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### **Code-switching and plurilingualism in English-medium education for academic and professional purposes**

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Maurizio Gotti

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# Code-switching and plurilingualism in English-medium education for academic and professional purposes

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**Abstract:** In the process of internationalization of their teaching programmes many universities all over the world are now offering courses in English. This is a typical English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) situation in which both lecturers and students – although they are not native speakers of English – use this language as a common means of communication and instruction. This article examines communicative interactions taking place in such contexts. The data are taken from “international” courses in specialized disciplines offered by the University of Bergamo. In particular, the article examines the role of code-switching and the use of other languages employed by lecturers to explain the main specialized terms and technical concepts concerning the specific courses they are teaching. The methodology employed for the analysis of the data is mainly qualitative and is based on selected pieces of the lectures recorded. The data presented show that code-switching and the recourse to words belonging to other languages play a relevant role among the main strategies employed by both lecturers and students in the realization of their communicative efforts, and increases the degree of cooperativeness on both sides so as to guarantee a successful outcome of the specialized communication in which they are involved.

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**Keywords:** English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), English-medium instruction/education (EMI), code-switching, multilingualism, specialized communication

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## 1 Introduction

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In the process of internationalization of their teaching programmes many universities all over the world are now offering courses in English (Wächter and

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Maiworm 2008; Hellekjær and Räsänen 2010). Sometimes the lecturers remain 1  
the local ones, who adopt English as a means of instruction although they are  
not native speakers of that language. In other cases the teaching of such courses  
is assigned to foreign lecturers (often non-native speakers of English), who are  
not chosen specifically for their language competence but rather according to 5  
their expertise in the subject they are supposed to be teaching. As they are  
taught in English, these courses attract many students from other countries. The  
result is a typical ELF situation in which most lecturers and students – although  
they are not native speakers of English – use this language as a common means  
of communication and instruction. 10

This article examines communicative interactions taking place in such con-  
texts. More specifically, it takes into consideration data taken from “interna-  
tional” courses in specialized disciplines offered by the University of Bergamo.  
In particular, the corpus consists of the recordings of 27 hours of European  
Tourism Law lessons, 21 hours of the Marketing Management course, and 34 15  
hours of Business Ethics and Social Accounting teaching activities.<sup>1</sup> One lecturer  
came from Switzerland and was a German native speaker (although he also  
spoke French fluently); the other two were Italian, one of them, however,  
commonly teaching at a British University. Altogether 62 students attended the  
three courses. They came from 12 different countries: Albania (3), Australia (1), 20  
Bangladesh (2), Cameroon (1), China (3), France (1), Great Britain (3), Italy (28),  
Latvia (1), Mexico (2), Serbia (2), USA (15). The lectures were mainly monologic  
with the lecturers talking most of the time, although frequently interacting with  
their students.

In particular, the article examines the use of languages other than English, 25  
and the role of code-switching (CS) employed by lecturers to explain the main  
specialized terms and technical concepts, or to overcome the difficulties of  
comprehension experienced by their students. The methodology employed for  
the analysis of the data is mainly qualitative and is based on selected pieces of  
the lectures recorded. 30

In general, studies of CS draw a distinction between the concepts of code-  
switching, code-mixing and borrowing. As clearly explained by Saville-Troike  
(2003), code-switching specifically refers to intersentential switching occurring  
between sentences or speech acts; code-mixing instead refers to intrasentential  
switching occurring within a single sentence, while borrowing denotes those 35  
cases in which lexical items from one language are adapted phonologically to  
the sound system of another and are frequently subjected to its morphological

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Dr Larissa D'Angelo (University of Bergamo) for organizing and over-  
seeing the recording and transcription of the various teaching activities. 40

inflections.<sup>2</sup> In this paper, however, the single term *code-switching* will be used 1  
 more generally to refer to the insertion of either a single word or a longer stretch  
 of foreign discourse into an utterance in English.

