7 English in Italian education

7.1 An 'English-first' educational system

English is today the first foreign language taught and learned at all levels of education in Italy, followed by French and, to a much lesser extent, German and Spanish (Balboni 2009). The primacy of English is the result of decades of progress in society and reforms of the educational system in Italy, following the end of the Second World War, which led to a progressive rise of EFL (English as a Foreign Language), in particular from the early 1960s. The economic 'miracle' of the post-war years (see 2.5) turned Italy into a modern, industrialized country, politically aligned with the NATO (*North Atlantic Treaty Organization*) since 1949 and a member of the EU (*European Union*) since 1958. These historical circumstances have undoubtedly influenced the educational orientation of the country and the preferences of Italians regarding foreign languages. A quick flashback to the past will explain the turn from a French-oriented to an English-oriented school system in Italy, but the main focus of this section will be on the present-day status of English in Italian education.

Up to the middle of the 20th century, the first foreign language in Italy was French. When Italy was unified in 1861, most of the northern part of the Italian peninsula belonged to the Kingdom of Sardinia, ruled by the House of Savoy, a French-speaking dynasty that reigned in the areas that today are the French Haute Savoie and the Italian Piedmont region from the 15th century to the Italian unification in 1861. French was the language of the court, although the House of Savoy supported the Italian language when the capital was transferred from Chambéry to Torino in 1562, and the Piedmontese dialect was also widespread among the population and the ruling elites.[120]

After the Italian unification, the first reform of the educational system was implemented in 1859 (Casati Law) (Balboni 1988). This reform introduced compulsory education (initially, only for 2 years of elementary school), and elected French as the foreign language to teach in secondary schools: this strategic choice would strike a balance between the existing geopolitical situation, encompassing French-speaking areas across the Alpine regions, and Italian, the language that

120 A paradigmatic example is that of the politician Camillo Benso Count of Cavour, who was prime minister of the kingdom of Sardinia and gave a great diplomatic contribution to the unification of the country. He was known for being more familiar with the Piedmontese dialect and French than with Italian. According to historical accounts, Cavour was worried about his new political role after the unification of Italy and the need to make speeches in fluent Italian.

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was to be recognized as the national language of unified Italy. English and German were recommended as optional subjects in technical schools, not as languages of culture, but as a support for the acquisition of technical terminology (Schirru 2019). The situation remained more or less the same after the 1923 educational reform by minister Giovanni Gentile at the onset of the fascist era (1922–1945) but the subsequent radicalization of autarchic policies strengthened the hostility towards foreign languages, especially towards English, the language of the enemies, until the end of the Second World War, when the scenario was totally reversed.

A turning point in education was a reform of the lower secondary school system implemented in 1962. The novelty consisted in opening up the choice of the foreign language to study to the four 'big' European languages, namely English, French, German and Spanish. In addition, the number of hours devoted to foreign languages was increased and the adoption of more learner-centred teaching methods, based on communication rather than grammar and translation, was encouraged. Since then, French has gradually given way to other languages, especially to English, which is now the first choice of most of the Italian school population. Over time, the teaching of foreign languages has been a core theme of special projects, local experimentation, and action research (Balboni 1988, 2009). For example, the 1970s *Progetto Speciale Lingue straniere* (*Special Project on Foreign Languages*), which ran until 1996, promoted in-service training for language teachers. Anglophone associations played a role in promoting the language and its culture; an example is the British Council, which supported EFL teaching conferences, workshops, summer courses and cultural exchanges. For decades the Italian school system was a bustling factory of experimentation and action research, thanks to new language education projects (e.g. *Progetto Lingue 2000*), and the activity of language teachers and their associations, such as GISCEL, *Gruppo di Intervento e Studio nel Campo dell'Educazione Linguistica* (*Intervention and Study Group in the Field of Language Education*). According to Schirru (2019), the Italian educational policy, especially on foreign language matters, gradually aligned with the policies of the European Union, which recommended that each European citizen should become competent in two EU languages besides their mother tongue.[121] In compliance with the Bologna Process (1999),[122] the teaching of two foreign languages was introduced in Italian lower secondary schools already in 2000. However, subsequent reforms gradually oriented the system in favour of

121 *White paper on education and training* (Commission of the European Communities 1996).

122 The Bologna Declaration was signed on 19 June 1999 by 29 European Ministers of Education. The signatories agreed to harmonize their university systems, establishing comparable degrees, enhancing mobility, promoting employability, and making the European area of higher education attractive world-wide for the richness, diversity and uniqueness of its cultural and scientific traditions.

English: in 2003 a foreign language (with English chosen by the large majority of families) became mandatory for the whole primary school population (*Riforma Moratti*), in 2007 all BA university programmes were required to offer credits in English (*Riforma Mussi*), and in 2009 English was adopted as the primary choice in curricula with only one foreign language, becoming practically a curricular subject when two foreign languages are taught (*Riforma Gelmini*).

To identify competence levels, the common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is normally referred to as a benchmark, which is set to B2 (upper intermediate or 'vantage') at the end of the upper secondary school. Cambridge English Qualifications and several other types of certificates (e.g. IELTS, TOEFL, Trinity) are quite popular among the Italian school population and beyond. Following the *Progetto Lingue 2000*, Italian schools may become testing sites for Cambridge English tests for local students, who can take these tests on a voluntary basis at special prices. Also, universities accept language diplomas issued by private organizations, such as the University of Cambridge ESOL and the British Council, to acquire credits or as entry requirements for English-mediated degree programmes (Cicillini 2021). As a results, the number of school-age students who have taken the A2 Key (KET), B1 Preliminary (PET) and B2 First (FCE) has shot up in the last two decades. Since 2010 the CLIL (*Content and Language Integrated Learning*) methodology has been gradually introduced in secondary schools, whereby a non-linguistic discipline is taught through the medium of a foreign language in the last year of the upper secondary schools. Subsequent legislative intervention in 2015 extended CLIL projects to other school levels, from elementary to lower and upper secondary schools.[123] The majority of CLIL experimentations involves the English language (70%), followed by French (21%), German (4%), Spanish (4%) and others (1%) (Cinganotto 2016).

Since the 1990s, the Italian higher education system has also been structurally modified according to the EU model, based on the three-cycle system, namely Bachelor's and Master's degrees (in Italy referred to as "the 3+2 formula"), followed by doctorate programmes, which last three years or longer. The European Credit Transfer System is applied to favour student mobility and implement joint programmes. Most Italian universities are centuries old, like the University of Bologna, founded in 1088 and the oldest in Europe. Originally elitist in character, devoted primarily to the study of the humanities, a radical transformation of the Italian university system took place after the 1968 student movement towards the liberalization of admission and comparatively low fees. Differently from other EU countries, Italian universities grant free admission to all applicants, and only a limited num-

123 https://www.miur.gov.it/web/guest/clil1 (November, 2022).

ber of degree courses are competitive (with *numerus clausus*),[124] and its overall structure is that of a 'mass' university system (Prat Zagrebelsky 1991; Salvi 2009; Solly 2010; Pulcini and Campagna 2015).

These giant leaps in Italian education since the 1960s have indeed changed society for the better. Nowadays, the level of illiteracy in Italy is practically reduced to zero. The portion of the population between the age of 25 and 64 who has completed a secondary school cycle is 62.2% and for tertiary education (university) the rate is 19.6%. Yet, both figures are below the average statistics in EU28 (78.7% for secondary level and 33.2% for the tertiary cycle)[125] (Istat 2020). Compulsory education in Italy lasts 10 years, from the age of 6 to 16. As a result of measures favouring the study of English as a foreign language, at the end of the 10-year period of compulsory education, all Italian school-age population has studied English for at least 10 years. According to the Eurydice data (European Education and Culture Executive Agency 2017: 32), Italy is an 'exceptional' case in Europe, as the learning of a foreign language in school has been compulsory from primary throughout lower and upper secondary levels since 2011. However, like in most European countries "English is the foreign language learnt by most students during primary and secondary education." (European Education and Culture Executive Agency 2017: 13).

