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ENGLISH GRAMMATICOGRAPHY FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN ITALY (1999-2011): PEDAGOGICAL GRAMMARS OR PEDAGOGICAL PRESENTATIONS OF LINGUISTIC THEORIES?

ABSTRACT

University grammars of English have been a prolific genre in many European academic contexts in the last hundred years, as a result of a long-standing tradition of scholarly research into English grammar, particularly in north-Western Europe. In Italian universities, the teaching of English language in faculties for language professionals for a long time boiled down to practical language classes while more academic courses focused exclusively on literary or philological topics. It was not until an overhaul of teaching and research areas was carried out at the turn of the last century that 'academic' English courses alongside practical language development classes were made a compulsory part of Modern Languages degrees in Italy. A limited number of Italian university grammars of English were published between 1999 and 2011. These have been scrutinized with a view to ascertaining what kind of role the authors of Italian university grammar books of English deemed their books might play in the newly established 'academic' English language curriculum and whether they considered themselves 'pedagogical' writers addressing an audience of advanced-level non-native learners of English. The analysis has shown that the emerging genre of Italian university grammars of English is more akin to pedagogical presentations of linguistic theories than fully-fledged pedagogical grammars of English.

1. ENGLISH GRAMMAR AS AN ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE IN EUROPE AND EUROPEAN GRAMMARIANS OF ENGLISH

English grammar has played a key role as an academic discipline in several European university contexts and has been a vibrant area of scholarly research at least for the last hundred years (see, for example, Bunt et al., 1987; Engler and Haas, 2000; Haas and Engler, 2008). It hardly needs mentioning that the beginnings of modern English (non-historical, descriptive) grammaticography (mainly in the shape of 'reference grammars') have been credited (e.g. F. Aarts, 1986; Linn, 2006; Crystal, 2017) to the work of European grammarians. Many of these 'continental' studies of English grammar had also been intended as pedagogical materials for non-native English speakers[1].

A special place in the output of continental English grammaticography in the latter half of the last century is held by R. W. Zandvoort's *Handbook of English Grammar.* This book was published in its original edition in Groningen in 1945 and has been acknowledged to be the first Dutch "textbook written specifically for students of English at university level" (F. Aarts, 1986: 375). Although written

[1] Poutsma claims in the preface to his multivolume grammar that his work is aimed at "continental, especially Dutch, students who have passed the elementary stage", Poutsma (1904-26), quoted in J. Aarts et al. (1997: 2).

in English, it provides bilingual examples (English/Dutch) and contrastive notes pitched at the Dutch-speaking reader. It was the most widely used textbook for university students of English in Dutch universities for at least thirty years (F. Aarts, 1986), until, that is, British-based linguists caught up and produced reference grammars of their own (e.g. Quirk et al., 1972). Not long after its publication, the *Handbook*'s influence spread to other European contexts (and beyond). A French edition of the original Dutch version came out in 1949, whereas an extremely popular 'international edition' (where bilingual examples had been taken out) was published by Longman in 1957. Japanese (1960) and American (1966) editions appeared in the following decade (Loonen, 2000). The reasons for the book's success, in Europe and beyond, lie in the fact that it seemed to cater perfectly for the needs of a university student audience, in an age where most linguistic works were either too narrowly focused on specific issues or too theoretically skewed to be of practical use to the (foreign) university student. As remarked by Mossé in the preface to the French edition (Zandvoort, 1949, quoted in Quirk, 1958: 449), "l'originalité de cet ouvrage ne reside pas dans quelque thèorie nouvelle ou revolutionnaire. M. Zandvoort ne l'a pas decrit pour demontrer une hypothèse linguistique. Non, son originalité, c'est son objectivité[2]". The book's strength was indeed the fact that its aim was to provide an up-to-date description of English (paying due attention to divided usage and register and geographical variation) and not simply use English grammar as a means to expound a linguistic theory. To do so – and this was by no means to everybody's taste (cf. Sledd's damning remark that the book was "too traditional", Sledd, 1958: 135) – Zandvoort mainly relied on Traditional Grammar, acknowledging as he did the influence of many grammarians of the Great Tradition, Kruisinga *in primis* (F. Aarts, 1986).

As an academic scholar with a keen interest in the pedagogical applications of his research, Zandvoort was the quintessential 'north-western European Anglicist' of the middle of last century, whose profile is drawn up in the preface to a volume dedicated to Flor Aarts:

> he (sic) has a broad and deep knowledge of the English language, especially English grammar. This knowledge is not limited to contemporary English, but also encompasses the earlier stages of the language, Old and Middle English. Secondly, he […] is well informed and appreciative of the developments in general linguistic theory and tries to incorporate these into his primary concern, the description of the English language. Coupled with these two characteristics, he possesses a deep sense of, and concern for the continuity of English studies (J. Aarts et al., 1997: 1).