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## 2 The role of code-switching in ELF 10 communication

Several studies have taken into consideration the use of ELF in English-Medium 10  
 Instruction (EMI) courses organized by universities, some of them investigating  
 formal aspects (Ranta 2006, 2009; Björkman 2008a, 2008b, 2009) while others  
 focus on pragmatic issues (Leznyák 2002; Mauranen 2003, 2006a, 2006b; Cogo  
 2009; Kaur 2009; Smit 2009; Suviniitty 2010). As regards the latter, Mauranen  
 (2003) has pointed to the adoption of “self-regulation” strategies, by means of 15  
 which speakers tend to adapt their way of speaking to the interlocutors’  
 assumed linguistic competence. Another strategy commonly employed is the  
 recourse to “self-repairs”, which takes place when words or expressions pre-  
 viously formulated are proposed in a different way by the same person to  
 facilitate the hearers’ comprehension. A further way to promote understanding 20  
 is by means of “self-repetition”, which occurs when the lecturer repeats some-  
 thing said before to make his concepts clearer (Mauranen 2006b). The clarifica-  
 tion of meaning also implies the adoption of cooperative strategies and  
 “interactive repairs” by both the speaker and the interlocutors whenever diffi-  
 culties or non-understanding occur. Hearers, in particular, recur to “minimal 25  
 incomprehension signals” (Mauranen 2006b) or direct questions when they  
 encounter comprehension problems. By means of “utterance completions”  
 (Seidlhofer 2001) and “overlaps” (Cogo 2009) they manifest their willingness  
 to cooperate in the fulfilment of the communicative act. Sometimes, instead,  
 minor points of non-comprehension are not raised by the interlocutor, who 30  
 prefers to adopt a “let it pass” strategy (Firth 1996) in order not to create  
 unnecessary breaks in the interactive flow, on the assumption that the unclear  
 word or expression will become either clear or redundant as talk progresses.

As regards the role of CS in ELF communication, early studies were mainly 35  
 based on the previous literature on discourse strategies in multilingual contexts.

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2 For a detailed account of the phenomena of code-switching, code-mixing and borrowing cf.  
 Gumperz (1982), Hoffmann (1991), Appel and Muysken (1995), Muysken (2000), Romaine (2001)  
 and Thomason (2001).

One of these early studies is Gumperz (1982), who identified the following six 1  
functions of the use of CS:

- Quotation marking
- Addressee specification
- Interjection 5
- Reiteration
- Message qualification
- Personalization vs. objectivization.

With particular reference to the field of ELF, Klimpfinger (2007) has identified 10  
the following four functions of the use of CS:

- specifying an addressee, i.e. directing one's speech to a specific addressee to invite her/him to participate in the conversation;
- appealing for assistance, by asking for the missing term/phrase or inquiring if a used form is correct; 15
- introducing another idea, i.e. resorting to CS with the implication that the language switched into is more appropriate to discuss a particular subject;
- signalling culture; this function can be performed in two ways: implicitly or explicitly; in the latter case the speaker uses a foreign word to refer directly to concepts associated with a specific culture. 20

The topic of CS in ELF has also been investigated by Cogo (2009), who has identified the following three functions:

- offering an extra tool in communication that is at the disposal of multilingual speakers and allows for meaning making and greater nuances of expression; 25
- ensuring understanding beyond cultural differences and the efficient delivery of talk;
- signalling solidarity and membership into the same community of multilingual speakers. 30

In analysing data from an English-medium MSc programme at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim (Norway), Ljosland (2010) has identified the following two factors that trigger a particular choice of language in teaching activities where speakers move from one language to another: 35

- The number of interlocutors and their language preferences. Indeed, in pairs or smaller groups, students and lecturers seem to feel that they are permitted to choose a language other than English if everyone present understands this language. On the other hand, when speaking to a bigger 40

group, such as the whole class, or to a group including someone who does 1  
not share this “other” language, the preferred choice is English.

- The type of situation or activity involved. Ljosland suggests that the speak-  
ers themselves understand that some situations are “core teaching and  
learning activities”, and that in these situations they feel more inclined to 5  
use English in accordance with the official teaching policy. Other situations,  
however, are perceived as “fringe” situations, where a range of languages,  
most notably the speakers’ native language(s), seem to be permitted to the  
speakers. Such “fringe” situations include social interaction, informal con-  
versations before and after lectures, and other types of conversation which 10  
are not directly associated with the main teaching and learning activities.

### 3 Functions of CS in the corpus analysed

The analysis of the data in our corpus will mainly be based on Klimpfinger’s 15  
(2007) and Cogo’s (2009) taxonomies. However, when appropriate, these will be  
integrated with any other functions found in further specific cases. The data will  
be categorized according to their main function, although in some cases more  
than one purpose could be attributed to the use of CS. In these cases the most 20  
prominent function (according to the context) will be identified and considered  
prevalent over the others.