Despite the spread of EFL in Italian education and the improvement in teaching time and methods, Italians are generally reported to be less proficient in foreign languages than their European fellows. The data shown in Figure 7.1 (*Special Eurobarometer 386*, 2014) report that only 38% of Italians regard themselves as capable of having a conversation in a foreign language, and 34% think that this foreign language is English. These figures are lower than the EU average, which indicates that 54% of citizens can hold a conversation in a foreign language, and 38% mention English.[126] Another meaningful indicator is the dramatic drop of French (only 16% of Italians declare they are able to have a conversation in this language), which is a particularly negative sign, considering the strong status of French until only a few decades ago. Equally alarming is that 62% of Italian citizens cannot communicate in a language other than their mother tongue (against an average of 46% in EU27).

Attitudes towards the English language are extremely favourable among Italians, to say the least. As shown in Figure 7.2, 70% of Italians consider English the

124 See universitaly.com for an overview of all degree courses offered by Italian universities, including the ones entirely taught in English.

125 Figures on the achievement of a secondary school diploma are below those of other EU countries such as Germany (86.6%) and France (80.4%). Spain, Malta and Portugal have lower rates of diploma holders than Italy.

126 The gap is much greater between Italy and Nordic countries, where self-assessed competence in English reaches 86% in Denmark, 86% in Sweden, 70% in Finland, and 90% in the Netherlands.

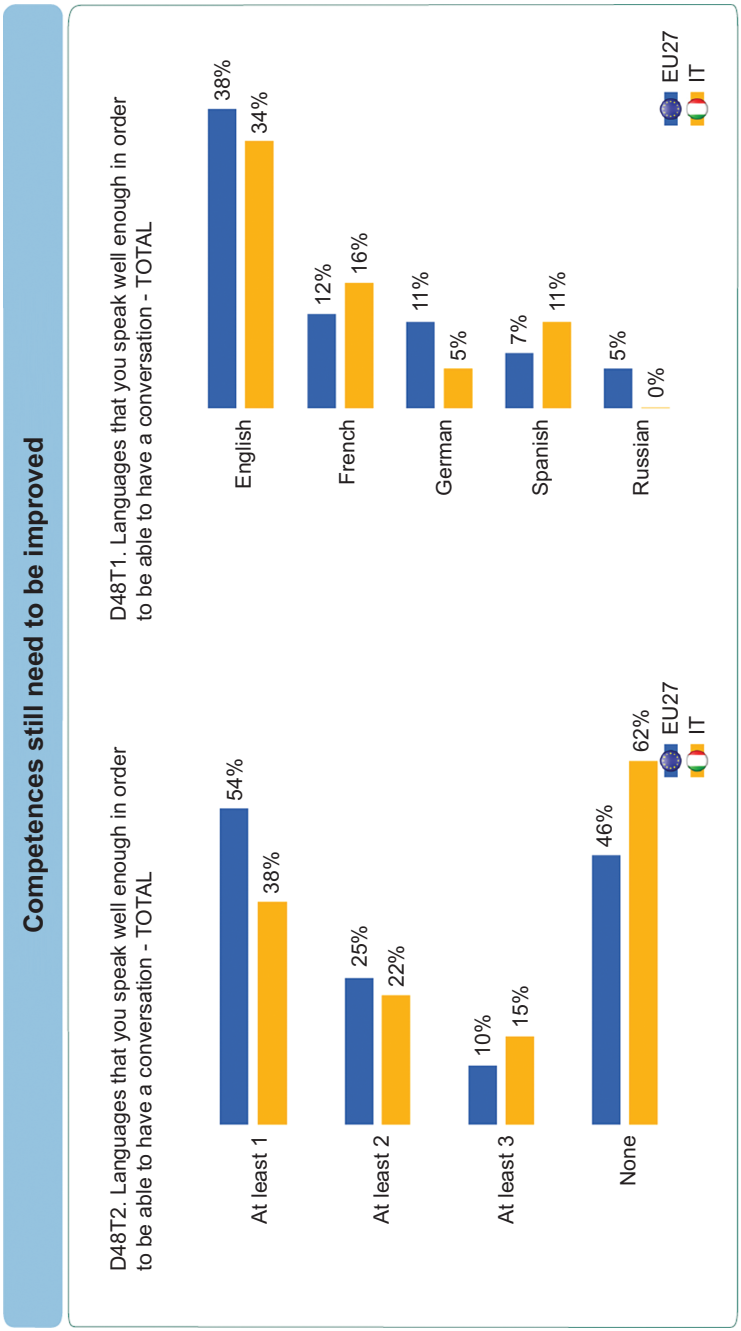

Figure 7.1: Statistics on language competence to have a conversation (*Special Eurobarometer 386*, 2014).

most useful foreign language for their personal development (against 67% in the EU27), and 84% consider English the most useful language for children to learn for their future (against 79% in EU27). Surprisingly, as noted above, French (a sister language, geographically close to Italy) appears to have completely lost its appeal, as only 11% consider it useful for themselves and 14% for their children's future (practically at the same level as Chinese).

English is today the most widely spoken language in the world, with an estimated number of native and non-native speakers amounting to 1.45 billion (Eberhard, Simons and Fennig 2021); therefore, the practical advantages that this language offers to communicate with people from different national and linguistic backgrounds are evident to everyone. In Italy, any middle or upper-class family would be ready to invest in English summer courses, especially in the UK, for their children, or English-only education. As explained by Tosi (in Lepsky and Tosi 2006: 165)

> The Italian situation reflects the general picture of the contacts between other European languages and English. This trend began some twenty years ago. Fluency in English was perceived not only as an advantage in one's work but also as a mark of social prestige.

Despite the common intent to create a harmonized *European Education Area* (EEA), evident differences exist across European countries. As far as English proficiency is concerned, a divide between Nordic and Mediterranean countries is well-known and confirmed by data (see footnote 130). In the Nordic countries, people are more intensely exposed to English outside the school environment, through television and other media. In Italy, the long-standing tradition of dubbing films and television shows makes national channels mainly monolingual: while this situation grants general access to audio-visual programmes, it does not offer the opportunity to hear other languages.[127] Arguably, the introduction of Italian television in the 1950s brought the Italian language into everyone's homes, spreading and reinforcing the use of the national language and the decline of dialects. Italian viewers are now accustomed to watching films and tv series in the dubbed version, but today it is also possible to opt for foreign programmes in the original version through satellite transmission and video streaming services. All

127 The dubbing market is a huge and expensive one compared to the subtitling one and is characteristic of populous countries with large audiences, like Italy, Germany, France and Spain. These countries tried to counterbalance the 'flood' of the American film industry in the post-war years by promoting national productions. The practice of dubbing was predominant in these countries also for nationalistic reasons. During the fascist era in Italy (1922–1945), non-dubbed films were prohibited (Minutella 2009; Audissino 2012).

