

“YEAH, YOU KNOW, THESE ARE THE MIRACLES OF TECHNOLOGY.” INTERACTIVITY IN THE COVID-19 ERT UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM

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Abstract

COVID-19 Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT, Karakaya, 2020) has been described as “an unprecedented challenge in university teaching” (Nuere & de Miguel, 2020), requiring lecturers to adapt or devise entirely new syllabi and testing methods in a very short period of time (Bryson & Andres, 2020; Major, 2020). This study investigates a relatively unexplored area of ERT, i.e. interactivity in the online and blended academic classroom, with specific reference to (1) positive and corrective feedback by the teacher; (2) student live feedback through open microphone; (3) face-saving and other repair strategies. We consider an intensive introductory course of English Language and Linguistics taught at the University of Bologna (Italy) by the author of this study, for a total of 30 hours. Following university policy and Italian special COVID-19 laws, 50% of the course was taught full-distance on Microsoft Teams, while 50% was administered “live,” with part of the audience connected online from home. Lessons were recorded, transcribed, and stored on the Sketch Engine (Kilgarrieff et al., 2014) to create a fully POS-tagged and lemmatized corpus in English. The results show that the level of interactivity is higher than it was the case prepandemically (Luporini, 2020), as students take and keep the floor on average 11.3 times for each 90 minutes lecture. Feedback is more positive than corrective, and repair strategies hinge on humour, sometimes eliciting spontaneous laughter in the “live” classroom. Although this may leave the analyst under the impression that students enjoyed this learning experience more than traditional ones, the data also show a high level of anxiety on the part of all participants, as testified by the remarkable frequency of hesitations, apologies, weak modals and pragmatic accidents.

Key words: corpus linguistics, COVID-19, e-learning, Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT), English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

1. Introduction

This paper deals with Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT), a new educational method that has arisen within the context of distance learning practices adopted worldwide as a containment strategy against the COVID-19 pandemic. We deal with specific aspects of ERT, from the disciplinary point of view, as our focus is on English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and from the point of view of the area of education we investigate, i.e. interactivity. Therefore, our research questions are: has ERT impacted on students-teachers interactivity in learning English as a foreign language in an academic setting? In what ways, and how much, has this interactivity changed during COVID-19? Is this only a challenge or also an opportunity? In other words, what is the "take-home," if any, of this emergency? Are there any aspects of ERT that we could treasure to improve academic English teaching and learning in a still hypothetical post-COVID era? If so, what are they?

To address these questions, we analyze data collected in academic year 2020-2021 (first semester) within an intensive introductory course of English Language and Linguistics, taught by the author of this study to first year students of the Bachelor's degree courses in Foreign Languages and Literatures and Languages, Cultures and Markets of Asia and Mediterranean Africa at the University of Bologna (Italy). The topic of the course is an introduction to M.A.K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), with particular reference to ideational and textual meanings, i.e. representation, relations of dependency and relations of cohesion, for a total of 30 instructional hours, administered in slots of 1.5 hour each, and taught in English. Following university policy and Italian special COVID-19 laws, the first half of the course (28 September – 16 October) was taught full-distance synchronically on Microsoft Teams, while the second part (21 October – 23 November) was administered in a blended "live" format, with part of the audience present in the physical classroom, and the rest connected online from home on Microsoft Teams.

The study was integrated into CO-METS (COmputer-MEdiated Teacher-Student interaction: Building a multiple-source corpus for Systemic Functional analysis and application), a pre-existing research project that the Department of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures (LILEC) of the University of Bologna initiated well before COVID. CO-METS was launched in 2013-2014 by the Department's Centre for Linguistic and Cultural Studies (CeSLiC) as a multi-year corpus assisted discourse analysis project investigating the impact of Computer Mediated Communication (henceforth, CMC) on students' grammatical and pragmatic skills in English (Fusari & Luporini, 2017a and 2017b). The ultimate aim of CO-METS is to devise a set of teaching strategies specifically suited to facilitate students-teachers interaction in academic settings. Prepandemically, CO-METS was mainly applied to emails and online forums used to complement interactivity in overcrowded courses in which direct contact between

teachers and students was particularly complicated (Fusari, 2016, p. 98; Fusari, 2021). Now, the focus has moved to distance and blended learning (Luporini, 2020), which has suddenly become, since the worldwide spread of COVID in late February 2020, the norm for all teaching in Italy and beyond.