#### 3.1 Specifying an addressee

In this type of CS, the speaker uses a foreign word or expression to refer to a 25  
specific interlocutor, who is usually a native speaker of the language switched  
to. This type of function is not very frequent in the corpus, mainly due to the fact  
that classes are mixed from the linguistic and national point of view. One of the  
few cases found is the following, in which the Italian lecturer refers to an Italian 30  
student by naming him and then adding a clear invitation to talk Italian (*dimmi*):

- (1) L3<sup>3</sup> there is no reason to think that the shareholders want to spend money  
in non-profit activities because this money will reduce the dividends  
of the share ... Luca (.) *dimmi* {tell me}? 35

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**3** L1 = Lecturer of European Tourism Law (Swiss, German native speaker); L2 = Lecturer of  
Marketing Management (Italian); L3 = Lecturer of Business Ethics and Social Accounting  
(Italian); S = Student; SS = Students; \_ = false start; (.) = short pause (1-2 seconds); ... = longer  
pause (3-4 seconds); xx = not clear. 40

- S: shareholders and stakeholders? 1  
 L3: the same (.) *sono gli azionisti* {they are the shareholders/stakeholders}  
 ... to be more precise (.) shareholders is more British language (.)  
 stakeholders is more American 5

The identification of the nationality of his interlocutor prompts the lecturer to provide a translation into his native language of the term the student is seeking clarifications about (*sono gli azionisti*). The explanation, however, continues in English as it is meant to be useful not only to the Italian student but also to the rest of the class. 10

### 3.2 Appealing for assistance

In this case, the speaker uses a foreign word or expression as (s)he does not know the English equivalent. Here CS is a communicative strategy; non-native speakers use their L1 to overcome communicative stumbling blocks due to lexical gaps. Of course, this sort of CS can work successfully only if at least another participant in the interaction knows the same language as the speaker. That is why it is commonly used by Italian students who can rely on the cooperation of other students and even lecturers from their own linguistic background. In the following example the Italian student does not know the English equivalent for *la sede*; the lecturer immediately provides the translation (“main branch”) so that the student is able to continue with her report: 15 20

- (2) L2: who did you call? 25  
 S: we called the phone service and green number in Italy and ... another  
 ... *la sede* {main office}  
 L2: main branch (.) in Milan?  
 S: yes, it told us that we had to send emails (.) we sent emails but they  
 answered yesterday <SS LAUGH> telling that they can't give 30  
 information  
 L2: ok

The appeal for assistance is often conveyed in an explicit way by means of the expression ‘how do you say...?’: 35

- (3) S: hm no (.) it's a public school (.) hm ... *gestire come si dice?* {how do  
 you say *gestire*?}  
 L3: manage  
 S: manage hm ... 40

- (4) S: uh we esage- (.) *come si dice esagerare?* {how do you say *esagerare*?} 1  
 SS: exaggerate

The recourse to cooperative strategies can also be seen in those cases in which the lecturer himself is not able to find the right word in English and directly 5 appeals for assistance. In these cases the students help him by providing the word needed:

- (5) L1: how do you say ehm the *phoque* {seal} (.) this eh arctic animal (.) you  
 see very nice animal eh 10  
 S: seal  
 L1: seal seal ah beautiful <SS LAUGH>

The lecturer's repetition of the word not only implies his acquisition of the term, but also underlines the cooperative process established in class in the construc- 15 tion and sharing of new knowledge. Repetition is thus not only comprehension-oriented but also interaction-oriented (Lichtkoppler 2007) as it is meant to highlight participation and solidarity.

### 3.3 Introducing another idea 20

This strategy is used in those cases in which the speaker thinks that a non-English word can convey a specific concept in a better way. This is the case with the following quotation in which the lecturer recurs to French terms to denote 25 particular professional workers operating in the tourist sector.

- (6) L1: vocational training (.) not academic vocational training (.) professional  
 courses (.) specific professional courses for *maîtres* for *chefs* for ... other  
 services we need vocational training practice experience (.) know-how 30

Particularly in the European Tourism Law lectures the lecturer at times uses a few Latin words which he considers specialized terms to be learnt as part of his course. In these cases, however, the lecturer accompanies the terms with an equivalent in English: 35

- (7) L1: what we call in latin *res publica* the state  
 (8) L1: it's as always in commercial relations in *do ut des* (.) i give you  
 something you give me something 40



- (9) L1: this period coming from the day of publications and the date of enter  
 into force according to a latin proverb is *vacatio legis* which means  
 that we need a period to prepare all the juridical systems at this new  
 legal order

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### 3.4 Signalling culture

As suggested by Klimpfinger (2007), this type of reference may be either implicit  
 or explicit.

