

Building on International Good Practices and Experimenting with Different Teaching Methods to Address Local Training Needs: The Academic Lecturing Experience

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Date of reception: 06/06/2020

Date of acceptance: 19/10/2020

Citation:

Borsetto, Elena and Ada Bier. 2021. "Building on International Good Practices and Experimenting with Different Teaching Methods to Address Local Training Needs: The Academic Lecturing Experience." *Alicante Journal of English Studies* 34: 107-130.
<https://doi.org/10.14198/raei.2021.34.03>

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Abstract:

The internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions is a process conceived of not as an end in itself but as a means to improve the quality of education, research and services (De Wit and Leask 2015). However, one of the consequences of this phenomenon is that lecturers are often called on to embrace the challenge of teaching their subject through a foreign language without receiving formal training in this, especially in countries where English-taught programs are still in their infancy, such as Italy. With the aim of supporting academic staff in this transition, the *Academic Lecturing* programme has been set up in a medium-sized public university in the north-east of Italy: it is specifically designed for lecturers who teach their subject through English and aims to raise their awareness of the impact of the internationalisation process on teaching, the more extensive set of skills needed for teaching and learning in English, and the increased heterogeneity of the student population. The purpose of the programme is also to help participants try their hand at new teaching methods and new technologies as a means of making lessons more interactive, thus increasing their accessibility and making them more effective, and to help participants to improve their strategic use of English within their disciplinary field. The professional development programme will be reported in the light of both a brief description of the programme format—a course and a one-to-one support service—and the feedback received from participants in

1 Although both Authors have equally contributed to the conception and planning of the present article, paragraphs 1, 3.2, and 4 should be attributed to Ada Bier, and paragraphs 2, 3, 3.1, and 5 should be attributed to Elena Borsetto.

the various editions so far. This feedback will be used to inform the future development of the programme, with a view to encouraging increased collaboration between language specialists and content specialists (Lyster 2017, Wingate 2018), thus further addressing the need for a more integrated use of language and content in university lectures.

Keywords: teacher professional development, English Medium Instruction (EMI), English Medium Education (EME), academic teaching, internationalisation.

1. Internationalisation, English Medium Instruction and Teacher Professional Development

A few years ago, Dearden defined the Bologna process as “a lever for forcing change in higher education pedagogy” (2014, 24), and in this sense internationalisation was conceived of as—and expected to be—“not a goal in itself but a means to enhance the quality of education, research, and service functions of higher education” (De Wit and Leask 2015, 12). As a matter of fact, over the last decade we have witnessed a growing trend towards the internationalisation of tertiary education (Knight 2008; De Wit et al. 2015) and a parallel spread of the English Medium Instruction (EMI) phenomenon in Europe and beyond (Smit and Dafouz 2012; Doiz et al. 2013; Wächter and Maiworm 2014; Dimova et al. 2015; Macaro 2018; Sánchez-Pérez 2020; Wilkinson 2017).

Against this backdrop, a pivotal role is played by university teachers, whose investment is of paramount importance (Dafouz 2018) especially in the light of the expectations surrounding internationalisation: with “a stronger focus on curriculum and learning outcomes [...], the involvement of academics becomes imperative” (De Wit and Hunter 2015, 52-53). Nonetheless, teaching through English poses a challenge to teachers for whom it is not an L1 and it may represent an obstacle to effective teaching and academic communication (see Airey 2011, 2012), resulting in their frustration (see Vinke 1995). In order to support teachers in the transition towards English Medium Instruction (EMI), it is necessary that a two-fold integrated change—language *and* teaching methodology—is enacted, where the role of teachers is fundamentally re-thought such that they are “*no longer conveying knowledge but helping students to construct knowledge by themselves*” (Cots 2013, 117, emphasis added).

A number of studies have highlighted the fact that teachers would benefit from professional development programmes focussing on teaching methods as well as language improvement, rather than courses that simply focus on the latter (Klaassen 2001, 2008; Wilkinson 2005; Ball and Lindsay 2013; Doiz et al. 2014; Costa 2016, 2017; Bier 2020). That said, it seems that the belief that proficiency

in the language of instruction is sufficient in itself to guarantee effective teaching through that language is still common in academia. The findings of a survey of 70 European universities carried out in 2014-15 (O'Dowd 2018) reveal that the majority of training programmes provide language support, while slightly less than half also include a focus on teaching methodology. Coherently with the assumption that being competent in the academic discipline on the one hand and in the language of instruction on the other automatically leads to effectiveness in teaching, it should also be pointed out that teacher professional development in academia is seldom provided, not only in terms of EMI, but for teaching in general (see Bier 2020).²

If the Bologna process and the switch to EMI that immediately followed it were already considered “a lever” for changing teaching practices in higher education as Dearden had suggested (see earlier), and revealed the need for teachers to strengthen their competences not only in the new language of instruction but also in teaching methods, the rather abrupt and non-optional shift to online teaching imposed by the extraordinary contextual circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic has further highlighted the necessity of updating university teaching.³ This update should consist in setting aside the traditional, monologic, teacher-centred lecturing style, both for courses in the L1 and for EMI courses, in favour of a more active learning approach where students are at the centre of the teaching-and-learning process. This can be achieved through the conscious adoption of different semiotic modes during face-to-face classes (see Morell 2018), together with a greater awareness and systematic use of digital media and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), during both face-to-face and online lessons.

Before delving into the main object of the present contribution and exploring how the issues discussed above have been dealt with in the various editions of the *Academic Lecturing* programme at Ca' Foscari University, Venice, an overview of a few significant teacher development programmes offered at different European universities will be presented.