As a matter of fact, ERT has been described as “an unprecedented challenge in university teaching” (Nuere & de Miguel, 2020), requiring lecturers to adapt or devise entirely new syllabi and testing methods in a very short period of time (Bryson & Andres, 2020; Major 2020), sometimes even overnight, in what was at first a very chaotic and abrupt passage from fully on-campus to full distance teaching, often without even having the opportunity to access any form of professional training (Jandrić, 2020). In our specific case, at the University of Bologna, training was provided immediately and intensively, online on Microsoft Teams and Zoom, at the same time as all the courses were moved online, in March 2020, on specially devised platforms based on the Moodle format. Specific teacher training for online exams and other forms of testing, including admission tests, both written and oral, was also provided internally by the Computer Service Department of the University (CeSiA), almost every day from March to June 2020. This allowed the university not to discontinue any of its services to students, not even for a limited period of time, but it undoubtedly entailed a high level of stress and extra work on the part of both technical and teaching staff.

Over the course of almost 2 years it has been in use in Italy at the time of writing, ERT is arguably no longer “viewed as a temporary solution to an immediate problem” (Karakaya, 2020, p. 296), but it has somehow been normalized, i.e. integrated into daily academic life, so much so that, in notices to students at our University, it is taken for granted that lectures and exams will be offered online, unless otherwise specified. Still, ERT-related stress levels actually play a very important role also for students’ communicative practices, as we shall see in the following sections of this paper.

2. Methods

For this study, an electronic corpus was built containing the full transcription of the whole course, recorded by Microsoft Stream within the computer infrastructure set up by CeSiA for ERT at the University of Bologna. The transcript includes all turns spoken by the teacher and her students, for a total of 104,837 words, fully lemmatized, POS-tagged and stored in Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al., 2014). Regrettably, the Microsoft Stream recording does not include interaction typed by students in Microsoft Team’s chat. This is a limit of the data in use, as university policy actually encourages students to communicate with the teacher and with each other by writing in the chat, instead of using their microphones, and also to keep their webcams and microphones off as much as possible, to increase bandwidth speed. Therefore, the majority of student-

initiated turns are actually likely to have occurred in the chat, for which, unfortunately, no recording is available.

After download, the Microsoft Stream output needed considerable editing, especially in the event of code-switching and code-mixing, which is quite frequent in the corpus, not only from students (whose English level is assessed at B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) but also from the teacher, who resorts to Italian largely as a bilingual accommodation strategy (Sachdev & Giles, 2006) to answer students who address her (an early bilingual Italian-English speaker who has spoken both languages from childhood) in Italian. Some manual annotation of contextual phenomena (e.g. laughing; tutors or other third parties entering the classroom) was also added to the text in the form of metadata.

First of all, to identify the main lexicogrammatical features, keyword lists were generated, using different reference corpora available on the Sketch Engine, from general (BNC, enTenTen20) to more specifically academic ones (Cambridge Academic English; British Academic Spoken English Corpus – BASE). Using a general corpus as a reference corpus elicits a set of keywords which are closely connected to the topic taught, i.e. Systemic Functional Linguistics (Figure 1).

reference corpus: English Web 2020 (enTenTen20)

Word	Word	Word	Word	Word
1 transitivity ...	11 bakeware ...	21 ah ...	31 attributive ...	41 homophoric ...
2 prepositional ...	12 verb ...	22 virtuale ...	32 epithet ...	42 oopt ...
3 ideational ...	13 milena ...	23 paratactic ...	33 interpersonal ...	43 cohesion ...
4 hypotactic ...	14 grammar ...	24 grammatical ...	34 non-finite ...	44 experiential ...
5 predicator ...	15 scone ...	25 locution ...	35 semiotic ...	45 syntagmatic ...
6 uh ...	16 è ...	26 giorgia ...	36 premodifier ...	46 embeddedness ...
7 deictic ...	17 clause ...	27 yeah ...	37 italiano ...	47 ok ...
8 noun ...	18 adjunct ...	28 hypotaxis ...	38 finite ...	48 pronoun ...
9 conflation ...	19 topical ...	29 qualifier ...	39 adverb ...	49 intonation ...
10 classifier ...	20 hamad ...	30 si ...	40 ellipsis ...	50 adjective ...

