The Bologna Declaration, with its focus on a common European Higher Education Area (EHEA), has encouraged trends to teach courses exclusively in English, promoted students and staff mobility and asked universities to change and implement reforms at a local, national and European level. In order to comply with this international regulatory framework, European universities have had to change the way they communicate and disseminate information, especially through the web by using English as a Lingua Franca (Mauranen 2010).

The present paper explores the acWaC-EU corpus, a collection of Irish, British and Maltese university websites and other European university websites in English (Bernardini and Ferraresi 2013).

A previous study (Venuti and Nasti 2013) conducted on the corpus has proved that native English universities use a more descriptive, promotional language with a focus on students’ needs while other European universities seem to be more interested in university matters and in the internationalization process without considering students’ concerns. Within this framework, this article confines its analysis to the comparison of Italian and UK university websites in order to investigate how UK universities employ movement metaphors on their institutional websites, and to what extent Italian universities use the conceptual frame of movement with a self-promotional purpose as English and Irish universities seem to do. On the basis of the analysis we try to assess to what extent Italian universities use English only to comply with the international rules or whether they are actually interested in entering the European higher education system, addressing and attracting a greater number of students. This paper also explores whether Italian universities are competing at a global level or are just providing a mere web-mediated version of their curricula and activities.