To what extent have Italian 'Anglicists' followed in the footsteps of their north-western European colleagues in coping with the challenge of teaching English grammar to would-be language professionals? Did university grammars of English emerge in Italy as a self-standing genre towards the middle of the last century, as in other European countries, and if not, why?

[2] The originality of this book does not lie in a new or revolutionary linguistic theory. Mr Zandvoot did not write it to demostrate a linguistic hypothesis. No, its originality lies in its objectivity.

To answer these questions, it is essential to provide a (however brief) historical overview of the teaching of English in Italian universities.

2. English (language and grammar) as an academic discipline in Italian universities: a potted history.

Franco Marenco starts off his contribution to a volume on the history of European English Studies (Engler and Haas, 2000) by presenting a picture of the 'founding father' of Italian English Studies, Mario Praz, pointing out that "the concept of 'English' Praz entertained was that of a discipline based on the critical evaluation of the literary tradition, which he more than anybody else contributed to set up as the standard requirement for higher education" (Marenco, 2000: 53). Marenco's survey of the history of English studies in Italy goes on to describe the different approaches to literary criticism that occupied Italian scholars in the latter half of the 20th century. In stark contrast to the other national surveys in Engler and Haas's volume, which devote equal attention to English literature *and* English language teaching and research, Marenco's essay provides very little information about the history of teaching English language/grammar in Italian universities, beyond, that is, hinting at its 'Cinderella role' within the Italian academic context. The need to train English language professionals, particularly secondary school teachers, which has been acknowledged as the main driving force for the development of English studies in many European contexts (Engler, 2000; Haas, 2000), did not seeem to deserve a mention in Marenco's review. Other sources (e.g. Pellandra, 2004) confirm that in Italian universities studying modern foreign languages was long considered at best a practical enterprise devoid of cultural or formative value and certainly not on a par with the study of classical languages.

By the end of the 1930s, when the most pervasive overhaul of the Italian education system, the so-called *Riforma Gentile*[3], had been in full swing for over a decade, which viewed the study of classics and philosophy as the cornerstone of secondary school education, self-standing degrees in Modern Languages were only available in the lower status *Facoltà di Magistero* (Faculties of Education), which were aimed at preparing teachers of lower secondary schools, and a much more restricted number of higher education institutions specializing in Economics and Business (e.g. those in Venice and Naples) (Charnitzky, 1996; Pellandra, 2004). Despite being offered within faculties with what appeared to be a practical orientation (teacher training, international business communication), Modern Languages degrees mainly provided a literary preparation, focused in part on foreign literature but also including core courses in Italian literature, Latin and historical and philosophical subjects. The actual teaching of the modern foreign languages was offloaded on to native or near-

[3] *Riforma Gentile* was a major overhaul of the Italian education system carried out by the neo-idealistic philosopher Giovanni Gentile in 1923, during his tenure as Minister of Education during the Fascist regime.

native speaking *lettori* (language instructors), as what was viewed as a mere practical endeavour was deemed unworthy of the attention of the professors. The more prestigious *Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia* (Faculty of Arts), which, alongside the Law faculty, was traditionally meant as the training ground for the country's elites, did not get to have a dedicated course in Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures until 1957. Although twenty years had passed since the institution of the Languages degree within Faculties *of Magistero* the almost exclusively literary bias of the degree had hardly changed, if anything it had become more pronounced, as shown in the list of core courses (Table 1) which the newly created degree required students to follow (Law, 27 July 1957, n. 741, cf. also Prat Zagrebelsky, 1991c).

DEGREE IN MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES
CORE COURSES
Italian literature Latin literature Glottology One modern foreign language and literature (to be studied for four years) A second modern foreign language and literature (to be studied for two years) Romance (or Germanic or Slavonic or Finno-Ugric) philology Medieval History Modern History Modern Art History (or Medieval and Modern Art History) Geography

Table 1. Core courses for the degree in Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures (*Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia*, 1957 curriculum)

At the end of the four-year degree, students were required to write a dissertation on a topic of their choice related to the modern foreign language they were specializing in. As the decree for the institution of the degree in the University of Turin (which may be taken as representive of the whole Italian academic context) spells out, dissertations were required to focus on "un argomento della letteratura scelta come quadriennale o della filologia germanica o romanza, a seconda della lingua scelta[4]" (Presidential decree, 12 January 1958, n. 626). The latter option was by far the less trodden path. Pellandra (2004: 127), recalling her experience as a student in those times, comments:

"l'università […] mirava essenzialmente […] a creare letterati: la tesi con cui si coronavano i nostri studi richiedeva in genere di cimentarsi soltanto nella critica letteraria[5]".