2 In a recent study of teachers' cognitions on EMI in an Italian university, a research participant expressed criticism towards this oversight by the academic system with these words: “This is, in my view, let's call it the tragedy of the Italian university, meaning that they don't teach you how to teach” (Bier 2020, footnote 12).

3 The Covid-19 pandemic started to spread all over Europe at the end of January 2020. At the time of writing, the ‘lockdown period’ in Italy, which lasted from mid-March to mid-May, was just lifted.

2. The Training of University Teachers: some examples from the European context

With regard to university teacher training, in those contexts where English is used as a target language, the universities that first activated professional development programmes, workshops and seminars are located in Northern and Central Europe. This is due to the fact that the internationalisation process, and the consequent introduction of EMI courses, initially occurred in those countries (Wächter and Maiworm 2014; Henriksen et al. 2018). Only later did the provision of training to support teachers in this change start in Southern European countries as well. For reasons of space, a selection of the most relevant examples of EMI professional development programmes is provided here, as they present characteristics which partially inspired the *Academic Lecturing* initiative.

One of the first training courses for EMI teachers took place in the Netherlands around twenty years ago, at the Delft University of Technology, where participants completed five half-days of workshop (Klaassen and De Graaff 2001). The themes of the workshop, designed to challenge the beliefs of the participants and the validity of traditional teaching strategies in the EMI classroom, focussed on non-verbal language, the structure and organisation of the English language, and how to deal with questions in the classroom. Teachers also participated in reflection activities and practical presentation exercises, which were then transformed into peer coaching to meet the needs of those who were unable to participate due to teaching commitments (Klaassen and De Graaff 2001, 283).

In Germany, the University of Freiburg has offered, since 2011, a course that provides personalised feedback and support, as well as seminars exploring topics such as academic register and vocabulary, English pronunciation and interaction strategies with students. In the first two years of the project the focus was mainly on language; however, after a series of analyses, observations and informal conversations with participants, the focus became more oriented towards “English for teaching purposes”, which included intercultural and didactic training (Gundermann and Dubow 2018, 116-117). Moreover, since 2014, the EMI programmes at the University of Freiburg can be rewarded with a “quality seal” if at least 80% of their teaching staff have had their linguistic and communicative competences certified by the university’s language teaching centre and the EMI team. To obtain the certificate, participating teachers are observed and recorded during their lessons, all arrangements made by the EMI team. In-depth feedback on candidates’ performance is given from different perspectives, through a triangulation approach which involves the classroom observation assessments of participants made by language experts, teachers’ own self-assessment, and the assessment of teachers by their students (Gundermann

and Dubow 2018, 118). The model for quality assurance in this university represents a practical example of the incorporation of teaching methodology into both the training and assessment of university teachers in EMI settings.

The language centre of the University of Copenhagen, on the other hand, as part of the strategy to improve the EMI offer, has developed the *Test of Oral English Proficiency for Academic Staff* (TOEPAS), a language assessment tool whose purpose is to test the language skills of teachers who teach through English (Kling-Soren 2015, 202). The test uses a standardised simulation protocol instead of observation of live classes, and descriptors in a 5-point scale, which assesses factors such as audience awareness, pronunciation, fluency and cohesion, grammar and vocabulary (Henriksen et al. 2018, 83-87).

Among the countries of Southern Europe, it is in Spain that the highest number of EMI initiatives have been carried out over the past few years (see Doiz, Lasagabaster and Sierra 2013; Sánchez-Pérez 2020). The national strategy for the internationalisation of Spanish universities expected that one third of the degree programmes would be delivered in English by 2020 (Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deportes 2014, cited in Dafouz 2018, 544). However, 88% of EMI program directors criticised their teaching staff's knowledge of academic English (Wächter and Maiworm 2014, 101). For this reason many professional development programmes offered to Spanish university teachers focus on their language skills, such as the one at the University of the Basque Country, which deals not only with aspects such as methodology and academic writing, but also devotes one third of the thirty hours of the course to improving pronunciation (Ball and Lindsay 2013, 47). At this same university, in addition, a test was developed to measure teachers' performances when teaching through English (*Test of Performance for Teaching at the University Level through the Medium of English*, TOPTULTE).

In France, in contrast, the number of programmes offered in English at universities is still limited, because English is not seen as a priority to attract international students (Pagèze and Lasagabaster 2017, 291). It is therefore not common for universities to provide specific training to their teachers. An exception, however, is the professional development programme at the University of Bordeaux, which includes modules about both teaching and language skills with, for example, a module on online resources and one on individual coaching. An intensive three-day course called *Teaching Academic Content through English* (Pagèze and Lasagabaster 2017, 298) is also organised.

In Italy, the situation in 2012 described by Costa and Coleman (2013) has not improved, and professional development for university EMI teachers is still not as yet provided by 60% of universities where English-taught programmes are in place, despite the increase in the number of those kind of programmes since 2012 (Broggini and Costa 2017, 251, 253). Nevertheless,

a few universities have started projects in recent years. For example, at the University of Padua, part of the *Learning English for Academic Purposes* (LEAP) project consists of a blended course on teaching and communication in English. It has the dual purpose of developing both linguistic and methodological skills, exploring topics such as academic vocabulary, pronunciation and intonation, interaction between teachers and students, both inside and outside the classroom, different methodological approaches and student evaluation. As part of the project, a summer school, an immersive course, and an individual language consultancy service were provided by the University's language centre (Helm and Guarda 2015, 359). At the Catholic University of Milan, modules on *Internationalising the higher education classroom and the use of English-medium instruction* are periodically organised which aim to bring together the different stakeholders who are directly involved and interested in these topics, exploring approaches, strategies and techniques for teaching English in international classes. The *Academic Lecturing* project at Ca' Foscari University also forms part of this picture in Italy and was created with the specific aim of providing support and encouraging participants' language and teaching-methodology awareness.

