

L'ANALISI  
LINGUISTICA E LETTERARIA

FACOLTÀ DI SCIENZE LINGUISTICHE E LETTERATURE STRANIERE  
UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA DEL SACRO CUORE

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SUPPLEMENTO

*Critical Issues in English –  
Medium Instruction at University*

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Edited by Jennifer Valcke, Amanda C. Murphy, Francesca Costa

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## METADISOURSE IN EMI LECTURES: REFLECTIONS ON A SMALL CORPUS OF SPOKEN ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

SUSANNA BROGGINI, AMANDA C. MURPHY\*

This paper describes a qualitative study on the use of metadiscourse in EMI university courses. It adopts Noble's<sup>1</sup> simplified and restricted classification model of metadiscourse markers, adapted from Ädel<sup>2</sup>, focuses on reflexive language and is applied to academic spoken discourse.

*Keywords:* Metadiscourse, discourse analysis, academic spoken discourse, corpus-based study, qualitative research

### Introduction

The spread of English as the working language in so many of the first world countries is undeniable. It generates the most diverse reactions, from enthusiasm to complete rejection, and raises both linguistic and political issues<sup>3</sup>. Within Europe, the use of English can be observed in many domains<sup>4</sup>, tertiary education being one: with the creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the need for an academic lingua franca to facilitate communication beyond national borders has contributed to the increased use of English as a teaching language across European universities. To enable institutions to be competitive and attract international students, English-medium course programs are now widely established at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels throughout Europe<sup>5</sup>.

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\*This paper was developed equally by both writers; Broggini is responsible for pages 81-88; Murphy for 75-80, 89-90.

<sup>1</sup> W. Noble, *Understanding Metadiscourse Use: Lessons from a 'Local' Corpus of Learner Academic Writing*, "Nordic Journal of English Studies", 2010, 9, pp. 145-169.

<sup>2</sup> A. Ädel, *The Use of Metadiscourse in Argumentative Writing by Advanced Learners and Native Speakers of English*, Ph.D. dissertation, Göteborg University, Sweden 2003.

<sup>3</sup> D. Crystal, *English as a Global Language*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2003.

<sup>4</sup> B. Björkman, *English as a lingua franca in higher education: implications for EAP*, "Ibérica", 22, 2011, pp. 79-100.

<sup>5</sup> M. Brenn-White – E. Faethe, *English-taught master's programs in Europe: A 2013 update*, Institute of International Education, 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Publications-and-Reports/IIE-Bookstore/English-Language-Masters-Briefing-Paper> (last accessed: October 19, 2017); A. Doiz – D. Lasagabaster – J. Sierra, *Globalisation, internationalisation, multilingualism and linguistic strains in higher education*, "Studies in Higher Education", 38, 2013, 9b, pp. 1407-1421; B. Wächter – F. Maiworm ed., *English-taught programmes in European higher education, the state of play in 2014*, Lemmens, Bonn 2014; A. M. Sandström – C. Neghina, *English-taught bachelor's programmes. Internationalising European higher education*,

This study of the use of English metadiscourse markers in lectures is part of a broader study of academics who teach their subject through the medium of English. It reflects interest in the ongoing educational debate about English as a medium of instruction in academic settings. In such a context, it appears both reasonable and relevant to examine the nature of this type of English and the way it is used in the university context. The study is borne out of the need to investigate the Italian situation in particular, where many tenured lecturers find it demanding to deliver their lectures in English<sup>6</sup>.

As a focus of the analysis, the spoken language of the Italian lecturers who use English as a medium of instruction is explored in terms of the role and function of metadiscourse markers in their lecture discourse. A mixed methods research methodology, following both a corpus-based and qualitative approach, is adopted. Traditionally studied in written discourse, metadiscourse is being increasingly examined in spoken language<sup>7</sup> and English-Medium Instruction (EMI) lectures represent an innovation on the research landscape. The novelty of focusing on the spoken academic discourse of non-native speakers responds to the practical, pedagogical needs of the current international Higher Education context. With the results of this study we intend to provide insights into the use and function of metadiscourse markers in the academic lectures delivered in English by non-native speakers.

## 2. Defining Metadiscourse

The term *metadiscourse*, suggested by Lyons<sup>8</sup> for language about language, has been extensively used to indicate various non-propositional elements that contribute to the organisation of text<sup>9</sup>. Although, as Mauranen<sup>10</sup> points out, the capacity of language to refer to itself has been debated by illustrious linguists, the concept of metadiscourse has recently become “a highly dynamic topic in text/discourse research” and one of the major subjects of discourse study<sup>11</sup>. Since the pioneering works by William Vande Kopple<sup>12</sup> and

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The European Association for International Education (EAIE), Amsterdam 2017, retrieved from <https://www.studyportals.com/press-releases/the-eaie-and-studyportals-partner-to-study-impact-of-english-taught-bachelors-in-europe/> (last accessed: October 19, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> C. Werther – L. Denver – C. Jensen – I. M. Mees, *Using English as a medium of instruction at university level in Denmark: the lecturer’s perspective*, “Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development”, 35, 2014, 5, pp. 443-462; J. Dearden – E. Macaro, *Higher education teachers’ attitudes towards English medium instruction: A three-country comparison*, “Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching”, 6, 2016, 3, pp. 455-486.

