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Introduction

English as a lingua franca (ELF) has become a burgeoning field of academic research in recent years, the development of which is shown by the publication of a remarkable amount of scholarly books, articles and doctoral theses revolving around this relatively new branch of theoretical and applied linguistics. Most importantly, however, the key to raising awareness about ELF is the organisation of international conferences, seminars and symposia that are either exclusively concerned with ELF related topics, or else include a few presentations about ELF in their programmes. Undoubtedly, the most important events in this field are the annual ELF international conferences that have been hosted by a different university every year, since 2008¹. This has been a special occasion when reputable scholars and researchers present their works and discuss their different approaches and methodologies in diverse areas connected to ELF such as language education, usage-based grammar, corpus linguistics and sociolinguistics, to name just a few. ELF conferences, therefore, represent the ideal arena where qualified experts come together and debate the 'glocal' nature of ELF as today's primary international language, and tackle the controversial issues entailed in the emergence of non-native speakers' Englishes.

The editors of this book were also the organisers and chairs of ELF6 International Conference, which was held in Rome in 2013, at the University of Roma Tre. Their intent is to provide the reader with a selection of relevant papers that were presented on that particular occasion, thereby contributing to the vibrant scene of ELF publications with fresh ideas informed by detailed field research.

First of all, it should be noticed that, differently from the previous five ELF conferences, ELF6 had an umbrella theme that elicited the main focus of the event, which incidentally was also used as the title of this edited collection: *Intercultural Communication: New Perspectives from*

ELF. The purpose of choosing this theme is to indicate that ELF studies are inherently inspired by respect for sociocultural diversity, which in the case of the construction of a global lingua franca leads to a reconceptualisation of the processes of language change and variation. These take place in multilingual and multicultural communicative contexts, whereby English is used and appropriated as a «second-order language contact» (Mauranen, 2012: 29)² by speakers who belong to different social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Hence, the core idea of ELF6 conference and of this book rests on the solid scientific foundation that in order to understand the contemporary development of English in intercultural environments, e.g. in web-based glocal communities, the synchronic and diachronic perspectives in ELF research should necessarily incorporate the notion of ‘interculturality’, that implies the study of discourse between culturally different speakers of English, their mutual accommodation of diverse linguacultural backgrounds, and the co-construction of a shared lingua franca.

Intercultural communication acts as a *fil rouge* in most contributions in this volume. In the last two decades this notion has been explored and revisited in an ELF perspective in several research areas: strategic business communication, intercultural awareness, language teaching, teacher education, web based communication, migration contexts, as well as intercultural studies themselves.

A notion originally derived from sociolinguistic studies (Hymes, 1972), intercultural communication has been explored in relation to the notion of culture, of critical cultural awareness and of intercultural communicative competence (Tomalin and Stempelski, 1993; Byram, 1997). It has also been investigated in terms of its relevance in multilingualism and identity issues (Kramsch, 2009) and in transcultural flows (Pennycook, 2007), within an intercultural awareness approach (Baker, 2009, 2015).

Intercultural communication through English has been pivotal in ELF research (Baker, 2012, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c; Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2005; House, 2012). An intercultural approach, Baker suggests (2015: 133), «examines communication where cultural differences, at a range of levels, may be relevant to understanding but does not make a priori assumptions about cultural difference». The relationship between language and culture through ELF is, *de facto*, the most common scenario currently adopted in intercultural communication. This view of culture and communication emerges in this book as the underlying assumption guiding most of the authors’ contributions on English as a Lingua Franca in a variety of areas such as English language teaching, teacher education, technology,

business communication, English mediated instruction, pragmatics, and sociolinguistics.

Issues related to ELF in language, culture and intercultural communication, to ELF awareness in English language teaching, teacher education and web-mediated instruction are addressed in the first part of the volume. Implications of ELF in language teaching are identified and discussed by Diane Larsen-Freeman's challenging contribution on the relationship between language as a complex adaptive system (CAS) and ELF. This is the first attempt to link these two research areas. CAS extends in a way the notion of culture while ELF research sees language as an adaptive, complex system. Ana Monika Habjan unfolds different aspects of current research on ELF and explores the applicability of usage-based approach, traditionally used in native discourse, in ELF. She looks beyond the established boundary in linguistics, determined by 'grammaticality', by investigating 'non-native discourse'. Pinar Ersin's and Yasemin Bayyurt's contribution describes how Turkish teachers develop their professional identities within an ELF related approach. Their study illustrates the contexts of pre- and in-service teacher education while analyzing teachers' practices with an intercultural communication focus. Paola Caleffi's contribution delves into current teaching materials, specifically those used for aural comprehension, in order to investigate the degree of attention devoted by course-book writers and material developers to the exposure of learners to a variety of accents and sounds in an increasingly multilingual/multicultural environment that recognizes the lingua-franca status of English. In her chapter, Paola Vettorel addresses an emerging issue in the ELF scenario, that of young learners in ELF environments and their exposure to English outside the classroom walls through the use of school partnerships and the development of intercultural communication skills. Enrico Grazzi and Stefano Maranzana's research study focuses on forms of telecollaboration between Italian learners of English and American learners of Italian who, under the guidance of teachers, sustain each other in their language learning process.

