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English as a lingua franca in the English-medium instruction classroom: Insights from multilingual universities

Summary

In recent years, universities in non-English-dominant countries have witnessed a sharp rise in English-medium instruction (EMI) programmes and the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF). On campuses world-wide, English is modified by non-native English speakers (NNESs) and used as a communication tool, with the primary objective of achieving mutual comprehensibility. In EMI, however, it is crucial to take into account how ELF alterations impact instruction as the linguistic competency of NNES lecturers is critical to their capacity to teach effectively.

Drawing on data obtained from thirty lessons taught by thirty NNES lecturers at five multilingual universities, this qualitative study examines ELF modifications in EMI, and considers their impact on instruction.

The results show how the lecturers modified English phonologically, grammatically, pragmatically and lexically, and applied translanguaging strategies. Although the majority of these ELF alterations would probably not seriously impair students' comprehension, it is argued that comprehension alone is not a sufficient benchmark for the quality of EMI, and ELF communication on campus and in the classroom should employ different language standards. Therefore, in order to ensure academic excellence, EMI lessons should be conducted in academic English, specialist discourse should be pronounced and used accurately, and modifications of the standard should be kept to a minimum.

Keywords: English-medium instruction (EMI), English as a lingua franca (ELF), EMI lecturers, language modifications, multilingual classroom

1. INTRODUCTION

Recent years have witnessed a dramatic increase in English-medium instruction (EMI) programmes (Dearden, 2014; Macaro et al., 2018; Yuan, 2023) as European universities eagerly embrace EMI to enhance global connectivity, foster international mobility, increase prestige, and boost university rankings, all of which depend on English and international students (Macaro et al., 2018). Additionally, EMI enables higher education (HE) institutions in non-English-dominant countries with small languages "to overcome their linguistic disadvantage in attracting foreign students" (OECD, 2011: 314), and thus compete with those from English-dominant countries, which "have asymmetrically dominated the internationalization market of higher education" (McCambridge & Saarinen, 2015: 292). Given that EMI is an effective strategy for transforming locally-oriented monolingual universities into multicultural, multilingual international institutions (Baker & Hüttner, 2017), it is hardly surprising that 27,874 English-taught programmes were offered in non-English-dominant countries in 2021, a 77% increase from 2017 (British Council, 2021), and what is more, this number has recently spiked to 40,786 (British Council, 2024).

The expansion of English has had a concomitant effect on both "English language education" and "education through English" (Galloway et al., 2017: 4). The latter, which entails "[t]he use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English" (Dearden, 2014: 2) is closely associated with the global use of English and its role as the (academic) lingua franca. Evidently, "one of the most important drivers of global English has been the globalization of higher education" (Graddol, 2006: 74), and the status of English as the global lingua franca has fostered the growth of EMI.

In this accelerating trend towards EMI, English serves as a uniting language; however, diverse language policies, stakeholders' proficiency levels, academic fields, and educational contexts have resulted in varied realisations of this educational phenomenon (Dafouz & Smit, 2019). Accordingly, concerns have been voiced about how the rise of EMI and English language ideology impacts multilingualism, educational equity, and the learning and teaching of national languages (Gao & Zheng, 2024). Furthermore, with no unifying language-in-education EMI policy, "many teachers in under-resourced educational contexts are still ill-prepared to teach subject knowledge through EMI, and students are unable to benefit from undertaking EMI educational programs" (Gao & Zheng, 2024: 2). Consequently, it has been difficult to ascertain to what extent modifications of standard English, variations in

lecturers' proficiency, and their use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) impact the EMI classroom, and what "baseline oral English proficiency and pedagogic knowledge for teaching EMI disciplinary content courses" are necessary (Dimova & Kling, 2024: 14).

Although English is used on campuses around the world by a greater number of non-native English speakers (NNESs) than native English speakers (NESs), thus transforming international universities into "lingua franca contexts", surprisingly little attention has been devoted to the possible linguistic implications of student and staff diversity on the use of English (Jenkins, 2014: 5; Murata, 2018; Sahan, 2020). Despite the rapid spread of EMI and the indisputable fact that ELF has become the linguistic reality in HE, the use of ELF in EMI classrooms is still largely underexplored (Murata, 2018; Sahan, 2020). This was the motivation behind the present study.

In line with these discussions, this study aims to fill the research gap and contribute to EMI research by analysing how NNES lecturers use ELF in the international multilingual EMI classroom, and deriving implications about how ELF usage can impact learning and teaching. We believe that the findings of this study can advance our understanding of ELF in EMI, and contribute to ensuring quality instruction in EMI university programmes.

This section has provided a brief introduction to EMI and stated the rationale for the study. The section that follows describes the ELF paradigm in terms of variability in pronunciation, lexis, grammar, and pragmatics, and explains the role of translanguaging strategies in NNESs communication. The relationship between English and EMI is explored in section 3, which shows that NNES lecturers use ELF and modify the language, and that inadequate proficiency can impair the quality of instruction. The ELF theoretical framework, educational contexts, method, and two guiding research questions are described in section 4. The main findings with respect to lecturers' ELF modifications are presented, along with excerpts from classroom data, in section 5, and the implications of the findings for teaching are discussed in section 6. Finally, concluding remarks about the intersection of ELF and multilingual EMI classrooms are drawn in section 7.

2. ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA

The different uses and communities of users of English can be divided, according to Kachru (1986), into three concentric circles: a) the English-speaking norm-providing inner circle, where English is the official language mainly used by NESs, b) the

norm-developing outer circle, where English has a special status, and c) the norm-dependent expanding circle, where English is a foreign language used by NNESs. Despite the limitations of this country-based model in describing the complex sociolinguistic realities of English, it is nevertheless still considered a useful framework for comprehending the pluricentricity of English as a global language and highlighting that the majority of English speakers worldwide are NNESs, who use ELF.

Two main conceptualisations of ELF have emerged with respect to speakers' identities. The first posits that ELF refers to "interactions between members of two or more different linguacultures in English, for none of whom English is the mother tongue" (House, 1999: 74). This perspective seems restrictive as it only applies to NNES interaction, implying that ELF communication is subpar to the NES standard. Conversely, the second viewpoint maintains that ELF is "[…] the world's most extensive contemporary use of English, […] as a contact language between people from different first languages (including native English speakers)", and thus is a legitimate form of English in and of itself (Jenkins, 2014: 2). Nowadays, the second approach is widely employed since it effectively captures ELF's role as the universal language of communication (Seidlhofer, 2021).

ELF research advocates a positive view on language modifications in terms of what NNESs can accomplish with English, rather than a language deficiency point of view focusing on how their usage falls short of the unrealistic NS ideal. In other words, the prime concern of ELF interaction is how speakers of different L1 backgrounds engage successfully in cross-cultural multilingual communication (Jenkins, 2014; Mauranen, 2018) and not how closely ELF speakers (should) resemble NESs. Another important feature of ELF is that it is not a language variety of a bounded community, but rather entails mutual engagement and negotiation in a community of practice (Jenkins, 2014). As a result, ELF is appropriated and modified by its users due to its "adaptation and nonconformity" (Widdowson, 1997: 140). Although advances have been made in documenting and describing ELF variability, "it has become appropriated as an expedient communicative resource and so has developed independently under its own steam", thus making it challenging to fully codify and describe ELF variation and use in the vast range of domains and contexts (Seidlhofer, 2021: 398). Notwithstanding its fluidity, "empirical ELF studies [have helped] us perceive and understand how people from diverse linguacultural backgrounds appropriate and adapt English for their own needs", employ their plurilingual repertoires, and adjust their use of English leading to "variable, creative, often hybrid forms" (Seidlhofer, 2021: 399). Consequently, the primary objective of ELF is communicative functionality

rather than "formal correctness" (Hulmbauer et al., 2008: 28). The use of diverse accommodation strategies, such as self-repetition, discourse markers, slower speech rate, and communicative clarity, reduce the risk that language modifications will cause misunderstandings (Seidlhofer & Widdowson, 2009).