The Italian training experiences discussed above are representative only of the Northern part of Italy as the Central and Southern parts of the country are still in the developing phase as far as the provision of EMI programmes and training is concerned (Broggini and Costa 2017, 258; see Costa and Coleman 2013). The Italian situation, in this respect, mirrors the European North-South division whereby countries in the Nordic region and in Central and Western Europe are the pioneers and leaders in the implementation and running of English-taught programmes (Wächter and Maiworm 2014).

3. The Academic Lecturing Project at Ca' Foscari University

This section describes the project, its evolution and the various editions carried out to date. *Academic Lecturing* is a professional development programme that includes a blended course consisting of face-to-face seminars and online activities, and an individual support service. As far as the course is concerned, its overall aims and main topics have remained unchanged over the course of the three years it has been running, while its format and activities have been modified to make it increasingly accessible and tailored to the needs of the participants. The various adjustments and improvements introduced will be described, as will the feedback received from participants in the various editions of the course, with a view to highlighting the potential of the programme as well as its limits.

3.1. *The Project: its Beginnings and its Evolution*

The idea of creating a professional development programme arose from the intention of helping members of the academic staff directly involved in the internationalisation processes of the University of Venice.

In the 2015-16 academic year, a pilot project was launched, whose name *Koinè* referred to a “common” language (from the Greek word κοινή). It was specifically aimed at teachers and technical-administrative staff of the Department of Management at Ca’ Foscari University, in Venice, and the focus of doctoral research that ended in 2018 (Borsetto 2018).⁴ The pilot project gave participants the opportunity to book sessions at a help desk, to receive personalised support with their language difficulties and needs related to their communication in English in the academic field. The analysis of the qualitative data collected during this pilot project contributed to informing the planning of *Academic Lecturing*, which started in the spring of 2016.

Although inspired by the same objective—that is, to offer support to teachers—*Koinè* and *Academic Lecturing* differ in a fundamental way: while *Koinè* mainly consisted of individual support sessions aimed at tackling linguistic difficulties, *Academic Lecturing* provides both a help desk service for individual consultancy (along the lines of *Koinè*) and a course made up of a series of seminars where language and teaching methodology issues are dealt with.

The *Academic Lecturing* project was born from a collaboration between the Ca’ Foscari School for International Education (CFSIE) and a scientific team from the Department of Linguistic and Comparative Cultural Studies (DSLCC) of the Ca’ Foscari University of Venice.⁵ The name of the project, which may seem etymologically redundant, originated from the need to avoid any explicit reference to ‘teaching’ and ‘training,’ as these words denote a pedagogical dimension which in Italy may cause some resistance on the part of prospective participants (see Borsetto 2018, as confirmed in quote 1; section 3.2 in this work).

The main aims of *Academic Lecturing* are manifold, but of particular interest are: improving participants’ awareness of the international and intercultural dimension of university classes; promoting innovation in academic teaching in multilingual contexts; increasing students’ active involvement by using appropriate

4 The Scientific Director of the *Koinè* project was Prof. Chiara Saccon, Full Professor of Accounting at the Department of Management.

5 The team responsible for the conception of *Academic Lecturing* is composed of: Prof. Paolo Pellizzari, Full Professor of Mathematics in the Department of Economics and Director of the CFSIE until December 2017; Prof. Carmel Mary Coonan, Full Professor of Educational Linguistics at the DSLCC and Scientific Director of the *Academic Lecturing* project; Dr. Ada Bier and Dr. Elena Borsetto, Subject experts in Educational Linguistics at the DSLCC.

communication strategies and communicatively effective materials (e.g. PowerPoint, quizzes and video-lessons); helping participants to learn to identify the linguistic features that characterise their discipline; encouraging participants to consider the implications of teaching through a foreign language which is also the main vehicle of assessment; raising participants' awareness of their weaknesses in the spoken language and helping them to act to ameliorate them.

To achieve these aims, the topics covered during the *Academic Lecturing* course are the following:

- (1) Internationalisation and Intercultural issues
- (2) The communicative nature of the lecture
- (3) The use of ICT in the interactive class 1: The flipped learning model, video-lessons and quizzes
- (4) Critical language issues in English: Elements of phonology and prosody
- (5) English as a Lingua Franca: Implications for teaching
- (6) The use of ICT in the interactive class 2: Learning Management Systems (LMS) with a focus on Moodle, blended and online learning, and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)
- (7) Academic language and the language of the discipline
- (8) Assessment issues in EMI situations⁶

At the beginning of the course, participants are asked to prepare and record on their devices (e.g., tablet, computer or mobile phone) a micro-lesson of about 10 minutes, to be used during the various meetings for self-analysis and self-evaluation of the linguistic, communicative and didactic aspects highlighted each time. Finally, at the end of the course, participants are invited to prepare a further micro-lesson in which they consider what has been learnt during the *Academic Lecturing* experience. The final meeting is dedicated to the delivery of micro-lessons and feedback from tutors and colleagues. All the materials used during the seminars, i.e., the exercises to stimulate reflection, the mind-maps from brainstorming and from the sharing of experiences during the moments of discussion, are all made available to the participants online.