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#### 3.4.1 Implicit reference

This kind of reference denotes an unplanned switch to another language, as in  
 the case of exclamations, pause fillers, tags, conjunctions or other function  
 words inserted in an English utterance. These unintentional switches are usually  
 conveyed in the speaker's own language and mainly denote slips of the tongue,  
 or betray tension or high pressure. As they do not carry much significance, they  
 do not create any problems in communication and they do not seem to be  
 noticed (or at least explicitly commented on) by the hearers. The following  
 examples occur in the corpus:

- (10) L2: have a look about this article (.) the abstract and the keywords ...  
 what I'd like \_ what i will ask you is about the abstract and the  
 keywords you prefer ... ok, ok? *bene* {good}
- (11) L3: i'm able to work for example with children (.) not with elders (.) with  
 alcoholics (.) not with uh teenagers *oppure no* {or not} but not with  
 uh disabled people (.) none of you say ok I'm interested in disabled  
 people

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20  
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In some cases the speaker realizes that he has involuntarily switched to another  
 language, and immediately provides the English translation:

- (12) L2: i am Italian and i make advertising for Italian people *perché* (.)  
 because marketing is changing to cross cultural marketing

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This type of CS is very frequent in the speech of those students who have a more  
 limited knowledge of English and, particularly, who are aware of their inade-  
 quate competence. This awareness creates a feeling of tension and uneasiness

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especially when the student is asked to give a report or present a paper, a situation similar to the exam one described by Gomez and Palmer Silveira (1999). Here is an example of this kind of situation:

- (13) S: *si si* {yes} (.) yes (.) but ok (.) my \_ the general question is ... i want simply describe ... ok hm 5

### 3.4.2. Explicit reference

This type of reference is usually the result of an intentional choice on the part of the speaker, who has recourse to the foreign word to refer to a cultural aspect concerning the term mentioned. For example, in the following quotation the lecturer is using CS to report a quotation faithfully. However, the quotation is in a language which is unknown to the students, so in the end – in order to facilitate comprehension – the lecturer translates the quotation into English. 10 15

- (14) L3: i got letters from the minister of foreign affairs (.) they had a revolution there and instead of saying best regards or sincerely yours they wrote *la vie ou la mort vive la révolution* {life or death long live the revolution} because eh <LAUGHS> you understand they speak french (.) french is the \_ one of the official languages *la vie ou la mort vive la révolution* you don't understand of course 20  
 SS: no  
 L3: life or death <LAUGHS> cheers to the revolution that was the critic formula okay 25

In the example below the lecturer uses the expression *bella Italia* [beautiful Italy] to better convey the specific cultural implications that Italy has acquired internationally, particularly in the field of tourism:

- (15) L1: and of course for tourism with these flagship carriers they were bringing the message of a country *bella Italia* {beautiful Italy} all over the world you know 30

In the following quotation, the lecturer introduces a word in Spanish to refer to beef as this kind of meat is typical of Argentina. Although he considers this word appropriate to the cultural background he is referring to, in order to make sure that the students understand it correctly, he accompanies it with the English translation. However, the speaker betrays his Italian origin as he accompanies the Spanish noun with the Italian article *il* 'the': 35 40

- (16) L2: ehm the hotels have to take goods and services from outside (.) the chef in the kitchen (.) *il lomo* from Argentina ... *il lomo* (.) do you understand what it is? (.) the beef  
 SS: yeah yeah

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Also the following examples indicate the use of foreign expressions to denote particular cultural aspects. In (17) the use of CS is clearly due to the specific name to be used to refer to *Guardia di finanza*, the Italian branch of the police that investigates financial crimes; the repetition of the preposition *di* is indicative of the effort of the foreign speaker to remember the exact name of this police department. In (18), on the other hand, reference is made to a protest movement typical of Spain that has become popular all over the world as its demonstrations were shown on television. The words *Die Grüne* ‘the Green Movement’ and *Länder* ‘regional authorities’, used in (19), are terms that refer to specific cultural elements of German society. In (20) the lecturer is describing a Mexican bullfight and, in order to preserve the original cultural implications, decides to use the local Spanish words (*cucaracha* and *corrido*). In this case, as in the cases above, translating the terms into English would provide only an approximation of the original concept.