Figure 1. Keywords extracted from a general reference corpus (enTenTen20)

Some elements of interactivity (e.g. full pauses, vocatives, continuatives, evidence of code switching) are visible in Figure 1 as well, but they become clearer when a more specifically academic reference corpus, the British Academic Spoken English Corpus (henceforth, BASE), is used for reference,¹ as shown in Figure 2.

¹ Grateful acknowledgements go to Hilary Nesi for suggesting, while discussing this paper at the *Fifth international conference "Contemporary challenges in LSP teaching"* (Zagreb, 1-2 July 2021, held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic), that the Lectures partition be used, instead of the whole BASE corpus, to ensure better comparability.

reference corpus: British Academic Spoken English Corpus (BASE) subcorpus: Lectures

Word	Word	Word	Word	Word
1 ok ***	11 scone ***	21 hamad ***	31 locution ***	41 camilla ***
2 uh ***	12 predicator ***	22 email ***	32 epithet ***	42 ellipsis ***
3 clause ***	13 analyze ***	23 molly ***	33 virtuale ***	43 existential ***
4 adjunct ***	14 verb ***	24 bakeware ***	34 paratactic ***	44 anymore ***
5 prepositional ***	15 alright ***	25 nicole ***	35 butter ***	45 interpersonal ***
6 classifier ***	16 conflation ***	26 leeds ***	36 giorgia ***	46 unmarked ***
7 um ***	17 topical ***	27 adjective ***	37 an ***	47 infinitive ***
8 noun ***	18 deictic ***	28 intonation ***	38 qualifier ***	48 si ***
9 ideational ***	19 è ***	29 relational ***	39 francesca ***	49 teaspoon ***
10 hypotactic ***	20 milena ***	30 exclamation ***	40 italiano ***	50 hypotaxis ***

Figure 2. Keywords extracted from an academic English reference corpus (BASE)

Candidate markers of interactivity (Hyland, 2005, p. 49) were also identified via Concordance, Collocation and Wordsketch in Sketch Engine.

3. Results

Figure 2 shows that, in comparison with the lectures stored in the BASE corpus, these lectures are indeed more interactive, as illustrated by discourse markers (e.g. “alright”; “ok,” almost always used as a textual organizer, in the expression “ok, so”), codeswitching, and especially vocatives, occurring in on-record feedback to students’ answers asked during class.

Overall, students take the floor 170 times in this corpus, with an average of 11.3 turns for each 90 minutes lecture. However, their turns are typically very short, often including only one word (e.g. “yes,” “ok,” “thanks”), for a total of only 1,617 words, or 9.5 words for an average turn. The most frequent word students use is by far “sorry:” indeed, the word “sorry” appears in almost all these 170 turns, although sometimes it is a non-standard way of attracting the teacher’s attention, where standard English would have favoured the discourse marker “excuse me,” which is, by contrast, extremely rare (2 occurrences). Students also restrict their use of modals mainly to “can,” used both deontically and dynamically (e.g. “Sorry, I have a question, can I?”; “Yes, I can hear now”), again perhaps because of their lower language proficiency, but still conveying quite a weak modality in comparison with classroom discourse as evidenced in the BASE² corpus.