<sup>7</sup> A. Mauranen, *Discourse Reflexivity - A Discourse Universal? The Case of ELF*, “Nordic Journal of English Studies”, 9, 2010, 2, pp. 13-40; A. Ädel, *Just to give you kind of a map of where we are going: A Taxonomy of Metadiscourse in Spoken and Written Academic English*, “Nordic Journal of English Studies”, 9, 2010, 2, pp. 41-68.

<sup>8</sup> J. Lyons, *Semantics*, 1, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1977.

<sup>9</sup> A. Mauranen, *Cultural Differences in Academic Rhetoric: A Textlinguistic Study*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main 1993a, p. 112.

<sup>10</sup> A. Mauranen, *Discourse Reflexivity - A Discourse Universal? The Case of ELF*.

<sup>11</sup> A. Ädel, *Metadiscourse in L1 and L2*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia 2006, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> W. J. Vande Kopple, *Some exploratory discourse on metadiscourse*, “College Composition and Communication”, 36, 1985, pp. 63-94.

Avon Crismore<sup>13</sup>, this line of research has evolved to cover whatever is separate from the ‘primary’ discourse<sup>14</sup>, the ‘topical’<sup>15</sup> text matter, the ‘propositional content’<sup>16</sup>, or in terms of Halliday’s theory<sup>17</sup>, the ideational metafunction of language<sup>18</sup>.

Although all researchers agree on its core conceptualisation, considering it as “discourse about discourse”<sup>19</sup>, the principal topic of discussion has focused on the conceptual boundaries of the field and the possible methodological ways of identifying all forms of metadiscourse<sup>20</sup>. Two different traditions, with diverse definitions and distinct approaches<sup>21</sup>, have developed to study metadiscourse. The first so-called broad definition of metadiscourse is adopted based on “the ways speakers and writers project themselves into their discourse to signal their understandings of their material and their audience”<sup>22</sup>, and “the linguistic resources used to organize a discourse or the writer’s stance towards either its content or the reader”<sup>23</sup>. The second so-called narrow definition is chosen when researchers restrict the concept of metadiscourse to features that contribute to organizing the text as a text (i.e. the elements of discourse that signal its direction, purpose, and internal structure).

In the first definition, *textual interaction* is seen as central to the category, while *reflexivity* is recognised as the second cardinal characteristic<sup>24</sup>. According to these two delimitations, the first tradition is classified as “integrative”<sup>25</sup> or as “the interactive model”<sup>26</sup>, and the second as “reflexive”<sup>27</sup> or “the reflexive model”<sup>28</sup>. Besides the terminological labels assigned to the different research positions, two main approaches can be recognized as

<sup>13</sup> A. Crismore, *The rhetoric of textbooks: metadiscourse*, “Journal of Curriculum Studies”, 16, 1984, pp. 279-296; Ead., *Metadiscourse: what is it and how is it used in school and non-school science texts*, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign 1983.

<sup>14</sup> A. Crismore – R. Farnsworth, *Metadiscourse in popular and professional discourse*, in *The writing scholar: Studies in the language and conventions of academic discourse*, W. Nash ed., Sage, Newbury Park CA 1990.

<sup>15</sup> L. Lautamatti, *Observations on the development of the topic in simplified discourse*, in *Writing across Languages: Analysis of L2 text*, U. Connor – R. Kaplan ed., Addison-Wesley, Reading MA 1987.

<sup>16</sup> A. Mauranen, *Metatext in Finnish – English Economics texts*, “English for Specific Purposes”, 12, 1993b, 1, pp. 3-22.

<sup>17</sup> M. A. K. Halliday, *Spoken and Written Language*, Deakin University Press, Geelong, Vic 1985.

<sup>18</sup> A. Mauranen, *Discourse Reflexivity – A Discourse Universal? The Case of ELF*, p. 14.

<sup>19</sup> A. Ädel – A. Mauranen, *Metadiscourse: diverse and divided perspectives*, “Nordic Journal of English Studies”, 9, 2010, 2, pp. 1-11.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>21</sup> A. Mauranen, *Cultural Differences in Academic Rhetoric: A Textlinguistic Study*.

<sup>22</sup> K. Hyland, *Metadiscourse*, in *International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*, K. Tracy ed., Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford 2015, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> K. Hyland, *Disciplinary Discourses: Social Interactions in Academic Writing*, Longman, London 2000, p. 109.

<sup>24</sup> K. Hyland, *Metadiscourse: Mapping interactions in academic writing*, “Nordic Journal of English Studies”, 9, 2010, 2, pp. 125-143; A. Ädel – A. Mauranen, *Metadiscourse: diverse and divided perspectives*, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> A. Mauranen, *Cultural Differences in Academic Rhetoric: A Textlinguistic Study*.

<sup>26</sup> A. Ädel, *Just to give you kind of a map of where we are going: A Taxonomy of Metadiscourse in Spoken and Written Academic English*.

<sup>27</sup> See note 22.

