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2 **12 English in Italian universities:** 3 4 **The language policy of PoliMi from** 5 **theory to practice** 6

7
8 **Abstract:** In Italy the decision of the Politecnico di Milano concerning the exclu-
9 sive adoption of English in all MA and PhD courses starting from 2014 gave rise to
10 a heated debate and triggered a lawsuit. The paper examines the arguments put
11 forth by the advocates of the decision as well as the claims of the opponents,
12 and analyzes the conclusions of the Court which judged the case, ruling against
13 PoliMi. It then focuses on PoliMi's website, with a view to verifying how the policy
14 of the institution is practically implemented. The overall structure of the site is
15 described, with special attention for the different language versions, and then a
16 small sample of texts concerning the presentation of courses is analyzed. The
17 comparison between the Italian and the English versions of the texts aims to
18 investigate the relationship between them, highlighting differences that reveal
19 how language choices discursively reflect and construct different ideological
20 attitudes.

21
22 **Keywords:** language policy, Politecnico di Milano, website, parallel text
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24 25 **1 Introduction** 26

27 Unprecedented processes of globalization have enhanced the role of English as
28 a *lingua franca* not only in economic and scientific contexts but also in the mass
29 media and in popular culture all over the world (e.g. Graddol 1997; Brutt-Griffler
30 2002; Crystal 2003; House 2003; Coupland 2010). Historical reasons combine
31 with economic power to make this language prestigious and pervasive, to the
32 point that it is often seen as the expression of a form of imperialism (e.g.
33 Phillipson 1992, 2003; Skutnabb-Kangas 2001; Dalby 2003; in a discursive per-
34 spective, Pennycook 1994; from a Marxist point of view, Holborow 1999).

35 The domain of science has been specially hit by the spread of English,
36 above all in written communication. The winning models of the Anglo-Saxon
37 scientific culture have marginalized other language traditions and led to the
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1 decline of important European languages – like French, German or Italian –
2 which used to enjoy high status and prestige (Ammon 2001; Truchot 2001; Gardt
3 and Hüppauf 2004; Calaresu 2011). The internationalization of science has
4 turned into an overwhelming process of Anglicization, which has gradually ex-
5 tended from research proper to academic contexts in general, involving special-
6 ized communication as well as instruction and training (Kruseman 2003; Béacco
7 et al. 2010). The use of English in higher education has become a transnational
8 problem (e.g. van Leeuwen and Wilkinson 2003; Ritzen 2004; Nannes and
9 Hellstén 2005; Coleman 2006; Phillipson 2009; Doiz, Lasagabaster, and Sierra
10 2013; van der Walt 2013).

11 In 2012 the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* devoted a
12 whole issue to the topic “Language and the international university” (Haberland
13 and Mortensen 2012a), considering the matter mainly under the perspective of
14 student and staff mobility. Published in the wake of a conference held in 2008
15 in Denmark, the issue is direct evidence of the state of the debate in Nordic
16 countries, which had traditionally been willing to adopt English as a teaching
17 language in their university courses. In their introduction, the editors pointed
18 out that all discussions concerning sociolinguistic implications of university
19 internationalization invariably focus on the role played by English in the pro-
20 cess: nevertheless, it should be clear that internationalization is more than
21 “mere Anglicization” (Haberland and Mortensen 2012b: 1). Rather, the choice of
22 English as an academic *lingua franca* hinders the development of a truly multi-
23 cultural environment and fosters uniformity, promoting a global marketplace of
24 knowledge, characterized by what Naidoo and Jemieson (2005) call “the com-
25 modification of teaching and learning”.

26 The trend towards Anglicization has more recently emerged also in Italy
27 (Gazzola 2012). *Internazionalizzazione* is now a key word in university policy, em-
28 phasizing the importance of an international profile as an essential component
29 in the quality of an institution. As a consequence, all the initiatives aiming to
30 promote a wider use of the international language *par excellence*, i.e. English,
31 are encouraged by the University’s governance. This policy is however contro-
32 versial. In particular, the language policy of the Politecnico di Milano (PoliMi),
33 which can be considered a leader in the adoption of English as academic lan-
34 guage in Italy, has had unexpected and unprecedented judicial consequences.

35 After a brief survey of the Italian situation aiming to single out the rationale
36 that lies behind the decisions, the paper examines the resolution taken by PoliMi’s
37 academic authorities in 2012 (2.1.). The main arguments put forth in the debate
38 triggered by this decision will be summarized (2.2.); the discussion will then
39 focus on the legal action taken against the resolution and on the judgement pro-
40 nounced by the Administrative Court (2.3.). The second part of the paper aims

1 to show actual problems emerging when language policies have to be imple-
 2 mented. Taking account of translation studies and of the discourse analytical
 3 framework, the analysis will focus on PoliMi's website, to verify how English
 4 and Italian are used. The survey will consider the overall structure of the site,
 5 and then focus on a small sample of texts concerning the presentation of
 6 courses and teaching syllabuses (4.). In the Conclusions (5.), the arguments of
 7 both adversaries and advocates of the English option will be discussed against
 8 the results of the analysis of the examples and under the wider perspective of
 9 worldwide trends and debates.

12 2 Language policies in Italian Universities

14 2.1 General outline

16 Italy has long lagged behind in the process of internationalization, but in recent
 17 years there has been an unprecedented acceleration in this direction, which has
 18 involved the Ministry for Education and Research with its official, *ad-hoc*-created
 19 agencies as well as academic authorities in individual institutions. As in Italy
 20 internationalization is tantamount to adopting English in teaching and in
 21 research, the push to go international in the Italian academia spells Anglicization,
 22 and boils down to a competition among universities to start new programmes
 23 taught in English.

