

# INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

## NEW PERSPECTIVES FROM ELF

edited by  
LUCILLA LOPRIORE and ENRICO GRAZZI



*Roma TrE-Press*

2016

Università degli Studi Roma Tre  
Dipartimento di Lingue, Letterature e Culture Straniere

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In writing this book, we have received help, support and inspiration from different sources.

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Lucilla and Enrico

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Immagine di copertina: S. Delaunay, *Electric Prisms*, 1913 (part.)

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Lucilla Lopriore, Enrico Grazzi

*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 2008<sup>1</sup>. 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)<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>1</sup> 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).

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

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ELF, LANGUAGE TEACHING AND TEACHER EDUCATION



Diane Larsen-Freeman

*A Successful Union: Linking ELF with CAS*

ABSTRACT:

ELF research has become a major field of study. However, it seems to lack theoretical tools. I suggest that Complexity Theory can provide a suitable theoretical framework and inspire a way of thinking that would be useful to ELF researchers. The paper then briefly discusses qualities of complex adaptive systems and some 8 resonances between them and the study of ELF. Some additional benefits from linking ELF with CAS are discussed, not the least of which is having a common discourse that would facilitate engagement among researchers.

*Introduction*

In the twenty years or so that it has been on the Applied Linguistics scene, researching ELF has made remarkable progress in establishing itself as a major field of study (Jenkins, 2012: 350). Indeed, the study of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) enjoys an enviable vitality today. For instance, this paper appears in the proceedings from the 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference on ELF (Italy), a 7<sup>th</sup> has recently taken place (Greece), and planning for an 8<sup>th</sup> (China) is underway. Furthermore, the field has its own new journal, *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, and, importantly, it has inspired Ph.D. student research. This interest in ELF today is a tribute to the energy and commitment of its founders, its growing number of adherents, and to its power as a critical enterprise.

I am not an ELF researcher, although I have been challenged by, have learned from, and have admired the development of the field. At the same time, I have noted the absence of a theoretical framework for informing ELF research agendas and for making possible a coherent explanation for its research findings. I am not alone in this observation. An ELF researcher has recently pointed out «in a period where intercultural English is used on a global scale, it is high time for us to try and find more appropriate theoretical tools to come to grips with this fact» (Hülmbauer, 2013: 69).

I think such theoretical tools lie with a view of language, its learning, and its use that I have been attracted to and have been advocating for some time (Larsen-Freeman, 1997), i.e., language as a complex adaptive system (CAS), a view inspired by Complexity Theory (CT) (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron, 2008; Ellis and Larsen-Freeman, 2009). In this paper, I propose that CT also offers ELF researchers a discourse for connecting with others who are thinking about and studying language development and use, and given the theme of this conference, intercultural communication, too. While the qualities of fluidity, variability, creativity, and local negotiability are all qualities foregrounded in ELF research findings, they are also characteristics consistent with viewing language as a complex adaptive system. It is not surprising, therefore, that CAS views have attracted some attention among ELF researchers.

Here is a sampling:

Seidlhofer (2011: 99):

«They [ELF speakers] draw on ELF as a complex adaptive system that, in the words of Cameron and Larsen-Freeman (2007), is “continually transformed by use”.»

Mauranen (2012: 44):

«[...]if we view language as a system, it is perhaps best seen as a complex system showing many features typical of complex (or ‘chaotic’) systems in general. Language systems influence each other in multilingual cognition, and in addition to this mutual influence, they act like other complex systems in interaction with their environment (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron, 2008).»

Dewey (2013: 347):

«The need to systematically analyse English in ELF settings is directly connected to a realization that when we speak about English in ELT, this is often in an idealized, abstracted way. By contrast, ELF research sees language as an adaptive, complex system (cf. Larsen-Freeman and Cameron, 2008).»

Without naming CAS as such, Sewell (2013: 3, 6) invokes similar themes: «It is important to appreciate that all language use—whether by native or non-native speakers—is variable, emergent, contextual, and subject to hybridity and change.»

And in keeping with the focus of this ELF6 conference, ‘Intercultural

Communication’, a CAS view extends to culture, too: «[...] many of the participants viewed cultures as mixed, hybrid, and open, and saw the need to adapt, interpret, and mediate between different cultures» (Baker, 2009: 585).

Hülmbauer (2013: 52): «[...] one can only come to the following conclusion: Language has to be treated as a dynamic system (Cameron and Larsen-Freeman, 2007).»

Perhaps I should be satisfied with these statements. However, I believe that CT can be plumbed for additional insights. And with them, one could go even further in contesting conventional understandings of language, its use, its development, and its learning. Moreover, CT also has the potential, at least partially unfulfilled, to challenge traditional language teaching practices. As I have written, I am not an ELF researcher; doubtless more is under way in these areas than what I am aware of. Nonetheless, sometimes it is helpful to hear from someone outside the community. It is in this spirit that I offer the following, which is based upon my appropriation of CT to understanding second language development (SLD).

### *1. A way of thinking*

Let me first make a preliminary comment about the nature of CT. After all, as Widdowson (2012: 7) has remarked: «It needs no chaos or complexity theory to tell us that natural phenomena, including human behavior, are unpredictable [elusive of conceptual control].» While I wouldn’t disagree, I think that beyond unpredictability, CT encourages a way of thinking that that can prove helpful to ELF researchers.

For instance, in the same article, Widdowson states that he is drawn to the metaphor that Sampson (2007) adopts regarding grammaticality. Sampson wrote: «The grammatical possibilities of a language are like a network of paths in open grassland. There are a number of heavily used, wide and well-beaten tracks. Other, less popular routes are narrower [...]» (Sampson, 2007: 10-11). While Widdowson’s central question is asking whose tracks count, I note that a similar spatial metaphor has been used to illustrate a way of thinking that CT inspires. In fact, those discussing CT have pointed to the landscape architect’s futility in setting down paths on a university campus. Such efforts are futile because shortcuts quickly develop despite ‘keep off the grass’ posted warnings. Instead, no concrete should be poured, no asphalt laid down until paths are created by those walking across the campus. This is the signature ‘bottom-up’ way of thinking that CT stimulates when applied to SLD. No textbook, no

instruction, no well-intentioned teacher's laying down of paths will obviate learners' creating their own developmental paths.

Consistent with this metaphor, Complexity Theory invites us to conceive of our objects of concern topographically. For instance, Todeva and Cenoz (2009: 270) understand the power of this way of thinking by writing «if one embraces a CT perspective, language should not be seen as an entity but instead as a space in which an infinite number of possible trajectories may be realized.» They go on to cite Larsen-Freeman and Freeman's (2008: 161) observation that «none of these trajectories comes into being until language is used in a specific context. Context, in this sense, does not mean just the physical space; it includes the intentional or inter-subjective space between users...in a dynamic view, there is no such thing as a uniform, homogeneous, static entity that can be called "Spanish", "Urdu", or "Japanese" [...]. Language users "soft assemble" their language resources in the moment to deal with the communicative exigencies at hand; by so doing, they not only adapt their resources to those of their interlocutor, but also the communicative partners together transform the language system they are using (Larsen-Freeman and Freeman, 2008: 161).» (cited in Todeva and Cenoz, 2009: 270-271).

Let me now go beyond introducing this way of thinking in order to inventory a selection of the theoretical concepts (or 'tools' as Hülmbauer put it – the abstractions that Widdowson points out are so necessary for our understanding) available in CT that an ELF researcher might find of value. I start with emergence and self-organization. I then go on to briefly consider other qualities of CAS: that they are open, adaptive/feedback sensitive, dynamic, unfinalizable, inseparable from context, and variable.

## *2. Theoretical concepts*

### *Emergence*

Emergence is the spontaneous creation of new patterns that arise in a system when components of the system interact. Emergence is not a one-time operation. Patterns or performance stabilities that emerge are transformed with further usage. The claim is that language is a CAS, which emerges bottom-up from interactions of multiple agents (learners/users) in and across speech communities through iterated soft-assemblies (Larsen-Freeman, 2011).

*Self-organization*

Self-organization «refers to any set of processes in which order emerges from the interaction of the components of a system without direction from external factors and without a plan of the order embedded in an individual component» (Mitchell, 2003: 6). In other words, there is no need for preformationism. In the complex adaptive system, which is language, there is spontaneous emergence of order (Schmid and Lowie, 2011) without the need for linguistic innatism, provided that the system remains open.

*Open*

An open complex system is open to the flow of new information, energy, or material (depending on the type of system), constantly in process, and consequently, never fixed. Novel complexities can arise, given the initial state of the system and the environment with which it interacts. Think of an eddy in a stream. An eddy is a relatively stable pattern whose elements (water molecules) continually change. Yet, as long as the contours of the stream bed, the rate of water flow, etc. do not change appreciably, a stable pattern within motion is displayed.

*Adaptive/Feedback Sensitive*

Amidst all the flux, a complex system maintains its stability through continuous adaptation (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron, 2008). The soft-assembled patterns arise from the dynamic adaptation of the system to a specific context. As applied to language use, the adaptation to a context includes the process of co-adaptation in which each individual in an interaction adapts to, not necessarily converging with, the language of another, with each response constructing a feedback loop between participants.

*Dynamic*

A CT-inspired view of language rejects the notion of language as something that is taken in—a static commodity that one acquires and therefore possesses (Larsen-Freeman, 2002). Instead, language can be construed as much a process as a product. Because language is a dynamic system, continuously changing, its potential is always being developed, and it is never fully realized.

*Unfinalizable*

«An ecological approach to language education does not seek dialectical unity, or bounded analyses of discrete events, but on the contrary

open-endedness and unfinalizability» (Kramsch, 2009: 247). From the perspective of CT, there is no need for finality in language education because with language learning «there is no end, and there is no state» (Larsen-Freeman, 2006).

#### *Inseparable from Context*

Furthermore, there is a different sort of relationship with the environment. The context is not a backdrop to the main action. Biologist Lewontin (2000: 54) observes «[O]rganisms not only determine what aspects of the outside world are relevant to them by peculiarities of their shape and metabolism, but they actively construct, in the literal sense of the word, a world around themselves».

Extending this insight from biology, I note that learners do not reproduce their linguistic world – they actively transform it, and that language use cannot be usefully segregated from its ecology (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron, 2008). Locating language use in the interstices between people and context, rather than only within tasks or only within individuals themselves, requires a different approach to thinking about and studying language from that of traditional ones.

#### *Variable*

In a complex system, there is «massive variation in all features at all times» (Kretzschmar, 2009: 8; see also de Bot *et al.*, 2007). As applied to language use, the variation is attributable to the fact that language users dynamically adapt their language resources to the context, and the context is always changing. Because of the dynamic interplay between a language user and context, the separation between the two, while possible for analytic purposes, requires the untenable assumption that the two are independent (van Geert and Steenbeek, 2005).

As I have noted earlier in this paper, perhaps I should be content with the attention a CAS view of language has received from ELF researchers. However, there is more to connect researchers in both fields, ELF and SLD, from a CT perspective. I have put these connections in the form of a list of 8 resonances.

### *3. Further connecting ELF and CAS: 8 resonances*

#### *1. Variability*

I have just written about the variability inherent in a complex system.

Variability is characteristic of ELF also. House (2012: 2) makes it clear that

«ELF is characterized by great variability; it is NOT a fixed code, and cannot be defined by its formal characteristics. Rather, it is an open-source phenomenon, a resource available for whoever wants to take advantage of the virtual English language. ELF is negotiated ad hoc, varying according to context, speaker group and communicative purpose. It is individually shaped by its users and can fulfil many different functions ranging from simple small-talk to sophisticated arguments. While of course based on English, ELF is also full of interlingual and intercultural adaptations, typically containing elements from different linguacultures.»

## 2. *Dynamics*

From what House has written, it is easy to see the dynamics of ELF at play. Here is how Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008: 198-199) relate the dynamics in SLD and ELF:

«Language as a separate entity [fixed system] is a normative fiction[...]; it only exists in the fluxes of language use in a given speech community. For the language classroom this implies that what has previously been taken as the goal of learning, the ‘target language’, ceases to exist in any simple form [...]. Inside the language classroom, the dynamics of language-using by teachers and students leads to the emergence of individual learners’ growing language resources and of classroom dialects, and, beyond the classroom, to the emergence of lingua franca varieties.»

## 3. *Focus on Process(es)*

In his review (2012: 127) of Seidlhofer’s (2011) book on ELF, Baker observes the following:

«Furthermore, Seidlhofer recommends that the focus should be on *how* what has been learnt not *how much* has been learnt, in other words that the process of learning is a viable object of study in itself.»

As I mentioned earlier in this paper, adherents of a CAS perspective conceive of language as a process, as they do its learning. In fact CT allows us to connect both processes. A CAS view rests on Gleick’s observation (1987: 24) that «the act of playing the game has a way of changing the rules.»

## 4. *Overcoming Dichotomies*

CT invites the interrogation of dichotomies (Morin, 2007). It recognizes

that dichotomies can be useful when used heuristically, but like all heuristics, they are simplifying moves. Baird (2012: 10) has written the same about ELF:

«Dichotomising along the lines of ‘standard’ vs. ‘non-standard’, ‘ENL/normative’ vs. ‘ELF/expressive’ or perhaps worse ‘creative’ vs. ‘conforming’ is to vastly oversimplify the linguacultural landscapes in which language is performed, the backgrounds and roles of the interlocutors, and the contextual identification processes involved in interactions.»

### 5. *Innovation or Error?*

In relation to creativity and conformity, when language is perceived to be a closed system, a fixed target, then no matter what they do, language learners and ELF users are disadvantaged to a certain extent. For example, a new linguistic form that a learner/user creates would likely be considered an error, rather than an innovation. The goal, although never explicitly stated, is conformity to uniformity. But, such a goal, even if it is desirable, is not achievable. Here is an example from ELF research to illustrate this point:

«...communication is *su-* so all-embracive a concept like air that we are *breathing*» (Information Society Seminar; Senior Faculty, *Finnish*) (Ranta, 2006).

Ranta observes that the ‘attention-catchingness’ of the [progressive] form is the factor that makes ELF speakers utilize it frequently. In other words, there is a reason for the use of the progressive, and because it makes sense and is communicatively felicitous, it is likely to endure. From an ELF perspective, Jenkins (2000: 160) argues: «There really is no justification for doggedly persisting in referring to an item as ‘an error’ if the vast majority of the world’s L2 English speakers produce and understand it.»

Indeed from a CAS/SLD point of view, there is a certain degree of both conformity and creativity in learners’ linguistic performance, just as there are with other language users. Second language learners/users adaptively imitate the language of the environment selectively (Macquoen, 2012) while at the same time having the capacity to create their own forms with meanings and uses and to expand the meaning potential of a given language (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron, 2008); learners do this through reference to extant forms, in the ambient language and in other languages they know, through recombination – by blending and analogizing (De Smet, 2013).

### 6. *Fighting the Myth of Monolingualism*

Both ELF researchers and SLD researchers can unite to counter the myth of monolingualism. Already some researchers (e.g., Cook, 1991; Seidlhofer, 2004; Ortega, 2005) have rightly asserted that the monolingual native speaker is not a legitimate model for L2 learning. Yet, despite this assertion, it can still be said that many researchers, misguidedly, continue to apply monolingual norms

«...when conducting research on bi- and multilingualism, which means that, among other aspects, native-speaker language proficiency is still used as the yardstick for all the languages of the multilingual person and the multilingual subject and their languages can be investigated without taking all the languages in contact into consideration [...]» (Herdina and Jessner, 2013: 755).

### 7. *Cultivating a Non-Teleological View of Language*

A problem, it seems to me, with which both ELF and SLD researchers have to contend, is that language is conceived of teleologically (Larsen-Freeman, 2012). I am using 'teleological' to mean having an end point. Deacon (2012: 24) writes «we recognize teleological phenomena by their development toward something they are not, but which they are implicitly determined with respect to...It is the *end* for the sake of which they exist...»

The view of language as a complex adaptive system (Ellis and Larsen-Freeman, 2009) counters the tendency to portray learner language as being an incomplete and deficient version of native speaker language. Indeed, as I mentioned earlier, implicit in this understanding of language as a self-modifying, emerging system is that the developmental change process is never complete and neither is its learning.

The system develops from experience (Ellis and Larsen-Freeman, 2009), afforded by the environment. The ambient language does, therefore, have a role in its shape. But the point is that it does not determine it, nor does it define the learning trajectory. If it did, there would be no way to account for the individual developmental paths that learners take.

Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008: 158) put it this way:

«Embodied learners soft assemble their language resources interacting with a changing environment. As they do so, their language resources change. Learning is not the taking in of linguistic forms by learners, but the constant adaptation [, creation,] and enactment of language-using patterns in the service of meaning-making in response to the affordances that emerge in a dynamic communicative situation.»

### 8. *Native speaker model?*

Currently, in discussions of ELF, a question concerning the appropriateness of a native speaker model for instruction (Sowden, 2012; Cogo, 2012; Sung, 2013) has been raised. While it is not my prerogative to intrude in such internecine matters, it seems to me that ELF proponents would be more persuasive if they can help teachers reconcile the normative conception of language that they have inherited (Dewey, 2012) with an acceptance of the fluidity of language. In other words, how can a view of language be entertained that helps learners/users extend their linguistic worlds, all the while making possible learners'/users' membership in the discourse communities to which they desire admission?

The following are three possible moves to reconcile the two (Larsen-Freeman, 2012):

1. Set the overall goal of language teaching as developing capacity (Widdowson, 1983), the ability to create meaning with language. Capacity is that which enables learners/users to move beyond speech formulas in order to innovate. Indeed, capacity is «an active force for continuing creativity» (1983: 27).
2. Within this overall goal, identify particular contexts of use, contexts in which norms for local 'success' can be established in keeping with learner goals. Illustrations offered by ELF researchers include Business English in Jenkins with Cogo and Dewey (2011), academic English in Mauranen (2012) and I-registers in Hall (2013).
3. What we should be teaching is not only language, but also the process of adaptation: Teaching learners/users to take their present system and mold it to a new context for a present purpose (Larsen-Freeman, 2013b).

For after all, «adopting an ELF perspective on teaching does not mean that norms and standards are no longer required, but that these are mutable concepts and that learners need to be introduced to language variation as soon as they are ready» (Sewell, 2013: 7).

### 4. *Research methods*

An additional way that CT might be of use to ELF researchers is offering some innovative methods of research (Verspoor *et al.*, 2011). Among these, are computer modeling (Ellis and Larsen-Freeman, 2009), the use of non-Gaussian statistics, such as Pareto distributions (Larsen-Freeman, 2013a), and retrodictive qualitative modeling (Dörnyei, 2011).

### *5. Reciprocity*

Finally, a successful union needs to be reciprocal. To this end, I believe ELF provides a clear test case for a CAS-inspired emergentist view of language and its development (Larsen-Freeman, 2011). As Seidlhofer (2011: 94) has written of ELF «...due to its extremely widespread use by speakers from a vast number of first language backgrounds, it affords us the opportunity of observing these processes [of variation and change] happening in an intensified, accelerated fashion.»

This is an exciting time in the evolution of the study of ELF. I am an outsider. It is up to you to decide on the merits of CT. However, besides offering a coherent theoretical frame, one other advantage in adopting a broad theory is that it features a discourse that makes it possible to transcend one's field of interest and to enter into genuine dialogue with others. We know, contrary to stereotypes, that science is a social enterprise. It is my contention that as the discourse of CT is increasingly taken up, it can facilitate engagement with other scholars to mutual benefit.

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Ana Monika Habjan

*Chunking, Emergence, and Online Production  
as Theoretical Concepts in ELF*

ABSTRACT:

Located at the intersection of applied linguistics and more formal language theory, this paper draws a parallel between concepts applied to grasp ELF and increasingly influential *usage-based approaches* to grammar. More precisely, I compare and discuss notions such as *chunking*, *intuition*, *emergent grammar* and *ad hoc constructions*. The discussion is based on chosen texts from the respective fields of study. Basically, that is Sinclair and Mauranen's book on Linear Unit Grammar and, the work of Joan Bybee.

*Introduction*

The creative and heterogeneous language use, a traditional object of sociolinguistics, is increasingly becoming the focus of scientific research in more formal linguistics as well. In particular, the so called *usage-based approach* seems to be suitable for the description of language acquisition and development in its various kinds of discourse. From this perspective, language is not innate, and grammar is 'distilled' out of language experience (cf. Kaltenböck, 2011). Hence, linguistic structures are not seen as fix and stable, but dependent on concrete interactions and thus dynamic and in constant change. Thus, moving away from the idealization of grammatical sentences of *native speakers*, the usage-based approach should be able to account for *non-native discourse* as well.

Traditionally, theoretical linguistics has been based mostly on inquiries of idealized *native speaker discourse*, more specifically, of *grammatical sentences* of idealized *native speakers*. The abstraction and idealization is, of course, necessary if one wants to come up with (more or less) strict regularities and a well-defined system with clear characteristics. But this limited definition is often questionable because language in its actual performance is in constant change and variation. My main goal is to

stress that the idealization of the *native speaker* is closely related to the assumption of innateness of language and to the project of identifying and describing the universal rules of language, i.e. *Universal Grammar*. Hence, my approach to *non-native discourse* is closely connected with the notion of rules, going hand in hand with the notion of grammaticality and therefore with the notion of *native speaker*, who is traditionally assumed as being the arbiter – by means of his intuition – of grammaticality and appropriateness. The aim of this paper is, therefore, to look beyond this established boundary in linguistics, determined by *grammaticality*, by investigating *non-native discourse*, which is commonly assumed as being ‘ungrammatical’ by definition.

### 1. The ‘non-native speaker’ in sociolinguistics and formal linguistics

The limits of the traditional ‘science of language’ have during the last decades been indicated by extensive studies in the fields of sociolinguistics and applied linguistics. The concept of *native speaker* itself has been called into question by numerous scholars and although it plays a central role in general theoretical linguistics, it is still «fugitive and subtle» (Davies, 2003: 47-49). Research on English as a Lingua Franca, which not only reflects on the question of *native speakerness* and ownership of language(s), but also provides invaluable *non-native speaker* databases, contributes in an important degree to this research field. For my investigation, therefore, ELF is interesting especially because it touches very fundamental questions of *language* that most linguists in more conventional linguistic theories take for granted.

This paper raises above all the question, how insights into the characteristics of *non-native discourse* achieved by sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, i.e. in this case by ELF studies, can be connected with theoretical concepts developed by general, more formal theoretical linguistics. As dynamic language use and irregularities play a central role in this type of discourse, I want to examine some of the alternatives to the stable and regular grammatical view, which have been developed by chosen theories.

I will therefore basically draw from the increasingly influential *usage-based model*. The striking parallels between their basic tenets and key notions of the descriptions of ELF enable a comparison, which, on the one hand, sheds light on the very ontology of ELF and, on the other, on the linguistic model as such. As Anna Mauranen claims, ELF is supposed to be «a good testbed for models of language aspiring to generality» (Mauranen, 2009: 231).

The discussion will be based on chosen texts from the respective fields

of study. Basically, that is Sinclair and Mauranen's (2006) book on Linear Unit Grammar as well as Anna Mauranen's article on chunking in ELF (2009). From the more general theoretical field, I will focus in particular on the work of Joan Bybee (2010, 2013), one of the most influential proponents of the usage-based approach. In order to draw concrete parallels between the fields of research, I will present and comment on some key notions used in both kinds of texts (i.e. chunking, emergence, on-line production of forms, *ad hoc* construction).

## 2. Usage-based model and Linear Unit Grammar: main tenets

The term *usage-based model* has first been used by Langacker (1987) and is since then related to cognitive linguistics. In recent years it has, however, evolved into a separate coherent linguistic theory, with an explanatory power in line with those of other important theories of the last decades. Since the model proposes that structure and usage are not separated from each other, it convincingly deals with some phenomena that 'mainstream' linguistics of the last decades has avoided. In this approach, «grammar is seen as an emergent system consisting of fluid categories and dynamic constraints that are in principle always changing under the influence of general cognitive and communicative pressures of language use» (Diessel, 2011: 830).

Consequently, context plays a crucial role in the creation of linguistic forms and the semantic interpretation of these forms, which are seen as variable and dynamic. Special emphasis is put on the functions and the interactive accounts of communication as well as the interaction with the physical world. Grammar is 'distilled' out of language experience (cf. Kaltenböck, 2011: 96), or 'sedimented' out of usage<sup>1</sup>. The domain-general processes, responsible for the sedimentation of linguistic forms, are: categorization, chunking, rich memory, analogy and cross-modal association (cf. Bybee and Beckner, 2010; Bybee, 2010, 2013; Diessel, 2011). In short, it is a dynamic model, in which the usage influences the linguistic forms and at the same time the (already sedimented) forms shape usage. So there is no real distinction between competence and performance<sup>2</sup>.

In order to compare some of the key concepts, I have chosen one of the theories, which have already been applied to ELF. The *Linear Unit Grammar* (Sinclair and Mauranen, 2006) seems particularly suitable for drawing parallels, since it also makes use of notions such as chunking, linearity, on-line processing and emergence of linguistic structures.

In Linear Unit Grammar (LUG) they follow the work by Brazil (1995) and Hunston and Francis (2000). The approach tries to overcome the limitations of hierarchical structures in the description of utterances, in particular spoken utterances. Instead of the tree diagrams, utterances are viewed as a linear sequence of chunks, therefore *chunking* as «an intuitive perceptual response to the incoming speech stream» (Mauranen, 2009: 220) is the central concept of the theory. Special importance is ascribed to the world of shared experience, which gets co-constructed by the participants. Interestingly, this shared world is essentially a ‘virtual world’, but interaction takes place in the ‘real world’ (cf. Mauranen, 2009: 223). Even though Sinclair and Mauranen call LUG «a coherent theoretical stance» (Sinclair and Mauranen, 2006: 23), it is presented more as a descriptive apparatus and method than a real detailed model (of analysis). For this paper, it is of prime importance that LUG takes into account all kinds of discourse, not only grammatical sentences of *native speakers*, and that it has already been applied to ELF (cf. Mason, 2007; Mauranen, 2009; Sinclair and Mauranen, 2006)<sup>3</sup>.

Valuable insights into both research directions can be gained if we select and compare the key similarities and differences between these theoretical approaches to ELF and the *usage-based model*.

### 3. *Chunking*

As stated above, chunking is one of the central concepts in both grammatical approaches. I will first list the defining characteristics of chunking in the usage-based accounts and then compare these theoretical statements with the so-called ‘pretheoretical term’ from Sinclair and Mauranen’s Linear Unit Grammar.

In usage-based accounts, chunking

«is the process by which sequences of units that are used together cohere to form more complex units. [...] In language, chunking is basic to the formation of sequential units expressed as constructions, constituents and formulaic expressions. Repeated sequences of words (or morphemes) are packaged together in cognition so that the sequence can be accessed as a single unit» (Bybee, 2010: 7).

«[T]he formation of chunks is a continuous process, [therefore] the emerging phrases exhibit varying degrees of cohesion. Other things being equal, smaller chunks (e.g. *the dog*) tend to be more tightly

organized than larger ones (e.g. *the old dog over there that is barking*) because they are more frequent, suggesting that constituency is a gradient concept just like any other grammatical category» (Diessel, 2011: 836f).

From the perspective of LUG, «[c]hunking is a natural and unavoidable way of perceiving language text as it is encountered» (Sinclair and Mauranen, 2006: 6).

In the text on Chunking in ELF by Anna Mauranen chunking is characterized as one of the fundamental features of LUG. She connects chunking to linearity and temporality of speech processing and states that «[c]hopping up the incoming speech stream into chunks seems an efficient way of coping with it, and in line with our other perceptual processes» (Mauranen, 2009: 220). She further suggests that these chunks of up to five words are formed 'naturally'.

«In LUG, we take chunking to be an intuitive perceptual response to the incoming speech stream. There is no reason therefore to expect it to differ in L1 and L2 speech in principle; [...] LUG takes chunking as a pretheoretical term, and we use our own intuitive capacity to perform chunking on stretches of transcribed speech» (Mauranen, 2009: 220).

In the following comparison I will state some characteristics and, basically, weak points of the LUG-approach, and then try to show how, in my view, they can easily be overcome, for instance by introducing some principles taken from usage-based approaches to grammar.

### 3.1 Intuition

In LUG chunking is an intuitive process, it is natural and unavoidable.

In the usage-based model chunking is not innate, but a domain-general process based on experience, repetition, and conventions.

Considering a broader perspective on cognitive processes in linguistic production, it is questionable and perhaps superfluous to insist, in LUG, on the pre-theoretical, 'intuitive' nature of chunking. In theoretical terms, the term 'intuitive and pre-theoretical' could be replaced, for instance, by 'domain-general cognitive processes, based on experience' as defined by usage-based approaches to grammar. In this way, Mauranen's claim about linguistic chunking as being «in line with other perceptual processes» (Mauranen, 2009: 220) can be reinterpreted in a theoretically more appropriate way.

From this starting point we can replace the view of chunking as a ‘natural’ process that takes place ‘intuitively’ with a more scientific description.

Sinclair and Mauranen also insist that LUG does not highlight the recurrent aspect of chunking, but instead its on-line, linear aspect, where the chunks are not (necessarily) conventionalised because «we use our own [more general, intuitive] capacity for chunking up language» (Sinclair and Mauranen, 2006: 40). But in grammar, the least one would expect is to get an explanation of its central concept, in this case ‘intuition’: how it is formed, who has this intuition, what influences it etc. Another question is whether external factors like conventions are perhaps not one of the pre-requisites for the existence of this kind of capacity. Indeed, the usage-based accounts can provide some plausible answers to these questions, simply because for them the ‘intuition’ of how to divide a text into chunks is shaped by experience. The experience comes with usage, that is, with everything we encounter both linguistically and extra-linguistically. This does not mean that intuition should be entirely banned from linguistic investigation or description. It does imply, however, that ‘intuition’ is a very vague concept and – if used in a theory – should be defined more thoroughly.

### *3.2 Variability*

Furthermore, chunking varies between speakers, according to LUG. As obvious as this sounds, the theory does not systematize, explain or comment on it, which is what a robust model would demand. To solve this problem we can, again, turn to the usage-based accounts: in their theory, chunking differs according to experience, i.e. the speaker’s previous usage. The more similar the experience, the more similar and cognitively entrenched (i.e. present in long-term memory), and the more similar the process of chunking between speakers. In *Linear Unit Grammar* (2006) chunking is unfortunately only very briefly associated with perception, learning and entrenchment (Sinclair and Mauranen, 2006: 37). It is interesting that Sinclair and Mauranen even name Bybee as one of the scholars who «emphasize social interaction in the shaping of grammar» and are «compatible with our approach» (Sinclair and Mauranen, 2006: 38). One can hence only regret that this direction is not developed further in LUG.

### *3.3 Examples*

In order to draw a more concrete comparison, it seems also very productive to see if the chunks from LUG can be interpreted as (the conventionalised)

chunks in usage-based accounts. Indeed, most of the chunks from the corpus of English as a lingua franca in academic settings (ELFA) in Sinclair and Mauranen (2006: 57; see (1) below) would also be identified as chunks in Bybee's sense. (1) and (2) below draw a parallel between a text from ELFA divided into chunks using LUG and individual chunks or types of chunks from Bybee (2010):

1. the Estonian	(2) small, frequent chunk (cf. Bybee, 2010: 35)
2. it was an article	larger, composed chunk (cf.: 25)
3. i read	small, frequent chunk (cf.: 35)
4. it was a famous Estonian tele-	larger, composed chunk (cf.: 25)
5. television	small chunk: word (cf.: 35)
6. i don't know	«I don't know» (cf.: 5)
7. reporter	small chunk: word (cf.: 35)
8. or something	prefabricated expressions (cf.: 35)
9. he went on strike	formulaic or prefabricated sequences of words (cf.: 34)
10. on the hunger strike	prefabricated unit (cf.: 28)

To sum up this section, as Bybee notes in her article from this year (Bybee, 2013: 68), the usage-based approaches provide «a linguistic theory with powerful explanatory possibilities», because they take into consideration the change and dynamics of representations and are based on domain-general processes. Unlike these approaches, LUG is a powerful tool for handling linguistic data, but has, in my opinion, little explanatory power when it comes to the functioning and generation of linguistic communication. Therefore it would be very productive to combine the principles of both kinds of approaches and show in practice the relevance of LUG as a model.

#### 4. *Emergence, on-line production of forms and 'ad hoc' constructions*

The so-called emergence of constructions is another central point in the usage-based model, in LUG and other recent grammar theories: linguistic structures can emerge constantly, so they can be *emergent* and not (necessarily) stable and well-defined (in advance). According to Hopper (1998), there is actually no stable, definite state of an adult grammar: language acquisition is never fully completed, grammar is constantly *emerging*, even a competent speaker can modify, extend and change it. Performance is shaped

by social, cultural and discursive forces: «Structure, or regularity, comes out of discourse and is shaped by discourse in an ongoing process. Grammar is, in this view, simply the name for certain categories of observed repetitions in discourse» (Hopper, 1998: 156). In his more recent work Hopper sees grammar as ephemeral and passing (cf. Hopper, 2011: 26), and therefore also language acquisition can never be considered as finished. The form of the structure can be either conventional or formed *ad hoc*.

In the same sense as Hopper, also Barbara Seidlhofer (quoting Cameron and Larsen-Freeman) claims that «concepts such as “end-state” grammars become anomalous» (Cameron and Larsen-Freeman, 2007: 230, cited in Seidlhofer, 2011: 99). In ELF-studies, the emergence and *ad hoc* production is in general repeatedly emphasized. Seidlhofer stresses that ELF-speakers use all the linguistic features they know in order to achieve a communicative goal and therefore a lot happens *ad hoc*. The negotiation of meaning is at work in the concrete situation and is influenced by a specific context. Similarly, Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey point out that «[s]peakers routinely – but not unvaryingly – exploit the language systems of English to the extent that we can identify EMERGING PATTERNS of lexical and grammatical forms» (Jenkins *et al.*, 2011: 288-289; emphasis in original). Finally in LUG, as its name suggests, linearity, emerging utterances and the on-line dealing with the speech stream are, of course, key principles of the approach (cf. Sinclair and Mauranen, 2006: 88f., 136f.).

Regarding the on-line processing, Holger Diessel observes that there should be more emphasis put on this phenomenon in the usage-based theory as well: «The sequential decision-making process is at the heart of language use; it determines the language users’ linguistic behavior and the development of linguistic structure over time» (Diessel, 2011: 841).

The notion of *ad hoc* constructions and the on-line production of forms is a matter of constant debate among linguists and is very problematic. On the one hand, something that is produced *ad hoc*, is dependent on the very situation, the context, the speakers in the concrete interaction etc. In this respect, an analysis of this kind of data goes beyond the scope of possible scientific analysis. On the other hand, *ad hoc* structures definitely constitute a key concept in linguistic production and should therefore be accounted for in some way. Theoretical approaches to these phenomena try to deal with it by, for instance, transforming *ad hoc* structures into well-formed sentences (the so-called ‘Step 5’ in LUG, cf. Sinclair and Mauranen, 2006: 96ff.) or locating the investigation on some kind of ‘local micro-level’ (cf. Zima and Brône, 2011: 266) for specific speech situations. Both of them are, however, very problematic for linguistic theories aspiring to generality.

5. *Pairings of form and function*

In this final section of the paper, I will just briefly draw a last parallel between usage-based accounts of grammar and ELF-studies, i.e. by comparing constructions as form-function mappings with the unusual and dynamic pairings of form and function that are indicated by the special, recently developed POS-tagging of VOICE Corpus. In the *Part-of-Speech Tagging and Lemmatization Manual* (VOICE Project, 2014: 11) these tags are characterized in the following way (emphasis in original):

«For all tokens in the corpus, separate tags for paradigmatic form and syntagmatic function are assigned. The tag for form is indicated first, followed by a tag for function, given in brackets.

Format: **FORM-tag(FUNCTION-tag)**

There are **2 options** of this format:

**OPTION 1:** form and function converge → identical form (function) tag is assigned, e.g. a **house\_NN(NN)**

**OPTION 2:** form and function do not converge → different tags for form and (function) are assigned, e.g. **two house\_NN(NNS)**».

I would suggest that this can be directly connected to the form-function mapping, which the usage-based model (and especially Construction Grammar as one of the best known manifestations of it) attempts to represent in its theory (cf. Bybee, 2010: 9-10), as illustrated by the following schematic representation:

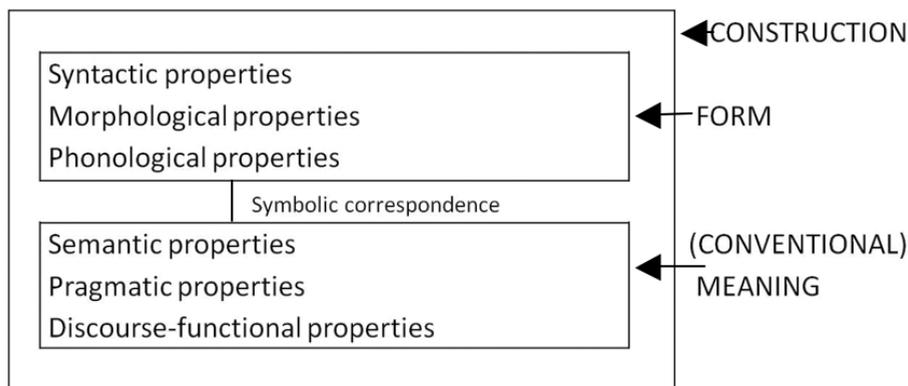


Fig. 1 – The structure of a construction according to Croft (2001: 18)

Without making a thorough analysis and comparison, it is evident that in both approaches the two levels are essential and inseparable, and are taken into consideration in every description. So it seems that the concrete device for the POS-annotation of *non-native discourse* directly resembles a coherent theoretical principle from recent approaches to grammar.

## 6. Conclusions

The present discussion of some of the key concepts in usage-based accounts of language has shown important convergences with some conceptualisations and descriptions of ELF. The online production of forms, emergent structures, chunks as central units, co-constructing language, *ad hoc* constructions and form-function units play a central role in both research fields. It seems particularly interesting to compare the notion of chunking in the usage-based accounts and in Linear Unit Grammar. But it has also become clear that the formalisation and concrete modelling of ‘ungrammatical’ data (for instance, *non-native discourse*) is very complicated and has not yet been taken into account sufficiently. In many respects it is still debatable whether grammatical approaches to *non-native discourse* are possible at all: the question, how to model, systematize and conceptualize the dynamic, the unsystematic and the irregular therefore remains open.

<sup>1</sup> See also the passages in Seidlhofer (2011) about sedimentation (2011: 114) and the respective passages in Pennycook about «sedimented products of repeated acts of identity» (Pennycook, 2007: 73).

<sup>2</sup> This is one of the points of difference in relation to Chomskyan generative grammar. In ELF-publications the distinction competence/performance is, however, maintained. This is especially striking in the term of *virtual language*, which is supposed to be an «underlying abstract set of rules» (Seidlhofer, 2011: 112), common to ELF and English as a Native Language.

<sup>3</sup> In her attempt to apply LUG to ELF Mauranen points out that ELF is «fundamentally normal language use despite some surface deviations from Standard English» (Mauranen, 2009: 218).

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*A Data-based Approach to Teacher Identity Development  
in an ELF Context*

ABSTRACT:

Today, we are living in a world where 80% of verbal exchanges in English do not involve native speakers of English (Graddol, 1997). Besides, in interactions between people who share neither a common language nor a common culture English is used as a lingua franca. This use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) (Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey, 2011) influences not only the identity of learners or users but also and more specifically the identity of English language teachers. As they constantly construct and reconstruct their professional identities along their teacher education and their teaching practices, they are in a search for a definition of identity. In this paper, we aim to find an answer to the following research question: 'How do Turkish pre-service and in-service teachers of English define their identities in relation to ELF?' The participants of the study are pre-service teachers studying at a state university and in-service teachers working in various secondary schools and tertiary educational institutions in Istanbul, Turkey. Qualitative data were gathered from six consenting pre-service teachers who were in their final year of study and six consenting in-service teachers with varying years of teaching experience. All participants were selected by the convenience sampling method (Duff, 2008). After having completed a background questionnaire, they participated in structured interviews, which were digitally recorded and transcribed afterwards. Data derived from the interviews were thematically analyzed (Lemke, 1998; Willis, 2007) and emerging themes related to the research question were categorized. The findings revealed that although both groups of teachers had an awareness of the present status of English as an international lingua franca, they had differing conceptions of the use of English in Turkey; i.e., ELF versus English as foreign language. There was still a consensus among pre-service teachers on their need to model either British or American varieties of English in their English language teaching practice to be accepted as a successful English language teacher. On the contrary, in-service teachers were more open-minded in embracing other varieties of English in their teaching. In sum, the differences between pre-service and in-service teachers in terms of their views of the role of norm-provided native speaker teacher model influenced the way they defined their professional identities.

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## *Introduction*

Today, we are living in a world where 80% of verbal exchanges in English do not involve native speakers of English (Graddol, 1997). Besides, in interactions between people who share neither a common language nor a common culture English is used as a lingua franca. This use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) (Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey, 2011) influences not only the identity of learners or users but also and more specifically the identity of English language teachers. As teachers constantly construct and reconstruct their professional identities along their teacher education and their teaching practices, they are in search for a definition of identity. Unfortunately, teacher education programs are not framed to guide prospective teachers of English in defining themselves legitimately without limiting teacher candidates to a definition of perfect language teacher. Instead, they assume and expect that prospective teachers should comply with the idealized native-speaker norms in their use of English language both in and out of the language classroom (Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Llurda, 2005). These programs fail to notice a particularly complicated issue which is teacher identity and also seem to be unaware of the fact that most of the teachers themselves are speakers of ELF (Pedrazzini and Nava, 2010, 2011).

### *1. Native/non-native teacher dichotomy and teacher identity*

The native/non-native teacher distinction has been a very debated issue. The dominant ideal native speaker teacher model was labelled as the native speaker fallacy by Philipson (1992) more than 20 years ago. Accepting the native-speaker teacher as the ideal language teacher has appeared to create a professional low self-esteem, negative self-perception and identity struggle among teachers from a variety of linguistic backgrounds (Canagarajah, 2005; Moussu and Llurda, 2008; Park, 2012). Many studies showed that non-native teachers perceived themselves as second language (L2) learners who were not able to enter the community of native-speaker teachers, thus not validating their personal and professional identities (Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 1999; Sifakis and Sougari, 2005). The concept of teacher identity plays a key role for these non-native teachers because they want to be able to legitimately define themselves as good and successful teachers. Therefore they describe themselves as L2-users (Cook, 1999), L2learners, L2-teachers or many more other

sociocultural identities that are dynamic and socially situated in different institutional and interpersonal contexts (Duff and Uchida, 1997). For example, they see themselves as language learners in school related contexts; whereas, they see themselves as language users in out of school interactions (Majanen, 2008). This ambiguity stems from teachers' low self-confidence and confusion.

Identity, as a construct, has been defined in various ways. Varghese *et al.* (2005: 35) define identity as «multiple, shifting and in conflict; crucially related to social, cultural, and political context as well as being constructed, maintained and negotiated primarily through discourse». Like language itself, identity is also a social concept and it is socially constructed (Joseph, 2004). To have deeper insights about teacher development, teacher identity is an area that requires investigation.

Olsen (2008) asserts that teacher identity is a useful research frame as it treats teachers as whole-persons and draws attention to the holistic, shifting, and contextually situated nature of teacher development. Seeing teachers from the whole person lens entails the acceptance of the personal and social struggle they go through in different contexts in such a globalized and changing society (Olsen, 2008). As teachers encounter various social contexts, they continuously construct and co-construct their identities in relation to other native and non-native colleagues, workplace characteristics, teaching objectives and methodologies. As it is obvious, the construction of the professional self is a hard and a long-lasting process because it involves cognitive development, technical knowledge, and social existence. Teachers are involved in an ongoing process of identity formation both on a persona and professional level and their identities are in flux all the time (Jia, 2011).

## *2. ELF identities as an option*

Non-native teachers feel ambiguous and indecisive in terms of defining their professional identities. They need to be able to define their professional identities not as a deficit one in comparison to those of native teachers but as a legitimate, equal one who can claim ownership of the language. At this point, ELF identities (Seidlhofer, 2011) is a concept and an option to embrace (Llurda, 2015). There have been many studies conducted on ELF and teacher identity although the term ELF is not used. In many of them, non-native teachers of English compared themselves to their native-speaker colleagues and felt they were deficient and

unable to enter the native-speaker community (Seidlhofer, 1999; Sifakis and Sougari, 2005; Jenkins, 2007). Consequently, this has affected their professional identities negatively (Bayyurt and Akcan, 2015).

In fact, ELF «opens up entirely new options for the way the world's majority of English teachers can perceive and define themselves» (Seidlhofer, 2011: 152). Non-native teachers as well as L2 learners prefer a community of L2-users instead of imagined communities of native-speaker teachers (Pavlenko, 2003). Thus, non-native teachers of English can negotiate and renegotiate their professional (and linguistic) identities towards more favorable ones (Jenkins, 2006). Comparing and contrasting native and non-native teachers has been a traditional trend, which should be avoided. Non-native teachers feel more empowered when they can accept that English belongs to everyone from different national, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This acceptance, in return, makes non-native teachers more confident and secure (Seidlhofer, 1999). Therefore, a detailed and informed model of ELF should be provided for teacher education programs. There have been some recent attempts in teacher education programs in terms of raising awareness, increasing self-esteem and self-confidence (Barratt, 2010; Bayyurt and Sifakis, 2015).

### *3. Teacher identity development through data-based tasks*

Teacher identity development has been investigated in many ways such as the use of focal group interviews, individual interviews, or journal entries (Clarke, 2008; Olsen, 2008; Pavlenko, 2003). In addition to these techniques, data from English language teaching (ELT) classroom research has been used as a means of teacher development activities. The term 'data' refers to «descriptions of ELT lessons and interviews in which teachers talk about their work» (Borg, 1998: 273). Borg used data-based teacher development activities and found out that such activities had implications on three major aspects, which were «reflective practice, teachers' beliefs, and the scope of research on teaching». We believe that using data-based tasks works as a useful tool to look at how teachers' discursively construct identities. In the present study, we focus on the implications of such activities on teacher identity development. The data-based tasks provided us with the opportunity to find out how participants developed understandings of and for themselves as teachers based on given situations. Furthermore, using real classroom data demonstrated that teachers' thinking about other teachers' concerns and trying to interpret them meaningfully would

help teacher education programs, as also suggested by Olsen (2008). Encouraging participant teachers to comment on the ELF-related situations that a classroom teacher experienced or is likely to experience gave us an idea about how these teachers defined themselves. While completing the tasks, teachers looked at themselves from an analytical lens, similar to Borg's (1998) findings.

In this paper, we have tried to find an answer to the following research question: 'How do Turkish pre-service and in-service teachers of English define their identities in relation to ELF?' The study aimed at examining the communication of teacher identity through teachers' reflections with respect to what they are currently doing or what they will do in their English language practice. The study aimed at exploring how participating teachers would define themselves as language teachers. While trying to gather their definitions of themselves, the study also attempted to investigate how the teachers would reflect upon data-based tasks which were used to raise their awareness on language variation (Pedrazzini and Nava, 2013). To the best of our knowledge, there are few studies, if not any, on teacher identity in Turkish socio-cultural context (Bayyurt and Ersin, 2012). Therefore, the present study is an attempt to fill the current gap in the field.

#### *4. Methodology*

Six consenting pre-service teachers (PTs) and six consenting in-service teachers participated in the study. PTs were in their final year of four-year study at a state university and in-service teachers were working in various secondary schools and tertiary educational institutions in Istanbul, Turkey. The study took place in the spring semester of 2013-2014 academic year.

All PTs were female and 22 years old. All of them were highly motivated to become teachers of English as a foreign/second language and were looking forward to graduating. Two reasons affected PTs in their choice of university study. They chose the Department of ELT as their major firstly and mainly because they liked English. Secondly, they were positively influenced by their own English language teachers while they were first learning English.

As mentioned earlier, six in-service teachers took part in the study. Five of them were female and the remaining one was male with ages ranging between 30 and 59. They had differing teaching experiences varying from 7 to 25 years. Three of the in-service teachers graduated from the

Department of English Language and Literature and the rest from the Department of ELT from various universities in Turkey. All of them had a master's degree (one in English Language and Literature and five in ELT) and all of them were PhD candidates at the time of the study. All decided to become teachers because they graduated from the related departments and they were motivated to keep teaching.

All the participants were selected through the convenience sampling method (Duff, 2008).

#### *4.1 Data collection procedure*

Data were gathered through two different data collection tools; that is, a background questionnaire and structured interviews. All the data were collected in Turkish, the mother tongue of both the participants and the researchers, which allowed the participants to express themselves as fully as possible. Interviews were conducted at a time and location convenient for the participants. In order to avoid the loss of any valuable data, interviews were digitally audio-recorded and later transcribed by the researchers. Each interview lasted approximately from 15 to 30 minutes.

The aim of the background questionnaire was to collect demographic information from the participants. The aim of the interviews was to find out how Turkish teachers of English define ELF in relation to their teaching context, how they define the ideal English teacher in comparison to their own use of English, how they define teacher identity and how they comment on the current status of English on teaching and learning it through a data-based approach. Data-based tasks guided the participant teachers to comment on different varieties of English, distinctive features of ELF, and the variety of English they actually use and teach in their emergent teaching contexts or will use and teach in their future teaching contexts upon graduation.

To be more precise, the following two data-based tasks (Pedrazzini and Nava, 2013) were used in the interviews. In the first one, the participants were asked to read what a teacher of English (T) said in a discussion about which English should be adopted as a teaching model. Then, the participants were asked how they would answer this teacher's question with regard to their hypothetical or current students. The excerpt was as follows:

«T [...] On what basis do you say ok ok I'm going to follow the guidelines of American English or British English or whatever so: (.) you simply can't say that one is superior to the other or you can also ask yourself a:hm what would all my students need more? So

will they be exposed to a British environment or often will they be exposed to an American environment etc. etc. [...]»

For the second data-based task, we told the participants that they had an option of using a new course book featuring recorded materials with different English accents (British English, American English, Indian English, West African English, etc.). We asked them if they would be happy to use this course book in their future or current classrooms. Additionally, we asked what reactions they would expect from their future or current students. Lastly, we asked the participants how they would introduce these materials, in case they planned to use them.

In short, the interviews aimed at finding out how the consenting participants identify themselves through their discourses.

#### *4.2 Data analysis*

The method of thematic analysis (Lemke, 1998; Willis, 2007) was used in order to analyze the data. The answers emerging from the data were thematically categorized and coded. Then, themes that were related to the research question were identified.

#### *4.3 Results*

The results of the study revealed interesting findings. Both pre-service and in-service teachers defined ELF as a ‘common language’ that was accepted in the world. They additionally defined English as a ‘language for communication’ in the countries where different languages were spoken, especially among people coming from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. When asked to choose the best possible option among the given ones (ELF, English as an International language (EIL), EFL, English as a second language (ESL) or English as an additional language) to define their teaching context, all pre-service teachers chose EFL whereas all of the in-service teachers declared that it was an ELF setting.

For the question that asked participants to order four different definitions of an ideal English teacher from the most important to the least important, all PTs chose the one that said the ideal English teacher is the one who is ‘a native speaker with a pedagogical formation certificate’ as the most important one; in contrast, all in-service teachers chose the option that said the one who is ‘a non-native speaker with a pedagogical formation certificate’.

For another question in which the options were offered to make the

participants choose or define their own use of English, the answers that PTs gave varied but most of the in-service teachers (four of them) defined it as being 'near-native like'. Two of the PTs said it was like 'near-native', two 'non-native' and the last two chose 'other' but with a native-speaker reference, meaning they did not feel confident enough to choose 'near-native like' directly and explicitly. Instead, they gave some additional explanations or even 'excuses'. The following quotation might illustrate the point better: «I'm not fluent but I can derive the unknown words from context like a native speaker» (PT1).

When asked to define teacher identity, only one PT gave a more essentialist definition but almost all of the in-service teachers gave such definitions. Essentialist definitions emphasized fixed and set qualities such as gender, nationality, linguistic background, attitudes, beliefs, race, etc. Most of the PTs defined teacher identity as being innovative, self-critical, competent in terms of technological advancements and cultural issues, paying attention to students' needs, guiding, and improving himself all the time.

Answers to the question about the participants' opinion on the effect of the current status of English on teaching and learning of English were as follows. PTs emphasized mostly the developments of new methods and techniques such as the use of technology in the classrooms while in-service teachers highlighted that even though the importance of interaction and intercultural communication increased, new issues such as whose or which English to teach emerged. They all added that the standardized use of English or the Received Pronunciation (RP) is not the concern for the teachers and/or interlocutors any more. Both groups agreed upon the increasing importance of learning English and the rapid spread of English education as a result of the current status of English as a global and an international language.

Next, participant teachers were given a quotation uttered by an English language teacher in a discussion entitled what English to adopt as a teaching model. The teacher's expression reflected his ambiguity. He was lost and unclear and obviously did not know what guidelines to follow: American English or British English? He was desperately looking for an answer. Participant teachers were asked to help out the teacher and answer his question by considering their own students. Most of the PTs said that in their teaching they would adopt the English model based on their students' needs, differences between American and British accents should be taught because neither is superior than the other and a mixture of these two accents should be taught because they wouldn't know in what

contexts their students participate. Unlike the PTs, most of the in-service teachers said that different varieties of English in addition to British and American varieties should be shown to the students and in intercultural communication contexts, the adopted English does not matter and the difference between the accents is less clear both in educational contexts and among the users. The following quote by an in-service teacher will demonstrate the point better:

«My students being in an American or a British context is not important. I'd tell them that English is now an international language; therefore, it cannot belong to one region or culture. As a matter of fact, the language that they'll learn is a language that the whole world uses to communicate. It shows even some 'local' changes or varieties» (T1).

Lastly, the participant teachers were given a situation and what they would do in such a situation. The situation was having the option of using a course book including recorded materials with different English accents such as Indian and West African English in addition to British and American accents. Then, teachers were asked if they would use this course book with their students in the classroom. Three of the PTs answered positively but the rest answered negatively. One negative answer is as follows:

«No, I wouldn't use such materials. This situation might make my students confused and it might result in their using incorrect accents. I think my students would agree with me. I'd present the materials by eliminating them [accents that are not British or American]» (PT2).

On the contrary, all in-service teachers gave an affirmative answer saying that this would prepare their students to the outside world where English is *really* spoken. One affirmative answer is helpful in clarifying the point:

«Yes, of course. I'd start by asking [my students] to what extent different varieties of spoken English in the world are intelligible to them by the help of these listening texts» (T3).

To sum up, the following tables present the abovementioned results to clarify the bigger picture (see [Table 1](#) and [Table 2](#)).

*Table 1 – Results of the study: similar comments given by both PTs and in-service teachers*

PTs and in-service teachers
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Similar definition of ELF</li> <li>2. No ‘whole-persons’ definition of teacher identity</li> <li>3. Similar perceptions about the increased importance of English as a result of its rapid spread</li> </ol>

*Table 2 – Results of the study: differing comments between PTs and in-service teachers*

PTs	In-service teachers
Turkey as EFL context Ideal language teacher: native speaker with a pedagogical formation certificate	Turkey as ELF context Ideal language teacher: non-native speaker with a pedagogical formation certificate
Description of their own English: for most of them ‘non-native like’	Description of their own English: for all of them ‘near-native like’
Teacher identity: being innovative, self-critical, competent in the use of technology	Teacher identity: essentialist
Effects of current status of English: technology-related techniques and procedures in the classroom	Effects of current status of English: whose English to teach, how to teach skills such as speaking, what techniques to use
Teaching accents in English: American, British, or both	Teaching accents in English: all varieties
Presentation of different varieties in the classroom: for half of them ‘yes’, for the other half ‘no’	Presentation of different varieties in the classroom: for all of them ‘yes’

All in all, findings confirmed to the effectiveness of data-based task methodology (Borg, 1998) in raising the awareness of participant teachers on identity and ELF and these will be discussed in detail in the following section.

## 5. Discussion

The results have indicated that the participant teachers’ definition of ELF resembled earlier definitions of ELF as defined by theorists in the field (Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey, 2011). However, all of the PTs overlooked the fact that Turkey is an ELF setting, since they defined it as EFL setting. In contrast, all in-service teachers were aware of the fact that Turkey was

an ELF context. Surprisingly enough, PTs appeared to have the conventional view of their teaching context and they located it in the expanding circle complying with the traditional Kachruvian circles (Kachru, 1982). Although English in the expanding circle used to be defined as EFL, now it can be defined as the lingua franca among users with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds for a number of purposes, for example, business and education (Park, 2012). Our line of thinking is parallel to that of Park in that Turkey can be considered an ELF setting since English is used in business, education and similar domains.