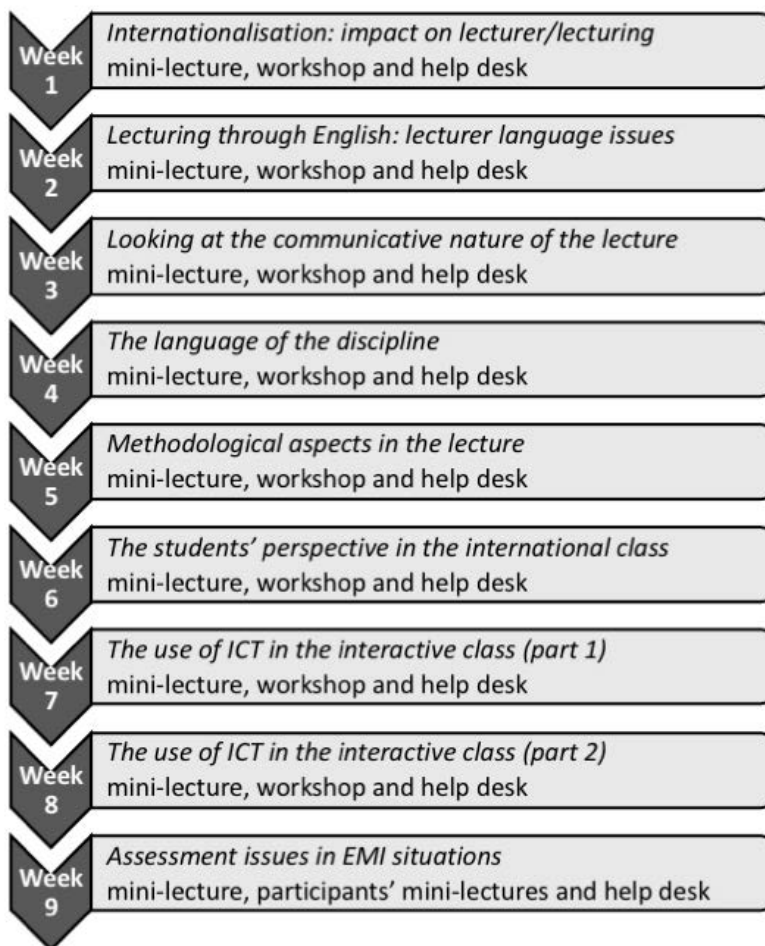
In addition to the course, the supplementary service offered to the participants is the personalised consultancy service—the help desk—which is structured in

⁶ Topics were covered by the following teachers: Prof. Carmel Mary Coonan, Ca' Foscari (topics 1, 2); Prof. Elisabetta Pavan, University of Padova (topic 1); Dr. Ada Bier and Dr. Elena Borsetto, Ca' Foscari (topic 3); Prof. David John Newbold, Ca' Foscari (topics 4, 5); Prof. Paola Corò, Ca' Foscari (topic 6); Prof. Geraldine Ludbrook, Ca' Foscari (topic 7); Prof. Caroline Clark, University of Padova (topic 8).

several stages, to guarantee greater flexibility to those who benefit from it. Phase I consists of a one-to-one session (by appointment) between the participant and the tutor, to deal with the linguistic and teaching-methodological aspects on which the participant wants to receive support. Phase II is a class observation: upon agreement with the teacher, the tutor attends one or more lessons, possibly recording them (in audio format and/or videos) and makes notes of the aspects identified by the individual teacher, as well as any other relevant issues. Phase III takes place immediately after the observation when the tutor provides some brief feedback to the teacher on her first impressions of his/her teaching and the specific points which were observed. The final phase (IV) becomes *ad hoc* consultancy: during one or more appointments, the tutor and the teacher focus on those linguistic and teaching-methodological aspects that can be improved, as in the meantime the tutor will have listened to the recording of the lesson observed so as to be able to provide targeted suggestions.

In its initial format, *Academic Lecturing* consisted of nine weekly seminars of two and a half hours each, which represented an occasion for participants to meet and listen to a short presentation on a specific topic by a member of the organising team or a guest speaker. After each mini-lecture participants were encouraged to reflect and share with colleagues their impressions and experiences. This part of the seminars, called “workshop” has a more practical and empirical nature, because the reflection is usually supported by guided activities and by real life examples from teaching practice. The topics covered and the initial structure of the course are shown below (Figure 1).

Subsequently, in order to stimulate greater active involvement of the participants during the meetings, the format of the course was changed: the short presentations of the guest speakers were recorded and split into two parts, each of them lasting twelve minutes on average. The sixteen video-lessons were then uploaded on the online Moodle platform. The adoption of the *flipped* mode (see Andujar 2020), allowed participants to watch the videos online in their own time before the meeting itself, and then move directly to the workshop and the discussion in the face-to-face part of the seminars. The switch to the blended format (Figure 2) was also made in light of suggestions received in earlier editions (for more on feedback, see section 3.2) by participants, who expressed interest in having an online video recording of the talks that they could watch at their own convenience. Another recommendation was to bring forward the lessons on ICT (which were moved from weeks 7 and 8 to weeks 3 and 6, see Figure 2) and use these tools more to increase opportunities for experimentation, which could then be implemented more easily in class. The reorganisation of the structure of the programme has transformed the course into a mix of three and a half hours of video-lessons online and twelve hours of “workshop” (eight weekly meetings of one and a half hours each), for a total of 15,5 hours.

FIGURE 1. *Academic Lecturing* in its first editions: traditional face-to-face format

The first four editions of *Academic Lecturing* were organised in and at the request of individual Departments, and were conducted at the time of year when the training was felt to be most useful. Starting from the fifth edition, however, participation in the programme has been extended to teachers from all Departments. In the eight editions held to date, a total of 111 teachers have participated in the course (Table 1).