<sup>28</sup> See note 23.

usually corresponding to the two traditions. Mauranen and Ädel refer to them respectively as the “thin” and the “thick” approach<sup>29</sup>, describing the former as more quantitatively oriented and the latter as qualitatively focused. Figure 1 illustrates these labels in a table. However, a single approach is rarely adopted and several studies combine both<sup>30</sup>.

Table 1. Approaches to studying metadiscourse

Broad Textual interaction Integrative; integrative model Thin Quantitatively oriented	Narrow Reflexivity Reflexive, reflexive model Thick Qualitatively oriented
---	--

Thus several metadiscourse classification systems have been proposed over time<sup>31</sup>, but one crucial distinction between systems lies in the consideration of evaluation as part of the concept of metadiscourse<sup>32</sup>. Evaluation concerns linguistic material that expresses the speaker’s attitude towards what is said, and according to Ädel<sup>33</sup>, it can be used as equivalent to ‘stance’, which expresses “personal feelings, attitudes, value judgements, or assessments”. The distinction between the broad and the narrow definitions lies in the inclusion or exclusion of evaluation in the concept of metadiscourse. In this respect, Ädel proposed a functional model based on four of Roman Jakobson’s<sup>34</sup> six functions of language, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Ädel’s model of metadiscourse (2003) including four Jakobsonian functions.

	<i>Function</i>	<i>Speech event component</i>	<i>Refers to...</i>
(a)	Metalinguistic	text/code	text or language itself
(b)	Expressive	writer	the writer persona
(c)	Directive	reader	the imagined reader
(d)	Referential	world/‘context’	entities in the ‘real world’

<sup>29</sup> A. Ädel – A. Mauranen, *Metadiscourse: diverse and divided perspectives*, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> W.J. Vande Kopple, *Some exploratory discourse on metadiscourse*; Id., *Metadiscourse and the recall of modality markers*, “Visible Language”, 22, 1988, 2/3, pp. 232-267; A. Crismore – R. Farnsworth, *Metadiscourse in popular and professional discourse*; K. Hyland, *Stance and engagement: a model of interaction in academic discourse*, “Discourse Studies”, 7, 2005, 2, pp. 173-192; A. Ädel, *The Use of Metadiscourse in Argumentative Writing by Advanced Learners and Native Speakers of English*; A. Ädel, *Metadiscourse in L1 and L2*; Ead., *Just to give you kind of a map of where we are going: A Taxonomy of Metadiscourse in Spoken and Written Academic English*.

<sup>32</sup> A. Ädel, *The Use of Metadiscourse in Argumentative Writing..*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>34</sup> R. Jakobson, *The Framework of Language*, University of Michigan, Michigan 1980.



Ädel observed that one or more of Jakobson's functions are prevalent in metadiscourse, with the metalinguistic function being crucial and indispensable. The resulting model of metadiscourse illustrates the functions with respect to each other (seen in Figure 1); it can also be used for studies on evaluation, since the model draws a distinction between evaluation and metadiscourse.

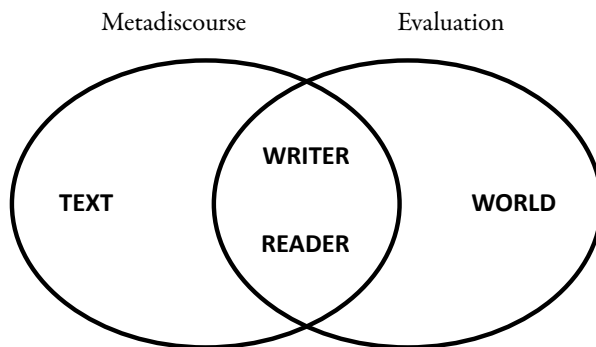


Figure 1. Overlap between metadiscourse and evaluation<sup>35</sup>.

The partial overlap between metadiscourse and evaluation, as illustrated in Figure 1, shows that in evaluation the metalinguistic function (code/text) is not activated, while the referential one (context) is stressed, and the expressive function is indispensable (writer). Ädel shows that in evaluation, the writer and the reader are not seen in relation to the current text but as “experiencers in the ‘real world’, about which they possess feelings and opinions”<sup>36</sup>. Although, as identified by Mauranen<sup>37</sup>, the most important aspect of metadiscourse is its reference to the current text or the writing process, according to Ädel the reader of a text is not the only necessary reference to be observed. For this reason, Ädel's reflexive model expands the notion of metadiscourse from the text to the writer of the text and the imagined reader as two other relevant components of the writing process. The distinguishing factor between metadiscourse and evaluation is precisely the reference to the writer<sup>38</sup>.

The definition of metadiscourse adopted in the present study is that of the narrow (thick) restricted model, adapted from Ädel<sup>39</sup> and proposed by Noble<sup>40</sup> in which self-reflexive language is the distinguishing feature of the type of metadiscourse investigated. In other words, metadiscourse here concerns the speaker's “commentary on the running text”<sup>41</sup> referring to “references made by the speaker about him- or herself, to the hearer

<sup>35</sup> A. Ädel, *The Use of Metadiscourse in Argumentative Writing...*, p. 90.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> A. Mauranen, *Cultural Differences in Academic Rhetoric...*

<sup>38</sup> A. Ädel, *The Use of Metadiscourse in Argumentative Writing...*, p. 76.