All PTs' definition of ideal teacher consisted of a native speaker model of English so it could be linked to the misleading assumption of teacher education program that they were attending (Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Llorca, 2005). In most of the courses, ideal teacher model is presented to PTs while ELF use of English is only mentioned in only one course based on the course contents of the program that the PTs were attending at the time of the study <<http://yidio.acf.marmara.edu.tr/lisans-programi/ders-icerikleri/>> (last access 08.02.2016). As a result of our informal interviews with the instructor who offers this course; that is, *Approaches to English Language Teaching I*, it was found out that only two or three paragraphs are dedicated to ELF in the chapter based on the sociocultural factors of English learning and teaching. On the contrary, for in-service teachers, non-native teachers were the ideal teachers. This could be the result of master's programs that they already completed or the doctoral studies that they were pursuing at the time of the study. Not all but some doctoral programs in Turkey recently started to include courses to address issues related to ELF, World Englishes and so forth. When checked with the background information questionnaire, it was seen that all of the in-service teachers were attending such a doctoral program. One of the researchers of this article is the instructor who offers one of the area electives <[http://fled.boun.edu.tr/home/?page\\_id=38#Doctor%20of%20Philosophy%20Program](http://fled.boun.edu.tr/home/?page_id=38#Doctor%20of%20Philosophy%20Program)> (last access 08.02.2016) and she herself includes ELF-related issues to raise the graduate students' awareness. Yet, all participating teachers, both prospective and in-service, emphasized the importance of being certified and professional in the field. For them, either native or non-native, a teacher should be trained on the necessary skills, methods and approaches to be able to teach English properly. Pedagogical knowledge as well as content knowledge that can be acquired through undergraduate studies is of utmost importance for them. To wrap up, both groups believed that it was necessary for a person to hold a legal pedagogical formation certificate to be qualified as an ideal language teacher. Even

though this is the case, for PTs the ideal teacher is a native speaker whereas for in-service teachers being a native speaker is neither an obligation nor a necessary attribution. This, once more, highlights the importance of the content of teacher education and training programs as these programs clearly shape the perspectives of teacher candidates. The mentioned programs help teacher candidates and teachers either construct or co-construct their views about native/non-native speaker dichotomy or ‘fallacy’ as Philipson (1992) called it.

Similar to the findings of Pedrazzini and Nava (2013), almost all PTs (four out of six) shaped their professional identities in reference to native-speaker norms indicating that they were not aware that they were ELF users themselves, as discussed above. PTs’ lack of ELF-awareness could be related to the curricula of teacher education programs since they lack pedagogical implications of ELF (Bayyurt and Sifakis, 2015). Sifakis and Bayyurt (2015: 471) asserted a comprehensive teacher education program involving «interested teachers in a critical reorientation of their beliefs toward English language teaching, learning and communication. This transformative framework informs what we call the ‘ELF-aware’ teacher education component». The results of the researchers’ project showed that participant teachers’ engagement with ELF-related issues helped raise their confidence as non-native speaking communicators and teachers.

When their definition of teacher identity was asked, most of the in-service teachers’ definition of teacher identity had something to do with a more essentialist view of identity with a capital ‘I’. They viewed it as something fixed, set and attributed. Essentialist views about what teacher identity is and what it means have tendency to look at it in terms of «wholeness, stability, a core identity, belongingness and homogeneity» (Le Ha, 2008: 12). PTs, on the other hand, focused more on the technical and cognitive aspect of teachers such as being equipped with technological skills and innovative ideas. Teacher identity definitions derived from both groups lacked the emphasis on the practices that concern the teacher as a whole person (Britzman, 2003; Olsen, 2008). Olsen (2008: 5) expressed that teacher identity framework «treats teachers as whole persons in and across social contexts who continually reconstruct their views of themselves in relation to others, workplace characteristics, professional purposes, and cultures of teaching». Neither group mentioned the situatedness of professional identities that are dynamic and open to change in relation to factors such as power relations, positioning with regard to others, social situations, and even inner conversations. Similarly, neither group demonstrated to have a non-essentialist view of teacher identity that involves becoming rather than being (Le Ha, 2008).

Additionally, when the current status of English and its effects on teaching and learning was discussed, it was seen that most of the PTs were more unaware on the teaching aspect of the ELF-informed or ELF-aware teaching of English language (Bayyurt and Sifakis, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2011; Sifakis and Bayyurt, 2015). Instead, their answers included innovations that entered the classrooms, supporting their definition of teacher identity. They expressed that the new methods and technology-related activities emerged as a result of the current status of English. For example, the use of blogs or wikispaces became more common teaching tools. Therefore, for them, teachers should keep up with the pace of these developments as part of their professional identities. Both groups acknowledged the rapid spread of English and said that this inevitable spread turned English into a lingua franca. However, in-service teachers' reactions and concerns demonstrated that they were more informed about the implications of the current status of English, especially in formal teaching settings, such as teaching pronunciation and teaching speaking. PTs had a narrower understanding of the current status of English delimiting it to the advancements and innovations in classroom techniques and procedures whereas in-service teachers looked from a broader perspective. For in-service teachers, how the ELF status of English affected classroom teaching, how some skills should be taught differently, whose English to teach, what techniques should be replaced with which ones were the main concerns. They tried to find answers to these questions as they thought aloud. This shows that understanding the ELF status of English is somewhat vague among PTs, again leading to the necessity of a more ELF-aware teacher education (Bayyurt and Sifakis, 2015).

Furthermore, most of the PTs adopted either American or British accents, or both, as a teaching model but not any other varieties in a given situation. They seemed to be indifferent to the other varieties of English other than American or British accents. Similar to the findings of Pedrazzini and Nava's study (2013), PTs in this study had worries about teaching their students incorrect pronunciation in English, which might result in their students' picking up the incorrect accent. Therefore, they were less eager to introduce different varieties of English to their English language learners. This shows that they cannot come up with another alternative yet. They were still operating under native-speaker norms. On the other hand, in-service teachers in the present study, unlike the ones in Pedrazzini and Nava (2013), did not mention any worries about their students' picking up wrong instances of language if exposed to different varieties of English.

In short, as discussed, the participant teachers had some understanding and acceptance of ELF at a theoretical level. However, working with data-based tasks showed that especially pre-service teachers shaped their professional identities in reference to a 'native speaker' model of English. It can be concluded that pre-service teachers will be training future ELF users according to a national view of English language teaching that takes the native speaker to be the present and future exemplar of English expression. As in-service teachers' answers explicitly indicated, being enrolled in a doctoral program that offers a course focusing on information and evaluation of ELF-aware pedagogy makes a difference in the perceptions of teachers. They were more informed and in return were more open to introducing other variables to their students. Additionally, their discourses revealed that they acknowledged that ELF offered new identity options for them professionally even though their definition of teacher identity still lacked non-essentialist, whole person, dynamic, and multifaceted aspects.

### *6. Implications*

The study has led to pedagogic implications about ELF in the area of teacher education. Teacher training programs such as Departments of ELT can contain more courses introducing different varieties of English, courses on ELF-awareness instead of emphasizing the native speaker teacher norms (Jenkins, 2007; Bayyurt and Sifakis, 2015). This would help non-native prospective teachers construct a new and a legitimate professional identity. Pre- and in-service teacher training programs should be organized to present and to familiarize practicing teachers with the new issues such as ELF. They should be shown how to reframe their current activities instead of replacing them. Bayyurt and Sifakis's (2005) pilot implementation of in-service ELF-aware teacher education program which involved teachers in reviewing the ELF literature, reflecting on their perceptions about related concerns, and developing ELF-aware lessons for their learners supported the point. Researchers put forward that in-service teachers can integrate ELF-aware instruction to a traditional EFL curriculum. Participating teachers in the project expressed that they strongly believed that their learners could gain from becoming ELF-aware, without this influencing the way EFL is taught in a country like Turkey. As seen, results of this project yielded promising findings. Therefore, a similar ELF-aware teacher education program, or at least one course or an area elective course, can be integrated in pre-service teacher training

programs in Turkey with the hope that this approach will be helpful for the prospective teachers, more importantly their learners, and even their wider social circle.

Additionally, in the beginning, pre-service teachers can be informed that they could start teaching a particular standard variety of English to their beginner level students; however, when the students reach a certain level of higher proficiency in English, they can be presented with ELF-related language teaching materials.

This study opens up a path for further research. It should be noted that this study was not a longitudinal one. It attempted to gather information about teachers' current self-perceptions, their definitions of themselves as professionals, and their discourses as revealed while working with ELF-data presented to them in the interviews. The limited time and scope of this study did not enable us to view teachers' identities as always becoming, as constructed through interaction and negotiation, or as positioned by the discursive practices of society. A further, larger, and a long-term study can be carried out to investigate the issue more deeply.

## *7. Conclusions*

This study aimed to find out how Turkish pre- and in-service teachers of English view themselves, construct their identities in the realm of ELF and how they do so in their discourses by reflecting on some data-based tasks. As Borg (1998) also suggested, data-based activities were used as a useful contribution to teachers' disclosure in this study. Participant teachers acted as if they were data-analysts and reflected more holistically while commenting on other teachers' classroom behaviors, beliefs, and ELF-related concerns. Raising participant teachers' awareness of language variation within a broader perspective such as ELF helped us gain an insight on how they defined themselves as teachers.

This study has led to the conclusion that all of the participant teachers seemed to be aware of the existence of ELF. However, unlike in-service teachers, pre-service teachers would not reflect an ELF-aware approach in their future classroom teaching. Furthermore, pre-service teachers were unaware of ELF as an identity option. We have a strong belief in that among the available identity options for non-native teachers of English in contexts like Turkey, ELF offers a more advantageous and useful alternative compared to the traditional identity options. ELF-aware teacher education instruction has the potential of providing teachers with a framework to

re-orient and transform their convictions. These re-orientations and transformations may result in raising their self-confidence as non-native speakers, communicators, more essentially as prospective or practicing teachers.

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Paola Caleffi

*ELF in the Speaking and Listening Activities of Recently  
Published English-language Coursebooks*

ABSTRACT:

This paper focuses on the presence of ELF-oriented approaches in the listening and speaking activities of recently published English-language coursebooks for adult learners and Upper Secondary School students. The listening and speaking tasks are analyzed to investigate whether they provide exposure to a plurality of accents, and offer opportunities to exploit the communicative strategies necessary for effective communication in an increasingly multilingual/multicultural environment that recognizes the lingua-franca status of English.

*Introduction*

Today English is increasingly being used in contexts of international communication where most participants are non-native speakers (NNSs) who use English as a «contact language» (Firth, 1996: 240) to interact with each other and achieve mutual understanding. It is arguably «the chosen foreign language of communication» (Firth, 1996: 240), which users employ alongside their own and other languages they may know, showing a remarkable ability in making dynamic and active use of their linguistic resources (e.g. Mauranen and Ranta, 2009; Archibald *et al.*, 2011). The international status of the language has fostered the regular occurrence of ‘ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) situations’ (e.g. business and/or academic meetings, exchanges on social networks etc.), namely, «de-territorialized speech events» (Seidlhofer, 2011: 4) in which «there is not necessarily a coincidence of linguistic forms but rather an acceptance that people need to communicate within a certain functional realm despite their possible pronunciation, grammatical, vocabulary, cultural and rhetorical difference» (Friedrich, 2012: 44).

Native speakers (NSs) of English do take part in these lingua franca situations, but «the native-speaker community is irrelevant anyway»

(Seidlhofer, 2011: 16). Indeed, while the world's population who has English as a first language (L1) is declining, that for whom English is either a second language (L2) (e.g. India) or a foreign language (FL) (e.g. China) is growing exponentially (Crystal, 2008, 2012). The increasing majority of NNSs using English in their daily practices is likely to make the non-native (NN) group «the primary force fostering the emergence of “new Englishes” [with] implications for the future character of the language» (Crystal 2008: 5), a view which is shared by many linguists (e.g. Seidlhofer, 2004, 2011; Graddol, 1997).

Changes in the perception of the role of English in the globalized world have indeed influenced the discourse about approaches to English language teaching (ELT) (e.g. Jenkins, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2004, 2011; Dewey, 2012). However, there still seems to be a divergence between what is happening to English in the real world and how English is thought of as a language-subject in the context of ELT (e.g. Seidlhofer, 2011).

A crucial point is whether or not, and to what extent, the recognition of the special status of English as ‘the’ global lingua franca has so far resulted into any adjustments in ‘how’ the language is taught (methodology, materials, contexts), ‘what’ is taught of the language, ‘by whom’ (ideally) and to ‘what purpose(s)’. A critical rethinking of these aspects should include (if not be based on) careful considerations of the changes, in both learners and learners’ needs, brought about by globalization. It should address the «(un)suitability of conventional frames of reference for learning/teaching English» (Dewey, 2012: 143), particularly with respect to «inherited beliefs about standardization and the monolithic approach this entails» (Dewey, 2012: 153), to the assumption that the goal for learners of English is to achieve native-like competence to be able to use English in interactions with native speakers only, and to those linguistic models traditionally regarded as ‘the’ learning targets (e.g. Alptekin, 2002; Seidlhofer, 2011).

In the light of the change in the role (and nature) of English, the adoption of an ELF-oriented perspective in ELT (e.g. Brumfit, 2002; Gnutzmann and Intemann, 2005; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Dewey and Cogo, 2007; McKay and Bokhorst-Heng, 2008; Seidlhofer, 2004, 2011) would imply a shift of the pedagogical focus from ‘form’ to ‘use’, making reference to what learners actually do with the language, and to how and with whom they actually communicate and will communicate in English. In other words, a shift towards a pedagogical focus that includes the ‘user’ and the ‘context of use’, and not only the ‘learner’ and the ‘context of learning’. Indeed, people who learn English today are both ‘learners’ and

'users' of it (D'Andrea, 2012). In Seidlhofer's words «[l]earners of English as a foreign language assume the role of users of English as a lingua franca. As they move into contexts of use outside the classroom, EFL learners become ELF users» (Seidlhofer, 2011: 187).

Taking this dual role into account, an ELF perspective in ELT would imply closer attention to all the resources the 'learner' can exploit to become an efficient 'user'. Particularly, learners should be encouraged to wholly draw upon their linguistic resources, including their L1, and take advantage of their previous experience(s) of (at least) one other language. This would help them learn how «to language» (Seidlhofer, 2011: 189), that is, get the meaning across irrespective of the possible (non-)conformity of their English against ENL (English as a Native Language) norms. It is this capability to naturally put the language to effective communicative use that traditional ELT pedagogy fails to foster. In fact, by setting ENL as the only legitimate ultimate goal, it does not allow learners to appropriate the language for themselves and their communicative needs. In an ELF perspective, instead, «the focus should not be on the *forms* of learner language and how far they deviate from NS norms, but on how effectively they *function* in making meaning» (Seidlhofer, 2011: 195, italics in original).

One way in which this alternative approach in ELT could be implemented may be that of designing didactic materials, particularly ELT coursebooks, with activities reflecting the heterogeneity of contexts of use outside the classroom, and developing the communicative competence which is needed in such diverse contexts.

### *1. ELF and ELT textbooks*

ELF research and empirical findings concerning current principles and practice in ELT (e.g. Howatt and Widdowson, 2004) could help shed light on how an ELF-oriented pedagogy might work, and at the same time offer teachers some useful tips about what they could possibly change/incorporate in their teaching practices. The language coursebook – a crucial tool for ELT teachers – might be a good starting point.

Given the pedagogic implications connected with the change in the role of English, and the theoretical and methodological challenges posed by ELF studies, one would expect teaching materials to reflect the new multifaceted reality that English represents today. As Hutchinson and Torres (1994) maintain, «[...] the textbook has a vital and positive part to play in the day-to-day job of teaching English, and [...] its importance

becomes even greater in periods of change» (Hutchinson and Torres 1994: 317). The great importance of textbooks in a changing environment is highlighted also by Matsuda (2012), who maintains that «few teachers [...] have a rich enough knowledge of and personal experience with all of the varieties and functions of English that exist today, and thus they need to rely on teaching materials in order to introduce students to the linguistic and cultural diversity of English» (Matsuda, 2012: 169).

However, investigation into teaching materials (e.g. Gilmore, 2004; Gray, 2010; Tomlinson, 2011) and, in particular, recent research on the presence of ELF in English language coursebooks (e.g. Kivistö, 2005; Eggert, 2007; Takahishi, 2010; Vettorel and Corrizzato, 2012; Tomlinson and Masuhara, 2013; Naji Meidani and Pishghadam, 2013; Vettorel and Lopriore, 2013) have shown that even though «[some] recent textbooks [adhere] more to the principles of EIL [...] [and] try to depict more aspects of the Expanding and Outer Circle countries» (Naji Meidani and Pishghadam, 2013: 93), and «some changes have occurred between the recorded materials of a decade ago and more recent textbook recordings» (Eggert, 2007: 30), it seems that «ELF/EIL have not yet taken hold in English language teaching» (Eggert, 2007: 32).

Apart from a generally recognized trend to include in textbooks multiculturally-oriented content and 'globalized' topics, and in spite of an emerging tendency to reflect on the sociocultural aspects of the spread of English on a global scale (Vettorel and Lopriore, 2013), merely linguistically speaking, ELT coursebooks appear to have remained quite traditional in their approach (Seidlhofer, 2011). ENL (especially the standard British and American English) is still proposed as the target model, despite the variety of grammatical and lexical forms that English displays today (McKay, 2012). Particularly, «the existence of multiple legitimate varieties of English is rarely represented in ELT textbooks» (Matsuda, 2012: 171). If, on the one hand, there seems to be acknowledgment that EIL/ELF is «not any longer tied to one (Anglophone) culture» (Vettorel and Lopriore, 2013: 487), on the other hand ELF settings of language use appear to be regarded as largely marginal. This is confirmed both by the representation of English users and accents and by the kind of interactions where English is employed. The main characters in textbooks still come from Inner-Circle countries and contribute more substantially than NNSs to the dialogues, while accents are only marginally representative of NNSs (e.g. Matsuda, 2002; Kopperoinen, 2011; Naji Meidani and Pishghadam, 2013); most interactions are still among NSs or between NNSs and NSs (e.g. Matsuda, 2002). Therefore, what emerges from the analyses of textbooks is that «[o]verall,

materials published specifically for classroom use [...] tend to be based on and reinforce a common assumption in the field of ELT that English is the language of the Inner Circle, particularly that of the US and of the UK, and the reason for learning English is to interact with native English speakers» (Matsuda, 2012: 171).

Such representation of English and of its users does not seem to mirror today's complex reality, since it fails to acknowledge the increased use of this language among non-native speakers, and the heterogeneity of its forms and functions. This is not likely to help learners become aware of and prepare for the encounter with other varieties (and non-native interlocutors) outside the language classroom. An inclusion of ELF research findings in the designing of ELT materials might be helpful for learners to exploit the proposed tasks/activities to familiarize with the multifaceted reality of English (use) outside the classroom. In turn, this would entail more realistic expectations about attainable linguistic goals, and enhance students' confidence in achieving successful communication as legitimate members of the community of English users. As Vettorel and Lopriore put it (2013: 484), «English cannot any longer be considered a monolithic entity, not least in didactic terms». A more comprehensive approach in the designing of language coursebooks that would provide «“appropriate” and realistic materials» (Vettorel and Lopriore, 2013: 485) and take into account the increasingly wider range of contexts and users employing English as the global lingua franca of communication could «help sensitize teachers to the deep changes English is going through» (Vettorel and Lopriore, 2013: 485).

Investigations into the extent to which recently published English-language coursebooks have actually integrated an ELF perspective into their design may shed light on the current availability of teaching materials enabling teachers and learners to approach English as *the* lingua franca of the twenty-first century (Kirkpatrick, 2006). It is precisely the purpose of this study to contribute to such investigation by providing the findings of the analysis of four recently published coursebooks, as illustrated in the next sections.

## *2. The study*

### *2.1 Aim of the study and research focus*

This study aims to report on the extent to which the listening and speaking activities of recently published English-language coursebooks

for adult learners and Upper Secondary School students are designed to foster aural and oral skills for effective communication in an increasingly multilingual environment, where English works as *the* lingua franca. Considering that the major area of investigation of ELF research is speech, a focus on the listening and speaking components seemed particularly suitable for this kind of investigation.

For the purpose of my study, I concentrated my analysis mainly on the following elements:

- A) Listening activities
  - i.* exposure to/reflection on authentic NNSs' accents engaged in authentic spoken discourse;
  - ii.* exposure to/reflection on NNSs-NNSs oral exchanges providing examples of use of accommodation strategies;
  - iii.* exposure to a variety of purposes of interaction in (realistic) international contexts of language use.
- B) Speaking activities
  - i.* active engagement in tasks fostering the use of learners' linguistic resources and/or communication strategies for an intended communicative goal;
  - ii.* discussion/reflection on cross-cultural/global topics and multi-culturally-oriented content;
  - iii.* engagement in activities connected/comparable with learners' experiences of ELF use outside the classroom.

## *2.2 Coursebook selection and methodology*

The first step was to identify the English-language coursebooks that would form the corpus of my analysis. Eventually, I chose four texts (see [Appendix A](#)) hereafter referred to as Book 1 (B1), Book 2 (B2), Book 3 (B3) and Book 4 (B4). These coursebooks are designed by native speakers and not addressed to any specific «local culture of learning» (McKay, 2012: 81). The reasons for choosing them were their recent year of publication (2010 to 2013), and the challenging EIL/ELF-oriented (sounding) claims they make as far as their approach and objectives are concerned. Indeed, the overviews of the four textbooks maintain, to some degree, to be aware of issues such as EIL/ELF, English varieties, native and non-native voices, and claim to have been designed with the purpose of offering authenticity, real-world and international settings of language use (see [Appendix B](#)).

For the sake of homogeneity, I decided to analyze the intermediate level of the four book series. The analysis involved only the students'

book (SB) «as this is the only course component used by many teachers around the world» (Tomlinson and Masuhara, 2013: 235). Accordingly, the teacher's book (TB) and the audio/video material connected with the units examined in the student's book were also analyzed in parallel, while the workbook and the web-based material (normally used for consolidation and/or self-study) were not considered.

The analysis was carried out by examining the listening and speaking activities of four units in each book (see [Appendix A](#)). The units were selected based on their topic and the extent to which it was deemed more likely to be permeated by an ELF approach (e.g. travel, work, language and culture, communications).

The analysis was conducted by examining closely all the sections and activities specifically presented as 'Listening' and 'Speaking', together with the 'Pronunciation' or 'Conversation Practice' sections, and all the speaking/audio material provided under other headings (e.g. 'Vocabulary') but connected with the listening/speaking tasks. Instructions and tips in the teacher's guide for each of the examined section were also considered.

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1 Listening

With only some exceptions, the findings concerning the listening activities and tasks were to some extent disappointing if compared with the 'promises' and claims made in the books overviews, as the next sections will illustrate.

##### 3.1.1 *Exposure to/reflection on authentic NNSs' accents engaged in authentic spoken discourse*

Being almost all the interactions in the examined material of the NS-NS kind, opportunities to hear NN accents are hardly to be found. The prevailing (if not the only) accent is Standard British English, with occasional instances of regional varieties, mainly northern British accents – like Scottish or Irish (B2, B3, B4) – and instances of American or Canadian English (B1, B2, B3, B4). As for the authenticity of the accent of those characters who are said to be from non-English-speaking countries, the general impression is that of simulation of foreign accents by native-speaker actors, which results in characters sounding like «exotic beings» (Tomlinson and Masuhara, 2013: 244). The artificiality of the alleged NN accents is also conveyed by the fact that none of the presumably foreign characters

seems to have problems with either the core (e.g. vowel length or contrastive stress) or non-core (e.g. inter-dental fricatives or intonation) features recorded by ELF research in the fields of phonology and prosody (Jenkins, 2000), with neither breakdowns actually occurring during the interactions, nor discourse markers (e.g. pauses, hesitations devices etc.) being heard. The only common trait the presumably foreign accents share (sometimes inconsistently) is the trill [r], which may simply reflect the tendency towards the inclusion of rhotic varieties of English, rather than of NN accents (B1, B2, B3). Moreover, none of the books encourages reflections on NN accents and on the issue of intelligibility, not even when, as in B3, it is maintained that the course «recognizes the diversity of spoken English today and includes a large variety of native and non-native voices in all of its audio recordings» (B3 overview) and «international intelligibility» is claimed to be «the principal aim» (B3, TB: 9) – claims which are in fact not reflected in any of the listening materials/tasks proposed by the book.

An attempt to go into the direction of including a plurality of accents is to be found in the ‘Global voices’ sections of B2, whose declared aim is «to provide students with exposure to authentic speakers of English both from native and non-native English backgrounds» (B2, TB: 26). In actual fact, the voices one can hear in these sections do not really provide exposure to genuinely NN accents, the ‘foreign’ characters still sounding fake non-natives. Yet, what differentiates B2 from the other material under examination is that the ‘Global voices’ sections provide, to some extent, the opportunity (though not explicitly elicited) to reflect not only on the plurality-of-accents issue, but also on a more inclusive approach to language teaching in terms of diversity. In this respect, the teacher’s is ‘warned’ against falling into the temptation «to hunt for specific pronunciation or language errors» as, it is explained, «in real-world communication not everyone speaks perfect English all the time, not even native speakers» (B2, TB: 26). Moreover, a number of short essays focusing on issues like Global English, Englishes, pronunciation differences, localization phenomena etc. arguably show (and foster) awareness of both the pluralization of English («English is an international language, spoken all over the world, by people with different accents and different “Englishes”», Clandfield, B2, TB: XXI) and of the new communicative needs connected with the status of English as a lingua franca («Swedish English, for example, [is] the kind of English I need to know when I go to Sweden, otherwise I will be unable to converse efficiently with Swedish speakers of English», Crystal, B2, TB: XXII).

### *3.1.2 Exposure to/reflection on NNSs-NNSs oral exchanges providing examples of use of accommodation strategies*

On the whole, only a small percentage of the recordings in the analyzed units are oral exchanges. The listening material is mainly made up of either monologues or sentences/short texts read out by native speakers of British English and used as a model to drill phonetic or prosodic features. In Unit 13 of B1, for example, listening 13.2 consists of 12 mini-conversations, all between native-speakers, where the same pattern – expressions like «“What was...like?”», «“You must be...”» etc. eliciting a response including a ‘strong’ adjective like «“filthy” or «“delicious”» – is repeatedly used. The instructions in the teacher’s guide tell the teacher to do «a quick drill and focus on the intonation [...] exaggerating the stress/intonation» (B1, TB: 91), and then have the students «say the strong adjective to each other [and] check» against the recording (B1, TB: 91).

The few oral interactions are mostly of the NS-NS type, with only few examples of NNS-NS interaction, the NNS not sounding authentic, or being identified as such not so much because of his/her accent, but because of other clues, e.g. visuals or personal details, like «“You’re from Germany but resident in Spain, correct?”» (B3, TB, tapescript listening 5.5: 56).

There are no examples of oral exchanges between two or more NNSs. Moreover, in the proposed interactions there are no opportunities to hear examples of accommodation strategies, as in none of the conversations there seem to be problems of intelligibility or mutual understanding.

### *3.1.3 Exposure to a variety of purposes of interaction in (realistic) international contexts of language use*

Though to a different extent, the interactions included in the listening materials of the examined units are hardly contextualized, and most of them do not provide any clues about the where-and-when of the situation; in many cases, not even the names of the interacting characters, their nationality or cultural/linguistic background are provided. In the ‘Global voices’ sections of B2, the (presumably) NNSs are presented through a photo, accompanied by their names and nationalities, but no information is given about the situational context which originated the speech event. The speakers are simply engaged in short monologues on topics like «What makes a good friend» (B2, SB: 51) or «some good news they have had» (B2, SB: 75). Similarly, the tasks the students have to perform during/after the listening never include questions concerning the context and purpose of the speech event. Rather, they focus mainly on identifying specific information concerning the conversation topic and/or the target language used to deal with it.

Moreover, the fact that for the most part the interactants are and/or sound native speakers of English makes it hard to imagine the situations as reflecting realistic international contexts of language use.

### 3.2 *Speaking*

As with the findings from the investigation of the listening materials, also those which emerged from my analysis of the speaking activities did not basically meet the expectations aroused by the books overviews, as illustrated in the following sections.

#### 3.2.1 *Active engagement in tasks fostering the use of learners' linguistic resources and/or communication strategies for an intended communicative goal*

Of the four books, it seems that B1 offers the fewest opportunities for students to make use of (all) their linguistic resources and to employ communication strategies. The speaking activities are on the whole fully guided and designed more as drills than actual interactive tasks. Rather than a specific communicative goal, students are asked to respond to 'prefabricated' sentences using the target language presented in the relevant Unit (e.g. «should/should not have + past participle» for blaming people – B1, SB: 97) and they are repeatedly encouraged to «use as much language from these pages» as they can (B1, SB: 99). Similarly, the teacher is asked «to model» and «to monitor closely and note down any errors [...] in the target language» (B1, TB: 38). On the whole, the speaking tasks do not seem to be «specifically meant to highlight communicative linguistic and strategic characteristics in ELF interactive settings» (Vettorel and Lopriore, 2013: 495), mainly because students are told *how* to say something and encouraged to «memorise the conversations» (B1, TB: 38) and somehow mime them.

The other three books appear to offer more opportunities for the students to interact and for a higher degree of freedom/creativity in the performance of the speaking tasks. In B2, B3 and B4 there are a number of speaking tasks – e.g. making a group decision (B2, SB: 9); asking for clarification (B2, TB: 47); finding a solution (B3, SB: 7); reaching (an) agreement (B4, SB: 62) or role-playing (B4, SB: 115) – which imply active cooperation and/or negotiation between the speakers to achieve a specific communicative goal. In B2, the teacher is invited not to «over-correct» and recommended to «encourage students to use what language they can at this stage» (B2, TB: 12). However, the teacher is in general not explicitly made aware of *how* these activities can be exploited for the implementation of linguistic resources and/or communicative strategies.

### 3.2.2 *Discussion/reflection on cross-cultural/global topics and multiculturally-oriented content*

The speaking tasks proposed by the books do not seem to focus on global issues, or to provide a global perspective on local issues. In B1, for example, Unit 14 deals with technology. The topic would lend itself to generate a discussion on a global issue like the massive changes digital technologies have brought about in our lives. Instead, the questions eliciting the discussion (e.g. «What kind of computer do you have?» or «Why did you choose that make?») (B1, SB: 98) sound more technical than globally-oriented; the teacher's guide does not prompt the teacher to elicit questions in this direction either. This applies also to topics like the environment, or immigration, the focus of the speaking being more on the target language form than on the content.

In B2, opportunities to discuss cross-cultural issues are offered in the 'Global English' sections, extra reading lessons focusing on English and language in general. These sections include a speaking activity, the aim of which is claimed to be «for students to relate the material in the reading to their own language, culture and experiences» (B2, TB: 13). So, for example, the speaking activity in the 'Global English' section of Unit 1 (dealing with Englishes) offers a good opportunity for students to talk not only about English but also about their language «changing across regions according to culture» (B2, SB: 15); moreover, students are encouraged to observe and reflect on the use of English in their own language, which indirectly introduces the notion of 'linguistic landscape' and of «how the surrounding environment is permeated by English» (Vettorel and Lopriore, 2013: 496).

B3 and B4 rely on visuals to introduce their global topics. In the introduction to the teacher's guide, the authors of B3 claim that the coursebook aims to «take a broader view of the study of English in today's world [...] [and to] consider cultural contexts not only from the traditional English-speaking world but from a variety of different global situations» (B3, TB: 6). Indeed, just flicking through the coursebook one is immediately caught by the engaging images reminding of different cultures/parts of the world. Similarly, the main topic of each unit in B4 is introduced via an eye-catching colour photograph showing different parts of the world (e.g. Brunei, Kenya, etc.). If properly exploited, these pictures may provide a chance to deal with cross-cultural/global topics. Only occasionally, however, the proposed speaking tasks relating to the picture are used to initiate a multiculturally-oriented discussion.

Similarly, the videos at the end of each unit in B4 may provide opportunities to deal with multicultural content. For example, the video in Unit

4 is about Confucianism in China, and the related speaking activity is a role-play implying students to compare the Chinese culture with their own on the aspects of «respect», «learning» and «virtue and wealth» (B4, SB: 55). However, as with the pictures, no specific instructions in this sense are present in the teacher's guide (e.g. how to develop the conversation and include more comparisons between different cultures).

Linguistically speaking, no prompts are given, neither in the teacher's guides nor in the students' task descriptions, to encourage learners from different lingua-cultures to bring their languages into the classroom, or make any comparisons between English and their L1s. Instead, English is presented as an indispensable language to communicate with other people, but still in the traditional perspective of a native-speaker-like proficiency being necessary to «succeed», both professionally and socially (see for example Unit 11 of B3, where a Spanish/Basque speaker of English who is visualizing her future life in connection with her knowledge of English imagines she will live in England and be able to speak English «as well as [...] Spanish of Basque» (B3, SB: 123).

### *3.2.3 Engagement in activities connected/comparable with learners' experiences of ELF use outside the classroom*

On the whole, not many opportunities are offered by the examined units for the students to engage in activities connected/comparable with experiences of ELF outside the classroom. This is particularly true with B1. First of all, no discussion in whatsoever form is elicited on topics like the use of English as a lingua franca. Moreover, even in those situations where a development of the task might have been in the direction of getting students to speak about their use of English in ELF settings, the teacher is given no prompts or instructions in this sense. For example, for the lead-in of the first speaking activity of Unit 13, students are asked to talk about their travel experiences. However, the questions suggested in the teacher's guide – e.g. if students enjoy travelling (B1, TB: 88) – do not contain any hint about, for instance, language-related problems the students might have faced, or the way they have overcome them. The focus is more on teaching collocations typically used when talking about travelling, rather than having students report on travelling as an experience of ELF use outside the classroom.

In general, almost none of the speaking activities in the examined books is accompanied by any reflections or suggestions for the students to notice, observe, experiment the language they are learning in contexts that might be relevant to their lives outside the language class.

Some opportunities are offered in the 'Global voices' sections of B2.

In the teacher's guide, the teacher is prompted to ask students whether they have «used their English as a “lingua franca” with other non-native English speakers», how they found it and what tips they have «on understanding or making themselves understood in an international context» (B2, TB: 27). Other opportunities are present in the speaking activities proposed in the 'Global English' sections, as they encourage learners to reflect on the existence of more than one English, their own English possibly being a legitimate one. The teacher's guide of B2 is also characterized by explicit notes and prompts aimed at developing awareness that learners have used and will be using English outside the classroom, in the «real world», and teachers are repeatedly invited «not to over-correct», (Tips in the TB for all 'Global voices' sections). It is also explicitly recognized that «it's important for all learners to have experience of listening to, and “tuning in” to a wide variety of different pronunciations from all over the world» (Marks, B2, TB: XXIX).

Some degree of engagement in speaking activities connected with learners' experience of ELF use outside the classroom is also present in Unit 1 of B3, where students are on more occasions invited to talk about whether they have ever found themselves in situations where they had difficulty communicating, and how they coped (e.g. B3, TB: 17). However, not much emphasis is put upon the consideration that L2 learners become L2 users «as soon as they step outside the classroom» (Cook 2002: 3; Seidlhofer 2011: 187, quoted in Vettorel and Lopriore, 2013: 492), at least not in terms of instructions and guidance for the teacher.

#### *4. Conclusions*

As illustrated in the previous sections, only B2 and B3 make explicit references to issues related to the new status and role of English in today's globalized world, to its varieties and accents, and to the effects of globalization on language practices and language use. B2 seems to be particularly concerned with these topics, offering a teacher's guide which contains experts' essays on the matter.

Similarly, though with less emphasis, B3 draws the teacher's attention to «the status of English as an international language» and to «the need to consider cultural contexts not only from the traditional English-speaking world» (B3, TB: 6), recognizing the priority of «international intelligibility» when it comes to pronunciation issues (B3, TB: 9). However, in both books there seems to be a mismatch between the claims made in the teacher's guide (or in the course presentation) and the actual content of the

coursebook, especially from a (merely) linguistic point of view. Neither book actually gives learners opportunities to listen to authentic non-native accents, nor to authentic natural discourse exemplifying the use of accommodation strategies; in fact, no examples of NNSs-NNSs interactions are given. The fact that learners can also listen to different English accents (though to a limited extent and with some of these accents sounding artificial) is generally not highlighted through specific tasks aimed at drawing the students' attention onto this aspect, or even less at helping students develop an ear for a plurality of accents. Opportunities for learners to actively engage in activities connected/comparable with their (past or future) experiences of ELF use in the real world, and specifically in international contexts, though at times provided, are only limitedly exploited. Such opportunities are rather controlled and guided, the possibility for students to experiment with communicatively effective ELF strategies and to exploit all their linguistic resources not being explicitly encouraged, but rather depending on the teacher's own initiative.

On the whole, the speaking and listening activities in the examined units of B1 and B2 resemble those that have always been present in ELT. Basically, receptive and productive skills for language use in *international* contexts are not actually practised through specifically designed tasks, and students are not guided to reflect and/or report on the kind of skills and competence they actually need to have in «the real world» to achieve successful communication.

B1 and B4 do not seem to consider the notion of ELF or international English, neither to be interested in raising students' and/or teachers' awareness of the lingua-franca status of English. B1 does use the expression 'English as a lingua franca' twice in the TB, claiming for example that «[v]ocabulary is carefully chosen to enable students to talk about the topic in the context of English as a lingua franca» (B1, TB: 4). However, the language target the course presents (not only in the 'Native Speaker Note') is still basically ENL, rather than EIL/ELF.

Of the four books examined in this study, B4 – despite being the most recent – is the one that never refers to the new status of English, neither in terms of international language, nor in terms of lingua franca of communication. Although no claims are specifically made in the book overviews to present English as either an international or a lingua franca language, the authors of B4, just like those of the other three books, declare that the aim of the course is to prepare learners to use the language in the real world. Moreover, the superb photographs showing places and countries from all over the planet seem to be designed to convey the idea

of a multicultural world connected through the language which is taught in the book. However, the way English is presented throughout the course does not seem to take into consideration any possible implications of ELF-oriented pedagogy, neither in the kind of instructions for the teacher, nor in the tasks students are invited to perform, which do not basically differ from the ones the ELT world is accustomed to; this applies in particular to aspects related to pronunciation, where there is a lot of emphasis on features that are typical of RP (such as ‘exaggerated’ intonation patterns, weak and strong forms, dark /l/) and that, instead, would appear as somewhat unnecessary in an ELF perspective, because not essential for intelligibility (Jenkins, 2000).

I can conclude that, despite claims of ‘internationality’ and explicit recognition (with the exception of B4) of the new status of English as a lingua franca, language models and targets presented by all books in the examined speaking and listening activities are still predominantly, if not exclusively, linked to the Anglophone world, with Standard British English representing the model par excellence, in terms of lexis, grammar and pronunciation, as well as linguacultural elements.

On the whole, it seems that the assumption on which the examined course-books are based is that the goal of teaching and learning English is for *all* learners to achieve, or approximate as much as possible, ‘native-speakerness’, with a lot of drilling and other controlled and guided tasks of the listen-and-repeat, ask-and-answer, or use-the-target-language type. Undoubtedly, there will always be situations where learners actually need (and/or aspire) to attain native-speaker competence, possibly in one specific Inner Circle variety. Yet, the idea of non-native bilinguals successfully communicating in English with each other (especially outside the classroom) still does not seem to be taken into consideration, and the increasingly overlapping roles of learners and users do not appear to be a matter of concern either.

Therefore, an ELF-oriented approach emerges only limitedly in my findings, and mainly in terms of content rather than language representation. For the time being, a possible integration of this perspective in language teaching seems to lie more in the hands of teachers than in those of teaching-material designers.

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## APPENDIX A

### *Coursebook Corpus*

Book	Title	Authors	Publisher	Year of publication
1 (B1)	<i>Outcomes Intermediate</i> Student's Book (SB) Teacher's Book (TB)	Hugh Dellar and Andrew Walkely Barbara Garside	Heinle Cengage Learning	2010
2 (B2)	<i>Global Intermediate</i> Coursebook (SB) Teacher's Book (TB)	Hugh Dellar and Andrew Walkely Barbara Garside	Macmillan	2011
3 (B3)	<i>The Big Picture Intermediate</i> Student's Book (SB) Teacher's Book (TB)	Ben Goldstein Sheila Dignen	Richmond	2012
4 (B4)	<i>Life Intermediate</i> Student's Book (SB) Teacher's Book (TB)	Helen Stephenson, Paul Dummet and John Hughes Mike Sayer	Heinle Cengage Learning	2013

### *Examined Units*

B1:  
Unit 5, *Working Life*; Unit 13, *Travel*; Unit 14, *Technology*; Unit 16, *News and Events*.

B2:  
Unit 1, *Language & Culture*; Unit 4, *Friends & Strangers*; Unit 6, *Seen & Heard*; Unit 7, *Supply & Demand*.

B3:  
Unit 1, *Communication*; Unit 5, *Bridges, Borders and Barriers*; Unit 6, *Global and Local*; Unit 11, *A Sense of Identity*.

B4:  
Unit 4, *Opportunities*; Unit 5, *Travel*; Unit 9, *Trade*; Unit 11, *Connections*.

## APPENDIX B

### *Coursebooks Overviews*

#### *Outcomes* (B1)

«Understanding the way the world learns English, Heinle has created *Outcomes* [...] «Opportunities to practise the language in authentic settings»<sup>1</sup>. «Real English for the real world. Natural, real-world grammar and vocabulary help students to succeed in social, professional and academic settings» (Teacher's Book, back cover). «Vocabulary is carefully chosen to enable students to talk about the topic in the context of English as a lingua franca (Teacher's Book: 4).

#### *Global* (B2)

«It enables you to learn English as it is used in our globalised world [...] and to learn about English as an international language» (Teacher's Book, back cover). «This course also includes a focus [...] on the English language as a subject itself. What is it? How is it changing? What kinds of English are appearing around the world?» (Clandfield, Teacher's Book: XXI).

#### *The Big Picture* (B3)

«The Big Picture is genuinely international. It is built around global topics and cultural materials which will be immediately relevant to the lives and experiences of learners. It also recognizes the diversity of spoken English today and includes a large variety of native and non-native voices in all of its audio recordings»<sup>2</sup>. «Real-life, relevant, international contexts» (Teacher's Book, back cover).

#### *Life* (B4)

«Real life lessons model and practise everyday functions, preparing learners to use language in the real world. Driven by rich National Geographic content and the fundamental values inspiring people to care about the planet, celebrating human achievement and exploring diversity»<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Outcomes* Guided Tour. Retrieved from <[ngllmedia.cengage.com/resource\\_uploads/static\\_marketing/1111031096/1943/index.html](http://ngllmedia.cengage.com/resource_uploads/static_marketing/1111031096/1943/index.html)> (last access 20.10.2014).

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from <[www.richmondelt.com/thebigpicture/about](http://www.richmondelt.com/thebigpicture/about)> (last access 20.10.2014).

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from <[www.ngllife.com/content/course-overview-0](http://www.ngllife.com/content/course-overview-0)> (last access 20.10.2014).

Paola Vettorel

*Young Learners' Uses of ELF: Moving Beyond the Classroom Walls*

ABSTRACT:

This paper deals with data from a project carried out in three primary schools in Italy, which appear characterized by several ELF-related processes such as code-switching to signal cultural identity and pragmatic communicative strategies. Findings from a follow-up study with primary school English teachers as to the pedagogic implications of Englishes and ELF are also examined. Drawing from both studies, it will be discussed how international school partnerships can foster pedagogic approaches oriented at developing (intercultural) communication skills and effectively communicating through English as a *lingua franca*.

*Introduction*

For younger generations, the foreign language classroom is increasingly becoming one among the several settings where English is encountered. Contact with this 'global language' takes place daily through the media (TV, music, gaming), in the linguistic landscape, via tourism and international mobility, and even younger learners are likely to be familiar with ELF contexts out of first-hand experience, for example while on holiday or meeting tourists in their town. As in other European countries, participation in projects related to Life Long Learning Programmes (LLL) has been growing at all levels of education also in Italy, with a significant presence of primary schools particularly in eTwinning<sup>1</sup>. These internationally-oriented interactive spaces provide important opportunities for learners to effectively step into the role of ELF users and familiarize with ELF multilingual and multicultural contexts of language use.

Findings from a project carried out in three primary schools in Italy (Vettorel, 2010, 2013a) suggest that young learners are highly motivated to participate in such internationally-oriented contexts and to interact with peers of other linguacultures about their cultural and personal worlds. Both written and oral data from the project activities are characterized by

several ELF-related communication processes, such as code-switching to signal cultural identity, the creation of some non-standard lexical items, as well as effective pragmatic communicative strategies. What is more, a follow-up study with primary school English teachers (Vettorel, 2013b, 2015) shows that they are well aware of their students' extended contact with English and value international school partnerships as a cultural and linguistic 'window on the world'. Drawing on the data of both studies, this paper discusses how international school partnerships can foster pedagogic approaches to develop intercultural communication skills and offer opportunities for (young) learners to communicate through English in its *lingua franca* role.

### *1. The 'ELF & ICC' Project*

The 'ELF & Intercultural Communicative Competence' project was developed over two school years (2009-2011) in three primary schools in the Verona area; two of the classes involved in the initial phases of the project also participated in internationally-oriented school activities, one with an eTwinning project, and the other further developing the letter-exchange with other European pupils undertaken the previous year, carrying out some web-conference sessions with Swedish and Spanish classes, too.

The first phase of the project was aimed at fostering awareness of the presence of English in the pupils' linguistic environment, of its spread and plurality, together with the *lingua franca* role it largely plays. Children were guided to reflect upon their experiences of communication in *lingua franca* contexts by mentioning several situations, from first-hand to family experience (e.g. at the seaside, on holiday, meeting tourists in their town, communicating with a sponsored child or with relatives living abroad), as [Figures 1](#) and [2](#) exemplify.

During the second part of the project, children were guided to discuss what they already knew about cultural representations related to the English-speaking world: the hypothesis – largely confirmed – was that, thanks to the increased opportunities offered by mobility and the media, they would be well familiar with many iconic aspects of the 'target culture' that are so often included in textbooks – just to mention a few, London and its monuments, the Royal Family, sports and traditions (Vettorel, 2010, 2008). It was thus deemed that Internationally-oriented school partnerships with peers living in other parts of Europe could constitute interesting opportunities to develop on the one hand Intercultural



Fig. 1 – Experiences of ELF



Fig. 2 – Family experiences of ELF

Communication (IC) skills, and on the other hand to use the language they were learning in realistic (ELF) contexts with participants of different linguacultures. Activities promoting communication were then developed through English as a shared lingua franca, with the concurrent aim of fostering ICC skills (Vettorel, 2010, 2013a).

Indeed, international partnerships are becoming part of educational experiences at all school levels (Maddalena, 2011; European Commission, 2012), particularly through and thanks to the support of the EU LLLP in its different actions, one of which is, since 2005, eTwinning. According to recent data, eTwinning involves more than 170,000 teachers and 33 countries (Crawley, 2013: 86; cf. also European Commission/LLLP, 2013) with about 122,637 enrolled schools and 63,140 teachers involved in projects as of June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014<sup>2</sup>. Projects on eTwinning can be managed wholly online, from identifying partners to setting up a project and carrying out communication among teachers, as well as pupils, in the dedicated virtual space; the project development phases and the final products can also be shared on the platform dedicated spaces. The eTwinning website is indeed community-oriented: as we read in the portal, it can be defined as «[t]he free and safe platform for teachers to connect, develop collaborative projects and share ideas in Europe» <<http://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/index.htm>> (last access 08.02.2016). It can thus be said to represent a particularly valuable tool to set up and manage an international project (Vettorel, forthcoming). The platform can be accessed in 26 languages, and English is most frequently employed as the in-common language of projects, often alongside other languages known by the participants (Ansan-Indire, 2010; Crawley, Gerhard *et al.*, 2010); given that English is widely taught since primary school all over Europe, the lingua franca role it plays in international school partnerships is hardly surprising.

And English was also the shared language of the European participants in the 'ELF & ICC' project; as mentioned, one school set up letter exchanges, as well as web-conferences, with previous Comenius partners and with other schools that were retrieved via the eTwinning platform; letters were exchanged in relation to Christmas traditions and trees, and, subsequently, through presentation letters with a Swedish class. The other class, instead, engaged in an eTwinning Project about legends with three schools from Poland, Latvia and Slovakia.

Records of all exchanges were kept by the teachers part of the Project team, who jointly planned the activities within a collaborative Action Research methodological framework (Vettorel, 2010). The dataset comprises about 23,500 words for written data (letters, e-mails), 540 for chat conversations and 2,150 words for web-conferences<sup>3</sup>.

## *2. ELF-oriented communication*

Given the internationally-oriented nature of the activities, set within a communicative rather than a strictly school-task framework and involving participants of different linguacultures, an ELF-oriented and qualitative approach was undertaken for data analysis. The exchanges are characterised by several traits that are common to ELF findings in other contexts, from lexico-grammar to the use of code-switching to signal cultural identity (Vettorel, 2013a). The latter in particular will be taken into examination in the following sections, together with exemplifications of how these communicative exchanges were not hindered by linguistic 'deviances' (e.g. dropping the 3<sup>rd</sup> person –s morpheme in Simple Present verbs, or using a non-standard word order in questions), but rather characterised by pragmatic communicative strategies, particularly during the web-conferences.

### *2.1 Code-switching to express cultural elements*

It has been shown that code-switching (CS henceforth) is naturally employed in ELF interactions to various functions (Cogo, 2011; Klimpfinger, 2007, 2009), among which signalling concepts and ideas related the participants' cultural worlds. This functional use of CS can be detected in the data at several levels, both in the exchanges referring to Christmas traditions – precisely in the ones dealing with trees typical of the area where the Italian and Spanish children live – and in the presentation letters to the Swedish partners by the Italian children.

Figure 3 below exemplifies the Christmas letters by Italian children: as can be noticed, elements typically related to Italian traditional Christmas food, such as panettone, zampone and pearà<sup>4</sup> are expressed in Italian, albeit with a translation, which is not provided for pasta and lasagne; it can be inferred that, while the latter are internationally known, the need for some explanatory notes was felt for the other lexical items in order to make them comprehensible for children who, belonging to other cultures, may not be familiar with these culturally-loaded concepts.

Tuesday the 1<sup>st</sup> of December '09  
 Dear friend,  
 my name is F. I'm 10 and I live in S. Benedetto  
 Verona, Northern Italy.  
 IT'S XMAS! How do you celebrate it?  
 In Italy we:  
 ✖ decorate our home and the TREES  
 ✖ prefer the CRIB [drawing]  
 ☆ on the 13<sup>th</sup> of Dec.  
 S. Lucy comes on her donkey  
 to bring present to good children.  
 ☆ on Xmas day we go to church  
 and have lunch!  
 we have  
 PANETTONE (Sweet cake) Wine  
 ZAMPONE COTECHINO (PIG MEAT)  
 PEARA (Bread) PASTA LASAGNE



Fig. 3 – Christmas letter (Italian)

In many cases, visual glossing is also provided for culturally-loaded elements (Vettorel, 2013a); for instance, for local carols other elements such as a 'golden piglet' or the Christmas food 'carp' are both expressed in English and visually represented with a drawing in letters by Czech and Polish children. This is likely to have been done to signal their relevance and singularity to that culture, thus foregrounding their significance. Such multilingual instances are particularly frequent in the data, and in the

great majority of cases they are accompanied either by a brief translation, by an illustrative drawing, or by both.

Similar strategies can be found in the exchanges concerning the typical trees in the Spanish and Italian regions where the pupils live, as illustrated in Fig. 4 for Spanish children and Fig. 5 for Italian ones. As can be noticed, the main strategy employed by the Spanish pupils is glossing the code-switched elements with drawings, while Italian letters are often characterized both by translations and drawings (Fig. 5). Fig. 4 shows particularly clearly that elements peculiar to the area (platanos), as well as more general ones (flor, hoja de laurel) are frequently referred to in Spanish. In the case of cork, both the more general tree name (quejia, 'Quercus faginea') and the cork tree (aconorque, 'Quercus suber', Fig. 4), which is typical of the area, are referred to in Spanish, while the final product (cork) is provided in English and very frequently visually glossed.

In the above exemplifications, code-switching in the participants' L1 signals elements that are likely to have been perceived as typical of their cultural environment and linguacultural 'world'; at times, however, other languages are involved, too, especially in season's greetings, where the addressees' L1 is used, together with English and other languages (e.g.

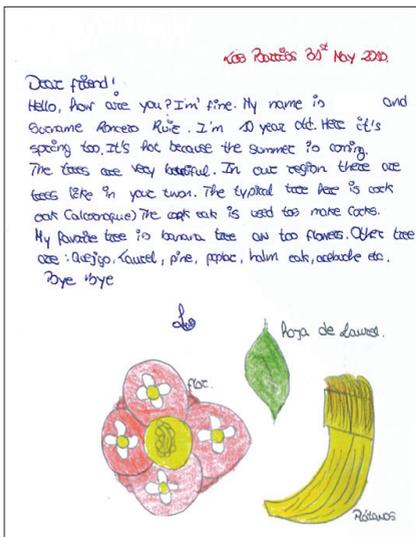


Fig. 4 – Trees (Spanish)

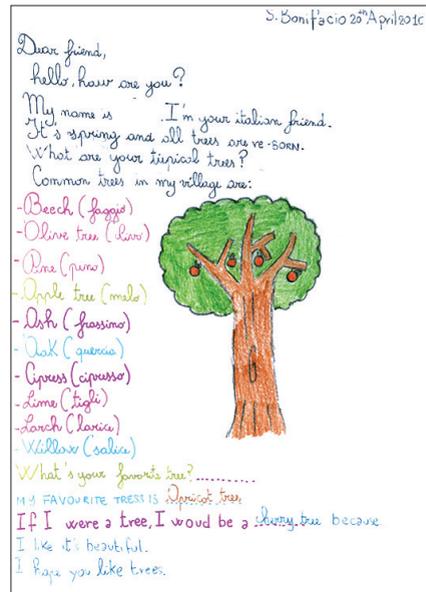


Fig. 5 – Trees (Italian)

French, Romanian, Greek). While on the one hand using the addressee's L1 can be seen as a sign of solidarity and rapport, the use of other LNs, even if in quite formulaic chunks, could be ascribed to a wish to acknowledge and mark the internationally-oriented and multilingual nature of these European exchanges.

Other instantiations connected both to the children's national identity and to their worlds in terms of personal interests can be noticed in [Fig. 6](#) and [Fig. 7](#), part of the letter exchange activity with Swedish partners.

These examples illustrate the children's strong wish to share with their partners elements of their world they deem significant and salient. They comprise food, both in its localized (as was seen for Christmas) and more global dimension (pizza, hamburger, chips, sweet marshmallows), hobbies (football, basketball), as well as aspects related to their national identity. The latter is represented in these examples by the Italian flag; in several other cases the messages contain also a reference to the President of Italy (e.g. The President of Italy is Giorgio Napolitano), or visual representations of Italy as a boot, as it is often referred to in Italian ('stivale') due to its shape. Code-switching seems once more to be employed to signal the participants' affiliation to their cultural worlds; at the same time, visual and/or linguistic cues are provided to support intelligibility – in line with ELF findings in other contexts (cf. e.g. Klimpfner, 2007, 2009; Cogo, 2011). These code-switched elements can be seen as instantiations of how multilingualism (rather than monolingualism) is an integral part of communicative practices in ELF settings, where bilinguals draw upon all their linguistic repertoires as legitimate L2 users (Cook, 2002, 2007) to express their intended meanings accordingly. In this perspective, rather than (negative) transfer, the interrelation between L1 and L2 can be seen as «bidirectional», drawing «on all kinds of resources (skills, knowledge and strategies) available to learners» (Nikolov, Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 2011: 100), within a multicompetence rather than a deficit, 'non-nativeness' framework (e.g. Pavlenko, Norton, 2007: 676; cf. also Jenkins, 2006) and the communicative aim to partake personal and linguacultural affiliations.