- (17) L1: eh well ehm it depends ... you with your *guardia di di finanza* maybe is not possible in Italy

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- (18) L3: for example the *indignados* in Spain also developed for other reasons ... for the crisis (.) economic crisis (.) financial crisis (.) and so on

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- (19) L3: in Bavaria is a very high level of awareness (.) of ecological environment (.) *die Grüne* ... is the first country where environment issues became an environment policy process ... in politics *die Grüne* was and is yet an important political party (.) in order to have a sustainability approach and several governance level in *Länder* local authorities

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- (20) L1: there is a scene from about (xx) singing la *cucaracha* (.) la *cucaracha* actually is a very very old *corrido* (.) mexican *corrido* but was politically charged of meaning and the *cucaracha* ...

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The data in the corpus show occasional difficulties of expression on the part of the lecturer when he tries to use local terms that instead are part of the language and culture of some of the students. These students then adopt proactive measures and cooperative strategies in order to bring the communicative

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interaction to a successful conclusion. This can be seen, for example, in those 1  
cases in which the Swiss lecturer has a problem pronouncing Italian place  
names. In these cases the Italian students attending the course complete or  
correct the names referred to:

- (21) L1: resort like *Cortina d'Ampezzo* or *Ma-madonna del Cam-*  
SS: *Campiglio*  
L1: *piglio* 5
- (22) L1: they have places where they operate eh business (.) business cities  
like *Milano* (.) also small ones where there is a business ... i was (.) 10  
eh yes is funny (.) i was in eh in italian place where (.) where they  
produce *prosecco* (.) very near to Venice ... i cannot pronounce it  
unfortunately in exact (.) yes this (.) i can (.) i can (.) *Valdo*?  
SS: *Valdobbiadene*  
L1: yeah *Valdobia-* 15  
SS: *-dobbiadene*  
S1: *dobiane dobiane* (.) eh i know

### 3.5 Emphasizing cultural identity 20

As seen in the previous section, CS is often adopted to signal specific cultural  
references. However, there are cases where, within the same utterance, the  
speaker sometimes uses CS and sometimes instead uses English expressions to  
refer to different aspects of the same national environment. This phenomenon 25  
can be seen in the following quotation, where the speaker refers to two different  
regions of Italy – Sicily and Lombardy – in a different way: in the former case  
with the English word and in the latter with the Italian word:

- (23) S: i ask you why Sicily (.) Sicily is far far from here (.) you want to travel 30  
all the time <LAUGH> or not ... i i hm say we have plenty of children  
from other countries here in Bergamo or in this area (.) *Lombardia* ...  
why you want to go to Sicily (.) you have to give me a specific reason

In this case the student – who is from Lombardy – probably prefers the use of 35  
the local term to refer to his region because he wants to underline his cultural  
identity and emphasize his place of origin, which is also visible in his clear  
specification with the expressions “here in Bergamo”, “in this area”. Another  
example can be seen in the following quotation, where the lecturer of the  
Marketing Management course – who not only has a permanent job at the 40

University of Bergamo but was also born in this town – refers to the places in this area by the local names but to other places outside the region by their English names:<sup>4</sup>

- (24) L2: but in half an hour you can reach this lake (.) *Lago d’Iseo* (.) very nice or this little lake (.) *Lago di Endine* ... all around you have hills and it is very nice ... you can make strolls (.) have a picnic and so on ... fifty kilometers (.) forty-five miles from *Milano* (.) and two hundred kilometers from Venice (.) eighty miles from Verona

This emphasis on cultural identity is particularly visible in the following quotation, where the lecturer not only refers to the old part of Bergamo with the Italian name (*Città Alta*) but also adds an emphatic remark denoting very positive evaluation (“a masterpiece”):

- (25) L2: ok this is *Città Alta* (.) a masterpiece ... so we are here! wherever you are in the town you can orientate yourself because *Città Alta* gives an idea of where you are

As Dewaele (2010) very aptly points out, this emotional involvement is a clear factor that triggers recourse to CS.

### 3.6 Ensuring comprehension

The lecturer sometimes has recourse to CS to make sure that the students have understood a specific term or concept by asking them to translate the term into their own language. For example, in the following quotation the lecturer checks that the students have understood his reference to the high mountain chain in South America and therefore asks them to provide the translation into Italian:

- (26) L1: or the train which links Argentina with Chile (.) a famous one in the Andes (.) the Andes (.) you know what it is?  
 SS: (xx)  
 L1: it’s the big mountains (.) also a big chain of mountains ... eh how you say in italian?  
 SS: *Ande*

<sup>4</sup> *Venice* is clearly an English noun, but also *Verona* is the noun that is used in English to refer to this town.