Conspicuous by its absence in the profile that we have been building of Italian Modern Languages degrees in the first half of last century was any reference to the study of the modern languages (as opposed to their literatures) as academic subjects. Although course titles (cf. Table 1 above) and

[4] A topic of the literature chosen as a four-year course or Germanic or Romance philology, depending on the language of specialization.

[5] University […] essentially aimed […] to create literary scholars: the dissertations which completed our degrees as a rule required students to engage in literary criticism.

academic positions did refer to '(English/French etc.) language and literature' (Prat Zagrebelsky, 1991c), literature remained the almost exclusive focus of academic teaching and research. As positions (and promotions) in this field were handed out on the basis of literary research output, there was little incentive for scholarly investigations on the make-up, development and teaching of modern languages. Whatever non-literary research was carried out by Modern Languages academics appeared to focus on philological studies (e.g. Tagliavini, 1940), not unlike what had happened to English studies in other European contexts "in the first phase of its existence as an independent discipline" (Haas, 2000: 360).

The social and political upheavals of the end of the 1960s also had a major impact on the Italian higher education system. Entrance requirements to university courses, which had until then been based on the type of secondary school attended, were lifted. Anybody who had left secondary school was allowed to enter higher education. The age of 'mass higher education' had started. As a result of this 'liberalization process', university students were granted more freedom in tailoring their degrees to their own interests. The number of required core subjects was pared down and a wider range of elective courses started to be offered. Marenco (2000: 55) views this period as a watershed moment in the development of English studies in Italy:

> From the late Sixties foreign languages as academic subjects bore the brunt of an over-fast burgeoning of the undergraduate community, with English an easy leader in popularity – and given the open access of students to the universities, a predictable loser in quality and efficiency. Nevertheless, it may be argued that this expansion gave foreign languages, and English in particular, a strategic position as spearheads of innovation among the humanities. They were laying increasing emphasis on factors that had so far remained outside mainstream educational practices, such as linguistic performance, the communicative function, the formal aspects of writing and the nonwritten aspects of culture, the links with other disciplines, the theory of what one does professionally – all elements that the older generation of academics would have regarded, if at all, of secondary interest.

This surge in student numbers and heightened focus on "linguistic performance" certainly led to universities beefing up the 'practical' language component of Modern Languages degrees and hiring (mainly or exclusively on part-time, non-permanent contracts) a large number of *lettori,* many of whom, however, were still merely asked to play the role of "'naif' native informants", as Prat Zagrebelsky (1991b: XX) put it.

It was not until AIA (*Associazione Italiana di Anglistica*), the Italian Association of English Studies, was founded in 1977 that English language as an academic subject received a major boost. One of the short-term aims of the association, as stated at its founding conference, was to achieve "autonomia a tutti gli effetti dell'insegnamento e della ricerca linguistica, con pieno riconoscimento del suo statuto scientifico[6]" (Melchiori, 1978: 12). This was to go hand in hand with a reform of the

[6] Autonomy to all effects and purposes of linguistic teaching and research, with full recognition of its scientific status.

structure of existing degree courses in *Lingue e letterature straniere* (one of AIA's study groups led a session at the conference devoted to "An overhaul of the Modern Languages degree: recognition of the scientific value of foreign language teaching"). An early practical outcome of AIA's grassroots activities was a survey of English language teaching in Italian universities carried out by the association's 'Didactic Section' and whose findings were presented at AIA's Third Annual Conference (*The English Language at University. Guidelines, reflections, proposals*), which took place in Bari in 1980.

The survey involved 15 courses in Modern Languages and Literatures throughout Italy. At the end of the 1970s, the degree was offered by four different types of faculties: Education, Arts, Economics and Business and Foreign Languages and Literatures. That said, barring slight variations, the structure and organization of the degree were the same irrespective of which Faculty it was offered in. The results of the survey provide a telling picture of the situation of the teaching of and research in English language and linguistics in Italian universities a decade after the 'open access' reform. Among the subjects taught as either core or elective courses, the investigators noted a paucity of linguistic and applied linguistics subjects (Dodd, 1982). In particular, only two universities offered self-standing courses in English Language (as opposed to 'English language and literature'), three in History of English, four in General Linguistics and two in Applied Linguistics. On average, of the total class time allocated to English, 59% was devoted to 'practical language teaching', 35% to 'literature', 1% to 'culture' and a mere 5% to 'theoretical reflection on language'. As to the foci of final-degree dissertations, results showed that 92% of students chose to work on topics of 'literature/culture', while only 8% wrote dissertations about 'linguistics/didactics'. The findings about English language research are not as detailed. However partial, the picture which emerged was rather bleak. Out of 15 universities surveyed, 7 failed to provide any information about research on English language, 3 explicitly stated they did not carry out any research targeting linguistic topics. The few universities that did provide evidence of English language research appeared to restrict their investigations to the newly emerging fields of applied linguistics/TESOL, stylistics and discourse analysis. Apart from a few generic mentions of 'pedagogical grammar' as a research effort, which seemed to be more targeted at catering for the needs of secondary school students in tandem with the investigation of the possible applications of the 'communicative approach' (e.g. Prat Zagrebelsky, 1985), the study of English grammar from either a descriptive or a pedagogical (advanced university student-oriented) perspective appeared to be uncharted territory. Incidentally, this seems to be borne out by the other papers presented at AIA's third conference (Siciliani et al., 1982), which predominantly focus on general language teaching issues (teaching speaking, use of technologies, testing etc.). On the whole, the survey seemed to confirm that most linguistic efforts in Italian universities were aimed at