2.1 Features of ELF variability

Empirical studies on the use of English in specific NNES contexts have identified certain features of ELF variability (e.g. Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE) and ELF corpus of academic English (ELFA)). These descriptions do not aim to codify ELF as a variety in its own right, but rather shed light on consistencies in language use in certain domains, and thus enhance our understanding of language modifications with respect to phonological (e.g. Jenkins, 2000), grammatical (e.g. Ranta, 2006, 2018; Seidlhofer, 2004), pragmatic (e.g. Cogo & Dewey, 2006; Cogo & House, 2018), and lexical features (Pitzl, 2018). Recent research has also directed attention to multilingual practices in ELF communication and speakers' drawing on their language repertoires using translanguaging strategies (e.g. Cogo, 2018, 2020; Iino & Murata, 2016).

Given that people who learn and use English are already bilingual, ELF environments are inherently multilingual spaces (Mauranen, 2018) where speakers modify and adjust English phonology, grammar, lexis and pragmatics. The most evident ELF variations are reflected in a dynamic phonology and individual alterations (Jenkins, 2000). However, as variability in pronunciation can affect intelligibility, Jenkins (2000) proposed a Lingua Franca Core comprising a selection of features which are crucial for preventing breakdown in communication, and thus should not be altered (Jenkins, 2000). Consonant sounds should be maintained as their deletion may impact intelligibility (*part* and *art*). Consonant clusters should be produced accurately and, when in the initial and middle position (*strain* and *rain*), should not be deleted (Jenkins, 2000). Nuclear stress or sentence stress is central to the creation of meaning, and thus should be preserved. For example, *I love SPEAKing English* indicates a preference for speaking, while *I love speaking ENGlish* conveys a positive attitude towards English. To prevent misunderstanding, the length of vowels, such as in *peach* /piːtʃ/ and *pitch* /pɪtʃ/ or *feet* /fiːt/ and *fit* /fɪt/ should also be retained.

Second, variations in grammatical features are also considered ELF modifications (Jenkins et al., 2011). Although ELF is not a variety, there is no fixed code and no ELF grammar (Ranta, 2018), certain features appear rather systematically in ELF corpora,

such as dropping of the third-person present tense *-s* (*he/she speak*), interchanging of relative pronouns *who* and *which* (*people which* and *things who*), overusing the tag form *isn't it?* (*they've finished their dinner, isn't it?* instead of *haven't they?*), and omitting, inserting or varying articles and prepositions (*discuss about something* instead of *discuss something*) (Seidlhofer, 2004). ELF speakers use more frequently *would* in conditional clauses (*if you would heat ice, it would melt*) and progressive tenses instead of the simple (*I'm studying every day*) (Erling & Bartlett, 2006). Other ELF features include non-standard plurals for uncountable nouns (*informations*), non-standard forms of the passive voice (*are affect by*), and double comparatives (*more simpler*) and superlatives (*most prettiest*) (Björkman, 2013).

The third type of ELF variations pertains to NES idiomatic language. In these instances, lexical creativity can compromise intelligibility in ELF interactions because the meaning of idiomatic phrases is typically not derivable from their constituent words (Jenkins, 2014). Idioms often represent linguacultural peculiarities that are difficult to interpret and understand (TAEC EMI Handbook, 2019). Since multilingual speakers' repertoires contain both English and non-English idioms, as well as mental images from other languages (Pitzl, 2018), ELF speakers create idiomatic expressions in non-conventional ways through the unintentional transfer of elements from other languages, or by making explicit reference to and using idioms from these languages. Three approaches are used to alter idiomatic expressions: a) lexical substitution (*"don't kill the messenger"* instead of *don't shoot the messenger*), b) morphosyntactic variations in the use of plurals, determiners, and prepositions (*"pieces by pieces"* instead of *piece by piece* or *"on the long run"* instead of *in the long run*), and c) syntactic variations and changes in construction through insertion of adjectives, adverbs, and pronouns (*"two different sides of the same coin"* instead of *two sides of the same coin*) (Pitzl, 2018: 238).

Fourth, ELF studies on pragmatics indicate how speakers negotiate meaning, resolve misunderstandings, and use pre-empting signals and interactional elements, such as discourse markers (Cogo & House, 2018; Mauranen, 2017). For example, ELF speakers use the discourse markers *I think*, *I don't know* and *I mean* to which they often attribute new functions whereby *I mean* may suggest evaluation rather than clarification (Baumgarten & House, 2010), and mean 'but' or express a different standpoint (Fu et al., 2024). Pre-empting signals and strategies, such as comprehension checks and rephrasing are used to avoid misunderstanding or clarify expressions (Cogo & House, 2018). Similarly, in EMI classrooms, discourse markers are used to indicate the structure of the lecture, improve coherence, and thus aid understanding (Martín del Pozo, 2019).

Finally, drawing on their multilingual resources (Cenoz, 2019), ELF speakers use translanguaging as a compensation strategy, not only switching to their L1, but to a third language as well (Cogo, 2018, 2020). EMI lecturers' main reasons for translanguaging include scaffolding learning, enhancing communication, drawing attention to cultural references, or simply compensating for language difficulties (Cicillini, 2024; Lasagabaster, 2022). When lecturers and students share the same language, they may not even be fully aware of the translanguaging practices (Kuteeva, 2019).

3. ENGLISH (AS A LINGUA FRANCA) IN ENGLISH-MEDIUM INSTRUCTION

For some time now, English has been the dominant language for scientific communication and research, and, more recently, it has gained traction as the language of education through EMI (Dafouz & Smit, 2019; Dimova & Kling, 2024; Jenkins, 2014). "English […] in these universities is naturally expected to be ELF" (Murata, 2018: 3) since NNESs unavoidably cause linguistic variations (Jenkins, 2014). Needless to say, in the EMI classroom, these variations should not impede comprehensibility and lecturers should be able to interact spontaneously, communicate effectively, and convey information accurately and intelligibly (Drljača Margić & Vodopija-Krstanović, 2017).

Regarding lecturers' proficiency level, C1 is generally deemed appropriate for effective teaching (Lasagabaster, 2022) although B2+ can also be adequate for more experienced teachers with pedagogical and disciplinary expertise (Dimova, 2018; Dimova & Kling, 2018). However, general English proficiency may not be sufficient as EMI lecturers need "different types of proficiency" to interact effectively and enhance comprehension (Macaro et al., 2021: 11). Factors that are pertinent to EMI lecturers' oral abilities include accuracy, coherence, fluency, vocabulary range, phonology, audience awareness, and mediation (Kling et al., 2022). Apart from knowledge of disciplinary discourse and discipline-specific vocabulary, lecturers need appropriate language skills for explaining, asking questions, clarifying, elaborating, and supporting arguments (Dimova & Kling, 2018; Molino et al., 2022). In addition, they need to be able to structure lessons using discourse markers (TAEC EMI Handbook, 2019). Besides having basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS), used in everyday social interactions, in formal learning contexts, lecturers should use

cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1979), and integrate disciplinary and academic discourse in class.

While NNES EMI lecturers are not held to the same standards as NESs, and unconventional grammar, modified pronunciation, and limited fluency and vocabulary range may be tolerated, they are not necessarily approved (Drljača Margić & Vodopija-Krstanović, 2017, 2019, 2022). More precisely, students tolerate NNES accents, pronunciation, and lexical and grammatical variations when they do not hinder comprehension or lower teaching standards (Drljača Margić & Vodopija-Krstanović, 2018). These students lean towards a "communicative-oriented interpretation of pronunciation" (Gómez-Lacabex & Roothooft, 2023: 348), whereas others may hold prejudiced biases against NNES accents (see Roessel et al., 2020), and evaluate lecturers with stronger accents less positively (Hendriks et al., 2023; Karakas, 2017). Therefore, comprehensibility does not necessarily entail acceptability, as intelligible NNES accents may be evaluated negatively based on their proximity to or distance from NES accents (Jenkins, 2007). Furthermore, NNES accent strength can be an important factor affecting comprehensibility (Hendriks et al., 2023), and lecturers' English may be criticised if students have to exert extra effort to understand the material, although the true cause may be their own inadequate proficiency combined with the inherent complexity of the subject (Drljača Margić & Vodopija-Krstanović, 2017).