L1: hm? 1

SS: *Ande*

L1: *Ande ah Ande* okay <SS LAUGH>

As the dialogue shows, the lecturer is probably not acquainted with the Italian word as he first replies with a question (“hm?”) and the second time with a repetition (“*Ande ah Ande*”), but in the end he confirms the students’ reply (“okay”) although not in a very spontaneous way, a situation underlined by the students’ laughter. In (27) too the lecturer wants to make sure that the students have understood the French word *bijou* and asks them to provide the Italian equivalent: 5 10

(27) L1: they promote this as a (.) a product where you can be sure that is totally (.) is quality eh ehm a *bijou* ... it’s a beautiful *bijou* ... somebody study french here around? how would you translate in italian *bijou*? 15

S1: *gioielli*

L1: eh?

S2: *gioiello*

L1: *gioi-gioi-?* 20

S2: *gioiello*

S1: *gioiello gioiello* <SS LAUGH>

The fact that he does not know the Italian word is confirmed by the question (“eh?”) and also by the difficulty in pronouncing it himself (“*gioi-gioi-?*”). The students, however, repeat the word so as to help the lecturer, thus establishing a very cooperative environment, also underlined by the students’ laughter. In (28) the lecturer tries to facilitate the comprehension of the term “package” by using the other foreign language that he knows, i.e. French, which however is not the native language of any of the students. There follows a negotiation of meaning with different interpretations given by the students and the final definition provided by the lecturer. 25 30

(28) L1: what is a package?

SS: ehm

L1: in english package *en français c’est un forfait* 35

S1: ehm, the appearance (.) ehm of it (.) of something

L1: speak loud

S1: ehm package is what eh contains something (.) what eh

L1: we will define this 40

- S2: what you see first before the content 1  
 L1: eh no (.) a package is more than one service (.) for instance a flight  
 (.) and accommodation ...that's a package. 10

Sometimes the lecturer perceives that the students do not understand a word 5  
 that he has uttered and therefore tries to facilitate comprehension by providing a  
 synonym in Italian, the language of the majority of the students:

- (29) L3: for example you (.) ehm would you like to work with for example (.) 10  
 with elders (.) elders ... hmm *anziani*?

In other cases, in order to show that they have understood a foreign word  
 introduced by the lecturer, the students themselves answer his question giving 15  
 a synonym, as in the following case concerning the French word *chauviniste*:

- (30) L2: for example the most important region for tourism is *Île de* eh *Île de*  
*France* but the french citizens are *chauviniste* ... you understand the  
 term? It's proud of itself  
 S: very nationalistic 20  
 L2: yeah (.) always the best of the world

The comment provided by the lecturer confirms that the students' interpretation  
 of the French word is correct.

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### 3.7 Conveying greater nuances of expression

Sometimes the use of CS is meant to provide a more specific explanation of the  
 meaning of a particular concept by contrasting it with the term used in another 30  
 language, particularly the language shared by most students, i.e. Italian. This is  
 the case with the following example, in which the lecturer is aware of the  
 possibility of misunderstanding deriving from the similarity between the two  
 words "financial" and *finanziario* and therefore adds a specific clarification  
 referring to the two contexts of use: 35

- (31) L1: financial in English meaning (.) non *finanziario* (.) financial means  
 economic ... when we speak in Italy (.) we have economic and  
 financial (.) but financial in *economia aziendale* {business  
 economics} is debts and credits (.) in financial statements 40

### 3.8 Showing interest

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The analysis of our corpus also shows that CS is sometimes used as an accommodation strategy in order to show listenership and engagement in conversation. This kind of usage highlights the speaker's interest in the interlocutors' language and culture, commonly expressed by means of translation efforts or requests. For example, in the following quotation the lecturer uses an Italian expression that he thinks equivalent to the English term *turnover*:

- (32) L1: and you remember last time i showed you that about the turnover (.)  
 that means the eh the receipts ehm ... how you say (.) *cifre d'affari* 10  
 SS: *giro d'aff- giro d'affari*  
 L1: eh?  
 SS: *il giro d'affari*  
 L1: ah *il giro d'affari* <SS LAUGH> *il giro d'affari* 15

As shown by the dialogue, the term “turnover” is quite well-known to the students so the lecturer's use of the Italian expression is not meant to explain the concept but rather to show that he is sometimes prepared to make the effort to use his interlocutors' native language. His words betray a limited knowledge of Italian as the translation is not correct. However, the students seem to appreciate the lecturer's effort to use their own language and react in a cooperative way by providing the right equivalent and repeating it until their interlocutor shows that he has learned it.