Indeed, these exchanges represented important opportunities to learn about cultural aspects of their peers living in other European countries. As will be seen below, the linguistic 'deviances' (when present) did not prevent effective communication among the children, who enthusiastically participated and were highly involved in the activities, both cognitively and emotionally. Rather than book-based knowledge, they could learn from their European partners elements of similarity and difference. This provided also the opportunity to reflect both on their own culture (especially as to

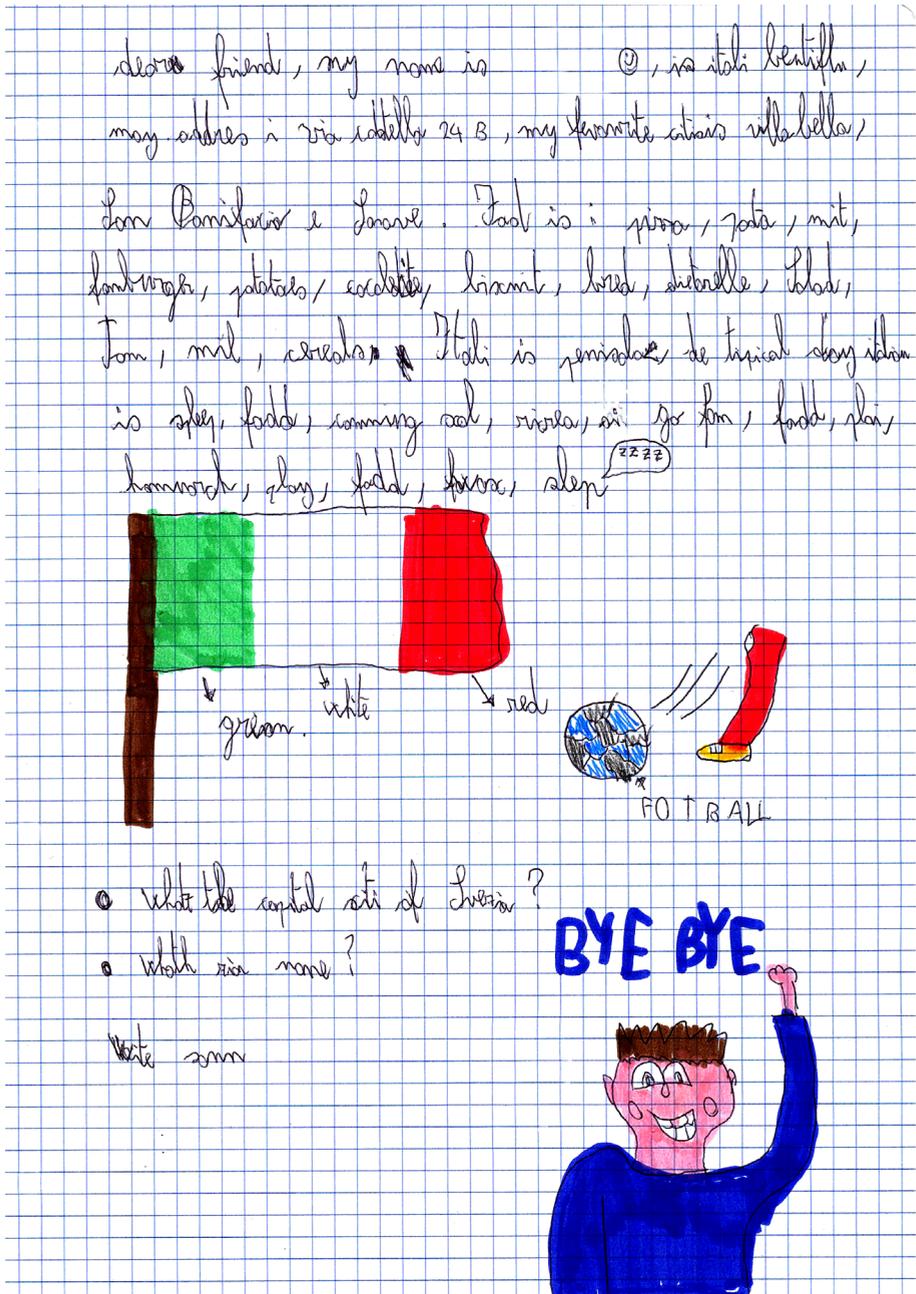


Fig. 6 – Letters to Sweden (Italian)



(e.g. Christmas trees), religious traditions, singing carols and exchanging presents are largely shared elements. Food, on the other hand, is much more localised, as well as rituals for Christmas dinner / lunch and good luck wishes on New Years' Eve. The project activities represented thus an opportunity for the development of intercultural awareness and sensitivity, as well as reflection on the learners' C1, not least in the description of traits of their culture(s) to their partners. The contribution given by the children of non-Italian origin was also fundamental in approaching otherness, fostering a broader and more inclusive perspective in classroom practices (as it had happened for Outer Circle Englishes in the activities related to awareness of World Englishes, cf. Vettorel, 2010). The fact that English was the *lingua franca* of these exchanges made communication possible; however, it did not work as a homogenising language, but it rather allowed cultural similarities and differences to emerge and to be shared in their own specificities.

### *2.2 Negotiating personal worlds – pragmatic features in oral data*

The same wish to exchange ideas about personal worlds can be detected in the oral data from the web-conference between Italian and Spanish children. The desire to communicate with their partners is well perceivable: all pupils consistently asked to take the floor and actively cooperated, supporting communication by providing translation of words into Italian, advice on lexical items or in-common references, or suggesting appropriate strategies, such as repetition or requests for clarification.

The topics the children dealt with are mainly related to their interests (school subjects and activities, music, sports); some more communicatively challenging subjects were tackled too, such as the funfair coming up in the Spanish children's town, and the class trips respectively to Madrid and Venice. The sound quality in the web-conference was frequently disturbed, and, despite the video helping in supporting interaction by making it closer to face-to-face conversation, utterances were not always fully intelligible, making the task even more demanding.

As the following extract exemplifies, pragmatic communicative features appear to be well present even in such a small-sized corpus. Same-speaker repetition, which in ELF talk secures recipient's understanding in case of misinterpretation (e.g. Kaur, 2009), emerges as a main strategy all throughout the oral data, as shown in the following extract<sup>5</sup>:

Extract 1

103 T it: what's your who's your favourite singer?

- 104 T sp: <un> xxx</un>  
105 S1 sp: what's that? <un> xx </un>  
106 T it: your favourite singer?  
107 T sp: <un> xx </un>  
[...]  
129 S1 it: who  
130 T it: music repeat MUSIC MUSIC do you like (.)?  
131 STS sp: <un> xx </un>  
132 Sx it: <whispering> do you like </whispering>  
133 S1 it: what is your favourite singer?  
134 S1 sp: repeat please  
135 T it: <loud>SINGER SINGER (.) WHAT GROUP?</loud>  
136 S1 sp: ah  
137 T it: he (.) eh eh eh @  
138 T/STS sp: <un> xx </un> <6><un> xx </un></6>  
139 S1 it: <in exasperation> <6>what is your favourite singer?</6>  
140 STS it: @@@  
141 T it: do you like rihanna do you like er  
142 S1 it: <7>Do you like rihanna? katy perry</7>  
143 T/STS sp: <7><un> xx </un></7> <un> xx </un>  
144 S1 sp: jennifer lo (.)jennifer lopez  
145 T it: <whispering> jennifer lopez </whispering>  
146 T it: ok<8> ok<8> @ jennifer lopez ok M.S. @  
147 S1 it: <8>ok<8>

In the previous turns the children had tried to deal with the topic of their favourite singer, with direct requests for repetition going on for several turns, as exemplified in line 134, where the imperative repeat is mitigated by please and linguistically 'geared' to the children's level of proficiency in English. The original question is then repeated once more in line 135 by the Italian teacher through a specification strategy, and then in an exasperated tone by the child holding the floor (line 139). This is followed by a burst of laughter by the other children that can be interpreted as support to the strategy adopted by their mate. The teacher provides an exemplification (line 141), which is promptly taken up by the child holding the floor, who adds the name of another singer (142). An answer is then given by the Spanish child (144), and confirmation of meaning finally takes place at line 145 for which the Italian teacher and student then signals comprehension (line 146, 147).

Among the several possible strategies to clarify meaning (exemplification,

definition, description, comparison, contrast, cf. e.g. Kaur, 2009: Chapter 6), exemplification is the most frequent in the data, and it is often prompted by the teachers with hyponyms or hypernyms, as in line 135 above. Given the still developing competence in English of the children, support by the respective teachers was granted all along the 13'33" length of the web-conference. Nevertheless, as these examples show, the teachers acted as a model for the use of cooperative strategies to support communication, providing examples of successful (ELF) strategies. Despite the difficulties, related also to the aforementioned sound quality problems, meaning was in most cases carried across successfully.

### *2.3 Communicating via chat*

Other instantiations of personal successful communication revolving around the children's interests can be seen in the eTwinning project email exchanges and chat conversation exemplified in Extract 2 below, that is part of the chat communication via eTwinning:

#### Extract 2

- V. (Italy)      hello A. how are you?
- A. (Slovakia)    Okay
- V.                I' dont understand: are you good or bad
- A.                I am good. What time table did ju have today
- A.                what subject is your favorite
- V.                this morning italian and maths, now english. I like italian, maths and english
- A.                are you here
- A.                my favorite subject is matsh
- A.                Maths
- V.                i like me
- A.                I go play basketball. and you

- V. I no
- A. do you have sister or brother
- V. yes, one sister
- A. I like pink what colour do you like
- V. My Favourite colour is orange
- A. I like horses and doks
- V. I like dogs, cats and canary
- A. xhave old are you
- A. have
- V. My favourite sport is swimming and volley ball
- V. sorry we have to go
- V. Bye
- V. Ok

In Extract 2 V. (Italian) and A. (Slovakian) ask each other several questions mainly related to school, their favourite school subjects and colours. In this – as in other cases (cf. Vettorel, 2013a; forthcoming) – the linguistic elements that would be considered as ‘deviant’ in ENL (e.g. ‘no’ rather than ‘I don’t’, lack of pluralization in nouns, verbs in the singular form, cf. e.g. Seidlhofer, 2011), do not appear to hinder interaction, nor to create miscommunication. Participants use and stretch the linguistic resources at their disposal to interact with each other, communicating about themselves and their world. Considering their age and level of proficiency (the exit level for primary school in Italy is set to A1 CEFR level), they appear to effectively carry across their intended meaning, and their communicative acts are oriented at getting to know each other, with genuinely communicatively oriented aims (Seidlhofer, 2011).

International exchanges, even at a primary school level, can thus constitute salient opportunities for learners to experience real and meaningful contexts of language use. The young participants in this study showed high levels of motivation and engagement all throughout the project activities, actively experimenting with the language to communicate and to learn about their mates' personal, local/national and cultural environment, exploiting the language they learnt – and were learning – to express themselves. These experiences provided them with the opportunity to step into the role of ELF users in settings that 'opened up' the classroom walls, projecting language use into real contexts, allowing them to stretch their bi- and plurilingual resources to effectively interact with peers of different linguacultures.

### *3. International partnerships: using the language – primary teachers' perceptions*

The follow-up phase of the research study was aimed at investigating primary teachers' perceptions of international exchanges as opportunities to foster the development of language and intercultural skills. Informants were experienced teachers, who agreed to participate in a questionnaire survey<sup>6</sup>; individual interviews were then carried out with 5 of the Italian teachers who had completed the questionnaire, and a focus group was held during a Comenius team meeting in one of the schools that had taken part in the 'ELF & ICC' Project, with mixed-nationality participants<sup>7</sup>. The aim of the interviews and of the focus group was to allow a deeper exploration of the topics included in the questionnaire<sup>8</sup>; this paper will deal with a qualitative analysis of findings related to international school partnerships.

Findings from the questionnaire survey show that, according to most respondents, international exchanges represent important occasions to acquaint pupils with intercultural communicative contexts, where ELF represents a shared code. The first column in [Chart 1](#) summarizes general findings and the first column in [Chart 2](#) the ones related to Primary school. As can be noticed, although exchanges are rated higher on the Lickert scale in [Chart 2](#) (1 = very important, 6= not important), on the whole results are similarly located on the positive end of the scale.

Teachers were also asked to express their opinion as to the relevance of international exchanges to improve listening, speaking, communication and intercultural skills; as columns 2-4 in both charts illustrate, results appear similar in this respect too, although with some differences in distribution on the 1-3 positive end of the scale. The same positive opinions can be found for most skills, in this case with slightly higher values on the negative end

of the scale. On the whole, however, international exchanges are positively valued, particularly as far as the development of communication and IC skills is concerned.

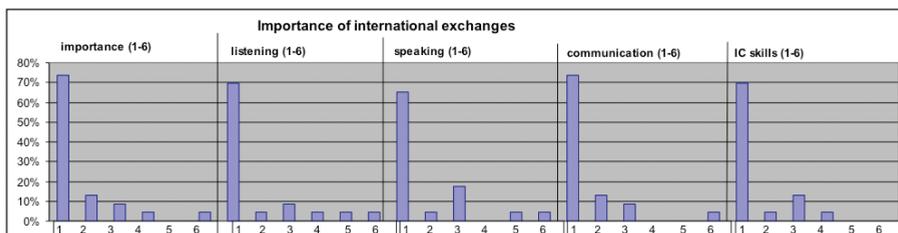


Chart 1 – How important are international exchanges in language teaching and learning to promote... (N=23)

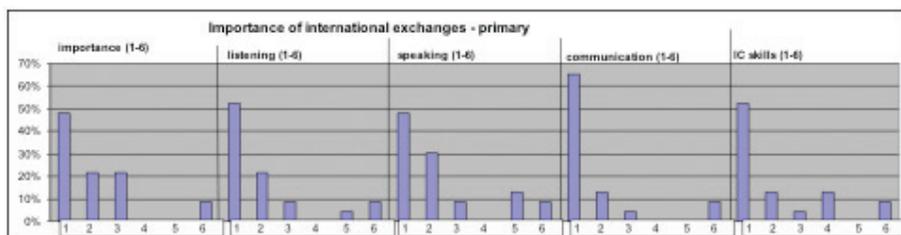


Chart 2 – How important are international exchanges in language teaching and learning in primary schools to promote... (N=23)

During the interviews and the Focus Group, teachers emphasised that in these internationally-oriented activities young learners show a high level of involvement and motivation, and are very curious to learn about their peers' life through these first-hand experiences, rather than from their teachers or their textbook only. In the words of a teacher, «they exchanged ideas on different aspects of their daily routine, rules in their school, they came to observe different elements, both writing and receiving the letters from their peers, so they learnt new things about other children living in a different environment. This was very positive, together with the fact that they were really waiting for their partners' letters to arrive...» (T7, interview). Indeed, the pupils' high affective and cognitive involvement, which allows them to take advantage of this 'window on the outside world' is a frequent trait in the 'ELF & ICC' project activities (Vettorel, 2010, 2013a), as well as in similarly oriented experiences (e.g. Crawley, Gerhard *et al.*, 2010; Crawley, Gilleran *et al.*, 2010). Although international exchanges can in principle be said to be part of educational activities, they

reach beyond the classroom walls, and can hence be seen as «the very first step to change and to intercultural communication; even if it is a window on another school, it is anyway a window» (T4, interview). This view is shared by many respondents, and clearly emerged as a positive asset both in the interviews and during the Focus Group discussion.

Motivation, enrichment, empowerment, open-mindedness and the development of communication strategies were the key-words chosen by my informants to define participation in international school partnerships, not least with reference to how the language that is being learnt is put to use in realistic communicative contexts. As one teacher pointed out, these are «very different from dialogues that can be carried out in the classroom, it was a way to communicate about something real» (T7, interview). During the interviews, four teachers highlighted that young children need to be guided in communication activities in such contexts – particularly in writing – given that in primary school the focus is mainly on the development of oral skills; as one teacher words it, «they wanted to describe things for which they did not have the language skills yet, so the letters had to be limited to some topics, and of course guided» (T7, interview). Nevertheless, no matter how challenging these experiences may be, particularly for young learners, using the language in such realistic communicative settings «allows you to go beyond your comfort zone, to take risks, to try out your skills, to improve them too in communication» (T4, interview).

Furthermore, internationally-oriented school exchanges can also contribute to familiarize learners with different varieties of English and ELF in realistic contexts of use. As one teacher pointed out with reference to her experience:

the main thing is that they tried their understanding and listening skills. You know, when they are at school they are exposed to a very small variety of language – they listen to me, to the tape, and I try to make them listen to some video, also on the internet, as I have a smart-board in class – which is very helpful. But everything is small, protected, not – so to say – authentic. Through these experiences, on the one hand they learnt that there are different settings of language use in terms of listening and understanding – which was a very important thing for them to understand. Secondly, they tried to use the language in real contexts; they are used to learn functions and memorize questions, answers, vocabulary – bits of language in chunks, but they don't use it really, so they had to find out strategies to use what they knew to communicate in a real context. These were the two most important things they learnt from this experience (T3, interview).

To sum up, these findings seem to suggest that the primary school EFL teachers in my sample see international school exchanges as an important and significant way to stretch occasions for language use, to create contact with people belonging to other cultures and to provide pupils with «more opportunities» (T3, Focus Group). Most respondents also reckon that these experiences can improve listening, speaking and above all communication and IC skills. This suggests that opportunities to use English in lingua franca contexts – such as in internationally-oriented school exchanges – are indeed positively valued.

Similarly to my informants, European teachers who have taken part in eTwinning projects highlight increased motivation and improvement of personal interrelationships among students (Crawley *et al.*, 2009: 27). Their active participation and interest in using foreign languages (FL henceforth) as a means of communication with their partners, as well as the development of intercultural communication skills (cf. interviews in Colaiuda, 2010; Crawley, Gerhard *et al.*, 2010; Tosoratti, 2010; Wastiau *et al.*, 2011) are also underscored. Indeed, out-of-school opportunities of contact with the FL (e.g. the media, the linguistic landscape, holidays, meeting tourists) can support motivation (ELLiE Second Interim Report, 2009; Enever, 2011a, 2011b), not least in intercultural terms (Cziser, Kormos, 2009). As the ELLiE longitudinal research has highlighted (Enever, 2011b), a positive impact on language learning activities can also be correlated to an internationally-oriented outlook by schools, either as engaged in partnerships with other classes or as open to foreign visitors and activities involving the foreign language. As Enever (2011a: 148) points out, «the networking opportunities provided by the European Comenius framework have been of great benefit, particularly where also supported by national/regional ministry initiatives». A positive impact on the children's FL skills, as well as on knowledge and attitudes, are also largely stressed in a recent study on the benefits of eTwinning (European Commission/LLLP, 2013). International school partnerships constitute thus opportunities to use the FL in meaningful contexts with peers of different linguacultures, favourably expanding their language learning experience (Enever, 2011a; Lopriore, Krikhaar, 2011; Lopriore, Mihaljević Djigunović, 2011), with positive effects not only on motivation but also on successful learning (e.g. Lopriore, 2012). These international cooperation projects can foster connections between language learning and language use, and prepare today's learners to the (future) communicative settings they will most likely be involved in, where English is largely employed as an international and intercultural means of cooperation,

most often with other non-native speakers. Significantly, as we have seen, participants in the 'ELF & ICC' project showed familiarity with contexts where English works as a lingua franca, as well as great openness and interest in cross-cultural communication with their European peers, whether native and/or non-native. A parallel could be drawn in this respect with findings in Nikolov (1999), where Hungarian and Croatian learners did not relate English with its NS community and, in a similar study (Nikolov, 1996), where about 46% of 13-14 year-old respondents emphasized «the role of English as the means of international communication» (Nikolov, 1999: 48) – thus testifying to a growing awareness of its de-nationalized vehicular function in cross-cultural contexts.

Occasions for intercultural contacts can thus naturally complement formal FL instruction, familiarizing learners with communication in increasingly multicultural and multilingual communicative settings, with a positive impact both on motivation and on language competence (Enever, 2011a; Csizér, Kormos, 2009).

#### *4. Conclusions*

As we have attempted to show, internationally-oriented school partnerships can have a positive valence on several grounds. Besides fostering the development of Intercultural Communication skills, they can promote and support learners' self-confidence in using the FL within real communicative settings, allowing them to share their worlds with peers of different linguacultures through ELF as a common code.

Most importantly, understanding out of first-hand experiences that the language can be used in such contexts to communicate with 'real' people can also positively affect motivation, helping learners to perceive the FL not merely as a school subject but as a life skill (Nikolov, Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 2006: 241). Furthermore, international school partnerships can familiarize students with ELF communicative contexts, fostering awareness of the importance of communication strategies in order to make understanding and effective interaction possible, particularly when interlocutors belong to different linguacultures; in these contexts, learners are provided with opportunities for «*linguaging*» (Seidlhofer, 2011), that is, to «*stretch their communicative capability and use their multilingual and multicultural competence to communicate*» (Lopriore, 2013a; 2015).

Findings from this research study suggest that code-switching has been employed to express culturally-related concepts connected to the

participants' identity – whether cultural, national or part of their personal worlds. As we have seen, code-switches are in the majority of cases accompanied by strategies suited to international and intercultural communicative settings, such as translations, visual glossing or explanatory strategies, showing awareness of the specificities of communication taking place with partners of different linguacultures. In oral data particularly, pragmatic strategies have been deployed to reach effective communication, which is the main, genuine aim of these participants, as perceptible all throughout the internationally-oriented phases of the project.

Teachers, both in general and in my findings, have very positive attitudes towards international school partnerships, which are seen as opportunities to develop intercultural, communicative and language skills. They generally believe that these activities can constitute 'windows on the world', complementary to 'school learning' in terms of language use as well as intercultural contact and awareness. This openness is certainly a valuable point for a possible change in perspective towards the inclusion of internationally-oriented (ELF) communication in language teaching and learning practices, together with familiarizing teachers with ELF and ELF-related pedagogical implications. Supporting teachers' self-confidence in the promotion of language use «without (the) fear of conforming to a standard» (Lopriore, 2013) may also foster a shift in perspective in their teaching practices, taking into account the importance of communication (strategies) rather than a primarily norm-oriented approach, particularly in the diverse settings where English works as a *lingua franca*.

Taking part in experiences like the 'ELF & ICC' project, or similar types of internationally-oriented activities, could also foster attitudes of curiosity and openness to diversity through interpersonal contact, rather than through a textbook – learning to talk about one's own experiences and cultural worlds, and to appreciate those of peers living in different contexts in a foreign language; an Anglophone perspective, which is still given prominence in teaching materials, would thus become one among several viewpoints. As importantly, such a perspective could also work as a significant backdrop in our increasingly multilingual and multicultural classes, actively acknowledging the experiences of learners who come from different realities and cultures in a reflective and inclusive way. Experiences like the ones we have illustrated in this paper could, in my opinion, also provide opportunities to 'localize' the language classroom syllabus, taking into account the learners' interests and personal worlds, possibly supporting localized and learner-centred methodological approaches too, both from a cultural and linguistic point of view. Furthermore, in the students'

perceptions English would not be confined to a school subject – like many others – or a generic skill (Graddol, 2006; Enever, Moon, 2009), separated from real encounters ‘from below’, but experienced as an attainable (in linguistic terms), true communicative tool to connect with the world.

<sup>1</sup> The eTwinning project was created in 2005 under the European Union’s e-Learning scheme, and is now integral part of Erasmus+. It aims at promoting European cooperation among schools, teachers and students; as we read on the dedicated website, “[t]he eTwinning action promotes school collaboration in Europe through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) by providing support, tools and services for schools” <[http://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/discover/what\\_is\\_etwinning.htm](http://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/discover/what_is_etwinning.htm)> (last access 06.02.2015).

<sup>2</sup> Source: <[http://www.etwinning.net/it/pub/news/press\\_corner/statistics.cfm](http://www.etwinning.net/it/pub/news/press_corner/statistics.cfm)> (last access 05.06.2014), statistics continuously updated; in June 2013 enrolled schools were 106,000.

<sup>3</sup> The corpus includes data for which consent was granted.

<sup>4</sup> *Pearà* is a typically Veneto sauce, particularly in the Verona area; it is prepared with grated bread, meat broth and other ingredients, and served with boiled meat.

<sup>5</sup> The L1 of the speakers has been reported in the extracts in each speaker’s turn (e.g. S1 it), for both students and teachers (T it, T sp). When a speaker not holding the floor intervenes, it has been indicated as Sx, and when all speakers are talking together as SS. Transcription conventions are based on VOICE Transcription Conventions [2.1] <[http://www.univie.ac.at/voice/page/transcription\\_general\\_information](http://www.univie.ac.at/voice/page/transcription_general_information)> (last access 15.04.2013); bold has been added for relevant examples.

<sup>6</sup> N=23, all Italian apart from the six teachers who had taken part in the project activities described above, 1 Spanish, 2 Danish, 1 Latvian, 1 Polish, 1 Czech.

<sup>7</sup> 2 Italian, 2 Danish, 2 Spanish and 2 NS teachers from Northern Ireland.

<sup>8</sup> The areas investigated included: personal and professional relations with English, opinions about their pupils’ present and future contact with English, openness to the inclusion of different varieties of English in classroom practices, added value of international school partnerships, understanding of ELF and opinions on the acceptability of ELF features in pupils’ productions; cf. Vettorel, 2013b.

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*ELF and Intercultural Telecollaboration: A Case Study*

ABSTRACT:

This chapter discusses an intercultural telecollaboration project led by the authors in the 2012/2013 school year. A group of ten Italian high-school students of English from Rome, and a group of ten American intermediate learners of Italian from the University of Arizona volunteered to be connected online asynchronously by means of a wiki to discuss a wide range of topics about their cultural backgrounds and lifestyles. The main purpose of our research was to enhance the participants' intercultural competence (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1998) via the creation of a Web-mediated, multilingual and multicultural communicative setting in which the students' second languages, English and Italian respectively, would be used as effective mediational tools. From this point of view, this project has shown that the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) by non-native speakers (NNSs) of English within a networked-based context is not a hindrance to communication and mutual understanding. On the contrary, it proves to be an appropriate affordance that L2-users develop through social cooperative practices in order to carry out pragmatic communicative goals. This study is based on integrating Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Sociocultural Theory (SCT). Our goal is to show language practitioners how to create a web-mediated community of practice (CoP), the members of which seek to improve their intercultural competence while using their respective L2s as an affordance to carry out several communicative tasks online. Our CoP, for example, interacted through a website and a wiki that were purposely designed for the needs of the project. As regards the pedagogical implications of our project, the qualitative results indicate that Web 2.0 technology could play an important role in teacher education, as it promotes a valid alternative to face-to-face instruction. It reduces the gap between the teacher and the student, as the former becomes familiar and learns to interact with forms of communication that are second-nature in younger generations. This research confirms that integrating telecollaboration into the foreign language syllabus is a promising option. It helps the learner gain a new impression about the languaculture systems they are exposed to and, in the case of non-native speakers of English, it favours the emergence of ELF as an authentic communicative tool in multilingual and multicultural web-mediated settings.

## *Introduction*

This paper discusses a pilot intercultural telecollaboration project<sup>1</sup> led by the authors in the 2012/2013 school year. A group of ten Italian high-school students of English from Rome, and a group of ten American intermediate learners of Italian from the University of Arizona<sup>2</sup> volunteered to be connected online asynchronously by means of a wiki to discuss a wide range of topics about their cultural backgrounds and lifestyles. The language level of the two groups was comparable and the age difference was minimal.

The main purpose of our research was to enhance the participants' intercultural competence (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1998) via the creation of an authentic, albeit Web-mediated, multilingual and multicultural communicative context in which the students' second languages, English and Italian respectively, would be used as effective mediational tools. Moreover, we assumed a pragmatic entailment between the improvement of the learners' intercultural competence and the development of their language awareness and communicative competence. Hence, the focus of our project was not primarily laid on second language acquisition (SLA) and the «learners' cognitive orientation [...] towards language form» (Mauranen, 2012: 7), but rather on the activation of real-life second language use (SLU), whereby the participants' intrinsic motivation to communicate was conducive to cooperating within a Vygotskian zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978; van Lier, 2004; Lantolf and Thorne, 2006)<sup>3</sup>.

Another important goal of our study was to show L2 practitioners how ELF-based communication can be integrated into ELT through networked-based language teaching (NBLT) (Warschauer and Kern, 2000). The distinctive feature of this particular research consists in the Italian participants' use of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), that is a «vehicular language used by speakers who do not share a first language» (Mauranen, 2012: 8). Following Mauranen (8-9), this definition of ELF applies also to communicative contexts where some of the interlocutors are native speakers (NSs) of English, as in the case of this telecollaboration. Traditionally, in a telecollaborative setting two foreign languages (FLs) are involved, so that each speaker plays two roles alternatively: the native speaker (NS) who has the status of language expert in his/her L1, and the non-native speaker (NNS) who is learning an L2. However, our contention is that if one of the two languages involved in telecollaboration is English, the use of which is situated beyond the canonical FL environment of the English

classroom, it should be identified as ELF, because the main aim of the speakers' engagement in communication is their mutual intelligibility and the achievement of pragmatic goals, rather than language accuracy, even when NSs of English are present. Therefore, the rationale underpinning our study is that once telecollaboration and Internet-mediated communication are integrated into English language teaching (ELT), English as a foreign language (EFL) – i.e. the English of the subject in a schooling context – and ELF – i.e. today's primary contact language for global communication – tend to converge and become complementary in the L2-user's performance (Grazzi, 2013).

The pilot study discussed in this paper was conceived to provide a platform for L2-users of English and of Italian to communicate through Web 2.0 technology. The following sections provide an overview of the theoretical framework that inspired this research, particularly as regards the potential of NBLT, as well as a description of the implementation of the project. Finally, we will discuss the most important outcomes of this research.

### *1. Theoretical framework*

Foreign language telecollaborative projects have the potential to provide learners with an alternative to knowledge found in traditional educational resources. However, their potential is not limited to the exercise of language per se, but includes the promotion of a deeper understanding of the culture of the language in question. As Antoniadou (2011: 285) asserts, culture in the 21st Century eludes national boundaries and calls for «multiliterate 'world citizens' who are able to work collaboratively in multicultural/multilingual contexts, co-construct knowledge, and think critically». Indeed, in the Modern Languages Association Report (2007) intercultural competence is a necessary issue that higher education needs to address in order to remain relevant in the imminent future. Even in the study of SLA, researchers and institutions are increasingly recognizing that communicative competence in itself cannot realistically be its exclusive objective. Thorne (2006: 5) observes that «according to the *Council of Europe* (2001)<sup>4</sup> communicative competence alone is no longer adequate as the sole goal of FL learning. Rather, the "objective of foreign language teaching is now... 'intercultural competence'" (Sercu 2004: 115)<sup>5</sup>. Nonetheless, this is not to say that intercultural-oriented tasks neglect the linguistic component of language learning. Rather, telecollaborative intercultural projects allow learners to direct their attention on cultural

differences through the means of language (O'Dowd and Waire, 2009). By way of unmediated interaction with members of different cultures, participants can gain valuable insights about foreign cultural backgrounds. According to Kern, Ware, and Warschauer (2004: 243), the emphasis that has been placed in recent years on intercultural education via distance collaboration presents a «second wave» of L2 pedagogy. Thorne (2006: 4) stresses three major shifts in this new trend: 1) the use of intercultural competence and pragmatics as a framework for L2 learning; 2) a move from a local, classroom-based context to a wider and global one; 3) a focus on the conceptualization of communication and of culture in L2 pedagogy and research. Moreover, one of the purposes of telecollaboration, as defined by Belz (2005: 23), is «to foster dialogue between members of diverse cultures, who otherwise might not have the opportunity to come into contact, in an effort to increase intercultural awareness as well as linguistic proficiency». Instead of the dry and impersonal information usually found in traditional classroom settings, in a telecollaboration learners have the opportunity to be exposed to subjective and personalized viewpoints from members of a different sociocultural background, thus becoming «aware of how aspects of the target culture are perceived within the culture itself, and what are the significant events and people in the target culture's 'national memory'» (O'Dowd, 2007: 146-147). In a telecollaborative pedagogical environment, intercultural learning and the promotion of intercultural communicative skills usually involve tasks in which learners are asked to examine or compare cultural artifacts, or to use their faculty of cultural interaction to recognize and discuss the different cultural positions between themselves and their partners. Through these environments, intercultural-oriented tasks allow learners to direct their attention on cultural differences through the means of language (O'Dowd and Waire, 2009). Byram (1997: 34) identifies intercultural competence (IC) as the «readiness to suspend disbelief and judgment with respect to others' meanings, beliefs and behaviours» and a «willingness to suspend belief in one's own meanings and behaviours, and to analyse them from the viewpoint of the others with whom one is engaging». As O'Dowd (2007: 149) explains, the skills for a successful intercultural telecollaboration may not be innate to many students. In order for participants to benefit thoroughly from such a project, it may be helpful for them to obtain explicit direction and coaching in various characteristics of intercultural telecollaboration. Instead of merely attempting to find a common ground and sustain discourse within those safe boundaries, «students need to be trained to see themselves as ethnographers or cultural investigators whose

task is to find out more about the foreign perspective and the beliefs and values which underlie it».

Today, Web 2.0 affordances are generally accepted by language teachers and researchers as powerful platforms through which pedagogical material and learning environments can be created to foster FL learning. In particular, an emergent pursuit that has attracted the interest of SLA researchers that make use of this technology is what is commonly identified as telecollaboration or Internet-mediated intercultural foreign language education (ICFLE) (Antoniadou, 2011; Belz, 2005; O'Dowd and Waire, 2009; Thorne, 2006). In language learning contexts, telecollaboration may be described as an «Internet-based intercultural exchange between people of different cultural/national backgrounds, set up in an institutional context with the aim of developing both language skills and intercultural communicative competence [...] through structured tasks» (Guth and Helm, 2010: 14). As indicated by Bloch (2007), discussing topics that require critical thinking from students enable them to contribute to the creation of knowledge, whereby they can attain greater confidence in their authorship instead of relegating them to a role of passive consumers. The objective of telecollaborative projects is to use Internet-mediated communication to promote discussion, debate, social interface and collaborative exploration among geographically separated participants, and thus to use the language they are studying within an real context and for meaningful purposes. For example, research indicates that the use of blogs may promote the development of intercultural competence as well. In a project conducted by Elola and Oskoz (2008), the authors found that, through blogging, students were successful in achieving intercultural competence, that is the ability to communicate with members of other cultures while being perceptive of diversities and correspondences without stressing otherness and stereotypes. The article argues that this was achieved by the communicative tools that are available with the blog as a medium (i.e. text entries, multimedia upload and commenting), which in turn allowed for the students to reflect and share their own knowledge and values. A similar pedagogical outcome may be achieved also with the use of wikis. These are websites where users' texts can be uploaded and edited by members of a discourse community. In a pedagogical context, wikis are found to be more motivating to the students than traditional writing assignments due to their collaborative quality (Warschauer and Grimes, 2007).

According to O'Dowd (2007), since the pioneering virtual learning environments carried out in the mid-1980s, the importance of telecollaborative exchange among language learners has steadily grown and is

currently deemed as «one of the main pillars of online language learning» (O’Dowd, 2007: 2). Therefore, one of the purposes of our pilot study was to show the pedagogical potential of telecollaboration and of new teaching methodologies that go beyond the traditional teacher-oriented and text-book-bound approach. Telecollaboration, we believe, allows students to use the L2 in a meaningful and authentic way, while expanding their intercultural and communicative competencies (New London Group, 1996; Byram *et al.*, 2002; Modern Language Association Report, 2007). In the following section we will discuss Web 2.0 technology and its implications for L2 instruction as well as networked-based language teaching (NBTLT).

### *1.1 Web 2.0 and its pedagogical implications*

The extraordinary progress of technology in the past decade, its widespread accessibility, cost-effectiveness, pervasive practice and user-friendliness, has made instantaneous communication and collaboration for business or leisure among geographically remote individuals a daily routine. Web 2.0 is the second generation of the World Wide Web. As opposed to its antecedent, Web 1.0, it is a technology that allows for the creation of content that is generated and maintained by users. The key feature of Web 2.0 is that it changes the orientation of Internet communication: while Web 1.0 could be considered as the «readable web» (Kárpáti, 2009: 2), where the emphasis is on the reception of content by consumers, Web 2.0 is the «writable web», a space where the importance lies on the creation and exchange of content. Zimmer (Schuck *et al.*, 2010: 235) summarises Web 2.0 as a «blurring of the boundaries between Web users and producers, consumption and participation, authority and amateurism, play and work, data and the network, reality and virtuality». The development of this technology has generated new literacies and new authorship practices that are shared by millions of users worldwide – fanfiction and collaborative writing (Grazzi, 2013) are a case in point – , and the impact of this digital turn has far-reaching implications in all aspects of modern society, including education. As Warschauer (2005) points out, it is impossible to understand the kinds of motivation and positions that young students have towards working with technology if we do not firstly understand the significance of new technologies in modern economy and society. The potential for participative networking and for the production of mixed-media inherent in Web 2.0 makes this technology an ideal support for L2 education, one that is able to transform students into «active learners, team builders, collaborators, and discoverers» (Thorne, 2008: 420).

As maintained by Wenger (1996: 214), «learning involves an interaction between experience and competence». The Internet promotes the development of communities of practice that afford access to competence and offers the opportunity for personal engagement with which the learner can integrate that competence in a participatory mode. «When these conditions are in place,» argues Wenger, «communities of practice are a privileged locus for the acquisition of knowledge». As the New London Group (1996: 60-61) pointed out: «[L]iteracy pedagogy has traditionally meant teaching and learning to read and write in page-bound, official, standard forms of the national language. Literacy pedagogy, in other words, has been a carefully restricted project — restricted to formalized, monolingual, monocultural, and rule-governed forms of language». The Internet has drastically revolutionized the literacy landscape into a constellation of sub-cultures, languages and expressive modes. For the new generation of students, the evolving literacies issued from digital spaces are extremely significant to their everyday lives as language users. For Digital Natives (Prensky, 2001) in particular, i.e., those individuals who were born when the Internet was already established, social, academic and professional interactions are increasingly mediated by digital communicative instruments such as social networks, blogs, instant messaging, online games, chat rooms and voice/text messaging via cellular phones. It is necessary for contemporary L2 educators and designers of pedagogical materials to be well informed about the ethos of this emerging culture and be aware of the potential of this technology, to identify the most valuable platforms and its possible setbacks (Thorne and Reinhardt, 2008).

The inherent networking capabilities of the Internet are considered fit for a wide-ranging investigation of other languages and cultures, for they allow learners to engage directly without the measured artificiality of textbooks and impersonal mediation found in traditional classroom-based instruction (Belz, 2005). Internet-mediated communication, be it synchronous (e.g. chat-rooms) or asynchronous (e.g. wikis, blogs, social networking websites) is being employed by foreign language practitioners to build collaborative learning environments in which students transcend the book-bound approach in favour of cross-cultural awareness and literacy and thus they can be exposed to their target language in relation with other human beings (Liaw and Bunn-Le Master, 2010). Many FL teachers are implementing Web 2.0 technology for L2 learning, and understand how this platform can offer the tools to constructing knowledge via collaborative learning environments and provide access to language in context (Stevenson and Liu, 2010). Instead of the more traditionally lopsided

and teacher-controlled classroom discourse, the addition of Computer-Mediated-Communication (CMC) in the foreign language classroom offers the prospect for students to use authentic language in real and meaningful interaction, which fosters a more student-centered environment. This in turn allows for greater student autonomy, participation and interaction as well as for different types of discourse that go beyond those generated in the traditional classroom (Gonzalez-Lloret, 2011). Teachers, program developers and institutions are now expected to pay attention to the learners' sociocultural backgrounds and adopt materials and pedagogical methods accordingly, «because ignoring the students' norms and expectations — that is, what students bring to the classroom — is denying the learners' experiences» (Dogancay-Aktuna, 2005: 99).

In Second Language Acquisition (SLA), researchers and teachers increasingly recognize the necessity to elicit instances of language use that are illustrative of the learners' performance while they are not focusing on accuracy (Ellis, 2003). By revolving language instruction around tasks, learners are implicated in an educative process in which they employ their L2 for meaning-making: «this negotiative language use process will spur and promote the learners' language acquisition» (Lai and Li, 2011: 1). Indeed, as pointed out by Reinhardt (2008), it has been decades since Wagner-Gough and Hatch (1975) called for a suitable model for interaction among language learners that did not isolate language from meaning. They solicited the investigation of language in context, containing all the «variables (for both the learner and the native speaker) that give life, colour and meaning to the learning process» (Wagner-Gough and Hatch, 1975: 298, in Reinhardt, 2008: 238). In this view, the attention of language teaching should be on meaning rather than simply on form, with an emphasis laid on communication for real-life situations.

The intercultural telecollaboration project that is presented in this chapter was intended to exploit the great potential of networked-based language teaching (NBLT), which also incorporates the five key features of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): 1) an emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the L2; 2) the introduction of authentic texts into the learning environment; 3) attention not only on the language but also on the learning process itself; 4) bringing the learner's own personal experience to the classroom as a component of the learning process; 5) the attempt to connect classroom language learning with language outside the classroom (Nunan, 1991, in Nguyen, 2013: 42).

The section below situates our telecollaboration within Sociocultural Theory (SCT) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). According

to SCT-based Communicative Language Teaching, language is acquired through social interaction, mediated through social and cultural tools, and fostered by the assistance of more competent peers. Our project intended to link together language students in two separate countries through computer-mediated communication in order to activate their ZPD via peer feedback to improve both their L2 and their intercultural competence.

### *1.2 Sociocultural Theory and Communicative Language Teaching*

Within a language pedagogy context, Sociocultural Theory (SCT)<sup>6</sup> marks a turn from individual acquisition to artifact-mediated participative collaboration to nurture the learning process. Through the lens of SCT, language is seen not simply as a means for communication but also as the expression of human thinking process and culture. According to Firth and Wagner (2007: 768), second language acquisition (SLA) researchers should identify and explain how language use and acquisition are consequences of interaction and context: «Language is not only a cognitive phenomenon, the product of the individual's brain; it is also fundamentally a social phenomenon, acquired and used interactively, in a variety of contexts for myriad practical purposes». As noted by Newman and Holzman, in Lantolf and Thorne (2006: 56), «Vygotsky's approach begins with the assumption that humans are always and everywhere social entities, always deploying their agencies in order to make sense of their environment, of what they are doing, and of what is being done to them». SCT-based Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) pedagogy thus assumes that: 1) language is best learned via social interaction and negotiation of meaning; 2) learning is typically mediated by social and cultural tools; 3) collaborative learning with peers activates a ZPD, resulting in the improvement of linguistic performance; 4) collaborative learning plays a fundamental role in CTL language classroom settings. In CLT, teacher-centered pedagogy is replaced by group-based and pair-based learning, where social interaction becomes a means of knowledge-formation and the student plays an active role while the teacher acts as a facilitator (Nguyen, 2013).

Our telecollaborative project was meant to provide a platform for linguistic and intercultural development of young students in Italy and in the USA. A series of themes that touched on various aspects of Italian and American culture – i.e., *education, Facebook and privacy, abortion*, etc. – were devised and posted online in a dedicated website. Participants were to choose one of those themes, mostly all of which included a scaffolding paragraph with external links to the topic in both languages, and write

their thoughts on a wiki to their partner. The latter was to read the post and provide a response that was expected to include a personal reaction as well as peer feedback on the partner's language to activate the ZPD. In the following pages we will take a detailed look at how the project was implemented and how the interactions were carried out.

## *2. The implementation of the intercultural telecollaboration project*

The project was launched in October of 2012 and ended in December of the same year, for a total of nine weeks of telecollaboration. It was not a didactic module within an institutional FL educational setting, therefore participants were not formally obliged to fulfil their assignments, nor was their work corrected and evaluated by their teachers.

To facilitate the development of the project, two ad hoc Web 2.0 websites were set up by the researchers. The first, created through the <[www.webs.com](http://www.webs.com)> (last access 10.02.2016) platform, was intended as a descriptive space through which participants gathered information about the telecollaboration. This website displayed the goals of the project, pictures of the participants and, more importantly, clear procedures and guidelines about the students' assignments. Because of time-zone constraints (there is an 8 to 9-hour difference between the two locations), the exchanges were to be carried out through asynchronous computer-mediated communication (ACMC), i.e. participants were not required to be simultaneously connected. The second website was a wiki developed through <[www.wikispaces.com](http://www.wikispaces.com)> (last access 10.02.2016). It was the medium used for the participants' interaction. These two platforms were chosen among a variety of Web 2.0 sites as they were free of charge, they offered the possibility to be password-protected, and were simple to develop and relatively easy to operate.

To keep the *communicative stress* factor to a minimum, i.e. to reduce the performance tension that may arise when speakers are involved in L2 verbal interaction, the thematic content of the tasks of this telecollaboration focused purposefully on the participants' familiar native cultural backgrounds and individuality (Ellis, 2003). The two groups of Italian and American students were randomly paired into ten dyads (teams of two) and were asked to choose among the various themes featured in the <[webs.com](http://www.webs.com)> (last access 10.02.2016) website (see [Table 1](#) below).

Table 1 – List of themes

1.	<i>First of All, Talk About Yourself</i>	9.	<i>Genetically Modified Food</i>
2.	<i>Abortion</i>	10.	<i>Music</i>
3.	<i>A picture, a culture</i>	11.	<i>Peer-to-Peer Downloading</i>
4.	<i>Death Penalty</i>	12.	<i>Soccer</i>
5.	<i>Education</i>	13.	<i>Stereotypes</i>
6.	<i>Facebook and Privacy</i>	14.	<i>Surveillance</i>
7.	<i>Football</i>	15.	<i>Swearing</i>
8.	<i>Films</i>		

Each theme included a representative image, followed by a short introduction to the topic and a selection of links to related articles and videos, both in Italian and in English. The only topic that all participants had to talk about at the onset was theme Number 1, *First of All, Talk About Yourself*, as it served as an introduction. Each week, one student within a dyad picked one of the topics listed above to write about in their L2, following no particular order. At the same time, the partner chose a topic which could have been the same or a different one, depending on his/her preference. Therefore, team members were not required to develop the same subject simultaneously.

The tasks designed for this telecollaboration project were to be developed by the participants in two parallel phases:

- Phase A: in each team, students were asked to produce a text in their L2, the subject of which could be chosen among the list of fifteen themes provided on the project website (see [Table 1](#) above). Next, they had to upload their texts onto the page of the wiki that had been previously assigned to each team. This would start the participants' asynchronous conversation on the topic/s they had chosen. More importantly, working on a wiki allowed students to enrich their texts with further uploads, like .mp3 audio-files, pictures, videos, and links to relevant Web pages. Moreover, each team's page hosted a forum, so that all the members of the discourse community involved in this telecollaboration could follow what was being discussed by each team and participate to their conversation, if they wanted. In any case, notwithstanding the forum was open to all participants, only team members were allowed to change their texts, add new ones, and delete or upload audiovisuals. Interestingly, though, participants were not particularly keen to join open discussions, nor did they use the forum to

exchange metalinguistic comments. Peer reviewing was essentially carried out in pairs, by each team. Against all expectations, as project coordinators, we realized that although our students were social networkers who usually interacted with their friends online (for instance through Facebook), they did not fully exploit the potential of the forum hosted on the wiki. Perhaps, we concluded, the main reason was that they were very busy and had little time to spend on blogging for this school project. Therefore, they limited their participation to team work.

- Phase B: in each team, students were asked to provide their partners with concise peer-to-peer corrective feedback to improve the overall intelligibility of their L2 texts. In order to support the students who conceivably had no prior experience in peer feedback, a PowerPoint presentation that included specific advice about the appropriate *modus operandi* and etiquette was distributed via email and posted in the website. Phase B, as will be explained in more detail in the following section, was a very important component of this telecollaboration, as it allowed students to reflect on the use of the L2 and on the communicative process while it was being carried out. Peer-to-peer corrective feedback enhanced the students' language awareness and helped them improve their language performance. Participants could even reformulate their texts progressively and, thanks to an application called *History*, could compare all the previous drafts of the texts they had written.

The ad hoc corpus that was compiled at the end of the project contains a total amount of 28,136 words. The following grid (see [Table 2](#) below) shows the word count as regards: a) the texts written in ELF by the Italian students of English; b) the texts written in Italian by the American students of English; c) the metalinguistic feedback about the use of Italian provided by the Italian participants; d) the metalinguistic feedback about the use of English provided by the American participants.

*Table 2 – Word count*

Word count
a. ELF: 12,380 words
b. Italian: 11,101 words
c. Feedback about the use of Italian: 2,130 words
d. Feedback about the use of English: 2,525 words

The number of themes discussed by each team, as well as the number of messages they exchanged, and the amount of metalinguistic feedback they provided varied considerably, as can be seen in the following grid, where a more detailed word count is presented (see [Table 3](#) below). Usually, each team exchanged from two to four messages per theme, but in some cases a few teams wrote even more messages per theme. Only in six cases out of forty-three (namely, Team 1, Theme 10; Team 4, Themes 4, 10 and 11; Team 6, Theme 6; Team 8, Theme 2) participants wrote a text that was not followed by a reply from their partners. Finally, almost all teams used to enrich their messages with audiovisuals and provided hyperlinks to relevant web pages.

*Table 3 – Detailed word count*

Team	Theme	ELF	Feedb. It.	Italian	Feedb. Eng.
1	1	413		282	
	6	241	24	286	
	10	182		175	
	13	340			
2	1	339	100	219	
	2	297		280	
	3	333		350	
	5	594	96	532	85
	6	318		267	89
	7	227		366	
	9	436	43	239	17
	10	509	129	225	
	11	110	105	200	31
	13	403	75	408	
3	1	225		276	
4	1	176	55	253	
	4	197			
	9	201	36	306	
	10	356			
	11	272			
5	1	198		147	116

	3	127		86	
6	1	293	127	621	99
	6			128	
	8	287		149	284
7	1	300	125	330	221
	11	152	96	243	
8	1	273	108	486	252
	2			356	
	10	197		271	195
	13	202	121	349	132
9	1	669	105	398	134
	2	353		301	139
	4	302			
	5	511		359	
	6	609		297	
	10	579	245	260	145
10	1	432		296	187
	3	57	154	645	
	10	197	126	135	117
	11	110	105	200	31
	12	161		122	58
	13	202	155	258	193

Aside from the first theme, which was to talk about oneself and which was required for all, participants could choose the themes they were more interested in discussing with their partners. The subject that the students were more interested in discussing was, perhaps not surprisingly, *Soccer/Football*. In both cultures, these two sports play an important role. Other popular themes were *A Picture*, *A culture* (where learners were supposed to share pictures of typical aspects of their cultural backgrounds and comment them); *Education*; *Facebook and Privacy*; *Swearing*. Not much attention was devoted instead to themes such as *Abortion*, *Surveillance*, *Peer-to-Peer Downloading* and *Death Penalty*. Owing to the fact that the researchers and organizers of this project are obviously not members of the same generation as were the participants, probably a more in-depth understanding of the kind

of themes young students are more concerned with could have increased overall participation and engagement. Indeed, one student suggested cutting altogether the more 'serious' themes and leaving it to more jovial matters. Most of the contributions of the students were in depth when one of the two pairs was particularly involved with a theme. They frequently asked personal questions and provided links to websites and videos that represented their thoughts.

The following section highlights the main features of peer-to-peer feedback and how participants carried it out.

### 3. *Peer-to-peer feedback*

Research indicates that corrective feedback among peers often results in less anxiety perceived by the learner than if it were to be provided by an authority figure such as the teacher. The noticing of language forms may take place within ongoing interactional assistance provided during the flow of conversation as well as in feedback in electronic tandem (e-tandem) partnerships (Ware and O'Dowd, 2008). In the case of our telecollaboration, we recommended the participants to be selective and deliver corrective feedback only when their partners' texts contained lexicogrammar 'deviant' forms that hindered meaning and intelligibility. To this purpose, we observed that students implemented interpersonal, strategic accommodation skills (Jenkins, 2000) and tended to focus more on content rather than form. Here is an example of peer-to-peer review (from Team 2, Theme n. 1, *First of All, Talk About Yourself*), where an Italian student is not only providing her American partner with lexicogrammar correcting feedback, but is also negotiating the meaning of a non-standard Italian expression to suggest a more appropriate wording:

Talking about the pair-review I don't know exactly how to do that, so I will try :) you are very good in writing in italian!!!!  
In italian we don't use the article before the word "sister", so we say: mia sorella minore, and we also say: è il suo ultimo anno di liceo.  
Then, when you say that you want to be an "editore di film" you mean that you want to "create" moovies? So in italian is: regista.  
Also when you say: "so sopra venti stili di danza", is better to say: conosco più di venti stili di danza.

Here is one more example of peer-to-peer feedback based on accommodation and negotiation of meaning, intended to facilitate mutual

understanding (from Team 10, Theme n. 13, *Swearing*). An American student is suggesting a possible interpretation and a more appropriate wording of a few opaque expressions used by his Italian partner:

What do you mean by “I disagree with believer people who blaspheme toward God of other religions”? Do you mean people who talk badly about other religions? I dislike when people do that too! Funny little thing I learned: bestemmiare is to blaspheme, but we don’t use “blaspheme” in America when we are referring to swear words. We use “swearing” or “speaking bad words”, so my professor told me the proper usage is, “dico parolacce”!

In some cases, though, some students overcorrected their partners’ texts, for the sake of lexicogrammar accuracy, according to NS-norms, rather than fluency. The following example shows a typical feature of ELF, that is the use of *advice* as a countable noun, which was corrected by the American student, even though this deviation from the norm did not affect the overall intelligibility of the Italian student’s utterance (Team 9, Theme 1, *First of All, Talk About Yourself*):

Suggestions for you:

In english the word Advice is both plural and singular so it is correct to write “Advice” not advices.

As regards the Italian students’ use of ELF and the corrective feedback they received from their American partners, the general tendency was to perceive it as a communicative affordance or, as Kohn (2011: 80) suggests, a pragmatic «orientation» for successful use of English. Here is an example taken from the ad hoc corpus (Team 8, Theme 1, *First of All, Talk About Yourself*):

I just wanted to give you a quick peer review. So you did a really awesome job again! I wish my Italian was as good as your English, I have to look up so many words in the dictionary :( The few errors I found were when you talk about your dad forcing your brother to love soccer, you say “he have done it with my brother” but it would sound better if you said “he did it with my brother”. Another thing I noticed was that you switched around some of your prepositions. For example, when you say “I’m very supporting with my team” it is better to say “I’m very supporting of my team”. Also, you said “in these occasions” but it is better to say “on these occasions”. Prepositions are very difficult though.

We could say that the kind of e-partnering that was activated within this ZPD was not meant to disregard the Italians' use of ELF and impose prescriptive NS norms. On the contrary, it favoured cooperative negotiation of forms and meanings between interlocutors who belonged to different languacultural backgrounds and at the same time helped the Italian students learn more about the L2. Thorne (2008) proposes that peer-to-peer feedback may indeed afford access to information purportedly missing in dictionaries and grammar books, thus intensifying an amplifying the pedagogical success of an L2 project.

The same could be said about the peer feedback the Italian students delivered to the American partners who spoke Italian as their L2. In any case, an important distinction should be made between the nature of English as a lingua franca and the nature of Italian as a foreign language, for this entails important implications as regards the concept of 'ownership of the language' and the languacultural identity of L2-users. This, however, is an area of research that goes beyond the scope of the present study.

The peer-review phase in this project gave students the opportunity to share ideas, provide corrective and topic-oriented feedback, as well as negotiate meaning. They employed spontaneous socio-affective comments to encourage their partners and their appraisal prevented them from feeling uncomfortable, as shown in the following example (Team 9, Theme 1, *First of All, Talk About Yourself*):

When you ask "How do you look like?" It is better to say "What do you look like?" We use the word "how" more often like "Come sta?/ How are you?" I am very impressed with your english! [...] You made very small mistakes, nothing bad at all! I look forward to talking with you the next few weeks. It will be fun! Bye for now!

With Belz (2005), we may conclude that within the dialogic pedagogical framework of telecollaborative settings the learner is not a mere passive receiver of norms, but an active interpreter of his or her own authentic L2 interactions.

In the sections that follows, we will discuss the results of this intercultural telecollaborative project and draw our conclusions.

#### 4. Discussion

We believe that, at this juncture in present-day society, the key question is not 'whether' the latest technologies should be used in education,

rather 'how' they can be used (Prensky, 2001). Perhaps, the case in point in the controversy involving the gap between *Digital Natives* – those individuals who were born after the Internet was already in place – and *Digital Immigrants* – those who were born before the advent of the Internet – (Prensky, 2001) is not that teachers should mould education to the supposed new learning styles of modern students. Instead, we claim it is the responsibility of modern teachers to at least bear in mind this hypothesis and get acquainted with what can be achieved with modern technology, exploiting it at its fullest to realize well-designed teaching objectives (Thorne and Reinhardt, 2008).

Additionally, this study shows that through telecollaboration more attention is given to the concept of «intercultural dimension» (Byram *et al.*, 2002). The 'intercultural dimension' in language teaching seeks to prepare learners to become «intercultural speakers or mediators who are able to engage with complexity and multiple identities and to avoid the stereotyping which accompanies perceiving someone through a single identity» (5). In order to do so, learners need to achieve intercultural as well as linguistic competencies; they need to be prepared to interact with people of different cultures and accept them as individuals having different outlooks, ideals and behaviours; and they need to appreciate that such kind of intercultural interaction is in itself an enriching event (Byram *et al.*, 2002). This approach tries to promote a distancing attitude towards stereotyping, which is much welcome in modern society. From this point of view, this project has shown that the use of ELF by NNS of English in a multicultural and multilingual networked-based context is not a hindrance to communication and mutual understanding. On the contrary, it proves to be an appropriate affordance that L2-users develop through social cooperative practices in order to carry out pragmatic communicative goals. Moreover, the participation of American NSs of English in this telecollaboration did not seem to have a gatekeeping function. Rather, it provided the Italian participants with useful peer-to-peer language feedback that enhanced their communicative competence without preventing them from expressing their own languacultural identity through the use of ELF.