With respect to ELF modifications at international universities, no single approach to ELF would be applicable in every EMI higher education context. Demands for standardisation and accuracy can vary (Dafouz, 2021) with respect to the context, implicit or explicit EMI language-and-education policies, lecturer and student populations, use of English in the wider context, prestige and ranking of the higher education institution, and disciplinary differences, among others. Furthermore, judgments about which norms are acceptable in an international academic context are influenced by cultural and ideological biases (Van Splunder, 2015). Therefore, there is no one-size-fits-all EMI language policy (Airey et al., 2015), and it is not possible to stipulate with certainty which features and use of ELF may be deemed "problematic in an educational context [because by] its very nature, education is centered on writing and speaking in a correct way" (Van Splunder, 2015: 8).

According to Drljača Margić and Vodopija-Krstanović (2017), lecturers' (language) expertise is presumed and expected in academic settings; therefore, both errors which impede understanding, as well as simple grammatical errors which do not, such as the omission of the third-person present tense *-s*, are frowned upon.

Furthermore, EMI lecturers should not be at the B2+ level of English language proficiency, regardless of their teaching experience and expertise, if international students are expected to be at level B2. Also, while there is no need to mimic NES pronunciation and it is acceptable and natural to pronounce English with a foreign accent, it is inappropriate to pronounce specialist discourse incorrectly. As pointed out earlier, classes should be taught in academic English, and CALP and disciplinary discourse should be developed. Therefore, EMI lecturers should be literate enough to produce disciplinary literate students and prepare them to participate in the academia, workplace, and society (Airey, 2011).

Despite the fact that ELF reflects the linguistic reality of multilingual EMI classes, linguistic diversity, academic expectations, and the NES/NNES debates have not been addressed sufficiently in such programmes, some of which seem to be highly "constrained by NES norms" (Murata & Iino, 2018: 409). Apparently, "EMI is still a paradoxical space for the local and foreign participants whose native language is not English […], and who need to balance the imposed Anglo linguacultural norms and the local values and practices" (Iino, 2018: 89). While ELF is firmly intertwined in international HE, it is nevertheless questionable whether claims that ELF is neither defective nor inadequate with respect to the standard hold equally true for CALP interaction in EMI classrooms and BICS interaction on campus at large.

Although EMI is a burgeoning field of study, research on English has very rarely focused on depicting language changes in relation to ELF (Ball & Lindsay, 2013; Drljača Margić & Vodopija-Krstanović, 2017, 2022; Macaro et al., 2018; Van Parijs, 2021). Taking into account the variability and complexity of ELF, the diversity of ELF uses and users, and the different standards and expectations regarding English in academia and EMI, this study focuses on NNES EMI lecturers' use of ELF, and draws implications of ELF for international multilingual EMI classrooms.

4. METHODOLOGY

The theoretical framework for this study is based on the ELF paradigm and the understanding that English is used as a lingua franca among NNESs in the international multilingual EMI classroom. As previously mentioned, ELF is not considered a fixed variety, or a second-best English (Jenkins et al., 2011; Seidlhofer, 2011), but rather a dynamic and fluid linguistic phenomenon used in real-world English communication in and across all Kachru's circles. It serves as a communication tool for speakers of different linguacultural backgrounds, who, when communicating in English, more

or less adjust the language. By the same token, NNES lecturers alter the language and depart from standard norms when teaching through ELF; however, the question that begs an answer is to what extent these adjustments are aligned with academic standards.

4.1 Aim and research questions

The aim of this study is to analyse how lecturers use, adapt, and modify the English language when teaching content, and to reflect on the extent to which these variations could impact instruction in EMI classes. The study specifically seeks to address the following research questions:

> RQ1: How do lecturers alter the English language while using ELF in the EMI classroom?
>
> RQ2: What kind of implications for EMI can be drawn from NNESs' use of ELF in the international multilingual classroom?

4.2 Contexts and participants

The study was carried out at five universities – the University of Copenhagen, the University of Turin, the University of Lleida, Maastricht University, and the University of Rijeka – all partners in the project "Transnational Alignment of English Competences for University Lecturers (TAEC)".

Thirty EMI lecturers – six from each university – were conveniently selected by the project members at the respective institutions to participate in the study. Their teaching experience ranged from 7 to 32 years, with an average of 17 years, while their EMI teaching experience ranged from 1 to 32 years, with an average of eight years. They came from three broad disciplinary fields: social sciences and humanities, life and medical sciences, and physical sciences and engineering. None of the 30 lecturers were NESs and their English proficiency levels ranged from B2 to C2 on the CEFR scale (CEFR, 2018). Consent was obtained from all the lecturers.

4.3 Corpus analysis

A corpus of thirty digitally recorded 90- to 120-minute lectures served as the basis for the qualitative analysis in this study. All the lectures were recorded and each one was transcribed by the TAEC-project researchers at the respective university. The data analysis was driven by the research questions and ELF theoretical framework, and the qualitative analysis was conducted by the two authors, both applied linguists and

TAEC-project researchers. Although our own disciplinary backgrounds and research fields inevitably influenced our analysis and agreement, the provision of textual extracts enhances the transparency and plausibility of the interpretations (Barbour, 2014). To become familiarised with the data and the lecturers' use of ELF, we first viewed the EMI recordings individually. Next, we read the transcripts, examined the data, and through manual coding identified categories and examples of ELF linguistic changes. Finally, we jointly decided on the representative data, transcript excerpts, and interpretations (cf. Saldaña, 2016).

5. RESULTS

Drawing on the corpus of EMI classroom interaction, in this section we present a selection of features of ELF. The aim is not to document how frequently the lecturers diverge from standard norms, but rather to show common modifications of the standard – "a language variety […] which is by convention generally considered the most correct and acceptable form" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2024) – and to reflect on how these modifications could affect comprehension and instruction in multilingual EMI classrooms.

5.1 Phonological features

Classroom data revealed that all the lecturers had foreign-sounding accents, although the extent to which the accents diverged from NESs' varied. The accents of lecturers from northern universities sounded more native-like, while those from the south (e.g. Italy and Spain) had stronger foreign accents (cf. Jenkins, 2007). Van Splunder (2015) also observed that English spoken by a Dutch or Scandinavian L1 speaker may be more comprehensible and acceptable than that spoken by an Italian L1 speaker.

As regards pronunciation, the data showed that several lecturers at B2 level of proficiency used more non-standard pronunciation of general terminology. As shown in Table 1, they typically replaced short and long vowels, e.g. /ɪ/ and /iː/, /ʌ/ and /æ/, interchanged the diphthong /eɪ/ and vowel sounds, mispronounced /ð/ and /θ/, and pronounced -*ing* endings as /ɪŋg/. Occasionally they also altered the stress of the word as in *response* /ˈresˌpɒns/ and *diapason* /ˈdiˌʌpʌzɒn/, and added an extra vowel sound. In the example *breathing* they switched between long and short vowels and /ð/ and /θ/, and the -*ing* form was derived from the noun *breath* /breθ/, rather than the verb *breathe* /briːð/ (see Table 1).