24 Focusing on Italian universities from the point of view of both research and
 25 teaching, Gazzola (2012) emphasizes that a new system of public funding, in
 26 which a share of resources can be allocated on a competitive base, has obliged
 27 individual institutions to try to comply with the requirements, improving their
 28 “performance indicators”. Needless to say, internationalization ranks high
 29 among these indicators, affecting the evaluation of both research and mobility,
 30 with special emphasis on the capacity for attracting foreign students. In fact,
 31 increasing the international student population has been a priority for many
 32 universities: to academic authorities the obvious solution and pre-requisite to a
 33 policy of foreign students' enrolment has been the adoption of English as the
 34 language of teaching, to the point that the dramatic increase in the number of
 35 programmes taught in English has become the most evident feature of the new
 36 course.

37 In the last few years, the process has accelerated impressively. Gazzola
 38 (2012), on the basis of a survey carried out by the Conference of Rectors of Italian
 39 Universities (CRUI) on 2007 data, reported that only 13 (or 18%) of Italian univer-
 40 sities offered at least one MA program taught entirely in English. However, the

1 most recent official figures now available on the website of CRUI, referring to the
2 academic year 2011–2012, show that the number jumped from 13 to 42 (in four
3 years!)¹. This trend actually reflects the recommendations of CRUI itself, which
4 in its 2009 report invited to at least double the total number of BA and MA pro-
5 grammes in English by 2015 (Calaresu 2011: 102).

6 Bernini (2012) comments on the data gathered by CRUI, and points out that
7 the adoption of English can actually follow three different patterns: (1) English
8 is used only for some disciplines, with total freedom of choice on behalf of the
9 students; (2) English and Italian are both used for the teaching in parallel
10 courses, and students can choose where to apply; and (3) English is the ex-
11 clusive language of teaching, and there is no possibility of choice. While some
12 universities have chosen a policy of gradual introduction of English by adopting
13 the first and the second pattern, others (especially polytechnic institutes) have
14 preferred a more radical option, by starting courses where English has a totally
15 predominant position, with no alternative in Italian. This approach has been
16 taken to the extreme by PoliMi.

17 PoliMi was one of the first institutions to launch programmes entirely taught
18 in English, which started as early as 2004, with MA programmes in engineering.
19 However, the radical turn in its language policy came in December 2011, when
20 the University Senate approved the strategic plan for the 2012–2014 period,
21 which was hinged on the qualification of PoliMi as an International University –
22 involving, among other things, the recruitment of foreign teaching staff and the
23 expansion of mobility. In this context, the guidelines established that, starting
24 from 2014, all MA programmes and PhD courses would be taught exclusively in
25 English with the parallel development of a language training programme both
26 for teachers and students.

27 This decision immediately triggered a heated debate within the institution
28 itself, and was discussed outside the academic context both by language experts
29 and laypeople. The main arguments put forth by advocates and by opponents
30 are summarized in the following paragraph.

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33 **2.2 PoliMi's resolution: advocates and opponents**

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35 PoliMi's resolution took for granted both the advantages of internationalization
36 and its interpretation as Anglicization. The arguments in favour of the decision
37 put forth by the Rector and Pro-Rector and by other professors outside PoliMi,

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39 ¹ The report is available on the CRUI website (<http://www.cruir.it/HomePage.aspx?ref=2094>),
40 with a full PDF version in English to download.

1 who have tried to implement similar policies in their universities, can be synthe-
 2 sized in three main points.

3 (1) Students' mobility, or the importance of attracting foreign students and, at
 4 the same time, contrasting the dispersion of Italian students (after BA, a
 5 growing share of them tends to move to foreign universities). Advocates
 6 of the decision considered English a means to make Italy "accessible" to
 7 foreigners and at the same time a means to encourage Italians to stay at
 8 home, offering them the opportunity to practice the English language,
 9 which is essential for their future job opportunities.

10 (2) The relationship between the adoption of English as official MA language
 11 and a possible change in teaching methods, including innovation in didactics
 12 and renewal of course planning. This argument makes it clear that a change
 13 in language is not simply instrumental nor a mere question of makeup;
 14 rather, it affects the organization of teaching profoundly, fostering foreign
 15 models and quickly making local approaches obsolete.

16 (3) A third, less frequent but highly interesting argument was based on a
 17 linguistic motivation. According to the dean of the Faculty of Medicine at
 18 the Università di Pavia, the ever growing importance of English in scientific
 19 contexts cannot be a mere consequence of the economic and scientific
 20 supremacy of the English-speaking world. The reasons must be purely
 21 linguistic, as English "seems to have been conceived for the purpose of
 22 describing 'facts' and to give ideas the status of 'facts'" (Del Canton 2012:
 23 195 [translation mine]). These words echo the famous observations made by
 24 Halliday (1993) about modern scientific discourse, which developed coher-
 25 ently with the shift from deductive to inductive logic: the linguistic solution
 26 to the problem of relying on previous findings, presenting them more
 27 concisely, was nominalization, by means of which processes could be
 28 systematically reconstructed as nouns. This syntactic feature emerged as
 29 early as in Newton's *Optiks* (Halliday 1993), and was functional to the
 30 construction of taxonomies as well as to repackaging previous pieces of
 31 information in order to organize them in a coherent sequence of logically
 32 connected moves. From the point of view of language ideology, this argu-
 33 ment implies that language is by no means a neutral instrument, and that
 34 the exclusive use of a language equals the acceptance of the fundamental
 35 features of the scientific paradigm adopted by the corresponding culture.