supplying basic English language tuition to the vastly increased number of Modern Languages students across Italian universities, many of whom (67.5%, according to the data gathered by Dodd and colleagues in 1982) still ranged between a false beginner and an intermediate level of proficiency at the outset of their degree.

In the 1980s, the need for an overhaul of the traditional literary-based structure of *Lingue e letterature straniere* degrees seemed to become more pressing. Various proposals (cf. Prat Zagrebelsky, 1991c) were drafted but what turned out to be the revamped Foreign Languages and Literatures degree in 1989 (Presidential decree, 3 February 1989) seemed to frustrate most expectations. The four-year degree was provided with three 'curricula' that did envisage a greater role for linguistic science (one of the curricula bore the title of 'linguistics/language didactics'). However, the issue of the autonomy of English language (and other modern languages) as an academic subject was not resolved. The core, four-year courses still bore the name of '(English') language and literature' with the literature professors being in charge of both aspects of the macrodiscipline. As Prat Zagrebelsky (1991c: 10) remarked, "in learning terms when a student is faced with a difficulty, we say that he or she may apply the strategy of avoidance. And this is exactly what has happened with the new curricula".

The 1990s saw two key conferences taking place in Turin and Brescia devoted respectively to English language teaching at university level (Prat Zagrebelsky, 1991a) and English grammar and its teaching (Porcelli, 1994). Only about 80 academics attended the Turin conference, which was a stark reminder of the still limited number of academic researchers in Italy who were involved in research about the English language. If a surge in academic positions in English language in Italian universities had taken place in the previous decade, these had been almost exclusively allocated to non-arts faculties, while English language/linguistics posts within faculties for language specialists could be counted "on the fingers of one hand", as Prat Zagrebelsky (1991c: 4) wryly remarked.

The budding English language research community in non-arts faculties led to the development of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) as an increasingly appealing research focus in the 1990s. The papers of the Turin conference reflect this trend. The two most popular strands were ESP and Language Centres. Of the papers in the General English and English Language Study and Research strands most concern the teaching of English (in particular, spoken and written skills) and its acquisition, but none tackles English grammar. Despite the fact that a widely agreed upon view bandied about in the conference was that "wide scope should be given to language awareness in the curriculum" (Rizzardi, 1991: 76), the prevailing idea seemed to be that this needed to focus on text and discourse issues, while morphosyntax did not appear to be worthy of more systematic theoretical reflection, let alone of research-based pedagogical applications in the form of grammaticography.

The Brescia conference, promisingly titled *La grammatica inglese e il suo insegnamento* (English grammar and its teaching), provided further evidence that in Italian academia English grammar was either being investigated from a pedagogical perspective, with an emphasis on language teaching methodology (e.g. teaching English grammar within a communicative language teaching approach, cf. Caimi Valentini, 1994 and Salvi, 1994), or, drawing mainly on Halliday's Systemic Functional grammar, as a tool for text analysis (cf. Ulrych, 1994). The only paper that provides what could represent a model for a pedagogical 'grammar' for advanced-level university students is focused on lexicological, not syntactic aspects (Iamartino, 1994).

Steps towards the long-awaited autonomy of English language in Italian universities continued apace throughout the last decade of the 20th century. A survey of the Italian Linguistics Society (*Bollettino SLI,* 1997/1) found that 18 universities (compared to only 3 at the end of the Eighties, cf. above) were offering a course in History of English as part of a degree in Foreign Languages and Literatures, 6 in English linguistics but only 1 (Pisa) had started to offer, on an experimental level, a self-standing English language course alongside English literature for each year of the degree in Foreign Languages and Literatures.

It was, however, not until the end of the decade that a review of 'scientific and disciplinary sectors'[7] (the teaching and research 'areas' in Italian universities to which each university teacher is 'affiliated') established the academic subject of 'English language and translation' as independent from 'English literature'[8]. The revamp of academic research areas, in tandem with the coming into force of the Bologna process in 2001, led to the development of academic courses in English language as mandatory requirement for each year of the new three-year BA Foreign Languages and Literatures degree.