Table 1.   Examples of modified pronunciation of general terminology
Tablica 1.   Primjeri promijenjenoga izgovora općega nazivlja

Example / Primjer	Modification / Modifikacija	Standard pronunciation / Standardni izgovor	Modified pronunciation / Modificirani izgovor
and had a slow **breathing**	/iː/→/e/ /ð/→/θ/ /ŋ/→/ŋg/	/ˈbriːðɪŋ/	/ˈbreθɪŋg/
the **respiratory** rate	/ə/→/e/ /ə/→/eɪ/ /ɪ/→/iː/	/rəˈspɪrətri/	/respiˈreɪtəriː/
when you have […] the **response**	/ɪ/→/e/	/rɪˈspɒns/	/ˈrespɒns/
this may might be **fatal**	/eɪ/→/ʌ/	/ˈfeɪtl/	/ˈfʌtʌl/
diapason provided it is pronounced **diapason** but I don't care **diapason** for me	/aɪə/→/iː/ /eɪ/→/ʌ/ /ən/→/ɒn/	/ˌdaɪəˈpeɪzən/ /ˌdaɪəˈpeɪsən/	/ˈdiːʌpʌzɒn/
surgeon	/ə/→/ɪɒ/	/sɜːdʒən/	/ˈsɜːdʒɪɒn/
muscles	/ʌ/→/æ/	/ˈmʌsls/	/ˈmæskls/

As for the past tense, while the majority of EMI lecturers pronounced the regular form of the past tense -*ed* accurately as /ɪd/, /d/, and /t/, two less proficient B2 lecturers mispronounced the -*ed* as /ed/ (see Table 2).

Table 2.   Examples of modified pronunciation of verbs in the past tense
Tablica 2.   Primjeri promijenjenoga izgovora glagola u prošlome vremenu

Example / Primjer	Modification / Modifikacija	Standard pronunciation / Standardni izgovor	Modified pronunciation / Modificirani izgovor
linked **increased** **fixed** **named** **complained**	/t/→/ed/ /d/→/ed/	/lɪŋkt/ /ɪnˈkriːst/ /fɪkst/ /neɪmd/ /kəmˈpleɪnd/	/ˈlɪŋked/ /ɪnˈkriːsed/ /ˈfɪksed/ /ˈneɪmed/ /kɒmˈpleɪned/

Occasionally, the authors of this paper had difficulty understanding some of the weaker lecturers, and they noticed discrepancies between the transcript and their interpretations due to lecturers' pronunciation and accent. For example, L30's

statement *it's difficult to know exactly but, eh many **thinks** that Marilyn Monroe suicided by an excess of barbiturate* was understood as 'it's difficult to know exactly but, many **things** that Marilyn Monroe suicided on'.

In regard to subject-specific terminology, B2 level lecturers occasionally pronounced it in a non-standard manner, possibly due to the influence of the L1. Some of the mispronunciations were only variations in the placement of stress or alterations of vowels and consonants, others included several modifications. Several examples are provided in Table 3.

Table 3.   Examples of modified pronunciation of subject-specific terminology
Tablica 3.   Primjeri promijenjenoga izgovora specifičnoga nazivlja

Example / Primjer	Standard pronunciation / Standardni izgovor	Modified pronunciation / Modificirani izgovor
ethylene do you know **glycol**?	/ˈeθɪˌliːn ˈɡlaɪkɒl/	/ˈeðɪlene ˈɡliːkol/
aldosterone excess	/ˌaldəʊˈstɪərəʊn/	/alˈdɒstrɒn/
duodenum ulcer	/ˌdʒuːəˈdiː.nəm/ /ˈʌlsə(r)/	/ˌdjuːɒˈdenɒ/ /ˈʊlser/
syncope	/ˈsɪŋkəpi/	/ˈsɪŋkɒpe/
calcium	/ˈkælsiəm/	/ˈkʌltʃum/
carbon dioxide	/ˈdaɪɒksaɪd/	/daɪˈɒksaɪd/

L30 pronounced *calcium* as /kʌltʃum/ thirty-seven times and even associated calcium with *calcio* /kʌltʃo/, the Italian word for soccer.

L30: […] about **calcium** this is a joke eh that is i- is comprehensible just to the Italian people because […] soccer in Italy is called **calcio** football calcio. so, it was spontaneous to take a a a, a ball… as to represent **calcium** […] okay? so **calcium** what is this?

When a lecturer's pronunciation diverged from the standard, the students also mispronounced the same term, as in the above-mentioned example *calcium* /ˈkælsiəm/ as /kʌltʃum/.

L30: […] do you have a question?

S9: and also eh and also abnormal levels of **calcium** cause an acid base unbalance.

5.2 Grammatical features

The data revealed grammatical variations in lecturers' use of ELF consistent with those in previous studies (Ranta, 2006, 2018), the most obvious and common example being the omission of the third-person *-s* (e.g. Cogo & Dewey, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2004). Although grammatical variations primarily characterise B2 speakers, interestingly, this was also observed in a C1 lecturer's speech, as shown below.

> L5: […] what to do […] autonomic nervous system, it's not completely autonomic. I mean, functional eh functionally yes but **he use** other ways, he's using a highway of the spinal nerve. you see here?, […] **he join** to the spinal nerve, **he use** his highway... and... it comes to the, to the spinal nerve. […] and then the brain is processing this information, after, **he decide**…

However, the dropping of *-s* did not take place systematically, but mostly with the third-person nominative pronoun *he*. Although a simple rule, from a communicative perspective, the third-person present tense *-s* is redundant and rather difficult to internalise, and use correctly (Puchta, 2018), which lowers the perceived accuracy rather than impedes comprehensibility.

Conversely, some lecturers overgeneralised the use of *-s* and applied it indiscriminately, as shown in the following example observed in L30's class.

> L30: oh it's difficult to know exactly but, eh **many thinks**…

Another typical ELF feature is the interchanging of the relative pronouns *who* for things and *which* for people, as illustrated in the following examples.

> L2: […] those companies **who** operate […] Romania **who** has a lot of farmers, […] even Britain **who** advocated for the reduction of investments […] I will add also Denmark **who** will have to give, the biggest amount of money […] of course I picked similar countries **who** have a similar population.

> L15: […] we need a general manager **which** is in charge of, eh this specific market, okay?

However, occasionally L2 seemed to be aware that they confused the two relative pronouns and self-corrected.

> L2: […] there are two eh principles **who** are_eh **which** are determined already.

As for tag questions, they were rarely used in the classroom and, when used, the negative question tag was used both correctly and incorrectly. Like most ELF speakers, L13 largely used *isn't it*, instead of other tags, and by default used it correctly and incorrectly. However, L13 may have also used *isn't it* as a filler.

L13: […] an extra day is never a bad thing, **isn't it** […] you are an actress you know how important the voice is, **isn't it**? how important is the voice?

When L13 expected the students to agree with their statements, *right* was used instead of the negative tags *isn't it* and *don't they* to convey a similar meaning. Again, *right* may have also served as a filler.

L13: […] like a director but for TV in a way, **right**? […] they have this very important, eh digital aspect to them, **right**? **right**? […] when they are being run… you know in specific time, **right**?

The most commonly observed modifications in lecturers' speech were omissions, unnecessary insertions, and the incorrect use of prepositions and articles. In the first excerpt, the correct preposition was used, but the wrong meaning was conveyed, while in the next three examples incorrect prepositions were used, and in the third the wrong article.

L3: […] that is for example going **on** in a private university eh colleges, like MBA programmes.

L30: **In** the stage with eh many roses and he threw **on** the public…

L3: […] only two players, **in a** global market one is called Novartis and one […] Pasteur.

L30: […] a metabolic acidosis with an increased anion gap you just mainly think **to**, kidney but you have always to think **to**, a possible, severe.

In the first example *going on* means 'happening'. However, the meaning that L3 wanted to convey was 'attending' or 'going to'. L30 used *in the stage* and *threw on* instead of 'on stage' and 'threw to'. In the third example, *on the global market* should have been used, and in the fourth *think of*.

The second type of alterations were insertions of unnecessary or wrong prepositions, or their omissions.