The teacher, on her part, favours the use of the modals “could” and “will” (in line with standard contemporary English, Leech, 2004) but, perhaps surprisingly, she uses “must”

² Here, a direct comparison with the BASE corpus is potentially problematic, because it mostly contains teachers’ talk rather than students’, but the difference in the frequency and range of modals is striking, with a much wider range of modals, especially strong ones, in the BASE corpus, as opposed to these lectures.

considerably more than it is the case in the BASE corpus (305.84 per million words, henceforth pmw, as against 230 pmw). This is interesting because, as noted by Leech et al. (2009, pp. 71-90), "must" has undergone a constant decline in standard English use at least since 1961. The reason for this decline is precisely that it is perceived as too strong a modal, especially in asymmetrical social settings, like the classroom, where it can convey an authoritarian attitude to students (Leech et al., 2009, p. 88). This disproportionate use of "must" by the teacher is quite possibly a compensation strategy for the low level of commitment shown by some other features of her speech, especially hesitations (the teacher uses as many as 750 full pauses and 1,190 textual organizers such as "ok," "alright," and "so"). Another factor at play could be the time it takes the teacher to solve quite an extensive series of technical and bureaucratic issues arising during class (47 turns), which potentially jeopardize her "competent face" (Bjørndal, 2020, p. 4), particularly crucial to save (Goffman, 1955) when big changes, like ERT, affect a whole profession.

This, together with some more specific episodes, to which we return in Section 4, reveals a high level of classroom stress, which tends to increase in the second part of the course (starting on 21 October), when blended teaching begins. At this point, there were effectively two groups of students attending the course at the same time, but not in the same place: most were actually connected from home, on Microsoft Teams, while only a few followed the lessons on campus. This set-up was in line with COVID-19 special laws in force in Italy, ensuring respect of interpersonal distance by restricting physical access to the Department only to students that had previously reserved a place. It was, however, also largely the result of self-selection, as most students decided to go on following the course online, often to avoid having to commute or to find accommodation in Bologna. This dual nature of the context (most of the class online, with a few students present in the classroom) creates an anomaly in the usual patterns adopted to conceptualize the prototypical features of dialogue, as summarized by Bazzanella (2002, p. 23) in Figure 3:

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- I. Interactivity**
 - 1. FACE-TO-FACE
 - 1.1. verbal code and aural channel
 - 1.2. temporal synchrony and special sharedness
 - 1.2.1. shared utterance context
 - 1.2.2. copresence of speakers and interlocutors
 - 2. TWO PEOPLE
 - 3. TURN-TAKING
 - 4. NEGOTIATION
 - II. Intentionality**
 - 1. EPISTEMIC STATES, ATTRIBUTION OF BELIEFS
 - 2. SHARED CODE AND GOAL

Figure 3. Prototypical features of dialogue (this English version in Bazzanella 2010, p. 30).

While this framework of conversation can, and indeed has, effectively been adapted for CMC (Pistoiesi, 2004), never before the emergence of ERT have two contexts, online and on-campus, coexisted within the same lesson. The presence of two groups of students, one online and one physically in front of the teacher, creates the constant need for the teacher to bridge the gap between the different contextual features students have available, depending on whether they are following the lesson from home or from campus, as can be seen in the following examples:

1. **Teacher:** Ehm. Yeah, and did did did the students online hear or do I need to summarize? Did you hear the question, students online?
Student: We don't.
Student: No, what was the question?
2. **Teacher:** Ok, so the question from Camilla. I'm summarizing it for students online because apparently *microfono ambientale*, you know, only works to a certain extent.
3. **Teacher:** The electronic one I I'm so sorry, especially for well, for all of you, but especially for students online. Because we're having this technical problem and I can't really get myself to solve it. Now it's green. But you can't see anything, right?
4. **Teacher:** Alright, let's see. First, if I have ah any questions here from online? I don't. Do I have any from the students in class?
Student: Yes.
5. **Teacher:** So I'll translate this for the students online. Diego just said, "when you *say*, you just say; when you *tell*, you have to tell someone something." Is that what you said, Diego? Did I translate correctly?

Besides this kind of "intralinguistic translation" (i.e. repeating chunks of the lesson that students online cannot hear due to technical obstacles), the other strategies that the teacher adopts quite regularly to minimize classroom stress are humour and positive Appraisal (Martin & White, 2005).