The two cultures involved in this project, the Italian and the American one, have a long history of mutual interaction. Thanks to the Italian immigration in the USA that characterized the beginning of the past century, many traits of the Italian culture are ingrained in the American one, especially in the realm of cuisine, art, and opera, but also in less flattering spheres, such as the 'mafioso' or the 'organ grinder and monkey' image (Maranzana, in press). Yet, Italy is obviously a lot more than this,

and oftentimes, to the US citizen, the Italian-American culture blends in with the Italian one, as if they were the same thing. Conversely, a lot of stereotyping revolves around Americans in the eyes of Italians, from the perennial cowboys to the hamburger-eaters.

The students who joined this project showed that they were aware of the groundlessness of cultural stereotypes, and proved to be receptive to the idea of learning about their partners' culture through their authentic descriptions. Let us consider this example (Team 7, Theme 11, *Stereotypes*):

American student:

Ci sono molti stereotipi degli italiani negli Stati Uniti, specialmente l'esagerazione dell'accento italiano. Gli americani pensano che gli italiani mangino gli spaghetti e la pizza ogni giorno e solo bevono vino.

Molti americani pensano che tutti gli italiani siano nella "mafia". Non mi piacciono gli stereotipi perché sono una rappresentazione negativa della cultura.

[There are many stereotypes about the Italians in the United States, especially the exaggeration of the Italian accent. Americans think that Italians eat spaghetti and pizza every day and only drink wine.

Many Americans think that all Italians belong to the "mafia". I do not like stereotypes because they give a negative representation of culture.]

Italian student:

I really hate stereotypes because i know that they are just an exaggeration of some behaviors or problems of a country and i can't tolerate that someone from another country describes me only as an eater of pizza and pasta or as member of mafia. I also think that what have a big importance in the diffusion of stereotypes are the mass media, infact for example we can see that in some movies or cartons people of other country are described only through stereotypes. In the end i think that stereotypes can exist but they should not be taken as something true but only as something funny.

Much can be done to promote real understanding of the Italian and American cultures through projects centered on developing intercultural communication, as this pilot study has tried to demonstrate.

## 5. Conclusions

This research indicates that Web 2.0 technology could play an important role in teacher education, as it promotes a valid alternative to face-to-face instruction. As Johnson (2006: 244) observes, it «create[s] more

equitable social roles as teachers engage in inquiry about their own learning and teaching, foster[s] greater collaboration among teacher learners, and decrease[s] the sense of isolation L2 teachers in disparate locations often experience». Furthermore, it reduces the gap between the teacher and the student, as the former becomes familiar and learns to interact with forms of communication that are second-nature in younger generations. Intercultural communication (ICC), which Dogancay and Aktuna (2005: 100) define «the process occurring when the producers and receivers of a message belong to different cultures», should for example be taken into consideration not only when the teacher is from a different country than the students' – e.g. an Italian teacher of Italian as a FL in the USA – but also when teacher and students are from the same cultural background but belong, as it is often the case, to different generations.

The peer review phase in this project provided students with opportunities to share ideas, offer corrective and topic-oriented feedback as well as negotiate meaning. The transcripts of this study reveal that 50% of the participants placed the use of correct lexicogrammar as the most important aspect for feedback. They employed spontaneous socio-affective comments to encourage their partners and prevent them to feel uncomfortable by their appraisal. In line with the findings of Thorne (2003, 2008), students' comments from the ad hoc corpus showed their enthusiasm in being able to communicate in their FL and learn the language and its culture from a peer. Within a dialogic pedagogical framework, the learner is thus not a mere passive receiver of norms, but an active interpreter of his or her own authentic FL interactions (Belz, 2005). Most of the students found this pedagogical project original and interesting and 40% were thankful that they were given the opportunity to relate with peers from another culture.

Pedagogically speaking, the research confirms that integrating telcollaboration into language learning is possible and promising. This project helped the student gain a new impression about the culture they were exposed to. Almost all participants realized that there is actually not much difference between the lifestyles of the young in both countries, while those who had discussed the topic of *Education* found a lot of difference between the Italian and the American school system. 80% of students found the themes for discussion quite engaging, although some of the Italian students<sup>7</sup> recognized that, despite the fact that their American partners were slightly older, they tended to be less interested in the more intense and thought-provoking themes. It needs to be understood, though, that the impressions they formed about the foreign culture

was forcibly the outcome of interaction with one single partner. A better understanding of the culture would unquestionably be achieved if every single participant could engage in conversation with multiple partners.

Overall, we are satisfied with the outcomes of this study and we believe that it benefitted the students as they were able to go beyond the traditional classroom setting and expand into the broader world beyond it. Some reported to their teachers (namely, Maranzana and Manni) establishing a friendly relationship that went past the boundaries of this project – indeed one of the pairs of participants kept in touch via email for a year and arranged to finally meet in person in Rome.

In sum, a long preparation needs to be carried out in order to maximize its pedagogical potential, with a look at which platforms are better to be used in line with the teaching objectives. Although the majority of the students declared that they had no major critiques on this telecollaboration, most of them had some reservations regarding the wiki platform (wikispaces.com) which they initially found somewhat complex to grasp. It is advisable, therefore, that the technology used in telecollaboration is as user-friendly as possible, to allow even less skilful social networkers to carry out their tasks.

Importantly, this kind of project was not part of the institutionalized curriculum of the language department in which the students of the University of Arizona study Italian as a FL. Therefore, it was sometimes challenging for Maranzana, their teacher and project organiser, to motivate them to participate actively as the outcomes of the telecollaboration were not translated into any academic credits. On the contrary, the participation of the Italian students to the intercultural telecollaboration project was very important for the overall evaluation of their school-leaving exam, that year. This contributed to stimulate and keep the participants' motivation alive.

In conclusion, we believe that projects of this kind, should indeed be integrated in the FL syllabus in order to provide language students with the possibility to use their L2s for meaningful interaction and broaden the scope of their intercultural and communicative competencies.

<sup>1</sup> This project was a recipient of the European Language Label Award for Innovative Projects in Language Teaching and Learning 2012-2013.

<sup>2</sup> The group of Italian high-school students attended the final year at the *Liceo Classico Statale Ennio Quirino Visconti* of Rome. They were coordinated by their teacher of

English, Rosella Manni. The group of American intermediate level-students of Italian of the University of Arizona were coordinated by their teacher, Stefano Maranzana.

<sup>3</sup> Within a ZPD, learners provide reciprocal language scaffolding and peer reviewing in order to carry out their joint communicative endeavour successfully. Their focus is not laid on language accuracy per se, but on the intelligibility of their discourse.

<sup>4</sup> Council of Europe 2001, *Modern Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. A Common European Framework of Reference*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>5</sup> Sercu, L. 2004, Intercultural Communicative Competence in Foreign Language Education: Integrating Theory and Practice. In John, O. St., van Esch, K. and Schalkwijk, E. (eds.), *New Insights into Foreign Language Learning and Teaching*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 115-130.

<sup>6</sup> Lantolf (2004: 30-31, quoted in Lantolf and Thorne, 2006: 1) explains what the essence of Vygotsky's (1978) SCT is: «despite the label “sociocultural” the theory is not a theory of the social or of the cultural aspects of human existence. [...] it is, rather, [...] a theory of mind [...] that recognizes the central role that social relationships and culturally constructed artifacts play in organizing uniquely human forms of thinking».

<sup>7</sup> Source: private communications sent to the project coordinators.

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Barry Lee Reynolds, Melissa H. Yu

*Using Web-based Video Technologies to Increase Taiwanese University Staff's Willingness to Use English as a Lingua Franca*

ABSTRACT:

An implementation of *YouTube* <[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)> (last access 10.02.2016), a video sharing website, and *English Central* <[www.englishcentral.com](http://www.englishcentral.com)> (last access 10.02.2016), a personalized video website that tracks progress on every word learners watch, learn, or speak, is reported in which the administrative staff ( $n = 20$ ) from a Taiwanese university enrolled in an English for Specific Purposes course increased their willingness to use English as a Lingua Franca to orally communicate with internationals ( $t = 2.302$ ;  $p < .05$ ). The staff adapted work related dialogues of encounters with international students and visitors that were filmed and uploaded to *YouTube* for review and commendation. The effectiveness of the course in conjunction with *English Central* and *YouTube* to improve the staff's willingness to use English as a Lingua Franca is discussed.

*Introduction and problem statement*

The Taiwan Ministry of Education (MOE) in 2002 initiated English language education policies to internationalize Taiwan's universities. The policies, such as English as a medium of instruction (EMI) courses, creating a global learning environment, and initiating international exchange programs, aim to internationalize Taiwanese universities to maximize international student recruitment (Chen, 2006; MOE, 2011a; Yeh, 2009). As Jenkins (2011) indicates, many of the world's universities are considered to be international having implemented a language policy on English as an academic Lingua Franca. An example relevant to mentioned policies is the new English language policy to internationalize Taiwanese universities via offering and/or increasing the offering of EMI courses (Chen, 2010: 89).

There was an approximate 60% increase in the enrolled international students (excluding students from China, HK, and Macau) between the 2006 and 2011 academic years (MOE, 2011b). This significant increase seems to prove the success in implementing the policy of internationalizing

Taiwanese universities. The literature and studies, however, have highlighted the difficulties arising from implementing this policy in various Taiwanese universities. These challenges include conducting EMI courses (Chang, 2010; Wu, 2006); language policy and planning concerning internationalizing Taiwanese language education (Chen, 2006; Hsieh, 2010), social, cultural adjustment of international students in Taiwan (Jenkins and Galloway, 2009), and university administrators', teachers', and students' perceptions of policy of internationalizing universities (Bruyas, 2008; Yeh, 2009). The cited challenges vary between policies, institutes, social groups, and Taiwanese people's perception but all point to use of English to internationalize Taiwanese universities.

Developing English-language curriculum and creating a global learning environment aims to assist international students to study and live in Taiwan. However, this may in turn pose various challenges for the university faculty/staff, teachers, and local and international students. As Taiwan is a non-English-speaking country, one of the challenges is Taiwanese people's English language proficiency to use English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) to communicate with international students. Chang (2010) and Wu (2006), for instance, have addressed the issue of Taiwanese students' and professors' English language proficiency when dealing with EMI courses. It has not yet been explored how Taiwanese university staff use ELF to assist international students to study in Taiwanese universities and whether Taiwanese staff have the language skills required in providing English service to international students.

The School of Management staff from a national university in northern Taiwan expressed uncertainty about conversing with foreign visitors and students during daily routine job duties such as answering inquiries through e-mail and phone, solving problems, offering advice, and face-to-face interactions. Based on previous research showing prompt feedback, modelling and encouragement for fostering motivation (Yang, Gamble and Tang, 2012), a 4-month English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course addressing the individual ELF needs of the staff ( $n = 20$ ) was developed incorporating: dialogues centring around negotiation with foreign interlocutors, short videos of staff as actors uploaded to *YouTube* <[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)> (last access 10.02.2016), and the use of *English Central* <[www.englishcentral.com](http://www.englishcentral.com)> (last access 10.02.2016), an interactive English video website with speech recognition, vocabulary, and pronunciation tools. The overarching research question guiding this study was: How will a 4-month ESP course addressing the individual ELF needs of the staff increase their willingness to communicate in English?

### *1. Instruction*

Before beginning course development, the instructor met with the Dean of the School of Management to better understand the concerns from an administrative level. The Dean expressed a need for the staff to be given English training that could assist them in fulfilling their job duties. The Dean supplied the instructor with a bilingual list of terms that he wished the staff to be familiar with in order to communicate with internationals. During the first two weeks of class the instructor asked the staff to describe encounters in which English language was required to fulfil their job duties. They were encouraged to use both English and their mother tongue, Mandarin Chinese, to express their concerns or difficulties faced. The instructor took notes about the staff concerns while this took place. At the same time, the English vocabulary that the majority of the staff only knew the Chinese equivalents was noted in order to be later cross-checked with the list provided by the Dean. After reviewing the notes, the instructor found that the staff reported their biggest concerns were a lack of professional English vocabulary and difficulty in pronouncing English.

Following the first two weeks, the instructor created dialogues that mimicked the interactions described by the staff in attempts to incorporate many of these unknown professional vocabulary words (e.g., introducing and assisting with international student scholarship policies, assisting students with course adding/dropping and auditing, explaining school policies). These dialogues were then used as the classroom texts staff used during class discussion. These discussions mainly consisted of the staff's opinions on whether the contents of these dialogues written by the instructor fully represented the interactions they had with foreign faculty, students, and guests at the university. If not, with the support of the instructor, the staff revised the dialogues to better represent realistic interactions. An example of such a revision imitated by the instructor will make the need for revisions clearer. One of the dialogues written by a staff member included an interaction between the staff member and an international student asking the location of the library. Since the instructor was aware that international students are given a guided tour of the campus during their initial student orientation, the instructor confirmed with the staff member that this was not a question that is usually asked. The instructor then worked with the staff member to figure out what type of places that international students need to get to but are unaware of after orientation. Working with the staff member, the instructor found that many international students ask for the location of the automatic document kiosk

in the administration building (used for printing of academic transcripts among other documents). The instructor then worked with the staff member to revise the dialogue to include directions to the printer kiosk. This then led to teaching of other prepositions (e.g., front of, behind, beside) and vocabulary (e.g., kiosk). The staff were then encouraged to further edit the dialogues at home. Eventually the staff began to write new dialogues incorporating other interactions they have had with foreign staff. The creation of class content by the staff through negotiation with their colleagues provided them with the opportunity to share experiences and language (e.g., vocabulary, phrases, translations, pronunciation) and to form a supportive learning community. At this point, for homework practice, the staff were encouraged to log onto *English Central* and *YouTube* to receive additional input and practice pronunciation. The participants were free to choose any material they wanted to practice, although they were encouraged to select content they felt were most related to the interactions they would encounter while doing their jobs (i.e., answering inquires, solving problems, and offering advice). The main reason for encouraging the staff to log onto *English Central* and *YouTube* was to get them comfortable with speaking and listening in English. Prior to enrolment in the course, the staff had used avoidance strategies to limit their interactions in English. The exposure to English on these websites was intended to aid in desensitization of the emotional negative responses that many of the staff had towards exposure to the English language.

*English Central* is a video website that provides learners with interactive video courses designed primarily for examination (e.g., TOEFL) and communication purposes (e.g., business, travel). Learners practice and learn words taken from the videos watched; *English Central* monitors users' progress on every word spoken. *English Central* uses a three-part 'watch, learn, speak' approach to assisting learners in enhancing English proficiency (see [Figure 1](#)). During 'watch' learners watch videos split into segments in which each word is 'clickable'; clicking on any word visually and aurally provides information on pronunciation and meaning. During 'learn', target vocabulary from videos is replaced with blanks for a cloze exercise to assess listening and spelling skills. Learners listen to a line from the video, type the missing word, and then study the word's spelling, part of speech, meaning, pronunciation, and usage in sentences. During 'speak' learners first listen to a line from the video and then speak the line. Feedback on pronunciation and fluency is prioritising the development of internationally intelligible English. Learners can thus focus on the sounds to produce internationally-intelligible English as discussed. A letter grade is

assigned after practicing a video. *English Central* also provides a social community of learners that allows learners to carry out intercultural learning exchanges within a private circle or with learners from around the world.

*YouTube* <[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)> (last access 10.02.2016) was used to upload the short videos of the staff interacting in communicative exchanges in order to allow for evaluation and criticism by both the staff as well as other *YouTube* users. The content of these videos were based on dialogues supplied by the instructor and later adapted by the staff or those solely written by the staff; all the dialogue topics centered on communicative information exchanges with foreign interlocutors.

The staff would come to class ready to put on role plays of the scripted dialogues. There was minimal time for the staff to rehearse dialogues at home and memorization of the dialogues were discouraged; instead, the instructor hoped that they would try to spontaneously act and use the language they felt comfortable with in order to improve language competence through role play practice of them fulfilling job duties. The instructor provided guidance in negotiation strategies to aid with communication. These strategies included speaking more slowly, requesting the internationals to repeat themselves, asking or using paraphrasing, circumlocution, and speaking more deliberately. Students would be paired up with colleagues and take turns at the roles of 'international' and 'staff'. After practicing a few times, the instructor or one of the staff would film interactions. Students would then upload these short films to *YouTube* for review and annotation. A similar process continued throughout the semester with staff being encouraged to write and practice dialogues focusing on communication breakdowns or difficulties experienced during the time period in which they were enrolled in the course. The staff were also encouraged to use *YouTube* to view recorded interactions of similar situations as those they uploaded throughout the semester.

## *2. Instrument and data analysis*

A willingness to communicate (WTC) questionnaire was adapted to measure the staff's willingness to use ELF when communicating with foreigners (see [Appendix A](#)). WTC was operationalized as «a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2» (MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément and Noels, 1998: 547). The questionnaire was translated from English into Mandarin Chinese and then back translated to ensure validity of the questionnaire items. The

face validity of the questionnaire is strong and Alpha reliability estimates ranged from .85 to above .90 in previous studies (McCroskey, 1992; McCroskey and Richmond, 1987). Cronbach Alpha Reliability analysis was performed to ensure the reliability of the adapted questionnaire in this study. According to Field (2005) and Nunnally (1978), the reliability coefficient should be more than 0.7 for the data to be reliable. The reliability was .977 before and .981 after taking the course. A paired-sample  $t$  test was conducted to investigate whether staff's willingness to use ELF increased after the curriculum. Other basic bio data and related English learning experience was also obtained.

### *3. Results*

After the curriculum, the staff's overall willingness to use ELF to communicate increased ( $t = 2.302$ ;  $p < .05$ ) (See [Table 1](#)) as well as their willingness to use ELF with foreigners during meetings ( $t = 2.669$ ;  $p < .05$ ) and public speaking ( $t = 2.809$ ;  $p < .05$ ); furthermore, their willingness to use ELF to communicate with foreign strangers increased ( $t = 2.744$ ;  $p < .05$ ) (See [Table 2](#)). However, there was no significant difference found between the pre and post-curriculum in terms of staff's willingness to use ELF during group discussions, interpersonal situations or with acquaintances and friends.

### *4. Discussion and conclusions*

The questionnaire results indicate an overall shift in the perceptions of the staff in terms of their willingness to use ELF with internationals. In addition, willingness to use ELF in several of the situations showed a significant increase. In fact, except for interpersonal communication, the staff's willingness to use ELF increased for all situations. Below we first discuss some probable reasons for these results and then provide opinions on how a future course could be improved upon. Lastly, we provide some thoughts on areas in which upcoming research should focus.

It is likely that there was no significant increase in the staff's willingness to use ELF during interpersonal communication and with friends due to the focus of the course, specifically on the use of ELF in a work environment. In other words, although the staff began to perceive English as a language able to assist them in their job duties, they seemed less inclined to transfer this use of English to non-work settings. We do not

necessarily see this as a negative outcome of the course, since there was no apparent need for the staff to use English outside of a work context. Sadly, this is a bit indicative that they may have been unwilling to make friends with internationals or the results at least point towards the conclusion that they did not feel comfortable using English with international friends (see items 6, 9, 4, 19 in [Appendix A](#) and [Table 2](#)). This, cannot, however, be confirmed without more in-depth interviews. Still, it must be noted that prior to the course, in comparison to other situations, the staff were more comfortable with using ELF in interpersonal communication ( $M = 57.33$ ). A higher pre-treatment mean score on the questionnaire results in less room for improvement to be shown on the post-treatment mean score. In fact, before the course, the staff were also somewhat willing to communicate with acquaintances using ELF. Unfortunately, willingness to use ELF during group discussions did not significantly improve. We believe this may have related to either how the class was run or the staff job requirements. Firstly, job requirements often cantered on one-on-one interactions with internationals. Since, the staff rarely encountered job related situations in which they needed to communicate with more than one or two individuals at a time in English, they were less likely to be willing to take part in such interactions. Furthermore, during class group discussions the use of Chinese was never limited. It may be beneficial to encourage the staff to try to use ELF more during these interactions as a practice for future group interactions. We believe the staff's willingness to use ELF in public speaking situations stems from their interactions during the role plays; they may have interpreted either the classroom interactions or the uploading of their videos as public speaking situations. This then may have translated to their willingness to speak English in front of strangers.

### *5. Limitations and future research*

Although the *English Central* website provided the staff with graded spaced-repeated vocabulary learning that allowed opportunities to improve pronunciation through an on-line speech system, unfortunately the website does not provide any videos containing the speech by non-native speakers. This is unfortunate in that as Seidlhofer (2005) points out, even when the «vast majority of verbal exchanges in English do not involve any native speakers at all»...«there is still a tendency for native speakers to be regarded as custodians over what is acceptable usage» (2005: 339). Given the multilingual nature of ELF intercultural exchanges (Canagarajah,

2007), the use of *English Central* was not intended to impose any linguistic norms on or to take a monolingual approach to the learners' development of English language proficiency. *English Central*, instead, was used to cater for international intelligibility of the staffs' English and their strategic negotiation of intercultural understanding, as Jenkins (2000) and Cogo (2012) suggest and to draw the staffs' attention to how to use pragmatic strategies to negotiate meaning with international interlocutors. For example, *YouTube* offered the staff opportunities to observe language strategies in use and then comment on those strategies while *English Central* provided them with opportunities for language practice. The *English Central* and self-filmed videos uploaded to *YouTube* provided the staff with the practice in developing internationally-intelligible English and confidence needed to use ELF to communicate with foreign students. Moreover, this was accomplished without increasing the amount of time that the staff spent on English learning each week (about 1.5 hrs./wk.).

Potential pitfalls from internationalizing Taiwanese universities may be avoided if administrators take the initiative of providing ELF-relevant language practice for university staff that encourages use of ELF with international students and visitors. Combined with language learning and confidence building exercises provided by websites such as *English Central* and *YouTube*, university staff will become more willing to use ELF, creating a more global learning environment. Future research should aim to address the needs of the international students by seeking to uncover their perceptions of using ELF for communication with Taiwanese university staff, administrators and local students.

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# ANNEXES

## TABLES

*Table 1 – Differences between pre and post treatment for overall WTC scores*

WTC	Pre		Post		t-value	Significance
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Overall	46.17	22.09	54.58	24.04	2.302	.033*

*Note.* \*Difference is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

*Table 2 – Differences between pre and post treatment for each WTC category score*

WTC	Pre		Post		t-value	Significance
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Group discussion	55.33	25.69	63.33	24.13	1.559	.136
Meetings	44.67	21.31	56.00	24.98	2.669	.015*
Interpersonal communication	57.33	27.31	56.67	23.14	-.154	.879
Public speaking	27.33	26.22	42.33	30.46	2.809	.011*
Stranger	37.25	22.39	49.25	25.66	2.744	.013*
Acquaintance	54.00	23.20	60.00	23.79	1.552	.137
Friend	47.25	24.79	54.50	25.59	1.852	.080

*Note.* \*Difference is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

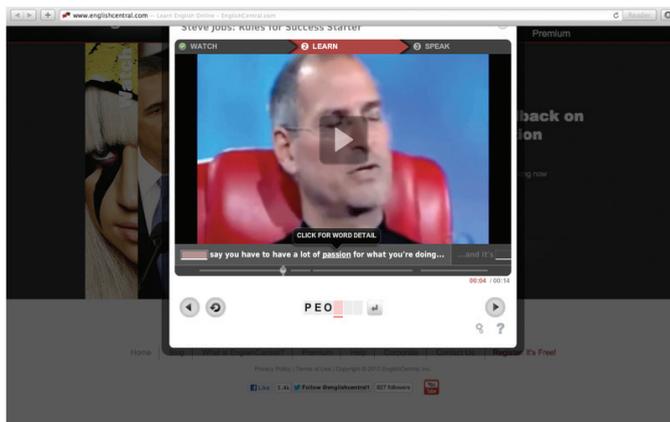


Fig. 1 – English Central's Web User Interface

## APPENDIX A

Below you will find twenty situations in which people could find themselves with the opportunity to communicate with foreigners in English. Assuming you have complete freedom to choose, please indicate your willingness to communicate in English for each item. Checking 0% indicates that in the situation you are always *unwilling* to communicate, while checking 100% indicates you are always *willing* to communicate.

		0%	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%
Example:	I am willing to give directions in English to a foreign visitor. (If you feel the above description fits how you would act at all times, then you would check 100%.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				

問卷題目	0%	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%
1. I am willing to talk in English with a foreign service attendant.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
2. I am willing to talk in English with a foreign physician.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
3. I am willing to give a presentation in English to a group of foreign strangers.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
4. I am willing to talk in English with a foreign acquaintance while standing in line.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
5. I am willing to talk in English with a foreign salesperson in a store.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
6. I am willing to talk in English in a large meeting with foreign friends.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
7. I am willing to talk in English with a foreign police officer.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
8. I am willing to talk in English with a small group of foreign friends.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
9. I am willing to talk in English with a foreign friend while standing in line.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
10. I am willing to talk in English with a foreign server at a restaurant.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
11. I am willing to talk in English in a large meeting with foreign acquaintances.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
12. I am willing to talk in English with a foreign stranger while standing in line.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
13. I am willing to talk in English with a foreign secretary.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
14. I am willing to give a presentation in English to a group of foreign friends.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
15. I am willing to talk in English with a small group of foreign acquaintances.	<input type="checkbox"/>					

16. I am willing to talk in English with a foreign garbage collector.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
17. I am willing to talk in English in a large meeting with foreign strangers.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
18. I am willing to talk in English with a foreign spouse (or girl/boyfriend).	<input type="checkbox"/>					
19. I am willing to talk in English with a small group of foreign friends.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
20. I am willing to give a presentation in English to a group of foreign acquaintances.	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Lili Cavalheiro

*Developing Intercultural Awareness and Communication  
in Teacher Education Programs*

ABSTRACT:

Despite interactions in English being mainly between NNSs, teaching methods remain chiefly centered on monolingual NSs. However, given today's international use of the language, an alternative would be to give more thought to the importance of intercultural communicative competence. For these changes to be applied, pre-service teacher education programs seem the ideal place for discussion. Bearing this in mind, this paper is centered on a study on how these issues are developed in Portuguese teacher MA programs, followed by some suggestions and approaches.

*Introduction*

Nowadays, the majority of the communicative interactions in English take place between non-native speakers (NNS) from diverse nationalities, who use the language for instrumental reasons in a variety of different fields like academia, business, and commerce, to name just a few. Meanwhile, English language teaching (ELT) methods have not quite gone hand in hand with the recent multicultural use of the language at an international level. Quite the contrary, traditionally, ELT approaches have barely taken into consideration learners' own languages (Alptekin, 2002), as educational systems' policies have maintained the monolingual native speaker (NS) as the standard model to follow. According to Alptekin (2002), it may be contended that NNS teachers are restricted by NS-based authenticity for two reasons. On the one hand, as multicompetent language users, they are discouraged from cultivating multicompetent minds by traditional educational systems' policies; while on the other hand, with English rooted in the NS model, its teaching also remains mainly connected to the NS culture, while the learners' own culture is many times disregarded.

More recently, learners' own cultures have in fact begun to be integrated

into the EFL classrooms; however, they continue without empowering learners to acknowledge themselves as legitimate users of English. In this sense, it may be argued that the traditional native speaker EFL model has not exactly excluded non-native learners' own cultures, but it certainly has not gone as far as viewing these learners on a par with the Inner Circle NSs (Kachru, 1985). Byram's five «saviors» paradigm (1997), for instance, not only proposes a structure for curriculum design when teaching intercultural communicative competence, but it also establishes a set of goals for assessment. The latter undeniably allows for learners' development, but it also establishes a standard (that belongs to the Other, the NS) by which to measure their evolution towards those very goals, and when unable to achieve them, they are perceived and assessed as «failed» learners (Seidlhofer, 2011).

Considering these issues, this paper proposes to reflect on alternative and additional approaches to ELT that can match the current demands for English language use. Therefore, notions like English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and intercultural communicative competence are viewed as key elements for successful communication in today's interconnected world, especially when considering language users' need to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and critical cultural awareness necessary to effectively communicate, as well as to measure the cultural and social values of the interlocutors involved in interactions (Hülmbauer *et al.*, 2008; Seidlhofer, 2003).

In view of these matters, pre-service teacher education programs may be considered the ideal environment to introduce these new approaches or notions to ELT (Sifakis, 2007, 2009, 2014), seeing as both innovative theoretical thinking and practical teaching come together, in order to train/educate well-informed and self-reliant professionals (Kirkpatrick, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011). Keeping this in mind, a study is presented on Portuguese pre-service teacher education programs (2011-2013), focusing namely on issues of culture, communicative competence and the diversity of English language varieties. From the results obtained in the questionnaires and the feedback received from trainees in the interviews, some suggestions in favor of developing intercultural awareness and intercultural communicative competence are presented as essential for today's teacher education programs. These proposals will hopefully not only allow trainees to look at language differently, but also to teach it differently, so that their students in turn, will similarly acknowledge the importance of these issues in their future use of the language.

### 1. *ELF and intercultural competence in ELT*

Several have been the definitions associated with the notion of ELF (e.g. Firth, 1996; House, 1999; Jenkins, 1998), however, the one considered here was put forth by Seidlhofer (2011: 7), who argues that ELF includes «*any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option* [in italics in the original form]». In this sense, ELF refers to communicative situations where English is the common language among different interlocutors (both NSs and NNSs), who do not share a mutual mother tongue and whose intent is to achieve successful intercultural communication.

Considering the multiplicity of its speakers, ELF is therefore defined functionally by its use in different intercultural interactions rather than formally by its reference to standard NS norms. From this standpoint, ELF users counteract the deficit view many times associated with lingua franca English, seeing how identical communicative rights are implied for all its users, rather than barriers being put up between «first class and second class language users». As Hülmbauer *et al.* (2008) further argue, the essential factor lies on how all speakers are allowed to adopt and adapt English for their own purposes, without there being an over-deference to NS norms. Needless to say though that when adopting and adapting a language, it is necessary for all users to rely on the negotiation of meaning (e.g. in terms of variety of norms, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc.), to keep in mind the specific context and domain, as well as the interlocutors involved. In the same way as the English language inevitably develops into local norms as well as global uses, speakers inevitably need to also become more flexible and creative in order to accommodate to this variation. It is the cooperation involved between both parties that leads to effective and successful communication. This being said, the notion of achieving a definitive command of an idealized standard variety does not necessarily imply intelligibility, however, nor is the recognition of all linguistic variations virtually possible. Taking these issues into consideration, Mauranen (2012: 239) argues that «intercultural sensitivity and adaptation skills are crucial in successful communication in a globalized world, and more often than not they bear no reference to Anglo-American cultural presuppositions.»

Traditionally, cultural perspectives in ELT have mainly been (and by and large still continue to be) taught from an American and/or British point of view; however, from an ELF standpoint, it is believed that there is no single identifiable culture that users may refer to, though this does not mean ELF communication is «de-cultured», as Dogancay-Aktuna and

Hardman (2012) emphasize. Quite the opposite, since ELF contexts usually involve both NSs and NNSs from a variety of linguistic backgrounds, these situations inevitably rely on intercultural communicative competence as an essential feature for effective interaction; that is, grasping the full meaning of culture and going beyond what may be simply conveyed as the «postcard culture» (e.g. reference to monuments, holidays and so on). Like Dogancay-Aktuna and Hardman (2012: 110) further reiterate, «developing intercultural competence demands an understanding of culture and the role of culture and cultural variation in all communication.» In view of the variable cross-cultural contexts that depict today's society, it can be further argued that users of English should preferably even develop what is denoted as a meta-cultural awareness, which can be adopted within an array of contexts, so as to apprehend not only the cultural elements of a given communicative scenario, but also the social and linguistic components involved.

Considering these relevant issues, new perspectives and approaches to ELT are called upon, which rethink the traditional notion of English as a foreign language (EFL), where form is viewed as predominating over function, as is argued in Cavalheiro (2013: 15):

«The notion of teaching English as a foreign language, based on processes and objectives that are unrealistic, no longer seems to meet the communicative needs of those who wish to take part in today's multicultural society in constant transformation. To counteract this tendency, an ELF approach emerges as an alternative way to think about ELT; an approach in which form gives way to function and to a redefined intercultural communicative competence.»

In this sense, the current communicative panorama is characterized by the increasing need for learners to develop intercultural communicative competence, as well as by the pressure to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and critical cultural awareness necessary to communicate successfully (Hülmbauer *et al.*, 2008; Seidlhofer, 2003). As a result, the role of language educators must likewise be reevaluated, as they are increasingly required to become more multifaceted on account of the considerable divergence in terms of beliefs and values across cultures. Friedrich (2012) thus emphasizes how language educators need to assume the arduous task of facilitating communication in terms of linguistic forms, of intercultural awareness-building as well as of communicative strategy development; in other words, encouraging the development of an «intercultural sensitivity» (Mauranen, 2012).

Unfortunately, this type of approach is not always visible in Expanding

circle environments, as the pressure for NS-based authenticity many times restricts NNS teachers, especially on two accounts. Firstly, as multicompetent language users, educators are persuaded against fostering multicompetent minds by conventional educational policies, which often value monolingual NS standards. Because of that, ELT curricula on many occasions neglect to reconsider the appropriate goals or situations for learners in a given context, and teaching methods rarely tend to contemplate the role/presence of learners' mother tongues on a par with the English language. Secondly, with English still rooted in two main NS cultures (mainly British or American), its teaching has also largely continued to be associated with those very same cultures, and as a result, learners' own cultures have many times been overlooked and marginalized. Even though NNS teachers feel at ease with their own culture, and share a similar linguistic and cultural background as their students, they are usually obliged to mainly center their approaches on NS norms and strategic/sociolinguistic skills (Alpetkin, 2002). When considering this type of approach, not only does it make learners feel apprehensive, but it also makes them feel uncomfortable, as they are being taught, and are expected to act and communicate like someone else beside themselves. Contrastingly, when employing an ELF perspective, teachers are believed to have much more freedom when considering culture, especially since they have the liberty and are encouraged to actually explore their own particular and familiar cultural context, which should be equally respected (McKay, 2012).

With these concerns in mind, pre-service teacher education programs seem the ideal place for discussion and reflection on new approaches to ELT. It is at universities that pre-service teachers engage with more academic and theoretical issues, while in basic and secondary schools they get the chance to participate in more practical pedagogical issues; considering these two facets, teacher education courses are in the best position if change is to come into effect – firstly with future language teachers, and afterwards with their learners. In order for this change to come through though, instead of simply preparing trainees for a limited set of pre-formulated teaching methods, a more widespread education should be given to them, allowing them to assess the implications of ELF use for their own ELT environments, and to adjust their teaching in relation to the specific needs of their students. If this were to be done, trainees would be able to assess and understand the fundamental issues involved in intercultural communication as well as comprehend the unreliability of «universal solutions», as is put forth by Seidlhofer (2004: 228):

«such teacher education would foster an understanding of the processes of language variation and change, the relationship between language and identity, the importance of social-psychological factors in intercultural communication and the suspect nature of any supposedly universal solutions to pedagogic problems.»

In view of these arguments, teacher education programs (especially pre-service education) should be reanalyzed and reevaluated, in order to verify whether these pressing issues are being taken into account. Besides, it is also central to assess the impact teacher education has on future ELT teachers' opinions when considering language itself as well as different teaching approaches.

## 2. *A study*

Considering this imperative need for reflection, a study was conducted between the 2011-2013 school years focusing on pre-service teacher education MA programs (English plus another foreign language)<sup>1</sup> at five public Portuguese universities. Besides observing the structure of the courses, a questionnaire was also given at two different stages – first, to trainees beginning their MA studies, and second, to those ending their courses. Out of the 166 trainees enrolled and attending English related seminars, 66% (N=109) responded to the questionnaire. Sixty-six percent (N=61) were first-year trainees beginning their MA degree and 64% (N=48) were second-year trainees in the last semester of their degree. Semi-structured interviews (N=6) were conducted as well to second-year trainees, so as to confirm the data retrieved and also to explore other topics that could not be delved into via questionnaires.

Among other issues, the importance given to intercultural awareness and communication in these programs (namely regarding the notions of culture, communicative competence and language varieties) will be here reflected on, so as to verify whether these programs contribute to any changes in trainees' attitudes regarding ELT. With the results obtained from this particular group of trainees, some suggestions and new approaches are subsequently suggested for Portuguese pre-service teacher education courses in the future.

Taking into consideration the concepts of native- and non-native speakerness, trainees were asked to consider a number of statements regarding their role as language teachers and to classify them accordingly on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from one (*strongly agree*) to five (*strongly disagree*):

*I think...*

1. NS teachers play a fundamental role in the correct use of the language.
2. NNS teachers play a fundamental role in the correct use of the language.
3. I should spend more time getting students to communicate in English.
4. I should spend more time getting students to obtain a native-like accent.
5. I should spend more time trying to eradicate mistakes typical of European NNSs.
6. It is important to teach that various cultures use English differently.
7. It is important to teach English features that make one understood internationally and not only in some societies.

Regarding the first two statements, according to the respondents from both groups, NS and NNS teachers equally play a fundamental part in correct language use, with those *mostly/strongly agreeing* ranging well over the 80% mark and with little variation from the first to the second year (see [Table 1](#)). As for obtaining a native-like accent and eradicating mistakes typical of European NNSs, these statements generated the most contradiction with opinions ranging from one end of the scale to the other, along with relatively high percentages of undecidedness (between 23% and 42%); however, difference between first and second-year trainees' opinions is visible. In the first case, roughly half of the first year group (46%) *mostly agrees* with getting students to obtain a native like accent, while in the second year the tendency is for trainees to *mostly/strongly disagree* (42%). As for eradicating mistakes typical of European NNSs, about a third of the respondents in both groups (31% and 35%, respectively) seem undecided on this notion, most probably because of their uncertainty in what this particular statement involves. Even so, similar to what was verified in the previous statement, the percentage of those who *mostly/strongly agree* decreases slightly by 6% from one year to another, while the percentage of those who *mostly/strongly disagree* has a minor increase of 2%. In this sense, it can be argued that notions of nativeness and correctness, more strongly manifested in first-year trainees, give way to that of communicative effectiveness, as can also be observed in the next three statements. It is clear, for instance, that spending more time trying to get students to communicate in English is one of the most important concerns for trainees, with the percentage of *mostly/strongly agreeing* reaching 92% and 94% of first and second-year trainees. However, in order for effective communication to take place in an international scenario, it is also vital that: a) students understand that various cultures use English differently

and b) that they are taught specific features/strategies in order to make themselves understood at a global level. In both cases, it is clearly visible that trainees are also alert to these notions with percentages for *mostly/strongly agree* starting at 80% and higher. The last statement especially received 92% and 93% of the responses in favor of being understood in international situations, reflecting the importance given to lingua franca scenarios and intercultural communication. These last three cases can then be considered an example of the growing tendency and increasing awareness, however little it may be, of function over form from the first to the second year.

*Table 1 – First and second-year trainees’ opinions on their role as language teachers*

	1 <sup>st</sup> year	2 <sup>nd</sup> year
NS teachers play a fundamental role in the correct use of the language.	86.9% (strongly/mostly agree)	87.5% (strongly/mostly agree)
NNS teachers play a fundamental role in the correct use of the language.	83.3% (strongly/mostly agree)	85.4% (strongly/mostly agree)
I should spend more time getting students to communicate in English.	91.8% (strongly/mostly agree)	93.8% (strongly/mostly agree)
I should spend more time getting students to obtain a native-like accent.	45.8% (mostly agree) 32.2% (strongly/mostly disagree)	31.3% (undecided) 41.7% (strongly/mostly disagree)
I should spend more time trying to eradicate mistakes typical of European NNSs.	45.9% (strongly/mostly agree) 31.1% (undecided) 22.9% (strongly/mostly disagree)	39.6% (strongly/mostly agree) 35.4% (undecided) 25% (strongly/mostly disagreed)
It is important to teach that different cultures use English differently.	83.3% (strongly/mostly agree)	89.6% (strongly/mostly agree)
It is important to teach that English features that make one understood internationally, and not only in one or two societies.	91.7% (strongly/mostly agree)	92.7% (strongly/mostly agree)

These answers can also go in line with the following section, in which first and second-year trainees were asked to rank from first place to fifth place, what they believe is most important to focus on when teaching English. Participants' responses were as follows:

*Table 2 – First and second-year trainees' ranking of most important issues*

	1 <sup>st</sup> year	2 <sup>nd</sup> year
1 <sup>st</sup>	Standard variety (e.g. BrE/AmE)	Lingua franca dimension
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Lingua franca dimension	Standard variety (e.g. BrE/AmE)
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Syllabus for practical field (e.g. business, tourism)	Syllabus for practical field (e.g. business, tourism)
4 <sup>th</sup>	Post-colonial/emerging varieties	Post-colonial/emerging varieties
5 <sup>th</sup>	Other	Other

When comparing the responses from this group of trainees at the beginning of their degree and at the end, it is at the top two positions where change is most evident, while the rest is maintained. At the beginning, standard varieties are valued as the main element in ELT, whereas towards the end an international or lingua franca perspective is increasingly recognized and valued, at least at a theoretical level. Having a practical syllabus (e.g. English for Specific Purposes) is ranked afterwards in third place, hence accentuating the instrumental use of the language; and in fourth, can be found post-colonial varieties, judged as the least important. As for the «other» option, respondents had the possibility of giving their own suggestions, of which four main ideas stand out. Firstly, it is that of language and language skills, where emphasis is placed on certain difficulties or errors that learners may have or make, and the need to correct them; in other words, the prevalence of form over function. Secondly, the notion of communication and the need to urge learners to communicate is also highlighted, which contrastingly, gives primacy to function over form. Thirdly, reference to culture is yet another essential issue according to trainees. On the one hand, mention is made to the traditional concept of culture associated with EFL, such as the culture of the language one is learning (namely the British or American culture); while on the other hand, there is also the understanding and consideration of other cultures that are essential if English is to be used as an international language.

Lastly, reference is made as well to students' own aims; an aspect that is many times forgotten due to the syllabus imposed, but which plays a crucial part in motivating and persuading students to learn and use the language. Taking into account these responses, it can be said that there is a tendency to favor both standardization and form; even so, there is a growing awareness (especially from the first to the second year) in what concerns international use and language function.

The part dedicated to culture, more specifically attitudes toward native and non-native cultures, begins by observing the quantitative data collected in the questionnaire and afterwards the qualitative data from the interviews. In the first case, in the questionnaire, trainees were asked to rank from one to six (being one the most important and six the least important) how they view the teaching of different cultures, so as to observe whether their opinions are more oriented toward native communities or an international perspective (Table 3).

*Table 3 – Most popular position chosen for each culture*

	1 <sup>st</sup> year trainees	2 <sup>nd</sup> year trainees
British culture	1 <sup>st</sup> (82%)	1 <sup>st</sup> (69%)
American culture	2 <sup>nd</sup> (71%)	2 <sup>nd</sup> (65%)
Other English-speaking cultures	3 <sup>rd</sup> (56%)	3 <sup>rd</sup> (60%)
L2 cultures	4 <sup>th</sup> (41%)	4 <sup>th</sup> & 5 <sup>th</sup> (42% each)
Other worldwide cultures	6 <sup>th</sup> (54%)	6 <sup>th</sup> (54%)
Students' own culture	3 <sup>rd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> (25% each)	6 <sup>th</sup> (27%)

Although participants widely recognize the significance of teaching how various cultures use English differently (as seen in Table 1), when it comes to the actual teaching of culture, the two main cultures traditionally associated with EFL continue to assume leading positions in both years – British culture in the first place and American in the second. It is worth noting though that in the second year both of these cultures lose some ground to other ones, namely to other English-speaking cultures and L2 cultures. With this in mind, it can be argued that the teaching of culture in English language classes continues to be very much associated with the nations where it is spoken, regardless of them being L1 or L2 countries, while other worldwide cultures are largely neglected and positioned in the last place. When taking into account the students' own culture, responses

from participants are primarily ranked between third and sixth place, although the tendency is for it to be positioned at a lower level. Bearing this in mind, it can be claimed then that some recognition is given to students' local/national culture; still, it is never fully recognized as being critical for the learning of the language. It is worth mentioning that these results are comparable to those found in Guerra (2005), who also enquired students on similar cultural issues in Portugal. In his study, preference was also manifested in favor of the British and American cultures (with 86% and 74% respectively deemed them as *important/very important*), while ESL cultures, Portuguese culture and EFL cultures can be found at the other end of the scale (35%, 37% and 56%, respectively, are believed to be *unimportant/very unimportant*). Considering these two studies, it is visible how native cultures clearly continue to weigh heavily in ELT. This position may have to do with the longtime tradition of ELT materials being mainly centered on the British (and American) culture. Nonetheless, as communication in English today is increasingly characterized for its flexibility and mutability, it becomes ever more important that learners know how to express themselves and interact in different cultural situations.

Bearing this in mind, the interviews conducted functioned as a way to get trainees to further explore this complex notion of culture. The responses received go beyond the strict set of options given in the questionnaire, with answers greatly varying between interviewees. One of the trainees, for example, referred to the importance of comparing different English-speaking cultures (mainly American and British), having as a point of departure the students' own culture. Another trainee went even further and referred to the importance of teaching other global cultures that differ from Western society (e.g. Asian cultural issues). The reason for this lies on the fact that we currently live in a global village in which cultural aspects do not widely differ among Western countries, and from this particular trainee's experience, learners react positively when presented with issues that vary greatly from their own. Yet another trainee mentioned the importance of adapting the concept of culture according to each student's/group's area of study, seeing that what may be appropriated in one case may not be in another. However, not all opinions manifested by interviewees share this openness towards culture. Reference was also made to how essential it is for ELT teachers to visit Britain or the US, for instance. According to one trainee, it is crucial for teachers to be familiar with the culture they are teaching in class; that they experience the «real culture» in loco, so as to properly explain matters in class and have the answer to any questions that may arise during class. Considering these responses, it is evident that culture is a much more

complex issue than can be initially thought, with opinions greatly varying among the several interviewees.

Besides the linguistic and cultural issues, towards the end of the interviews trainees were likewise questioned on whether they were familiar with the concepts of English as a Lingua Franca or English as an International Language, so as to understand if these issues had ever been developed throughout their MA programs. The feedback that was received consists in an array of answers, in which no reference had been made to these issues, in other cases just vaguely, while in others it had been developed to a certain extent. It is interesting to note that the interviewees, who manifested their unfamiliarity with these concepts, were quite interested in finding out more about them. The trainees from the University of Lisbon were the ones who most outwardly manifested their knowledge and understanding of the concept, seeing as they had attended seminars on Teaching Materials and English Didactics, in which this topic was discussed in class by the chair professors and by an invited guest lecturer<sup>2</sup>.

Taking into account the responses gathered from the questionnaires and interviews, it is clear that these trainees exhibit some awareness toward intercultural sensitivity, though not yet fully developed, as there still continue to be strongly held beliefs typical of traditional EFL approaches, especially regarding culture. It is with this study in mind and the results obtained that several aspects may be reconsidered in pre-service teacher education programs.

### *3. Some suggestions*

Similarly to what was verified in the questionnaires, Sifakis (2009: 346) states that there is evidence of «a mismatch between what ESOL [English Speakers of Other Languages] teachers seem to believe about the English that they teach to their non-native learners and the competences and abilities that they believe these learners need, when communicating with other non-native users (Sifakis and Sougari, 2005).» According to Sifakis, when actual teaching issues are taken into consideration, most NNS language educators seem to manifest more traditional and established beliefs regarding the importance of a single variety and culture (usually British or American) for their teaching situation. This is verified in the questionnaires with the Portuguese trainees, especially in what concerns culture, as participants beginning and ending their degrees continue to favor the British or American cultures as key models for the ELT classroom. Furthermore, first-year trainees likewise

exhibited preference for standard varieties (BrE/AmE) as the most important issue to focus on in ELT, although it is true that in the second-year, trainees did demonstrate preference in favor of a lingua franca dimension, followed by standard varieties.

Considering this evident mismatch, much still needs to be achieved for the notion of ELF to take on a more visible role in pre-service teacher education. These courses are particularly special due to their unique combination of academic viewpoints with practical teaching experience. As a result, they foment the ideal environment to promote dialog not only among trainees, cooperating teachers and university professors, but also with the Ministries of Education and those locally in charge of language planning.

In what concerns the specific case of ELF (and its importance in developing intercultural awareness and stimulating communication), some suggestions for pre-service teacher education programs include paying more attention to the education of future language teachers, and not only to their training. If this were to be done, trainees would be able to understand «the nature of language and its use that underpins their pedagogic practices» (Seidlhofer, 2011: 204), consequently enhancing their status as well informed and self-reliant language professionals. Such a framework would essentially favor process over form, awareness over certainty, and consider knowledge of language and knowledge about language as equally imperative. Taking for example the particular case of language proficiency in EIL teacher education, Dogancay-Aktuna and Hardman (2012: 111) stress the importance of focusing on its multidimensional nature, seeing as it is «a construct consisting of a combination of sociocultural, strategic discourse and grammatical/linguistic competences and an awareness of pluricentric English as opposed to having achieved ‘native-like’ fluency and pronunciation of a single Inner Circle variety like British or American English [...]»

It cannot be ignored that when trainees enroll in teaching programs, they inevitably arrive with a set of preconceived ideas of what ELT is and of what it consists of, which only makes it more difficult to break down the barriers that may exist and introduce new alternatives to their way of thinking. Bearing this in mind, Sifakis (2009) argues in favor of the implementation of a transformative framework in teacher education, where language practitioners have the opportunity to become actively aware of the complicated issues that ELF research raises, and their implications for both communication and pedagogy. What is essentially expected of participants is for them to confront and change their opinions about ELF by providing hands-on information and getting them to a) understand and critically consider their suppositions, b) explore new terrains by testing new roles, c)

develop a course of action, d) obtain the information and necessary skills to carry out that plan, e) acquire self-confidence in their new roles and f) become reincorporated on the basis of conditions determined by the new perspective (Sifakis, 2009: 346).

With this in mind, Sifakis (2009) goes even further and proposes a five-stage framework for teaching programs, which includes: 1) Preparation; 2) Identifying the primary issues of ELF discourse; 3) Fostering trainees' informed awareness about ELF discourse; 4) ELF and pedagogy; and 5) Formulating an ELF action plan. With this framework, language educators' opinions face a transformative adaptation in what regards their worldviews and outlooks toward ELT; hence, becoming not only aware of the features, but also of the challenges that ELF discourse and teaching provoke. The active reflection required plays an essential role in getting (prospective) teachers to consider these issues in relation to their own beliefs, contexts and teaching experiences. For this reason, Sifakis' general framework functions as an ideal model, seeing as training programs in different countries may adapt it according to their own specificities.

An example already implemented and presented at the 'Fifth International English as a Lingua Franca Conference' in Istanbul, is a seminar included in the teacher education program at Dortmund University and developed by Marie-Luise Pitzl (Pitzl, 2012). The seminar essentially aims at: familiarizing students with core concepts; presenting descriptive ELF findings and relating them to ELT local contexts; raising awareness of what an «ELF perspective» might mean for ELT; having students experiment with different cooperative teaching methods; as well as triggering reflective processes (namely, on NS models in ELT, their own experiences, their own ideals, standard discrepancies, among other issues). With this type of course, trainees have come to recognize the importance of mutual intelligibility over correctness, of teaching negotiation and communication strategies, and of focusing on different cultures.

Even though such transformation towards an ELF outlook is likely to be time-consuming, teachers will increasingly be expected to become fully aware of the features and challenges that ELF discourse and teaching provoke. The fundamental objective is to change their worldviews and perspectives about language teaching, and get them to actively reflect on such issues by relating them to their own experiences, beliefs and teaching contexts.

As Friedrich (2012: 50) argues, «If the only constant in lingua franca situations is diversity, then we should anchor our practices in that assumption and educate students to encounter such diversity with respect, curiosity and wisdom.»

#### *4. Conclusions*

As communication in English has proliferated around the world in both intra- and international contexts, nowadays the majority of the communicative scenarios are characterized by the hybridity of their interlocutors. Successful communication can no longer be restrained by standard linguistic forms, instead, critical cultural awareness becomes increasingly imperative for achieving high levels of intercultural competence; that is, holding the necessary skills and knowledge to evaluate each situation accordingly as well as its interlocutors, so as to adequately communicate.

It is with this in mind that this paper chose to reflect on the importance of the role of teacher education in modifying prospective teachers' perceptions on English and ELT. The study carried out helped to understand this particular group's outlook toward several relevant issues in terms of language, culture and communication, in addition to also verifying if there were any changes of opinion throughout their degrees. Although some changes were verified, opinions still continue being set according to certain traditions. Because of this, it is suggested that teacher education programs integrate specific instruction in what concerns ELF and its implications, hence fostering an awareness of the importance of developing intercultural communicative skills and stimulating communication.

Sifakis' (2007, 2009) transformative framework plays as well a fundamental role in how these notions can be implemented and integrated into teacher programs across the world. Functioning as a model that can be adapted according to each context, trainees have the opportunity to study authentic ELF discourse, read bibliography on ELF, reflect on and reconsider their own positions, reactions and opinions about ELF, tackle the preconceived views in their own teaching environments, and ultimately explore and project their role as ELF language teachers (Sifakis, 2007).

<sup>1</sup> At Portuguese universities, English teacher training courses include another foreign language – French, German or Spanish. In addition, when concluding their MA degrees, trainees are qualified to teach in lower and upper secondary education, between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades. Nonetheless, trainees may go on to teach other lower educational levels (primary education, for instance) if there are no other available options.

<sup>2</sup> The guest lecturer invited was Professor Sávio Siqueira from Universidade Federal da Bahia (Brazil), who also works with the concept of ELF and who gave a talk on teaching materials and ELF, how these can be adapted considering today's current needs.

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*ELF in Teacher Education: A Way and Ways*<sup>1</sup>

ABSTRACT:

English language teacher education has been challenged in the last two decades by new scenarios deriving from factors such as: the growing number of multilingual and multicultural classrooms, the widespread exposure through multimedia to varieties of Englishes, the emerging use of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in intercultural communication (Jenkins, 2007; Jenkins, Cogo, Dewey, 2011; Seildhofer, 2011) as well as the acknowledged new role of non-native teachers and teacher-trainers<sup>2</sup> in institutional contexts (Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Llorca, 2005; Mahboob, 2010; Snow, Kamhi-Stein, Brinton, 2006). Issues of identity, standards, proficiency levels, intercultural communication and language relevance for both learners and teachers demand for a paradigmatic orientation and for a serious reconsideration of the English curriculum, of language teacher education, of language policies as well as of research and practice (Sifakis, 2007; Sharifian, 2009; Pakir, 2009; Lopriore, 2010; Pedrazzini and Nava, 2010; Alsagoff *et al.*, 2012; Cogo and Dewey, 2012; Dewey, 2012; Canagarajah, 2006, 2014; Blair, 2015). New ways in devising patterns, models and actions in terms of educational aims and of language awareness activities require a closer investigation of language data in order to elicit teachers' reflection, unveil and challenge existing beliefs about language and about language communicative competence (Llorca and Huguet, 2003; Sifakis, 2007; Pedrazzini and Nava, 2010; Lopriore and Vettorel, 2015; Vettorel and Lopriore, in press; Bayyurt and Sifakis, 2015). This contribution illustrates how two groups of Italian English language teachers respectively participating in pre- and in-service teacher education courses led by a non-native teacher trainer have been introduced to ELF through exposure, analysis and use of ELF language samples in and outside the language classroom via language awareness and noticing activities (Schmidt, 2001; Bolitho, 2003). Teachers' implicit and explicit knowledge about English, inevitably challenged by the exposure to and reflection upon ELF, led to a shift in positioning themselves in terms of their role and function in an institutional context that demands for standards in language achievement. Preliminary findings and samples of activities will be discussed.

*Introduction*

Teacher education – whether targeted at pre- or at in-service teachers for their professional development – has always been an extremely

delicate field where, according to local contexts, to educational policies and to shared pedagogical principles, different theoretical frameworks are being adopted, specific approaches devised, course components differently combined, while teachers' and trainers' espoused theories and beliefs about teaching and learning are being challenged and differently shaped in accordance with diverse traditions. Any form of teacher education occurs in specific educational policy environments or in school cultures, some of which are more appropriate and conducive to learning than others. As Avalos (2011: 10) points out: «not every form of professional development, even those with the greatest evidence of positive impact, is of itself relevant to all teachers».

Foreign language teacher education on the other hand, is a very specific area where issues such as language education, teachers' proficiency in the target language, the status of the foreign language in the educational context and in the school curricula, the growing attention paid to standards and to learners' achievement, the notions of culture and of intercultural communication, the most recent findings of research into second language acquisition, bilingual and multilingual education, second language cognition, the use of technologies and the most effective teaching methods, inevitably underlie the choice of procedures to be adopted and of the competencies to be achieved. It is in this respect that the choice of cooperative as well as of language awareness approaches for effective language competence development has become a common feature in most training courses.

In the last three decades foreign language teacher education has been largely influenced by a vast and stimulating literature in terms of approaches and of teacher professional development. Numerous research studies and the publication of training manuals have widened the spectrum of traditional education including learners' and teachers' voices, reflective approaches as well as forms of classroom-based research (Nunan, 1991; Brown, 1994; Richards and Rogers, 2001; Kelly and Grenfell, 2004; De Carlo and Lopriore, 2007; Richards and Burns, 2012). In many contexts, an important role has been played by powerful international publishers who have sustained teachers' development constantly providing new teaching and learning materials, but also greatly influencing their ways of teaching (Pennycook, 1989; Tollefson, 1995). All of these factors make the organisational structure of foreign language education and its components an extremely complex system (Pickering and Gunashekar, 2014) worth observing in its multi-layered implications.