L29: […] if you ask **to** me, eh professor talk **(X)** us about this. ('ask me', 'talk to us' or 'talk about')

L30: […] will organise some activity **of** you as a student. ('for you')

L16: […] we have different ways to work **at** class, yes? strategies to perform **at** class. ('in class')

L13: […] heated debate eh about […] what you post, **in** the net […] I read most books **in** my **in** my iPad so or later like **in** my phone […] I don't see anything anymore. ('on the net', 'on my iPad', 'on my phone')

Three variations of incorrect article use were observed: omission, overuse, and incorrect usage, as shown below. In the following extract, L3 omitted the article in medical disciplinary discourse before systems and parts of the body, which are specific and definite.

L5: […] four branches one is **(X)** dorsal branch […] but there is another two one is […] meningeal branch […] they leave **(X)** spinal cord through the ventral […] there are fibres that are leaving **(X)** spinal cord […] ramus ventralis, in Latin or **(X)** ventral branch. okay? you see how **(X)** autonomic nervous system, it's not completely autonomic.

In the next three extracts, unnecessary definite and indefinite articles were used before uncountable nouns.

L6: […] wellness like for instance the combination of pool with **the** lukewarm water.

L4: […] this is the core product you're buying, **a** transportation.

L25: […] a patient not with **a** pain but with a new diagnosis.

Another type of modification common to ELF is the overuse of the progressive tenses. The data revealed that EMI lecturers frequently used both the present and past progressive instead of the simple to indicate habitual actions, events, and facts. The progressive was employed in the three following examples from medical sciences to indicate a fact and characterise a medical condition, both of which are typically expressed using simple tenses.

L5: One of the first symptoms that you can see is actually that you lose, those nerves that **are transmitting**, the sense of pain.

L5: […] autonomic nervous system **is regulating** this body functions […] autonomic nervous system **is innervating** three, structures three things, those are, smooth muscle, heart muscle, and finally, glands […] the information **it's going** inside the brain it comes to the cortex of the brain and then the brain **is processing** this information.

L6: George Washington […] who **was having** only a, an inflammation of throat but with bloodletting actually his, condition, eh was became actually disastrous.

In the next example, L6 used the continuous for habitual past actions with the adverb *usually*, possibly because the actions were seen as lasting for some time.

L6: […] eh the professor […] he **was** usually even **reading** his book. and his assistants and students **were performing**, exercises […] they **were dissecting** human bodies and **showing**, those parts that were mentioned in the lecture.

Similarly, L3 used the continuous *are we having* where *are there* would be more appropriate to indicate a fact or the existence of something, while L2 exclusively used the continuous to denote what they believed to be generally true, even with verbs of thought, such as *agree* and *think*, which are rarely used in the continuous.

L3: […] could have put instead of one two three I could have put A B C and how many letters **are we having** an alphabet?, up to thirtyish, right?

L2: […] the French people are not very, well the majority **is thinking** positively on their membership but there are […] 42 per cent who **are not agreeing**, in this issue.

Regarding the overuse of *would* in conditional clauses, L4 did that to make a hypothesis and explain something that did not take place in the present, which is usually conveyed using the past tense forms.

L4: […] more most chefs are men ah **if you would** see a woman […] if somebody **if your friend would tell** you that he's going to psychologist would you think is okay or that he is a little bit mhm?

Non-standard forms of the passive voice were also used by teachers in the C1 range. These modifications typically involved varied forms of the past participle, such as the non-standard *have been bornd* instead of the past participle *have been born* or the deletion of the suffix *-ed*.

L5: the grey matter of the spinal cord […] the by default where those fibres **have been bornd** they originate here somewhere in in the brain and the final destinations are the organs that they innervate.

L25: […] if you read this paper that **has been publish** many years ago you see 20 years ago? […] the studies that **have been** done and not **publish** not till publish or publish…?

Occasionally, the regular past tense form was converted to irregular, often incorrect forms, such as *skipped* to *skept*, *performed* was replaced by *done perform*, and *did happened* was used instead of *happened*.

L10: […] we spend some time on it **I skipi** s- **skept** yesterday these slide where I will focus now.

L16: […] one species speciation so the changes that organisms **done perform** along the years along history.

L11: […] look what **did it happened**?

5.3 Pragmatic features

Regarding pragmatics and the use of discourse markers, L13 frequently used *I mean* and *you know*. *I mean* was used to signal that more information would be added or reformulate, while *you know* appears to be a filler used in longer stretches of speech. *You know* may also have been used to clarify ideas and support understanding (cf. Fu et al., 2024).

> L13: […] we could do our lessons in **you know** anywhere so sometimes we would **you know** be in my office if it was very cold. […] **you know** the earlier you start the better I **mean** I understand what you mean but, **you know** you have to see how it works like how am I gonna know if I write well if nobody reads me? **you know** you have to test your. […] I think it's different I **mean** even if it's a bit, **you know** cringy even if it's even if you're going to feel ashamed of it later on.

Rephrasing, comprehension checks, and the use of various pre-empting signals are useful (pedagogical) strategies which help prevent misunderstanding of content (cf. Cogo & House, 2018) and support student learning in EMI (Drljača Margić & Vodopija-Krstanović, 2018, 2022). In the following extract, L15 used various creative non-standard ELF expressions to explain 'monthly salary' and ensure student understanding.

> L15: then the benefits okay this is in- in- Emirates eh AD eh dollars **okay month**. then they are the **basic monthly** the **flying pay** and then **the average**.
>
> S2: eh euros 2240.
>
> […]
>
> L15: **per month**. **monthly**, **average monthly**.

Another important aspect of discourse markers is that they help create cohesion and enable the listener to connect ideas (Šišić, 2024). Coherence and cohesion are also established through the consistent use of pronouns, which, by referring back to specific terms and notions, can generate unity and create smooth flowing speech. In the following extract, L5 used pronouns interchangeably throughout the lesson, making it somewhat difficult to follow. They also used everyday expressions, such as *they leave*, *he has to reach*, *he will use taxi*, and *who is going to be taxi* to explain physical processes.

> L5: our great four branches one is dorsal branch, […] **it** goes in the back and we do not care about eh **him** now […] another two one is meningeal branch […] **it** goes back into the […] the fourth one it's very important and it is called rami

comunicantes […] **he** communicates with someone with who? with the spinal nerve.

[…] **they leave** spinal cord through the ventral, through the ren- ventral root, and then what? **he** has to reach the periphery **he has to reach** to the organ... win which way? **he will use taxi**. you know? **he will use taxi who is going to be taxi** in this case? spinal nerve. which branch of the spinal nerve?

While accommodation is an important strategy in ELF communication (Cogo, 2020), in the above examples, the use of collocations, such as *the spinal nerves carry*, *is carried by the ventral ramus*, or *the ventral rami supply*, would be more aligned with disciplinary discourse. Also, the use of the personal pronoun *he* instead of the impersonal *it* does not support clarity and coherence. Similarly, in the following example, L29 used conversational discourse and everyday expressions, such as *you will have (a look)* for 'examine' and 'give', *has gone away* for 'stopped functioning or is not functioning', and *put out* for 'breathe out' or 'exhale'.

L29: […] **you will have a look** and **you will have** a diagnosis of metabolic acidosis and the question is why? […] one lung **has gone away**. **you may have** a pulmonary embolism […] so if **you have** a pulmonary emboli- your patient has a pulmonary embolism, has an immediate hyperventilation […] because he will **put out** an amount of carbon dioxide.

Coherence and comprehension breakdown can also occur when multiple morphosyntactic modifications take place in a stretch of speech, which occurred occasionally in B2 lecturers' class. They altered the word order, used tenses incorrectly, used phrases instead of sentences, and overused the *-ing* form.