36
 37 The voices against PoliMi's decisions mostly came from scholars and lan-
 38 guage societies, *Crusca* first and foremost. The Accademia della Crusca is the
 39 oldest language society in Europe, aimed to protect and foster the Italian
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1 language. In its 430-year history, Crusca has actively contributed to the develop-
2 ment of Italian as a standard language, and in recent times has promoted,
3 alongside its traditional areas of research, investigation of modern trends and
4 uses. Against this background, it seems obvious that reactions to PoliMi's lan-
5 guage policy quickly emerged from within the academy, which decided to foster
6 a wider debate. In the words of Crusca's President, Nicoletta Maraschio, "the
7 Accademia della Crusca has decided to participate in this debate to encourage
8 a comprehensive and accurate analysis of this delicate question, which certainly
9 affects other countries and in the opinion of many has crucial political, juridical,
10 cultural and social implications" (Maraschio 2012: v [translation mine]). To con-
11 tribute to an open and critical discussion, the academy has devoted a section of
12 its website to this theme, publishing the opinions of some of its members, and
13 collecting the comments of ordinary people in a blog. Moreover, Crusca organized
14 a round table on 27th April 2012, giving the floor to representatives of all the
15 parties involved: PoliMi, the Ministry for Education, legal experts, and Italian
16 and foreign language scholars. It then decided to gather the presentations in a
17 book published in cooperation with a popular publisher, in order to favour its
18 wide circulation (Maraschio and De Martino 2012). The editors also asked other
19 experts and intellectuals for their opinion, aiming to give an even more detailed
20 picture of the situation. As stated in the Introduction, most participants in the
21 debate were in favour of a double track option (Maraschio 2012: ix).

22 The arguments against PoliMi hinged on the 'abolition' of Italian, empha-
23 sizing that the *exclusive* use of English spells *exclusion* of Italian from MA and PhD
24 curricula. No-one denied the importance of English and its prominent role on
25 the international scene, but for language experts this cannot lead to the total
26 elimination of Italian in a whole sector of education. Language is essential for
27 the construction of a national identity and is a fundamental component of the
28 cultural and historical heritage of a nation, and should therefore be defended.
29 Experts focused on the risks for both the Italian language and the Italian speakers:
30 on the one hand, they highlighted the negative consequences for the language
31 in terms of domain loss; on the other, they pointed at the risks for Italian stu-
32 dents, who have to abandon their mother tongue and therefore may have diffi-
33 culties in developing and controlling logic and argumentative structures.

34 Linguists, however, did not stand alone against PoliMi's policy. Scientists
35 also feared its effects on Italian, which would disappear from some important
36 areas of scientific communication. Domain loss, in its turn, would widen the gap
37 between scientists and laypeople, with serious consequences for the dissemina-
38 tion of science. In her last interview, the late Italian astrophysicist Margherita
39 Hack affirmed that she was "shocked": in her opinion, the mother tongue
40 should not be abandoned, as it is essential both for the learning process and

1 for the dissemination and popularization of science (Patria Europea 2013). In a
 2 discourse analytical perspective, Hack's remark calls to mind the distinction
 3 between closed (*fermé*) and open (*ouvert*) discourse (Maingueneau 1992: 120):
 4 in closed discourse genres addressers and addressees tend to coincide both
 5 qualitatively and quantitatively, as generally happens in highly specialized scien-
 6 tific communication. Teaching (and popularization), however, inherently requires
 7 an open discourse genre, as there is a sharp distinction between producers and
 8 recipients. In this context, the exclusive adoption of a foreign language explicitly
 9 developed for close communication among experts sounds absurd.

12 2.3 The lawsuit

13 On 2 May 2012 a group of professors and researchers working at PoliMi sub-
 14 mitted a petition to the University's governance, asking for a revision of the
 15 strategic plan which should cancel the imposition of English. The petition
 16 hinged on 4 main arguments: (1) the exclusive use of English is against the
 17 principle of "freedom in teaching", which is explicitly stated in the Italian Con-
 18 stitution; (2) the guidelines *de facto* introduce a form of language-based dis-
 19 crimination, and can have negative consequences for the career of both teachers
 20 and students; (3) the guidelines are against the norms stating that the Italian
 21 language is the official language of teaching and exams, and at the same time
 22 misinterpret the concept of internationalization, which should involve the
 23 co-existence and integration of different cultures rather than impose one to
 24 the detriment of the other; (4) the compulsory introduction of English is not
 25 necessarily an added value from the pedagogical point of view.

27 On 21 May 2012 the petition was officially discussed during a meeting of the
 28 Academic Senate, which finally confirmed the original decision with a majority
 29 vote. Against this resolution a group of 100 professors summoned the University
 30 administration before the Local Administrative Court, as provided for by Italian
 31 administrative law. The Court ruled in favour of the claimants, and the resolu-
 32 tion was declared invalid and repealed. The judgement was officially published
 33 on 23 May 2013 (Tribunale Amministrativo della Lombardia 2013)².

34 It is worth summarizing the motivations of the decision as they outline the
 35 main interests involved in the question and illustrate some important aspects of
 36 Italian legislation in this matter. After having discussed procedural questions,

37 ² In July 2013, however, PoliMi appealed the judgment before the Higher Administrative Court
 38 (named "Consiglio di Stato"), which fixed the first hearing on 11 March 2014. The Court, with a
 39 decision published on 23 January 2015, referred to the Constitutional Court to establish whether
 40 the recent norms concerning universities are compatible with the principles stated in the Italian
 Consitution.

1 the Court examines the arguments put forth in the claim as well as the counter-
2 arguments of the University administration, discussing them from a juridical
3 perspective and emphasizing some crucial points.

4 First of all, the Court acknowledges the official and preeminent position of
5 Italian as a constitutional principle: although it is not explicitly stated in the
6 Constitution, it can be inferred from general norms in favour of language minor-
7 ities, which are a direct consequence of the supremacy of Italian in official con-
8 texts. As already stated in previous judgements pronounced by the Constitu-
9 tional Court, legislation imposes the necessity to guarantee that the Italian
10 language is not penalized in relation to minority languages, and this principle
11 must obviously apply also when the contrast involves foreign languages which
12 are not the object of protection norms.