The numerous overlapping factors that occur in foreign language

education make it a more challenging form of education than those traditionally adopted to train teachers of other subject matters, even if in most recent years in those courses, there has been a shift to emphasise the role of language in teaching for learning subject matters. Factors such as teaching for inclusion, the fast diffusion of ICTs, of Web2.0 technology, and of forms of blended education as well as the adoption of learner-centred approaches, have gradually permeated different subject teacher education training courses, thus reframing assumptions and beliefs of both trainers and teachers (Beck and Kosnik, 2006; Forlin, 2010; Vieluf, 2012). This trend has been most recently favoured by the introduction of training courses for Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) teachers that are very often led, and inevitably influenced, by foreign language trainers (Dalton-Puffer, 2007; Lyster, 2007; Llinares, Morton and Whittaker, 2012; Breeze *et al.*, 2014).

The main aim of this contribution is to illustrate how two groups of English language teachers – native and non-native - participating in pre- and in-service teacher education courses led by a non-native teacher trainer have been introduced to ELF through exposure, analysis and use of ELF language samples in and outside the language classroom. Teachers' implicit and explicit knowledge about English, inevitably challenged by the exposure to and reflection upon ELF, led to a shift in positioning themselves in terms of their role and function in an institutional context that demands for standards in language achievement.

### *1. English language teacher education: emerging perspectives*

English language teaching and teacher education have been challenged in the last two decades by new scenarios triggered by a variety of factors such as the growing number of multilingual and multicultural contexts and classrooms, the widespread exposure of learners and teachers through multimedia to varieties of Englishes, the emerging use of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in intercultural exchanges among non-native speakers of English (Jenkins, 2007; Jenkins, Cogo, Dewey, 2011; Seildhofer, 2011) as well as the acknowledged new role of non-native teachers and teacher-trainers in institutional contexts (Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Llurda, 2005; Mahboob, 2010; Snow, Kamhi-Stein, Brinton, 2006).

As a consequence of the above mentioned factors, issues of identity, standards, proficiency levels, intercultural communication and language relevance for both learners and teachers demand for a paradigmatic orientation and

for a serious reconsideration of the English curriculum, of English language teacher education, of language policies as well as of research and practice (Sifakis, 2007; Sharifian, 2009; Pakir, 2009; Lopriore, 2010; Pedrazzini and Nava, 2010; Alsagoff *et al.*, 2012; Cogo and Dewey, 2012; Dewey, 2012; Canagarajah, 2006, 2014; Blair, 2015).

The emerging shift from monolingual to multilingual and multicultural learners, from native-like to non-native language teachers, from monolingual approaches to multilingual ones in language teacher education, demand for a different perspective as well as for a different teaching discourse in terms of language objectives, procedures, use of materials, long term competencies and language standards.

In order to widen and reshape the borders of traditional English language teaching and training in a profession where teachers' view of the language is still strongly linked to their own individual experience of learning and living that language, the shift in perspective cannot but start from the observation of language itself. That language is not anymore the language most teachers were taught and/or brought up with, it has 'grown' into something different that needs revisiting and new ways of looking at it. As Blair (2015: 91) highlights: «[...] what is required is a reformulation of 'effective pedagogy' (James and Pollard, 2011) for our field: one which embraces multicompetence and an understanding of 'ELF aware teaching' relevant for what can be seen as a 'post-native' era».

### *1.1 Awareness and identity in the ELF-aware classroom*

In order to best sustain and monitor learners' and teachers' awareness of World Englishes and of ELF in a language classroom and to enhance effective ELF communication, it is important to find new ways to describe, present and use English (Jenkins, 2007; Seildhofer, 2011; Jenkins, Cogo, Dewey, 2011; Sifakis, 2007; Blair, 2015). This shift is particularly relevant and should start in both pre- and in-service teacher education courses. Educational aims should be revisited, language awareness activities should become embedded in the language teaching procedures and teachers would need to be sustained in their initial and in-service preparation. This would require a closer investigation of language data in order to elicit teachers' reflection, unveil and challenge existing beliefs about language and about language communicative competence (Llurda and Huguet, 2003; Sifakis, 2007; Pedrazzini and Nava, 2010; Lopriore and Vettorel, 2015; Vettorel and Lopriore, in press; Bayyurt and Sifakis, 2015).

In order to enhance their language competence, learners are required

to pay attention to and become aware of the language they are being exposed to in order to be able to use it later – and hopefully automatise it – for their own purposes. How far can the notion of attention in language acquisition, often taken as a synonym of consciousness (Ellis, 2008), play a crucial role in the learning process of English, since it helps raise awareness of the language in use? According to Bolitho (2003), language awareness «develops through paying motivated attention to language in use, and [...] enables language learners to gradually gain insights into how languages work. It is also a pedagogic approach that aims to help learners to gain such insights». How far would this apply in an ELF aware language classroom where the main focus is on effective communication through English? And how can teachers of English in teacher education courses be sustained in adopting an ELF aware teaching approach and sustain their learners' intercultural competence development?

As Jenkins suggests when she discusses ways of introducing it in language courses,

«[...] planned innovations are only likely to be implemented effectively if the need for change is acknowledged by teachers themselves [...] This is more likely to be the case if teachers have, themselves been involved in some way in the research that leads to the curriculum development. [...]...because learning about English is so important for teachers, a particularly good way to explore their beliefs and assumptions is through language awareness activities.» (Jenkins, 2007: 248-249)

The study presented in the following section will discuss implications for ELF-aware language classrooms in terms of approaches and materials that would enhance learners' and teachers' awareness through languaging and noticing activities (Schmidt, 2001; Bolitho, 2003; Swain, 2006).

## *2. Implementing a shift in perspective in language teacher education*

Pre-service courses at university level for teachers of all subjects were first established in Italy in 1999. The two-year teacher training programs called *SSIS*<sup>3</sup> first consisted of a face-to-face university course and of a practicum component supervised by expert school teachers (Freeman, 2003). This program was subsequently changed (2009) at national level and reduced to shorter six-month courses, one for novice teachers called *TEA*<sup>4</sup>, and another in-service course called *PAS*<sup>5</sup> for teachers with temporary jobs

with a few years of teaching experience, but without any formal background preparation. Both courses now include two components, one on pedagogical approaches, and a disciplinary one on subject teaching. A practicum component is part of the novice teachers' courses. At the end of the course trainees take a teaching qualification exam.

### *2.1 The study*

The study presented in this contribution is a follow up of a previous study – *The ELF Project Study* (Lopriore, 2010)<sup>6</sup> – run between 2006 and 2008 at Roma Tre University<sup>7</sup>, in a two-year teacher training program (SSIS) for future teachers of English.

The present study was carried out between 2012 and 2015 within two new TFA and PAS blended courses and a PAS on-line course. The project aimed at introducing an ELF aware approach to sustain teacher professional development, whereby teachers were gradually involved in elicited reflective tasks on their perceptions of English language and its teaching. The present study partly replicated what had been done in the first study, but within a shorter program and with new groups of trainees inclusive of both native and non-native teachers. Changes in the new study concerned the main aims, the forms of intervention to stimulate trainees' awareness of ELF, the focus on professional identity issues and the direct involvement of teachers in course-book and material evaluation and development.

The new aims, besides the original ones of the first project concerned with the development of professional competencies comprehensive of teachers' awareness of World Englishes and ELF, included an ELF-aware perspective that was embedded all through the course, with a focus on aural and oral skills, on the development of specific ELF aware abilities and of a new professional profile whereby teachers would enhance learners' communicative capabilities in intercultural encounters, particularly in the emerging plurilingual Italian school context. In this respect the study widened the perspectives offered by the *European Teacher Profile* (Kelly and Grenfell, 2004) four main sections<sup>8</sup>, focussing particularly on the sections *Strategies and Skills*, and *Values*.

### *2.2 Research questions*

In order to identify ways to introduce ELF awareness in training courses for English language teachers – mostly non-native speakers - and to

enhance teachers' ability to plan and develop interactive tasks and activities within a multilingual community and in an intercultural communicative perspective, the main research questions of this study were:

- Are non-native teachers of English ready to challenge their beliefs about English and to widen their view of English in order to include ELF? Is a reflective approach suitable in an ELF-aware approach?
- What aspects of English language teaching and learning would best sustain language teachers' awareness of current uses of English and capacity to plan and implement English-based syllabi and lessons?
- How far would a major focus on aural comprehension and oral interaction in English through the use of authentic multimedia materials favour future teachers' awareness and competencies?
- What tasks and activities would best enhance teachers' capacity to adapt and produce teaching materials in an ELF perspective?

### *2.3 Course participants*

Each course lasted approximately 18 weeks and overall the courses were attended by an average of 60 to 80 participants (a total of about 250 trainees), mostly Italian native speakers holding a degree in foreign languages. Within the two PAS groups there were smaller groups (15%) of native English speakers with temporary teaching jobs for 'English conversation' classes in Italian schools.

### *2.4 Tools*

Questionnaires aimed at identifying trainees' attitudes and understanding of English language teaching before and after the course, as well as their expectations from the course and implications for their teaching job after the course, were administered. During the course, in four different occasions, focus group interviews were carried out during or immediately after task discussions. Trainees were also asked to write, in the forms of short narratives, their immediate reactions and reflective responses to the training sessions and the training tasks.

### *2.5 Course organisation*

Each of the language teaching training courses where the study was carried out, was structured in two main components: one on English culture and literature, one on English language teaching, with a sub-section on

using ICT for language teaching (Vettorel and Lopriore, in press).

The English language teaching component included the following sections:

- From English to English/es, norms, varieties and uses: grammar, lexis, phonology and phonetics, language skills, communicative activities, course-book evaluation;
- From language planning to assessment and evaluation.

The sections included different individual and group activities with a series of reflective tasks based on specific audiovisual and written input (see a sample in [Appendix 1](#)). The main focus of most course activities was geared at stimulating trainees' attention on current and different instantiations of English – inclusive of traditional varieties, international English (EIL) and ELF – as a cross-curricular notion to be referred to all across the course. This choice was meant to engage the course participants, all traditionally educated in standard English settings, in a reflective process since the beginning. While relying upon their own language learning experience and their individual response to a wide range of multimedia input, when asked to develop English teaching plans, the participants' beliefs about and views of English were thus challenged. Participants were asked since the beginning to reconsider their perspectives on English and its plurality, as multilingual speakers, as learners and as teachers of English, a language whose borders are increasingly becoming mobile and difficult to label (Pennycook, 2012; Canagarajah, 2013). The participants' understanding of the language they are bound to teach, i.e. English, and the implications of teaching it in a growingly multilingual society, were stimulated through their individual and group exploration of the English currently used in the media.

In the first section of the course the trainees were encouraged to explore – individually and in groups - features and changes of the language they are going to teach, particularly in samples within ELF corpora (VOICE) first, and then in extracts from TV series and social networks. In the second section, the tasks required them to select samples of authentic spoken and written English to be used in their activities, to identify the use of interactive communicative strategies and to use those samples in their English lesson planning with the aim of developing their learners' ability to 'language' (Cortes and Hymes, 2001; Swain, 2006)<sup>9</sup> as well as their aural comprehension and interactive strategy use. They were since the beginning encouraged to focus on aural and oral skills because these are the skills whose development is most often neglected in course-books, but also because it is in spoken language that changes in English are more noticeable by learners (Lopriore and Vettorel, 2015).

### *3. Course preliminary findings*

Almost all of trainees' first responses to the tasks were particularly meaningful in terms of their understanding of the complexity of English and of its implications as for language teaching. One of the unexpected responses was their discovery of unknown aspects of the language they supposedly know and will be using as well as teaching. And this came both from the native and the non-native teachers.

#### *3.1 Unexpected discoveries about English*

Among the participants' reactions to the first section tasks numerous trainees were very surprised, many of them had never actually realised how different the language they thought they were going to teach was from the language they and their students are currently exposed to. This surprise clearly emerges in the trainees' narrative responses to the tasks they had been assigned, as in some of the excerpts transcribed below that collect both native (2, 3, 7) and non-native (1, 4, 5, 6) teachers' voices.

«Before watching the videos I did not know of the several changes of the language in all the world and that English takes a lot of words from the country where it's spoken». (T1)

«Another thing I did not know before was that even a native speaker of English can consider himself a foreigner in a country where a new variety of English is spoken because of its culture». (T3)

«For me, personally, as a native speaker (teacher), ELF is the most interesting development as it calls into questions what I should be teaching. [...] Language is changing increasingly quickly. Students should be exposed to different varieties of English even when they are just beginning to learn». (T7)

#### *3.2 Teaching materials: reflections in an ELF-aware perspective*

The course participants' personal responses became more critical when, during the training sessions and in the on-line forum, they were asked to analyse currently available teaching materials, such as course-books, teachers' books and multimedia products. One of the tasks was to focus on what they thought was missing in the course-books currently used in English language teaching.

«There is no attention to varieties of English, mentioning only some references to UK and USA». (T5)

«Language is changing increasingly quickly. Students should be exposed to different varieties of English even when they are just beginning to learn [...] Ideally, text books would include listening and reading materials that not only provide exposure to World Englishes, but also different cultural settings where English is used and not just the inevitable exchanges between native speakers in Anglo-Saxon countries [...]». (T7)

«[...] the themes (in the course-books) are all about English life in UK and the functions are all about situations of real life but students look like just visitors, tourists. I think that we need to revise every time vocabulary and pronunciation too and that we are not always tourists in UK, so we need to learn to deal with all life situations». (T6)

«Books should include more dialogues, listening and reading where the protagonists are not only native speakers but also people who have developed their own cultural English. The multimedia and internet can offer an almost endless possibility of material». (T9)

«In my opinion for older students even a famous TV series like LOST can give them and their non-native teachers exposure to World Englishes since the survivors of the air crash on a mysterious island come from both inner and outer circles of English. Intercultural experiences among schools and theatre projects for example, (I had a personal experience of this), could also be effective in developing and appreciating English as a Lingua franca». (T9)

### *3.3 Implications for English language teachers*

Some of the trainees' comments revealed that a shift of perspective was already occurring in the trainees' perceptions and awareness, as it emerges in their answers when they were later on asked about the main implications of a WE and an ELF aware view in English language teaching.

«Traditionally communicative language teaching has been designed to help learners to interact with native speakers. So British and American English are considered "correct". But the use of English among speakers of different first languages put teachers to change strategies and consider other English varieties originate from non-native speakers. The ELF perspective is that the modified forms of the language which are actually in use should be recognized as a legitimate English,

as an international means of communication. In this perspective teacher can help their students to accommodate to whole range of cultural differences, not only those from Inner Circle native speakers but also from English speakers from Outer Circle. Because these two options co-exist and need to be negotiated.» (T4)

«It's not enough to understand what teaching materials and tools to be used, rather how teachers should use them». (T2)

«As a matter of fact, teachers with better awareness of the actual status of the English language will be more effective in finding out the linguistic needs of their students». (T8)

«Considering the evolving status of English, teachers can't insist on proposing static models; but they should, instead, expose their students to many varieties at the same time: educating, thus, to difference». (T4)

«I need to balance the changing nature of language and how my students will use it in the real world with the conservative demands of the educational system and examination boards». (T7)

### 3.4 Planning ELF aware lesson plans

Trainees had been asked to plan lesson plans and activities in an ELF aware perspective. Not all of them actually developed them considering such perspective, but most teaching plans included elements of World Englishes and/or references to ELF. In planning what is more rapidly understood and used in the plans is the reference to World Englishes, while incorporating an ELF perspective implying a major focus on interactive exchanges and the use of communicative negotiation strategies has proved more difficult to develop as the following sample – an extract of a lesson plan jointly developed by two trainees – shows.

- Lesson Plan: *English around the world* (T10 and T11)
- *Rationale*: The module is aimed at raising students' awareness of the different varieties of English spoken around the world, focusing on the different slang variations. Slang is an essential skill in today's society as it occurs in everyday social interactions. Therefore, being exposed to it, the students are provided with the tools to develop "real" foreign language interactions, getting in touch with the language of songs, films and the language spoken by their peers in English speaking countries. To

this purpose, the teacher provides the students with authentic materials like American videos, a film trailer (on Indian-English), an Australian song, etc.

- Class profile: CEFR level B2.

*Main aims:*

- To raise students' awareness about the differences of spelling, pronunciation, use and meaning of slang words in different parts of the English-speaking world (specifically UK/USA/Australia/India).
- To raise students' awareness that English is a living language, just like their native language.

*Subsidiary aims:*

- To increase students' listening skills on the different English accents around the world.
- To increase students' understanding of slang expressions and use in everyday language.

#### *4. Conclusions*

The preliminary findings presented in this contribution inevitably offer a partial view of what the study carried out in the training courses under consideration has so far highlighted. Some areas of the study, such as trainees' answers to the pre- and post-course questionnaires as well as the language activities and material adaptation developed by the course trainees in their final tasks are not presented here mainly for word limits. They will be part of another contribution that is soon forthcoming.

Still, it is already possible to draw some preliminary conclusions and answer some of the research questions posed by the study. The first and most evident conclusion is that both native and non-native teachers of English are keen to explore new ways of teaching English inclusive of World Englishes and ELF. This readiness to investigate new instantiations of English besides the traditional standard forms is already an indicator of awareness of the linguistic landscapes and of the language issues emerging in a polylingual society. The approach used in the courses by which an ELF-aware perspective was embedded all through the course rather than being added as a further component as well as the use of reflective tasks based upon individual readings on research findings and exposure to different and authentic multimedia resources, all provide a useful and effective way of engaging teachers in personal professional development.

Dealing with research findings and samples of updated literature on current status of English offered teachers the opportunity to reflect on the implications for teaching in their own context, critically looking at existing materials in a 'new light' and planning locally relevant activities within a WE, EIL and ELF-informed viewpoint.

In numerous accounts of their responses to the tasks, the trainees were most engaged by the whole section devoted to spoken language awareness and aural comprehension. In many cases the activities that were created by trainees in the final lesson plan tasks were those that involved learners in viewing authentic videos with aural comprehension tasks aimed at making them notice features of different linguacultures in intercultural exchanges. The constant focus all through the course on aural comprehension and on oral interaction in English through the use of authentic multimedia materials, certainly enhanced future teachers' awareness of spoken language, an area too often disregarded by teachers and course-books.

Not all lesson plans were WE or ELF oriented. There were very traditional grammar oriented lessons, while some trainees designed either short discrete activities or lesson plans whereby learners would be exposed to varieties of English and ELF. What is still missing though, as previously mentioned, is trainees' attention to structured ways to develop learners' negotiating strategies by exposure to authentic tasks in non-native interactive exchanges. Even if capable of planning more flexible lesson plans and, in a few cases, languaging activities, most trainees still lack a capability for observing and using interactive strategies.

Most probably the course should have provided more exposure to samples of meaning negotiation among native and non-native speakers or between non-natives. The use of noticing activities through the VOICE corpus was most probably too limited and needed further development. Another objective that was only partly achieved through the course activities was the trainees' capacity to adapt and produce teaching materials in an ELF perspective. Trainees' teaching practice is still to be observed and evaluated because teachers are confronted with tasks and duties and they may not be able to incorporate aspects addressed during the course in their current classroom practices.

Adopting a reflective World Englishes and ELF aware approach in teacher education courses is not an easy task for trainers as well because they are not just introducing new techniques, rather they are revisiting traditional approaches while challenging teachers' beliefs and views of the language. The study highlighted how difficulties do not lie in teachers' resistance to changes or in their attitudes towards new ways of using and

teaching English, rather the difficulty is created by the limited time available to the trainees for practising new forms of teaching, selecting and adjusting materials, implementing activities and lessons in the practicum component and in the local contexts. In this respect it would be advisable to incorporate forms of action-research within the practicum component in order to trigger teachers' observation of their classroom practice.

In an ELF aware training course adopting a reflective approach, both native and non-native teachers:

- develop more flexible attitudes;
- stretch a norm-prescriptive approach towards a user's approach;
- are sustained in their perceived distance from the norm thus overcoming linguistic insecurity;
- appreciate the effects of transcultural flows;
- are able to widen their students' language choices and appreciation for differences;
- reinforce their own localised identity as members of a global community.

<sup>1</sup> The choice of this title is a homage to one of the most powerful thinkers in English Teacher Education, Earl Stevick (1923-2013). He was the Director of the Trainer Course I attended in 1989 at San Francisco State University.

Stevick, W.E. 1989, *Teaching Languages: A Way and Ways*. Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House.

<sup>2</sup> While the term teacher education is used here as the superordinate (Freeman, 1989), the terms 'teacher-trainer' and 'teacher-educator' throughout this contribution are used interchangeably, without significant difference in meaning (Lopriore, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> SSIS: Scuola di Specializzazione all'Insegnamento Secondario/Specialization School for Secondary School Teaching.

<sup>4</sup> TFA: Tirocinio Formativo Attivo/Active Training Practicum.

<sup>5</sup> PAS: Percorso Abilitante Speciale/Special Teaching Qualification Path.

<sup>6</sup> *The ELF Project Study* (Lopriore, 2010: 70) was aimed at introducing future teachers of English to:

- the varieties of English and the implications of taking them into account in language courses both in terms of contents and of practice;
- the notion of English as a Lingua Franca and of its function and role in current English language teaching programs in a European context;
- the function and the role of non-natives engaged in teaching English as a foreign language in multilingual classrooms, in terms of authenticity and identity development;
- the use of Language Corpora as a resource for English language teachers and learners.

<sup>7</sup> Teacher education courses at both pre- and in-service level are organised and run by Roma Tre University Teacher Education Centre – CAFIS (Centro di aggiornamento e formazione per gli insegnanti delle scuole secondarie/Centre for secondary school teachers pre- and in-service training) <<http://www.cafis.uniroma3.it/>> (last access 09.02.2016).

<sup>8</sup> The 4 main sections of *The European Profile for Language Teacher Education: a Frame of Reference* (2004):

<p><i>Structure</i> This section contains items describing the different constituent parts of language teacher education and indicates how they could be organised.</p>	<p><i>Strategies and Skills</i> This section contains items relating to what trainee language teachers should <i>know how</i> to do in teaching and learning situations as teaching professionals as a result of their initial and inservice teacher education.</p>
<p><i>Knowledge and Understanding</i> This section contains items relating to <i>what</i> trainee language teachers should know and understand about teaching and learning languages as a result of their initial and in-service teacher education.</p>	<p><i>Values</i> This section contains items relating to the values that trainee language teachers should be taught to promote in and through their language teaching.</p>

<sup>9</sup> *Languaging* is associated with ‘positioning oneself within the repertory of customary practices of a local culture’ and with acquiring a ‘linguistic sense of place’ (Cortese and Hymes, 2001: 194). Merrill Swain, stated: «our capacity for thinking is linked to our capacity for languaging» (2006: 95) that is when a person produces language he or she is engaging in a cognitive activity, an activity that goes beyond mere output. *Languaging* conveys the idea of an action, a continuous dynamic process whereby language is being used to make meaning. «Languaging about language is one of the ways we learn a second language in an advanced level» (Swain, 2006: 96).

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## APPENDIX

### *Course section 1 tasks (sample)*

From English to Englishes – Section 1.1 – From English to Englishes: norms, uses, varieties

#### *Objectives:*

- to learn about English, its varieties and its current state at global level (*Global English, World Englishes, English as an International Language, English as a Lingua Franca*);
- to discuss learning and teaching implications;
- to identify ways to take the current state of English into account when planning English teaching paths, lessons and forms of assessment.

English has definitely changed its role and function all over the world. Besides its world well known varieties, English has become a global language while its emerging and most diffused use is in interactions among non-native speakers. This poses several questions for teachers of English:

*What English to teach? What varieties? What standards to bear in mind? How has the role of non-native teachers changed?* Let's explore these issues through the following tasks.

#### *TASKS*

Read David Graddol's *English Next* and write a brief summary of main ideas highlighting what you think could be relevant for you as a teacher of English.

Watch David Crystal's videos

- <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ItODnX5geCM>> (last access 09.02.2016) Challenges in teaching English;
- <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2\\_q9b9YqGRY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_q9b9YqGRY)> (last access 09.02.2016) World Englishes.

Jot down 2 things you did not know before watching these videos and write 4 main points relevant for you as a future teacher of English.

Choose three of the 4 articles listed below, read them and then answer the questions (max 500 words):

- Jennifer Jenkins (2006). "Current Perspectives on teaching World English and English as a Lingua Franca". *Tesol Quarterly*
- Aya Matsuda (2003). "Incorporating World English in Teaching English as an International Language". *Tesol Quarterly*
- Barbara Seidlhofer (2005). "English as a Lingua Franca". *ELTJ*

- Henry Widdowson (2012). “ELF and the inconvenience of established concepts”. *JELF*

*Questions*

- a. What are the main implications for English language teachers?
- b. Has the role of non-native speakers changed in the last two decades? How? What about that of native English teachers?
- c. How could World Englishes, EIL and English as a lingua franca be taken into consideration and/or included in English language manuals, materials, lessons or activities? Ideas?



Sávio Siqueira

*English as a Lingua Franca: For a Critical Intercultural Pedagogy*

ABSTRACT:

Departing from beliefs, values, attitudes, and expectations of English teachers from three educational realities in Salvador, Brazil, and taking into consideration the competitive advantages and peculiar adversities of each context, this ethnographic work had as its main goal to investigate how Brazilian EFL teachers see themselves as contemporary language professionals, to which extent they are aware of principles and implications related to the condition of English as an international or global lingua franca, and whether their daily practice and behavior reflect these beliefs. The data were collected through a questionnaire, ethnographic class observations, and video recordings of semi-structured group interviews where topics like ELF/EIL (McKay, 2002; Seidlhofer, 2004; Jenkins, 2007), intercultural competence (Byram, 1997; Guilherme, 2002), and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Crookes 2010) were discussed and approached under a more dynamic and democratic perspective. Results and considerations have proven useful and relevant not only to the discussion of methodological and political-ideological implications inherent to English education today, but especially to the reflection on issues which may contribute to the (re)construction of a more adequate profile of non-native English teachers, proposing, among other things, the adoption of an appropriate critical intercultural pedagogy capable of empowering local teachers in order to search for local solutions to the challenges contemporary linguistic education has been intensively posing to them.

*Introduction*

English is today a truly world means of communication. Never before has a language operated in a lingua franca role on such a global scale (Dewey, 2012). With the current process of globalization, the language, which according to Kachru, Kachru and Nelson (2009), is experiencing its fourth diaspora<sup>1</sup>, has been solidly spreading within the global scenario as the lingua franca<sup>2</sup> of the so-called information age, reaching in the last decades an unimagined expansion. As Phillipson (1992: 8) contends, «English has been equated with progress and prosperity», and it has acquired so much

prestige along the years that any individual who might have reached any formal educational background will feel at a great disadvantage if he/she does not speak it at least at a certain level of proficiency.

According to Crystal (1997), English is the native language of approximately half a billion people, besides being the first language spoken by non-natives, reaching, in case we consider the criterion of «reasonable competence», an approximately number of two billion speakers around the globe. Statistics has shown that, currently, for each native speaker of English, there are already four non-native (Graddol, 1997; Siqueira, 2008, 2011), which, undoubtedly, demonstrates the power and the level of internationalization reached by the language spoken by William Shakespeare, Salman Rushdie, James Joyce, Chinua Achebe, Oscar Wilde, among others. In other words, English has made its presence almost everywhere and it is being appropriated in practically every corner of the planet.

For Kumaravadivelu (2006), the most distinctive trace of the current stage of globalization is the electronic communication, especially due to the notable expansion of its most prominent catalyst, the internet. In just a few years, the global computer network has become «the major engine that is driving economic imperatives as well as cultural/linguistic identities».

(Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 131), and has been made into a unique source which connects millions of people from all parts of the world in a matter of seconds, most of the time, using English, so far the language of globalization. As a consequence of this process, Rajagopalan (2002) points out that English has ended up being turned into a high-valued global commodity, especially in countries like Brazil, where teaching and learning the language has become a great business «around which is building up a truly powerful fetishism that the mavericks of the marketing world have been quick to exploit» (Rajagopalan, 2002: 115).

In view of such a scenario, the world feels compelled to learn English. According to Seidlhofer (2011: 7), «for the first time in history, a language has reached truly global dimensions, across continents, domains, and social strata». Fishman (1998-1999: 26) reminds us that «whether we consider English a “killer language” or not, whether we regard its spread as benign globalization or linguistic imperialism, its expansive reach is undeniable, and for the time being, unstoppable». Such a remark may be put into questioning, but it is still reasonable to affirm that the global expansion of English has not yet showed significant signs of deceleration. So, instead of arguing in terms of the past why it has reached such a condition, we have to look ahead and deal with the implications of the phenomenon, especially those related to its pedagogy. Or, as Jenkins

(2000: 4) would advise us, we had better find «ways in which we can make the language more cross-culturally democratic, under the ‘ownership’ (in Widdowsonian terms) of all who use it for communication, regardless of who and where they are».

Besides the internet, another factor which has massively contributed to the global spread of English is the ELT industry, which far from being just a simple and neutral acronym, it sponsors and promotes a global multibillion business, highly competitive and solely oriented by the adoption of a *Standard English* conceived in the hegemonic centers, United Kingdom and United States, to be sold and taught to millions of eager learners from around the world.

Due to the great potential and development of the ELT area, more and more English teachers/educators, native and non-native, are being formed, especially in the so-called periphery countries, where these professionals get their degrees not only at the tertiary level, but also in innumerable programs offered by hundreds of language centers spread around the globe. Although the ELT remarkable expansion and structure seem to be founded in an environment of apparent neutrality, several authors like Phillipson (1992), Pennycook (1994, 1998, 2001), Rajagopalan (1999, 2004, 2005), among others, criticize them for being basically oriented by a sense of domination. Phillipson (1992), for example, has repeatedly called our attention to the way the ELT industry has been contributing to the global diffusion of English in an acritical and apolitical manner, which, according to him, it has been conducted as a monumental effort to impose an imperialist agenda. In his view, «the legitimation of English linguistic imperialism makes use of two main mechanisms in relation to educational language planning, one in respect to language and culture (anglocentricity), the other in respect of pedagogy (professionalism)» (Phillipson, 1992: 47).

Apparently indifferent to these more ample and sensitive matters, including the emergence and consolidation of important research areas, today in constant dialogue with the science of language, like World Englishes, Critical Pedagogy, Cultural Studies, Education for Citizenship, to mention a few, English departments from many universities, courses and programs on foreign language teacher education and development (pre-service and in-service), curricular structures, besides professionals with a large teaching experience, still align themselves with a refractory profile which guarantees very little or no room whatsoever for critical discussions concerning English as an international language (EIL) or as a lingua franca (ELF) and its ideological, political, and pedagogic implications.

In this sense, Pennycook (1990: 303) calls our attention to such a fact, pointing out that «a major lacuna in second language education is its divorce from broader issues in educational theory». According to him and Lange (1990), to a certain extent, this practice reflects the highly theoretical preparation of the language teacher, commonly connected to traditional linguistics and anchored in a conscious detachment from education in general.

However, still in Pennycook's view, «the nature of second language education requires that we understand our educational practice in broader social, cultural, and political terms», and, for him, «it is to critical pedagogy that [...] we could most profitably turn to extend our conception of what we are doing as language teachers» (1990: 303). In the same line of thought, Moita Lopes (2005: 6) reminds us that in Brazil (and in many countries), the teaching of English as a foreign language has followed such a path for a long time, in other words, «we continue teaching languages totally distanced from social, cultural, historical, political-economic issues». For the Brazilian applied linguist, the English teacher nowadays is so crucially positioned in the new world order that he/she is left with only two main possibilities to choose from: he/she either contributes to his/her own marginalization making a point of seeing him/herself merely as 'a language teacher,' with no connection whatsoever with social and political issues, or he/she perceives that, as someone who works with language, he/she is fundamentally involved with the political and social life (Moita Lopes, 2003; Gee, 1994).

Besides that, even pedagogic issues are to be scrutinized and reconsidered once we understand that settings where English is used as a lingua franca comprise a high degree of linguistic and cultural diversity (Dewey, 2012). As Jenkins, Cogo, and Dewey (2011: 305) postulate, the pedagogic implications of ELF include key areas like «the nature of the LANGUAGE SYLLABUS, TEACHING MATERIALS, APPROACHES and METHODS, LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT and ultimately the KNOWLEDGE BASE of language teachers (as cited in original)».

Anchored in such points and arguments, it is our objective in the article to demonstrate in a synthetic way how the current process of teaching and learning English as a global lingua franca can (and should) establish a broader and more beneficial dialogue with general education and other fields of knowledge which support and promote critical approaches to language teaching. Besides that, drawing on findings and results from our doctorate research study with Brazilian teachers of English from different instructional realities in Salvador, Brazil (Siqueira, 2008), we propose the

adoption of a critical intercultural pedagogic of ELF/EIL which, among other aspects, takes into consideration the political nature of linguistic education and is entitled to contribute to help contemporary English educators face the challenges that more than ever will come their way (Siqueira, 2011).

### 1. *Critical Pedagogy (CP)*

What has ELT to do with critical pedagogy? As Jeyaral and Harland (2014: 344) highlight, «critical pedagogy is based on the premise education can make the world a better place». For Shin (2004), once we work with linguistic education, especially English in the contemporary international context, be teachers or teacher educators, we are to engage ourselves in a practice which is to lead us into understanding and reinforcing the social, economic, political, and ideological implications of our profession. In other words, we need to challenge the predominant ‘technicism’ so dear to our area and *do* critical pedagogy.

Contrary to what one might think, critical pedagogy is not a theory or a method, but a way of life, it is a form of *doing* teaching and learning (Akbari, 2008), it is teaching with an attitude (Pennycook, 2001). Once critical pedagogues see schools as cultural arenas where distinct social and ideological forms find themselves in constant conflict, what they shall be seeking is society transformation through education, including language teaching. For Guilherme (2002), CP is a way of living which questions in depth our roles as teachers, students, citizens, human beings. Because of this, she argues that «it is impossible to give simple prescriptions about how to *do* CP» (Guilherme, 2002: 19). Such a feeling is corroborated by Wink (1997: 103) who goes beyond, affirming that he doubts we can teach someone to *do* CP: «We do not *do* critical pedagogy; we *live* it», completes the author.

The basis of CP, as highlighted by Guilherme (2002), shall not be attributed to a single theory. Despite the several ramifications both in Europe and the US, it was the work by Paulo Freire, the remarkable Brazilian educator, which has made the Latin American experience one of the most prominent and celebrated in the area of CP around the world. In this sense, Guilherme (2002: 23) postulates that the crucial role played by Freire’s thought in CP, always keeping in mind the Latin American context where he founded and developed his educational theory and practice, explains CP’s non-Eurocentric stance, «in spite of his adoption of some

European and North American philosophical and educational theories». It is for this reason, therefore, that several authors recognize Freire, especially because of his pioneering work in 'critical literacy' with the poor populations of the Brazilian northeast in the 1960, as «the founder of CP».

CP's main concern is power in the social and educational contexts, says Santos (2002: 10). It surely «worries about “how” and “to which interests” knowledge and cultural formations are produced and distributed, acting as instruments of legitimation of hegemonic forms of power». Therefore, under this perspective, CP seeks to foment citizens' critical capacity, empowering them to resist, in a limited way or not, the effects of power. In the author's view, with its emancipatory ideal, more than recognition of injustice, CP looks for «alternative ways of change thorough solidarity» (Santos, 2002: 10).

In general education, or educational theory, as preferred by Pennycook (1990), CP offers a rubric under which it is possible to find the most useful understandings for fundamental social, political, and cultural issues related to the area. In the same line of reasoning, Rajagopalan (2003) also reminds us that the critical pedagogue, by nature, is someone who disturbs and disrupts the general *status quo*. In his/her task of stimulating the critical view of his/her learners, of fostering a critical posture, the critical educator «has always been and will always be a threat to consolidated powers». (Rajagopalan, 2003: 111) Consequently, in Freire's thought, one of the most powerful weapons available to the critical pedagogue is 'conscientization' (*conscientização*)<sup>3</sup>, which, in his own words, it is «the most critical look of reality, which “unveils” it in order to get to know it and the other myths that cheat [people] and help maintain the reality of the dominant structure» (Freire, 1980: 29). At all levels, education is to be mostly transformative rather than stubbornly reproductive. ELT shall not go on immune to this.

## 2. *Critical Pedagogy and ELT*

As well-known, English has reached the status of today's global lingua franca not for the significant increase in the number of its native speakers, but, essentially, due to the exponential growth of the number of individuals the world over who are aware of the advantages of speaking the current language of international communication. As aforementioned, because of such a demand, the ELT industry, as any huge transnational corporation, has been experiencing a never imagined development and

expansion. Phillipson (1992, 2003), one of the most acid critics of this segment, on several occasions, calls attention to the power, the ideological grounds, as well as its consequences, in his view, still obscure. In search of an awareness development which would result in the adoption of a critical posture related to the global spread of English, especially by those directly involved with linguistic policies and education, he states that,

«English has acquired a narcotic power in many parts of the world, an addiction that has long-term consequences that are far from clear. As with the drugs trade, in its legal and illegal branches, there are major commercial interests involved in the global English language industry». (Phillipson, 2003: 16)

Rajagopalan (2004) is another scholar who approaches the peculiar linguistic and cultural phenomenon which he came to label it World English. According to him, the expansion of English is neither a neutral nor an apolitical process, and because of that, it is imperative a drastic revision of ELT pedagogic practices. As he contends,

«[...] ELT practices that have for long been in place need to be reviewed drastically with a view to addressing the new set of challenges being thrown at us by the phenomenon of WE. Up until now a good deal of our taken-for-granted ELT practices have been threatened with the prospect of being declared obsolete for the simple reason that they do not take into account some of the most significant characteristics of WE». (Rajagopalan, 2004: 114).

Although many researchers have been for some time already bringing about these issues with a certain frequency, it is plausible to affirm that a more intense dialogue between language teaching and critical pedagogy, its premises and practical implications, is a fairly recent initiative. As pointed out by Akbari (2008), the great majority of the discussion has been limited to CP's theoretical bases and intentions, and very little has been done to really connect CP with the language classroom universe (Crookes, 2010). As stated by Ortega (1999: 248), such a disparity can be credited to a certain elitism perpetuated in the area, culminating with a myopic professional orientation characterized by the lack of sociopolitical awareness, and, therefore, «a dismissal of the political nature of second language teaching within the FL profession». For the author, it is way past time we engaged in a «politically responsible language education», or as Crookes (2013: 5) defends, we «need a language teacher with energy, experience, and a vision of social change».

Besides that, experience has shown us that Applied Linguistics (AL) itself has been given very little importance to CP, its principles and arguments, which, for Kumaravadivelu (2006), sounds totally paradoxical. In his opinion, once CP seeks to relate the 'word with the world', language with life, and if AL is said to be a field which poses great interest in "problems of the real world", how to refrain the two areas from approximating and dialoguing? A possible explanation to the problem reveals both the lack of access to knowledge related to Critical Applied Linguistics (Pennycook, 2001) and the absence of a greater professional articulation in terms of initial education and continuous development of FL teachers who, traditionally, are not used to attending (re)qualification programs theoretically oriented by a critical-reflective perspective. Awareness to such a complexity will make us perceive a «need for activism towards S/FL teaching as a true profession with social goals and political responsibilities» (Ortega, 1999: 243).

But not everything is bad news. As time passes by, especially with the consolidation of the transdisciplinary character of AL, in FL education, for instance, we begin to see emerge certain room for dialogue with important fields of study like CP and Culture Studies. This makes us realize that it is vital to rethink and reconceptualize teaching practices traditionally oriented by methodological principles and processes imported from the hegemonic centers of knowledge and solely designed for communication. As Ortega (1999: 249) points out, «hegemonic beliefs and attitudes in FL education are crucially related to nested notions of nativeness and standardness». In many ways, as already mentioned, these deep-rooted practices need to be challenged, including those which take as reference only the cultural aspects and values of the target language/community, disregarding any political or ideological concern that should support the FL teaching profession.

As for English, today a denationalized and re-nationalized language, the theme holds great relevance, and, even though still in a small scale, it attracts the attention of the common teacher. As Gee (1994) argues, English teachers, whether they realize or not, occupy a central position in the most crucial educational, cultural, and political themes of these contemporary times. Once we conceive our educational practice in broader social, cultural, and political terms, keeping in mind that ELT is far from being an ideologically neutral enterprise, our classrooms can naturally serve as the ideal space for teachers and students empower themselves and be able to relate ELT with the real world, aiming at, mainly, a more active and more critical participation in the ever growing planetary community.

A PhD research study with Brazilian teachers of English working in different educational settings in the city of Salvador, Brazil, synthesized in the sequence, aims at discussing the questions aforementioned, and, from a local perspective, tries to shed some light on the role of the teacher in this complex scenario of English as a lingua franca and the need to privilege the emergence of the intercultural speaker of today's world language.

### *3. English as a global lingua franca: for a critical intercultural pedagogy*

According to Medgyes (1994), for a long time, ELT researchers have been showing some reluctance in investigating and writing about the English teacher/educator, be he/she native or non-native. For this author, «'Learner-centredness', the buzzword of the 70s and 80s, implied that teachers should keep a low profile in the teaching/learning operation» (Medgyes, 1994: X). As a consequence of such a practice, research studies which focused on the teacher were pushed from a central to a peripheral position. Much has been written about the learner, being the teacher left aside, and in this specific area, restricted to a secondary position. The research conducted and presented here takes an opposite path. We assumed there was a need to understand the implications of teaching an international language, calling attention to the critical intercultural perspective which, in our point of view, should orient the current teaching practice in periphery countries like ours, and to the questioning and reformulation of historically consolidated concepts that have proven anachronistic in light of the new world order. Our motivation then was to investigate and understand how local teachers of English from a Brazilian megacity would see themselves professionally, how they would behave in this new context of teaching English as a global lingua franca, and which would be the most meaningful challenges to be faced and dealt with in such a scenario.

Under a qualitative research paradigm, we have established a theoretical construct based on four main pillars: (1) the context of English as an international language and the pedagogic implications to each setting, (2) the language and culture relationship and its relevance in the process of teaching English as a global/international lingua franca, (3) the teacher's intercultural competence, and (4) the adoption of a critical ELT pedagogy aiming at a sociopolitical action of an ideological, reflective, and transformative nature. Fifteen teachers were selected and data were generated through three different instruments: (a) individual questionnaire, (b) ethnographic

observation of two classes per teacher, and (c) two video-recorded collective semi-structured interviews. In the long run, we had five teachers from the tertiary level, five from primary and secondary public and private systems, and five from English language institutes. The data were treated separately, according to each instrument, so we could carefully analyze the questions raised in the study on three different occasions, including the teacher in action. A fourth moment and final phase corresponded to the triangulation of the data.

The research questions were the following:

1. How does the teacher see his/her position and conducts his/her practice in the context of English as an international language (ELI) in Salvador, Brazil?
2. Does the setting where the teacher works (university, regular school, language institute), with their curricular objectives and idiosyncrasies, determine the adoption of different postures on the part of teacher in his/her daily classroom practice?
3. Does the teacher understand his/her ELT practice as a political and ideological act?
4. Does the teacher recognize the particularities and methodological implications of teaching a global language?
5. What would the most appropriate EIL teacher profile be in such a context?
6. What is(are) the most adequate pedagogy(ies) to EIL teaching in Salvador, Brazil, and what challenges would the adoption of this(these) pedagogy(ies) represent to the contemporary teacher?

The data triangulation pointed to some routes of redefinitions concerning the reality of the teachers who participated in the study. Through the answers to the questionnaires, the discussions in the semi-structured interviews, and the classroom observations, interesting regularities emerged, allowing us to make some interesting elaborations, and, in parallel, raise a few problematizations related to each of the pillars which supported the academic work.

As for the first theoretical pillar, *the context of English as an international lingua franca*, we could see from the answers and discussions that the traditional competences such as solid fluency, linguistic and methodological knowledge, sociability, creativity, flexibility, among others, several new competences were added to the profile of the contemporary teacher. To mention a few, they should have familiarity with information technology, sharp critical sense, respect for diversity, openness to (un)(re)learn, constant search for (re)qualification, intercultural sensibility, sociolinguistic view,

ample awareness of new ELT trends, readiness to make mistakes and capacity to reflect on his/her own practice. In many ways, this has demonstrated a high level of maturity in relation to recent demands which have been imposed on these professionals.

We could also verify that the difference between teaching a foreign language (FL) and a lingua franca (LF) or an international language (IL), along with the political and pedagogic implications, is something already accepted by the informants, and relatively consolidated among them. However, the data have shown that ELF/ELI-aware teaching proposals and initiatives are still very diffuse. As Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey (2011: 305) would argue, «there has been little discussion of what an ELF-oriented pedagogy might actually look like, and little consideration of what teachers might do in order incorporate an ELF perspective».

In fact, these teachers do conceive the English class as a democratic space for discussion and reflection on what happens in the world outside, but they still seem to be entrapped in the eternal dilemma of either putting into practice those peculiarities which go against ELT traditional procedures or simply give in to the sole resistance shown by learners, colleagues, and even superior staff like coordinators and administrators. The latter, it is plausible to say, do not seem to be interested in themes usually taken by them as ‘too revolutionary’, ‘utopic’, ‘fictitious,’ ‘disturbing.’ Because of that, teachers either ignore the topics or, voluntarily, opt for being loyal to the historical discourse which does not propose the development of the learner’s ability to speak, listen, read, and write in order to produce counter-discourses, refute, debate, question, in other words, very little is done to deviate from the «empty blah, blah, blah of the communicative class» (Pennycook, 1994: 301).

Concerning the second theme of the study, *culture teaching in the ELF/EIL context*, we noticed that, although informants brought up interesting assumptions on the topic and placed themselves in favor of a systematic teaching of language and culture, or even *language as culture*, contradictions came up. As Baker (2011: 62) states, «the cultural dimension to language has always been present in language pedagogy, even if it is not always explicit». During discussions, especially, several of them stated categorically that, despite recognizing the intimate relationship between language and culture, for them it would be extremely difficult to teach this element in the EFL class if the teacher never had any living experience in a native country or if there was never specific training for such a task to be carried out on a daily basis.

A deeper analysis into the matter has shown then that there is still a

long way for a better understanding of what it means to teach a denationalized language where, it is reasonable to affirm, there is plenty of room for the encouragement of intercultural reflections among learners (Sung, 2013). In general terms, when we talk about culture and ELF/EIL teaching, what really matters is not to discuss the essential character of this element in the pedagogic process or when to approach it. The challenge for the practitioner is to find out 'how' to really take culture as something intrinsic, inherent to the plural linguistic system he/she is teaching and, in a proactive way, make good use of it. Besides that, it is crucial to critically analyze the cultural content of textbooks which tend to present cultural aspects as packages of static information normally emulating and/or reinforcing the values of the target culture(s). As we all know, once a language becomes international it gets free from the custody of nations and cultures (Smith, 1976; Widdowson, 1994). An ELF-aware classroom is surely not to neglect such a fact.

As for the *intercultural competence*<sup>4</sup> the teacher needs to develop in order to foster it in his/her students, the study has shown that they are aware of the need to work under such a perspective, although several of them demonstrated some insecurity and, to a certain extent, a surprising ignorance towards what it means to teach English assuming the role of an intercultural teacher. Although they are aware that in almost all contexts the regular FL student does not seem to care for intercultural issues or show any motivation for the theme, the data allowed us to postulate that our informants are, in many ways, still very distant from an overall comprehension of what an interculturally competent teacher would be or do. However, it is possible to affirm that they are open to learn how to conduct their daily classroom practice employing specific methodologies and activities which, in some way, would substantiate an interculturally sensitive pedagogy of English, which, among other things, respects and privileges local learning culture(s) and learners' needs. A productive way to bring to foment such a competence in the regular EFL teacher is made clear by Sifakis (2009: 256), for whom we could begin

«by raising pre-service and in-service teachers' awareness of the communication value of ELF-related accommodation skills, with the aim of empowering themselves and their NNS learners as valid intercultural communicators, as opposed to maintaining a perspective that views EFL learners as deficient users of a language that is wholly 'owned' by its native speakers».

For the last theoretical pillar, *a critical pedagogy of ELF/EIL and the role of the teacher*, the study has signaled that our teachers seem to be more critical in theory than in practice. Their conceptions and beliefs concerning the issue manifest more clearly in the discourse, in the open discussions, during the occasions in which they voice consistent opinions about the importance of the contemporary teacher, native or non-native, incorporate in his/her daily practice principles and expectations of a transformative language pedagogy, concerned with the human being and the environment where he/she lives. In other words, a pedagogy distanced from the conception of 'banking education', heavily criticized by Freire (1970) in general education, and that, unfortunately, still predominates in most EFL classes around the world.

We could verify that our fifteen respondents, apart from the context where they work and their learners' specific objectives, concerning their assumptions, beliefs, and theoretical references, are, although slowly, becoming aware of the central position they occupy in the pedagogy of English as a global lingua franca and of the pressing revisions and changes in posture that the process has been triggering. However, although they might have incorporated a few particularities which would differentiate them positively and competitively from other ELF practitioners, such as the relative comprehension of the implications of teaching a global language and their status of «(inter)(trans)cultural brokers», in the terms of Lima and Roepcke (2004), the teaching of English in our context still reflects very little of these perceptions and conceptions, especially those which can potentially contribute to the adoption of a critical intercultural pedagogy of English as a global lingua franca.

In reality, with the study, we have realized that our ELT classrooms, including those which count on well-intentioned teachers, fully aware of an ELF/EIL pedagogy as an eminently political enterprise, still reproduce the traditional scenario globally conceived and designed for the incorporation and development of methodologies that usually ignore the local learning culture(s) and learners' specific needs and objectives.

As we already know, much has been said about the fact the CP is a very positive initiative to be considered for FL education, though, for its detractors, it is still highly theoretical. However, it is not a new concern by several scholars engaged in critical ELT, who insistently have been calling attention to this, and indeed devising work on the practicalities of CP in the area of linguistic education (Crookes, 2010, 2013). As Kanpol (1999 as cited in Crookes, 2013: 12) would point out years ago, «something must be done about making critical pedagogy's ideas at least pragmatically accessible». And

as Crookes (2013: XIII) would remind us, «English is the most powerful language and the language most deeply involved in international lineages of power and privilege». It is exactly because of this, and other important factors, that, in our view, CP is to play a crucial role in ELT, contributing to make teachers, students, and all stakeholders involved aware of the fact that what encompasses this entire educational process goes beyond the mere acquisition of a global cultural capital, but, in many ways, is to «take seriously our hopes for improvement in the direction of goals such as liberty, equality and justice» (Crookes, 2013: 1).

#### 4. *(In)Conclusion*

The research study synthesized in this article, among several things, has shown that the ELT profession in these post-modern times has become more complex than ever. English spread around the world, and whether we have clearly realized or not, the phenomenon has been offering excellent opportunities for us, workers in the field, to question and rethink innumeros imposed and consolidated ELT assumptions, beliefs, values, and pedagogies, and, therefore, granting us with the unique opportunity to critically reconstruct them based on local realities and imbued in a local flavor.

In a nutshell, the answers to our research questions have made us conclude that our teachers seem to be more critical in theory than in practice, they commonly engage in reflection, but this is turned into little action, they are totally in favor of enforcing a relationship between critical pedagogy and FL teaching, but feel they lack the theoretical background, and that they are underqualified to carry out such a task. Our informants are aware of the fact that teaching the current global lingua franca cannot take place in a neutral or uncritical way. They assure it is difficult to systematize the teaching of culture as much as it is to engage themselves in a daily practice based on principles of critical pedagogy. They also believe it is not a simple thing to see themselves as intercultural professionals, and though in class there are always opportunities to approach issues which could raise and foster students' critical intercultural awareness, they seem not to feel empowered enough to disturb the previous lesson plan and move away from the expected linguistic content to be covered.

From the results, we can affirm that the most adequate ELF/EIL pedagogy to a context like ours, a country located in the periphery of English, should be the one that, above all, recognizes and seeks to unveil in the ELT class the complexities inherent to the current condition of English as global

lingua franca which, among several functions, connects speakers from all parts of the world, in its majority, non-native users, with an emphasis on its *intercultural* use (Sifakis, 2006: 156). Besides that, such a pedagogy shall be aligned with the specific objectives of each local program, being sensitive enough to critically challenge certain methodological canons which seem to be untouchable throughout ELT history. An ELF/EIL pedagogy is to assume its mixed condition, its local character, counting on well-formed educators and constantly (re)qualified by linguistic education programs founded in critical and transformative approaches. These programs, besides contributing to improve and refine their linguistic knowledge, can also help them become better ELT professionals, having them become empowered and aware of their fundamental political role in the process of combating homogenous and homogenizing thoughts and behaviors and in the construction of discourses which will surely lead their students into exercising their local/global citizenship through the world's global lingua franca. In other words, a pedagogy capable of empowering local teachers in their search for local solutions to the challenges contemporary linguistic education has intensively brought to these professionals.

Once the reflection on the possible adoption of a critical intercultural pedagogy of English as a global lingua franca is made clear, it is important to mention that, based on the analyses and results of our investigation, in order to reach such an objective it would be crucial to count on ELF-aware professionals who, among other aspects, engage themselves in:

- approximating linguistic education to general education, therefore to the socio-political issues intrinsically related to the process of educating people;
- recognizing and conducting ELT as an eminently political activity;
- conceiving language as an essential social and ideological instrument and not as a package of grammatical rules to be memorized;
- rejecting methodologies which privilege practices oriented towards a linguistic education of a 'banking' nature, in a Freirean sense;
- seeking concept re-signification, re-evaluation of ELT paradigms, questioning methods and procedures solely based on models oriented towards *standardness* and *nativeness*;
- enrolling with a certain frequency in *development* rather than *training* programs, trying to expand knowledge that goes beyond methodological tools;
- analyzing critically the context he/she is inserted in, taking into consideration the highly sensitive nature of the role of English in the world today;

- investing in the development of his/her critical intercultural competence in order to be able to foment similar ability in his/her learners;
- comprehending the fact the English today is what with its speakers, native and non-native, do with it;
- preparing the learner to become an international speaker of English who is able to operate both at a global and local level, an intercultural/transcultural speaker of the language;
- defending and supporting initiatives of democratization of the access to English;
- combating deep-rooted myths, canons, prejudice, xenophobia, imperialisms of all types, especially those related to language;
- helping students to produce, not reproduce, knowledge and discourse; seeing ELT through a SOL (Speakers of Other Languages) perspective (Shin, 2006);
- conceiving and implementing interculturally sensitive curricula, syllabi, and methodologies which truly reflect learners' realities and attend to their specific goals;
- developing and/or implementing critical approaches which contribute to learners' self-perception as human beings and critical citizens;
- defending the access to foreign languages, especially a powerful language like English nowadays, as a human right not as a privilege of those few who can afford 'to buy' it.

In sum, English is here, on the streets, on the media, frantically navigating on the inforoads of the Internet, bombarding our eyes, our ears, our lives. In the current circumstances, ignoring the global language is a virtually inconceivable act. Not because we would like or are overeager to speak fluently the language of the United States or Britain, but because we want to speak with the United States, Britain, and the entire world at the same level of equality. People all over the world wish to dominate this language, acquire it, and use it in their favor, and their own way. It is because of such a scenario that many changes are called upon, especially when it comes to the noble and highly complex task of those who, in all corners of the planet, will set their hearts and minds to teach the global language of our current times.

<sup>1</sup> In *The Handbook of World Englishes*, Kachru, Kachru and Nelson (2009) discuss the spread of English through four diasporas. The first diaspora, according to them, refers to its local spread towards Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. The second one refers to the advance towards the colonies of North America (United States) and Oceania (Australia and New Zealand). The third, the one that transplanted English in new linguistic, cultural and social contexts, heavily founded in the British colonial enterprise in Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Caribbean. Finally, the fourth diaspora of current times, when English, in several ways, has become the global lingua franca and it has been spreading all over the world, being analyzed through different perspectives, generating innumerable debates and elaborations, especially at the conceptual level in which, recurrently, it is possible to see a proliferation of terminologies and notions to conceive and study the phenomenon and its uses (McKay, 2002; Jenkins, 2007; Cogo, 2008; Siqueira, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> There are currently several assumptions and conceptions to the term *lingua franca*. We conceive a *lingua franca* as the language of contact and communication between linguistically distinct groups or members of groups in relations to international commerce and other more extensive interactions. The view we adopt here takes English as a lingua franca, but not as a neutral language, devoid of its political, ideological, and cultural loads. As much as Jenkins (2007) and Seidlhofer (2011), our conception of lingua franca considers both native and non-native speakers as legitimate users of the language.

<sup>3</sup> For Freire (1996: 183 as cited in Guilherme, 2002: 32), «a person who has reached conscientization has a different understanding of history and of his or her role in it. He or she will refuse to become stagnant, but will move and mobilize to change the world».