L25: […] the today setting **in being** a doctor and **being a patient with this that is** so Internet is of help and maybe a great help for the patient and for the doctors **saying** as yesterday we said that **to have** in front of us **a patient that is** that **searched had informatio**n and…?

L30 recounted an event at a concert using BICS, CALP, and disciplinary discourse, which contained lexical, discourse, and morphosyntactic modifications. Regarding morphosyntactic modifications, the passive was used instead of the active, the transitive verb *release* was used intransitively, and phrases were used instead of full sentences.

L30: […] young man […] he **was completely contracted** completely hysterical […] okay? eh he was hyperventilating, in a fantastic way, eh... completely mad

[…] to be there so, hyperventilating in […] a really great al- acute alkalosis and **completely contracted man** and legs so, and **he could not release** so we convinced him in a few minutes to stop breathing to be quiet and, **this release that is**, acute hypocalcaemia functional hypocalcaemia **due to kidnapping of calcium by**, albumin due to acute alkalosis and, we **put him again in the public** two minutes, later **he was again that again** so we send him to the infirmary and **he lost the concert** okay?

In terms of the meaning, L30 probably wanted to explain that due to excitement or anxiety, the man began hyperventilating, which caused symptoms, such as muscle spasms, seizures, and stiffness. The hyperventilation induced hypocalcaemia due to calcium binding to albumin. After treatment, he was allowed to return to the concert; however, when he began hyperventilating again, he was taken to the infirmary, and missed the concert.

5.4 Lexical and idiomatic features

EMI lecturers seldom used or adapted English idiomatic expressions, or created novel expressions. When a phrase was modified, it was difficult to determine whether it was used in its literal sense or as a modified idiomatic expression. For example, L30 said: *you will have in your hands ABG a blood gas analysis*. It is not clear whether *have in your hands* means 'to hold something' or is a modified expression indicating 'someone's responsibility or something that somebody has to deal with' ('have on your hands').

In the next example, L25 used *in a corner of mind*, which was probably a modification of the expression 'in a/the corner of one's mind' or could be an adaptation of the more idiomatic phrases 'at the back of one's mind' or 'keep in mind'.

L25: […] if […] you see the patient with symptom andcetera it's very hard but if you have **in a corner of mind** this, is very important.

L25 also modified the phrase 'afternoon tea' into *taking a tea a- afternoon time*.

L25: […] that is why I will spend some time on this example that is, not so lovely as **taking a tea a- afternoon time** because it's important in the history of medicine.

L4, on the other hand, creatively played with words and coined the rhyming expression *a seat is a treat*, which could have been derived from the idiomatic expressions 'in for a treat', meaning 'a luxury or a delight', to explain that assigned seats are a luxury for budget airlines.

L4: […] depends if it's Ryanair you don't expect […] **a seat is a treat** 15 years ago we didn't have so many low budget airplanes so then, a meal, was expected.

L30 used a phrasal verb analogous to the one they were familiar with, but conveyed a different meaning. *Coming out* was possibly used as the opposite of *coming down with an illness* to indicate that they were 'recuperating from the flue'.

L30: […] hi guys I'm just a bit not well it's too much a bit better. **I'm coming out**.

The non-standard collocation *combine a difficult calendar* in L25's statement *we have, to eh combine difficult a difficult calendar okay?*, despite comprising simple lexis seems ambiguous as it may refer to several things: 'the schedule', 'amount of material to be covered in a limited period of time', or 'a series of activities that would take place'.

5.5 Translanguaging strategies

In ELF, translanguaging is deemed to be a useful compensation strategy which entails the use of other languages in addition to English (Cogo, 2020). In the EMI classroom, translanguaging is generally used to provide scaffolding, clarify concepts, and prevent misunderstanding (Cicillini, 2024). The next extract shows L26 drawing on their multilingual resources and using a Latin metaphor to explain a notion, while highlighting that metaphors condense meaning into vivid images and convey messages succinctly. The reason why L30 switched to Italian was to create an effect, get closer to home students or say something that they were unable to convey in English.

L26: […] metaphors […] allows you to understand complex issues […] I believe that it is especially true in economics, […] you don't explain, technological progress it just falls it just happens and you don't know why it's a **deus ex machina** that's another metaphor.

L30: […] she stayed up two three minutes not more. and my colleague I can say it to you in Italian **cornuto davanti a migliaia di persone** no that's not for me.

Several lecturers, particularly those at the B2 level, used translanguaging to compensate for potential language barriers, primarily when they had difficulty explaining professional discourse in English.

L30: […] I don't know really the correct word this is […] I should say your patient **ha smanettato con l'insulina**, you know **smanettare**?, I did not, know which, eh precise word to choose in English but eh something like that tinkering…

L13 and L14 employed translanguaging techniques for similar reasons; L13 referred to the L1 because they did not know the English word, while L14 used the Catalan expression *la caza de brujas*, 'witch hunt', to aid comprehension, *doncs*, 'so', to transition, and *sí*, 'yes', to check understanding.

L13: […] it's like a direct- yeah I don't know the translation maybe eh. because **realitzador** is really like a director but for TV in a way right?

L14: […] during the McCarthyism do you know the McCarth-McCarthyism? **la caza de brujas**? in the United States yeah? okay **doncs** Ed Marrow was he fought against the McCarthyists […] have you heard about it before?

S12: yeah […]

L14: **sí**?

A rather different approach to and reason for translanguaging was observed when L25 used Latin as international academic disciplinary language and explained the meaning to ensure understanding.

L25: I cannot I say **tabula rasa**? I use some Latin terms is part of the international language sorry but I will. […] that is a table without anything on that is nothing […] the patient that doesn't know anything about the problem eh, for which is searching you as a doctor okay? **tabula rasa** eh not being a **tabula rasa**.

6. DISCUSSION

This paper highlights the various ways lecturers modify the English language while using ELF in the multilingual EMI classroom, and discusses the potential implications of these ELF features on EMI and the quality of instruction. Overall, NNES EMI lecturers adapt their English and use it as a lingua franca in line with their needs, ability, and language knowledge, leading to various linguistic modifications, which could have implications for teaching and academic excellence.

With regard to non-standard phonology, studies have shown that EMI lecturers can face difficulty pronouncing words accurately (Doiz et al., 2019). Such variations can easily impact intelligibility (Jenkins, 2000), and inaccurate pronunciation can impede understanding in EMI (Yildiz et al., 2017). As expected, certain ELF modifications were present in the lecturers' speech, particularly those at the B2 level. These lecturers also had strong foreign accents, stressed syllables incorrectly, and mispronounced general and specialist terms, and the past tense suffix *-ed*. In addition, their intonation was often less expressive and occasionally even quite flat.

At times, the authors misinterpreted some of the lecturers' statements, so it seems reasonable to wonder whether students also had trouble understanding any of the lectures. While weaker lecturers with a strong accent were harder to comprehend, we had no trouble understanding those who spoke the same L1 as ourselves. This could suggest that international students may find it more difficult to understand NNES EMI lecturers than domestic ones, who are accustomed to the lecturers' accents (cf. Vančura & Alić, 2022). Also, it was easier to understand standard general English words from the context than lecturers' inaccurate pronunciation of disciplinary discourse and specialist terminology, suggesting that this could hinder students' ability to comprehend disciplinary discourse and complex course material. Although it is claimed that intelligibility is more important than accuracy (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2023), intelligibility often hinges on accuracy. Besides, if students are exposed to incorrect pronunciation in the classroom, it may be difficult for them to understand and use disciplinary discourse in real-world international professional environments, where speakers of different linguacultural backgrounds would not necessarily associate /kʌltʃum/ with *calcium* or /mæskls/ with *muscles*. Therefore, while EMI students may adjust to certain ELF modifications and perform well in academia, they may not necessarily do so in the workplace and society (cf. Airey, 2011). Furthermore, since lecturers are expected to be experts in their field and disciplinary discourse, mispronouncing specialist terminology may be interpreted as superficial and unprofessional (cf. Gómez-Lacabex & Roothooft, 2023). Hence, it seems reasonable to state that lecturers should not modify the pronunciation of disciplinary discourse and specialist terminology, but rather adhere to standard norms (cf. Valcke & Pavón, 2015), regardless of whether such practice is customary and/or acceptable in other ELF contexts, as it "could sometimes be a distraction" in the EMI classroom (Gómez-Lacabex & Roothooft, 2023: 348). This can be easily prevented since lecturers should know which subject-specific terminology will be covered in class, and should therefore plan and prepare beforehand.