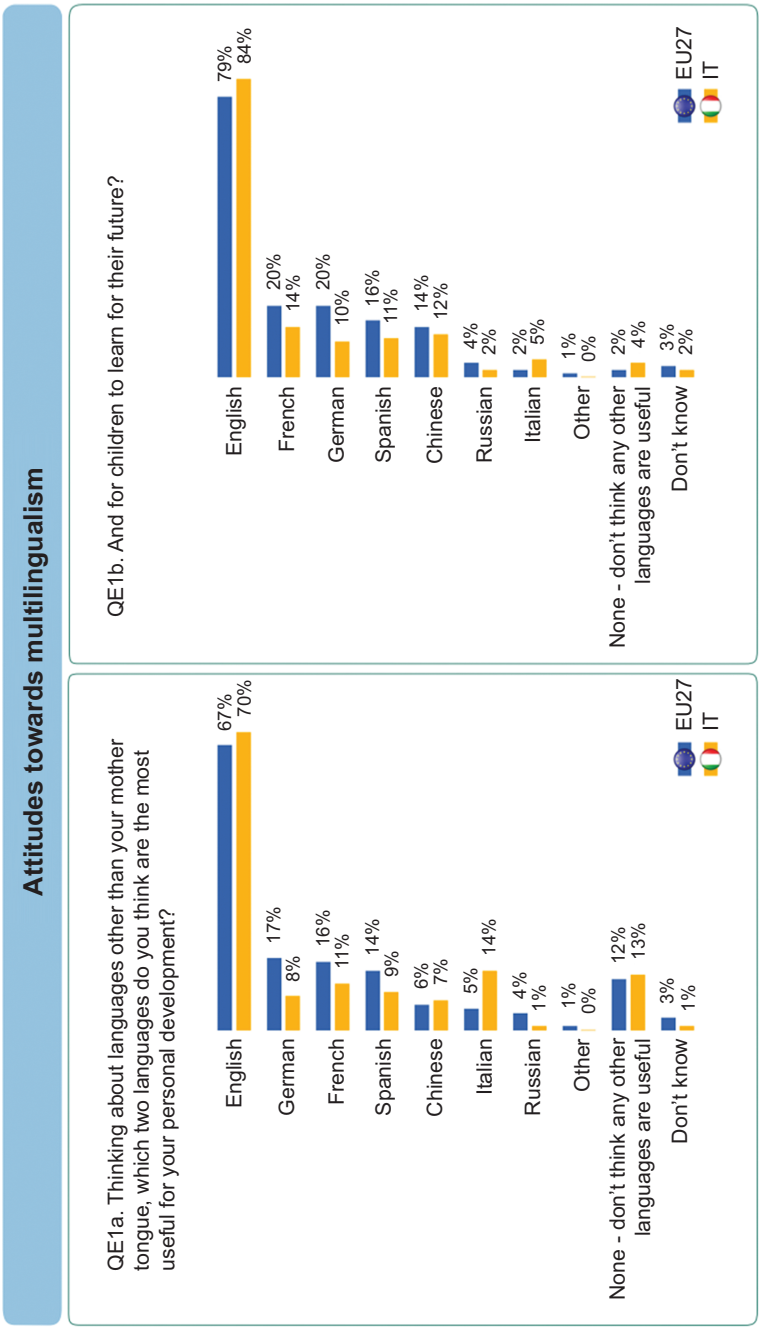

Figure 7.2: Statistics on attitudes towards multilingualism in the Italian population (*Special Eurobarometer 386*, 2014).

in all, competence in English of Italians leaves much to be desired, as clearly stated by Carlucci (2018):

> [. . .] direct contact with English speakers is a minority experience within the Italian-speaking community, and [. . .] a confident command of English is beyond reach of many speakers of Italian. Amongst those speakers whose material conditions of life and work make advanced knowledge and usage of English quite detached from everyday practices and priorities, this language is only learnt at a basic level or not learnt at all (Carlucci 2018: 4).

However, the Italian generation of millennials may modify the Italian linguistic scenario. The number of non-native speakers of English (at least 38% of EU citizens) is higher than that of native speakers (about 13% of the EU population before Brexit), which makes English the lingua franca of international communication and, as such, the expression of a 'de-territorialized' culture, at least for many learners (*Special Eurobarometer 386*, 2014). As surveyed by Aiello (2018) in a study of Italian youth learning English in 2012–13, secondary school students have a positive attitude towards the study of English, which they consider 'useful' for their future, as it will enable them to get a good job, to work abroad and travel. Indeed, the motivating driver towards the study of English is largely instrumental, utilitarian and, to some extent, self-centered. It looks as though the 'integrative' motivation which supported the study of English among previous generations, attracted by the British or American cultures and societies, and by the desire to imitate native speakers, is losing ground. Yet, young learners still consider 'native English' (mainly British and American) the best model to aim at as far as pronunciation is concerned. All in all, the widespread view that Italians are not very good at learning foreign languages still endures. However, according to Aiello's data, as far as self-perceived proficiency is concerned, Italian students regard their level of English as not fully satisfactory but have a positive perception of their own potential to learn English.

7.2 English-medium instruction

By English-medium instruction (normally abbreviated to EMI) is meant the use of English in tertiary education for the transmission of disciplinary knowledge, and implemented in countries where English is not the first language of the majority of the population (Dearden 2015; Macaro et al. 2018; Pecorari and Malmström 2018). The introduction of English-medium instruction in higher education is another step forward to align Italian education to the EU agenda of internationalization, a guiding principle for the creation of the *European Higher Education Area*

(EHEA).[128] The goals of internationalization, based on the objectives of the Bologna Declaration and extending beyond the EU, are to make higher education programmes more similar and compatible, and encourage transnational alignment and mutual recognition of curricula, so that student and staff mobility can be facilitated. Despite the great variety of languages spoken in the European continent, some 'stronger' languages are more operational than others for cross-border communication, but English is anyway the undisputed supranational lingua franca. Consequently, the goal of internationalization goes hand in hand with the 'Anglicization' of higher education, a strategy that may indeed ease this process, given that on average more than half of the European population is competent enough in English to hold a conversation and English is the most widely studied foreign language in all EU countries, as noted above (Wilkinson and Gabriëls 2021).

This trend towards homogenization across the European educational systems may sound contradictory and even paradoxical, given that linguistic diversity is held as one of the assets for the EU, as expressed by the well-known European motto 'united in diversity' (*in varietate concordia*). In fact, the growing use of English as a medium of instruction in European higher education contradicts the pluralistic approach to languages, traditions and cultures, which has made multilingualism the flagship principle of European identity. The promotion of internationalization, which has become an ever-present buzzword in academic policy-making, is meant to bring the beneficial effects of consolidating cooperation and enhancing mutual understanding among European citizens by subscribing to common key values and contributing to the making of the 'global citizen'. In a more pragmatic vein, once alien to the academic community, increased attraction of international students and staff will contribute to placing universities on the international market as 'brands', make them more competitive, raise their quality standards on international academic rankings, and ultimately increase their budgets (Mautner 2005).

The advantages of EMI have led to a swift surge in the number of programmes offered by universities in non-Anglophone countries (Coleman 2006; Macaro et al. 2018; Molino et al. 2022), giving priority to disciplines that generally attract many students interested in managerial and professional careers, such as economics, business administration, law and engineering. Indeed, from a European perspective, the goal of internationalization is not simply confined to student and staff mobility within the European continent, but, more ambitiously, to reach out much beyond the EU borders and attract students from all over the world.

128 The *European Higher Education Area* (EHEA), launched in 2010, is a collaboration among 49 countries in the European continent and the European Commission. Members of the EHEA agree to gradually transform their educational systems in accordance with the objectives of the Bologna Accord.

The controversial debate on the rise of English as the lingua franca for the development of higher education with a strong international vocation revolves around many arguments, equally valid, in favour or against (Dimova, Hultgren and Jensen 2015). The opportunities offered by the use of a language that is already shared by the majority of scholars and students are likely to bring about positive results in terms of knowledge construction and dissemination. In other words, the English language can be seen as an excellent tool for integration and intercomprehension in a multilingual and plurilinguistic context such as the European one.[129] The positions against English as a European lingua franca include ideological, cultural and educational factors. First, the ideological argument claims that subscribing to English-only education may imply the acceptance of 'English linguistic imperialism', that is, the superiority of the people who speak this language as a mother tongue. Second, the cultural argument maintains that monolingualism conveys the wrong assumption that only Anglophone cultures are relevant for one's future, while the other languages and cultures stand in a diaglossic or ancillary relation with it. Finally, the educational argument stresses the importance of education in one's own native language, which is essential for the full acquisition of expressive means in all knowledge domains, including scientific and technical terminology (Phillipson 2003, 2006, 2008).