13 According to PoliMi, the 2010 law providing for the general principles for
14 the reorganization of the universities (Legge n. 240/2010) implicitly abrogates
15 all previous norms concerning the official character of Italian in public institu-
16 tions, as it emphasizes the role of internationalization (article 2, paragraph 2.I).
17 This argument is however considered invalid by the Administrative Court, as
18 internationalization implies different forms of action (mobility, cooperation,
19 etc.), including the implementation of courses taught in a foreign language, but
20 does not allow for the exclusion of Italian from teaching. In other words the
21 measures encouraging internationalization do not contrast with those guaran-
22 teeing the supremacy of Italian, but the two norms need to be integrated. The
23 crucial point is therefore the exclusive use of English, which in PoliMi's view
24 should replace Italian indiscriminately in all MA and PhD courses, irrespectively
25 of the nature, contents and specificity of the subjects involved. In this way,
26 according to the Administrative Court, the goal of internationalization is pursued
27 beyond legitimate means, and the substitution of English for Italian is a measure
28 not proportional to goals.

29 According to the Court, internationalization does not equal Anglicization:
30 if it excludes Italian and all foreign languages other than English, it actually
31 hinders the expansion of authentic multiculturalism, and only favours the
32 development and spread of knowledge and values typical of the English-speaking
33 culture. Moreover, the use of English in disciplines that refer to the Italian cultural
34 and institutional background (as in the case of legal disciplines) breaks the link
35 between contents and language. The Court concluded:

36 The measures adopted by the Academic Senate through the contested resolutions are
37 excessive, as on the one hand they do not favour internationalization of the University
38 but merely lead to the adoption of one single language and the cultural values transmitted
39 in that language, while, on the other, they unnecessarily limit the constitutionally acknowl-
40 edged freedom of both teachers and students (Tribunale Amministrativo della Lombardia
2013 [translation mine]).

1 The publication of the judgement rekindled the debate as a reaction to the
 2 decision taken by the Administrative Court. The arguments put forth in the
 3 judgement triggered some pro-PoliMi reactions, mainly focused on the impor-
 4 tance of English today and on the poor language performance of the average
 5 Italian student. Actually, the main arguments put forth in favour of PoliMi (e.g.
 6 the crucial role of English, the need for a more effective language education at
 7 school) were accepted by language experts, but the experts also looked at the
 8 other side of the problem, and considered the capitulation to English a promo-
 9 tional move – not the expression of an international approach, but rather the
 10 sign of a parochial attitude.

13 3 PoliMi's website

15 3.1 Aim and method of website's analysis

17 The arguments put forth by PoliMi are based on the conviction that internation-
 18 alization (which is implicitly considered a value *per se*) can be easily achieved
 19 through the adoption of English, which in its turn merely requires preliminary
 20 language training opportunities for teachers and students. This theoretical
 21 standpoint needs however to be verified in practice: are the problems deriving
 22 from the use of English mere language problems? Is it enough to improve com-
 23 petence to ensure effective communication in the educational process? Or does
 24 the adoption of English necessarily involve changes in the didactic and scientific
 25 approach? And, if so, are these changes always a value?

26 To see how the language policy starts to be implemented both by the in-
 27 stitution as a whole and by individual staff members, PoliMi's website has
 28 been examined to verify how different languages – Italian and English in the
 29 first place – are used in its overall structure and in the description of course
 30 syllabuses.

31 The analysis will first take into consideration the architecture of the site,
 32 focusing on surfing possibilities, page organization and texts. The survey of the
 33 site is carried out against the background of translational research, starting from
 34 the conviction that in a multimodal environment different language versions
 35 cannot be analyzed in a traditional perspective. The very concept of translation
 36 is by no means neutral, and has been the object of important re-definition,
 37 mainly with a fuzzy set approach (Reiss and Vermeer 1984; Garzone 2002). In
 38 the context of new media communication a traditional and implicit idea of
 39 translation is particularly inadequate, and researchers have tried to develop
 40 new theoretical models and single out new concepts that can better describe

1 the actual relationships between texts and contexts (Gambier and Gottlieb 2001;
2 House 2006). Adaptation (Bastin 1998) and transadaptation (Greenall 2012) are
3 particularly relevant for this case.

4 English and Italian are used also by individual professors, who publish their
5 syllabus on the website. The analysis focuses on a few texts dating back to spring
6 2013 to compare the Italian and English versions with a discourse analytical
7 approach. In this respect, the perspective typical of the Anglo-Saxon approach
8 is usually characterized by “critical” implications (Wodak and Meyer 2001; Fair-
9 clough 2003; Wodak and Chilton 2005), but extends from more ideologically-
10 sensitive areas to different genres and modes (Renkema 2009; Bateman 2009;
11 Garzone and Catenaccio 2009). The constructive aspect of discourse and its posi-
12 tion in-between language and society is more strongly emphasized in the French
13 tradition (Charaudeau and Maingueneau 2002; Maingueneau 2014; Antelmi
14 2012), incorporating also argumentative and rhetorical aspects (Amossy 2006).
15 Drawing on Foucault’s (1969, 1970) tradition, research focuses on how discourses
16 actively contribute to the creation of societal and interpersonal structures, at
17 the intersection among different disciplines (pragmatics, rhetoric, semiotics,
18 argumentation etc.), which can contribute to the analysis of texts with their
19 theoretical and methodological instruments. Against this background, the exam-
20 ples will be examined with a view to showing how the description of a course
21 implicitly displays ideas about teaching methods and aims as well as more
22 general assumptions about the status of the discipline itself.