3. English grammars for Italian university students: a genre in its infancy

The brief review we have carried out above of the troubled history of English language as an academic discipline in Italian universities has shown that English language studies in Italy have followed a different path from many other European academic contexts. As self-standing English language courses taught by academics in Italy in the second half of the 20th century were almost exclusively offered in faculties of Economics, Political Science or Medicine, even those academics that viewed themselves as 'English language experts' seeemed to orient their research and teaching efforts towards areas of English lexicology, discourse and ESP (e.g. Taylor Tosello, 1990, 1992) rather than

[7] Ministerial Decree dated 4th October 2000.

[8] The scientific and disciplinary sector of 'English language and traslation' was meant to cater for scholars of English language and linguistics as well as academics teaching Italian/English translation and interpreting in specialized Higher Schools of Translation and Interpreting within university institutions.

English grammar. It was not until the end of the century, when the 'English language and translation' sector was officially recognised and mandatorily included in all curricula of Foreign Languages and Literatures degrees, that English grammars addressed specifically to university students started to surface – albeit in a limited number compared to other European contexts and to underwhelming commercial success[9]. Table 2 below lists grammar books for Italian university students of English written by academics working in Italian universities between 1999 and 2011[10].

Title	**Author(s)**	**Year of Publication**
Elementi di Grammatica Enunciativa della Lingua Inglese	G. Gagliardelli	1999
Strumenti di Analisi per la Lingua Inglese	G. Giusti	2003
Functional Grammar. An Introduction for the EFL student *Exploring Functional Grammar*	M. Freddi M. Lipson	2004 2006
Linking Wor(l)ds. Contrastive Analysis and Translation	S. Laviosa	2005
English Verbs. A Practical Grammar. *Exploring the English Noun Phrase.*	J. Falinski	2008/2011

Table 2. English grammars for Italian university students (1999-2011)

I will make a brief remark about the authors and the linguistic frameworks adopted in the books. All except for Giuliana Giusti (who is a professor of Linguistics) are or were professors or researchers of the newly created sector of English language and translation. Most of the titles hint at specific linguistic frameworks featured in the books – Utterer-centred Grammar (Gagliardelli, 1999), Systemic Functional Grammar (Freddi, 2004; Lipson, 2006), Contrastive Analysis and Translation Studies (Laviosa, 2005). Giusti's grammar is based on the Generative Grammar framework while Falinski's books seem to draw upon the English descriptive grammar tradition (e.g. Quirk et al., 1985).

On the basis of the corpus of university grammar books listed in Table 2, the rest of the article will attempt to establish the extent to which this 'new' genre has actually addressed the needs of would-be English language professionals, in the same way that the rich crop of European university grammars of English have done for nearly a century. I shall hence seek to answer the following two

[9] British-produced reference grammars (e.g. Quirk and Greenbaum, 1973; Greenbaum and Quirk, 1991) were sometimes used in the newly estabished 'academic' English courses (Prat Zagrebelsky, personal communication).
[10] An extra grammar book for Italian students, *Grammatica Ipertestuale della Lingua Inglese* (Porcelli, 2002), has not been included in the present corpus as it reproduces – in 'hypertextual form' – the contents of a much earlier work (Porcelli and Sala, 1980) which identifies itself as a language teaching textbook (*Manuale della Lingua inglese*) rather than a grammar book.

main questions by scrutinizing the paratexts (contents pages, introductions, back covers etc.) of each book in the corpus:

1. Given the novelty of English language as an academic subject in Italy at the beginning of the 20th century, its epistemological status needed to be somehow established. To what extent and by what means is this done in the books in the corpus? What kind of role is meant to be played by the 'English grammar book' in the restyled curriculum of the Foreign Languages and Literatures degree? How is 'grammar' as an academic subject construed?

2. To what extent do the authors view themselves as 'pedagogical' writers who aim their grammars at an audience of professional users of the language who are nonetheless also *language learners*? How are the needs of this specific group of addressees catered for? To what extent is the addressees' L1 (Italian) said to be taken account of in the way the selection of contents and their presentation was carried out?

3.1. English grammar study as preparation for metalinguistic analysis

As seen above, a European-wide university reform kickstarted a number of changes in Italian academia at the turn of the last century, including the long-awaited establishment of English language as a self-standing teaching and research area. Even so, very few explicit references to the role of English language studies in the new curricula of Foreign Languages and Literatures degrees are found in the corpus of university grammar books published in Italy after 1999. The most vocal author is Lipson. In an article illustrating the curricular 'experiment' carried out at the University of Bologna which led to the publication of her grammar book, Lipson describes the challenges of creating a pedagogical syllabus for the newly established courses held by 'academics' and meant to run alongside *lettorati*, "the many hours of traditional EFL practice with mother-tongue speakers", aiming at "the development of the four language abilities by levels, as set out by the Council of Europe" (Lipson, 2002: 371). This dual focus for English language courses is also hinted at in the following quotation from Falinski's (2008: 19) book introduction, which discusses the role of English grammar study:

> the study of grammar is a moment of reflection, putting it all together, not only using the language but putting it into focus, seeing how it works, thinking about it.