Barry Lee Reynolds and Melissa H. Yu report a study carried out in a Taiwanese university where the administrative staff attending a course in English for special purposes through a web-based video-technology, were encouraged to use ELF in their international communication. Lili Cavalheiro addresses the issues of English language teacher education for non-native teachers where teachers' beliefs and traditional approaches may create resistance to including English varieties and to ELF approaches. Cavalheiro suggests to integrate specific instruction on ELF, and to foster

the development of intercultural communicative skills as the way to widen teachers' understanding of Englishes and ELF. Lucilla Lopriore highlights ELF oriented teacher education courses within the new scenarios of multilingual and multicultural contexts where reconsideration of language education is sustained by the development of intercultural understanding and communication skills. Reflective practice is thus enacted by the analysis of data from intercultural interactions and by trainees' exposure to a variety of communicative actions in English speaking contexts. Savio Siqueira widens the borders of ELT pedagogy offering new views in terms of intercultural pedagogy and in teacher education where the adoption of an appropriate critical intercultural pedagogy would empower local teachers facing the implications related to teaching English in its condition of an international or global lingua franca ELF environment.

In the second part of the volume the eight contributions offer different yet very engaging perspectives on ELF, the first three chapters discuss ELF as used within migration contexts, the following three chapters explore different instantiations of ELF in oral and web based interactions in plurilingual contexts. The last two chapters look at how ELF can be associated to the emergence of attitudes or resistance particularly by university students to non standard pronunciation and how in ERASMUS ELF successful interactions emerge in the use of different plurilingual speakers.

In her chapter Maria Grazia Guido offers a new perspective in terms of ELF research in migration contexts. She illustrates how the Catholic Church Evangelization is enacted through ELF by Italian clergy when offering spiritual and practical assistance to immigrants. Her analysis of the interactions between the Italian clergy and the migrants shows how the development of accommodation strategies of ELF reformulation and hybridization can make culture-bound religious discourses 'conceptually and socially acceptable to participants in cross-cultural NE interactions'. The paper by Pietro Luigi Iaia, Mariarosaria Provenzano and Silvia Sperti analyses the ELF used in the subtitling of an Italian film where spoken Italian lingua franca uses and written ELF subtitles, by means of hybridization processes, may enable or fail to realize the unequal encounters in contexts of specialized communication between low-status Albanians and high-status Italians. Cristina Pennarola's chapter studies the ELF used in migrants' web forums where the migrants who participate in discussion forums rely on the experience of other users to obtain additional information and solve their problems. In his paper, Bill Batziakas describes and discusses the ELF features emerging in interactions among members of an international student society at the University of London where

speakers' flexible language use draws linguistic elements from various linguistic resources which they have available. Berat Başer's study analyses how ELF characterizes interpersonal relationships in interactions when speakers do not share common linguacultural assumptions and practices. In their joint paper, Paola Vettorel and Valeria Franceschi explore ELF use in computer-mediated-communication – personal blogs and fan fiction texts – and discuss speakers' language choices and their exploitation of the users' plurilingual repertoires as a communicative strategy. The results of a survey on university students' attitudes towards non-native speakers' accents is the object of the study presented by Athanasia Tsantila, Evanthia Ganetsou and Melpómeni Ilkos. The survey aimed at exploring how learners of English react to non-standard pronunciation in a period of time when English is mostly used by non-native speakers. Irena Vodopija addresses an aspect of intercultural communication and ELF, that relates to the Erasmus programs offered in Croatia where the role of English, and as a consequence its teaching, has been completely revisited and emphasis is laid in the development of students' communicative strategies. Findings suggest that ownership of English no longer belongs to any particular group as ELF is negotiated through efforts and adjustments by all parties involved.

In the third and last part of the volume the main theme is the presence of ELF in business (BELF) and academic contexts (ELFA). Alessia Cogo investigates the use of English in business interactions where speakers' main aim is not to display their language ability, but to deal with their business. The view of the participants, as ELF users, is the interest of her paper, which focuses on 'attitudes and orientations towards ELF communication, including the central aspects of accommodation and multilingual strategies'. Costanza Cucchi's paper explores BELF and corporate cultures through the analysis of website discourse in English in a corpus of national companies located in four European countries. Franca Poppi's small-scale case study, centered on the website of the Agency for International Business Promotion of the Modena Chamber of Commerce, compares different versions of the homepage of the Agency's website with a view to showing how, through adjustments of its linguistic and structural organization, possible it is 'to guide the global stakeholders to better apprehend the agency's local identity'. Lanxi Hu illustrates in her chapter how the use of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) to teach content subjects is perceived by content teachers in 10 universities in China. Jennifer Schluer's contribution describes how cultural awareness activities trigger processes of self-reflection on the role of culture in academic knowledge. She argues that greater sensitivity towards cultural factors may facilitate

intercultural research. In his chapter Alan Thompson investigates ELF situations where the variance in practices for expressing modality depends on the dominating or peripheral role of participants in the discussion.

¹ Here is the list of ELF conferences to date: ELF1, Helsinki (2008); ELF2, Southampton (2009); ELF3, Vienna (2010); ELF4, Hong Kong (2011); ELF5, Istanbul (2012); ELF6, Rome (2013); ELF7, Athens (2014); ELF8, Beijing (2015); ELF9, Lleida (2016).

² Mauranen, A. 2012, *Exploring ELF: Academic English shaped by non-native speakers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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