23 24 25 **3.2 Site architecture**

26 The website of PoliMi has undergone major restructuring and restyling as a con-
27 sequence of the organizational changes triggered by the recent reform of univer-
28 sity legislation in Italy. Schools have replaced what used to be called faculties,
29 while research has been more directly linked to departments, with new and
30 more relevant functions. Schools and departments, however, do not appear
31 on PoliMi’s homepage: the organization of the portal hinges on more general
32 aspects (*University, Programmes, Students, Scientific Research, Companies*) and
33 also includes one link for prospective students and one for staff (*apply to PoliMi,*
34 *work with us*, respectively). Each school and each department has its own web-
35 site, which can be reached from a second or third level of the web hierarchy³.

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39 ³ All information concerning PoliMi’s website is based on my personal surfing experience (last
40 access 1 December 2013).

1 A Google search for “Polimi” gives as first result “Politecnico di Milano: ver-
 2 sione italiana” (www.polimi.it) if the search language is Italian, and “Politecnico
 3 di Milano: English version” (www.polimi.it/en) if the search language is English.
 4 The two pages have the same layout and can be considered one the translation
 5 of the other. Both offer the possibility of switching to the other language with a
 6 click (hotspots are the Italian and the British flag); access to a Chinese version is
 7 also possible (hotspot: the Chinese flag), but in this case the surfer is sent to a
 8 completely different page (www.chinese.polimi.it), which has the same layout as
 9 “Polinternational” (see *infra*). As a matter of fact, when moving to the second
 10 level of the web hierarchy correspondence between Italian and English version
 11 is not perfect: when choosing *Apply to Polimi*, prospective students enter an
 12 autonomous site, Polinternational (www.polinternational.polimi.it), which is
 13 not parallel to the Italian version and displays a different organization.

14 As suggested by Greenall (2012) in the analysis of the Norwegian University
 15 of Science and Technology’s website, there are differences between the local-
 16 language and the English version, but students may not perceive that the texts
 17 have actually been adapted to what are believed to be the needs of foreign stu-
 18 dents. The different organization of information in Polinternational is a typical
 19 example of blurred boundaries between source and target texts (Gambier and
 20 Gottlieb 2001), as it results in comparable texts which are not one the transla-
 21 tion of the other, but still are in a form of translational relationship (Greenall
 22 2012). This observation applies to the hyper-structure of the site in the first
 23 place: a different organization of pages and surfing options is meant for
 24 English-speaking students who want to “apply to PoliMi”, but they may not
 25 realize they have actually left the main site and hyper-jumped into an “inter-
 26 national” area, which is not parallel to the original Italian version. In this case,
 27 it could be more adequate to talk of *adaptation*, as the English hypertext is not a
 28 translation of the Italian, “but is nevertheless recognized as representing a
 29 source text”, according to Bastin’s (1998: 2) definition of adaptation.

30 The whole architecture of the website is very complex, and the description of
 31 courses, with detailed indication of subjects and information about the syllabus,
 32 can be reached from different points, which generally allow cross-navigation
 33 between Italian and English. In some cases, however, direct switching is not
 34 possible and surfing implies non-reversible choices. Foreign students who enter
 35 the Polinternational website can find lists of the BA and MA courses offered, as
 36 well as information concerning other training and specialization opportunities.
 37 The description of single courses is the responsibility of the School supplying
 38 the programme, but direct access to the schools’ website is not possible from
 39 Polinternational. The list of schools can be reached from the *Programmes* menu
 40 available on the home page, and at the third level of the site hierarchy a link to

1 each school's website is available. Moreover, each school's website has its own
2 structure, layout and textual organisation reflecting remarkably different ap-
3 proaches to web communication and – more importantly – to the very concept
4 of university education and teaching. From the point of view of language choice,
5 there are various possibilities: the School of Architecture and Society offers
6 an *International programme* in English (adapted from the Italian version, but
7 profoundly different from the original); the School of Civil Architecture has a
8 *Foreign students* link, and a parallel site in English is now under construction;
9 the School of Design presents a totally bilingual homepage, but at the second
10 level correspondence is not guaranteed, and the surfer jumps from English to
11 Italian without any apparent reason; the School of Civil, Environmental, and
12 Land Management Engineering, the School of Industrial and Information Engi-
13 neering and the School of Architectural Engineering have no English option,
14 but their sites are apparently under construction.

15 Despite the work-in-progress impression which justifies discrepancies, the
16 surfer can be really puzzled by the architecture of the website as a whole; con-
17 fusion grows when moving to the detailed description of programmes, single
18 courses, syllabuses. At the moment there are three language possibilities: pro-
19 grammes taught in Italian, in English or in both languages (and in this case
20 some disciplines are taught in Italian and some in English). Information at a
21 more general level is available on the schools' websites, and the presence of
22 translations or adaptations in English depends, as we have seen, on the choice
23 of the single school. More detailed information concerning each subject is acces-
24 sible through the Manifesto of the programme (available on an e-learning plat-
25 form accessible from the general description), which has parallel Italian and
26 English pages. The full text of the syllabus of single disciplines (generally illus-
27 trating objectives, topics and teaching methods) is however available only in the
28 language actually used for teaching the course. This monolingual choice is the
29 result of very recent restructuring of the website: last year double versions of
30 each syllabus were still available, and presumably the English one was meant
31 to be a translation of the Italian. The analysis of these texts is particularly inter-
32 esting to highlight some practical consequences of the adoption of English.
33 Therefore, in the next section I shall focus on a small sample of texts (Italian
34 and English version) downloaded in March 2013.

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37 **3.3 Analysis of examples**

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39 A small sample of Italian and English texts was collected with reference to the
40 academic year 2012–2013. At that time detailed course descriptions and sylla-
buses were still available in the two languages and allowed a comparison. A

1 qualitative analysis of the sample revealed that various forms of adaptation
 2 were quite common. Three examples will be briefly discussed here as an illustra-
 3 tion of the main problems emerging from the investigation.