<sup>4</sup> Baker (2011: 62) discusses the concept of intercultural awareness (ICA), which, in our view, is an important element of an overall intercultural competence. We subscribe to his words when he argues that in the contemporary language educational context, ICA is more relevant than simply cultural awareness (CA). We also agree with the author when he says that despite the fact of being very important along decades, CA «needs re-evaluation in the light of the more fluid communicative practices of English used as a global lingua franca», which, on the other hand, make ICA «a more relevant concept for these dynamics contexts of English use».

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COMMUNICATION IN PLURILINGUAL  
AND MIGRATION CONTEXTS:  
ATTITUDES AND INTERACTIONS



Maria Grazia Guido

*Is the Word of God in ELF?  
New-Evangelization in Italian Immigration Contexts*

ABSTRACT:

This paper investigates how the ‘New Evangelization’ (NE) process in the Catholic Church is enacted through ELF by Italian clergy offering spiritual practical assistance to immigrants. A case study will show how the NE discourse requires from immigrants the activation a ‘suspension of disbelief’, epistemically inducing them to believe that the clergy’s possible-world ‘metaphysical’ representations can be true, ‘experiential pliability’, deontically compelling immigrants to adapt their actual-world experience to such counterfactual constructions.

*Introduction*

*Research focus*

This paper focuses on misunderstanding in ‘lingua-franca’ communication which is not just caused by the participants’ typologically-different native languages whose structures are transferred into ELF (Guido, 2008, 2012), but also by their different cultural schemata in contact with each other in need of accommodation. Central to this paper are the religious schemata underlying the ongoing ‘New Evangelization’ (NE) process in the Catholic Church (Wuerl, 2013), which is aimed at «the proclamation of the Gospel in the contemporary world» characterized by mass migration globalization (Pope Benedict XVI, 2012; Synod of Bishops, 2012). More precisely, the focus of the research at the basis of this study is on the NE discourse enacted through ELF in unequal encounters where the Italian clergy offer practical assistance to non-western immigrants, often on condition that they accept their Evangelization message. The case study under analysis will specifically deal with an Italian Catholic priest interacting with a Nigerian immigrant newly-arrived in Italy.

*Research context*

The context of this research is represented by the Synod for the *New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*<sup>1</sup>, which was convened by Pope Benedict XVI on October 7-28, 2012. The expression 'New Evangelization', however, was coined by Pope John Paul II<sup>2</sup> who can be considered as the father 'voice' of NE since he succeeded in conveying what Roman Catholics believe to be the Word of God through a multiplicity of languages in innumerable occasions. Yet, speaking a multiplicity of languages may be simply functional to a one-way 'transmission' of the Evangelical message meant to remain unaltered, but it does not necessarily guarantee the receiver's interpretative 'appropriation' of such a message. In fact, such an 'appropriation' can be achieved only through a two-way communication in cross-cultural contexts where a language needs to be a 'lingua franca' adapted to different linguacultural uses, schematic associations culture-bound values. The notion of a one-way 'transmission' of a religious message, however, seems to be indeed in contrast with the NE objective of «*inculturation* of faith» aimed «to have the Gospel take flesh in each people's culture» (Synod of Bishops, 2012), which envisages a process of 'appropriation' (or, rather, of actual 'embodiment') of the Word of God that receivers belonging to 'non-western' countries cultures are expected to activate in order to 'authenticate' (Widdowson, 1994) the NE message by making it their own according to their cultural schemata. Yet the implication of the term 'transmission' in the Bishop's document comes to be disambiguated as soon as it appears clear that it is rather in line with the limits of the NE purpose of valuing only «what is positive in every culture» , thus, «purifying [cultures] from elements that are contrary to the full realization of the person according to the design of God revealed in Christ» (*ibidem*) – in this way, actually allowing non-western receivers to activate only a mere 'acculturation' process of uncritical acceptance of the NE message (Schumann, 1978).

This justifies the reactions of a number of bishops representing non-western dioceses across the five continents at the Synod<sup>3</sup>, who warned against such an 'acculturation' process covertly required by the NE message. Thus, for instance, Cardinal Pengo, from Africa, argued, «globalization introduces rapidly undigested foreign values, making it hard for Christians on the continent to be truly Africans. Their Christian faith is thus rendered also very much alien.» – Archbishop Reter, from Latin America, pointed out, «the pastoral of the Church cannot ignore the historical context in which its members live. It lives in very concrete

social, cultural contexts.» – which was also supported by Cardinal Gracias from Asia, «The effects of globalization are seen overall affecting our value systems. Traditional Asian values, much cherished traditions, cultures are being impacted and eroded».

More recently, this challenge of conveying the Word of God through a ‘new language’ meant as a ‘lingua franca’ for global communication (MacGabhann, 2008) has now been passed onto Pope Francis who, however, avoids using English, rather preferring for this purpose Italian – which cannot, however, be considered a proper international ‘lingua franca’ since the Pope has to rely every time on consecutive translation into Standard English that would reduce the innovative straightforwardness characterizing his communication style.

## 1. *Rationale*

### 1.1 *Research assumptions*

Indeed, the shortcomings of the one-way ‘NE transmission’ process can be noticed every day in the Italian Catholic clergy’s attempts to achieve the «*inculturation* of the Divine Word» by bringing it to «migrant people from far-off-lands»<sup>4</sup>. Misunderstandings in such circumstances occur not simply because of the different ELF variations that clergy migrants use, but because the clergy do not seem to realize that the ‘western’ Catholic discourse is intrinsically ‘metaphysical’ (Guido, 2005), that is, constructed on culture-bound patterns of possible-world semantics (Stalnaker, 1987, 2001) characterizing its counterfactual logic. In adopting such a discourse type, the clergy actually seem unaware of the divergent ways by which non-western immigrants differently make ‘religious’ sense of their existence. In fact, the clergy’s purpose is to induce non-western immigrants into an exploration of alternative semantic possibilities underlying conventional meanings. In this sense, the clergy’s NE discourse is a clear example of how Modal Metaphysics by its very nature starts from reality to extrapolate beyond it, thus transcending any accepted notion of time, space, social contexts (Laurence and MacDonald, 1998). But such an interpretative procedure may be utterly different from the procedures that immigrants activate in their minds as they interpret the religious experience. Indeed, especially if they are African immigrants (as in the case in point), their religions – the Christianity included – are embedded in shared social contexts sanctioning their interpretation as an expression of

meanings, cultural values ways of thinking of particular social groups – thus making *indexical reference* to specific native communicative contexts. In the NE context, instead, the possible-worlds construct in Modal Logic is essentially iconic representational, not just indexical referential, thus applicable to the description of the imaginary metaphysical contexts that are furthermore devised received through different ELF linguacultural variations. The assumption, therefore, is that recognizing divergent ways of expressing the religious experience in different cultures through different ELF variations may help ‘new evangelizers’ find alternative, ‘hybrid’ ways of conveying the Word of God through ELF by making it accessible acceptable to non-western migrants, thus, fostering true ecumenical communication. Yet, such a communication very seldom occurs, the case study under analysis shall illustrate a case of cross-cultural communication failure that occurs despite a successful interaction carried out by means of the two participants’ typologically-different ELF variations which do not cause any serious linguistic misunderstanding.

### *1.2 Research hypothesis*

The hypothesis underlying this study is that misunderstanding in the NE discourse may be determined not simply by linguacultural assumptions, reflecting the two contact groups’ different typological-syntactic, semantic, sociopragmatic features transferred to their respective ELF usage (Guido, 2008, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2011), but also by schematic associations triggered by the participants’ different knowledge systems community values related to the religious experience expressed through ELF. In fact, to make sense of the NE discourse, immigrants are required to activate in their minds two specific cooperative maxims here defined as *suspension of disbelief*, epistemically inducing them to believe that the clergy’s possible-world representations in their evangelization discourse can be true, *experiential pliability*, deontically compelling immigrants to adapt their actual-world experience to such counterfactual constructions – even though for most African immigrants (the group to which the case-study subject belongs) religion is intrinsically connected with the referential domain of the actual, socio-political world. Failure in the immigrants’ application of these two maxims in interacting with the Italian clergy is supposed to be the main cause of misunderstanding.

## 2. *The Model*

### 2.1 *Theoretical grounds*

In this study, the clergy's NE discourse in ELF is analyzed through a Model of Possible-Worlds Semantics in Modal Logic (cf. Allen, 1989; Stalnaker, 1992, 1996), according to which mental projections of possible worlds exist only within an imaginary dimension, not in reality. The Model focuses on two modality levels:

1. a *representational level of epistemic and doxastic modalities* concerning the expression of the speaker's beliefs accounting for:
  - a. the *indexical, referential dimension of the actual world*, determining shared truth-conditions (i.e. the conventional sense of a concept – or 'primary intension' – given by what the concept refers to in reality – Lau, 1995);
  - b. the *iconic, representational dimension of the possible world*, where truth-conditions are determined by the semantic value that a counterfactual concept acquires within the possible world (Lewis 1973; Zalta, 1997) – (hence, the referent for a concept – or 'secondary intension' – diverges from its conventional sense in the actual world – Lau, 1995);
2. a *referential level of deontic modality* concerning the displacement of counterfactual even impossible concepts into an actual communicative context where the clergy try to convey their intentionality accessibility conditions to the immigrants whose interpretations, however, may diverge from the clergy's expected interpretation of their thought – vice versa (cf. Pietrovski, 1993). This is furthermore to be contextualized in situations of unequal transactions where the clergy in charge of the interactions offer immigrants assistance services which are covertly exchanged with the immigrants' conversion to the Catholic faith.

### 2.2 *Research objectives*

In transcultural asymmetric situations of interaction where different identities may not be mutually recognized – as in the case study analyzed in this paper – some schema divergences need to be explored by accounting for:

- a. on the one hand, the Italian clergy's 'western' NE discourse, which is inherently grounded on epistemic representations of mystical

- concepts linguistically rendered according to metaphysical categories of possible-world semantics which are non-logical, abstract difficult to conceptualize – yet they are employed as strategies of deontic argumentation aimed at inducing in non-western immigrants the unconditioned acceptance of such counterfactual logic;
- b. on the other h, the non-western immigrants' religious discourses which instead are often grounded on a deontic argumentation meant to prompt actions aimed at the achievement of better social/personal conditions. Only afterwards can such discourses allow forms of epistemic, metaphysical representations which, though counterfactual, are always brought to bear on real-world social life.

Precisely because such divergences are culture-bound, they are here assumed to be cognitively linguistically inaccessible, conceptually unavailable (Widdowson, 1991), often socio-culturally unacceptable respectively to the 'western' clergy to the 'non-western' immigrants – the latter often finding 'western' religious concepts totally alien to their native schemata.

Hence, two deviation levels between 'western' 'non-western' religious discourse through ELF shall be investigated: (1) counterfactual syllogism vs. factual reports (2) transitive vs. ergative representations of metaphysical events.

### *3. Method analysis*

#### *3.1 Conversation-Analysis Method*

The method adopted in this study is the Conversation Analysis (Moerman, 1988), carried out on the protocol transcription (Ericsson and Simon, 1984) of ethnographic data collected during an ELF exchange (representing the case study) which is part of a larger corpus of recorded conversations subsequently transcribed annotated in order to identify marked syntactic pragmatic features characterizing ELF variations by each group in contact<sup>5</sup>. The aim was to explore how western clergy non-western migrants interact through ELF make sense of the situations they are involved in. The issue, in such situations, is represented by the fact that whereas the Italian clergy use their ELF variations in situations that take place within their own socio-cultural contexts, the immigrants, instead, use their own non-western (mostly African) variants of English outside their geographical experiential contexts. Hence, the immigrants' transfer of their native features into ELF, the consequent misinterpretation of

such features by the clergy, turn African variants (once they become ELF variations in cross-cultural interactions) into language usages that are ‘displaced’, ‘transidiomatic’ (Silverstein, 1998), insofar as their meanings become disconnected from the native contexts of their use to be recontextualized within a non-native estranged communicative situation. The result is that each participant in the conversation engages indexically with his/her own socio-cultural reality to disambiguate the other participant’s discourse, thus producing a type of ‘schema-biased presupposition’ (Guido, 2008: 64) on the borderline between semantics pragmatics, which fulfils neither truth conditions (since the reported metaphysical processes are not actual actions), nor felicity – or appropriateness – conditions (since there is no shared linguacultural knowledge or assumptions between the two participants in the encounter). Such a discrepancy may entail disregarding the original illocutionary force of the narrative. Therefore, recovering the ‘situatedness’ (Gumperz, 1982) of the immigrants’ displaced ELF narrative means recognizing the original socio-cultural pragmatolinguistic dimensions that give sense to the referential domains of their discourse.

### 3.2 Case-study context transcript

The case study analyzed in this paper regards an interaction between two participants: an Italian Catholic priest (P) offering assistance in a reception camp to a Nigerian Catholic man (M) who fled from Nigeria after his family had been slaughtered by the terroristic group Boko Haram<sup>6</sup>, which claims to be Muslim, persecuting Catholics in north-eastern Nigeria. P speaks the ‘expanding-circle’ (Kachru, 1986) Italian-ELF variation, typical of countries (like Italy) where English is a foreign language used for international communication, as such, it makes exonormative reference to the native ‘inner-circle’ (*ibidem*) Standard-English code. M, instead, comes from Nigeria, a former British colony where English is a second language used for institutional/interethnic communication. M, in fact, speaks Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE), an ‘outer-circle’ (*ibidem*) ELF variation that makes endonormative reference to sanctioned non-native Pidgin/Creole grammar codes.

The main endonormative syntactic characteristics of NPE that generally contribute to misunderstandings in intercultural communication are: the use of pre-verbal tense aspect markers instead of Standard-English auxiliaries inflectional suffixation, the addition of the pronoun ‘dem’ (‘them’) after a noun to signal plural, the use of the all-purpose preposition ‘for’ to indicate any kind of position movement in spatial orientation (Guido, 2008, 2012). NPE is here conventionally transcribed according to its phonetic

spelling (Faraclas, 1996). Central to this case study are the two typologically-different L1-structures transferred into the participants' respective ELF variations: on the one hand, M's native Ergative constructions of events (in which an animated agent in Grammatical-Subject position is substituted by its Logical Object according to the OV(S) typology – Langacker, 1991: 336), which was identified as a feature of Igbo, M's first language (Carrell, 1970; Nwachukwu, 1976; Agbo, 2009) (also emerging from the corpus of Igbo speakers' oral immigration reports in NPE – partly published in Guido, 2008); on the other hand, P's own native Accusative SVO structures with the animate Agent in Subject position – through which P interpreted M's Ergative structures once they were transferred into the ELF he used, thus identifying the 'dislocated' NP-ELF variation spoken by M as a 'defective' inner-circle variation. Yet, despite these typological divergences in the two ELF variations in contact, this exchange was principally characterized by misunderstanding due to different schematic associations related to different religious experiences, as evident in the following transcript:

*P: Allo::ra* (.) better now? (..) eh? (..) where are you from?

*M: Kano* (.) Nigeria (..) >yu must help mi< (.) please [*Kano, Nigeria. You must help me, please*]

*P: yes* (.) tell me (..) God help all people that believe in him

*M: .hhh no* (.) no bi so (.) no (..) a bin lef mai kontri (.) bekos Muslim dem bin de kill mai pipul, Igbo pipul, bekos wi dey Catholic dem (..) Boko Haram de kill os >yu know?< [*No, it's not so, no. I left my country because Muslims were killing my people, Igbo people, because we are Catholic ... Boko Haram is killing us, you know?*]

*P: yes* (.) yes I know (..) >they're Islamic terrorist<° (..) so:: you're Catholic?

*M: hhh yes* (.) a no no (..) Boko Haram bin kill mai wife an tu pikin dem (.) >tu son dem< (..) God eye dem bin see no murder (..) a no sabi (..) a no tink se a believe God now= [*yes ... I don't know ... Boko Haram killed my wife two children, two sons ... God's eyes didn't see any murder. I don't understand ... I don't think that I believe in God now*]

*P: =no no don't say this* (.) you see::? (.) although it seem that God can appear completely absent when happen tra::gedies like this (.) well (.) he's (.) absolutely present (.) he must be present (.) beca::use (.) >he surely do what is right< (.) for realize his kingdom (.) of peace (.) justice [>you know?<]

*M: [no (..)] God no tink fo Nigeria (.) no (.) Nigeria wan a beta*

go::vment (.) no corruption (.) no murder (..) >a no wan kom fo Nigeria< (.) no now (.) no (..) a beta life (.) a beta job >a permit fo stay< (.) beta education must kom first (..) yu must help mi (.) dem bin tek mai fingerprint dem (.) a no won kom fo Nigeria (.) justice no dey fo Nigeria (.) no law [*no, God doesn't think of Nigeria, no. Nigeria needs a better government, no corruption, no murder. I don't want to go back to Nigeria, not now, no. A better life, a better job, a residence permit, a better education must come first. You must help me, they took my fingerprints, I don't want to go back to Nigeria, there's no justice in Nigeria, no law*]

P: but God is love (.) justice (.) listen (.) you cannot separate the wi::ll of God his (.) apparent absence when tragedy happen (..) because (.) although (.) although (.) it seem that God actions appear (.) casual (.) cruel (.) but they (.) they are also completely (.) good (..) premeditated (..) why (..) he give to us his son Je::sus (.) that was killed on the cross? eh? (..) you see::? (.) to save us (.) to give to us the peace

M: .hhh no (..) a have no peace (.) a must kill pipul se bin kill mai wife an mai son dem so so (.) [*no, I have no peace, I must kill the people who killed my wife my sons like that.*]

P: .hhh (..) we can (.) we can think that God killed your family apparently only for cruelty (.) but (.) he want that you can forgive the sins of your enemies (..) God will judge them (.) make justice (.) not you

M: (..) .hhh maybe Ala go mek justice (.) no God [*maybe Ala will do justice, not God*]

P: stop (.) stop (..) Ala? (..) listen (.) if you have faith in God he can help me to help you for the permit (.) *va bene?*

### 3.3 Case-study analysis

The analysis of this exchange shows how, at the *representational level*, P uses propositional attitude sentences representing ‘belief reports’ signalled by a modal operator – i.e. epistemic verbs adverbs (Stalnaker, 1987; Schiffer, 1996) – expressed by:

1. an indexical mode-of-presentation referred to a specific possible world under which the Subject believes that the proposition is true (Lau 1995) which, in the following statement (a), is ambiguously expressed through the use of the modal verb ‘must’, to be interpreted either as an epistemic logical deduction, or as a deontic obligation fulfilled by the Agent (God):
  - a. he’s [God is] absolutely present, he must be present because he surely do what is right.

2. a *that*-clause whose semantic value corresponds to the intension of the embedded sentence:
  - b. it seem[s] that God can appear completely absent [...]
  - c. it seem[s] that God actions appear casual cruel [...]
  - d. we can think that God killed your family apparently only for cruelty [...].

Belief reports (b) (c) are agentless indirect as they are introduced by an impersonal clause with 'it' as Subject placeholder. Also (d) is an instance of indirect belief reports. In these cases, the propositional attitudes are expressed by the epistemic verb 'seem' which introduces the *that*-clauses, as well as by the verbs 'appear', 'can' the adverb 'apparently' within the *that*-clauses – hence, there is no direct affirmation of belief within the main clause. M, therefore, is expected to understand, consequently, share P's belief by activating in his mind a process of semantic presupposition (Levinson, 1983: 199-204).

The 'suspension of disbelief' the 'experiential pliability' processes that M is required to activate in his mind in order to accept P's metaphysical message are however hindered by the non-logical complexity of the clauses which require from M a cognitive effort to process them. The concepts expressed by the propositional attitudes in P's clauses are in fact assumed to coincide with the secondary intensions of the corresponding embedded clauses. These embedded clauses, in their turn, have truth-conditions that are equivalent to the truth conditions of the embedded clauses in the corresponding semantic presuppositions. In processing such clauses, M has to deduce the semantic presupposition either by a process of *entailment*, involving the concept of *necessity*, or by a process of *compatibility*, involving the concept of *possibility*. In both cases, however, M needs to account also for the primary intensions underlying embedded sentences. This means that he has to make reference to the indexical dimension of the real world if he wants to determine the truth-conditions the modal status of the *that*-clauses in the iconic possible world represented within the metaphysical discourse.

Yet, with reference to the metaphysical concept of God, this indexical/ iconic interaction between real possible worlds seems useless as regards the case of an hidden indexical belief which relies neither on primary nor on secondary intensions for its belief attribution (Pietrovski, 1993; Lau, 1995). This being so because its truth-conditions can be inferred from the representational context within which it is framed. Such truth-conditions may appear inconsistent in the actual-world dimension (mainly for the lack of a concrete indexical referent for the Agent 'God'), but they can be

considered veritable in a possible-world dimension of representation. In it, the given anthropomorphic properties of God are epistemically possible even deontically necessary to deny the allegation of ‘absence’ – as in statement (a) above in the following statement (e):

- e. you cannot separate the will of God his apparent absence when tragedy happen[s] [...]

Within the counterfactual world introduced by (a) (e), *de re* modal claims stating that something is *necessarily* (‘must be’) or *possibly* (‘can be’) something else, can be asserted without being ‘prefixed by expressions of ‘angle, containing or implying the ‘according to [...]’ operator (Divers, 1999). Divers defines such modal claims as ‘extensional’, which indicates that they define their truth-value at the possible-world level independently from the truth-values at the actual-world level. This means that modal-logic processes, such as entailment (claiming that a thing is ‘necessarily’ as it is) compatibility (claiming that a thing is ‘possibly’ as it is), are essential in the activation of a possible-world context. In this case, entailment creates a representational context within which the semantic presupposition to statement (e), inconceivable in the actual world, becomes conceivable as a logical deduction within P’s possible world.

On the other hand, at the *referential level* of bimodality, it can be observed how P organizes his metaphysical discourse on two pragmatic dimensions:

- a. an *overt illocutionary dimension* through which he intends to convey information about his beliefs,
- b. a *covert perlocutionary dimension* through which he introduces his religious beliefs to M and expects him to accept it.

In this perspective, P’s discourse may be said to simultaneously account for the two speech roles that Halliday (1994: 68) defines respectively as *proposition* (statement of information about beliefs, knowledge, etc.) *proposal* (offers or commands) in relation to the Interpersonal Metafunction of language underlying communication. As a *proposition*, P’s discourse expresses a stance that is both *epistemic doxastic* as he overtly makes his illocutionary point by means of constative utterances that convey his religious/metaphysical beliefs through the projection of the non-logical image of the anthropomorphic figure of God, representing both the Psychological Subject (the Theme) the Logical Subject (the Agent) (*ibidem*: 31), though it does not always coincide with the Grammatical Subjects of the clauses. In this way, God loses its Thematic position as the Psychological Subject of the clause to be dislocated into a *that*-clause introduced by ‘it’ as Subject-placeholder – thus downgrading such a metaphysical concept to the level of a detached ‘fact’ in a Rhematic position.

Yet, the ‘facts’ represented in these clauses are only purely possible-worlds projections of beliefs, to be rather classified as wholly imagined ‘chances’, ‘possibilities’, or even ‘impossibilities’ (*ibidem*: 267) rendered linguistically as ‘projections’ in the embedded form of *that*-clauses through a declarative mood (*ibidem*: 115). In P’s discourse, the abstract counterfactual concept of God is adapted to the conventional image-schema of a powerful male human being who performs the semantic role of Actor in material processes where the transitivity system does not represent any truth-functional semantic pattern applicable to a real-world context. This ‘counterfactual logic’ (cf. Lewis, 1973) aims to fulfil P’s pragmatic function of allowing M’s accessibility to his non-consistent thought-development. Yet, accessibility to the semantic structure of such a complex metaphysical discourse does not automatically facilitate M’s sense of experiential proximity to the non-logical processes represented in it. Indeed, the pronoun ‘it’ employed as a Subject placeholder may convey precisely the opposite sensation – namely, P’s intention to keep an experiential distance from the ‘metaphysical fact’ that he represents which is projected impersonally in a separate, embedded clause to create an ‘objective modulation’. In this way, P covertly disclaims responsibility for his semantic abstraction (*ibidem*: 269).

In sum, at the level of the ‘clause as a message’, projections of ‘possible-world facts’ through impersonal *that*-clauses can be seen as:

- a. *epistemic doxastic propositions*, whose overt illocutionary point is to present objectively a metaphysical view of a ‘possible fact’ (i.e. an epistemic ‘noun of modality’ concerning hypothetical chances, possibilities, or impossibilities – *ibidem*: 267). This may not imply P’s personal involvement in the message he conveys, thus emphasizing his assertion of a ‘universal truth’ that cannot be doubted;
- b. a *deontic proposal*, whose covert perlocutionary point is to induce M into concluding that what P asserts is not just about a ‘possible fact’, but it is rather a ‘need’ (i.e. a deontic ‘noun of modulation’ representing a category of ‘facts’ that requires the speaker’s and the receiver’s commitment in believing in it – *ibidem*: 268).

As a result, this double-message coming from the language of P’s discourse can produce an ambiguous disconcerting *distance-proximity effect* on M. On the one hand, he is overtly elicited to consider P’s discourse as a mere exposition of abstract ideas, on the other, he is covertly induced to feel committed to P’s stance, which introduces the level of *proposal*. On this level, P’s stance is *deontic*, as he covertly makes his perlocutionary point by means of utterances whose pragmatic function is performative, as they are employed to bring M to share his metaphysical beliefs. This

objective is pursued through an argumentation typical of the discourse of persuasion (Billig, 1996) which contains circumstantial elements of ‘angle’ (Halliday, 1994: 158) that are, unexpectedly, impersonal, as they do not specify whose perspective they report. This is achieved by P’s use of the ‘it’ as Subject placeholder meant as a disclaimer for the assertions reported in the *that*-clauses where P seems to keep his distance from his own metaphysical contention, probably to reassure M that his discourse is objective, detached, thus, unchallenging. Consequently, M may experience a sense of displacement at perceiving that his interpretative freedom is limited by P’s use of non-logical semantic constraints which may divert his cognitive operations of information processing. This is illustrated by the Transitivity system underlying P’s discourse built on a *hypothetical syllogism* based on both ‘contraposition’ and ‘vacuous truth’ – which are typical features of Possible-Worlds Semantics (Lewis, 1973). The clauses in P’s discourse can therefore be ranked into two main counterfactual types, here defined as:

1. *Clauses of illogical compatibility*, semantically constructed as a mental projection of opposing polarities, at the same time, epistemically modalized within a conditional logic. Furthermore, they are structured impersonally, with the pronoun ‘it’ as Grammatical Subject in the Thematic position, the Logical Subject as the Rheme (see instances (a)-(b)-(c)).
2. *Clauses of illogical contingency*, semantically constructed as hypotactic expansions ‘by concession’, at the same time, interconnected by means of relational processes of an ‘intensive’, attributive type equating two wholly contradictory concepts.

The following two statements from P’s discourse are instances of counterfactual clauses (i.e. clauses of illogical contingency):

- f. although it seem that God can appear completely absent when happen tragedies like this, well he’s absolutely present, he must be present because he surely do what is right [...]
- g. although it seem that God actions appear casual cruel but they are also completely good premeditated [...].

In these complex sentences there is a circumstantial element of *contingency* (Halliday, 1994: 155) marked by the concessive conjunction ‘although’, which normally enhances a causal-conditional logical-semantic relation among the clauses (*ibidem*: 324). Yet, in this metaphysical discourse, logical-semantic relations do not follow ‘normal’ cognitive routes – in fact, they are patterned according to what Lewis (1973) defines as a *paraconsistent hypothetical syllogism*. Thus, for example, the concessive clause in (f) introduces a relational process of an intensive type, where the

intension is signalled by a high degree of attribution, conveyed by the positive-polarity adverb 'completely', which ascribes the attribute 'absent' to its Carrier – namely, the personified entity of 'God'. Yet, the sense of indifference conveyed by 'absent' is immediately denied by the obligation-adjunct of modality represented by the adverb 'absolutely'. This adverb is strengthened by 'surely' to stress the contradiction with a different entity of 'God' as an Agent, this time, whose processes are believed to have a high value of certainty («he surely do what is right»). again, God's 'absence' is denied by the simultaneous deontic-obligation/epistemic-deduction verb/adjunct 'must' 'surely' («he must be present because he surely do what is right»), personifying God as an active Agent of high-certainty actions. In (g), once again, the image of God is characterized by the opposite notions of 'cruelty' 'goodness', which make the 'moral' processing of this Entity quite challenging. Furthermore, here the concessive enhancement by means of the causal-conditional element 'although' reiterates the same non-logical correlation between the opposite concepts of 'premeditation' 'casualness' attributed to God, only that this time it is directly expressed through a relational process of an intensive type since the intension is represented by the relation between God's 'actions' the opposite attributes 'casual', 'cruel' 'premeditated' 'good', emphasized – as in statement (f) – by the polarity-adverb 'completely'. In the previous statement (e), P abandons the impersonal stance and tries to involve M directly in his paraconsistent thought-processes. This is signalled by the second-person pronoun 'you', associated with the deontic operator 'cannot' denoting an expected response of inclination. Yet, 'cannot' signals a dimension of ambiguity as it may be interpreted as being simultaneously 'overtly epistemic' 'covertly deontic', entailing M's avoidance of an autonomous exploration of a possibility, but also God's denial (sanctioned by P's words) of the permission for P to conceive 'divergent truths' («*you cannot* separate the will of God his apparent absence»). Also in statement (d), P tries to involve M – but on an epistemic level, this time. This is represented by the expression of possibility 'we *can* think', triggering in M a mental process which is, however, soon denied by the projection of an 'impossibility'-type of conditional sentence by means of a *that*-clause («that God killed your family apparently only for cruelty»), minimized by the intensity-adjunct of mood 'only' (Halliday, 1994: 83).

So far, analysis has regarded the possible plan of propositional attitudes illocutionary points intended by P. But, what are the possible perlocutionary effects that P's metaphysical discourse may induce in M?

P opens the exchange by a covert proposal aimed at inducing M to

‘suspend his disbelief’ – as the condition for M to receive P’s assistance – to adopt a ‘pliable’ stance on P’s counterfactual representations of the NE message («tell me, God help all people that believe in him»). M replies to P’s NE metaphysical argumentations with a series of dispreferred conversational moves (most of which start with a stern denial ‘no’) aimed at challenging P’s religious stances. As hypothesized, on the one hand, the syntactic-typological divergences between the two ELF-variations in contact (i.e. Italian ELF Nigerian-Pidgin ELF) do not cause serious misunderstandings – only in one case, does P misinterpret M’s pronunciation of the word ‘law’ (NPE [lo]) for ‘love’ (It-ELF [lov]). On the other hand, M’s NPE ergative structures extensive use of the deontic modal ‘must’ contribute to determine the illocutionary point M intends to make. Indeed, the Noun Phrases «beta [‘better’] life, a beta job, a permit fo [‘for’] stay, beta education» as Ergative ‘abstract Objects’ in Subject position emphasize their semantic status as a ‘medium’ (Halliday, 1994) for the fulfilment of his life’s goals. M’s determination to succeed is then stressed by the high deontic modal ‘must’ («a beta life, a beta job, a permit fo stay, beta education *must* kom first»), which is also employed as a strong request for help addressed to P («yu *must* help mi» – repeated twice), as a strong commitment to his revenge plan («a *must* kill pipul se bin kill mai wife an mai son dem so» / «*I must kill the people who killed my wife my sons like that*»). M’s strength of mind may be seen as a reaction to the sense of confusion probably triggered by P’s representation of God personified according to the blurred experiential categories of an unsympathetic, punitive ‘Strict Father’, at the same time, a caring ‘Nurturant Parent’ (Lakoff, 1996). Hence, M resolves instead to represent God according to his own socio-cultural parameters: on the one hand, he reinstates the African social archetype of the Biblical God as a ‘Strict Father’ in conflict with Man as the responsible Agent for social good justice; on the other, he makes reference to Ala, the African Creator Goddess – i.e. a ‘nurturant’ Mother Earth – very popular among Igbos.

This exchange ends with P’s reiteration of his proposal of assistance on condition that M unreservedly accepts the metaphysical NE message («if you have faith in God he can help me to help you for the permit»).

#### 4. Conclusions

The conversation analysis presented in this paper has examined the NE discourse by which P, an Italian Catholic Priest, tries to make his religious belief acceptable to M, a Nigerian immigrant, who feels a sense

of alienation towards P's NE discourse. In fact, though conveyed through ELF, P's discourse actually makes M realize that its concepts are semantically pragmatically 'divergent' from his own culture-bound religious experience. As argued, the communication failure in this exchange is not so much generated by typologically-marked syntactic divergences between the two ELF variations in contact (i.e. P's Italian ELF M's NP-ELF), but it is rather produced by two socio-cultural religious schemata in conflict conveyed through ELF. P's NE message is an instance of metaphysical discourse requiring from non-western immigrants (like M) a readiness to transcend the everyday experience of reality by displacing it into the modal logic of different possible worlds. Such possible worlds are suggested by the semantic structure of the NE metaphysical discourse which sets its own 'rules of inference' that do not correspond to the conventional ones of the real world. The case study has illustrated that the bimodal structure of P's religious/metaphysical discourse is mainly concerned with the representation of the epistemic/doxastic modalities by which he represents his beliefs through ELF. M, thus, is expected to 'suspend his disbelief' activate in his mind a 'conceptual pliability' in order to make sense of the semantic patterns of P's metaphysical discourse (which he perceives as non-coherent according to his actual-world experiential logic), by projecting them onto the possible-world dimension of an alternative, paraconsistent logic that would make them meaningful.

In conclusion, the outcome of this case study suggests that to achieve true ecumenical communication, the clergy in charge of such interactions should first recover the 'situatedness' (Gumperz, 1982) of the immigrants' displaced ELF by recognizing the original socio-cultural pragmlinguistic dimensions determining sense reference in their religious experience. Then, the clergy should also develop accommodation strategies of ELF reformulation hybridization to make culture-bound religious discourses conceptually accessible and socially acceptable to all the participants in cross-cultural NE interactions.

<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from: <[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20120619\\_instrumentum-xiii\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20120619_instrumentum-xiii_en.html)> (last access 09.02.2016).

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from: <[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_letters/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_20010106\\_novo-millennio-ineunte\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20010106_novo-millennio-ineunte_en.html)> (last access 09.02.2016).

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from: <[http://www.vatican.va/news\\_services/press/sinodo/documents/bollettino\\_25\\_xiii-ordinaria-2012/02\\_inglese/b05\\_02.html](http://www.vatican.va/news_services/press/sinodo/documents/bollettino_25_xiii-ordinaria-2012/02_inglese/b05_02.html)> (last access 09.02.2016).

<sup>4</sup> Retrieved from: <[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/messages/migration/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20110921\\_world-migrants-day\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/migration/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20110921_world-migrants-day_en.html)> (last access 09.02.2016).

<sup>5</sup> To this purpose, the following conversation transcript symbols (Edwards 1997) were adopted: [ ] → overlapping speech; underlining → emphasis; → quieter speech; (.) → micropause; (..) → pause; :: → elongation of prior sound; .hhh → breathing in; hhh → breathing out; > < → speed-up talk; = → latching.

<sup>6</sup> The expression 'Boko Haram' in Hausa means «Western Education is Sin».

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*ELF Reformulations of Italian ‘Lingua Franca’ Uses  
in the Subtitling of the Migration Movie Lamerica*

ABSTRACT:

This paper enquires into the scripted ELF variation adopted in the English subtitling of *Lamerica* (Gianni Amelio, 1994). The target script reformulates the original interactions through Lingua-franca Italian by means of hybridization processes between spoken Italian lingua franca uses and written ELF rendering that are seen as enabling/failing to realize the complex unequal encounters in contexts of specialized (legal-bureaucratic) communication between low-status Albanians and high-status Italians. The analysis of the spoken interactions rendered into ELF subtitling involves three different, yet complementary dimensions of analysis: the register dimension in the perspective of Halliday’s (1978) functional approach and of van Dijk’s (1980) processes of deletion, construction and generalization in rendering the original social interactions into ELF subtitling, respecting the technical limits and facilitating accessibility and acceptability of culture-bound concepts either between the participants in the interaction and in the international audience of the subtitled movie; the phonopragmatic dimension (Sperti, 2014) of the spoken interactions to explore the socio-pragmatic processes accounting for illocutionary and perlocutionary implications (Searle, 1983), and the rendering of such dimensions characterizing the cross-cultural unequal encounters (in terms of intonational and prosodic variations, emotional and attitudinal conveyance, paralinguistic and visual information) into equivalent written forms of ELF; and the functional dimension involving the standard and scripted ELF variations used in the subtitles, analysed through the application of a causal model of translation (Chesterman, 2000; Bogucki, 2011), enquiring into the cognitive and pragmatic features of the translator’s retextualizations, characterised by relevant lexical and syntactic choices in the attempt to render the participants’ status asymmetries. ELF in this case may thus represent a new hybrid mode of spoken lingua franca rendered into written forms in situations of difficult intercultural communication due to power/status asymmetries between the participants.

*Introduction and rationale*

This paper introduces a multimodal analysis of the ELF variations adopted in the English subtitling of *Lamerica*. In the movie, the Italian

businessmen Fiore and Gino come to Albania—impoverished by the recent fall of communism—to launch an imaginary shoe firm. Here, they meet Spiro, who turns out to be an Italian ex-soldier from World War II. While following him, Gino experiences the dramatic socio-economic conditions, inevitably getting closer to Albanian people.

The research focus is on the identification of the role of hybridization in constructing equivalence in translation by means of written reformulations into ELF subtitles of the original oral interactions through Italian lingua-franca (ILF). ‘Hybridization’ signifies the process of translation/interpretation of the socio-cultural asymmetries between the participants to the exchanges. These processes of hybridization between spoken ILF forms and written ELF rendering are considered as either enabling or failing to express the challenging unequal encounters in specialized (legal-bureaucratic) communicative contexts in cross-cultural interactions between low-status Albanians and high-status Italians. In the practical terms of the analysis, this means to consider the different forms of ELF variations in subtitling, including the kinds of ELF registers used to achieve equivalence; and, in a functional perspective, van Dijk’s (1980) rules of summarization (deletion, construction and generalization), applied for translation. The scope of this methodology is to describe the levels of equivalence achieved through summarization of culture-bound specialized concepts, and to motivate these degrees in terms of information giving or eliminating.

The investigation of ‘hybridization’ processes (cf. Provenzano, 2008) is conducted according to three different dimensions of analysis: (a) ILF oral exchanges are firstly examined through a phonopragmatic approach applied to investigate the original characters’ illocutionary and perlocutionary implications (Sperti, 2014); (b) ELF legal-bureaucratic registers are analysed with the aim of enquiring into hybrid processes of adaptation through the reformulation (i.e. simplification or extension) of original spoken interaction in ILF; (c) a functional approach is finally applied to the multimodal and linguistic characteristics of the target subtitled script rendered in ELF.

## *1. Theoretical background*

### *1.1 Phonopragmatics*

The first level of analysis of the original ILF interactions entails a phonopragmatic examination (Sperti, 2014), or a pragmatic-oriented investigation of phonological and prosodic actualizations in ILF of participants’ illocutionary

acts and perlocutionary effects (Searle, 1983). The original spoken interactions are explored in order to identify the interface between prosodic realizations and pragmatic implications in the original ILF exchanges, eventually enquiring into the rendering of the phonopragmatic dimension characterizing the cross-cultural encounters (in terms of intonational and prosodic variations and correlates, emotional and attitudinal conveyance, socio-cultural 'schemata' and status asymmetries, paralinguistic and visual information, intended as kinesic and prossemic features) into equivalent ELF subtitles.

More specifically, the objective is to investigate the role played by the illocutionary and perlocutionary dimensions – affected by different culture-based linguistic and paralinguistic features derived from L1 interferences – in the cross-cultural phonopragmatic realizations of the movie interactions, accounting for linguacultural differences in the original conversational ILF variations used by the characters in the selected extracts. Actually, the interface between prosody and pragmatics in cross-cultural settings reveals a culture-oriented discourse construction in oral interactions where a 'lingua franca' is adopted.

A spectral, pitch and formant PRAAT analysis (Boersma and Weenink, 2014) of the conversation moves and acts is carried out by considering phono-prosodic parameters used in different ILF variations. PRAAT is a program for the analysis and reconstruction of acoustic speech signals, which offers a wide range of investigative tools for the acoustic evaluation of speech and voice samples, including spectrographic analysis and speech synthesis and manipulation. It represents here a technical support to the phonopragmatic analysis of the selected exchanges accounting for pragmatic realizations of different acoustic and prosodic parameters, such as: pitch variations (intended as perceptual interpretations of frequency); pitch contour (in terms of perceived intonative patterns); speech rate (number of words per minute); vowel and tonic syllable duration; pause duration at phrase boundaries and its influence on syllabic duration; acoustic intensity (perceived as loudness).

The phonopragmatic design is employed in a migration context where ILF variations are used by characters, with the aim of bridging the gap and the lack of attention for some crucial pragmatic and communicative aspects of spoken interactions revealing important information in terms of role disposal and status asymmetries.

### *1.2 Hybridization through Van Dijk's Macrorules*

The present section focuses on the construct of 'hybridization', by

attempting to define its role in the process of meaning interpretation of some of the relevant cues within the selected movie interactions. Such a process here is meant as an analysis of the various forms of simplification/retextualization of the original ILF exchanges through ELF subtitling, in particular by applying a register analysis (Halliday, 1978) aimed at enquiring into hybrid processes of ELF legal-bureaucratic language reformulation (i.e. simplification or extension) of the original exchanges.

The objective is to focus on the nature of these processes, on how well, if at all, they succeed in realizing the socio-cultural relationships among the characters in the original version. Our focus will be on the strategies applied to reformulate the original meaning of the scripts, through the application of van Dijk's (1980) macrorules, whose essence is to be explained soon afterwards. The ultimate objective is to evaluate 'equivalence', insofar as this is realized semantically or pragmatically, and also in the perspective of any functional change, which is meant to keep unaltered and even enhance the original ILF significance of the statements, or contrarily, subvert it.

This summarizing process is illustrated in this section, through a brief description of the three macrorules, called Deletion, Generalization and Construction, by defining them and also their contribution within this context to determine, in theoretical terms, either (a) the semantic gist of the discourse, or (b) the pragmatic «uptake» of it (Levinson, 1983). What will result is an interesting representation of either a reduction or an enlargement of the original *culture-bound* concepts, for example 'family', 'business' and 'entrepreneurship', 'social welfare', as well as the particular contribution of the macrorules to the specialized ELF context of the scripted interactions.

In van Dijk's (1980) terms, «Deletion» is meant as the elimination of meanings in the resulting text format, whereas «Generalization» leads to the new forms of sentence construction, based on the «resulting predicate as yielded by the meaning of the single propositions of the sequence units», which is finally distinguished from the Construction macrorule. The latter in fact implies that the result is provided by «the joint sequence of the original propositions into a new predicate». Identifying these processes will enable one, in pragmatic terms, to single out the covert ideological processes underlying the occurring changes in translation. What, for instance, the main motivations in re-rendering original legal concepts into new forms of ELF are, and also what kinds of intake or deprivation are yielded from the shift into the 'lingua franca' written forms, as the resulting compromise of the translators' choices.

### 1.3 ELF subtitling: linguistic and pragmatic features

The English subtitles of *Lamerica* aim to reproduce the linguistic and communicative features of the original interactions and to prompt specific effects in the audience by means of a 'scripted lingua franca'. In fact, the differences between the main protagonists' standard Italian and the lexical and syntactic characteristics of the Albanian people's cues actualise the illocutionary and perlocutionary dimensions (Austin, 1962), contributing to the audiovisual representation of the power asymmetries and to the audience's identification of the high-status and low-status participants. The adjective 'scripted' is here adopted to define a lingua-franca variation created for film interactions, which tries to respect and share the actual features of the non-native speakers' language in cross-cultural interactions where the high-status participants' cognitive and socio-cultural schemata generally prevail (cf. Guido, 2008). Yet, it is also constructed on the translators' cognitive construct of 'lingua-franca', generally characterised by lexical and syntactic deviations such as the omission of articles, subjects and verbs, or the selection of simple tenses, mainly present and past simple (cf. Iaia, 2015).

By means of the opposition between standard and ELF variations, which integrates the original audiovisual characteristics, receivers can infer the dominant role of the Italian protagonists. In fact, they generally rule the interactions and impose their objectives by focusing on their socio-cultural background to overcome the Albanians' resistance and doubts (interaction 1), or by raising the tone of their voices (interaction 2). On the other hand, the non-native speakers resort to simplified verbal tenses—mainly present or past simple—with fragmented syntactic structures that show «non-conformity to the established norms of grammar» (Seidlhofer, 2011: 94) such as the omission of the 's' in the third person singular, and to hesitations justified by the need to find appropriate words and expressions in Italian (English, in subtitles). Actually, even though the alternation between the standard and ELF variations contributes to the multimodal rendering of the original semantic and communicative dimensions, such translation strategy is not conventional in AVT, for the production of subtitles generally focuses on the respect for their temporal and spatial constraints determining their readability, or the number of words per line (cf. Neves, 2008). As a result, target scripts are generally condensed and do not achieve pragmalinguistic equivalence. Migration movies represent cases in point, because if it is true the omission of the opposition between standard and lingua-franca variations may produce

subtitles that are more comfortable to read, it is also true that the audience has to be acquainted with the acoustic dimension of the source languages in order to recognise the phonological deviations from the standard norms conveying their status of non-native speakers. For those reasons, it is argued that also the non-native speakers' pauses and iterations should be reproduced in subtitles, thus supporting the receivers' interpretation of the original semantic and communicative dimensions.

## *2. Corpus and method*

Three interactions have been selected as fitting specific criteria of analysis and investigation: their ILF phonopragmatic nature and the consequent rendering into ELF subtitling of status asymmetries between the higher-status Italians and the lower-status Albanians; the target-oriented analysis of the reformulated scripts on the basis of summarization macrorules; the functional dimension of the alternation between Standard English and ELF variation in subtitles. Finally, an alternative translation of interaction 3 will be provided, to exemplify the production of an equivalent target script contributing to the multimodal construction of the participants' asymmetric relationship.

## *3. Phonopragmatic analysis*

### *3.1 Case study 1: Fiore, an albanian woman and the interpreter*

Since the phonopragmatic analysis is based on a correlated approach to acoustic analysis and auditory assessment of utterances produced in oral interactions, the following interactions have been treated by means of a first acoustic investigation aimed at defining the main suprasegmental variations characterizing each participant involved in the ILF encounters under examination. Speakers' utterances are examined with the aim of highlighting either pragmatic and illocutionary influences on the prosodic production of linguistic acts, and possible acoustic/auditory attitudes, triggering conflicting positions and possible misunderstandings in inter-ethnic exchanges, further fostered by power/status and knowledge asymmetries among interactants as well as their socio-cultural schemata through which they filter the interpretation of reality (Guido, 2008).

A number of prosodic paralinguistic aspects are considered: use of over-

all voice quality, pitch range, length, pitch movements and articulation rate used to show—consciously or not—attitudes (involvement, tension, anxiety, authority) or emphasize certain sentence parts (by means e.g. of pauses and non-lexical items). Moreover, intonational behaviours (in terms of pitch movements during the course of an utterance or a speech) give considerable insight into sentence phrasing and pragmatic structuring of spoken utterances into smaller tone groups.

In this perspective the participants' linguistic behaviour is examined according to their phonetic and prosodic correlates such as: (i) pitch (in order to verify prominence, i.e. stress and pitch accent, and the perceived correlate of *f0*), (ii) duration (in terms of timing, vowel lengthening, syllable duration, and speaking rate), and (iii) loudness (especially as perceptual correlate of intensity).

What follows are three significant utterances of the speech analysis taken from an extract (00:07:57-00:08:29) of *Lamerica*, when Fiore intends to impose the plan for his illegal business to an Albanian woman and her interpreter, using an ILF formal tenor and appropriate prosodic means. The phonopragmatic features of his 'ILF forms' reveal strong socio-cultural attitudes and asymmetries between Fiore's high status and the Albanian woman's low status. These intercultural discrepancies are realized through the acoustic and prosodic dimension: Western perspective and socio-cultural roles are established by means of pitch variations, pauses, and intonational phrasing.

In (1) the Italian businessman Fiore tries to impose his authoritative perspective:

(1)(.) *Noi dobbiamo dare ad ogni Albanese un paio di scarpe nuove* (.)<sup>2</sup>

The 'majestic' *we* (*noi*) is adopted to involve Fiore's interlocutor in his business plan and is reinforced by the modal verb *dobbiamo* ('we must'), pauses at the boundary tone, slower speech rate and the tonal pitch on *ogni* ('every') in an attempt to emphasize and successfully persuade his interlocutors of his plan. The same phonopragmatic attitude is moreover underlined in (2) and (3) as a tonal climax where the information structure is particularly affected and emphasized by the tonal arrangement:

(2) *Nella fabbrica ci sarà soltanto manodopera locale* (.)<sup>3</sup>

The register analysis shows the use of the future tense (*ci sarà*, i.e. 'there will be'), highlighted by the tonal pitch on the adverb *soltanto*

(‘only’) to give solemnity to Fiore’s illocutionary purposes. The use of the future tense is also employed in (3) where the pitch emphasis on *Albanese* (‘Albanian’) and *prmissima* (‘first’) aims at convincing the listeners of the important economic operation he is willing to undertake:

(3) >Utilizzeremo pellame *Albanese* di *prmissima* qualità<<sup>4</sup>

The paralinguistic dimension (in terms of proxemic and kinesic behaviours) is also important in the phonopragmatic investigation of this extract, where the physical opposition between high-status Italian and low-status Albanian is signalled by means of space arrangement (a table separates the seated participants; Fiore stares at the woman underlining his words with hand and eye movements; whereas the Albanian woman often smiles and leans her head).

These segments of speech are examples of the employment of different phono-prosodic strategies speakers activate to fulfil their illocutionary goals not only through the adoption of lexical and syntactic devices, but also through the application of prosodic and acoustic devices (as showed in Figure 1).

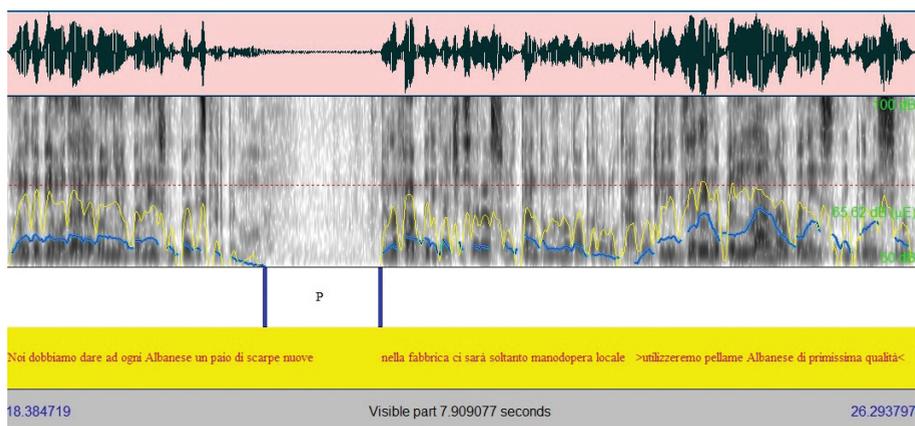


Fig. 1 – The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turns (1), (2) and (3)

### 3.2 Case study 2: Gino and an albanian doctor

The two extracts (00:34:51-00:35:18; 00:36:48-00:37:01) represent an important cross-cultural encounter among the Italian businessman

Gino and the Albanian female doctor who takes care of Spiro in hospital, as their utterances exemplify the intercultural asymmetries and tension emerging in terms of socio-cultural opposition and ‘imposition’ of roles and perspectives. Actually, Gino’s ‘ILF forms’ are quite different from those adopted by the Albanian doctor and are characterized by distinctive phonopragmatic features revealing role and pragmatic dispositions. The acoustic and prosodic dimension realizes this role and attitude opposition by means of intensity variations, pauses and disfluencies, high vs. low tonal patterns, speech rate, and pitch movements.

In (4), the phonopragmatic analysis of the doctor’s ILF utterance reveals—apart from her linguistic uncertainty—precise illocutionary aims signalled by linguistic and paralinguistic behaviours (cf. Figure 2):

(4) *Ma (..) non grave (..) ora bene (.) bene (..) voi (.) parente?*<sup>5</sup>

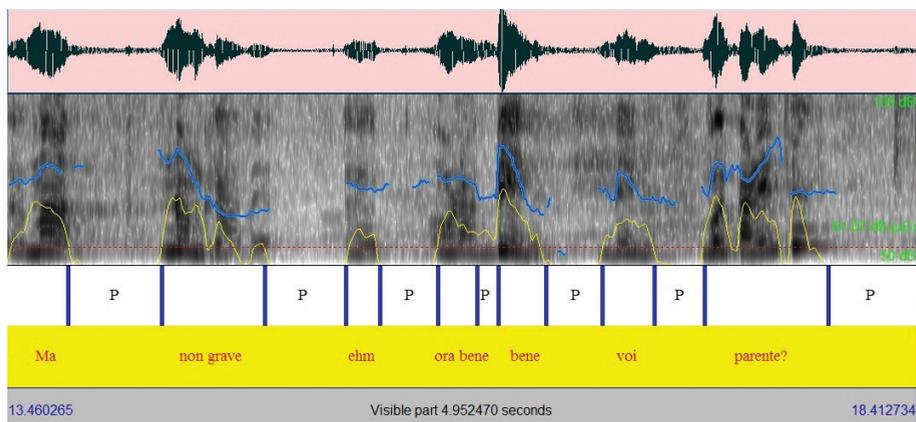


Fig. 2 – The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (4)

The changing tonal patterns and the high tone on *bene* (‘better now’) and *parente* (‘family’) signal the speaker’s willingness to establish and maintain the conversation open in spite of her interlocutor’s dispreferred reactions in (5) and (6) where Gino’s dismissive and mocking tone reveals his intercultural perspective toward the doctor (cf. Figure 3):

(5) *>che vuol dire< qua tutti parla italiano*<sup>6</sup>

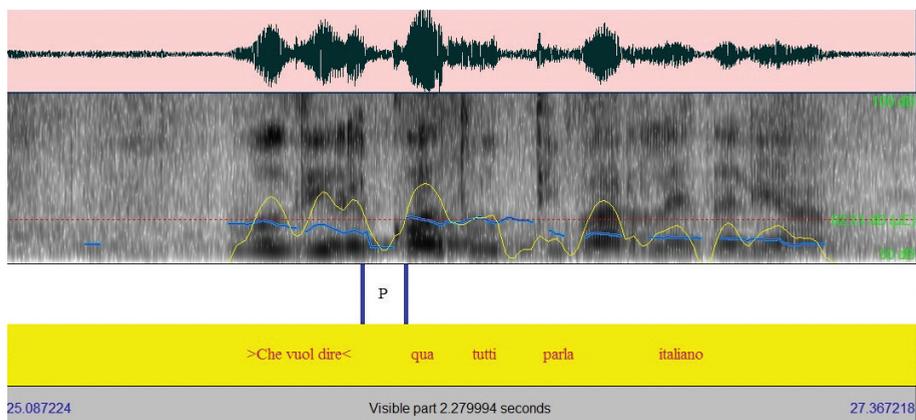


Fig. 3 – The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (5)

Gino's attitude is clearly showed by his informal tone and above all by the speeded-up *che vuol dire* ('so?') and the mocking form *qua \*tutti parla* ('everyone here talks') where the voluntary syntactic mismatch between the plural subject (*tutti*) and the third person singular (*parla*) aims to mimic – as higher status participant and Italian native speaker – the Albanian doctor's ILF variations.

