (Phillipson 2006: 72), as it contrasts with the official EU policy of preserving linguistic and cultural diversity through the adoption of multilingual policies. At some universities, when a course is offered in English, there is usually an alternative group of the same course which is taught in the local language, but this is not the case in all universities and countries, where courses are almost always offered in only one language, i.e. English. In this case students are confronted with a process of ‘forced multilingualism’ rather than ‘optional multilingualism’ (Lasagabaster/Cots/Mancho-Barés 2013).

In many universities, the initial impetus to English-taught courses emerged as a participation in higher education exchange programmes. Particularly in those countries whose national languages were little taught elsewhere, bilateral exchanges were facilitated by the provision of courses through an international language, usually English. The increase in EMI programmes has also been facilitated by the implementation of the Bologna Process³. Although originally expressed to refer to the Norwegian situation, the following remark could easily be extended to the rest of non-English speaking Europe:

*The development towards more English-medium teaching at university level is partly due to Norway’s participation in the Bologna Agreement. [...] Although the Bologna Declaration never states that **English**-medium education is strictly necessary to achieve internationalization, this is the way it is interpreted in Norway [...]. (Ljosland 2007: 398, emphasis in the original)*

The Bologna Process has sometimes determined a replacement of ESP courses (Räisänen/Fortanet-Gómez 2008). Indeed, all over Europe many degrees with a tradition of ESP courses have replaced ESP programmes with content courses

³ The Bologna Process is based on an agreement signed by 45 countries in Europe to facilitate the creation of a more uniform higher education system. The original Bologna Declaration is available at <http://www.cepes.ro/information_services/sources/on_line/bologna.htm>.

taught in English. Apart from stakeholders' pressure, the revision of curricula also reflects the students' desire to devote as much as their university time as possible to the learning of content rather than language. In particular, rather than CLIL courses students that are weak in English seem to prefer ESP courses that concentrate on their language skills so as to enable them subsequently to attend EMI courses (Arnó-Macià/Mancho-Barés 2015).

While internationalisation is perceived as a desirable outcome, on the practical level, the use of English in academic settings outside the Anglophone world also brings new challenges for students and lecturers. There is even the risk of diminished education quality when a lecturer does not teach in his/her native language. Therefore, English should be used in academic settings after careful consideration of the consequences of such practices. Indeed, in many cases, both lecturers and students tend to overestimate their proficiency in English. Where students have an adequate language competence, the learning outcomes of the EMI courses are comparable to those reached in courses taught in the local language. Only minor differences have been detected in the students' behaviour: little breakdown in communication, similar understanding of content provided adequate time is given. However, also some limitations have been found: students tend to speak more slowly and pause more often in English, some experience difficulty in simultaneously following a lecture and taking notes, and there is a smaller number of questions asked and answered during lectures in English (Airey 2012). Some scholars have pointed out a more limited participation in discussions when these are carried out in English:

Most seminars at my department in Sweden are held in English. Although I think most of my colleagues speak good English, it is clear that it lowers the intellectual level compared to scientific discussions in Swedish. When it comes to teaching at the undergraduate level, that is even more clear. The students (and teachers) spend more time trying to understand or find the words. That implies that less effort can be put into actually discussing scientific problems in depth. (Researcher, Faculty of Science, quoted in Kuteeva 2014: 339)

In some countries, in order to facilitate the learning of specialized contents in a foreign language Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) programmes have been implemented. CLIL has become more and more popular in Europe since the 1990s. This approach relies on the combined teaching of specialized subjects and a foreign language, with the aim of attaining a good competence in both (Dalton-Puffer 2007, Ruiz de Zarobe/Sierra/ Gallardo del Puerto 2011). This double objective requires the dual integrative focus on content and language on the part of the content specialist or both the content specialist and the foreign language teacher working as a team (Dalton-Puffer/Nikula/Smit 2010). The integration of the two main elements of the course may be effected at various levels depending on local conditions, with greater or lesser importance assigned to content compared to

language, under the sole responsibility of the specialist instructor or through the collaboration of subject-matter and language specialists.

At university level the CLIL approach has sometimes been considered unsuitable since language learning goals are not specifically mentioned in the objectives of specialized courses. Moreover, content lecturers fear that adapting content to English lower-proficiency learners may result in a “watering down of the content” (Crandall/Kaufman 2002: 3). The goal that one should learn the English language at the same time as one learns a specialized discipline is the exception rather than the norm there. The foreign language competence is considered a prerequisite rather than a learning objective.

While many European countries are rushing to increase the use of English in their higher education systems, in some countries (especially in the North of Europe) the general attitude towards this trend has become more critical. In these countries there is great concern toward the high proportion of English language use and the need to guarantee the adoption of the local language for specialized purposes. In his presentation of the current debate over this issue in Sweden, Salö (2010) reports that many Swedish universities have implemented new language policies aiming at regulating the use of academic English while guaranteeing the survival of academic Swedish. As both languages are considered important, the solution proposed is parallel language use (Josephson 2005). This new policy is meant to guarantee the students’ right to receive education in their native language and to protect the national language from the ‘threat’ of English (Bolton/Kuteeva 2012). However, even this policy has often proved to be ineffective. As Kuteeva (2014: 333) asserts,

the full implications of parallel language use and its practical applications remain unclear, and to this day it largely remains an unoperationalised political slogan [...]. Ideally, both languages should be used by students and teachers alike for various academic purposes, but this rarely happens in practice.

Also in Norway the increasing use of English in higher education is seen as a threat. Brock-Utne (2001), for example, mentions five elements that contribute to this threat: the increasing use of English words in Norwegian academic, bureaucratic or technological discourse; the increase in the sale of academic literature in English vs the stagnation in the sale of academic literature in Norwegian; the recruitment of teaching staff who do not speak Norwegian; the growth in Master’s degree courses taught in English; and finally the financial rewards for publishing in English.

Moreover, where English is largely used at master’s levels, scholars have complained a reduction in the availability of local terminology at higher levels with a greater recourse to code mixing (Airey 2011). This is also due to the fact that less and less specialized literature originally written in English is translated into other native languages. Referring to the Norwegian situation, Brock-Utne (2001: 228)

asserts that this is “a development which shows that the market for required texts written in Norwegian and to be used in Norwegian higher education is clearly shrinking. Academic literature written in English replaces academic literature written in Norwegian at a high pace”.

4. Conclusion

As shown by the analysis presented here, the globalisation of research has determined important consequences on the status of academic discourse. Our findings show that one of the key factors of verbal behaviour is the affiliation of actors to one or more cultures (whether professional, ideological, or ethnic-geographic); this does not only affect a discourse community’s thinking and internal relationships but also the rhetorical ‘positioning’ of its participants. Moreover, the studies reported here also reflect the considerable challenges and opportunities that confront scholars seeking to achieve a delicate balance between their willingness to adhere to the norms and conventions of their professional community and the desire to express individual values and identity traits. Such factors have been found to interact, producing transversal identities that often betray their dependence on local traits and traditions, thus giving rise to textual realisations characterised by hybridising forms deriving from intercultural clashes.

Also the analysis of the globalising trends in higher education shows that although the use of English in academic settings outside the Anglophone world offers greater opportunities in terms of a wider international preparation, it also brings new challenges for both students and lecturers. The studies reported here reflect the considerable issues that confront not only academics but also education policy-makers seeking to achieve a delicate balance between their willingness to integrate more fully in a globalised context and the need to protect their national language for specialized and academic purposes. Such opposing trends have been found to provoke animated discussions concerning not merely linguistic or pedagogic issues, but also more general problems of political and educational relevance at a wide national level.

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