4 English versions were often shorter, with omissions of details or more
 5 synthetic presentation of the concepts. The following example refers to a course
 6 of History of Architecture:

7 (1) L'insegnamento fornisce una conoscenza di base della storia dell'architettura
 8 dall'antichità alle soglie dell'800 e introduce *alla comprensione degli* aspetti
 9 (linguaggio, tecniche e saperi) che caratterizzano l'architettura nei diversi
 10 tempi e quadri storico-geografici. Il corso ha l'obiettivo di mostrare *come*
 11 le componenti espressive e formali, *costruttive* e materiali, ideologiche e
 12 *di costume* sono correlate nelle soluzioni architettoniche *realizzate, e di*
 13 *dimostrare come la loro conoscenza sia stata, anche in modo contraddittorio,*
 14 *una componente determinante degli esiti architettonici.*

15 (1a) The course provides a basic knowledge of history of Architecture from
 16 the antiquity to the beginning of the nineteenth century and introduces
 17 the several aspects (language, techniques, knowledges) that characterize
 18 Architecture in different times and historical-geographical contexts. The
 19 course aims at showing the close relation existing between formal, mate-
 20 rial, expressive, ideological elements and architectural solutions.

21
 22 The parts in italics in the Italian text are omitted in the English translation.
 23 It can be noted that, apart from a whole final sentence, which adds a completely
 24 new concept totally ignored in the English version (stating that the “knowledge
 25 [of the mentioned elements] was a crucial – albeit contradictory – component in
 26 architectural production”), there are other minor but still significant omissions
 27 resulting in a different approach to the whole subject: in its Italian version, the
 28 course introduces “to the comprehension of several aspects [...]”; it aims to
 29 show “how” the various mentioned elements (and among them also “the struc-
 30 tural” and “the traditional”, which are omitted in the English version) are linked
 31 to the adopted architectural solutions. The very concept of education and teach-
 32 ing lying behind the Italian formulation is the expression of a different ideol-
 33 ological standpoint, emphasizing the importance of understanding rather than
 34 merely describing historical facts and of analyzing different forms of (conflict-
 35 ing) interactions among the various contextual components.

36 Omissions are rarer when the English text is conceived as a close translation
 37 of the Italian source, but in this case loan structures and false friends occur
 38 more frequently. One example from the description of a course of Mathematics
 39 (my suggestions in square brackets):

40

1 (2) Il corso intende fornire principi e strumenti operativi della matematica
 2 essenziali per affrontare sia le discipline strutturali e progettuali, sia la
 3 morfologia architettonica e i modelli fisici, tecnologici, economici, sociali,
 4 urbanistici. Il rigore logico, tipico delle discipline matematiche, contribuisce
 5 in modo peculiare alla formazione dei futuri architetti.

6 (2a) The course *is intended* [aims] to give the principles and *operational instru-*
 7 *ments* [processes] of Mathematics essential to undertake both the disci-
 8 plines aimed to the structural design and those aimed to the architectonic
 9 morphology and physical, technological, *economical* [economic], social
 10 and projectual models. The *logical rigour* [strictly logical thinking], typical
 11 of Mathematics, contributes in a *peculiar* [special] way to the *formation*
 12 [training] of the future architects.

13
 14 There are evidently other inaccuracies in the English text, and in this case
 15 the inadequate solutions are presumably linked to a poor language and transla-
 16 tion competence of the writer.

17 A final example is meant to illustrate a different problem, stemming from
 18 the effort of adapting the Italian text to the features typical of the English lan-
 19 guage and way of thinking. The text is a presentation of a course of History of
 20 Architecture:

21 (3) Il corso intende proporre una serie di approfondimenti sulle complesse
 22 vicende che caratterizzano il lungo ciclo storico dell'architettura italiana
 23 tra il XV e il XVIII secolo. In questo *denso e complesso* segmento storico
 24 l'architettura fu protagonista, insieme alle altre arti figurative, di un lungo
 25 processo di riscoperta, studio, lettura e reinterpretazione dell'antichità
 26 classica, che aprì il campo a un vivace sperimentalismo [1] e a una con-
 27 tinua riverifica e aggiornamento delle fonti [2], accompagnati dalla messa
 28 a punto di metodi di studio sempre più rigorosi e "scientifici" [3] [...].

29 Il punto di vista privilegiato di queste indagini di approfondimento sarà
 30 una lettura interdisciplinare, che considererà gli innumerevoli e talvolta
 31 indissolubili legami dell'architettura con le altre arti e più in generale con
 32 più aspetti della vita dell'uomo.

33 Particolare attenzione sarà rivolta agli aspetti costruttivi e all'importan-
 34 za che lo studio dell'antico – attraverso l'analisi diretta degli edifici, i
 35 disegni e gli appunti nei taccuini, la trattatistica – ebbe nella formulazione
 36 di nuove concezioni spazio-strutturali. Si vuole evidenziare l'importanza
 37 della considerazione degli aspetti costruttivi dell'antichità, di importantis-
 38 simo valore ancora oggi, in un momento storico in cui grande attenzione è
 39 rivolta a processi di recupero e rigenerazione di manufatti esistenti piut-
 40 tosto che alla edificazione *ex-novo*.

1 (3a) The course aims to carry on an in-depth analysis on some of the main
 2 events in Italian Architecture from the XV to the XVIII century. In this
 3 period Architecture, along with the other figurative Arts, played an im-
 4 portant role in the long process of rediscovery, study, interpretation and
 5 re-interpretation of classical antiquity. Experimentalism [1] developed
 6 alongside with the refinement of a rigorous and “scientific” method of
 7 investigation [3] and the continuous analysis of the historical sources [2] [..].