<sup>39</sup> A. Ädel, *Metadiscourse in L1 and L2*; Ead., *Just to give you kind of a map of where we are going...*

<sup>40</sup> W. Noble, *Understanding Metadiscourse Use: Lessons from a ‘Local’ Corpus of Learner Academic Writing*, “Nordic Journal of English Studies”, 9, 2010, 2, pp. 145-169.

<sup>41</sup> A. Ädel, *The Use of Metadiscourse in Argumentative Writing...*, p. 74.

or about the text at hand, but not about the world ‘outside’ the text”<sup>42</sup>. In our opinion, the adoption of the reflexive model enabled the setting of clear criteria for the identification of metadiscourse markers; for this reason it was considered a useful tool to clarify the ambiguity connected to the study of this area.

To summarise, reflexivity is a relative concept, since some parts of the text function as metatext only in relation to the rest of the text. A “metadiscourse marker” in the present study is understood as an element employed by the speaker to talk about or structure the text (*Firstly... This lesson will...*), to capture the attention of the audience (*I will talk about... as we have already seen*), or to reflect or comment on the text (*otherwise, however, next, consequently*).

### 3. Research questions

As Flowerdew observed, “knowledge of the linguistic/discoursal structure of lectures will be of value to content lecturers in potentially enabling them to structure their own lectures in an optimally effective way.”<sup>43</sup> This understanding of the important role of the structure in academic lectures becomes even more crucial in the case of lectures delivered in English as a lingua franca to international students. Indeed, the novelty of the investigation lies in the setting under scrutiny, which is that of academic spoken English when used as the medium of instruction by Italian lecturers.

Given the importance of metadiscourse markers, both for the lecturers in the way they deliver their lesson, and for the students in understanding the stages of the lesson, this study concentrates on the following specific questions:

- RQ1: Which metadiscourse markers are employed most frequently by Italian EMI lecturers?
- RQ2: Do the EMI lectures contain a similar amount of personal and impersonal metadiscourse?

(Personal metadiscourse expressions are self-mentions while impersonal metadiscursive expressions include connectives, frame markers, and code glosses.) Such a distinction might allow us to observe the means a lecturer chooses in attempting to lead the audience through the discourse and the way he or she presents him or herself to the audience<sup>44</sup>.

### 4. Method

The analysis of the role and function of metadiscourse markers in Italian EMI lecture discourse was carried out by means of a close, qualitative (or narrow and thick) analysis of elements found in a corpus of lectures. A list of the search terms selected for this study was

<sup>42</sup> W. Noble, *Understanding Metadiscoursal Use...*, p. 148.

<sup>43</sup> J. Flowerdew, *Academic Listening*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994, p. 8.

<sup>44</sup> A. Ädel, *Metadiscourse in L1 and L2*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia 2006, p. 14.

produced by drawing on important reference works, Quirk et al.<sup>45</sup>, Biber et al.<sup>46</sup>, Ädel<sup>47</sup> and Hyland<sup>48</sup>.

#### 4.1. Corpus-based research and study sample

Parallel to the rapid development of large corpus studies, a focus on the analysis of small textual corpora has also emerged. The corpus (illustrated in Table 3) consists of four lectures that were audio recorded and transcribed by hand. The lectures were delivered in the Business and Management and International Relations degree courses at a private university in Northern Italy, within Masters' programmes. Lectures in these subjects were chosen based on the international role and relevance of their topics, and it was agreed with each lecturer that a minimum of three academic hours<sup>49</sup> should be recorded. All the four lecturers were native speakers of Italian, three male and one female. Unofficially, we were informed that no evidence of a minimum level of English is required from teachers who volunteer or are asked to participate in these EMI programmes. In the case of the four professors taking part in this study, no English language certification of their level was provided to the University: an adequate level of English was simply self-certified by the lecturers themselves.

Study sample

<i>Lecturer and course level</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Length in words</i>	<i>Length of lecture in minutes</i>
native Italian – second level degree (laurea magistrale) in Economics	Financial accounting and analysis (advanced)	10,111	169
native Italian – master in Middle Eastern Studies	Regional Studies	16,169	192
native Italian – second level degree (laurea magistrale) in Economics	Change management	10,801	138
native Italian – second level degree (laurea magistrale) in Economics	Political and Public Economics	13,491	153

<sup>45</sup> R. Quirk – S. Greenbaum – G. Leech – J. Svartvik, *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, Longman, London 1985.

<sup>46</sup> D. Biber et al., *The Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*, Longman, London 1999, p. 966.

<sup>47</sup> A. Ädel, *Metadiscourse in L1 and L2*, p. 113-114.

<sup>48</sup> K. Hyland, *Metadiscourse: Exploring interaction in writing*, Continuum, London 2005.

<sup>49</sup> In the Italian university system, fifteen minutes of the hour are known as “the academic quarter of an hour” (quarto d’ora accademico). This indicates that a “teaching hour” is made of a forty-five minute session of student academic activity. The remaining 15 minutes give lecturers and students time to move from one classroom to another.

Total number of words	45,886
Average length of lecture in words	11,300
Average length of lecture in minutes	163

Table 3. Details of the corpus of EMI Lectures.