Some cues after, Gino's patronizing attitude leads him to exaggerate the tonal patterns (especially on *scalzo*, i.e. 'barefoot') of his rhetoric wh-questions to the doctor (also evidently shown in Figure 4):

(6) *E io come faccio a portarmelo via? (.) SCALZO?*<sup>7</sup>

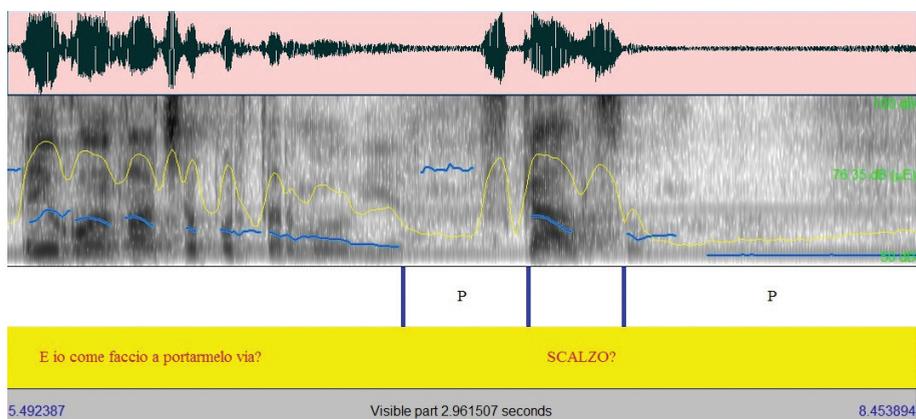


Fig. 4 – The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (6)

The perlocutionary effects of Gino’s upgrading tone on the Albanian woman are recognizable by her quieter tone, hesitations and repetitions. Moreover, the register analysis of her closing move shows the use of deontic modal verbs and lexical formality to close the interaction and leave the floor (cf. Figure 5):

(7) °*Mi dispiace*° ma (.) *non posso aiutarla* (..) °*mi dispiace*°<sup>8</sup>

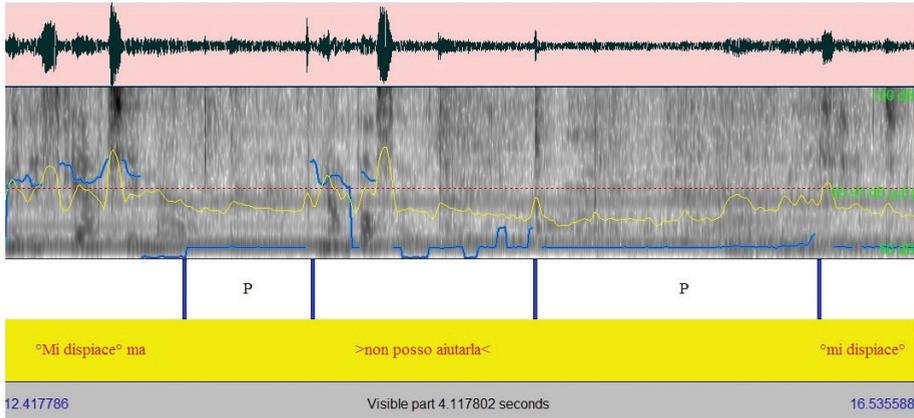


Fig. 5 – The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (7)

The failure of the cross-cultural exchange is dramatically marked by means of both linguistic and prosodic devices: the repetition of *mi dispiace* (‘sorry’) testifies the woman’s involvement in Spiro’s personal history, but also a certain disappointment for his interlocutor’s communicative intensity (in terms of loudness and tonal patterns); however, her usual courtesy is signalled by the use of a formal closing (*non posso aiutarla*—‘I cannot help’) wisely related to long pretonal pauses.

Moreover, the paralinguistic dimension also helps to underline the cross-cultural asymmetry between the characters: the Albanian doctor’s embarrassment is confirmed by her use of spatial and kinesic aspects, such as distance and the avoidance of direct eye contact with her interlocutor, whereas Gino’s higher-status is imposed by means of the physical invasion of his interlocutor’s spatial zone and direct and steady gaze.

### 3.3 Case study 3: Gino and a police officer

The phonopragmatic features of the characters’ ‘ILF forms’ in the

third exchange (01:32:50-01:33:50) reveal a socio-cultural alteration of ‘standard’ gatekeeping roles, when Gino’s illegal business is unmasked and he is interrogated by an Albanian police officer. The acoustic and prosodic dimension shows a shift in the ‘standard’ perspective and a power inversion by means of pause timing and vowel duration, intensity patterns, pitch contour and level.

In (8) the police officer’s summoning move, preceded by a long pause, final vowel prolongation and silence at the boundary tone are easily recognizable:

(8) (..) *nome::* (..) *cognome::* (..) *e dove è nato*<sup>9</sup>

The police officer’s precise and blunt eliciting move (acoustically represented in Figure 6) does not leave room for misinterpretations: after a previous informal exchange, roles are now inverted and the higher status is challenged. The unemotional declarative tone—rhythmically marked—represents precise illocutionary goals.

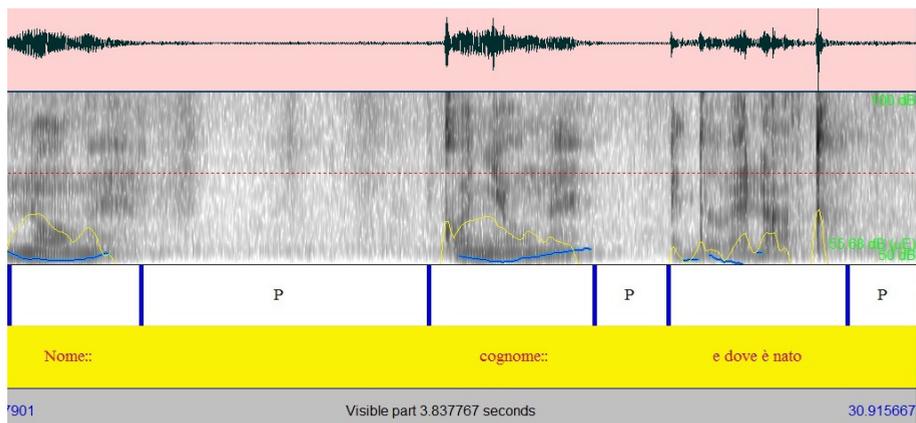


Fig. 6 – The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (8)

The perlocutionary effects of the police officer’s act in (8) are immediately perceivable in (9) where Gino’s backchannel is prosodically realized as showed in Figure 7:

(9) (..) *>ci lavoro<* (..) *lavoro con loro*<sup>10</sup>

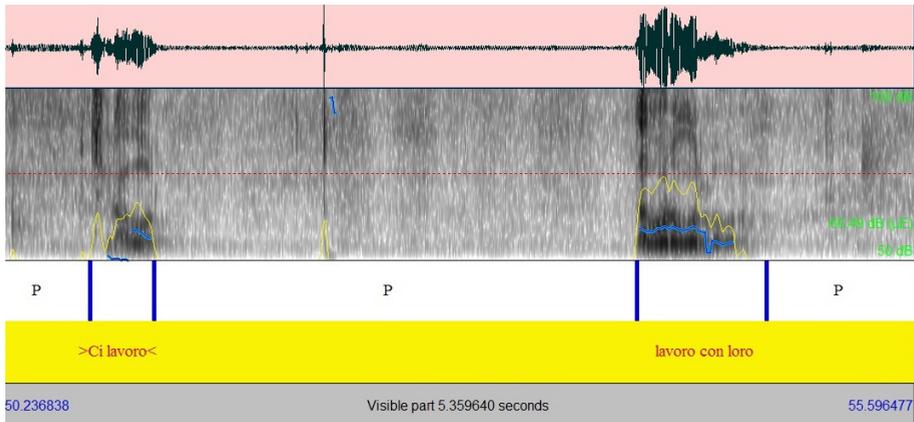


Fig. 7 – The utterance waveform, the f0 contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (9)

Gino’s speeded-up talk and the long pause signal a final attempt to restore his initial higher status by trying to repair the subversion of social roles, and by searching in vain for a sort of complicity with the Albanian police officer. However, the informal and dismissive tone and the generic answering (*ci lavoro, lavoro con loro* – ‘I work there, I work with them’) are not appropriate for an interrogation and therefore his attempt is doomed to fail. Actually his interlocutor perceives Gino’s intentions and the status inversion is finally realized in (10) where the police officer’s linguistic and paralinguistic behaviour is aimed at imposing and making clear the role disposal: the use of the Italian mispronounced imperative form (*\*rispondo* – ‘just answer’) in suggesting the only answers admitted (*sì:: o no::*, i.e. ‘yes or no’) contributes to the pragmatic dimension of the utterance, yet mitigated by the downgrading *ti prego* (‘please’), pronounced in a considerably quieter tone (cf. Figure 8):

(10) (..) *rispondo* (..) *sì:: o no::* (..) *ti prego*<sup>11</sup>

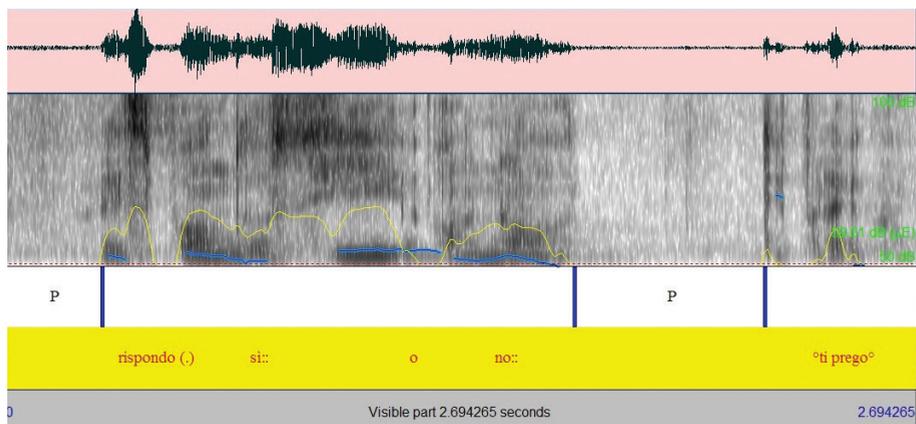


Fig. 8 – The utterance waveform, the f0 contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (10)

Once again, the paralinguistic behaviour—in terms of proxemics and body language—contributes to highlight the pragmatic dimension of the encounter in terms of the Albanian police officer's higher status and unusual Italian submission, by means of tonal patterns, head and eye movements and space disposal (e.g. direct gaze, smiles, batonic hand movements, spatial distance, seated position).

Indeed the three case studies have revealed how phonology and prosody influence the effects of lexical and syntactic choices, as well as pragmatic intentions, in discourse comprehension and socio-cultural perception during cross-cultural oral interactions. The phonopragmatic analysis of the original ILF interactions, therefore, has paved the way to investigate the hybridization processes aimed at a written reformulation into ELF subtitles of the ILF spoken conversations.

#### 4. Analysis of hybridization

##### 4.1 Case study 1: Fiore, the Albanian woman and the interpreter

The aim of this section is to focus on the hybridization processes and the way(s) these are connected to the phonopragmatic analysis of the original ILF interactions. We will look at the lexico-syntactic and functional use of specific linguistic devices aimed at hybridizing (i.e., making accessible and acceptable), culture-bound concepts to an international audience. The method implies also considering the effective application of

the register analysis within a comparative discourse analysis.

One of the most relevant scenes in the movie in relation to the ELF reformulation is the one between Fiore, the Albanian woman and her interpreter. The scene tries to represent the power-asymmetrical relationship between the characters and thus different elements should be taken into account. In particular, we should consider the multiple levels of register interpretation involved within the analysis, which contribute to the making of the meaning. We refer to the idea of business and entrepreneurship embedded and transfigured certainly within the visual elements of the scene (cf. section 6.1), also through the phono-pragmatic approach (see also section 4.1), but here considered from the relevant point of view of ELF 'hybrid' subtitling.

The aim is not to focus on the textual and linguistic aspects of the subtitling per se, but relevantly on the strategies of reduction/addition/enlargement of their entities, in order to understand (a) the nature of the eliminations (where they occur and are collocated at the shifting levels of retextualization from the oral into the written), and (b) the pragmatic consequences that such avoidance of information could have at the level of target reception. The level of hybridization here may probably be interpreted also from the genre perspective (Swales 1990) as in the example of an indirect report of events actualized through the ELF subtitles which provide by addition a context to the event («She say Italian shoes best in world, she see on television», 'Ho visto in tv (.) le scarpe italiane -sono migliori al mondo'). The pragmatic effect is thus different insofar as the sensorial aspect through report is represented.

#### 4.2 Case study 2. interaction between Gino and the Albanian doctor

The following example from another case study tries equally to focus on the ideological effects of the interaction. The lines quote: «Ah, Italian. How do you say...? Asphyxia, but not serious, better now. You family?» as an example of ELF reformulation in the subtitling of the original ILF concept of '*parente*'. It is interesting to analyse the example from the pragmatic viewpoint, i.e. within the specific situation where it occurs. The situated context is indeed an (ideological) representation of the exchange between the two differing status participants, wherein also social constructs are differently constructed and rendered. The most evident exemplification is the concept of '*parente*', which is rendered with the general term of 'family', the generalization macrorule thus also reducing the original concept into a more general one, although the choice may nonetheless preserve the pragmatic equivalence.

### 4.3 Case study 3: Gino and Albanian police officer

Hybridization is in fact meant in an extended sense in the development of the plot. As we can infer especially from case study 3, where the specific choices of the translator cannot be seen simply in relation to concepts, but applied to relations to be conveyed/made accessible. In fact, application of van Dijk's macrorules could be explained here within a systemic-functional perspective of analysis (Halliday, 1994), as this allows one to convey or conceal the original social/asymmetric relationships between the participants by changing the sentence linearity, although with relevant pragmatic consequences. This viewpoint should be explained with regard to Gino's utterance: «I gave my clothes away» determining a lack of communication, i.e. insofar as the ideological illocutionary force of the original statement is concerned ('I miei vestiti—li ho dati via'). Such a difference at the level of functional equivalence may represent a difficulty for the target receiver, in the sense of the concept perception and the rendering of the original illocutionary force of the statement. Hence, such a lack triggers the need for a multimodal interpretation (cf. section 6.3), aimed at a clarification of the original meaning and at achieving an integrated ELF meaning interpretation.

## 5. Analysis of the ELF subtitling

### 5.1 Case study 1: Fiore, an Albanian woman and the interpreter

Fiore wants to create a shoe factory in Albania, called 'Alba Calzature', but his plan is actually a fraud, as he only wants to embezzle the money from aid grants. In the dialogue below, an Albanian woman is going to be convinced to become the company chairman:

	Italian Script	English Script
FIORE:	Signora, a Lei piace la scarpa italiana? Il cuoio morbido, la confezione moderna, il piede che poggia in un velluto.	Do you like Italian shoes? Soft leather, modern manufacturing, feet wrapped in velvet.
WOMAN:	[Parla in albanese]	[Speaking Albanian]

<p>INTERPRETER:</p>	<p>L'ha visto in TV. Le scarpe italiane sono migliore al mondo.</p>	<p>She say Italian shoes best in world, she see on television.</p>
<p>FIORE:</p>	<p>Noi dobbiamo dare ad ogni Albanese un paio di scarpe nuove. Nella fabbrica ci sarà soltanto manodopera locale. Utilizzeremo pellame albanese di primissima qualità: vaccariello, capretto, agnellino... Lei, signora, sarà Presidente della Società 'Alba Calzature'.</p>	<p>We must give every Albanian a pair of shoes. We'll use local manpower in the factory and choice Albanian skins: lamb, kid, calf. And you will be the chairman of our company, Alba Calzature.</p>

Whereas the woman speaks Albanian, her interpreter embodies the non-native speaker who resorts to an Italian lingua-franca variation entailing specific features such as a non-conventional pronunciation and syntax. Consider, for example, the definition of Italian shoes as the «best in the world», where the adjective *migliori* is rendered in its singular form, *migliore*, and not in the correct, plural one. The English variation adopted in the subtitles reproduces the non-standard linguistic features of the source utterances by means of syntactic structures such as the omission of 's' in the third person singular, in «She say[s] Italian shoes», or «[...] she see[s] on television», or the omission of the verb 'to be' and the definite article in the sentence «Italian shoes [are] the best in [the] world». It is here argued that the construction of the interpreter's ELF variation actualises the opposition between the high-status Italians and low-status Albanians from a linguistic perspective, integrating the multimodal representation of the different roles, rendered by means of their spatial arrangement, since a desk separates Fiore and the woman, and the latter politely answers the former's questions. For these reasons, despite obtaining a shorter script due to the spatial and temporal limitations of subtitles, the target version of the interaction under analysis can be considered a pragmalinguistic equivalent to the source script.

### 5.2 Case study 2: Gino and an albanian doctor

After discarding the woman from case study 1 above, Fiore and Gino choose a local old man as the future chairman of 'Alba Calzature'. The latter runs away, though, and is eventually found in a hospital, where a female doctor informs Gino about the old man's conditions:

	Italian Script	English Script
GINO:	È grave?	Is it serious?
DOCTOR:	[Inizia a parlare in albanese]	[Starts speaking Albanian]
GINO:	No, non capisco: parla italiano!	I don't understand, speak Italian.
DOCTOR:	Ah, italiano. Come dice...? Asfissia, asfissia... Ma, non grave—ehm... ora bene. Bene. Voi parente?	Ah, Italian. How do you say...? Asphyxia, but not serious, better now. You family?
GINO:	No, che parente?! Io sono italiano!	No, of course not... I'm Italian.
DOCTOR:	Lui parla italiano con me.	He speaks Italian with me.
GINO:	Che vuol dire? Qua tutti 'parla' italiano. [...] Le scarpe dove sono?	So? Everyone here speaks Italian. [...] Where are his shoes?
DOCTOR:	Non avevo scarpe. Non avevo.	He had no shoes.
GINO:	E io come faccio a portarmelo via? Scalzo? Mi procuri un paio di scarpe, le pago. Pago.	How am I supposed to take him away? Could you get me some shoes? I'll pay.
DOCTOR:	Mi dispiace ma... non posso aiutarla.	I'm sorry, I cannot help.

Gino's high status is multimodally conveyed by the integration between his attitude towards the interlocutor and the linguistic perspective. In fact, he sometimes shouts while speaking and even imitates the woman's lingua-franca variation in a disparaging way. For example, in «Qui tutti parla italiano ['Everyone here speaks Italian']», the man resorts to the non-standard *parla*, the third person singular form that replaces the correct *parlano*, third person plural. As for the subtitles, Gino's disparaging imitation of the woman's language is not rendered, but the asymmetric relationship is actualised by means of the differences between the standard and non-standard variations of English. The man's question, «How am I supposed to take him away?», in fact denotes a correct construction from the lexical and syntactic perspectives, and can be opposed – for example – to the doctor's «You family?», where the fragmented syntax is evident in the lack of verbal forms, if compared to the standard version «Are you family?». Similar features are contained in the utterance «But not serious, better now», where the subject ('he') and verb ('to be') are omitted. Even though the differences between the standard and lingua-franca variations represent the asymmetric relationship between Gino and the doctor, it is here argued that the ELF subtitles actually lack the reproduction of other,

peculiar behaviours of the speakers. For example, when the doctor explains the old man's condition, her hesitation needs to be inferred from the Italian acting, since subtitles omit the repetition of the sentence in «He had no shoes. [He did not]». At the same time, the imperative in the translation of Gino's order is not preserved, and «Could you get me some shoes?» – instead of the equivalent 'Bring me a pair of shoes' – creates a more polite version eventually resulting in a lack of pragmatic equivalence due to the arbitrary choices in the translators' interpretation and retextualization of the original semantic and communicative dimensions.

### 5.3 Case study 3: Gino and a police officer

The following interaction between Gino and a police officer takes place in an Albanian prison and subverts the conventional social roles, as the Italian man is now represented as the low-status participant. This change is multimodally represented by the characters' position in space (the two men are separated by a desk like in case study 1 – cf. section 6.1 above) and Gino's behaviour, which is different from the one he conventionally shows (cf. section 6.2 above). In the subtitles of this scene, the translators reproduce the modified power relation by means of the different features of the Albanian man's English, which lacks the lexical and syntactic characteristics of the lingua franca previously adopted:

	Italian Script	English Script
POLICE OFFICER:	Tuoi bagagli sono sequestrati.	Your bags have been sequestered.
GINO:	Che volete da me?	What do you want from me?
POLICE OFFICER:	Nome, cognome, e dove è nato.	Name, surname and place of birth.
GINO:	Cudrali Luigi, Agrigento, 30 gennaio '63.	Cudrali Luigi, Agrigento, January 30th, 1963.
POLICE OFFICER:	Fai parte di questa società chiamata Alba Calzature?	Have you anything to do with this company called Alba Calzature?
GINO:	Ci lavoro. Lavoro con loro.	I work for them. I work with them.
POLICE OFFICER:	Rispondo sì o no, ti prego.	Just answer yes or no, please.
GINO:	Sì.	Yes.

Despite the different power statuses, in the source version the police officer still resorts to an Italian lingua-franca variation, exemplified by the pronunciation of the imperative verb «Rispondo [‘Answer’]», instead of the conventional *rispondi*, or the fragmented syntactic construction of «[I] Tuoi bagagli sono [stati] sequestrati [‘Your bags were sequestered’]», with the omission of the definite article ‘*T*’ and the verb ‘to be’ (*stati*). If the subtitles are considered, the subversion of the conventional socio-cultural roles is in the selection of verb tenses that underline the policeman’s higher status. For example, the latter resorts to the syntactically complex present perfect passive in «Your bags have been sequestered», a tense which is not adopted by Albanian speakers in the previous scenes. Besides these syntactic and lexical features, a ‘tenor’ parameter-shift is identified as well, consisting in the alternative focus on the informative, not emotive function of the text. Consider the sentences «This Albanian prison is a very nasty place» and «I gave my clothes away». The former utterance is descriptive and unmarked, whereas the latter does not contain the original focus on the emotive tone, since by postponing the subject and verb in «I miei vestiti—li ho dati via [‘My clothes—I gave them away’]», Gino tries to protest against the subversion of social roles, which he eventually accepts agreeing to the police officer’s requests. Even though the left dislocation of object is a frequent syntactic structure in Italian language, the connotative-pragmatic dimension of its use – namely, the unwilling awareness of the subverted social roles – is conveyed by Gino’s audiovisual dimensions, precisely by his eye movements and tone of voice while speaking.

Finally, some alternative solutions are here proposed for the achievement of a different type of equivalence, rendering the original pragmatic and linguistic features. At first, different tenses are selected: for example, in ‘Your bag were sequestered’, the past simple is preferred to the present perfect, restoring one of the simple tenses that are generally used by non-native speakers (cf. MacKenzie, 2013). Secondly, «I gave my clothes away» is changed as ‘My clothes—I gave them away’ to provide a more equivalent target version. In fact, it is here thought that the subversion of the social roles should not be indicated by the different variations of ELF spoken by the police officer, but should result from the integration between the audiovisual dimension and the linguistic features of subtitles.

## 6. Conclusions

The phonopragmatic analysis of the English subtitles of *Lamerica* has adopted a pragmatolinguistic approach aimed at identifying specific lexical,

syntactic and stylistic features, in order to show different pragmalinguistic strategies applied to the construction of messages through 'ILF forms' in intercultural encounters involving Italian and Albanian speakers.

Furthermore, the analysis has underlined the prevalence of the written mode in the scripted ELF variation adopted in the subtitles, which is determined by the deletion/generalization macrorules, as well as the linguistic actualisation of the original power asymmetries by means of the contrasts between the standard and lingua-franca variations of English. The definition of the ELF variations as 'scripted' is meant to indicate that the non-native speakers in film exchanges generally resort to specific lexical and syntactic deviations according to the translators' cognitive construct of 'lingua-franca'.

Finally, since the reformulation strategies and the respect for the technical constraints of subtitles sometimes lead to non-equivalent target scripts, this paper has also proposed an alternative translation of one of the exchanges under analysis, adopting a cross-cultural approach to audiovisual translation that respects the linguistic, syntactic and functional dimensions of ELF, and which exploits the multimodal construction of audiovisual texts for the production of equivalent target versions.

<sup>1</sup> While the authors are responsible for the design of this study and for sections 1, 3 and 7, and have co-revised the paper, Pietro Luigi Iaia is responsible for sections 2.3, 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3; Mariarosaria Provenzano for sections 2.2, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3; and Silvia Sperti for sections 2.1, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3.

<sup>2</sup> «We must give every Albanian a pair of shoes». Speech transcriptions symbols in this study are: underlining: emphasis (focus marking, maximum pitch); CAPITALS: louder speech (high intensity); ° °: quieter speech (low intensity); (.): micropause; (..): pause; :: : syllable lengthening; > <: speeded-up talk; (Edwards, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> «We'll use local manpower in the factory».

<sup>4</sup> «And choice Albanian skins».

<sup>5</sup> «But not serious, better now. You family?».

<sup>6</sup> «So? Everyone here speaks Italian».

<sup>7</sup> «How am I supposed to take him away?».

<sup>8</sup> «I am sorry, I cannot help».

<sup>9</sup> «Name, surname and place of birth».

<sup>10</sup> «I work for them. I work with them».

<sup>11</sup> «Just answer yes or no, please».

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Cristina Pennarola

*ELF Encounters in Migrants' Forums: Communication Management  
Across Cultures*

ABSTRACT:

The present study investigates the strategies that migrants can adopt to ask for help and express their views in English as a Lingua Franca. On the basis of the exchanges between migrants of various nationalities and in different locations, a framework is proposed with the twofold aim of outlining the structure and discursive moves of migrants' postings and analyzing the interactional dynamics which may turn a mixed group of nationals into a goal-oriented community of practice (House, 2003). The migrants participating in discussion forums rely on the experience of other users to obtain additional information and solve their problems. This prominent goal is manifest in the survey of the discussion threads, from nationalization documents to job hunt, including lawful residence, citizenship tests, application forms and many others. The transactional metafunction is, however, entwined with the interactional one (Brown and Yule, 1983) as feelings of anger, frustration, relief, joy, gratitude are in turn expressed by the forum users. In light of the 'entailment' paradigm advanced by Firth (2009), that is «the inherent interactional and linguistic variability that lingua franca interactions entail», the analysis focuses on the affective connotations of lexical choices and interactional markers, as well as the dialectics between potentially disruptive language behaviour and consensus-seeking pragmatic strategies. The migrants' forum Trackitt <[www.trackitt.com](http://www.trackitt.com)> (last access 31.05.2013) is contrasted with a British expatriates' forum <[www.britsabroad.com](http://www.britsabroad.com)> (last access 31.05.2013) in order to ascertain to what extent the pragmatic features of the former can be realistically associated with an ELF use rather than with the genre (i.e. forum discussion) and the subject (i.e. migrants' queries) under examination.

*1. Introduction and general framework*

ELF literature has so far mostly focused on the phonological, lexicogrammatical and pragmatic features of English as a Lingua Franca, or rather of the many different kinds of English used for international communication (Burns, Coffin, 2001; Canagarajah, 2007; Facchinetti, Crystal and Seidlhofer, 2010; Firth, 2009; Jenkins, 2007; Kachru, 1983;

Mauranen, 2005; McArthur, 2001; Mollin, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2001, 2011), also with a view to putting forward an adaptive educational framework and agenda for teaching English in a global context (Gagliardi and Maley, 2010; Jenkins, 2000, 2006; Kuo, 2006; Lee McKay, 2002; Seidlhofer, 2004, 2005). Few studies have attempted to combine linguistic analysis and cultural insights, putting forward a more holistic approach to the English used in multinational contexts (Canagarajah, 2006; Guido, 2008). Starting from recent developments in cross-cultural pragmatics (Leech, 2005; Wierzbicka, 2003), this paper aims to examine the cultural implications of immigrants' dialogic exchanges with particular regard to the expression of emotions.

Many studies grounded in different disciplines have examined the concept of culture, either underlining its inherent elusiveness or highlighting its considerable potential for explaining and resolving conflict (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005; Kiesling and Bratt Paulston, 2005; Wierzbicka, 1999, 2003, 2006). In his thorough analysis of the semantics of culture, Goddard (2005) illustrates the evolution of this word and outlines its past and present meanings, including its classical anthropological meaning of «ways of living, thinking and behaving», which is the one used in this study. Far from complying with universally shared norms and conventions, people's patterns of behaviour are shaped by different cultural models and frames of reference, which need to be explained by allegedly impartial analytical tools such as cultural scripts and cognitive scenarios (Wierzbicka, 2003 and 2006). Both tools account for human emotions and behavioural patterns through a simplified language reduced to its conceptual primitives (e.g., causality, possession) and lexical universals (e.g., good, bad, think)<sup>1</sup>.

The present study investigates the discursive moves of migrants when eliciting help and expressing their feelings in an English-medium forum dealing with immigration and citizenship issues. A migrants' forum Trackitt <[www.trackitt.com](http://www.trackitt.com)> (last access 31.05.2013) was automatically downloaded by the aid of a web crawler application, Teleport, <[www.tenmax.com/pro.html](http://www.tenmax.com/pro.html)> (last access 31.05.2013) and the threads from January 2012 until May 2013 were selected, totalling 70 threads approximately. In parallel, a British expatriates' forum <[www.britsabroad.com](http://www.britsabroad.com)> (last access 31.05.2013) was also downloaded with the same software and a roughly equivalent number of threads was analysed.

Although both forums address migrants' issues related to narratives of displacement and relocation, they differ with regard to a significant feature, the migrants' origins and life stories. The Trackitt migrants come from all over the world and tend to concentrate in the UK and the USA, while Britsabroad – as indicated by the name itself – is a forum almost exclusively represented

by British people settling down or wanting to settle down anywhere but their homeland. Furthermore, most of the Britsabroad participants are moving or have moved to Anglophone countries such as the USA and Australia, where the differences in the (English) language and culture would not feel as threatening and destabilizing (see Wierzbicka, 2006: 6-7) as they may be perceived by the Trackitt participants and where bureaucratic requirements (including visa fees) can be much less demanding for British citizens. Thus, the cultural and linguistic closeness between the British expatriates and the host countries may also account for the perceived lower stress level of the Britsabroad participants and for their higher-order self-actualization concerns (Maslow, 1987).

The differences in the migrants' origins and life stories across these two forums also entail a difference in focus, made apparent by the very titles of the threads (Table 1): while the Trackitt threads tell painful stories of outrageously long visa waiting lines, the Britsabroad threads are more concerned with quality of life including topics such as climate, geography, house hunting and job opportunities. The British migrants are typically looking for a sunny climate and, possibly, breath-taking landscapes, whereas the Trackitt migrants are more concerned with application forms, visas and work permits. In line with the different communicative contexts embedded in the two forums, also the length and tone of the forum posts may dramatically differ: while the Trackitt posts are concise and to the point with a clearly utilitarian purpose, the Britsabroad ones are often more elaborate and diffuse to the point of sounding like autobiographical reflections:

«I have stumbled accidentally across this forum and am reading the posts about leaving NZ to move back to the UK with interest. I thought I would share our story... I apologise in advance as it's very long... [follows a one-page-long summary of the participant's life story]» (Britsabroad).

Given the differences between these two migrants' forums, the contrastive approach is meant to verify to what extent the pragmatic features of the migrants' postings could be realistically associated with their linguistic and cultural backgrounds rather than with the genre (i.e. forum discussion) and the subject (i.e. migrants' queries) under examination. The linguistic analysis has focused on 'moves' or units of pragmatic meaning (Swales, 1990; Flowerdew, 2005), lexical choices, and cultural scripts. Given the kind of cooperative behaviour mutually elicited by the forum participants, attention was also paid to face threatening acts and the strategies of positive and negative politeness used for counteracting the potential face damage (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 69-70).

*Table 1 – Some typical discussion threads in the two forums*

TRACKITT THREADS	BRITSABROAD THREADS
Waiting for interview	Thinking of a big move?
February 2013 Filers	Australian passport
Spouse sponsorship	It's warm again!
Tier 1 Extension	Brit moving to Auckland
I-140 denied	Hi newbie here
UK student Visa	Moving to USA
IELTS mandatory for applicants	Hello from Canada

More than thirty different nationalities are represented in the Trackitt corpus, each contributing to a lesser or greater extent in the discussions: beside the largest national group represented by Indians, also Pakistanis and Latin Americans are well represented, while Europeans in general are sparse<sup>2</sup>, apart from a fairly large group of Russians (Table 2). The dominance of the Indians may, to some extent, turn a migrants' forum into an Indian migrants' forum; however, in point of fact, the close interaction among people from different nations has resulted in a variegated production of English, as shown by the analysis below where the contributions of the single nationalities have been acknowledged<sup>3</sup>.

*Table 2 – Trackitt participants according to their nationality*

COUNTRIES	PARTICIPANTS	COUNTRIES	PARTICIPANTS
Bahamas	3	Jamaica	6
Bangladesh	10	Japan	2
Bulgaria	2	Jordan	2
Brazil	2	Kenya	2
Canada	3	Malaysia	4
Cameroon	2	Mexico	2
Colombia	2	Morocco	1
China	3	Nigeria	2
Cuba	3	Pakistan	22
Germany	4	Peru	3
Ghana	2	Philippines	4
Greece	2	Russia	17
Haiti	1	Turkey	2
India	74	UK	2
Israel	3	USA	6
Italy	2	Vietnam	4

## 2. *The analysis of moves*

The forum postings have been analysed in terms of their 'moves' or 'macrosegments', i.e. functional text constituents, according to the electronic message schema partially adapted from Herring (1996). In particular, the comparative analysis across the two forums is aimed at exploring the migrants' English usage when performing the following functions:

- greeting;
- requesting information;
- requesting help;
- encouraging;
- complaining.

All these functions are central in both migrants' forums, pointing to the close intertwining of the transactional and the interactional macrofunctions (Brown and Yule, 1983). The member users in both forums interact for friendship and mutual support and not just for eliciting information or advice; however, depending on the urgency of their queries or their perceived lack of control in the relocation process, their online interaction may either sound like a pleasant, worthwhile pastime or some anxiety-ridden borderline experience.

### 2.1 *Greeting*

One general feature of forums is that very often they dispense with opening and closing salutations, and allow their members to go to the point without any preamble (Crystal, 2001: 141). In the two forums under examination, however, greetings were found to be a very common way to engage with the big group of all potential forum members, as shown by the general forms of address used: *Hello, Hi, Hi all, Hi there, Hello everybody, Hi folks, Hi guys, Hey Guys*. All these forms were found in both forums beside more personal forms of address directed at one member in particular, called either by their first name or username. In some cases, however, the greeting sounded more hearty and affectionate as in *Hello Buddy* (Nigeria); *Hi brother! Hi bro* (Pakistan); *Hello Friends, Dear Friends, Hi dude* (India). Interestingly, the use of the heavily connoted word *dude*, indexing solidarity and casualness among young male speakers in North America (Kiesling, 2005: 96-97), is evidence of the echoing taking place in the migrants' forum by which ELF speakers appropriate English words and adapt them to suit their particular communicative purposes and speakers' identity (House, 2003).

## 2.2 *Requesting information*

Queries are most frequent throughout the Trackitt corpus and largely revolve around citizenship issues, employment opportunities, job requirements, and daily routines. The same topics are also tackled in the Britsabroad forum but they appear to be more conversational and devoid of the sense of urgency associated with the Trackitt messages. The overall impression, on reading the Britsabroad postings, is that the member users are exploring alternative ways of life and socializing in the meantime, while in the Trackitt messages the member users let out anguish and frustration at their loss of control over their own life. The following two long quotations from Trackitt and Britsabroad respectively may give an idea of the different pathos associated with the migrant experience in each forum:

«First, do we have any one who had finished filing by August, 2012 at VSC? anyone with news? romours? Secondly, what are the odds that one can be called for an interview? are there many cases? if so what are the qns? (examples). I guess I am asking the odds for an interview as i know many who just got approvals??» (Nigeria, Trackitt)

«Hello, I just landed a job through CanadaVisaJobs.com which qualifies me for Arranged Employment for the Skilled Visa program. My wife and I are planning to move to Toronto in a few months so I can start my job, and now need to file my visa application ASAP. Now that we've come this far I don't want to take any chances with the visa filing process and wondered if anyone knew a good and reliable immigration lawyer in Canada that could handle everything for us. Any recommendations would be greatly appreciated, thanks for your help.» (Britsabroad)

In the first quotation, the sequence of interrogatives culminates in a disconsolate remark, «I guess I am asking the odds for an interview as I know many who just got approvals??», illustrative of the frustration and confusion experienced by many migrants. The syntactic hybridity of the sentence – which is made to sound like a statement, an exclamation and a question all at the same time – can be interpreted as evidence of the migrant's turmoil, but also of his deeply emotional response to problems. In the second quotation, by contrast, going through the visa procedure is just one of the many steps ahead, a feasible endeavour which can be greatly facilitated by a legal expert. In line with a typically English «reason-based approach to human life» (Wierzbicka, 2006: 72), problems are confronted and emotions are kept under control<sup>4</sup>.

### 2.3 Requesting help

The language used in the requests for help seems even more indicative of the reason-emotion divide that appears to emerge across the two forums, with the Trackitt participants systematically personalizing their requests for help through repetition, capitalization and a skilful use of punctuation devices:

- Can you help?
- Please help?
- pls help!!
- Plzzz help
- Please please help
- please somone help me
- PLEASE HELP

Direct requests for help in the Trackitt forum are a standard move shared by all the participants regardless of their nationalities; they are generally placed in the closing salutations where they can be seen to perform an appeal function:

«Hi friend plz help me,i already pay\$88 and \$230 aos and ds3032 bill, please tell me what will be mine next step.when I will get next mail from nvc.thanks in advance,plz help me.» (India, Trackitt)

«My question is how long does the processing with the NVC takes, since we worried about airfare will sky rocket soon. We want to buy my ticket now for 1 June 2013, but we are worried to know how long it takes for the NVC to finalize our case to have my visa number and interview, please help us, urgent needing help. Thank you.» (Ghana, Trackitt)

Some messages convey the utter impotence and frustration of the migrants, who seem to rely on helpful others for the solution of their problems:

«Anyone else have had this kind of experience? Any advice to what we should be doing?» (Colombia, Trackitt)

«Thanx ikhan for responding i have checked visa bulletin 2012 it indicates F2A numbers r available for all countries with priority dates earlier than 01 AUG. 2010, while my PD is 24 Feb. 2010 what does it means & what shall i do» (Pakistan, Trackitt)

Orienting oneself through the bureaucratic complications of the visa procedure is obviously not an easy task, as shown by the cryptic acronym-ridden

postings above, hardly comprehensible to anybody unfamiliar with the US National Visa Center (NVC), the visa bulletin and the various forms and fees requested from immigrants. The whole procedure may appear so overwhelming to require some form of guidance and enlightenment on the part of more expert member users:

«I am very worried about the age Issue during my Interview with the Consular. Please Enlighten me Osweiti.» (Nigeria, Trackitt)

«Please guide me as I am thinking to send a reminder as I have been waiting response for the last 2 months.» (Pakistan, Trackitt)

«Hi, Any AMIE graduates got the Eb2 I-140 approval. kindly respond & guide.» (India, Trackitt)

This kind of pleading downplays the requesters' ability to cope with the migration experience and maximizes the unknown recipients' skills and expertise, almost casting them in a saviour role. Interestingly, the pleading script largely enacted in the Trackitt forum appears at odds with the way in which the Britsabroad member users try to sort out their own problems, by requesting information rather than by appealing explicitly for solidarity:

«Wanting to work in America for a few months. Help!  
I leave my job here in England on the 7th August with ambitions to go to America to work for a few months. Just wondering if anyone could help me by telling me whether this is possible and if so, where do I start? What visa will I need etc? Many thanks!» (Britsabroad)

«English Lad living in Perth moving to Toronto <--- Can anyone HELP me Pleaseee :))))  
I'm an English lad who moved to Perth 10 years ago. So far I love it, but It's a little boring and very isolated. I've always loved the Idea of Canada seeing as I like snow boarding, Ice Hockey and Canadian Club Lol. I'm about to finish my degree in Finance (Graduate October), which is number one on the short listed skills needed for Canada right know. I'm just wondering what are my chances of getting a job in either a bank or financial institue?» (Britsabroad)

Although the Britsabroad participants also resort to standard formulas such as «help please!!!», made more pressing by the graphological devices used in the thread titles, the actual requests in the body of the message are indirectly phrased through some mitigating devices such as the use of the 'be wondering' structure and the past tense (cf. Wigglesworth and Yates, 2007).

From the messages quoted above, it is apparent that the Trackitt participants and the Britsabroad participants resort to different strategies of negative politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 70): the former by using a deferential mode which maximizes their recipients' self-image and decisive intervention (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 178-179), and the latter by relying on self-effacement and restraint, which are meant to minimize their addressees' coerced response (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 176). Fully in accordance with the pivotal value of personal autonomy in Anglo culture (Wierzbicka, 2006: 50), pressurizing people, by exerting undue influence or resorting to the «Oriental habit of imploring», appears to be unacceptable (or at least culturally inappropriate) for the British (Wierzbicka, 2006: 52-53).

#### *2.4 Encouraging and complaining*

The participants in both forums express feelings of gratitude for the advice and support received from the other member users; however, while the Trackitt participants extend their gratitude to the forum itself acting as a catalyst for their sense of common belonging, the Britsabroad member users mostly address their words of thanks to single participants and, even when they express their appreciation of the forum community, they sound much less emotional and empathetic:

«I'm so thankful for this forum everyone is so helpful and supportive. I'm glad I'm not alone going thru all this» (Mexico, Trackitt)

«I like talking to people going through the same thing as me. We can all lean on each other for strength and guidance» (Jamaica, Trackitt)

«Hello Everyone, I've been reading all these great posts, so good job to everyone who posts and replies :)» (Britsabroad)

The differences in attitude across the two forums can be ascribed to the different pathos associated with the same communicative goal, i.e. obtaining the information necessary for settling down successfully in a foreign country: as the Trackitt member users seem extremely worried and sceptical of a satisfactory outcome, their common feelings of disorientation and dejection helps them develop a bonding relationship based on in-group solidarity which cuts across the differences in culture, language and ethnicity. By contrast, the British participants, coming from a society where bureaucratic matters are considered much less stringent and worrisome, show a

more relaxed happy-go-lucky attitude. For example, the same unpleasant experience of waiting for the greencard is perceived and commented on very differently by a British member user and by some other nationals:

«Not in any rush to get GC but the wait is rather unpleasant» (UK, Trackitt)

«I will go crazy if I have to wait for 2 months.» (Mexico, Trackitt)

«How long should I wait, had also made erequest [sic] and was told waiting for decision...but for how long... very frustrated.» (Italy, Trackitt)

«How long should I wait? This is simply agonizing!! [...] Oh well what can we do? We are completely at their mercy» (Malaysia, Trackitt)

The former minimizes the feeling of annoyance caused by the long wait in accordance with the Anglo practice of understatement (Wierzbicka, 2006: 25 ff.), while the latter emphasize it and give full vent to the participants' anger and frustration.

The very expressions of encouragement across the two forums seem to point to two opposite semantic scripts, the 'good luck' script in Britsabroad clashing with the 'I Need Divine Intervention' script in Trackitt:

«Leave it to Allah...things will move smooth inshaallah» (Jordan, Trackitt)

«Pray for the best. Leave it in God's hands. I'll be praying for you.» (Jamaica, Trackitt)

«We are trying to be positive, since no answer is better than a negative answer. So we are just praying.» (Colombia, Trackitt)

«I'm just praying to God that everything come out good» (Mexico, Trackitt)

«Be strong Faith Works» (Nigeria, Trackitt)

Religious feeling is not, by any means, removed from the Anglo cultural scripts and cognitive scenarios, but, due to the blend of the Puritan and Enlightenment philosophies, it is inextricably bound for the English with reason and a modern scientific outlook (Wierzbicka, 2006: 96-97). Thus,

the troubles of everyday life are seen to require a rational approach and the problem-solving skills so deeply ingrained in the English mindset<sup>5</sup>. By contrast, other nationalities as represented in the Trackitt corpus appear to rely on religion and divine intervention, especially as the whole immigrant pathway seems out of their own control.

### *3. Conclusions*

The Trackitt forum messages appear to be rather imprecise with frequent misspellings and some convoluted syntactic patterns, which may be accounted for either by the hurry and inaccuracy associated with computer-mediated communication or by the varying degree of proficiency of the ELF users. By contrast, the Britsabroad messages are characterized by a much more accurate use of English, giving the impression that they are perceived to be more akin to personal accounts dignified by some autobiographical aspiration than to the urgent requests for help sent out by the Trackitt participants.

Despite frequent lapses, the Trackitt postings seem to display an idiomatic use of the English language with many typical collocations and phraseological patterns related to feelings and daily routines: 'to be in the same boat'; 'fingers crossed'; 'a hell of a life change'; 'rat race'; 'hard feelings'; 'counting the days'. The wide vocabulary range and even linguistic creativity shown in the Trackitt postings are evidence of how the English language resources are adapted to suit the communicative needs of a multinational online community and their negotiated identities. In particular the Trackitt migrants' tendency to emphasize their feelings and strengthen bonds of mutual solidarity was contrasted with the Anglo dispassionate script and their inclination to adopt a reason-driven approach to problems, as shown by the frequent hedging devices (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 145 ff.; cf. Wierzbicka, 2006: 29). As observed by Kirkpatrick (2007: 36) «far from English being a purveyor of Anglo-cultural norm, the development of new varieties of English shows how English can be adapted by its speakers to reflect their cultural norm.»

While the findings of this study appear to match Wierzbicka's insightful observations on cross-cultural interaction and, particularly, Anglo attitudes and values, it seems fair to outline the limitations of the present research and, in doing so, also indicate further developments. The corpus would need to be extended to other English-medium migrants' forums and investigated also from a quantitative point of view, bearing in mind that, rather than being absolutes, «most cross-cultural differences turn out

to be differences in context and/or frequency of occurrence» (Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986: 9-10). In fact, as people's responses are inevitably correlated to communicative context and social identity dynamics (Hogg and Reid, 2006), it may be worthwhile exploring to what extent the need for group membership may shape the varying emotional response of forum participants: for example, whether, placed in a multicultural and multiethnic forum, the Anglos would show greater emotionality and, on the other side, whether non-Anglo participants, under the influence of a predominantly British forum, may adapt and give evidence of the dispassionate and non-imposing script characteristic of mainstream Anglo culture (Wierzbicka, 2006), as proved by many cross-border life stories where «immigrants choose to 'go native'» (Fox, 2004: 18).

<sup>1</sup> See Wierzbicka (2003 and 2006) for a full account of the Natural Semantic Metalanguage.

<sup>2</sup> Although the Forum does not exactly specify whether the participants come from the European or Asian part of the Russian Federation, the Russians have been considered part of the western territory, as it is by far the more populous one.

<sup>3</sup> The language items evidenced in the analysis have been associated with the countries rather than with the forum usernames for ease of reference.

<sup>4</sup> This unemotional style typically associated with Englishness has been labelled in many different ways: 'British stiff upper lip' (Aitch, 2008: 185), 'default mode of moderation' (Fox, 2004: 403), and 'belief in privacy' (Paxman, 1999: 123).

<sup>5</sup> In her impressive study *English. Meaning and Culture*, Wierzbicka (2006) identifies the shared cultural core of the inner circle of English-speaking countries in light of her own immigrant experience. Although wary of the ideological simplifications underlying 'Anglo English', she argues that «the concept of Anglo culture is potentially particularly useful to millions of immigrants to Anglophone countries like Britain, the United States, and Australia. To deny the validity of this concept means to deny the immigrants culture training, which is essential to their social advancement». (Wierzbicka, 2006: 7).

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Bill Batziakas

*Making Specific Meaning Through Flexible Language  
Use in ELF Conversations*

ABSTRACT:

This paper looks at the naturally occurring discourse of the meetings of an international student society at the University of London, with the aim to discuss instances of flexible language use and their pragmatic significance while they were using English as a common language. In particular, it looks at how the students were using language flexibly, that is, how they were making use of the entire gamut of their available linguistic resources by drawing extensively from them, and how they were thus achieving various communicative objectives. Speakers' flexible language use whereby they draw linguistic elements from various linguistic resources which they have available has come to be known under various terms, such as 'code-switching', 'code-mixing', and so on, and this chapter starts with a discussion of the most widely used of them. It also explains why the term 'flexible language use' was used instead of another one. Then, it moves on to the flexible language use of the students in the investigated meetings. In doing so, what is yielded is that the students were thus achieving the pragmatic function 'making specific meaning', which appears in the title of this paper, and which is broken down into the sub-functions 'filling in a lexical gap' and 'using a more precise word'.

*Introduction*

Previous research (e.g. Gumperz, 1982; Baynham, 1993; Li and Zhu, 2010) has shown that speakers may make use of a wide range of linguistic elements which they draw from their available languages or language varieties or dialects. One of the first terms which was used to describe this phenomenon is *code-switching*. *Code-switching* occurs in a conversation which primarily takes place in a single one language or language variety or dialect, but at times speakers depart from these and use other ones (e.g. Auer, 1995, 2002). For example, in a conversation taking place in English, speakers may depart from English, draw some words or phrases

or expressions from their mother tongues, and then use them back in the conversation which they were holding in English. While the term *code-switching* refers to speakers' sparse shift from one 'dominant' linguistic code to another one, and then again back to the 'dominant' one, as it was mentioned above, there are various interrelated terms. For example, the term *code-mixing* suggests speakers' drawing from their linguistic resources in such an extensive way that a new hybrid linguistic code is brought about. In other words, code-mixing is similar to the creation of pidgins, with the difference that pidgins are created by speakers who do not share a common language, whereas code-mixing may occur in settings where speakers may share one or more languages (*ibid.*). In a similar vein, the term *code-fusion* has to do with such a systematic and extensive mixture of two or more linguistic codes in the course of a single conversation that the fused lect which is formed is almost fully grammaticalised (*ibid.*).

The above terms are mainly used to show alterations between linguistic items at the lexical level and usually only in oral interactions. On the contrary, Canagarajah (2011), focusing on English, uses the term *code meshing* to refer to the practice of combining local, colloquial, vernacular, and international varieties of English, in everyday conversations and even in formal assignments of students, as through this practice some kind of linguistic resistance against the spread of English can be signalled, as he argues. In addition, the term *crossing* is used to describe speakers' use of linguistic items which are used by other group of speakers in order to signal some kind of affiliation with this other group of speakers (Rampton, 1995). For example, white teenagers in urban settings may use African-American English speech markers in order to show some kind of affiliation with the hip-hop culture which is associated with African-American groups. Another related term, which mainly focuses on school settings, is *translanguaging* (e.g. Creese and Blackledge, 2010; Lin, 2006). Looking at countries with significant amounts of bilingual populations and considering the rising number of bilingual school students, *translanguaging* has been put forward to describe these bilingual pupils' practice of using different linguistic features from their known languages in order to maximise their communicative potential. Proponents of *translanguaging* lament language education which aims at the development of languages as compartmentalised linguistic systems, and argue for the legitimisation of pupils' practice to access different linguistic features from their available repertoires.

Similarly, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)* argues in favour of the term *plurilingualism* (e.g. Council of Europe, 2000). *Plurilingualism* aims at moving beyond multilingualism

as the presence of many languages in a society, as in the case of French, Dutch and German in Belgium, and it emphasises the fact that people develop knowledge and skills in more than one language at the same time. For example, their linguistic repertoire may expand from the language or languages of their home to the languages of their school or social environment, and then to the languages of other people with whom they communicate. In doing so, speakers cannot keep languages in separate mental compartments. Instead, they build up a communicative competence in which all language knowledge and experience interrelate, interact, and contribute (*ibid.*). For example, speakers may alter from one language or language variety or dialect to another and draw lexis and other elements in order to communicate effectively with their interlocutors. In turn, their interlocutors may recognise these 'foreign' lexis and elements thanks to the word roots which are common with the languages that they know.

In the linguistic practices which the above terms refer to, there is a common denominator. All of them show that, when speakers from different linguacultural backgrounds interact, they may depart from English and they may draw linguistic items from their mother tongues or from the other languages or language varieties or dialects which they have learned later in their lives or which they know that they are used by their interlocutors. This takes place even if they have limited knowledge and experience of them. Subsequently, they may use these items in their English conversations. In other words, the terms above refer to practices which show that linguistic codes are not decompartmentalised from one another, but instead language users can make use of more than one of them in the course of a single interaction. What this means is that language use is quintessentially flexible in nature. It is for these reasons that, for the purposes of a term to be used in the rest of this chapter, *flexible language use* will be adopted here. It should also be noted that *flexible language use* does not have to do with school settings only, and in that sense it is not the same as *translanguaging*, although they share a lot in common, as shown above.

As outlined above, *flexible language use* and the way it sees the speakers' practice of drawing linguistic elements from all their linguistic repertoires differs fundamentally from the way which many EFL researchers see the same practice. In EFL research, this is lamented as evidence of speakers' gaps of linguistic knowledge, because of which they have to resort to another linguistic code, most commonly their mother tongue, in order to make up for their linguistic 'deficiency' (see e.g. MacSwan, 1999). Instead, the perspective on *flexible language use* taken here is more in line with ELF

research. For example, as Jenkins (2011) explains, speakers of English who switch between the languages that they know are not failed native English speakers and they do not do have any linguistic 'deficiency' for which they have to compensate. Instead, they are skilled communicators who make full use of all their available linguistic resources in order to enhance their communicative potential and to achieve their communicative objectives. In doing so, their *flexible language use* and therein the strategic use of all their linguistic resources is a manifestation of their communicative competence.

Thus understood, *flexible language use* in interactions between speakers from different linguacultural backgrounds has been found to contribute to a variety of pragmatic functions which speakers set out to fulfil in their communicative encounters. For example, it has been found to help speakers address particular interlocutors. This was noted when interlocutors were departing from the language which was being used until a particular point, and they used the language of the particular interlocutor whom they wanted to address (Klimpfinger, 2007). Also, through lexis drawn from their mother tongues, speakers have found to project their linguacultural identities, for example, by using this lexis to highlight their association with a particular mother tongue and thus with a particular ethnic group too (Pözl, 2003). In addition, this innovative use of language have included speakers' strategic moves to exploit redundancy and to enhance prominence in their utterances (Cogo, 2007, 2012; Cogo and Dewey, 2006, 2012; Dewey, 2007, 2011), to increase clarity (e.g. Pitzl *et al.*, 2008; Ranta, 2006), or to increase the semantic transparency of their arguments (Seidlhofer, 2009). On the interpersonal level of interactions, through flexible language use, speakers have been found to establish rapport with their interlocutors too (Kordon, 2006), or express solidarity with them especially in cases when they use a lexical item which they draw from their interlocutors' languages (Cogo, 2007). Likewise, this way, speakers have created a feeling of shared satisfaction with their interlocutors (Hülmbauer, 2007, 2009), or just added humour to their conversations (Pitzl, 2009).

This paper aims at building on the research of *flexible language use*, as this was outlined and discussed above, and in particular on the pragmatic functions which have been found to be achieved in ELF-mediated interactions, which were also discussed above. Thus, what follows is some brief clarifications about the data examples of this chapter. These are followed by the data analysis from the meetings of the international students. As it is shown, the students' *flexible language use* was found to contribute to the achievement of the pragmatic functions 'filling in a lexical gap' and

‘using a more precise word’. To further support my arguments in this data analysis, I also report some comments which the students made during our post-event discussions which we did and during which they looked at their own interactions.

The instances of flexible language use which are looked at here include alterations between the linguistic resources which the students had available, such as Standard English, other English varieties and dialects, their mother tongues, other languages which they knew well, or even elements from the languages of their interlocutors. Also, these examples are not grouped according to the grammatical category to which the drawn word or phrase or expression belong, for example, according to whether these are nouns or verbs. Instead, as the aim is to discern the pragmatic functions which are achieved each time through students’ flexible language use, these discerned pragmatic functions are first named and then illustrated through the extracts which are analysed. It should be also noted that the meaning of the words and phrases or expressions below and also the additional information about them were provided to me by the students themselves in our post-event discussions, or by other friends or colleagues of mine who were speakers of these languages. Or sometimes I myself was finding out more about them searching online. In each case, I specify the source of my information. This layout will be followed in the subsequent analytical chapters as well.

### *1. Filling in a lexical gap*

As it was mentioned above, the overarching pragmatic function which was achieved through students’ *flexible language use* was ‘making specific meaning’. In particular, this pragmatic function was found to be further broken down into two sub-functions, ‘filling in a lexical gap’ and ‘using a more precise word’. Both of them are illustrated below through the analysis of one extract each.

#### *1.1 Diaosi*

(Mandarin Chinese hanzi: ‘吊丝’; English approximate translation: ‘average person’, ‘commoner’ / Participants: Arvin<sup>1</sup> - L1 Mauritian Creole, Breno - L1 Portuguese, Eshal - L1 Urdu, Jose - L1 Spanish, Linlin - L1 Mandarin Chinese.)

The following interaction of the students took place in the second meeting of their society, during a discussion about who would represent their society to each college. Linlin, sharing her opinion about the characteristics of the ideal officer for her college, draws from her mother tongue, Mandarin Chinese, and she emphasises the fact that that she would not like her college's officer to be a *diaosi*. As she explained in our post-event discussion, and as I also confirmed with the help of other speakers of Mandarin Chinese, *diaosi* is a person who is average in social skills and who cannot be expected to do anything worthwhile in his life. It is nowadays also used extensively on online forums and social media among youngsters in Mainland China.