FIGURE 2. *Academic Lecturing* current editions: blended format

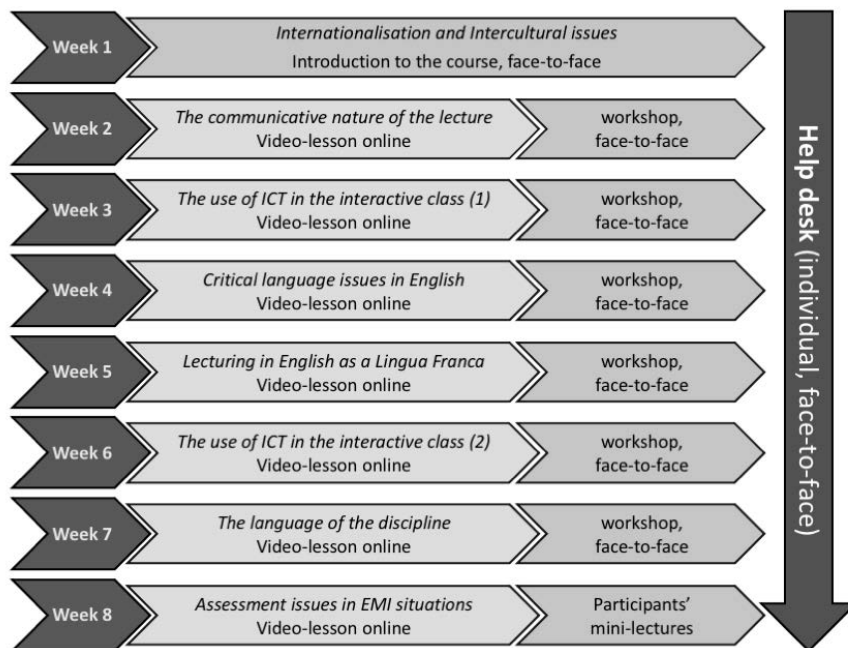


TABLE 1. Editions of *Academic Lecturing* and number of participants

Edition	Period	Departments involved	Number of participants	Teaching staff in Department (Tot) ⁷	% of total
1	May-June 2016	Economics (DEC)*	17	115	14.8%
2	November 2016-January 2017	Management (DMAN)	11	108	10.2%
3	November 2016-January 2017	Philosophy and Cultural Heritage (DFBC)	7	93	7.5%
4	May-June 2017	Molecular Sciences and Nano-systems (DSMN), Environmental Sciences, Informatics and Statistics (DAIS)	18	189 (60 DSMN; 129 DAIS)	9.5%

7 This total has been obtained by summing the number of Full Professors, Associate Professors, Researchers and Post-doc Research Fellows employed in the Departments involved (last update: 8 June 2020). Generally, all these categories of academic staff have teaching assignments, and therefore are considered as lecturers.

Edition	Period	Departments involved	Number of participants	Teaching staff in Department (Tot) ⁷	% of total
5	October-December 2017	All Departments**	24	819	2.9%
6	May-June 2018	All Departments	13	819	1.6%
7	October-December 2018	All Departments	7	819	0.9%
8	September-November 2019	All Departments	14	819	1.7%
Cumulative total number to date participants to date			111		

*Acronyms in parentheses refer to the Italian names of the Departments: i.e., DEC stands for *Dipartimento di Economia*, DMAN for *Dip.to di Management*, DFBC for *Dip.to di Filosofia e Beni Culturali*, DSMN for *Dip.to di Scienze Molecolari e Nanosistemi*, DAIS for *Dip.to di Scienze Ambientali Informatica e Statistica*.

**There are eight Departments at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. In addition to those already mentioned (DEC, DMAN, DFBC, DSMN, DAIS) are the Dept. of Humanities (DSU, *Dip.to di Studi Umanistici*), the Dept. of Asian and North African Studies (DSAAM, *Dip.to di Studi sull'Asia e sull'Africa Mediterranea*), and the Dept. of Linguistics and Comparative Cultural Studies (DSLCC, *Dip.to di Studi Linguistici e Culturali Comparati*).

3.2. The Participants: Their Feedback

To monitor the perceived quality of the service offered, a couple of months following the end of each edition a feedback questionnaire was sent out to all participants on each *Academic Lecturing* programme. The reason for letting some time pass before sending the form was motivated by the fact that we wanted participants to have enough time to reflect on their professional development, to put into practice what they had learned and to assess the impact (if any) that the experience may have had on their teaching practice.

The feedback questionnaire was created in Google Forms and was sent to all participants (N=111, see Table 1), 42 of whom filled it in. In addition to a few factual questions aimed at collecting information on participant profiles (e.g., age, gender, academic discipline taught, university teaching experience, EMI experience), the anonymous feedback questionnaire included both open and closed questions, of which the following are of particular interest in terms of describing the perceived quality of the professional development programme offered:

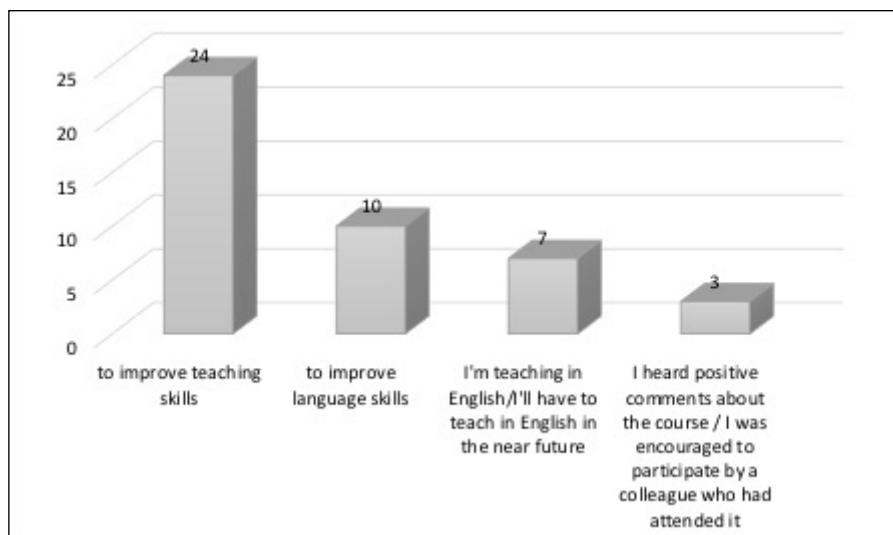
- (1) Why did you decide to attend the *Academic Lecturing* course?
- (2) Was the course successful in meeting your expectations?

- (3) Why was the course successful in meeting your expectations?
- (4) Do you think that the course has had an impact on your teaching?

Open questions (i.e., questions 1 and 3) were submitted to qualitative content analysis: the most recurring themes mentioned by respondents in their short answers were isolated as main nodes and then the frequency with which they appeared in participants' answers was reported in histograms (see Figures 3 and 4). Data from closed yes/no questions (i.e., questions 2 and 4) was submitted to frequency count.

As for question (1), the majority of respondents (42 in total) stated that the main reason for attending the *Academic Lecturing* programme was to improve their teaching skills (24/42), the second most common reason being their desire to strengthen their competence in English (10/42) (Figure 3). These two reasons, which reveal respondents' perceived need to improve *both* their teaching skills and their language proficiency, are in line with findings from previous studies (see Ball and Lindsay 2013; Bier 2020; Helm and Guarda 2015; Klaassen and De Graaff 2001; Pagèze and Lasagabaster 2017).

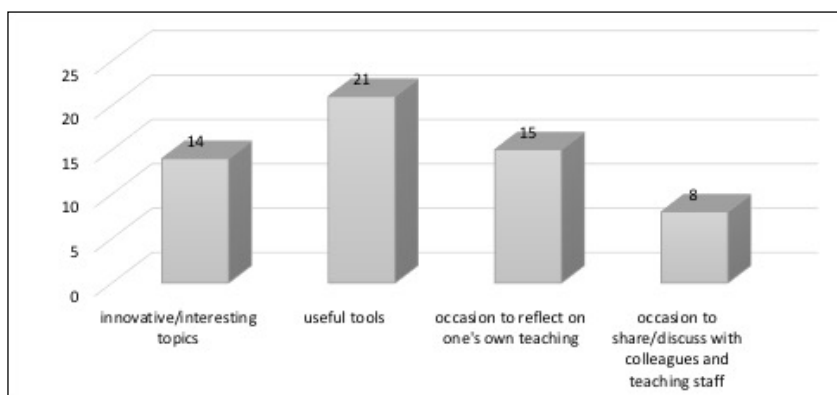
FIGURE 3. Why did you decide to attend the Academic Lecturing course?



For question (2), all respondents (42/42) answered in the affirmative, i.e., that *Academic Lecturing* was successful in meeting their expectations.

As for question (3), half the respondents said that the main reason why their expectations had been met was the fact that they had received useful suggestions on the use of teaching tools previously unknown to them and which could be easily incorporated into their teaching practice (21/42). The next most cited reasons were that participation in *Academic Lecturing* provided an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their own teaching (15/42), as well as to exchange views and experiences with colleagues from different disciplinary fields (8/42) or an opportunity to explore innovative topics (14/42) (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4. Why was the course successful in meeting your expectations?



In question (4), all respondents but one (41/42) said that *Academic Lecturing* impacted on their teaching; the only negative answer was from someone who thought it was “too early to judge... this question should be asked at the end of the next semester. For now, I can say that the course contributed to building greater awareness of many aspects of teaching.”⁸

A number of the responses to the open questions provided meaningful observations and reflections on teaching methodology issues; some confirmed that professional development in academia is fundamentally lacking, not only for EMI (see quotes 1 and 2), and showed that the *Academic Lecturing* experience was successful and was, in general, probably appreciated because it contributed to filling the ‘training gap’ perceived by participants in an engaging way (see quotes 1 and 3):

(quote 1) To me, the main contribution of the course was to “teach how to teach”, while also suggesting some innovative tools to achieve educational

⁸ This comment was originally written in Italian. The translation is the Authors’.

objectives. Which in Italy means breaking a taboo. From this (unexpected!) perspective, the course was really satisfactory.⁹

(quote 2) Because we are a generation of instructors and researchers who are finding ourselves (sic) to work and teach according (sic) different methods and with different teaching tools if compared to the one (sic) we have been taught with. [...] We often do not have the passive knowledge or experience for that, although we are asked to work with ITS facilities (sic) all the time in academia [...] and that is exactly why I signed up for your class.¹⁰

(quote 3) There was a good blend of technical expertise (linguistic, organisational, related to IT) and fizzy (sic) atmosphere, meetings were never flat and not too demanding. Really, I found this was one of the few things that could be followed while lecturing and doing all the business as usual (still keeping some energy to remember and plan something).

Another interesting comment in relation to reasons for participating in the programme was expressed by one teacher who was motivated by the desire to experience the perspective of a student attending an EMI course; as such, *Academic Lecturing* was therefore seen as an opportunity to acquire greater awareness of the challenges faced by learners, and to find effective ways of addressing them (see quote 4):

(quote 4) [I decided to attend *Academic Lecturing*] [t]o gain an overview of the main difficulties that students face when attending classes and therefore find ways to address them. To be able to analyse the teaching and learning practice from a different point of view.