### 5. Analysis

For the purposes of this analysis, we have used a simplified classification model of metadiscourse markers in the written language proposed by Noble<sup>50</sup>, adapted from Ädel<sup>51</sup>, which focuses on explicit reflexive language. As suggested by Ädel's subsequent study<sup>52</sup>, the model has been adapted to analyse two macro-categories, namely personal and impersonal metadiscourse. The four subcategories, illustrated in Figure 2, are:

- a) Connectives  
Logical connectors: e.g. therefore, in addition, however
- b) Frame Markers  
Sequencing: e.g. first, second, then  
Label stages: e.g. finally, to conclude
- c) Code Glosses: e.g. call, define, mean, i.e.
- d) Self-mention: I, we, my, our

In order to examine the reflexive (metadiscourse) markers that normally occur in EMI lectures, the analysis was divided into three stages, textual-manual, computer, textual-manual. First of all, the transcriptions were read and recurrent markers were identified. These markers were subsequently sought in the text systematically by using the concordancer<sup>53</sup>, and the number of their occurrences was checked. Thirdly, each individual token was analysed within its linguistic context to ensure it played the assumed metadiscoursal role. In the third stage, the metadiscourse markers were divided into personal and impersonal markers and their frequency observed.

A combination of two types of textual analysis was chosen, since computational and manual methods together can provide a more complete description of how a lecture is delivered. However, although it could be argued that corpus linguistics methods offer the researcher a considerably higher degree of objectivity, we found

<sup>50</sup> W. Noble, *Understanding Metadiscoursal Use...*

<sup>51</sup> A. Ädel, *The Use of Metadiscourse in Argumentative Writing...*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>53</sup> The concordancing software used was AntConc 3.4.4 (Laurence Anthony, 2016).

that subjective researcher contribution is undoubtedly involved at almost every stage of the analysis, as has been demonstrated in the literature<sup>54</sup>.

## 6. Findings

Internal organisational patterns which structured information in the lecture corpus through the use of metadiscourse markers were analysed, with a focus on the categories of a) *connectives*, b) *framing*, c) *code glosses* and d) *self-mentions*. Overall, it was noted that in general non-native lecturers' spoken language does not present a wide range of types, with the most frequent type being self-mentions. The lecturers demonstrate significant use of a limited variety of connectors, and rarely use framing and code glosses. By contrast, the data show heavy reliance on self-mentions.

The six most frequent metadiscourse markers from the four categories were chosen for analysis, since we attempted to discover which metadiscourse markers are most used by EMI lecturers and, subsequently, if the markers are personal or impersonal. In this case, the data collection process was partially objective, since occurrences were found using the concordance, and partially subjective, since each occurrence was examined in context, and only the occurrences of metadiscourse were chosen for analysis.

### 6.1 Connectives

Relatively few connectives were found in the corpus. We expected that spoken language, constrained by the limitations established by short-term memory, would present a higher number of connectives as signs, 'prints' of the cognitive process "underlying the production process"<sup>55</sup>. The data overturns these expectations and seems to suggest that connectives are not used much in the English spoken by non-native academic lecturers, although they may be used more for formal or academic writing. Compared to previous studies<sup>56</sup>, where corpora showed heavy reliance on a range of connectives in writing, the present study reported minor use of connectives in speaking.

The most frequent connectives found in the EMI lecture corpus are reported in Table 4.

<sup>54</sup> P. Baker et al., *A useful methodological synergy? Combining critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics to examine discourses of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK press*, "Discourse Society", 19, 2008, 3, pp. 273-306.

<sup>55</sup> C. Soria, *Constraints on the use of connectives in discourse*, Contribution in the proceedings of the Istituto di Linguistica Computazionale "A. Zampolli", CNR, Available at: <http://www.ilc.cnr.it/it/content/pubblicazioni> (last accessed: March 30, 2017), p.6.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*; A. Ädel, *Metadiscourse in L1 and L2*; W. Noble, *Understanding Metadiscoursal Use...*

Table 4. Frequency of connectives in the lecture corpus  
(Total number of words of the corpus 45,886)

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Connectives</i>	<i>Occurrences per thousand words</i>
1.	But	201
2.	For example	34
3.	Instead	16
4.	However	15
5.	Therefore	11
6.	In any case	9

The marker but was by far the most frequently used and, in the case of one lecture, the only one employed. It is worth noting that while but expresses oppositional/contrastive relations between two events or pieces of information<sup>57</sup>, the second most frequently used connective, for example, belongs to the appositive category and consequently has to be looked at in relation to all the items that have gone before<sup>58</sup>. A lecturer's reliance on one connective, rather than being indicative of the quality of his/her spoken language, suggests familiarity with it and disregard for other kinds of connectives. Moreover, it is worth noting that the three connectors most heavily relied on in the four lectures of the EMI lecture corpus all belong to the contrastive type: but, instead and therefore. These connectives provide direction for the audience and are central in academic discourse as a means of assisting readers to understand how the writer links the argument<sup>59</sup>. In this sense, both items qualify as reflexive metadiscourse markers since they refer to the characteristics that explicitly direct the audience through the lecture and speaker-audience interaction. In using these connectives, the speaker reveals his/her intentions or extends the reference to the text to the audience. The main overall results show that the EMI lecture corpus relies on a small set of connectors in speech.