Turning now to internationalization and English-medium instruction in Italy, introduced in the 1990s, it must be pointed out that it is a relatively recent phenomenon with respect to other European countries.[130] For this reason, over the last decades many surveys and studies have been devoted to EMI in Italy and to local contexts where EMI has been implemented more or less successfully, with a particular focus on attitudes, implications, advantages and disadvantages for teaching staff and students (Costa and Coleman 2012; Campagna and Pulcini 2014; Molino and Campagna 2014; Pulcini and Campagna 2015; Broggini and Costa 2017; Mastellotto and Zanin 2021). In Italy there are over 90 higher education institutions, mostly State (public) universities, several private ones, and some polytechnics (which have faculties of Architecture and Engineering), as well as other institutions such as the

129 Plurilingualism is a notion that normally refers to individual competence in the use and learning of more than one language, while multilingualism indicates the presence of more than one language in the same geographical area, even though these are not known by all speakers. Plurilingualism and multilingualism are often used as synonyms, but multilingualism is more commonly used in the EU context.

130 According to Coleman (2006) in the Netherlands and in Sweden English-taught courses were already present in the 1950s, while in Finland, Hungary and Norway they were introduced in the 1980s. The university of Maastricht is considered the pioneer of EMI, since it was the first institution to offer EMI programmes in Europe, starting from 1987.

academies of fine arts, conservatories of music, higher schools of design, fashion and restauration, theological colleges, and military academies (Solly 2010).[131] Since 2010, legislation has given Italian universities an 'autonomous status', according to which institutions are free to decide on their own educational organization, including the introduction of new degree programmes, if they comply with general requirements defined by the Ministry[132] (Solly 2010; Pulcini and Campagna, 2015). As shown in Table 7.1, the increase in English-taught programmes has been noteworthy: according to a national report issued in 2019, the number of programmes (degree courses) in English in the 2013–2014 academic year were 143, rising to 398 in the 2018–19 academic year, registering an increase of 178% (Rugge 2019). At the moment, the number of degree programmes taught entirely in English amounts to just over 10% of all degrees offered in Italian universities (Universitaly).

Table 7.1: Increase of EMI programmes in Italy (Rugge 2019).

A.A.	TOT. CORSI IN INGLESE	AUMENTO % RISPETTO ALL'A.A. 2013/2014
2013/2014	143	
2014/2015	193	+ 35 %
2015/2016	248	+ 73 %
2016/2017	279	+ 95 %
2017/2018	341	+ 138 %
2018/2019	398	+ 178 %

The data provided by the same report on the distribution of the EMI programmes across cycles and disciplinary areas show that the great majority of EMI programmes are at MA level (91.2%), whereas only 8.8% are at the BA level. Post-graduate, doctoral programmes and winter-summer schools in English have increased by 30% in the

131 Italy has some of the most ancient universities in Europe: the University of Bologna, the oldest, was founded in 1088, the University of Naples "Federico II" in 1321, the University of Rome "La Sapienza" in 1303, the University of Florence in 1321, the University of Turin in 1404 (Solly 2010).

132 In Italy there are the *Ministero dell'Università e Ricerca* (*Ministry of University and Research*), also known as MUR, and the *Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito* (*Ministry of Education and Merit*), whose competence regards all the other school cycles. Until 2020 the two ministries were joined together.

same time span. The most common disciplinary areas are economics, business administration, information science, engineering and medicine. Needless to say, degree programmes in Modern Languages, including the study of English language, literature and civilization as 'curricular' disciplines for the training of teachers and language specialists are a completely different matter, as English in this case is both the focus and the vehicle of disciplinary content.

The importance of English-medium instruction is a priority item on the agenda of the Italian *Ministry of University and Research* (MUR), as a strategic policy to implement internationalization. The *Conference of Italian University Rectors* (C*onferenza dei Rettori delle Università italiane*, also known as CRUI),[133] which holds a consulting role within the Italian university system, regularly conducts national surveys through its dedicated commissions in order to collect data and monitor the implementation of specific actions of academic relevance. The importance of the English language for internationalization has repeatedly been highlighted and discussed in many documents, as the following quote testifies:

> [. . .] l'internazionalizzazione della formazione può realizzarsi attraverso le forme dello scambio (soprattutto con il Programma Erasmus+), della mobilita internazionale strutturata, degli accordi interateneo. La via principale dell'internazionalizzazione rimane comunque l'erogazione dei programmi – di tutti e tre i livelli, ma soprattutto dottorali – in lingua straniera (inglese). (Rugge 2019: 81)

> [the internationalization of education can be realized through forms of exchange (especially through the Erasmus+ Programme), structured international mobility as well as inter-university agreements. The main route to internationalization is anyway the teaching of programmes – of all the three levels, but especially the doctoral ones – in a foreign language (English).]

The various challenges of EMI in Italy are carefully addressed by national documents. As far as competition is concerned, it is fully acknowledged that Italy can hardly stand up to the high-quality programmes in business and economics offered by Anglophone universities, and these particular subject areas normally feature as international EMI programmes all over the world. It follows that Italy needs a tailor-made strategy for implementing internationalization, focusing on its national strong points such as its geographical context, climate, people's welcoming attitude, Italy's strong cultural appeal as well as the Italian language:

> La nostra lingua rappresenta perciò un'opportunità non ancora sfruttata. Così come l'inglese è, ormai, la lingua semi-ufficiale in molte discipline, l'italiano avrebbe le potenzialità

133 CRUI is an association of Italian state and private universities with a co-ordinating and consulting role in the higher education system, linking institution to the Italian parliament and the Ministry of University and Research. Link: www.crui.it

> di essere la lingua-madre in alcune materie di studio come il design, l'architettura, l'arte, il restauro ecc. (Rugge 2018: 70)
>
> [Thus, our language represents an opportunity not yet exploited. As English is by now the semi-official language in many disciplines, Italian may potentially be the mother tongue of some disciplines such as design, architecture, art and conservation etc.]

On the other hand, the obstacle posed by the Italian language to attract international students cannot be denied. The number of international students attending Italian universities has been relatively low so far, amounting to 5.32% of the whole university population in 2019–20, according to the data issued by the *Ministry of University and Research*.[134] At the moment, the Italian university context is widely monolingual, which may make EMI an artificial operation or, as argued elsewhere, "the cosmetic travesty of internationalisation mandates" (Campagna and Pulcini 2014: 188). In fact, a truly international degree programme should posses specific characteristics, such as being designed for the realization of a joint degree programme, or an international consortium, or have an international orientation, include visiting professors in the teaching staff, and have a congruous number of international attenders. To some extent, given the relatively low number of international students, EMI in the Italian context may be considered as a form of 'internationalization at home', where Italian students have the opportunity of meeting some international students, attending lessons taught by visiting professors, and being fully involved in a 'foreign' academic experience in their home country. Italian reports on internationalization acknowledge this intrinsic drawback of EMI in Italy:

> Con oltre ¾ di una classe composta di italofoni, l'utilizzo, nel corso, della lingua inglese tende a ridursi e a essere percepito come posticcio. Né una così ristretta componente di studenti provenienti da altri Paesi riesce a imprimere al collettivo, oltre alla lingua, quelle prassi di lavoro e studio che rendono l'esperienza di apprendimento effettivamente internazionalizzata. (Rugge 2018: 27)
>
> [With more than ¾ of a class composed of Italian speakers, the use of the English language in the lessons tends to be reduced and be perceived as a fake. Nor can such a limited component of students coming from abroad transfer to the whole group, besides the language, working and studying styles that make the learning experience truly internationalized.]

134 Data from the *Anagrafe Nazionale degli Studenti* (Osservatorio Studenti Didattica), available at https://anagrafe.miur.it/php5/home.php. The indicators provided by OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) referring to 2021, quote 5% as the share of international and foreign students at all tertiary levels of education (Education at a Glance, available at https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2021_b35a14e5-en) (November, 2022).