As concerns humour, it is often activated by hyperbole and reversal of expectations/evaluation of what usually happens in an academic classroom (Lovorn & Holaway, 2015). In the following example, the teacher explains the use of a new technological gadget, the ambient microphone (*microfono ambientale*), which has just been installed in the classroom to help students in class and online be audible to each other, but often fails to do so.

1. Students talking in class should normally be hearable to you through the *microfono ambientale*. Honestly, I don't know. Maybe if I I wouldn't touch it now, [students in class laugh] sorry, I could run the risk or but turning it around, but I just won't.

Metaphorically, the microphone is referred to by the teacher as if it was a living creature, and more specifically a wild animal, eliciting laughter in class, where students can also see the gestures, facial expressions, and mimics of the teacher. This humour, however, due to context mismatch, remains largely inaccessible to students following the lesson online.

In the second example, the teacher tries to rely on homophora, i.e. the shared cultural knowledge that Friday 13 brings back luck, and that knocking on wood is an apotropaic gesture for speakers of English, to involve the online class in situational humour.

2. Thanks. Yeah, sorry, yeah yeah, of course the students live have seen what happened. We had a tutor who came in to ask if the computer equipment is working. [laughs] Because it's Friday the 13th, I don't know, but for now we're fine, touching wood [knocks on the desk].

Finally, hyperbole is a typical strategy the teacher activates in the quite frequent event that technology breaks down completely, often because of unexpected errors in the recently installed domotic system the University has purchased to enable ERT to take place.

3. Uh-huh it got totally stuck is that what? Is that what's happening? Yeah, so I don't even have a whiteboard anymore. [students in class laugh] Yeah, you know that these are the miracles of technology.

As concerns Appraisal, i.e. the system of language "concerned with the interpersonal in language, with the subjective presence of writers/ speakers in texts as they adopt stances towards both the material they present and those with whom they communicate" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 1), positive attitude is overwhelmingly more frequent, as expressed by the adjectives shown in Figure 4.

Adjectives ("Epithets", or evaluative, according to Martin & White 2005)	#
good	146
sorry	113
little	78
important	57
big	45
right	45
clear	43
certain	37
real	36
long	36
easy	34
full	34
sure	33
beautiful	31

Figure 4. Evaluative adjectives, in order of frequency

Positive Appraisal overall conveys a relaxed atmosphere in which the teacher tends to reward students individually for their effort to participate actively (e.g. "Yeah. Yeah, brava Beatrice, è una puntina da disegno! Pin. Very good. You use it to pin things to yeah, billboards;" "Absolutely. Emma's just put it very nicely;" "A doctor' is a complement. Very good observation, Elisa, a very good observation"), and students seem to be happy about this, responding with laughter (in class) and emoticons (online). However, as we shall see in our conclusions, all that glitters is not gold.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The pass rate for this course has been excellent (302 students have taken the final exam at the time of writing, and almost all have passed), as has the average score (45.8% scored full marks). No data are available to make a direct comparison with overall exam results prior to the pandemic, but the teachers' general impression is that results have been better online than they used to be when the exam was administered live. As no web proctoring resources (i.e. software to detect online cheating, the best known of which is probably Respondus Monitor) was used, and invigilation was carried out only by human proctors asking the students to keep their webcam on and share their screen as needed, the possibility that at least some students cheated or resorted to other illicit resources during the exam cannot be ruled out. Although some studies show that web proctoring is effective in preventing cheating (Reisenwitz, 2020), its use has raised ethical concerns (Coghlan, Miller & Paterson, 2021), especially in terms of access (e.g.

not all students have electronic devices that allow face recognition and other features required for effective web proctoring), privacy (e.g. web proctoring software, by its own nature, "hacks" students' computers to control their activity remotely throughout the exam), accountability and trust (the choice to use a web proctoring system implies that the teachers do not trust their students to abide by the rules). For these reasons, the Department of Modern Languages of the University of Bologna has unanimously decided not to resort to computer-based web proctoring, but to rely exclusively on human proctoring, i.e. traditional invigilation carried out online.