Linked with the issue of lack of professional development referred to above, the concept of *apprenticeship of observation* (Lortie 1975) also emerges in the answers reported. There is an explicit mention of the “passive knowledge” (quote 2) that a teacher should possess in order to be able to reproduce a teaching model; however, this knowledge is often missing, in EMI as well as in L1 teaching, because, first of all, there is a mismatch between the teaching style that was prevalent in the past—i.e., traditional, monologic—and the different approach that is felt as more appropriate nowadays—i.e., student-centred, more interactive—and, secondly, because systematic training and reflection on teaching is lacking. A slightly more

9 Quotes 1 and 4 were originally written in Italian. The translation is the Authors’.

10 Quotes 2 and 3 are the respondents’ verbatim answers.

implicit reference to this issue but with the same end-result—i.e., decision to participate in the programme—is also seen in quote 4, where the respondent declared she wished to experience the student perspective, and thus be exposed to and be able to reflect on (“analyse”) a teaching model that might be more effective in tackling learners’ problems and difficulties (see Klaassen 2008, 37-38).

4. Discussion

Drawing on investment theory (Darvin and Norton 2015) and on the ROAD-MAPPING analytical framework (Dafouz and Smit 2016), Dafouz, in a recent paper, puts forward three suggestions for “transformative” teacher education (2018, 550) that should be taken on board when planning professional development programmes. In this section, the *Academic Lecturing* experience will be discussed from the perspective of those suggestions.

First of all, professional development programmes should strengthen lecturers’ language proficiency while at the same time “incorporating pedagogical strategies and reflective practice closely contingent on the specific Academic Disciplines they teach” (Dafouz 2018, 550). In this regard, proactive collaboration between teachers themselves and language experts ought to be encouraged (see Lyster 2017; Wingate 2018): the synergy between subject experts—here the participating teachers—and educational linguists—tutors—stands at the core of *Academic Lecturing*, allowing the former to “recognise the linguistic nature of academic learning and teaching” (Purser 2011, 34) while also providing them with both useful teaching strategies and tools to adopt in their classes and occasions for reflection on their own practice (see Figure 4).

Expanding Dafouz’s suggestion, we believe that the incorporation... incorporation of pedagogical strategies and reflective practice, as referred to above, needs to also include training and reflection on the use of ICT tools for teaching and learning, which should be adopted according to their *affordances* (Gibson 1977, cited in Bates 2015, 266), that is the pedagogical characteristics that make them unique and “less easily replicated by other media” (Bates 2015, 266). This implies, for example, that ‘transferring’ a two-hour monologic lecture in English online in the form of a recorded video-lesson on an LMS does not take into consideration the characteristics that make it pedagogically unique and fundamentally different from a traditional face-to-face monologic lecture in a physical classroom. One of the most important features that characterises *Academic Lecturing* is the systematic incorporation of ICT training throughout the programme, in both an explicit and an implicit way. This is done, first, as explicit instruction on how to use technologies to enhance active learning in EMI classes and, second, as implicit training linked with the experience of the programme

itself, which is organised and delivered capitalising on the use of ICT (see Figure 2) as a means to offer participants the opportunity to gain the “passive knowledge” (quote 2) of a model so that they can reproduce it in their own courses. Reflection on the conscious use of ICT in teaching and learning calls for attention to *identity issues* as well—Dafouz’s next suggestion—as it aims to boost participating teachers’ confidence in the use of technologies while rejecting misleading myths, such as that of the ‘digital native’ (Prensky 2001) which may hinder, rather than help, both teaching and learning (Kirschner and De Bruyckere 2017).

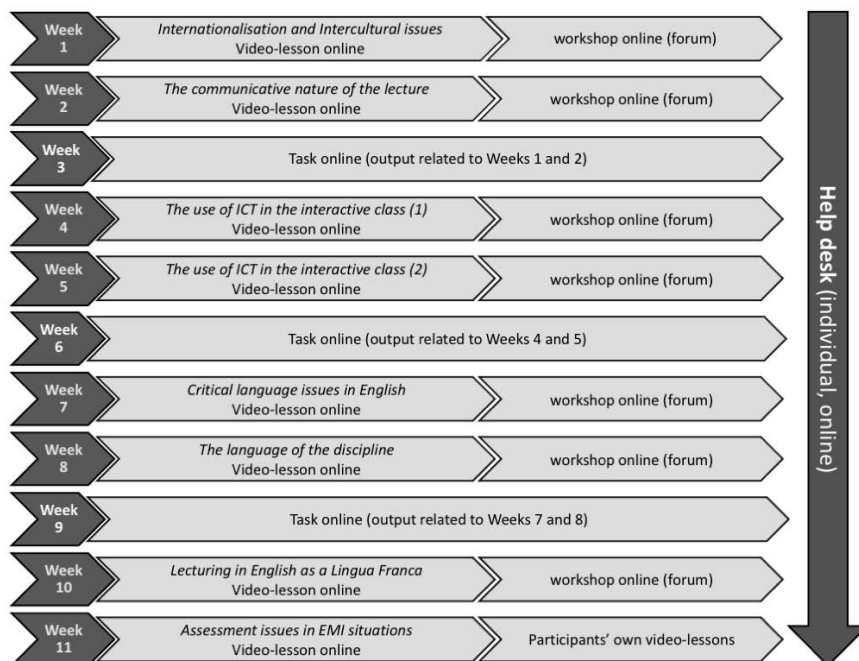
As just mentioned, professional development programmes should take ideological forces and identity issues into account, and support university teachers “in reshaping their identities as *users* rather than as ‘perpetual’ learners of the foreign language” (Dafouz 2018, 550, emphasis in the original), and encouraging access to international academic lingua franca practices (Jenkins 2014): *Academic Lecturing* takes these crucial matters into careful consideration, providing participants with occasions to reflect on both the meanings of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and being an ELF user, and the implications of teaching international and multicultural classes through the medium of ELF.