Additional problems may arise in university contexts when a sudden shift to EMI results from a top-down imposition, dictated by political reasons rather than real educational motivations, such as, for example, to attract more students towards a declining degree programme. The teaching staff may not be confident enough to teach in English or not be willing to invest more time in lesson preparation and in the reorganization of the course material. Several professors learned English during their own training or specialization abroad, and feel that they can successfully handle and transfer complex notions in it, but many lecturers may only have a passive knowledge of the language and scarce communicative competence, and be reluctant to take on the extra hurdle of a full course in the EMI mode. Being able to teach in a language other than your own mother tongue, elaborating on complex content with an adequate linguistic richness and interacting with students in class and outside the class requires very high competence. Some Italian lecturers do not have these skills, and their performance in class may result in 'watered-down', simplified presentations of translated slides. Many scholars in the field of EMI argue in favour of adequate in-service methodological training and linguistic support in the transition to EMI, which would in fact reflect the approach referred to as ICLHE (Integrating Content and Language in Higher education)[135] or CLIL at tertiary level (Costa 2016, 2021). In order to encourage EMI, training courses on EMI methodology and linguistic support have been offered to university teaching staff by the British Council in Italy, leading to the acquisition of the ATE diploma (*Academic Teaching Excellence*). Other forms of competence validation are being considered for lecturers in charge of EMI courses to overcome situations of 'forced' recruitment of unenthusiastic lecturers.[136]

A further stumbling block for EMI is the students' level of English. Although universities set entry requirements for local and international students enrolling in EMI programmes, which is usually B2 (upper intermediate), often students' proficiency levels are not up to standard. Thus, it is necessary to provide linguistic support for students too, through the teaching of practical lessons to reinforce their English skills and avoid fossilization of wrong habits. Although EMI does not involve any specific focus on language acquisition, research on students' motivations

135 The Association ICLHE (Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education) was created in 2010 to promote international debate and experience within the university context on the integration of disciplinary content and the language of instruction (not only English).

136 At the *Center for Internationalization and Parallel Language Use* of the University of Copenhagen the TOEPAS (Test of Oral English Proficiency for Academic Staff), an oral performance test based on a simulated lecture, has been implemented to verify and certify the lecturers' proficiency and teaching skills (Dimova 2017). The advantage of this form of certification, now aligned to the CEFR (Dimova 2018) is international recognition allowing mobility for EMI lecturers.

and expectations from an EMI programme has shown that students choose English-taught programmes also to improve their competence in English by experiencing a 'full academic immersion' in the language. Academic training through the medium of English is considered an additional opportunity of consolidating one's competence in the language that is normally used by professionals, scientists and academics in conferences and in top-class specialized journals to access and disseminate specialist knowledge, especially in the 'hard' sciences, or simply to be more competitive in the global job market (Cicillini 2020).

As for possible drawbacks caused by EMI programmes, difficulties with content recall, note-taking and the learning of specialized terminology have been noted, although these learning problems are not significantly different from those encountered by non-EMI students. As for English competence, it cannot be denied that during an EMI degree programme lasting several years, students are exposed to English through lessons and written course material so that they expand their vocabulary and strengthen their grammar, often in an incidental way. Yet, this may not be enough to make significant progress in English proficiency, especially if the students' entry level is not advanced, without systematic language support and focus on language as well as content. Research into these questions has not yet provided solid evidence on EMI students' language gains. On the other hand, it has also been noted that EMI students are highly motivated to work hard and develop specific socio-affective strategies to achieve good results (Guarda 2018; Molino et al. 2022).

The educational issues related to EMI in Italy has recently provoked fierce debate within the academic community. The increase in the number of English-taught programmes in higher education is a phenomenon that has been criticized for various reasons, particularly because of its legal and cultural implications. The legal question lies in the 'imposition' of English as a medium of instruction on Italian university staff who may not be happy to switch to English. The cultural question, raised by many Italian linguists, is whether an Italian graduate should be trained in a foreign language and miss out on the acquisition of technical and scientific terminology in the national language.

On this particular issue, the case of the Polytechnic of Milan in 2012 is worth mentioning, since it attracted intense media coverage for these legal and cultural implications and is indeed emblematic in the Italian EMI context. The Polytechnic of Milan decided that its MA and PhD programmes would be taught entirely in English starting from the academic year 2014. This decision was opposed by some professors who did not feel or want to teach in English and consequently filed a legal action on the ground that Article 33 of the Italian constitution guarantees freedom of teaching, that is, teachers are free to choose the methods that they consider most suitable and are free to withdraw from a duty that is ideologically incompatible with their own values. The professors won the lawsuit and the

appeal brought by the Polytechnic against this sentence was finally ruled out in 2018. This legal controversy, stemming from the adoption of English as a medium of instruction against the will of all the teaching staff involved, brought to the fore some fundamental principles of the Italian constitution, namely, beside the above-mentioned freedom of teaching, the protection of all languages also in matters regarding education. The final sentence of the Italian State Court established that a degree programme taught in any foreign language can be implemented only if a parallel programme taught in Italian is also available. This decision confirmed the principle that the exclusive use of a foreign language–English in this case–creates linguistic discrimination in society, weakens integration among cultures and enforces the superiority of a language over another, and, ultimately, students are denied the opportunity to choose.[137]

The legal implications and the emotional overtones that were brought to the public attention by the case of the Polytecnic of Milan were extensively commented on in the media. The *Accademia della Crusca* organized a conference on this issue and decided to make an open stand against EMI. The question posed by the Academy to society at large was: "Can you abandon your mother tongue altogether in university education? Is it right, is it possible?" Reactions came from academics, legal experts, scientists, linguists, writers and journalists, all eventually gathered in a volume (Maraschio and De Martino 2013). The pro-EMI position taken by the Rector of the Polytechnic of Milan, who was the initiator of this controversy, was that the mission of the university is to train the future managerial classes to operate on a multinational marketplace; therefore, in pragmatic terms, choosing English as a medium of instruction is a rational choice, from an entrepreneurial point of view. In addition, the Rector added, their students never complained about this choice, which confirms that customer satisfaction was fully achieved. Against this pro-English stand, the prevalent opinion that emerged from the debate was that English competence is indispensable nowadays for scientific and professional communication, but imposing this language as the only option is wrong. Moreover, as confirmed by several ministerial documents devoted to internationalization, it is advisable for international students to learn Italian, even if the degree programme is entirely taught in English. Indeed, according to Italian policy-makers, international students cannot live in linguistic isolation during their academic experience in Italy, and it is necessary that the culture of the host country should be transferred and retained to establish a long-lasting cultural bond. As for the benefit of Italian students, the prevailing opinion

137 The case of the Polytechnic of Milan is examined and discussed in detail by Molino and Campagna (2014), Campagna and Pulcini (2014), Santulli (2015) and Costa (2021).

among the Italian linguists that attended the conference about the EMI controversy was that graduates should familiarize with the scientific-technical register in their native language in all knowledge domains and that the exclusion of Italian is undesirable in higher education.

Toning down the myth of English, Beccaria and Graziosi (2015) argued in favour of the importance of one's mother tongue for the emotional and cultural growth of any individual. In their view, it is necessary to oppose "la nuova, grave invadenza" ["the new serious intrusion"] of vehicular English in all educational cycles, since this is the result of a new 'Anglocentric' entrepreneurial culture, the fruit of utilitarianism and consumerism, a negative practice that is motivated by a policy that gives priority to what is useful and not to what is necessary for "la formazione della personalità e la cultura dell'immaginazione" ["the development of personality and the culture of imagination"] (Beccaria and Graziosi 2015: 104).