8 The approach of the course will be interdisciplinary, as it will focus on the
 9 indissoluble connections between Architecture and the other figurative arts,
 10 as well as several other aspects of human life.

11 The course will emphasize the importance of certain aspects of con-
 12 struction (*the building materials and techniques, and the building process in*
 13 *general*) as well as the impact that the study of antiquity had on the creation
 14 of new concepts of space and structure.

15 *During the time period that the course will focus on, architects studied the*
 16 *ancient monuments in situ and produced a great amount of drawings (disegni*
 17 *dall'antico), with annotations, measurements and other notes. Moreover, the*
 18 *issue of construction was widely dealt with in the treatises.*

19 *A close analysis of these elements provides student architects with the neces-*
 20 *sary base knowledge, and it is also extremely valuable in relation to our*
 21 *present history, in a moment when research is focused on the rediscovery*
 22 *and reuse of previous buildings rather than on the realization of new*
 23 *constructions.*

24
 25 In this case, the parts in italics are added in the English text with the evi-
 26 dent aim to make concepts clearer to students who are supposed to have less
 27 experience in this particular area. On the other hand, the two adjectives qualify-
 28 ing the historical period under scrutiny (*denso e complesso*) are omitted in the
 29 translation. Moreover, in the first paragraph a sentence is split in two, presu-
 30 mably to comply with English stylistic norms. This however entails the elimination
 31 of an important logical connection, cancelling the causal link between the two
 32 parts of the Italian sentence (the process of rediscovery “opened the way” [‘apri
 33 il campo’] for experimentalism). The three concepts mentioned in the sentence
 34 (experimentalism [1], the analysis of sources [2], and the scientific method of
 35 investigation [3]) are differently arranged in the two versions: in Italian [1] and
 36 [2] are accompanied by [3], while in English [1] develops alongside with [3] and
 37 [2]. The rhetorical effect produced by this re-arrangement is not neutral.

38 To describe the relationship between these two texts, the intermediate notion
 39 of *transadaptation* (Greenall 2012: 81) could be adopted, a sort of “mid-way solu-
 40 tion” between translation proper and adaptation introduced by Greenall to go

1 beyond usual dichotomies in translation studies, which are often inadequate for
2 describing a complex and blended reality.

3 The three examples have been chosen to offer evidence of the strategies
4 most often used in the production of parallel texts meant to describe a course,
5 together with the consequences deriving from the different choices. In (1) the
6 choice for omissions is well represented, as well as its consequences in terms
7 of both loss of content and reshaping of reasoning; in (2) the difficulties in
8 writing a syllabus in a foreign language are evident, and call for caution when
9 evaluating the proficiency of both teachers and students; (trans)adaptation in
10 (3) is a strategy oriented to a target of foreign students, which however obliges
11 the drafter to re-think the Italian original text, and alters some of its qualifying,
12 distinctive features.

15 4 Conclusions

17 The language policy of PoliMi had put on the agenda the final step towards
18 Anglicization, namely the elimination of Italian from all top-level programmes.
19 Was this a “cultural suicide” or an “advantage for Italy”?⁴ As documented in
20 section 2, the debate around PoliMi’s decision, and the litigation which followed
21 it, has been animated by supporters and adversaries, who have put forth argu-
22 ments (and fallacies) with strong emotional involvement. Language is often a
23 delicate matter, as it concerns personal as well as group identity: therefore,
24 linguistic issues are often discussed also by laypeople, who are not willing to
25 leave them to scholars. In this particular case, the protection of the mother
26 tongue collides with the attraction of English, which is perceived as a future-
27 oriented language, conveying positive and innovative values. The issue goes far
28 beyond the scope of an academic linguistic discussion, and involves complex
29 ideological questions in the crucial fields of research, education, and science.

30 The international scene is evidently dominated by the process of Angliciza-
31 tion, which for many seems irreversible, as a global economy needs a globalized
32 labour market as well as a uniform educational system, possibly dominated by
33 standard practices and high levels of mobility. Criticism however is emerging,
34 and an alternative view is fighting its way through mainstream ideas and behav-
35 iours. The discussion is particularly animated in those “avant-garde” countries
36 where the process started, i.e. the Netherlands and the Nordic countries, where
37

38
39 ⁴ Both quotations are taken from the title of newspaper articles (the former: “Libero”, 25 May
40 2013; the latter “Corriere della sera”, 11 March 2012).

1 research has been carried out in this area to investigate the consequences of
 2 the complete Anglicization of university education and highlight the possible
 3 risks for society as a whole (see among others, Airey and Linder 2006; Coleman
 4 2006; Hansen and Phillipson 2008; Phillipson 2006).

5 In Italy the litigation between PoliMi's administration and some of its own
 6 professors has shown that the acceptance of the process cannot be taken for
 7 granted. The decision of the Administrative Court is the expression of a more
 8 discerning attitude, the cutting-edge of a new Enlightenment. However, it can
 9 also be interpreted as the result of old-fashioned resistance to innovation, linked
 10 with the fear of losing privileges and advantages.

11 The two opposite interpretations reflect different ideologies, or different
 12 ways of conceiving education with its personal and societal goals. In this respect,
 13 a useful synthesis of the history of university education is given by Mortensen
 14 and Haberland (2012), who single out four phases for Danish institutions: 1. the
 15 medieval university, based on the principle of *auctoritas* and dominated by
 16 Latin; 2. the Enlightenment university, based on *ratio* and characterized by the
 17 use of Latin as well as other European languages; 3. the National university,
 18 founded on the idea of nation and consequently dominated by Danish; 4. the
 19 post-national university, inspired by the logic of market, with the use of Danish
 20 and English. In this scheme (which could be roughly applied to other European
 21 traditions), the crucial point is the "acceptance of 'market' as the governing
 22 factor of choices for universities" (Mortensen and Haberland 2012: 191). Against
 23 this background, English is functional to the marketization of knowledge.