As for lecturers' grammatical ELF modifications, they occurred sporadically, and, from our perspective, did not appear to have an impact on comprehensibility. Variations in the use of prepositions could alter the meaning of prepositional phrases and phrasal verbs, but the examples in this study did not seem particularly pertinent to the content or discipline. Omission of the third-person present tense *-s*, and sporadic mistakes in the use of (irregular) past forms, continuous tenses, the modal *would* in conditional clauses, pronouns *which* and *who*, and passive were consistent with ELF modifications, and deemed acceptable in ELF discourse among NNES lecturers.

However, it is questionable whether frequent and consistent modifications of such features are considered acceptable in EMI (cf. Van Splunder, 2015). Besides, it is highly unlikely that EMI lectures and students are aware of the tenets of the ELF paradigm, or are able to see ELF interaction through the applied linguist's lens, and thus may readily judge unconventional grammatical constructions and forms. Even when they have no bearing on comprehension, basic mistakes, such as the incorrect use of the third-person present tense *-s* and irregular verbs, are typically disapproved by students (Drljača Margić & Vodopija-Krstanović, 2017). Similarly, modifications involving articles and their omission, which diverge from standard disciplinary discourse, could be disapproved, regardless of whether they affect comprehensibility. Therefore, in the medical sciences, lecturers should adhere to the standard use of the definite article with organs, systems, and certain parts of the body. These conventions are fundamental to disciplinary discourse and should be applied consistently across all courses. Furthermore, the use of the simple rather than continuous tenses to describe established medical facts and processes is a rather elementary and straightforward rule to follow. While accuracy and precision are expected in medical academic writing (Kojima & Popiel, 2023), they should not be overlooked in oral communication. Thus, it would seem reasonable to state that EMI lecturers should adhere to standard disciplinary discourse as students' understanding and knowledge of medical communication in English is an essential competence, which they will use to interact with other professionals globally (Kantz & Marenzi, 2016).

In view of the fact that EMI involves the teaching of academic content and "[has emerged] as academic means of instruction" (Curle et al., 2024: 2), it is important to employ appropriate academic discourse style. In other words, lecturers should use CALP rather than BICS, and express themselves clearly and coherently (Kling et al., 2022). Therefore, ELF accommodation (to the students' level of English) and the use of simplistic language, as in *one lung has gone away*, does not meet the expectations of oral academic discourse for teaching in HE. Clearly, it is quite inappropriate to use excessively conversational and informal English instead of adhering to the conventions of academic and scientific discourse. If BICS was employed to make the content more accessible to the students, the use of (pedagogical) scaffolding would have been a more effective strategy (TAEC EMI Handbook, 2019).

The data have also shown that B2 lecturers' speech was occasionally difficult to understand as the meaning was convoluted, even when the lexis was comprehensible and there were few formal language errors. When the lecturers modified the language to make up for their limited oral skills, they compromised the clarity and coherence of

the message. While such examples could be interpreted as accommodation, negotiation of meaning, and the creative use of English (cf. Seidlhofer & Widdowson, 2009), the outcome was ambiguous and inappropriate for the teaching-learning context.

Regarding pragmatics, lecturers used strategies such as comprehension checks, paraphrasing, simplifying, and pre-empting signals to help disambiguate the message (cf. Cogo & House, 2018). However, it should be noted that, in EMI classrooms, simplifying involves the use of scaffolding strategies to make complex content accessible by breaking it down into manageable chunks, including examples, using clear language, rephrasing, elaborating, using transitions, and organising information coherently. It is important to distinguish between simplifying and oversimplifying, whereby complex material is conveyed in rather basic language, which, as discussed above, involves using conversational everyday expressions rather than scholarly discourse.

As for lexical alterations and the creation of figurative expressions, they were not used frequently in class, possibly because they are not a part of disciplinary (academic) discourse and the lecturers' language repertoire. When used, they were not highly idiomatic. Besides, these expressions mainly provided supplementary information, and were therefore unrelated to the core discipline-specific content.

Translanguaging is "seen as an intrinsic part of ELF communication" (Jenkins et al., 2018: 2), and an important pedagogical strategy for supporting learning in EMI (Cicillini, 2024). However, when students and lecturers do not share the same L1, translanguaging can increase ambiguity, rather than enhance learning (Sahan, 2020). In this study, lecturers occasionally used translanguaging as a "word-search" strategy (Cogo, 2018: 361) to overcome their limitations in English, which raises concerns about "sufficient proficiency to teach EMI" (Macaro et al., 2021: 462). While using translanguaging to explain concepts through cultural references (Cicillini, 2024) (e.g. *calcio* and 'calcium') could serve as a mnemonic device for domestic students, it would probably exclude the international ones, who do not share the same linguacultural background (Sahan, 2020).

Regarding the implications of the findings for EMI, a widely held position is that "EMI in the non-English-dominant context, with a majority of L2 English stakeholders, demands an acceptance of the use of English as an academic *lingua franca* and necessitates rethinking requirements for teaching EMI" (Dimova & Kling, 2024: 15). However, the question that arises is how English as an academic lingua franca and "requirements for teaching EMI" can be operationalised in practice in terms of specific skills and competences for EMI lecturers. Therefore, what needs to be considered is: a) which ELF modifications are deemed acceptable in a specific academic context,

and b) whether EMI as a unique ELF context sets specific (language) requirements of lecturers. In order to be able to address these questions, theoretical discussion of ELF should be operationalised and empirically tested in practice in diverse contexts. However, given the discoursal hybridity of ELF (James, 2008), and "the absence of linguistic authority other than communicative efficiency, group norms are negotiated internally" in communities of practice, such as academia (Mauranen, 2012: 6). Accordingly, what can be deemed successful and appropriate ELF communication in one context may not be acceptable in academic settings.

Therefore, as far as ELF modifications and the standard are concerned, lecturers as skilful ELF users are expected to have a "sufficiently high level of proficiency to teach EMI", which does not imply adhering to the unrealistic NS ideal (Macaro et al., 2021: 462). As previously noted, proficiency for EMI is more complex that the NNES-NES dichotomy, and even "[l]evel C2 is not intended to imply native-speaker or near native-speaker competence. What is intended is to characterise the degree of precision, appropriateness and ease with the language that typifies the speech of those who have been highly successful learners" (CEFR, 2018: 178).

If C1 is the recommended level of English for EMI lecturers (Lasagabaster, 2022), they should be able to use "a broad range of language [and] express themselves fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly [with] little obvious searching for expressions or avoidance strategies" (CEFR, 2018: 174). They should also have "a high degree of grammatical accuracy [with] errors [being] rare and difficult to spot" (CEFR, 2018: 131). As for pronunciation, C1 speakers should "have sufficient control to ensure intelligibility" and "vary intonation and place stress correctly" (CEFR, 2018: 134). Overall, they should be able to use the "language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes" (CEFR, 2018: 175).

It should also be acknowledged that lecturers are responsible for developing students' disciplinary discourse, meaning that "the EMI lecturer should become a discourse guide of the subject taught in English" (Lasagabaster, 2022: 27). Therefore, "from a disciplinary discourse perspective, all university courses can be said to involve content and language integrated learning (CLIL)" (Airey, 2012: 64).