## 6.2 Frame markers

The entire category of frame markers was defined by Hyland as markers used to sequence parts of the text or order arguments in the text<sup>60</sup>. Within this category of metadiscourse markers, only two sub-groups were studied in this research, in compliance with Noble's

<sup>57</sup> A. Knott – C. Mellish, *A feature-based account of the relations signalled by sentence and clause connectives*, "Language and Speech", 39, 1996, pp. 143-183.

<sup>58</sup> R. Quirk – S. Greenbaum – G. Leech – J. Svartvik, *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, p. 637.

<sup>59</sup> K. Hyland, *Metadiscourse: Mapping interactions in academic writing*.

<sup>60</sup> K. Hyland, *Disciplinary interactions: Metadiscourse in L2 postgraduate writing*, "Journal of Second Language Writing", 13, pp. 133-151.

study<sup>61</sup>: sequencing (e.g. first, second, then) and stage labels (e.g. finally, to conclude). To compile a list of these metadiscourse markers, both Ädel<sup>62</sup> and Hyland<sup>63</sup> were consulted.

As for logical connectives, a few different frame markers were identified in the corpus, and the results also show a low frequency. Among the frame markers found are the classic framing sequencers, such as first, last, second, first of all and third, which are text-oriented, since they fulfil the function of announcing informational focus and then narrowing it down. It is significant to note that the data indicates greater reliance on frame markers in the case of the lecture on financial accounting and analysis, where a significant number of tables, lists and diagrams were used throughout the lecture. It seems reasonable to suggest that where graphical representations are more copious, frame markers are more frequently applied, their presence in the form of ordinal numbers being particularly notable.

### 6.3 Code glosses

Code glosses are used to explain or deepen what has just been said by the speaker, and in our case, the lecturer. These elaborations contribute to the production of a well-organized and audience-friendly discourse<sup>64</sup>. Code glosses provide signals for the appropriate interpretation of the elements in the discourse. Quirk et al.<sup>65</sup> categorised this category as 'style disjunct' where the majority of the examples are represented by adverbials (e.g. honestly, seriously). The results show that code glosses are infrequently used in the lecturer corpus. If we consider that this type of marker provides extra explanations through rephrasing, explaining or illustrating, it is interesting to observe their rare use by the four lecturers. According to Noble<sup>66</sup>, academic lectures should represent a moment of "topical development" where ideas are examined in depth, examples are given and complexity is elaborated. It is interesting to note that results showed a high frequency of participant-oriented metadiscourse, with the markers that is and called the most frequently used in the corpus. The function of these markers is in fact that of clarifying, i.e. specifying the meaning of textual material in order to avoid misinterpretation. Sometimes it seemed that the lecturer realized that something was missing from the current explanation. All in all, as with frame markers, the study of code glosses suggests that although monologic lectures are predominantly informative, they also favour some dialogism, depending on the way lecturers reconstruct experience and negotiate it with the students.

<sup>61</sup> W. Noble, *Understanding Metadiscoursal Use...*

<sup>62</sup> A. Ädel, *Metadiscourse in L1 and L2*.

<sup>63</sup> K. Hyland, *Metadiscourse: Exploring interaction in writing*.

<sup>64</sup> K. Hyland, *Applying a gloss: exemplifying and reformulating in academic discourse*, "Applied Linguistics", 28, pp. 266-285.

<sup>65</sup> R. Quirk – S. Greenbaum – G. Leech – J. Svartvik, *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, p. 615.

<sup>66</sup> W. Noble, *Understanding Metadiscoursal Use...*, p. 162.

#### 6.4 Self-mentions

Personal metadiscourse directly refers to the speaker and/or hearer of the current speech, through the use of pronouns (I, we and you and their possessive and oblique forms) and nouns (speaker or hearer)<sup>67</sup>. The most frequent self-mention markers found in the lecture corpus are reported in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Frequency of self-mention markers in the lecture corpus (Total number of words of the corpus 45,886)

	<i>Rate</i>	<i>Self-mentions</i>	<i>Total</i>
1.		We	382
2.		You	334
3.		I	224
4.		Us	39
5.		Our	34

The pronoun we was the most frequent self-mention marker in the corpus (382 occurrences) and the clearest indication of speaker presence. The metadiscoursal meaning of we was inclusive, as in ‘you and me’<sup>68</sup> since it refers to the writer and reader. The inclusive use of the first-person plural pronoun we evokes a sense of commonality and rapport between a speaker and his/her audience. By contrast, an exclusive we deliberately does not include the audience, it is not group cohesive, and for this reason its occurrences were excluded from this research.

Extract for inclusive *we*.

*ok (.) let me say two things first (.) we are going to close this course next week*

Extract for exclusive *we*.

*but on the other hand very often this is not the distribution you would expect (.) as I told you we are spending a lot of money not for the poor people (.) we are spending for the young pensions (.) that is in Italy (.) same in other countries (.)*

The extracts taken from the corpus appear to be particularly significant, since in English the distinction between inclusive and exclusive is not made through grammatically different forms of the pronoun. For this reason, context and additional wording (such as explicitly inclusive phrasing such as “we all” or “let’s”) play a crucial role in distinguishing the two forms.