What are the aims of this new 'academic' strand in Foreign Languages and Literatures degrees, according to the authors of Italian university grammar books of English? An English grammar course is viewed as a way to have students turn their implicit knowledge of the language into explicit (e.g. Giusti, 2003; Falinski, 2008). However, across the corpus there are also several attempts to justify

the academic study of English grammar not as worthwhile in itself but as a route to developing general metalinguistic skills. Giusti (2003: xi), for example, points out that her book

> fornisce […] una metodologia di analisi di fenomeni linguistici che non riguardano comunque solo l'inglese, ma in generale riguardano la facoltà umana del linguaggio, e dunque tutte le lingue[11].

Gagliardelli (1999: 19) also remarks that he is aiming at fostering readers' acquisition of overall language awareness through the combined study of the grammar of English and their L1:

> the ultimate aim of the study of a foreign language ought to enable one not only to master it, but also to lead one – through a more profound understanding of one's native language – to approach the comprehension of language.

Likewise, Lipson (2006) mentions the development of higher level language awareness skills as the primary aim of her book, and the adoption of the Hallidayan linguistic framework is said to enable students to appreciate how grammar study can be applied to language analysis in contexts connected to their future professional lives (which are thought to be ESP-related rather than restricted to the more traditional outlet, language teaching). The type of language awareness envisaged in the book is meant to provide students with "explicit critical pedagogy that would make the workings of language as visible, and as attainable as possible" and "empower them through an increasing awareness of the functions of the English language in a variety of more, but also less, dominant sociocultural contexts" (Miller, 2006: 8). On the whole, developing explicit knowledge and metalinguistic skills is represented as requiring intellectual effort (as Gagliardelli, 1999: 51 puts it, it comes with "un certo prezzo intellettuale[12]" to pay) and, more importantly, the learning of new metalinguistic terminology (e.g. Laviosa, 2005: 1, "Contrastive analysis and the study of translation require the use of specific terminology") stemming from the linguistic frameworks adopted in each book.

In putting forward a new theory-inspired approach to grammar study, Italian university grammars of English often refer to mainstream grammatical 'theory' in order to distance themselves from it. Mainstream grammar is, depending on the framework espoused by each book, portrayed as 'prescriptive' (Giusti, 2003), 'descriptive' (but hardly explanatory) (Gagliardelli, 1999), and 'formalistic', as shown in the following quotation which opposes 'traditional' to 'functional' approaches to grammar:

> Traditional grammar describes the grammar of standard English by comparing it with Latin. As such it is prescriptive. […] It teaches parts of speech and correct usage and focuses on rules for producing correct sentences. Formal grammar describes language as a set of rules which allow or disallow certain sentence

[11] Provides a methodology of analysis of language phenomena which do not only concern English, but more generally the language faculty, hence all languages.
[12] A certain intellectual price.

> structures. In contrast, Functional Grammar is concerned with how structures construct meaning and describes language in actual use and focuses on texts and their context. (Lipson, 2002: 19)

It is its supposed concern with imposing a linguistic 'norm' that is thought to render mainstream grammar unsuitable for the modern study of English grammar. Hence, Giusti (2003: xii) opposes her Generative Grammar-inspired aim of making the ideal native speaker's unconscious knowledge explicit to prescriptive grammar's injunctions aiming at altering "quella competenza acquisita in modo inconsapevole[13]". Gagliardelli (1999: 9-10), on the other hand, pinpoints the lack of 'justifiability' and flexibility as the main problem with mainstream grammar norms ("norma linguistica come una sorta di tracciato obbligato che inibisce o riduce i gradi di libertà dell'enunciatore[14]").

3.2 'We're not pedagogical grammar writers'

Aiming their output at an audience of non-native English speakers, albeit would-be language professionals, the authors of Italian university grammar books of English may be expected to view their books as inherently 'pedagogical' resources, following in the footsteps of Zandvoort's trailblazing grammar, as has also been done by many recent European instantiations of the genre (e.g. Declerck, 1991; Depraetere and Langford, 2011). This is not what emerges from the analysis of the paratexts of most of the books in the corpus. "E dunque non è una grammatica pedagogica della lingua inglese a uso di studenti italiani[15]", states Giusti (2003: xi) at the very beginning of her book's introduction. "Questa non è una grammatica pedagogica, se non nella misura in cui può aiutare lo studente dell'inglese a scoprire le regolarità profonde di questa lingua[16]", points out Gagliardelli (1999: 10). How do the authors of Italian university grammar books of English actually conceive of the notion of 'pedagogical grammar'? To back up her claim that her book is not a "pedagogical grammar book", Giusti (2003: xi) argues that it doesn't feature "regole grammaticali normative", o "liste più o meno esaustive di classi di parole da memorizzare" o "attività di esercitazione e verifica" o "una trattazione esaustiva della grammatica di questa lingua[17]". Giusti's portrayal of pedagogical grammar books seems more fitting of old grammar translation textbooks, which represented the main or only teaching resource for language instruction at university level in Italy for many years. Despite not mentioning the term 'pedagogical grammar', Falinski (2008: 19), in the most recent book in the corpus, posits a distinction between a "theoretical/descriptive" approach to grammar and a "practical