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### 3.9 Stengthening cooperation

The data have also shown that some of the instances of CS are indicative of a particular spirit of cooperation. In these instances the speakers' use of words or expressions in the language of their interlocutors is mainly aimed at strengthening the links of solidarity and engagement among the participants in the communicative situation in view of a successful outcome of the interaction. In the following example, the lecturer is aware of the high number of Italian students in his course and therefore invites them to offer an equivalent of the term “company” in their language:

- (33) L1: okay (.) now two sentences ... what i want to explain you (.) this is 35  
 basic economics (.) big firms (.) companies ... you understand what i  
 mean? ... what is the term in italian? ... a firm a company in italian  
 you say?  
 SS: *azienda* {company} 40



- L1: eh? 1  
 SS: *azienda*  
 L1: yes yes exactly (.) louder?  
 SS: *azienda*  
 L1: *azienda si si si (.) si {yes}* 5

The term “company” denotes quite a basic concept in business studies, therefore the main function here is not to introduce the word but rather to invite students to interact by resorting to their own language. The spirit of cooperativeness on the part of the lecturer is also shown by the addition of the exclamation *sì* ‘yes’ – repeated four times –, one of the very few Italian words that the foreign lecturer knows. This use of Italian is meant to establish common ground between the lecturer and the Italian students as a basic step in building up shared knowledge. Moreover, in reversing the roles between the participants by showing that he is asking something that he does not know but the students do, the lecturer wants to diminish the social distance between him and his students, a choice which is reinforced by the enthusiastic repetition of the exclamation, meant to signal total agreement and acceptance of the students’ suggestion. 10 15

Also in the following case the lecturer is not resorting to the other language/culture merely to introduce a specific meaning – as the students have already shown their understanding by providing the right answer – but mainly because he wants to show his openness toward his interlocutors. The lecturer seems to be aware of the fact that idioms are culture-bound and that misunderstanding may easily arise from the use of English phrases that do not correspond literally to those in other languages, a typical case of “unilateral idiomaticity” (Seidlhofer 2009). Therefore he often checks that the students understand them properly and in some cases he asks them to give their own local rendering of the same concept, as can be seen in the following case: 20 25

- (34) L3: what is the elephant in the bedroom?  
 S: it means something very very big 30  
 L3: so it’s a sort of contradiction ... how do you say this in italian?  
 S: *un elefante in una cinquecento* {an elephant in a Fiat 500}

### 3.10 Metalinguistic comments 35

The analysis of the corpus has also shown cases in which the terms in the foreign language give rise to specific metalinguistic comments. One of these cases can be seen in the following quotation: 40

- (35) L1: international visitors just come to see the attractions here (.) that 1  
 means that ci\_ eh the the eh ci\_ eh ci\_ eh *citte\_citte d'arte*  
 SS: *città d'arte* {cities of art}  
 L1: *città d'arte una* {one}  
 SS: (xx) 5  
 L1: it's so (.) ah okay (.) *città d'arte ... città d'arte* is not in plural form  
 apparently

The lecturer's limited knowledge of Italian grammar erroneously leads him to think that all words ending in *-a* should adopt *-e* as a plural marker. This is not true for words ending in *-à*, which remain invariable in the plural. When he is corrected by the students, he tries to justify his choice by saying that *città* is singular ("*città d'arte una*") while he was referring to many cities of art. However, he soon realizes that his assumption is wrong ("it's so ah okay") and confirms his understanding by expressing his metalinguistic reflections aloud ("*città d'arte* is not in plural form apparently"). Another example of a metalinguistic comment can be found in (36):

- (36) L1: a tourism product is always a bundle of services what they call a  
 package in english (.) *forfait* eh in french and in italian it's ... 20  
 SS: *pacchetto* {package}  
 L1: *pacchetto* ah it's an anglicism proba-probably ... *pacchetto* is not nice  
 but is like this <SS LAUGH>

After having introduced the term "package" in English, the lecturer provides the equivalent in French (the other language that he knows) and then asks the students for the Italian translation. Having obtained the answer, he comments on it by saying that the Italian word is probably an Anglicism and then adds that he does not find it a very nice word.