The overexposure of EMI as an ideological debate in the Italian educational context brought the beneficial effect of making society more aware of the implications that language choices involve. Families normally think that English is a good educational choice for young adults but, on the other hand, monolingualism in favour of English may lead to ignorance in other foreign languages and to the weakening of the Italian language in its specialized registers. In addition, strategic planning, quality assurance, linguistic and methodological support are necessary to avoid 'improvization' in the introduction of educational reforms such as EMI and to beware of a *tout court* 'Anglicization' of knowledge, since future graduates need much more than 'basic English' to become competitive on the marketplace.

7.3 The cultural debate: From 'Anglomania' to 'Anglophobia'

Attitudes to language are important sociolinguistic indicators of how a language is perceived by speakers and of the values, positive or negative, that are associated with it (Garret 2010). As an invisible force, speakers' attitudes contribute to building general perceptions in society, which, in turn, may also influence and direct official language policies (Pulcini 1997, 2019b). The appeal of English and its spread in Italy have been boosted by intense echoes of modernity, trendiness, professionalism, innovation, leadership, and success. Yet, the growing presence of English in Italy, which today is favourably welcomed by most Italians, has recently raised a debate in society on whether intervention is needed to protect Italian from the excessive input of Anglicisms and, more generally, to limit the 'Anglicization' of Italian society.

As reviewed in chapter 2, the different historical periods in which the English language and culture were in contact with Italian society were marked by attitudes

of acceptance or rejection coming from scholars, thinkers, and ultimately by lay speakers, depending on the prestige that the model culture enjoyed at that particular time, and on the political relations, friendly or hostile, between English-speaking countries and Italy. Anglomania was a cultural fashion that dominated 18th century Italy (cf. 2.2) and lasted for over a century; by contrast, the unification of Italy in 1861 laid the seeds for linguistic patriotism (cf. 2.3). At the turn of the 20th century, America was seen as a promised land, and attracted 5 million Italian migrants, but a new wave of nationalism in Italian society grew into overt opposition to American and British values, including language, during the fascist regime (1922–1945). Neo-purist linguists such as Alfredo Panzini and Paolo Monelli expressed mild disapproval towards Anglicisms, and recorded them in their dictionaries with both descriptive and prescriptive intents (see 2.3). Attitudes to Anglo-American societies and their language changed in time, in the ebb and flow of social events and political relations, swinging back and forth from 'Anglomania' to 'Anglophobia'.

Attitudinal stands towards the influence of English in Italy have come from different voices of society. Italian academics have generally maintained a descriptive attitude, looking at linguistic innovation with curiosity and considering language change as a sign of vitality rather than a pathology (Sabatini 2008). Beccaria's (1988: 240) statement on this matter is worth quoting:

> La lingua è un bene comune, un bene sociale e culturale, ma non è come l'ambiente che va protetto perché vi si scaricano abusivamente liquami e immondezze inquinanti. La lingua non è come il monumento che all'aria si deteriora. Non è come l'Ara Pacis Augustae da tenere sottovetro. Non è un bene da preservare in museo. Va lasciata vivere per le strade, nelle accademie e negli angiporti, nei libri e nelle canzoni, in valli isolate e in tumultuose metropoli. La sua 'babele' rispecchia intensamente la comunità composita di cui è espressione. È stolto parlare di corruzione.
>
> [Language is a common property, a social and cultural asset, but it is not like the environment that must be protected because polluting effluents and garbage are illegally discharged in it. Language is not a monument that deteriorates in contact with air. It is not like the Ara Pacis Augustae to keep in a bell jar. It has to live in the streets, in academies and in narrow lanes, in books and in songs, in isolated valleys and in busy metropoles. Its 'Babelic' spirit forcefully reflects the composite community it is the expression of. To talk of corruption is foolish.]

This 'open' attitude towards exogenous influences that Italy has adopted since the end of the Second World War has granted Italian the fame of a 'democratic' language, in contrast with more 'introvert languages' such as French, German and Spanish, whose language academies exercise the right to decide on linguistic

matters.[138] Italian is believed to be the most 'Anglophile' language towards Anglicisms of the Romance languages; according to the number of Anglicisms recorded by Görlach (2001), Italian ranks in fourth position after Dutch, Norwegian and German.

The Italian *Accademia della Crusca*, since its foundation in 1583, has been committed to the preservation of the linguistic heritage of the Italian language, mainly through philological research and lexicographic activity, and was never in favour of active intrusion in national language policy-making. During the fascist regime the Academy was closed down (the compilation of the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* was interrupted at letter O) and the *Accademia d'Italia*, the voice of the dictatorship, took over.[139] In contrast to the autarchic ideas of the regime, the scholars and lexicographers of the time had a comparatively moderate attitude to foreign words and dialects, and basically refused to mix language issues with political or racial matters (Marazzini 2015). Neo-purists disapproved of the eccessive borrowing of foreign words, and objected to the 'structural and functional' features of foreign loans which made them inadequate for assimilation into the national language, but did not deny the historical dimension of language and its need to renew itself through contacts and exchanges with other languages. Against the political suppression of liberty, at the end of the regime, Italian dialects reclaimed their status and foreign words banned by legislation emerged again. This confirms that any form of expression of one's self is deeply entrenched in people's identity and any attempt to control or manipulate language is destined to failure.

This position finds support in the insightful writings of the Italian philosopher and labour activist Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), who was imprisoned during the

138 In France, the *Académie française*, founded in 1635, has always invigilated on the purity of the French language and opposed the phenomenon called 'franglais' (anglicized French). Several protectionist measures were introduced to oppose the spread of Anglicisms and create French terminology in specialized domains, imposing quotas in the film industry and in advertising (see Humbley 2008). In Spain, the *Real Academia Española* (RAE), founded in 1713, monitors the development of the Spanish language and its varieties. When foreign words are recorded in the *Diccionario de la lengua española* (DLE), it means that the loanword is admitted and should be typographically marked in italics in case of non-adapted loanwords. Spanish equivalents are suggested but not imposed. The *Verein Deutsche Sprache*, or German Language Association (VDS) is an association, founded in 1997, whose goal is to protect and promote the German language and its development in specialized areas of knowledge, contrasting the excessive use of English words and expressions, a phenomenon called 'Denglisch'. This association regularly issues a list of Anglicisms (Anglicisms Index) used in German and suggests domestic equivalents.

139 The dictionary compiled by the *Accademia d'Italia*, ideologically inspired by the fascist regime, stopped at letter C. The entries contained quotations from Italian authors and from Mussolini's speeches.

Italian regime because of his political dissent. In his contribution to intellectual debate, mainly focused on political relations, Gramsci expressed bright ideas on language and power relations, which may be a source of inspiration for the contemporary debate on the advantages and disadvantages of the spread of English as an international lingua franca (Carlucci 2013, 2018). On the question of language policy, and in the light of the authoritarian policy of his age, Gramsci rejected any form of linguistic imposition, as expressed in the following often-quoted statement:

> Ogni volta che affiora, in un modo o nell'altro, la quistione della lingua, significa che si sta imponendo una serie di altri problemi: la formazione e l'allargamento della classe dirigente, la necessità di stabilire rapporti più intimi e sicuri tra i gruppi dirigenti e la massa popolare-nazionale, cioè di riorganizzare l'egemonia culturale (*Quaderni del carcere*, Quaderno 29, § 3)
>
> [Every time that a language question arises, in one way or another, it means that a series of other problems are being imposed: the formation and widening of the ruling classes, the necessity to establish more intimate and safe relations between the establishment and the national-popular mass, that is, to reorganize the cultural hegemony (*Prison Notebooks*, Book 29, § 3)]

In Gramsci's view, multilingualism is a positive measure as it enriches the linguistic repertoire and expressive means of all speakers and language competence is indispensable to enable citizens to participate in social and political life. This also means that the exclusion from the 'standard' language or from the mainstream code of communication may bring the negative consequence of people's social marginalization and frustration.