[13] That competence acquired unconciously.
[14] Linguistic norm as a sort of prescribed route which inhibits or reduces the degree of freedom of the utterer.
[15] Hence this is not an English pedagogical grammar for Italian students.
[16] This is not a pedagogical grammar except to the extent it may help students of English to discover the deepest regularities of this language.
[17] Normative grammar rules, more or less exhaustive lists of classes of words to memorize, practice and assessment tasks, an exhaustive presentation of the grammar of this language.

one" and claims that the two are combined in his grammar book. The 'practical' – perhaps more aptly named 'pedagogical' – approach Falinski hints at appears to boil down to devising a set of exercises to accompany a traditional presentation of grammar descriptions and examples.

The authors of Italian university grammars of English couch explicit references to pedagogical grammar in disparaging terms or forgo them altogether. Nonetheless, they claim to tap their long-standing teaching experience (e.g. Falinski, 2008: 19, "It is a way of approaching English verbs that has been found to be effective over many years of teaching") and knowledge of their prospective readers' language learning background to better cater for the needs of their addressees. In particular, Giusti (2003: 274) states that her selection of Generative Grammar research findings was driven by Italian students' language learning needs:

> Il proposito di questo lavoro è presentare in modo accessibile ai non specialisti alcuni aspetti di quella ricerca che sono più correlati con l'apprendimento di una lingua straniera (l'inglese) da parte di apprendenti italiani[18].

By contrast, Lipson's (2006: back cover) language-learner oriented approach is said to have been implemented in the way theoretical descriptions have been couched – using a simple language which tries to reflect "i livelli di competenza dell'inglese di studenti non madrelingua[19]". Laviosa (2005: 1) considers learners' needs as projected in a specific (translation-oriented) professional future and states that "translation tasks" were designed in such a way as to enable learners to "apply some of the translation procedures commonly used by professional translators to solve problems of non-equivalence at the level of lexis or syntax".

As a way of responding to the needs of their addressees, all the Italian university grammar books in the corpus (barring Freddi's and Lipson's books) claim to take a 'comparative' approach (between English and the addressees' L1, Italian). According to what is stated in the paratexts, this is implemented in a more or less overt fashion and only at the level of content selection or both at the level of content selection and of actual grammaticographical description. At one end of the cline lies Falinski's grammar. The author states that his book is "Italian-language specific" in that "grammars that target all languages rarely cover the grammar of any one in particular". However, the Italian-language bias is hardly visible in the actual descriptions, but has led the author to lay more emphasis in "choice of topics, explanations, examples and exercises" "on areas of the verb that give Italian students most trouble" (Falinski, 2008: 20). At the other end of the cline, Gagliardelli (1999) even devotes parts of his book to the detailed presentation of aspects of the Italian grammatical system.

[18] The aim of this work is to present in an accessible way to non-specialists some aspects of that research which are more relevant to the learning of a foreign language (English) by Italian learners.
[19] The levels of English proficiency of non-native students.

For example, chapter 7 "Il sistema dei tempi dell'inglese[20]" is preceded by a chapter devoted to "Il sistema dei tempi dell'italiano[21]". Laviosa's book, as might be expected from a textbook that views grammar from the perspective of Contrastive Analysis and Translation Studies, highlights 'contrastive' aspects of English and Italian, featuring in each chapter "a discussion of the translation problems that may arise when there are differences across English and Italian at various levels of contrastive analysis" (Laviosa, 2005: 1). Finally, following from its Generative Grammar orientation, Giusti's grammar book claims to implement a comparative approach which "valorizza le proprietà comuni alle lingue, *evitando di enfatizzarne le differenze*, e costruendo *consapevolmente* la conoscenza di una lingua straniera sulla conoscenza della lingua madre dell'apprendente[22]" (Giusti, 2003: xi). Highlighting what languages have in common, rather than where their superficial differences lie, is thought to be instrumental to developing general language awareness and is said to "facilitare la riflessione, la memorizzazione, l'automatizzazione, dunque l'apprendimento di una o più lingue straniere spesso studiate in contemporanea sia a scuola sia a livello universitario[23]" (Giusti, 2003: xi-xii).

4. PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSITY GRAMMARS OR PEDAGOGICAL PRESENTATIONS OF LINGUISTIC THEORIES?

Italian university grammars of English surfaced at the end of the 20th century in an academic context that differed a great deal from the European contexts which throughout the century had been nurturing the rich tradition of the university grammaticography of English. Up until the implementation of the Bologna process the teaching of the English language in Italian university courses for would-be language professionals had almost exclusively been carried out by language instructors and boiled down to 'practical' language classes, not dissimilar from the teaching students received in secondary schools. With the requirement that each year of the degree in Foreign Languages and Literatures offer an 'academic' English language course alongside *lettorati* (practical language courses) came the need to develop a 'dual' syllabus and to search for suitable teaching materials. In the period immediately following the university reform (1999-2011), a limited number of Italian university grammars of English were produced. These books have been scrutinized in order to identify to what extent the status of the newly established 'academic' English course, as well as the home-grown English grammar book, within the revamped Foreign Languages and Literatures curricula is discussed, and

[20] The English tense system.
[21] The Italian tense system.
[22] Values common properties among languages, avoding emphasizing differences and consciously building the knowledge of a foreign language from the learner's knowledge of their native language.
[23] Foster reflection, memorization, automatization and hence the learning of one or more foreign languages often studied at the same time either at school or at university.

whether authors view themselves as 'pedagogical' writers aiming at an audience of advanced-level university students of English.

Contrary to what might have been expected, the analysis has pinpointed few explicit references across the corpus to the changes in English language curricula that occurred in the Italian academic context and the newly emerging need to establish a role for a more theoretical, linguistics-inspired approach to teaching English in Italian universities. On the other hand, references are often made (to mark a distance from them) to grammaticological theories and teaching approaches (prescriptivism, formalism, descriptive 'rules of thumb') which have played a role in teaching English as a native language or in secondary school teaching of English as a Foreign Language. Despite acknowledging that, differently from traditional *lettorati*, an 'academic' study of English must be aimed at the development of a conscious, explicit knowledge of the language, many of the Italian university grammar books published between 1999 and 2011 appear to view English grammar study not as worthwhile in itself but mainly as a way to acquire general language awareness and metalinguistic skills. This is thought to be facilitated by the adoption – more or less overtly acknowledged – of a specific linguistic framework by each of the books in the corpus.

The authors of Italian university grammars of English seem to run into difficulties when attempting to define the genre of their books. This is often done by stating what they are *not* – and the association with pedagogical grammar is to a greater or lesser extent rejected. The notion of a 'pedagogical grammar book' is construed as being instantiated in grammar translation textbooks or mechanical drill practice books, while no reference is made to the output of European grammarians writing for university students. The specific learning needs of Italian students are, nonetheless, routinely said to be at the forefront of the authors' minds. A learner-friendly orientation is claimed to have been implemented by taking a 'comparative' approach which has led the authors to single out, within the linguistic frameworks adopted in their books, those topics thought to be of greater relevance to Italian students. However, the comparative outlook either stops at the level of content selection, is carried out through a simple juxtaposition of Italian and English grammar topics or highlights superficial differences in the lexicogrammar of the two languages. More generally, learners' needs appear to have been catered for through a 'simplification' of the linguistic frameworks adopted by each book. The following quotation from Lipson (2002: 374), who comments on the process of developing and testing out her Functional grammar book, provides evidence of the way a learner-oriented approach has been implemented by a university grammar book author and the challenges faced in doing so:

> While no attempt was made to substitute the FG terminology with less "intimidating" labels to facilitate learning, a few finer distinctions were avoided, e.g. Token and Value. […] Unfortunately, despite relentless attempts to emphasize the relationship between lexicogrammar and meaning, there was a tendency for students new to the framework to get caught up in the memorization of terminology.

On the whole, Italian university grammars of English appear to be more akin to pedagogical presentations of linguistic theories – e.g. generative, functional, utterer-centred linguistic frameworks watered down to better cater for learners' needs. Unlike Zandvoort's grammar and many other later representatives of the genre of European university grammars of English, their ultimate aim is to have students acquire a specific linguistic theory as a way to hone their language awareness and language analysis skills. More recent instantiations of the genre of Italian university grammars of English do appear to be less wary of adopting a more 'practical' approach – although this often boils down to featuring exercises and tasks to accompany descriptions and examples rather than providing a linguistics-inspired but pedagogically sound presentation of English grammar.

The fact that none of books in the corpus of Italian university grammars of English has achieved commercial success or has been adopted outside the university where it was originally developed, is probably evidence of a mismatch with the needs of English language professionals in Italy. What is sorely needed in the Italian academic context is a fully-fledged theoretically-grounded *pedagogical* grammar of English for Italian university students.

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