Interactivity is also definitely higher than in on-campus teaching, with or without CMC aids (Luporini, 2020, p. 80). This, together with the more positive (56.5%) than corrective (43.5%) teacher feedback and the quite frequent spontaneous laughter (20 times) occurring in class, may leave the analyst under the impression that students enjoyed this learning experience more than traditional ones. As noted by Luporini (2020, pp. 79-80) in her investigation of the same course, one possible explanation for this higher degree of interactivity is the teacher's deliberate use of clues to stimulate discussion during class, especially flipped classroom methods. These methods, however, were not used throughout the course, but mostly during the first part, which took place entirely online, as it is extremely complicated to implement a flipped classroom approach when the physical context is not shared, i.e. when part of the students connect to the lesson online from home and part are physically in the classroom, as was the case during the second part of this course. Therefore, a more general explanation could be advanced for the higher degree of interactivity, i.e. "in class, probably due to the more formal and 'prescribed' environment characterising lectures, students may be reluctant to interrupt the teacher's flow of discourse. On Teams, by contrast, they tended to be more interactive (i.e. more students interacted more frequently), also during lectures centred on the teacher's explanation" (Luporini, 2020, p. 80). This is in line with prepandemic findings from CO-METS, which show that including CMC into the academic curriculum has the advantage of allowing more introvert students to "talk" in public without being seen by their peers (e.g. by writing their questions and comments in the chat), and getting more actively involved in the lesson. This, however, can also be quite easily considered to be "a kind of avoidance coping strategy, keeping students at bay from social stress in the here and now, but at the same time depriving them of the much richer interpersonal relation that can be built face-to-face" (Fusari, 2021, p. 372).

This may also explain why, in a specific survey performed within CO-METS (Luporini, 2020, p. 81), students also explicitly acknowledged "a sense of isolation and digital divide," not to mention a few very embarrassing pragmatic accidents that occurred during class, when some students following lessons from home inadvertently left their microphones on.

In the first transcription shown below, an online student suddenly blurts out a very offensive expression, i.e. “perché sei stupida” (“because you’re stupid”), which the teacher cannot ignore, as it has been heard very clearly by all students, both in class and online, as well as by Vincenzo, a graduate attending the lesson as an external participant observer collecting data for his Master’s degree dissertation.

Teacher: just one verb can be at the same time Finite and Predicator

Student (online): perché sei stupida

Teacher: Really? Uh.

Students (in class) laugh

Teacher: So. You, you weren’t talking to me, right?

Students (in class) laugh

Teacher: (in response to a question asked in the chat) Yes, I *am* recording the lesson.

[4 seconds pause]

Teacher: Vincenzo, you’re taking notes, aren’t you? (laughs) ‘Cause you’re going to write a special chapter of your thesis about this! (laughs) No, I’m just joking.

Students (in class) laugh

Student (in class): I think she was talking to a cat.

Teacher: Yeah, it was most probably a cat.

In the second pragmatic accident we report, a student who is following the lesson online from home picks up a phone call without realizing that the teacher and the other students can hear her through her active microphone.

Teacher: Ok so, I’ll summarize. We have a question asking if ideational experiential [speech inaudible due to phone ringing] at the clause level ... It’s not mine!

Students (in class) laugh

Teacher: or if it can also be done at the clause complex level. Is that the question?

Student (in class): Yes.

Teacher: And now let’s see an example (writes on whiteboard)

Student (online): Non mi prende il numero. Sì, no, della madre.

[*It won’t get me through that number. Yes, no, the mother’s.*]

Teacher: Whose mother? Please keep your microphone off.

Student (online): [inaudible, in Italian]

Teacher: Yes, s-shut your microphones, please. I mean it’s not

Student (online): Sì, certo, certo, sì sì sì ok, prego. Ciao ciao.

[*Yes, of course, of course, yes yes yes ok, you’re welcome. Bye bye.*]

Students (in class) laugh

Teacher: Ok. (writes in the chat) Please shut your microphone or we'll hear all your personal business.