24 In this respect the situation today is profoundly different from the medieval
 25 one, when Latin dominated for centuries as "it was established as an integral
 26 part of the dominating sociolinguistic worldview" (Mortensen and Haberland
 27 2012: 191). The position of English in contemporary Europe is profoundly different
 28 from that of Latin in the Middle Ages. Banfi (2012: 33–35) comments on the role
 29 of Latin as a *lingua franca*, emphasizing that in medieval and modern Europe
 30 there were no modern languages with a solid tradition of standardization. Latin
 31 was then "the 'binding element' essential to create the western European iden-
 32 tity, not only in the period when the main national languages developed, [...] but
 33 also later, when, in the framework of well-standardized languages, Latin
 34 was for a long time the prestige language, used to write formal documents and
 35 to educate what we would now call the 'ruling class'" (Banfi 2012: 34 [transla-
 36 tion mine]). The difference between Latin and English is so significant, that
 37 it has been suggested that the term diglossia cannot be used to describe both
 38 situations. As a matter of fact, Calaresu (2011: 99) distinguishes three types of
 39 diglossia, and maintains that the language functional asymmetries in scientific
 40 communication (diglossia₃) are actually different from the differentiated use of

1 high (H) and low (L) varieties (diglossia₁) described in the original formulation
 2 of the notion (Ferguson 1959). In both cases the role of written texts is crucial,
 3 but diglossia₁ is linked to “the combined presence of writing and socially re-
 4 stricted literacy [...], while biliteracy becomes crucial in diglossia₃” (Calaresu
 5 2011: 100).

6 In the light of these observations, extreme caution is necessary when compar-
 7 ing different periods, and it is not possible to draw conclusions about possible
 8 future developments simply on the basis of the analysis of previous historical
 9 periods. Latin did not hinder the development of modern European languages,
 10 and actually became a dead language, but the evolution of the present socio-
 11 linguistic situation is not likely to be the same. In other words, it is difficult to
 12 predict the future.

13 What is happening in present time is however sufficiently clear. The motiva-
 14 tions given by PoliMi are in line with those emerging from a 2007 European
 15 survey (Wächter and Maiworm 2008). All over Europe the introduction of
 16 programmes in English has been a top-down process (Wächter and Maiworm
 17 2008), mainly addressed to foreigners (in 2007 only 35% of students in these
 18 programmes were of domestic origin [Wächter and Maiworm 2008: 67]), as the
 19 presence of foreign students is generally considered an indicator of quality, a
 20 value *per se*. Not differently, it can be assumed that PoliMi’s crucial aim is to
 21 enhance the profile of the institution, openly addressing foreign applicants in
 22 the first place, and regardless of the needs and the opinions of Italian students
 23 – who in public universities (and PoliMi is one) are also, as tax-payers, the main
 24 financial supporters of institutions charging fees far below the level of their
 25 private (Italian and foreign) counterparts. Adversaries often emphasize that uni-
 26 versity education is a public asset, and university policy should care not only for
 27 present advantages of individual institutions but also – and primarily – for the
 28 future of the whole community.

29 The crucial point, however, is the actual implementation of language policies.
 30 When examining how languages are used, difficulties and side-effects become
 31 evident. The analysis of PoliMi’s website shows that cultural specificities are
 32 inevitable and need to be taken into account. As a consequence, switching to
 33 another language implies the adoption of a different point of view and mentality.
 34 As pointed out by Maingueneau: “On ne peut dissocier les normes d’organisation
 35 des discours et les normes d’organisation des hommes” [discourse norms are
 36 tantamount to societal norms] (2002: 3). The texts we have examined provide
 37 evidence of the discrepancies between the different versions. It is not a mere
 38 problem of language competence: difficulties stem from the need to adapt con-
 39 tent to a new audience, leading sometimes to content loss or, in other cases,
 40 requiring further background information. More importantly, the use of academic

1 English is parallel to the adoption of the typical Anglo-Saxon approach to univer-
2 sity education and research.

3 These aspects are actually mentioned by supporters of PoliMi's decisions
4 (arguments 2 and 3 mentioned above), who base their reasoning on an implicit
5 premise, though, namely the intrinsic value of a typically Anglo-Saxon didactic
6 and scientific approach. Argument 1, on the other hand, is based on a premise
7 concerning facts, i.e. students can learn better English if English is the language
8 of teaching. In rhetorical terms, these statements are used as "objects of agree-
9 ment" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tytecha 1958), which do not need to be proved.
10 However, the arguments can be persuasive only if the audience accepts these
11 implicit premises. Actually, both the factual and the value premise are by no
12 means universal truths. The difficulties with the use of English by teachers are
13 themselves a poor predictor of success for students' proficiency. Nor is the ideol-
14 ogy of science (and of scientific education) promoted in the English-speaking
15 world the only possibility – and not necessarily the best.

16 In this respect, the dominance of the Anglo-Saxon approach, which in-
17 evitably weakens the local tradition of teaching and research, has been clearly
18 described by Bennet (2007). She uses a term coined in sociological studies to
19 describe it: epistemicide. In the international academia, the general principles
20 underlying English discourse must be followed, both in the organization of con-
21 tents and in style (Bennet 2007), thus transforming the logic of thought and the
22 rhetorical approach to communication. Epistemicide, however, has not been
23 committed – not yet. The debate illustrated in this paper shows that there are
24 still scholars, and laypeople who believe that total capitulation to the dic-
25 tatorship of English is not inevitable, and that there is still room for alternative
26 solutions.

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