According to some linguists, looking closely at the presence of English loanwords in the common language and the repertoires of specialized vocabularies, the growing use of Anglicisms is not an alarm and will not spoil the integrity of Italian. Among the most authoritative scholars, Tullio De Mauro has always toned down the preoccupations concerning the 'invasion' of Anglicisms. As pointed out in Section 5.1, De Mauro's data on absolute numbers and frequency of Anglicisms show that their overall incidence is very low, and the presence of foreign words can be recorded outside the core vocabulary, that is, in specialized domains. Moreover, Italians seem to prefer heritage lexis to foreign words for everyday use. In one of De Mauro's books, whose title echoes a line from Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (*In Europa son già 103. Troppe lingue per una democrazia? [In Europe there are already 103. Too many languages for a democracy?*]), he traces the linguistic history of the European continent and its plurilingual roots–a large inventory of transnational and regional languages–held as symbols of local identities. The genetic roots of Latin and Greek, which have contributed to the formation of the intellectual, philosophical and scientific lexicons of European languages, is a common heritage that is stronger than differences. Given that Europe needs a common language for communication, not only to simplify

communication at institutional level, but especially to build a strong democratic community, English can be chosen for this role of transnational or supra-national language, being the most 'Latinized' language in Europe. In sum, according to De Mauro, the linguistic and cultural identity of national languages would not be jeopardized if European citizens adopted English as a common language, that is, "Più inglese non comporta necessariamente meno altre lingue." ['More' English does not necessarily imply 'fewer' other languages.] (De Mauro 2014a: 67).

This tendency has also been noted by Fanfani (2001) who argues that the use of Anglicisms has declined in some key fields such as sport and computing, compared to some decades ago. He also presents the opinions of other authoritative scholars in Italian linguistics and literature, whose arguments are in line with De Mauro's, i.e., that the 'intellectual lexicon' of Italian and the language used by educated speakers for daily communication have not been influenced by English to such an extent as to undermine its integrity. Forms of linguistic hybridization occured in the past between languages; for example, the French language penetrated into the structures of Italian much more forcefully than English is doing today. The English language is indeed taking over many areas of knowledge, so that it would be short-sighted to deny its importance for contemporary scientists or for whoever wants to operate in any field on an international level.

The reactions to the influence of English described so far come from linguists who have a liberal attitude to language borrowing. By contrast, many scholars observe this phenomenon with preoccupation and open hostility. A well-known position is that of Arrigo Castellani, expressed in an article entitled *Morbus Anglicus* (1987), in which he compared the eccessive input of English loanwords into Italian to a deadly disease. The title of this article was particularly impactful, and raised echoes of agreement and solidarity in Italian academia, though the author himself was not so strongly prejudiced against the English language, and the title meant to introduce the argument with a light-hearted tone, as can be gathered from the opening lines:

> Nome del paziente: Italiano. Professione: Lingua letteraria. Età: quattordici secoli, o sette, secondo i punti di vista. Carriera scolastica: ritardata, ma con risultati particolarmente brillanti fin dall'inizio.
> Diagnosi: sintomi chiarissimi di *morbus anglicus*, con complicazioni (fase acuta).
> Prognosi: favorevole, purché (puntini di sospensione). Già, purché: dato che il *virus*, nel caso che c'interessa, agisce in profondità, attaccando gli organi essenziali. Un medico prudente parlerebbe piuttosto di prognosi riservata.
>
> [Name of the patient: Italian. Job: Literary language. Age: fourteen centuries, or seven, depending on viewpoints. Education: late, but with particularly brilliant results from the beginning.

> Diagnosis: very clear symptoms of *morbus anglicus*, with complications (acute phase).
> Prognosis: favourable, as long as. . . Right, as long as. . .: since the *virus*, in this specific case, acts in depth, attacking the vital organs. A careful practitioner would rather talk about a critical condition.]

Castellani acknowledges the limited incidence of Anglicisms, proved by the data presented by other eminent linguists who have taken a tolerant position, but claims that the structures of Italian may anyway be seriously jeopardized by alien lexical models. He rejects Anglicisms that are unnecessary and argues in favour of systematic adaptation and substitution of non-adapted loanwords. Since the Italian language derived from the Florentine model, syllable-final consonants (except for rare cases of liquids and nasals) and complex consonant clusters are not admitted. Therefore, words like *bar* and *bum* (*boom*) may be accepted, but *film*, *sport*, *bluff* and *boomerang* should be adapted to '*filme*', '*sporte*', '*bluffo*' and '*bumerango*'; the word *bestseller*, containing the complex cluster <sts>, should be replaced by the very Italian creation *vendissimo* (which never caught on after Castellani's proposal). In short, loanwords that clash with the orthographic and morpho-syntactic rules of the Italian language challenge its linguistic stability, create perplexity and cause distress, like 'a pebble in your shoe'. Many proposals put forward by Castellani are often quoted as anecdotal examples generated by a stubbornly purist mind: *intredima* for *weekend*, *fubbia* (*fumo+nebbia*) for *smog* (*smoke+ fog*), *velopattino* for *windsurf*, *ubino* for *hobby*, *abbuio* for *blackout*, *trotterello* for *jogging*, and *guardabimbi* for *baby sitter*. In any case, some Italian equivalents mentioned by Castellani as acceptable substitutes, such as *bilancio* for *budget* and *allibratore* for *bookmaker*, have been naturally assimilated into Italian without any academic imposition.

An analogous line of intervention to contrast the allegedly 'superfluous' use of Anglicisms in Italian and make them structurally acceptable for assimilation is the work done by Giovanardi and Gualdo (2008), who claim for themselves a neutral position between the opposing views of 'Anglo-skepticals' and 'Anglo-enthusiasts'. Following the new wave of concern among the Italian intelligentsia about the presence of Anglicisms in Italian, they propose 14 sociolinguistic parameters that may measure the strength of an Anglicisms or the possibility/probability of their replacement by Italian substitutes. These criteria are briefly illustrated below:

1) Type of equivalence: this parameter indicates whether the Italian equivalent is an adaptation or a substitution of the Anglicism. Adaptation is preferable when a fully Italian word is obtained, and it is particularly favourable when the words share a neo-Latin base (e.g. *community* / *comunità*; *devolution* / *devoluzione*; *extension* – *estensione*). Conversely, the substitution of an Italian equivalent may be an unfavourable solution; in fact, *auto da città* and *pagina iniziale* are less popular than *city car* and *homepage*.

2) Age (old or recent borrowing): older borrowings tend to be fully assimilated and harder to replace; recent borrowings can be replaced more easily.

3) Degree of assimilation: this parameter is measured on the attestation, or otherwise, of the Anglicisms in dictionaries; the more dictionaries record an Anglicism, the less this item is amenable to replacement.

4) Presence in French and Spanish: the attestation of an Anglicism in other Romance languages may strengthen or weaken its chances of success.

5) Domain of use (general or specialized): if an Anglicism belongs to a specialized domain, its spread may be limited within a small community of users and replacement is more difficult; however, many terms transfer from specialist to common use.

6) Register: this parameter refers to the use of Anglicisms according to social classes (educated vs general vs widely available); a distinction is made between Anglicisms that are typically used by educated speakers (e.g. *e-commerce* / *commercio elettronico*), which are more likely to be substituted), general words whose currency may vary depending on the age of speakers (e.g. *e-mail* / *posta elettronica*) and words that have wide circulation, through not yet assimilated in general speech (e.g. *exit poll* / *sondaggio a caldo*). The two latter categories are more resistant to substitution.

7) Spoken vs written medium: Anglicisms spreading through the written medium are more likely to become assimilated, whereas Anglicisms entering the language through spoken or broadcast media have a more transient nature.

8) Degree of technicality: highly technical Anglicisms are difficult to replace with Italian equivalents, whereas a lower degree of technicality may favour adaptation or substitution.

9) Expressive value: the connotative power of an Anglicism is a strong driver for its preference with respect to an Italian equivalent. Several aspects come into play, namely brevity, evocative power, sound, status symbol. Words like *blog*, *cookie* and *tag* do not offer much chance to Italian competitors.