These situations are emblematic of a contextual mismatch. While maintaining rapport with students by teaching them only full distance is arguably almost impossible, managing two groups of students, one online and one in the classroom, at the same time, and with the same kind of lectures and teaching tools, runs counter the prototypical order of dialogue as we know it, as seen in Figure 3 above. As the context is not shared by all participants, the interaction cannot help being characterized by a set of more or less embarrassing pragmatic accidents, which almost inevitably undermine the students' positive face, i.e. "the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61).

In conclusion, ERT has increased interactivity in the academic classroom, showing that even very crowded university courses that used to be taught in lecture theatres – and in which the teacher was both physically and metaphorically unapproachable –, can, and indeed should, entail an element of dialogic interaction. This interaction can effectively be achieved by integrating a set of computer-based aids into classroom teaching, and this can go on even when the COVID-19 pandemic is, as we all hope, only a distant memory. These aids, however, have to be shared by all students in order for them to participate fully, and as peers, in the discourse event that is the academic lecture. The simultaneous presence of online and offline students in the same class is actually very risky in terms of both face wants and digital divide. It may indeed lead, even unintentionally and despite our best endeavour not to leave anybody behind, to the segregation of students into class A (i.e. able to attend lessons in person, because of physical proximity to the University, freedom from family/ work commitments, access to vaccination, economic means to afford rented accommodation etc.) and class B (i.e. relegated to the role of "online students," due to a variety of obstacles to physical classroom access).

This is why we should not lose sight of the fact that the "E" in the acronym "ERT" means "emergency." By definition, an "emergency" is a temporary situation that sticks out (from Latin *ēmergere*, to come to the surface) from what would otherwise be an ordinary and desirable state of affairs. It is therefore of paramount importance that we treasure what good ERT has brought us in terms of interaction through technological tools, without surrendering to the illusion that this can ever be the "new normal."

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**“I MIRACOLI DELLA TECNOLOGIA.”
INTERATTIVITÀ NELLA DIDATTICA DI EMERGENZA
A LIVELLO UNIVERSITARIO**

La didattica di emergenza (DE) legata all'epidemia di COVID-19 (Karakaya, 2020) rappresenta “una sfida senza precedenti per la didattica universitaria” (Nuere & de Miguel, 2020), per far fronte alla quale i docenti sono stati chiamati in brevissimo tempo ad adattare, se non a riconfigurare completamente, i loro insegnamenti e le relative modalità di verifica (Bryson & Andres, 2020; Major, 2020). Questo contributo analizza un aspetto meno conosciuto della DE: l'interattività nella didattica a distanza e mista, con particolare riferimento a (1) feedback positivo e correttivo del docente; (2) feedback interattivo dello studente a microfono aperto; (3) strategie pragmatiche di riparazione attivate sia dal docente sia dagli studenti. Il corso esaminato è un modulo intensivo di 30 ore di Lingua e Linguistica inglese, tenuto dall'autrice di questo studio e rivolto agli studenti del primo anno di un corso di laurea triennale presso l'Università di Bologna. In linea con le decisioni assunte a livello di Ateneo e nel rispetto delle norme COVID, l'insegnamento è stato erogato al 50% a distanza su Microsoft Teams e al 50% in presenza, con una parte della classe collegata a distanza. Le lezioni, videoregistrate e trascritte, sono confluite in un corpus in lingua inglese su Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al., 2014), lemmatizzato e annotato per le parti del discorso. I risultati evidenziano un maggiore grado di interattività rispetto a quello riscontrato prima della pandemia (Luporini, 2020), tanto è vero che gli studenti prendono la parola in media ben 11,3 volte per ogni lezione di un'ora e mezza. Il feedback positivo predomina su quello correttivo e le strategie di riparazione si avvalgono in maniera preponderante di umorismo e ironia, talvolta anche strappando una risata agli studenti presenti in classe. Tuttavia, l'impressione che questa esperienza didattica sia qualitativamente migliore di quella tradizionale si scontra con l'evidenza dei dati relativi al grado di ansia espresso dai partecipanti attraverso la notevole frequenza di esitazioni, scuse, ripetizioni, false partenze, modali deboli e incidenti pragmatici.

Parole chiave: COVID-19, Didattica di Emergenza (DE), e-learning, inglese accademico, linguistica dei corpora