The results show a lower incidence of the other first person plural pronoun analyzed in the corpus, us. While the subject pronoun we was used very frequently throughout the corpus, the object pronoun us is less frequent, being used only 39 times in total. Its function is explicitly participant-oriented and us was often used in the introduction and conclusion sections, i.e. when the speaker’s and audience’s positions tend to align by sharing the lecture’s common goals and final considerations. The pronoun us mostly occurred in participant-oriented cases, where the speaker’s attempt to invite the audience to share

<sup>67</sup> A. Ädel, *Metadiscourse in L1 and L2*, p. 47.

<sup>68</sup> W. Noble, *Understanding Metadiscoursal Use...*, p. 163.



similar lines of thought (it is important to understand that...) is made explicit<sup>69</sup>. Despite its low occurrence, it is significant to note that this personal pronoun often followed verbs such as *allow*, or was found within metadiscursive units such as *it is relevant for all of us*. The first person plural marker *our* was the sixth most frequent marker. Its frequency rate was very similar to that reported by *us*. However, there are relevant differences in the use of these self-mentions, since the word *our* is often used when the lecturer tries to align with the audience perspectives (*in our knowledge of...*). To sum up, a possible explanation for the use of the possessive adjective *our* seems to lie in the fact that in a spoken setting, participant-oriented functions allow the speaker to express a more persuasive presence. Overall, the results indicate that the subject pronoun *we*, the object pronoun *us* and the possessive adjective *our* are frequent in the corpus, although to varying degrees.

The pronoun *you* was the second most frequently used self-mention marker in the whole corpus, employed 334 times. Throughout the corpus, the pronoun *you* seemed to perform discourse 'management' purposes, contributing to the effective presentation and organisation of the discourse. *You* can indeed be considered as a warning to the audience every time something new is coming or needs to be given their full attention. Furthermore, it can also invite the audience to actively participate in the lecture. Undoubtedly, the use of the metadiscursive *you* adds conviviality to lectures and makes the speech less objective, sharing features of informal conversational events. It is also noticeable that the self-mention marker *you* is used for summary and recapitulation. In other words, *you* helps to focus students' attention on the content of the lectures. Examples of reformulation markers were also found in the corpus.

### 7. Overall comments and conclusion

The objectives of the present research project comprise the analysis of metadiscourse features, namely metadiscourse markers, and the way they are used in the genre of lecture within the spoken discourse of English-medium instruction in Italy.

The goal of this study was precisely to analyse the use of metadiscourse markers in a corpus (45,886 words), consisting of four lectures recorded and transcribed for the purpose of the present research. The primary aim was to observe and understand how non-native English lecturers express certain concepts and if they underuse or overuse specific elements when the lecture is delivered through the medium of English. An overall observation of the results obtained from the study of the corpus revealed that, as an academic lingua franca, English represents an interesting field for the study of aspects of discourse that do not rely on interlocutors sharing linguistic or cultural knowledge. This is not a contrastive study. Thus, no comparison is made with native speakers, since the focus is on the communicative efficiency of lingua franca speakers and the academic setting together, rather than on language contact (Mauranen 2010). The data seems to suggest discourse

<sup>69</sup> C. Pérez-Llantada, *The Discourse Functions of Metadiscourse in Published Academic Writing: Issues of Culture and Language*, "Nordic Journal of English Studies", 9, 2010, 2, pp. 41-68.

reflexivity as one of the explicitness strategies employed by Italian academics who deliver their lecture through the medium of English. This study demonstrates that analysing monologic lectures delivered in English as an academic lingua franca reveal important uses of metadiscourse that share features of informal conversational events, despite their formal and planned nature.

The main conclusion to be drawn from this research relates to the comparison between the use of personal and impersonal metadiscourse in the EMI lecture corpus, i.e. metadiscourse items that refer explicitly to the speaker and/or the audience and those in which the reference is only implicit<sup>70</sup>. The principal finding is that the number of personal metadiscourse tokens surpasses the impersonal counterpart. Surprisingly, the use of connectives, frame markers and code glosses was not frequent in the corpus in comparison to self-mentions. As regards connectives, the four lecturers of the present study seemed to generally underuse them and this is similar to the results of other studies, including those of Altenberg and Tapper<sup>71</sup>.

The discourse actors are highly present in the corpus and their visibility seems to confirm the general tendency observed. In other words, the four Italian EMI lecturers taking part in the study seemed to produce informal and personal discourses, since they seemed to be inclined to explicitly indicate their presence and so their awareness of the situation. As already mentioned, according to Samson<sup>72</sup>, the case of self-mentions is particularly significant since it indicates how a lecturer positions him/herself in the discourse and his/her perception of the relationship with both the audience and the discipline.