In view of the above, it is clear that proficiency, accuracy, knowledge of disciplinary and academic discourse are key to effective teaching, and comprehensibility and skilful use cannot be a sufficient benchmark for EMI classrooms. Phonological, lexical, grammatical, and pragmatic modifications and errors should be kept to a minimum as they alone can impede comprehension, convey incorrect information, thus making the content less accessible to students. When combined with the challenges lecturers

face regarding fluency, use of academic English, vocabulary range, structure and coherence, and disciplinary discourse, these issues are exacerbated and reduce the quality of lectures, as well as the lecturer's expertise and status (Drljača Margić & Vodopija-Krstanović, 2017). While BICS can be used on campus at large, different rules should apply to the EMI classroom, where CALP should be employed, just like in L1 classes. In spite of the fact that EMI lecturers do not feel it is their place to teach language (cf. Schmidt-Unterberger, 2018), they should be able to use disciplinary discourse accurately, as language is not only taught and learned explicitly, but acquired implicitly as well (Airey, 2012).

Given that not all modifications can be considered ELF accommodation, several important practical implications are that lecturers should become aware of the language skills required for EMI, reflect on how their language use affects EMI, and consider how they can continuously improve their language skills, prepare for classes in terms of pronunciation, grammar, and lexis, and strive for fluency, accuracy, and precision in English. Since lecturers are responsible for ensuring that students learn both content and disciplinary language, care should be taken that the creativity and modifications associated with ELF do not translate into subpar language use. That being the case, HE institutions should develop an EMI language-in-education policy to guarantee that teachers are equipped for teaching through English and are able to appropriately provide and support effective educational and learning experiences.

Regarding the implications of the study for the quality of EMI, it is also important to consider what kind of support or which strategies would help EMI lecturers address some of the challenges and shortcomings revealed in this research. First and foremost, lecturers and stakeholders need to be aware of the complexity of EMI and the differences between teaching in the L1 and English (Drljača Margić & Vodopija-Krstanović, 2024). Therefore, in order to deliver courses effectively, lecturers require sustainable professional development for EMI, which includes training in general English, English for teaching purposes, academic English, and disciplinary discourse (Drljača Margić & Vodopija-Krstanović, 2018).

As for the limitations of the study, the insights provided in this study are based on observations of EMI teaching in international ELF contexts, which are subject to observer biases and the observer's paradox. Furthermore, the participants were not asked to validate the interpretations and implications derived from the data, and students were not invited to share their perspectives on acceptability and comprehensibility of ELF in EMI, as well as the impact of the lecturers' ELF modifications and translanguaging practices on their learning experiences. Future research could build

on our findings and investigate the use of ELF in EMI classrooms from lecturers' and students' perspectives by triangulating classroom observation with student and teacher interviews.

7. CONCLUSION

With the rapid expansion of EMI programmes it is important to better understand ELF use in diverse multilingual classrooms. The findings of this study demonstrate how the lecturers modify English, and critically discusses these modifications in relation to classroom practice. All the lecturers, whose language proficiency ranged from B2 to C2, were able to teach in English, albeit with varying degree of success as the quality of their English varied substantially, which was reflected in the intelligibility of the message, discourse style, complexity of explanations, and coherence of the presentations.

While ELF is used effectively in communities of varied degrees of permanence, diffusion, and stability (Mauranen, 2018) with respect to the standard, somewhat different criteria should apply to academic contexts. Although skilful communication may indeed be sufficient for the use of ELF in everyday communication, proficiency, academic standards, and teaching excellence should apply to EMI. The least that should be expected is that university teaching will be conducted in academic English and that specialist discourse will be pronounced and used accurately to ensure students' subsequent accurate use in international professional contexts. Students in Drljača Margić and Vodopija-Krstanović's study (2017) explicitly stated that they expected high English proficiency from their teachers and would tolerate only the occasional error. Airey (2012) pointed out that disciplinary discourse was an integral part of EMI, and should not be overlooked, and Van Splunder (2015) highlighted that academic context sets high expectation of language use and language accuracy. Therefore, what needs to be re-examined is the ELF tenet that communicative efficiency is an adequate criterion for quality EMI, and that "[t]he appropriation of the language as a lingua franca necessarily focuses attention not on what is proper English in reference to standard or native-speaker norms, but what is appropriate English for new and different communicative and communal purposes" (Dewey, 2007: 88). However, keeping in mind that EMI has, in fact, created a new communicative purpose, appropriate ELF use should not automatically reject any association with the standard as English in EMI should include accurate use of standard disciplinary discourse and academic English, as well as accurate and coherent transfer of information. Approximations in

communication are insufficient in this setting, and translanguaging may not be the best practice in a linguistically diverse EMI classroom.

Be that as it may, surprisingly little focus has been placed on EMI's quality assurance and language-in-education policy, which would establish clear standards for lecturers' language proficiency and classroom usage. English competence for EMI should not be perceived only in terms of comprehensibility or C1 level of proficiency, but should also take into account proficiency in academic and disciplinary discourse. Accordingly, a key policy priority should be securing teacher training and development for all EMI lecturers, so that they are better able to identify and overcome their language weaknesses, and adopt pedagogically responsive strategies in international multilingual contexts (cf. Drljača Margić & Vodopija-Krstanović, 2024). Ultimately, the goal of EMI should be to provide quality education through English, which will not take place through the mere translation of teaching materials and undermining correctness and precision in classroom talk.

In general, therefore, it seems that although English used as a lingua franca on campuses is in conformity with how it is used in society (Jenkins, 2014), a distinction should be made between the use of ELF on campus and in the EMI classroom. ELF accommodation, modification, and the use of compensation strategies should not take precedence over accuracy as the use of ELF in EMI requires a higher and more rigorous standard of (general, academic and disciplinary) language use than the use of ELF in society at large.

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Hrvatska

Engleski kao *lingua franca* u engleskome kao jeziku visokoškolske nastave: spoznaje s višejezičnih sveučilišta

Sažetak

Posljednjih godina sveučilišta u zemljama neengleskoga govornog područja svjedoče znatnome porastu uporabe engleskoga kao jezika visokoškolske nastave (EJVIN) te uporabe engleskoga kao *lingue france* (ELF). Na sveučilištima širom svijeta neizvorni govornici engleskoga jezika modificiraju engleski jezik koristeći se njime kao sredstvom komunikacije s primarnim ciljem međusobnoga razumijevanja. U EJVIN-u je međutim od izrazite važnosti promotriti kako modifikacije engleskoga jezika u uporabi ELF-a utječu na poučavanje, uzevši u obzir da sposobnost učinkovitoga poučavanja ovisi o nastavnikovu jezičnom umijeću u engleskome.

Na temelju podataka prikupljenih tijekom opservacija trideset nastavnih sati koje su održali nastavnici s pet višejezičnih sveučilišta, u ovoj se kvalitativnoj studiji analiziraju modifikacije engleskoga jezika u uporabi ELF-a te njihov utjecaj na poučavanje.

Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da nastavnici modificiraju engleski jezik na fonološkoj, gramatičkoj, pragmatičkoj i leksičkoj razini te primjenjuju prebacivanje kodova. Iako većina uočenih modifikacija vjerojatno ne ugrožava razumijevanje gradiva među studentima, u radu se ističe da samo razumijevanje nije dostatno mjerilo za kvalitetu EJVIN-a, odnosno da komunikacija u učionici i izvan nje treba počivati na različitim stilovima jezičnoga standarda. Stoga, da bi se osigurala akademska izvrsnost, nastavni bi se sati trebali održavati na akademskome engleskom jeziku, terminologija i stručni diskurs trebali bi se točno upotrebljavati i izgovarati, dok bi modifikacije standardnoga jezika trebalo svesti na minimum.

Ključne riječi: engleski kao jezik visokoškolske nastave (EJVIN), engleski kao *lingua franca*, nastavnici u EJVIN-u, jezične modifikacije, višejezična učionica