10) Spelling and pronunciation: complexity in the orthographic form and the pronunciation of an Anglicisms may contribute to the preference for an Italian equivalent.

11) Number of possible Italian substitutes: when the possible Italian substitutes are more than one, the strength of the Anglicisms may be increased and its replacement becomes more difficult.

12) Combinability: Anglicisms may be particularly successful when they replicate similar already existing patterns (the element *-day* in *election day*, *tax-day*, etc.); this property also applies to derivation such as, for example, the creation of verbs from a base noun (e.g. *format* / *formattare*)

13) Semantic divergence (false Anglicisms): when Anglicisms are Italian autonomous creations, with little correspondence in equivalent English models, their strength is reduced and therefore they are likely to give in to Italian substitutes.

14) Semantic status (monosemic, polysemic): monosemy represents an advantage for the success of an Anglicism, whereas polysemy may lead to the creation of successful multiple translation equivalents.

The selection of 150 Anglicisms that are analyzed and discussed in this work includes exclusively non-adapted Anglicisms, which confirms once again that purist concerns are addressed to 'foreign-looking' items, whereas adaptations and calques are not formally in conflict with Italian structures and therefore perceived as natural additions to the lexical resources of the language. The parameters singled out by the authors are indeed very interesting for understanding lexical borrowing, and the attempt to propose Italian substitutes is a legitimate policy, albeit prone to failure in most cases. As happened to Castellani's awkward proposals, also in Giovanardi and Gualdo's study there are several cases of humorous or improbable renditions such as *giallino* for *post-it*, *pensatoio* for *think tank*, *rullovaligia* (or *valigia a rotelle*) for *trolley* or *fusopatia* for *jet lag*. The proposal to substitute *slow food* with the Italian phrase *mangiar bene* sounds rather unconvincing, given that this word is an Italian creation (from proper name to common noun); in fact, it is the brand name of the movement founded in the Piedmont region of Italy. On the other hand, the fact that every selected items is analyzed through linguistic parameters and accompanied not only by the comments of the authors but also by common people's opinions makes this approach particularly worthy of attention.

The cultural debate on the dominance of English in Italian society has also been fuelled by journalists and commentators, whose viewpoints are often much more subjective, direct and often disrespectful than the objective ones expressed by academics. For example, the journalist Indro Montanelli cried out against the overuse of English words in the press and defined this habit as 'a mental vice inherited by centuries of servitude'. On the opposite front, the Italian scientist and media-man Piero Angela stated that the modern 'illiterate' is the person who knows no English, because they have no access to scientific culture. Opinion-makers often feel that the excessive use of Anglicisms is irritating when speakers intentionally sprinkle their speech with English words as a form of 'snobbery' and 'exhibitionism', especially some categories of speakers such as managers,

economists, and ICT experts. Newspaper language is full of English (Dardano, Frenguelli and Puoti 2008; Caimotto & Molino 2011), not only for their eye-catching power in headlines but also as a result of sloppiness, laziness, lack of time or effort to transfer news from English sources into Italian, according to some commentators. In political discourse, politicians are criticized for using Anglicisms as a rhetorical strategy to give an attractive name to an unpleasant measure (e.g. *spending review*, with the meaning of 'cuts to expenses') or to make small allowances sound like benefits (e.g. *social card*).

By analogy with *franglais and Denglisch*, the term '*itangliano*' was coined some decades ago to denote "the overuse or misuse of English terms for the purpose of adding a touch of class to Italian discourses" (Pulcini, 2019: 40). The word 'itangliano' was used for the first time by the Italian-American author Giacomo Elliot, who published a book containing a list of 400 English words that are necessary to work your way up in professional careers, highlighting the function of English as a 'status symbol' (Elliot 1977; Dunlop 1989; Botticella 2007). Criticism towards the superfluous use of English is addressed to speakers who try to communicate in business transactions with limited competence, producing an ungrammatical 'Italianized' form of 'bad simple English' or 'macaroni' English that would sound incomprehensible to competent speakers (Caimotto 2013, 2015; Incelli 2013; Furiassi 2018).

Following the mediatic protest against the introduction of English-medium instruction in higher education in 2012, several actions were undertaken to sensitize public attention to 'the language question'. In 2015 an online petition was launched, pleading politicians, public administrators, the media and companies for a more 'respectful' use of the Italian language in public discourse. The petition #dilloinitaliano (#say it in Italian)[140] received the support of the *Accademia della Crusca*, who organized a conference on the impact of Anglicisms on Italian and on other Romance languages in times of globalization. The themes discussed among international experts were the much debated attraction of Italians towards English at the expense of Italian, the overuse of unnecessary Anglicisms and the importance of the historical and cultural heritage of one's native language. This occasion, and the positions expressed by linguists and recorded in the proceedings of this symposium (Marazzini and Petralli 2015), testified a widespread preoccupation about the welfare of Italian but, at the same time, the rejection of direct intervention through national language policies. The memory of the fascist regime is a constant reminder for Italian academics to avoid radical stands and assume a consultative role in language

140 https://www.internazionale.it/opinione/annamaria-testa/2015/02/17/dillo-in-italiano (November, 2022).

matters, on the basis of data acquired from 'unbiased' observation. To counter the irresistible appeal of Anglicisms, the position that emerged from the academic community was that it is important to foster a greater sense of identity and raise the awareness of Italian speakers of their own historical heritage and national culture.

Despite the soft-spoken support of the Italian academy, crusades in the defence of Italian and against the 'invasion' of Anglicisms are made by journalists and independent scholars (Zoppetti 2017, 2022). For example, a portal officially dedicated to the promotion of the Italian language is actually primarily focused on the insidious flood of Anglicisms and hosts an online dictionary with Anglicisms and Italian substitutes.[141] In 2021, this group of self-appointed 'activists of Italian' presented an appeal to the government for a series of legislative measures that they deem necessary to protect the Italian language: to abolish the use of Anglicisms in job contracts, to eliminate the requirement of English as a foreign language to work in the the public admnistration, to cancel the compulsory use of English to submit proposals for research projects of national interest, to waive the exclusive use of English as a medium of instruction in higher education (this was already ruled out by Italian legislation in 2018), and to write in the Italian constitution that Italian is the official national language. Actually, these requests may never obtain serious consideration by the Italian parliament but may contribute to bring the discussion on language matters to the public opinion.

To conclude, although the majority of Italians consider knowing English a great opportunity, the steady rise of English in Italy over the past decades, both as a language donor and as a cultural model, has bred sentiments of soft but proud 'purism' among some scholars and external observers, nurturing a useful and legitimate debate on the health and future developments of the Italian language (Beccaria 2006; Marazzini 2018; Marello 2020).

7.4 Roundup

Since the post-WW2 period, the Italian educational system has been transformed following on from national reforms and activism in foreign language teaching, gradually giving greater priority to the study of English as a foreign language mainly to the detriment of French. Although the level of English competence in Italians is not up to the standards reached by speakers in other European countries, Italian learners are favourably motivated to study English owing to its importance in any walk of life. The prestige of English and its association with modernity, success and professionalism is not free from criticism coming from linguists and

141 https://aaa.italofonia.info/ (November, 2022).

observers who condemn an 'Anglocentric' vision in education and consider the dominance of English as a threat for the Italian culture and language. Italy appears to be changing its welcoming attitude towards English into a moderate acceptance, which is consistent with protectionist sentiments expressed by other Romance languages such as French and Spanish. The stand made by academics is anyway tolerant, generally more inclined to the creation of Italian substitutes of Anglicisms and to fostering a greater sense of respect and pride for Italian, rather than resentment towards English. Despite protectionist reactions, the spread of English in Italy is generally perceived as an opportunity rather than a threat, and efforts are being made in education to raise the competence of Italian learners of English up to the standards of their more advanced European peers.