The use of the self-mention you seemed to contribute to the construction of a more convivial and subjective rather than formal and objective style of lecturing. All in all, the use of self-mentions seemed to confer a more conversational disposition to the monologic lecture. This is in line with the consideration of Dudley-Evans<sup>73</sup> on the conversational nature of lectures (as opposed to a speech), where the topic has been previously prepared, and some interaction with the students is allowed by lecturers. One of the four lectures could reasonably be considered interactive due to the periods dedicated to collective exercises. In general, in contrast to the reading style and the rhetorical style<sup>74</sup>, the lecturers forming the EMI lecture corpus presented a significant number of false starts and repetitions that, although beyond the scope of this dissertation, characterized the genre of lecture under examination as spontaneous and informal. The heavy reliance on the use of personal metadiscourse is in fact the main pattern found in the analysis. Lecturers explicitly indicate how they want their students to understand their ideas through the use of reflexive metadiscourse markers and they give the impression of facilitating an informal chat, rather than a more formal argumentation, by using personal metadiscourse, i.e. self-mention

<sup>70</sup> A. Ädel, *Metadiscourse in L1 and L2*, p. 13.

<sup>71</sup> B. Altenberg – M. Tapper, *The use of adverbial connectors in advanced Swedish learners' written English*.

<sup>72</sup> C. Samson, *Negotiating academic knowledge...*

<sup>73</sup> A. Dudley-Evans, *Genre analysis: an approach for text analysis for ESP*.

<sup>74</sup> B. Crawford Camiciottoli, *The language of business studies lectures*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam 2007, p. 218.

markers. In conclusion, it seems possible and appropriate to speak about “personalisation” to describe the academic English spoken by the four Italian lecturers under review.

### 8. Possible pedagogical implications

Previous studies on English as a lingua franca (ELF) agreed on the assumption that communicative effectiveness depends more on the ability to use metadiscursive strategies than on formal language skills, since native-speaker standards should not be used for ELF speakers<sup>75</sup>. Although more recent research exploring the EMI lecturers’ ability to convey their message effectively<sup>76</sup> showed a correlation between effectiveness in EMI settings and the presence of both pragmatic ability and language proficiency, metadiscourse plays a crucial role in the monologic setting of the university lecture. As seen throughout the present paper, reflexive metadiscourse is the umbrella term for the self-reflexive expressions used by the speaker/writer to negotiate meaning in a text. In other words, it is the writer/speaker’s explicit commentary on his/her own ongoing text. It marks the writer/speaker’s awareness of the current text as text or as language, of him/herself as writer/speaker, and of the potential reader/hearer as reader/hearer of this text. Therefore, the use of metadiscourse can help to guide the audience as well as to create space for interacting with it and it could be used as a persuasive strategy<sup>77</sup>. Discourse reflexivity seems to contribute to the fundamental uses of language, sharing experience and negotiating interaction (Mauranen 2010). To be more precise, lecturers explicitly indicate how they want their students to understand their ideas through the use of reflexive metadiscourse markers and they give the impression of facilitating an informal chat, rather than a more formal argumentation, by using personal metadiscourse, i.e. self-mention markers. The discrepancy between the use of personal and impersonal metadiscourse markers indicates that different cultural conventions – a sort of propensity – may exist in how the lecturers approach their relationship with the students when using English as the academic lingua franca. In this respect, thus, it would be interesting to include the teaching and learning of metadiscourse in teacher training courses to improve the quality of their lectures. As aptly pointed out by Denver et al.<sup>78</sup>, the challenge is to understand what can be done to enable the lecturers to use metadiscourse since its correct use depends on a considerable high level of language proficiency. Furthermore, the findings obtained from this study could be applied to the teaching and learning of the features of the lecture for both lecturers and students, as a

<sup>75</sup> B. Seidlhofer, *Research perspectives on teaching English as a lingua franca*, “Annual Review of Applied Linguistics”, 24, 2004, pp. 209-239; B. Björkman, *So you think you can ELF: English as a lingua franca as the medium of instruction*, “Hermes: Journal of Language and Communication Studies”, 45, 2010, pp. 77-96; J. Jenkins, *Accommodating (to) ELF in the international university*, “Journal of Pragmatics”, 43, 2011, pp. 926-936.

<sup>76</sup> C. Jensen – L. Denver – I. M. Mees – C. Werther, *Students’ attitudes to lecturers’ English in English-medium higher education in Denmark*, “Nordic Journal of English Studies”, 12, 2013, 1, pp. 87-112; Id., *Good enough to teach? A study of EMI Lecturers’ Language Skills and Metadiscourse*, “Moderna Språk”, 110, 2016, 2, pp. 46-72.

<sup>77</sup> A. Ädel, *Metadiscourse in L1 and L2*, pp. 197-198.

<sup>78</sup> L. Denver – C. Jensen – I. M. Mees – C. Werther, *Good enough to teach?...*

means of reinforcing good teaching practice and enhancing students' comprehension. The study of metadiscourse also focuses attention on the phraseological dimension of language and sheds light on the need to integrate form and meaning. Studies of metadiscourse at phrase and sentence level would also provide analysis of idiomatic style in spoken discourse which would be useful for lecturers and students alike.

Overall, the findings of this research can be useful in expanding the learning strategies employed at the tertiary level of instruction and our hope here is that they can improve the communicative competence in a language, in the case of this study English, by raising lecturers' awareness of their own role as a lecturer.

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