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## 4 Multilingualism

The use of words from different languages is indicative of the speaker's excellent communicative competence and of his mastery of cross-cultural CS, identified by Molinsky (2007: 624) as "the act of purposefully modifying one's behaviour in an interaction in a foreign setting in order to accommodate different cultural norms for appropriate behaviour". The corpus analysed contains very few cases in which the speaker uses terms or expressions from more than one language to express the same concept. The rarity of this phenomenon may be due both to the

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limited knowledge of foreign languages on the part of the speakers and also to the wide variety of native languages spoken by the students. It is interesting to note that this use of cross-cultural CS is mainly typical of the Swiss lecturer, and thus serves to communicate his multilingual identity, as multilingualism is a typical trait of the Swiss national situation. The Swiss lecturer mainly adopts this strategy when he wants to make the meaning of a term clearer by means of translation. Since the students come from different linguistic backgrounds, the lecturer tries to cope with this difficulty by using the various equivalents in the languages that he knows:

- (37) L1: each year from two thousand eight the european commission organizes a prize  
 S: ah the last word is ... commission organizes what exactly?  
 L2: a prize  
 S: ah  
 L2: a *concours*, a *premio* a competition

In this way the lecturer exploits his linguistic competence (typical of a multilingual speaker) by skilfully drawing on the range of languages that he knows.

## 5 Conclusion

The analysis carried out here shows that CS and the recourse to words belonging to other languages play a relevant role among the main strategies employed by both lecturers and students in the realization of their communicative efforts. The type of CS observed here is mainly intrasentential and usually consists in a single word or expression focused on by the speaker.

Contrary to the view that CS betrays lack of linguistic competence, the data show that this communicative choice is adopted by the speakers to perform several functions. Some of these coincide with the ones identified in previous studies on ELF, such as the speaker's use of a foreign word or expression to refer to a specific interlocutor, or the appeal for assistance when the speaker does not know a particular term in English, or the adoption of a non-English word in those cases in which the speaker thinks that this term can convey a specific concept in a better way. CS has also been found to signal culture, both in an implicit and in an explicit way. This function, however, has been shown to play a more important role in our corpus, as speakers often adopt CS in

order to emphasize their cultural identity and underline their place of origin, 1  
sometimes also adding emphatic remarks denoting positive evaluation of their  
culture.

Other functions identified here are meant to improve the didactic efficacy of  
the teaching activity with the lecturer's recourse to CS to make sure that the 5  
students have understood a specific term or concept by asking them to translate  
the term into their own language, or his provision of a more specific explanation  
of the meaning of a particular concept by contrasting it with the term used in  
another language, particularly the language shared by most students.

The analysis of our corpus also shows that CS is sometimes used as an 10  
accommodation strategy in order to show listenership and engagement in con-  
versation. This kind of usage highlights the speaker's interest in the interlocu-  
tors' language and culture, commonly expressed by means of translation efforts  
or requests. The data presented highlights a high degree of cooperativeness on  
both sides when they interact among themselves so as to guarantee a successful 15  
outcome of the specialized communication in which they are involved. A further  
function identified here consists in the conveyance of metalinguistic comments  
concerning the use of a foreign language, usually the native language of some of  
the students. These comments too are indicative of the lecturer's interest in the  
students' language and culture and are perceived by the interlocutors in a very 20  
positive way.

As regards the use of multilingualism, the corpus analysed contains very  
few cases. The rarity of this phenomenon may be due both to the limited  
knowledge of foreign languages on the part of the speakers and also to the 25  
wide variety of native languages spoken by the students. Cogo (2009) has  
described cases of conversations in which speakers do not only code-switch to  
their mother tongue, but also to a third language which is the native language of  
none. This CS in a third language is considered normal by the interlocutors, and  
seems an unmarked choice for the multilingual and multicultural community of  
ELF speakers observed by Cogo. This situation, however, has not been found in 30  
our corpus, mainly due to the limited linguistic competence of the speakers  
involved in the teaching activities analysed here.

In general, however, we can conclude that, although the courses have been  
organized as part of an English-Medium Instruction project, the presence of  
other languages is not completely excluded. As Hülmbauer (2013: 53) rightly 35  
asserts, "In contrast to native speaker talk, ELF takes place and indeed generates  
multilingual environments". This is certainly the case with the courses observed  
here, and CS is one of the most powerful tools adopted to create a multilingual  
environment in them.

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