Third and last, professional development programmes should be “fully integrated in the institutional structure” (Dafouz 2018, 550), and thus capable of taking its specific contextual demands—linguistic, cultural, academic—into account. As we have seen (see section 3.1), *Academic Lecturing* is not a ‘fixed’ or static programme but has indeed evolved over the years: the main reason behind its evolution being to increasingly adapt the programme to fit with participants’ needs and expectations while at the same time being mindful of contextual demands and constraints. The results obtained so far from feedback questionnaires (see section 3.2), albeit partial inasmuch as they reflect the perceptions of just over a third of the full participant population (42 out of 111), seem to indicate that the training and support service offered within *Academic Lecturing* is regarded as effective in terms of both language and teaching methodology support. Nonetheless, despite these encouraging results, a rather important limitation needs to be acknowledged with reference to the participation rate: looking at the data in Table 1, it can be seen that the number of actual participants in each of the editions represents only a very small percentage of the number of potential attendees. Not only is this a limitation that should be taken into account, it is also a circumstance that stands in quite stark contrast to the high value given to the programme by those who took part in it. However, based on the many informal conversations we have had over the past four years with university teachers—both those who have attended *Academic Lecturing* and many who, as yet, have not—we can say with some confidence that one of the main reasons for low participation in

the programme is to be found in teachers' difficulties in reconciling the many commitments that characterise their profession and thus make attendance on such courses difficult and irregular at best, impossible at worst (see quote 3). The lack of time to devote to professional development is an issue that has also been found in previous studies (see Airey 2011; Ball and Lindsay 2013; Borsetto 2018; Gundermann and Dubow 2018).

A possible further development of the *Academic Lecturing* model which takes teachers' limited availability into account is shown in Figure 5, where an online-only format is shown.¹¹ As can be seen, this format envisages an eleven-week programme, rather than the eight weeks of face-to-face and online content, in which all the activities are online via Moodle and can be accessed asynchronously. The individual support service offered by tutors as part of the help desk is the only *synchronous* activity, and it can be booked in advance and conducted through Google Meet or Zoom.

FIGURE 5. *Academic Lecturing* in the future: online-only format



¹¹ This format has not been experimented with yet.

During each week—with the exception of weeks 3, 6 and 9—online video-lessons are combined with an online forum, managed by the tutors, where both discussions on the week's topics and hands-on activities are carried out, in preparation for the main, practical tasks. Weeks 3, 6 and 9 are dedicated to these tasks; for example, the preparation of a lesson plan in which short monologic teaching sessions are alternated with group- or pair work, or the elaboration of an assessment grid for oral examinations where both disciplinary content and academic language are considered. Finally, the end-of-course task requires participants to record a video-lesson where they try to put into practice all that has been learned during the programme (language, teaching methodology and use of ICT): the video-lessons are then watched by all participants and their strengths and weaknesses commented on and discussed in the forum under the tutors' guidance.

Tertiary education EMI today can be defined as an *emergent* phenomenon that should be analysed within the conceptual framework of complexity theory (Byrne and Callaghan 2014; De Bot and Larsen-Freeman 2011): it is a set of interrelated elements—the main ones being academic discipline, language of instruction, teaching methodology and ICT—in which, thanks precisely to the very relations between the elements, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. By the same token, the emergent whole ceases to be if it is taken apart: in terms of teacher professional development, this concept implies that to provide effective training all the elements should be present and be dealt with in an integrated manner, each one in relation to the others and to the whole. As shown in the previous pages, the *Academic Lecturing* programme is a step in this direction. As for future research, it would be interesting to study the dynamic interplay between the elements mentioned above (i.e., academic discipline, language of instruction, teaching methodology and ICT) within the framework of the online-only format of the course and in participants' everyday academic practice.

5. Conclusion

In Italy, the professional development of teachers is seldom offered at higher education level because it is generally perceived as a sensitive topic (Broggini and Costa 2017; Costa 2017). However, this contribution presents the experience of *Academic Lecturing* as an example of good practice to help lecturers adopt different teaching methodologies for coping with the higher linguistic and cognitive demands required in EMI programmes (see Airey 2011, 2012; Ball and Lindsey 2013; Bier 2020; Klaassen 2001, 2008; Vinke 1995). In fact, the disruption of traditional teaching approaches due to the EMI phenomenon has pointed out major problems and the need for innovation in higher education teaching, bringing new perspectives and challenges. Integrating the two main

dimensions of language and of teaching methodology with the systematic use of technologies may be a solution to benefit from the possibilities offered by EMI and, specifically, to bring about a transformation in teacher education. Moreover, the use of ICT has become crucial nowadays as the recent pandemic forcefully moved all teaching online. Therefore, teachers should be given support to deal with this change thanks to the help of language experts who can also assist them with the use of tools that can be integrated into a suitable methodology for online teaching, especially when the language of instruction is not the teacher's L1.

In times of uncertainty, like those we are currently facing, it is important for higher education teachers involved in EMI to find renewed motivation by questioning their traditional lecturing habits, and to boost their confidence in their language and digital skills, provided they have the willingness to conceive of a more holistic teaching practice, and the capacity to adopt it.

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