- 1 Linlin and you know why? (.)  
2 because sometimes in all these induction days and freshers fayres  
3 i see people who approach you and talk to you  
4 and they're they're bad with what they're doing=  
5 Eshal =yeah you're right=  
6 Linlin =so i wouldn't like someone who can't  
7 you know  
8 who can't do this or do that  
9 (1.2)  
10 Arvin [yeah]  
11 Marat [true]=  
12 Linlin =so I wouldn't like someone who is who is (.)  
13 ah in china we say ah @@ **diaosi**  
14 (.)  
15 Breno hm?  
16 Jose what?  
17 Linlin oh i mean you know **diaosi** (1.4)  
18 ah ah in english i think perhaps  
19 if there is this word=  
20 Arvin =so what's this word? what do you mean?  
21 Linlin **diaosi** (.) someone who is average and normal (1.3)

- 22                    who can't do anything can't manage anything (.)
- 23                    like good for nothing (.)
- 24    Arvin         is he someone loser then?=  
 25    Linlin        =a loser? **diaosi** is not a loser it's not a loser definitely not  
 26    Jose           is he in spanish we say @@ perdedor?  
 27                    like someone who can't manage things and people  
 28                    (.)
- 29    Linlin        i don't know this word this language i mean  
 30                    but nuh it's not what you said (0.2)  
 31                    you know it's just diaosi  
 32                    **diaosi** and nothing else  
 33                    (0.3)
- 34    Arvin         ok↑ i get you↑  
 35                    no **diaosi** will be selected  
 36                    and do we all agree no **diaosi** will ever represent the society?=  
 37    Breno         =[ok]  
 38    Jose           [yes]=  
 39    Linlin         =thanks↑  
 40                    yeah it's better this way no=  
 41    Arvin         =no diaoshi  
 42    Linlin         thanks↑

After the exchange of some general thoughts on student societies in general, Linlin (line 13) begins her turn with the interjection «ah», the adverbial «in china», the verb phrase «we say», followed by «ah» again, and a double laughter, which may suggest that what she is about to say is probably not going to be immediately understood by her interlocutors, and therefore they should pay more attention to it. She then uses *diaosi*, and an a-priori clarification of its meaning begins. It is important to note here that, when Breno (line 15) and Jose (line 16) ask Linlin to explain *diaosi*, Linlin's reply (line 17) starts with the interjection «oh», which is followed by the discourse markers «I mean» and «you know, which in turn are followed by a pause of 1.4 seconds, the longest one in this extract». In addition, Linlin (line

18) continues with the filler «ah» uttered twice, followed by the hedges «i think» and «perhaps», which could also be argued to suggest some uncertainty. However, it seems that Linlin does not use *diaosi* because she does not know or she cannot recall the equivalent Standard English term. That is why she wonders «if there is this word [in Standard English]» (line 19). In that sense, it can be argued that she does not exhibit any kind of linguistic deficiency. In the same vein, she rejects Arvin's attempt to translate *diaosi* as «loser» in English (line 24), and likewise she does not seem satisfied with Jose's attempt to translate *diaosi* in his mother tongue Spanish as «perdedor» (lines 26-27), which also means «loser». For Linlin, these seem to be enough to make her discontinue her attempts to try to translate *diaosi* any further, and to conclude by emphasising that all that she wanted to say is just «*diaosi*» (line 31) and «*diaosi* and nothing else» (line 32). This provides further support to the argument above that Linlin's reason of drawing *diaosi* from her mother tongue was not any lack of knowledge in English.

After Linlin's last pause of 0.3 seconds (line 33), Arvin takes the floor to speak for the first time in this extract. His views hold special weight, not only because he has not spoken until this moment, but also because he is the president of the society. The fact that he chooses to engage with *diaosi* is in itself important, in as far as it shows the importance which he places on this word that he has not heard before. Despite this new experience, his «ok» and «i get you» both in an enthusiastic rising tone (line 34) indicate that he is satisfied with the meaning of *diaosi*, as it has been discussed by Linlin and the rest of the students so far, and that he does not need any other explanation or clarification. He even accommodates to Linlin and uses *diaosi* twice himself too, when he ends the conversation by promising that «no *diaosi* will be selected» (line 35), and when with his rhetorical question he invites everyone to agree that «no *diaosi* will ever represent the society» (line 36). Likewise, Breno with his «ok» (line 37) and Jose with his «yes» (line 38) also indicate their agreement with Arvin and by extension with the meaning and use of *diaosi* in their conversation. Breno and Jose's «ok» and «yes» do not only show their agreement with Arvin's point, but their acceptance of her *diaosi* too, as it was mentioned above, and this is something which Linlin seems to realise. Thus, her thanks in a rising terminal intonation (line 39 and 42) could be interpreted as a signal of her need to thank them as well. As the analysis of this extract shows, Linlin drew *diaosi* from her mother tongue and used it in her English conversation with her interlocutors, not motivated by any linguistic deficiency but because this is the very word which she believed that would be able to express what she wanted to say. In this way, she managed to express her

thought the way that she wanted, which she could not have done using Standard English only. That is why it is argued here that, in so doing, she achieved to fulfil the pragmatic function ‘making specific meaning’ and the sub-function ‘filling in a lexical gap’.

Further to my arguments regarding the pragmatic significance of the students’ *flexible language* use in this extract, as achieving their communicative needs by means of ‘making specific meaning’ and in particular in ‘filling in a lexical gap’, it is interesting to see what Linlin had to say for that matter. The extract below is taken from the follow-up discussion which I had with her and in which she saw the transcriptions of the respective linguistic interactions and she also heard the audio-files, and she provided her comments.

«Sometimes in English you just know a word or an expression and you say it. But sometimes you don’t know or you don’t remember. And then what do you do? I mean you can do a lot of things, explain it with other words, find something similar and many more [...]. But sometimes I have a thought in my mind and I have a word for this thought from my mother language. And I want to express this and only this thought, but in English there is not any word for this thought [...]. If I say another word, ok, fine, but then I don’t express my thought [...]. So, yeah, *diaosi*, because it was just this and nothing else, and even the closest English words were very different from what I wanted to say [...]. I didn’t expect that the other person knew Chinese, but I was sure that we could communicate, he would ask me and I would tell him. This is better than not expressing exactly your thought or not speaking at all.»

In her comments, Linlin seems to be very conscious of her linguistic choices and what she achieved through them. In particular, with her comments about *diaosi* such as «because it was just this and nothing else, and even the closest English words were very different from what I wanted to say», it could be said that she seems to corroborate my analysis of this instance of *flexible language use* of hers as achieving the pragmatic function of ‘making specific meaning’ through ‘filling in a lexical gap’.

## 2. Using a more precise word

As discussed above, the overarching pragmatic function ‘making specific meaning’ was found to be further broken down to two sub-functions, ‘filling in a lexical gap’ and ‘using a more precise word’. The former was

illustrated in the previous section, and an example for that matter were provided. This section is about the latter one. Their difference is slight but an important one. In the case of ‘filling in a lexical gap’, the students were found to draw lexis whose meaning could not be made at all using lexis only from Standard English. On the other hand, ‘using a more accurate word’ suggests that the meaning which was made could have been made or at least could have been almost made using lexis from Standard English too. However, drawing lexis from their available linguistic repertoires, the meaning which was made was more accurate and exact.

### 2.1 *Kefi*<sup>2</sup>

(Greek: ‘Κέφι’; English approximate meaning: ‘high spirits’, ‘good mood’, ‘joy’ / Participants: Arvin - L1 Mauritian Creole, Jose - L1 Spanish, Leonidas - L1 Greek, Sener - L1 Turkish.)

The extract below is taken from the third meeting of the society. The students just acknowledged the difficulty of organising events which will be so attractive that their members will be willing not only to attend them but also to pay for them. Leonidas, then, shares his view that in order for this to happen the members of their society should know that in these events they will have an exceptionally good time. To describe exactly what he means, he uses *kefi*, drawn for his Greek mother tongue.

- 1 Leonidas i mean, we can persuade them to pay in our events (.)  
2 you know, everyone should be entertained and enjoyed, right?=  
3 Sener =[right]  
4 Arvin [yes]  
5 Leonidas and not only everyone else  
6 but even ourselves should be ok too, obviously=  
7 Jose =obviously, yeah  
8 Leonidas and in my mind the only way to achieve this  
9 is when whatever we say or do or organise  
10 is done in a way that can make everyone have (2.6)  
11 eer (2.4)

- 12 i'll tell which word we have in greece used exactly for this case (3.8)  
 13 which could be a key-word for everyone in our events (3.4)  
 14 **kefi** is the word (.)  
 15 in english it is eer (2.2)  
 16 [takes out his smartphone and tries to look that word up\*]  
 17 Arvin ok↑ (.)  
 18 but seriously it's fine you don't have to do that=  
 19 Leonidas =eeeh give me one second please because  
 20 because this greek word in english (.) it means (1.6)  
 21 found it (.)  
 22 it says it's like high spirits or good mood or joy in english [\*](1.3)  
 23 yeah these english words aren't bad to describe the events  
 24 but they they go round and round in what is needed here  
 25 but seriously man  
 26 that greek word is exactly what is needed in these events  
 27 not round and round but accurate and exact=  
 28 Jose =[@@@]  
 29 Sener [@@@]@  
 30 Arvin [i see→] (2.0)  
 31 and is **kefi** a noun or a verb or something else  
 32 like you're saying i'm **kefying** (.) or i'm **kefiful** (.) or i **kefi** something?  
 33 like I'm having a good time (.) or i'm delightful (.) or i like something?  
 34 Leonidas @@@@ no no no my fault i didn't explain everything (.)  
 35 it's like i do something with **kefi** (.) or i have **kefi** (.) or i am in **kefi**  
 36 Jose like i'm in love perhaps?  
 37 Leonidas @@@ yeah @@ well  
 38 **kefi** (.) the most appropriate for our events  
 39 Sener it sounds good to me, i mean=  
 40 Jose =you mean it sounds good the word or the idea?  
 41 Sener both, i mean

- 42                    this is exactly what we need for the events  
43                    and the word is (.) specific and definite=  
44 Jose              =and i can say **kefi** with **kefi** (.)  
45                    and also i want our society to organise events with **kefi** too=  
46 Leonidas        =@@@ thank you really very much, guys

Leonidas' tag tail question whether in these events «everyone should be entertained and enjoyed, right?» (line 2) is latched by Sener's «right» (line 3) and Arvin's overlapping «yes» (line 4), who thus show their agreement and their overall interest in the conversation. Likewise, Leonidas' sentence-final evidential «obviously» regarding his opinion that they should also enjoy these events themselves (line 6) is also latched by Jose's agreeing «obviously» and «yeah» (line 7). Leonidas then starts discussing what he believes their society members need in order to pay for their events. However, he seems quite unsure about how to best verbalise his thought. Thus, he pauses for 2.6 seconds (line 10), he utters «eær» which also shows some hesitation, he pauses again for 2.4 seconds (line 11), he explains to everyone that he will let them know about a word which is «used exactly for this case» in Greece, as if he wants to gain some more time, and then there is one more pause of 3.8 seconds (line 12). After that, he highlights the importance of this up-coming word by characterising it a «key-word for everyone in these events in greece» (line 13), and finally he lets them know that this word is «*kefi*» (line 14).

Knowing that *kefi* is a word unknown to his interlocutors, Leonidas continues with trying to explain its meaning. But his hesitation seems to continue here too while he tries to render it in English, hence his hesitant «eær» and his pause of 2.2 seconds (line 15), and likewise his need to take out his smartphone to look that word up (line 16), something which I had noted down immediately in my notes while I was attending this meeting. Arvin's subsequent «ok» could be taken as some kind of welcoming of Leonidas' decision to use his smartphone in order to be more precise (line 17), but immediately afterwards he seems to change his mind as signalled from the continuation of his sentence with his «but seriously it's fine you don't have to do that» (line 18). Still, Leonidas asks Arvin's permission to give him some more time to complete his search (lines 19-21), and finally he informs everyone that his dictionary renders *kefi* in English as «high spirits or good mood or joy» (line 22). However, he explains that, although «these English words aren't bad to describe the events» (line 23),

«they go round and round in what is needed here» (line 24), «whereas that greek word is exactly what is needed in these events» (line 26), in so far as it is «not round and round but accurate and exact» (line 27).

*Kefi* also seems to be welcomed in the conversation by the other interlocutors. First, Arvin seems to be interested in knowing more about it, in addition to the fact that Leonidas so far has provided its meaning and highlighted or at least tried to highlight its importance for their events. So, Arvin enquires the grammatical category of *kefi*, and in particular he asks whether it is a *noun* or a *verb* (line 31), and then he accommodates to it and uses it himself very creatively asking whether one can say «i'm *kefying* or i'm *kefiful* or i *kefi* something» (line 32), in the same way that one says «i'm having a good time or i'm delightful or i like something» (line 33). Leonidas laughs for a while in the beginning at hearing these usages of *kefi*, but acknowledges that this was due to the fact that he did not explain it adequately (line 34). Thus, as he now explains, its actual use is in sentences such as «i do something with *kefi* or i have *kefi* or i am in *kefi*» (line 35). Later on, *kefi* seems to be endorsed even more explicitly by the rest of the interlocutors too. Sener mentions that «it sounds good» to him (line 39), he continues with saying that «this is exactly what we need for the events» (line 42), and after him Jose also latches to add that he «can say *kefi* with *kefi*» (line 44), as well as that he wants their society «to organise events with *kefi*» (line 45). Leonidas seems happy with the positive reception of the word which he drew from the mother tongue and he used in this conversation in English, and thanks his interlocutors profoundly with his «thank you really very much» (line 46).

The above analysis revealed one more example of how specific meaning was made thought drawing lexis from one's linguistic resources, in this case, Leonidas' *kefi* from his mother tongue Greek. However, this was not a case of 'filling in a lexical gap' but of 'using a more precise word'. As it was explained in the beginning of this section, in the case of 'filling in a lexical gap', the meaning made could not have been made at all using lexis only from Standard English. On the other hand, 'using a more accurate word' suggests that the meaning made could have been made up to a point using lexis from Standard English too, but this way the meaning made was much more precise. I would argue here that the Standard English lexis 'high spirits', 'good mood' and 'joy' would be sufficient for Leonidas to express what he wanted, but by drawing *kefi* from his mother tongue he managed to express his thought much more precisely.

### 3. Discussion

As it was shown, students were drawing lexical items from their mother tongues. Drawing linguistic elements from all the available linguacultural backgrounds is not part of all the terms which were discussed in the introductory section of this chapter. Most notably, code-switching traditionally accounted only for alteration of linguistic material between one's mother tongue and the language in which the conversation was taking place before. In a similar vein, traditionally, this alteration would be seen as motivated by some kind of linguistic deficiency, whereby the speakers had to resort to their mother tongues in order to compensate for this lack of knowledge. However, this was not found to be the case in the analysis of the extracts in this chapter. The cases here suggested that the students were not motivated by any sort of linguistic deficiency, since every time it was found out that they knew the equivalent lexis from Standard English. Instead, as it was argued here, they were strategically opting for these linguistic choices, and they were thus expanding the scope of their communicative competence (see e.g. Leung, 2005, 2014). In particular, in doing so, they were achieving the overall pragmatic function of 'making specific meaning through flexible language use in ELF conversations', and the sub-functions 'filling in a lexical gap' and 'using a more precise word'. This expands our understanding of the pragmatic significance of flexible language use in ELF-mediated conversations, as well as it expands the list of the meaning-making pragmatic functions which have been discerned so far in ELF interactions, as it was discussed in the introductory part of this chapter.

### 4. Conclusion

This paper set out to look at the natural occurring discourse of the meetings of the international students with the aim to shed some light at their *flexible language use*. In particular, it aimed at discerning the pragmatic functions achieved when students' used language flexibly, that is, when they were using linguistic items drawn from all the linguistic resources which they had available. As it was discussed, in doing so, the students were not motivated by any linguistic 'deficiency', but instead they were found to be achieving the pragmatic function 'making specific meaning', which in turn was divided into two sub-functions, 'filling in a lexical gap' and 'using a more precise word'. 'Filling in a lexical gap' was found

to be represented by Linlin's *diaosi*, and on the other hand Leonidas' *kefi* was found to be a case of 'using a more precise word'.

<sup>1</sup> All the names of the participants are pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

<sup>2</sup> *Kefi* is provided here Romanised to facilitate its reading, although the Romanisation of Greek words is not something standardised, as it is for example the case with the Mandarin Chinese words and pinyin (see 1.1).

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Berat Başer

*Negotiating Interpersonal Relationships in English  
as a Lingua Franca (ELF) Interactions*

ABSTRACT:

In the discourse of English as a lingua franca (ELF), interactants will tend to bring with them the linguistic and cultural conventions they associate with communication in their own communities. These conventions are likely to differ in certain respects. When different sets of usage conventions come into contact and into conflict with each other, problems arise. The question then arises of how people position themselves and negotiate interpersonal relationships in ELF interactions when they do not share common linguacultural assumptions and practices. This paper reports on the first stage of an exploration of this issue. It considers how far the various perspectives on pragmatic interaction that are offered by three different approaches [namely the Co-operative Principle (Grice, 1975 [1989]), the Politeness Theory (Brown and Levinson, 1978 [1987]) and the Accommodation Theory (Giles and Coupland, 1991)] might provide an appropriate framework for the description of positioning in ELF interactions, by relating the concepts and findings of this literature to a sample of ELF data from the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE).

*Introduction*

This study considers how far the various perspectives on pragmatic interaction that are offered by three different approaches, namely the Co-operative Principle (Grice, 1975 [1989]), the Politeness Theory (Brown and Levinson, 1978 [1987]) and the Accommodation Theory (Giles and Coupland, 1991)] might provide an appropriate framework for the description of positioning in English as a lingua franca (ELF) interactions, by relating the concepts and findings of this literature to samples of ELF data from the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE).

In the discourse of ELF, interactants will tend to bring with them the linguistic and cultural conventions they associate with communication in their own communities. These conventions are likely to differ in certain

respects. When different sets of usage conventions come into contact and into conflict with each other, problems arise. The question then is: how do people position themselves and negotiate interpersonal relationships in ELF interactions when they do not share common linguacultural assumptions and practices?

ELF is a naturally occurring language, and users of ELF are interacting as all people do, in general. How, then, can we look at the data, and in some sense, assign and/or relate certain goings on in these data to implicature, face saving and accommodation in order to create an effect? How far can these theoretical concepts that are common in the general literature be used to explain what is going on in ELF interactions?

### *1. Remarks on positioning in general literature*

Many ideas have been put forward on how the people who share the same lingua-culture manage their interactions, from the Co-operative Principle to the Accommodation Theory. In this Section, some of the concepts in the Co-operative Principle (Grice, 1975 [1989]), the Politeness Theory (Brown and Levinson, 1978 [1987]) and the Accommodation Theory (Giles and Coupland, 1991) will be reviewed. Then an example from the ELF data will be examined from the perspective of these approaches in Section 3.

The current Section does not aim to give a detailed account of the three approaches, rather it elaborates on only some of the concepts that could provide insights into understanding certain occurrences in the ELF data that will be looked at more closely in Section 3.

#### *1.1 Co-operative Principle*

As Widdowson (2012: 12) discusses, interpersonal positioning occurs in all discourse with each participant trying to have an effect on the other. Some positional convergence has to take place in order to maintain any communication. Communication depends on co-operation. This is what urges Grice to formulate the Co-operative Principle, «a rough general principle which participants will be expected (*ceteris paribus*) to observe» (Grice, 1975 [1989]: 26). The Co-operative Principle has four maxims, namely Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner (Grice, 1975 [1989]: 28).

One of the ways a participant in a conversation may fail to fulfill a maxim is when a participant blatantly fails to actualize the requirements of

a maxim; in other words, he flouts a maxim. This situation characteristically leads to a conversational implicature (Grice, 1975 [1989]: 30). Irony is one of the conversational implicatures. The following is an example of irony:

«(...) X, with whom A has been on close terms until now, has betrayed a secret of A's to a business rival. A and his audience both know this. A says X is a *fine friend*. (Gloss: It is perfectly obvious to A and his audience that what A has said or has made as if to say is something he does not believe, and the audience knows that A knows that this is obvious to the audience. So, unless A's utterance is entirely pointless, A must be trying to get across some other proposition than the one he purports to be putting forward. This must be some obviously related proposition; the most obviously related proposition is the contradictory of the one he purports to be putting forward)». (Grice, 1975 [1989]: 34)

### 1.2 Politeness Theory

Whether the speaker ensures no offense by respecting the hearer's self esteem, or seeks to undermine the hearer's self-esteem, the speaker does so in order to promote the speaker's territorial intentions or make the hearer susceptible to co-operation (Widdowson, 2012: 15). «Politeness, positive or negative, is a positioning tactic, a means to an end. To put the point epigrammatically: people save face to make space» (Widdowson, 2012: 15).

«Utterances which have the effect of intruding into the addressee's life space, the psychic territory he claims as his own and in which he finds his individual security, are 'face-threatening acts', and it is generally in the interests of both interlocutors that they should be mitigated in some way». (Widdowson, 1983: 78)

One of the possible strategies which Brown and Levinson propose for doing face-threatening acts is positive politeness. Positive politeness is oriented toward the hearer's positive face and positive self- image that the hearer wants for himself. Positive politeness shows that the speaker considers the hearer to be the same as the speaker, as someone who belongs to the same group (Brown and Levinson, 1978 [1987]: 70).

A positive politeness strategy is using in-group identity markers. By using that strategy, the speaker «can implicitly claim the common ground with the hearer [sic] that is carried by that definition of the group» (Brown and Levinson, 1978 [1987]: 107). 'Use in-group identity markers' includes 'in-group usages of language or dialect'.

«Use of in-group language or dialect: The phenomenon of *code-switching* involves any switch from one language or dialect to another in communities where the linguistic repertoire includes two or more such codes. In some cases, situations of *diglossia* (Ferguson 1964), the switch is between two varieties or dialects of a language, one of which is considered 'high' and prestigious, the other 'low' and domestic». (Brown and Levinson, 1978 [1987]: 110)

Another positive politeness strategy is 'conveying X is admirable, interesting'. This strategy includes noticing the hearer's interests, wants, needs and goods (Brown and Levinson, 1978 [1987]: 102). Yet, another positive politeness strategy is claiming common ground with the hearer. This strategy includes the use of 'you know'. Its usage claims the hearer's knowledge of that kind of situation in general (Brown and Levinson, 1978 [1987]: 120).

### *1.3 Accommodation Theory*

One interesting common area of interest in the Accommodation Theory is Brown and Levinson's (1987) specification of «positive politeness» strategies, construed as diverse moves to claim common ground with an interlocutor, and portraying interactants as cooperators generally fulfilling interlocutors' wants. Although these authors discuss such strategies exclusively in terms of moves made to redress face threats, their strategic currency is presumably broader, fulfilling face promotion and maintenance goals (Penman, 1990). They would appear to fall well in the context of traditionally invoked accommodative motives to gain approval and increase communication efficiency (Giles, Coupland and Coupland, 1991: 51).

The basic concepts of the Accommodation Theory are 'convergence' and 'divergence'. Convergence is described

«as a strategy whereby individuals adapt to each other's communicative behaviours in terms of a wide range of linguistic/ prosodic/ non-vocal features including speech rate, pausal phenomena and utterance length, phonological variants, smiling, gaze and so on». (Giles and Coupland, 1991: 63)

Divergence is the term used «to refer to the way in which speakers accentuate speech and non-verbal differences between themselves and others» (Giles and Coupland, 1991: 65).

Both convergence and divergence could be either 'upward' or 'downward'. Upward refers to a shift towards a prestigious variety; e.g. accent,

while downward suggests a shift away from it. An example of upward convergence could be adopting the high-prestige dialect of an interviewer, and that of downward convergence could be shifting to street language in certain minority communities (Giles and Coupland, 1991: 67).

«Relatedly, divergence of a sort may occur not only by simple dissociation away from the interlocutor towards an opposing reference group, but by sociolinguistically expressing greater identification with that other's reference group than the other is able to display. For example, when talking to an old school friend who is using a lower-prestige code than you and perhaps disdainful of your 'superior' manner, you might adopt an even more basilectal code to show your greater identification with local values. These strategies can be termed upward and downward cross-over divergence respectively, though they are, of course, achieved by initial (and often substantial) convergence». (Giles and Coupland, 1991: 68-69)

## *2. ELF data*

A sample of spoken ELF data (ID number EDcon496) was taken from VOICE. Its written text and 32-minute audio recording is available in VOICE. A part of this ELF data is closely looked at in Section 3.4., and the written text of the part under discussion is shown in Section 3.3.

### *2.1 Description of the ELF data*

This is a conversation that takes place in a student booth at a university library in Holland. Speaker 1 (S1), S2 and S3 get together to prepare a Power Point presentation for a class the next day <<http://voice.univie.ac.at>>.

### *2.2 Speaker information*

The information related to the speaker's ID number in the conversation, age, first-language (L1), role in the conversation, occupation is illustrated in [Table 1](#).

Table 1 – Speaker information <<http://voice.univie.ac.at>>

ID	Sex	Age	L1	Role	Occupation
S1	male	25-34	spa-VE	participant	business student
S2	female	25-34	eng-GY, dut-NL	participant	business student
S3	male	25-34	ind-ID	participant	business student
S4	female	25-34	ger-AT	researcher	linguistic researcher
S5	female	17-24	ita-IT	non-participant	business student

2.3 ELF data script (EDcon496, <<http://voice.univie.ac.at>>)

585	S1:	= <soft> paper cut </soft> (.)
586	S2:	@ (.)
587	S3:	<soft><reading> [first name2] [last name2] (.) <un> xx </un> oxford <4><un> xxx </un></4></reading></soft>{S3 continues to read to himself}
588	S2:	<4> you want </4> my cut? (1) your paper cutter is better than mine you know (3) i could bring a plate and chop your finger
589	S1:	oh you're so: sweet you know
590	S2:	@@@
591	S1:	<imitating> bring a plate and chop me finger you (.) you PUSsy hole huh? (.) you PUSsy HOLE you (rasta) <un> x </un></imitating>
592	S2:	@ @ (.) {S2 hits table} @@
593	S1:	i used to live with a jamaican in the states.
594	S2:	hh bo:y yeah <5> but they </5> speak erm (.)
595	S1:	<5> you you </5>
596	S2:	you have like <pvc> baji </pvc> <pvc> baji </pvc> english that's ba<6>jan </6> for the CLAasy caribbean <7> bajan </7> the bahamas and (.)
597	S1:	<6> yeah </6>
598	S1:	<7> okay </7>
599	S2:	then you have erm (.) the french accent for saint saint lucia saint <1> kits </1> and so
600	S1:	<1> yeah </1>
601	S1:	yeah
602	S2:	cos they live (.) close to martinique <2> and </2> guadeloupe
603	S1:	<2> yeah </2>
604	S1:	yeah? (.)
605	S2:	and then you have like the raw english from jamaica?
606	S3:	@@ =
607	S1:	= now that's what he spoke <imitating> man (you) PUSsy hole man you've </imitating> (.)
608	S3:	<soft> @ </soft>
609	S2:	they can't say <spel> h </spel><3> and they can't say </3> erm (.)

610	S1:	<3><fast> you call me (a) </fast></3></imitating>
611	S1:	<imitating><fast> you call me you call me you call me (a) </fast></imitating> (1)
612	S2:	and then you have like trinidad and (.) and guyana (1) they have like indian accents?
613	S1:	and you're from? (.)
614	S2:	guyana and barbados and born in suriname sweetie
615	S1:	oh you're born in su- so see that's why i'm so confused about you.
616	S3:	@@ (.)
617	S2:	yes everybody is. (1)
618	S1:	so but where (.) <8> where does </8> your family live right now (.)
619	S3:	<8><yawns></8>
620	S2:	in suriname and guyana? (.)
621	S1:	where does your mom live (.)
622	S2:	in suriname and guyana? (1)
623	S1:	she lives what on the border of both? (.)
624	S2:	no: cos we <4> have a house in each <@> country?</@></4>

## 2.4 Findings

It is possible to analyze the ELF data, the script of which is shown in Section 3.3. from the point of view of the concepts discussed in the Co-operative Principle, the Politeness Theory and the Accommodation Theory.

Brown and Levinson would say that S1 is being polite by saying «oh you're so: sweet» (EDcon496: 589) since S1 conveys S2 is admirable and by adding «you know» (EDcon496: 589) as this creates a common ground between the speaker and the hearer. Both of them are positive politeness strategies according to Brown and Levinson (1978 [1987]: 102 and 1978 [1987]: 120 respectively). In addition, S1 uses another positive politeness strategy which is *in-group usages of language or dialect*. In this strategy, there is a code-switching «between two varieties or dialects of a language, one of which is considered 'high' and prestigious, the other 'low' and domestic» (Brown and Levinson, 1978 [1987]: 110). Apparently, S1 switches from Standard English considered as a high and prestigious variety to a variety of English which is used in the Caribbean and considered as low and domestic, in order to indicate in-group membership with S2 who is from the Caribbean. However, he exaggerates this by saying «(...) you PUssy hole huh? (.) you PUssy HOLE you (rasta)» (EDcon496: 591) which could be interpreted as very offensive in normal circumstances. It is the element of exaggeration which distinguishes the positive-politeness redress from normal everyday intimate language behavior (Brown and Levinson, 1978 [1987]: 101). Right after S1 says these words, S1 adds that «i used to live with a jamaican in the states» (EDcon496: 593). This

and his accent makes it clear that S1 has just imitated his Jamaican roommate in the States by uttering these words which would be interpreted as offensive and would even provoke a fight in Standard English, in order to communicate to S2 that he wants S2's positive face to be satisfied. S2 acknowledges this intent of S1's, welcomes it by laughing and happily starting to comment on S1's accent, rather than expressing that she was offended or starting a fight.

At the same time S1 is not conforming to the cooperative maxim as he is being ironical by telling S2 «oh you're so: sweet you know», and «<imitating> bring a plate and chop me finger you (.) you PUssy hole huh? (.) you PUssy HOLE you (rasta)» (EDcon496: 591) , by switching to a variety of English spoken in Jamaica. The fact that Jamaica is one of the island countries in the Caribbean where S2 is from is important in understanding the real meaning of what is actually communicated.

It is perfectly obvious to S1 and his audience that what S1 has said is something he does not believe, and his audience knows that S1 knows that this is obvious to his audience. This is clear because S1 would not say «oh you're so: sweet you know» (EDcon496: 589) to S2 right after S2 tells S1 «i could bring a plate and chop your finger» (EDcon496: 588) , when the maxims of the Co-operative principle are observed. Also, in a friendly conversation between fellow students, one would not expect to hear offensive words and they are welcomed with laughter by the addressee. Based on what Grice (1975 [1989]: 34) says about irony, it is possible to say that if the S1's utterance is not entirely pointless, which does not seem to be the case, S1 must be trying to communicate some other proposition than the one he appears to be putting forward. This proposition must be a related one. What is the most related proposition is the contradictory of the one S1 appears to be putting forward. What S1 tries to communicate by telling S2 «(...) you PUssy hole huh? (.) you PUssy HOLE you (rasta)» (EDcon496: 591) must be just the reverse of what he says. In this example, S1 must be intending to communicate more than what is said, in other words, to exploit the maxim through irony, resulting in a conversational implicature, in order to create an effect. Most probably, S1 is trying to show his respect and appreciation for S2's identity and where S2 comes from.

It is also possible to parse this particular data from the perspective of accommodation. S1 says to S2 «bring a plate and chop me finger you (.) you PUssy hole huh? (.) you PUssy HOLE you (rasta)» (EDcon496: 591) by switching to a variety of English used in Jamaica. While saying this, S1 imitates his Jamaican roommate in the States, as is understood when

he says «i used to live with a jamaican in the states» (EDcon496: 593) and he also imitates this Jamaican friend when he says «now that's what he spoke man (you) PUssy hole man you've» (EDcon496: 607) and «you call me you call me you call me» (EDcon496: 611). S1 may utter these words in order to sociolinguistically express greater identification with S2's reference group than S2 is able to display. S2 comes from the Caribbean where Jamaica is located, but does not use the codes belonging to the Caribbean much. S1 moves to a variety of English used in the Caribbean considered as a lower-prestige code in order to show his identification with the code which S2 is associated with, regardless of whether S2 conforms to this code or not. It is this move to a lower-prestige code which makes it downward. Moreover, S1 adopts an even more basilectal code to show his greater identification with local values of the community which S2 belongs to, and this makes it a cross-over. Therefore, this strategy of S1 can be termed downward cross-over divergence, though it is, of course, achieved by initial (and often substantial) convergence.

### *3. Discussion*

As seen in Section 3.4, S1 is negotiating some kind of relationship with S2 in this set of ELF data (EDcon496) from VOICE. It is possible to describe the same ELF data in terms of conversational implicature through irony, or in terms of face saving through positive politeness, or in terms of accommodation through divergence. All of these can be considered to be different ways of talking about the same phenomena.

### *4. Conclusions*

In this particular ELF example (EDcon496) from VOICE with its script and audio recordings, it is seen that some of the concepts discussed in three different approaches describing positioning can be helpful in explaining how ELF speakers position themselves in ELF interactions. At this early stage of exploration of positioning in ELF interactions, the analysis of the ELF data in this study shows us that the concepts of conversational implicature through irony, face saving through positive politeness and accommodation through divergence can all be used to explain the same phenomena in the very same ELF example.

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Paola Vettorel, Valeria Franceschi

*English as a Lingua Franca. Plurilingual Repertoires  
and Language Choices in Computer-Mediated Communication*

ABSTRACT:

This paper focuses on ELF use in computer-mediated-communication, and specifically on language choice and on the exploitation of the users' plurilingual repertoires as a communicative strategy in Web 2.0 social spaces. Through data drawn from personal blogs and fan fiction texts, it will be exemplified how adapting English to ELF contexts and engaging in language alternation practices such as code-switching and polylingual languaging or heteroglossia may relate to audience design strategies in these online spaces.

*Introduction*

In the contemporary, global society, international communication among people from different linguacultural backgrounds has become a common, if not daily, occurrence. As transportation and mass communication technology developed over the second half of the twentieth century, distances have shrunk considerably; geographical borders have stretched and collapsed, allowing for the free movement of flows of goods, people and data. High international mobility has given rise to the need for a language of global communication, which is de facto played by English in its lingua franca role.

ELF has been extensively studied in relation to a number of face-to-face professional, academic and personal communication contexts, where speakers involved in ELF communication make use of a variety of linguistic and pragmatic accommodation strategies in order to carry out successful interactions that lead to the achievement of their communicative goals. However, the pervasiveness of English has crossed over to the digital world, where international users from different linguacultural backgrounds meet in virtual spaces and share information and content most often via ELF. Computer-mediated communication, (henceforth

CMC) is a product of those same globalization processes that have fostered international mobility and communication as well as the need for a common LF. Despite being different phenomena, CMC and ELF have many intersection points, as will be seen, both being involved in cross-cultural communication across traditional boundaries and communities, and in the establishment of virtual communities and networks that are no longer geographically but interest-based, involving either professional or personal interests. ELF is indeed employed as a language of cross-cultural communication in international online spaces as part of its users' linguistic repertoires. Plurilingual users often navigate the multilingual web selecting which elements of their linguistic repertoires to use according to context and aims. Indeed, the self-presentational (Lee, 2014) nature of social network sites (SNS) and other Web 2.0 spaces is such that users adopt different linguistic behaviors, including language choice, when they communicate on an international level with different types and categories of users.

In this paper, after outlining characteristic traits of ELF and CMC, we will be looking more specifically at how linguistic behavior such as language choice and code-switching on social network sites (henceforth SNS) is employed by users of Web 2.0 social spaces in relation to audience design (Tagg and Seargeant, 2014), and how the insertion of culturally-loaded elements from other languages into ELF talk is managed in relation to international audiences. Specifically, we will focus on the users' exploitation of their sociolinguistic repertoires in data from the content-sharing social platform Fanfiction.net (henceforth FF.net) and the blogging platform LiveJournal.com (henceforth LJ) and on the way participants employ English in its lingua franca role to position themselves as global internet users and include elements of their local culture in their use of English. Exemplifications of data drawn from two larger research projects and qualitative studies related respectively to fan fiction (Franceschi, 2014) and personal blogging (Vettorel, 2014) will be provided.

### *1. English and CMC*

From its advent, the use of the Internet has grown exponentially, as computer and mass communication technologies have developed and become easily accessible to the general public over the years (Crystal, 2006). Looking at figures, the extent and the speed of this growth becomes apparent: in 1995, less than twenty years ago, the percentage of the world population connected to the Internet was a meager 0.4%. Fifteen

years later, in 2010, the figure had risen to a 28,7%, and the most recent estimates, referring to March 2014, put the percentage at 40,7%, which translates into 2,937 million Internet users in the world today<sup>1</sup>. Although English remains to this day the most represented language online, statistics show that its hegemony is slowly being eroded by other languages, with emerging economies such as China, Brazil and a number of Arab-speaking countries increasing their presence online. For example, in the 2000-2011 period, the presence of English increased of the 301.4%, Chinese of 1478.7%, and Portuguese of 990.1%<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, given its role as a language of international communication, English online sets itself apart from other increasingly represented languages: indeed, English is not used exclusively by (and among) its native speakers, but acts as a lingua franca for internet users connecting from all over the world. The use of English for cross-cultural communication goes hand in hand with a reduction of traditional spatial boundaries, which has fostered higher mobility and migration fluxes, as well as CMC in virtual environments (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999; Pennycook, 2012; Blommaert and Backus, 2013). As Mauranen recently states, «we can without hesitation place ELF among one of the most important social phenomena that operate on a global scale; it is on a par with things like global economy, mobility, and the Internet, and closely intertwined with them» (Mauranen, 2012: 17). On the one hand, CMC has contributed to the acceleration of the spread of English as a commonly shared code of communication, while on the other hand it has fostered the use, adaptation and appropriation of English as a Lingua Franca by non-native speakers of English; in addition, English itself is employed together with other languages (and semiotic codes) to communicate across traditional territorial and community boundaries, as will be seen.

ELF, by its definition, «is not a variety of English but a variable way of using it» (Seidlhofer, 2011: 7); it is therefore not retraceable to a monolithic English, or a self-contained language system. It is, on the other hand, dynamic, fluid, and adaptable according to the needs of the communicative situation and participants. This protean ability of ELF fits well in international CMC contexts: language online is adapted to the multiple CMC modes and their specific characteristics, as well as to the communicative needs and aims of online users, individual, and constellations of participants (Vettorel, 2014), with ELF coming into play especially where globalized/ing and localized/ing factors entwine (Androutopoulos, 2010).

The use of English as a language of international communication in CMC may be ascribed to a translocal view of digital communication.

Translocality «denotes a specific understanding of culture, where culture is seen as outward-looking, exogenous, focused on hybridity, translation, and identification» (Leppänen *et al.*, 2009: 1082), and it refers to the shift from a human experience that is primarily geographically and ethnically-based, to increasingly mobile and virtual contexts of interaction. CMC and ELF can both be associated to the concept of translocality, where cross-cultural interactions occur within a de-territorialized global context. In terms of linguistic behavior, translocality online may be related to users who «find it a motivated and meaningful option to draw on resources provided by more than one language» (Leppänen, 2012: 233) in addition to ELF as a shared resource for communication. Internet users make use of their linguistic repertoires in a variety of ways while engaging in online communication: they may employ multiple codes in a single contexts, using them one at a time (e.g. Barton and Lee, 2013; Chen 2013) or mixing them together, both as code-switching between two languages, (Lam, 2000, 2004) or through the exploitation of plurilingual resources (e.g. Leppänen *et al.*, 2009) in languaging (Jørgensen, 2008) and heteroglossic (Leppänen, 2012) practices.

Translocality is only one of the multiple features that ELF and CMC can be said to have in common: both show a high degree of hybridity, fragmentation and fluidity (Seidlhofer, 2011: 73); uses of non-normative, or innovative language features frequently emerging from both contexts mainly respond to pragmatic and social needs (Androutsopoulos, 2010, 2013; Seidlhofer, 2011; Mauranen, 2012; Hülmbauer, 2013; Cogo, 2012). As Baym (2010) remarks: «any instance of digital language use depends on the technology, the purpose of the interaction, the norms of the group, the communication style of the speakers' social groups offline, and the idiosyncrasies of individuals» (Baym, 2010: 65). The same concept is highlighted more recently by Barton and Lee, who state that «regular similarities and differences occur within and beyond one single mode of CMC; on the other hand, in reality, users do not apply the same set of CMC features to all contexts; but they constantly re-appropriate their ways of writing in different modes of CMC to suit different purposes» (Barton and Lee, 2013: 6). This is reminiscent of the fluid and ever-changing characteristics of ELF communication, where meaning is constantly negotiated on-line, and the language tweaked and adapted according to the context of the interaction, as well as to the needs and goals of its speakers. In CMC hybridity and non-standardness coexist with innovative language forms allegedly created to localizing aims; as in ELF, this is often realised drawing on the users' plurilingualism and exploiting

the potentials of the ‘virtual language’ (Widdowson, 2003; Seidlhofer, 2011; Hülbauer, 2013), as well as other semiotic codes.

## *2. Audience in online social spaces*

ELF users skilfully draw on their plurilingual (and semiotic) repertoires also on Web 2.0 CMC environments, that is, online platform that allow users to publish and circulate their own content online (cf. Barton and Lee, 2013: 9); the participants’ L1s and other LNs are often employed within heteroglossic and translanguing practices according to the constellations and linguacultural identity participants wish to affiliate to.

At the turn of the millennium, the way people connected online underwent a shift from what is known as Web 1.0 to what is called Web 2.0. As Seargeant and Tagg explain, this shift «saw an explosion in online interactivity and user participation. The web was no longer a place where you went predominantly to consume content and information» (Seargeant and Tagg, 2014: 2). On the contrary, «Web 2.0 users increasingly regard the internet as a social space, where one can meet new people, hang out with friends and pursue all kinds of leisure activities» (Eisenlauer, 2013: 1), in networking practices among people who share professional and/or personal interests, often giving life to virtual Communities of Practice, or «*constellations* of interconnected practices» (Wenger, 1998; Hülbauer, 2009; Seidlhofer, 2011). Such activities are carried out in multiple and varied online spaces that allow users to socialize as well create and circulate content sharing. These interactionally-oriented spaces are known as social media, which have been defined as «a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content» (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010: 61). As Boyd and Ellison (2007) remark, there are three main elements that characterize social network sites: «a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system», «a list of other users with whom they share a connection» and the possibility to «view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system» (Boyd and Ellison, 2007: 211).

One very important element in these environments, where users participate actively and create their own content, relates to how the presentation of the self is carried out; language choice is one of the means through which this can be done. The language, the variety and the register used in SNS may vary according to a number of criteria, mainly the target audience and the

topic discussed. As stated by Barton and Lee (2013: 55-56): «online users know very well how to deploy their linguistic resources in different contexts for different purposes and to different people», including the choice of a language (L1, Ln), together with English in its shared lingua franca role.

With the exclusion of certain CMC modes, such as instant messaging, where users communicate with specific, selected people, or forums where the rules of communication may be set by the forum moderator or owner, in most Web 2.0 spaces users can choose to formulate their contributes according to the intended, imagined or target audience. As mentioned, when users engage in SNSs, where interlocutors are not addressed face-to-face, an idea of the audience is constructed and then imagined into being «for the purpose of giving context to one's utterances» (Tagg and Seargeant, 2014: 180). Barton and Lee (2013: 56) have identified three primary groups of target audience in Web 2.0 environments: «the general 'unknown' audience on the web (especially on Flickr and YouTube); 'friends' who are listed as contacts (especially on Flickr and Facebook), and friends in 'real' life (especially on instant messaging)». Along the same lines, the audience design strategies identified by Tagg and Seargeant, (direct address, for example tagging or creation of smaller groups; other structural affordances, such as separate posts; style and language choice; content, 2014: 167) «are crucial for SNS users as they seek to target individuals and communities from within the wider audience» (*ivi*: 161; cf. also Puschmann, 2009, 2013 for blogs). In multilingual environments such as SNSs, as described earlier, language choice becomes thus one of the main factors in terms of discriminating among audience groups. Language choice is one of the contributing elements in the management of self-presentation online, and the decision to post content or hypermedia links in a specific language is related to both positioning of the self and audience design, which are in turn connected<sup>3</sup>. The following sections will examine how language choices are enacted drawing upon the plurilingual repertoires of CMC users communicating internationally in two main datasets, fan fiction writing and personal blogging.

### 3. Data collection: *LiveJournal and Fanfiction.net*

The two platforms from which data are drawn in this paper, FF.net and LJ, are social spaces that are not traditionally ascribable to the narrower definition of social network sites as «*Social Software-based Websites* whose primary aim is *establishing and maintaining online communities* by

asking *participants* to present themselves (in the form of public or semi-public profiles) and to connect and communicate with other participants» (Eisenlauer, 2013: 21, italics in original); nevertheless, they fulfill the aforementioned criteria proposed by Boyd and Ellison (2007) and are thus conceivable as strongly Web 2.0 social spaces. On FF.net, users that are fan of popular media texts may publish and circulate user-created narrative texts or poems inspired by their favorite original texts. The affordances of the website have, over the years, provided users with increasingly social opportunities: in addition to a profile page for each author, and a comment section for reader reviews and comments, the site allows users to create and participate in communities for fan and writers. A corpus of English-language fan fiction by NNS was compiled from FF.net, comprising the work of 26 writers representing 11 different native languages, for a total of about 250,000 words. A parallel, much smaller corpus of reader comments and reviews was also analyzed in order to explore the relationship between writers and readers. Due to the nature of the study, the collected data was analyzed from a qualitative perspective.

Weblogs have a strong social element to them as well: while blogging can be seen as a more monologically-oriented CMC mode, the comment sections allow readers to post remarks, at times prompting multi-party discussions among users. In addition, bloggers have a profile page where they list information about themselves, their interests and hobbies, or where they may link to their accounts on other websites and social spaces (Herring *et al.*, 2006). Furthermore, the blogging platform LJ, from which the data mentioned here was collected, has a strong communitarian element to it, also thanks to the possibility to create public or limited-access community blogs, where multiple bloggers can post and leave comments. The corpus comprises data from 15 personal blogs by Italian bloggers communicating internationally, totaling about 312,300 words. Although English constitutes the main lingua franca of communication, languages from the interactants' plurilingual repertoires, as will be seen, are widely present in the data.

#### 4. *Language choice in ELF online social spaces*

As outlined in the previous sections, the Internet is inherently multilingual. In Web 2.0 spaces, users share content with multiple people and may make use of their plurilingual repertoires within the same space, according to their needs and to the audience they are targeting. Predictably,

English in its ELF realization is the go-to language in the first scenario theorized by Barton and Lee, when the audience is unknown, since it is likely to reach a wider public than other languages (Barton and Lee, 2013: 57; cf. also Tagg and Seargeant, 2014: 182). Indeed, non-native respondents from multiple studies have underlined the importance of English as the gateway to international audiences. For instance, Leppänen et al.'s Finnish informants, fan fiction writers, remarked that «writing in English is of course sometimes motivated by a wish to reach bigger audiences than the local Finnish ones» (Leppänen *et al.*, 2009: 1090). Similarly, Barton and Lee's informants on Flickr, agreed that «that English is the 'universal' language, which they would use to communicate with people who do not speak their local languages (Barton and Lee, 2013: 56). Bloggers in Vettorel's study similarly stated they used English in order to address their international audience (Vettorel, 2014). In personal correspondence with some of the non-native fan fiction authors in Franceschi's study (2014), an interest to share their content with a global audience emerged as the main reason for writing in English as well.

At the same time, most ELF users online do not use English exclusively, but employ their L1 and other LNs according to their communicative needs, the elements of their identity they want to project and the audience they want to address, and «[t]his audience cannot be conceived of as a single, one-rounded concept, but should rather be conceptualized as multidimensional» (Vettorel 2014: 63). Users may include (or possibly exclude) individual or multiple users in their posts simply by selecting one language over the other. For example, Chen's empirical study (2013), based on Facebook, shows how language use in two comparable situations may vary substantially according to the respondents' personal attitude and to the audience they target through their language choice. The subjects, two Chinese young women living in the United States as international students, displayed opposite behavior in their language choice on Facebook. One student wrote 68% of her posts in Mandarin, her L1, whereas the other student's use of English involved 99% of her activity on Facebook, «position[ing] herself as an international English user» (Chen, 2013: 154). Language choice was related to audience perception and design: the first respondent posted culturally-loaded content to her Chinese readers, whereas the second one intended her posts to reach all her international English-speaking friends.

Linguistic behavior online linked to audience design does not involve exclusively the choice of one language, but it includes a range of language alternation phenomena such as code-switching, polylingual languaging (Jørgensen, 2008: 169) and heteroglossia (Leppänen, 2012). Through the

use of these strategies, users exploit their linguistic repertoires for meaning-making and social purposes (Leppänen, 2012: 236). In these cases, alternation may not entail long stretches of language, but the insertion of single words, discourse markers, fixed phrases and social formulas within the main language of communication. In contexts of high language contact such as CMC, these practices are not uncommon (Leppänen *et al.*, 2009; Leppänen, 2012; Androutsopoulos, 2010, 2013). Such strategies have also been observed in ELF in offline contexts (Pözl, 2003; Klimpfner, 2007, 2009; Seidlhofer, 2011; Cogo, 2012; Motschenbacher, 2013), and, more recently, online environments, too (Lee, 2014; Barton and Lee, 2013; Lee and Barton, 2012; in relation to ELF Vettorel, 2014; Franceschi, 2014).

Resorting to languages other than English and code switching may be realized in the interactants' L1 or in other languages that are part of these ELF users' plurilingual repertoires (e.g. Hülmbauer, 2007, 2009, 2013; Cogo, 2009, 2011, 2012); generally the participants' L1 is employed in connection to concepts related their primary linguaculture, while other LNs are generally related to (globally-set) interest-based topics the participants share in these 'constellations of interconnected practices'.

#### 4.1 *Plurilingual repertoires*

One of the most characterizing features of ELF is its protean form, in that it is often tweaked and adapted by speakers to fit the communicative needs of specific situations; English native norms are frequently flouted and innovative forms created in a given interaction; sometimes, it may even be more effective to employ a non-normative, innovative form, or introduce elements from a different language, especially when local elements are being shared with an international audience (e.g. Hülmbauer, 2013; Seidlhofer, 2011). This may be done also by drawing on the users' plurilingual repertoires, as shown for example in Vettorel's personal blog data, through borrowings or linguistic forms influenced by the participants' L1, or by any Ln that is deemed relevant in a specific interest-based constellation (Vettorel, 2014: Chapter 6).

In fan fiction, Japanese and English elements are sometimes mixed together to increase understanding. One of the writers in Franceschi's dataset, for instance, created a mixed compound, '*megane*-boy', meaning 'a boy with glasses'. «The word *megane* alone can be used to refer to a person with glasses, but the compound form - also as separate words - is also found in manga-related group» (Franceschi, 2014: 186). The seemingly redundant 'boy' may have been used to clarify that *megane* is not employed

in its meaning of ‘glasses’ but in reference to a person.

On the other hand, as documented in several online environments, English is generally perceived as the lingua franca allowing comprehensibility to an internationally-oriented audience. For example, several among Barton and Lee’s informants (2013) use, and at times state they use, English alongside other languages to share local cultures with a broader audience. In interviews with Facebook users, one of Sangiamchit’s non-native speakers of English informants mentions the necessity to adjust his linguistic behavior in order to make his messages fully understandable by his readers: «*Using English online makes me aware to select a proper words or abbreviation. For example, I always use “hahaha” rather than “555” because my friends from different countries don’t know it means laughing in Thai*» (Sangiamchit, 2013, emphasis in original).

Other times, as in Poppi’s study (2013) on corporate websites, linguistic strategies that have been associated with ELF, such as rephrasing and explaining (e.g. Mauranen, 2012), may be adopted in order to make content more appealing to the target audience. Including local terms and concepts rather than generic normative English ones may also contribute to clarifying content for the readers. As Poppi reiterates, in ELF contexts effective communication is not exclusively dependent on linguistic accuracy or native-like use of English. In Kankaanranta and Lohuiala-Salminen’s words «a grammatically and lexically ‘correct’ message doesn’t necessarily do the job, but a message with many mistakes may do so» (Kankaanranta and Lohuiala-Salminen, 2007: 56).

To sum up, the exploitation of the plurilingual repertoires in CMC-related modes appears to be a frequent practice, that is carried out to different aims according to the participants, the intended audience, as well as the characteristics of the mode itself.

#### 4.2 Code-switching

Code-switching in ELF does not involve exclusively the speaker’s L1, but also other languages in which the speakers may be more or less proficient, resulting in polylingual languaging practices. As Jørgensen puts forward, «the use of languages of which the speaker knows only very little is more common in late modern urban societies» (2008: 168). Elements from multiple languages may also be used at the same time (Blommaert and Rampton, 2012; Jørgensen, 2008). Indeed, globalization has increased the contexts and occasions for language contact, and expressions and words from other languages have seeped into the linguistic repertoires of speakers, drawn

from «recreational, artistic and/or oppositional contexts» (Blommaert and Rampton, 2012: 7) that may be related to the specificities of (lingua)cultural elements, and/or «ethnic groups, new media and pop culture» (Franceschi, 2014: 136). As will be seen in the following sections, code-switching practices in our data are enacted in different ways to several functions, from signaling primary linguacultures to interest-based affiliations.

#### *4.2.1 Primary Culture*

Introducing elements of the speaker's L1 into ELF as the primary language of communication is not uncommon in our data, as it is often through these elements that users project their linguacultural background out to other members of these spaces. Code-switching (henceforth CS), as well as translation and the exploitation of plurilingual repertoires are recurrent practices both in Vettorel's personal blog data (Vettorel, 2014) and Franceschi's fan fiction texts and reviews (2014), where three out of the four main functions identified for CS in ELF, that is, to specify an addressee, to introduce another idea, to signal culture (Klimpfinger, 2007, 2009) are realized<sup>4</sup>. As we have seen, overall, English is clearly employed by the participants to address a wider audience in its lingua franca role allowing internationally-based communication; furthermore, even code-switches, or aspects related to a more localized culture, are in the great majority of cases expressed also in English, in order to accommodate to the bloggers' international audience. At times language alternation is even more directly related to audience design; a language switch involving long strings of non-formulaic language, for example, points to a choice to address a specific audience, that is, a more localized one, often consisting of speakers of the user's L1. This may be seen, for example, in the profile pages in FF.net, where authors can write information about themselves and their interests in and outside the universe of fan fiction and popular media. In Franceschi's study (2014), out of 26 subjects, 10 published stories only in English, but even among those who published stories in multiple languages, usually English and their L1, the most frequent choice was to have their profile page entirely in English, in order to maximize accessibility to international fans. In the four cases where the profile page included both English and the writers' L1, the content expressed varied according to the target audience, as in example (1) below:

(1) Next things will be written in [L1] because only they can understand them anyway, sorry!

Here, the writer marks the switch to her native language and apologizes to her international audience, justifying the language change on the basis that the meaning expressed would be culturally-loaded and as a result, oriented to a specific, local audience. The upcoming switch is therefore justified as the intention to specify an addressee (cf. Klimpfinger, 2007, 2009; Barton and Lee, 2013), which in this case is identified in a more local audience.

Affiliation to a primary linguaculture is however frequently expressed in a specific way within the fan fiction texts in our dataset. While not extremely common, fan fiction writers publishing in ELF sometimes include in their stories elements drawn from their linguistic or cultural backgrounds, providing a localized setting for their pop culture text of choice that allows writers to project elements from their background into ELF discourse and share it with their readers. Often, these references are then explained clearly to international readers in Author's Notes<sup>5</sup>, as in example 2 below:

(2) For non-Polish readers: Częstochowa is a city known for Catholic influence.

Here, the writer, an L1 Polish speaker who sets part of her manga-inspired story in Poland, justifies her choice by providing additional information about the location chosen for the fan fiction. This tendency is not only limited to the writers' primary linguaculture, but can be expanded to other linguacultures that they have been immersed in for a prolonged period, as in example (3):

(3) I lived in Hungary for a bit [...] "Szia" means "hello" in Hungarian. [...] The word "Magyar" means Hungarian.

This author, who spent time in Hungary, uses her knowledge of the language to better characterize the Hungarian character existing in the original text.

References to primary linguacultures through CS practices are even more common in Vettorel's data, with switches into the bloggers' L1, Italian, referring to areas such as food, geography, events, songs, films and books (Vettorel, 2014: 221-227). The following extract (*ivi*: 231) nicely exemplifies how code-switches are employed in these personal blogs to refer to socially and culturally loaded elements, while at the same time providing an explanation in English so that the reference can be understood by an English-speaking international audience.

(4) Because you see, I gave him a rang (*uno squillo donnine belle*) [a ring my dear ladies] it's a common practice in Italy, when you need to tell something and you don't have money you make the other person's cellphone ring only once (it can mean "yes" or "I received your message" or another 100 things depending on the context).

In addition, in this case the switch is also meant to address a specific audience the blogger refers to, that is overtly mentioned (*donnine belle*). The data contain several other instances where CS is employed to this function either through one-word switches (e.g. *grazie*), or with longer stretches, that are usually in the bloggers' L1 (*ivi*: 214-217).

Particularly in the fan fiction universe, use of multiple languages in writing is considered a positive trait by the plurilingual writers and readers, as the community is highly diverse and cosmopolitan (Black, 2008; Leppänen *et al.*, 2009). This cosmopolitanism is visible in reader reviews as well, where the use of multiple languages and language alternation is not uncommon; readers may switch into their own L1 when it is shared with the writer, as a means to show solidarity to the writer and highlight the shared linguacultural affiliation. In example 4 below, as well as in Example (1), language alternation is related directly to audience design and addressee specification (Klimpfinger, 2007, 2009), in addition to cultural affiliation.

(5) Hello! Merci pour ton update [...].

The reader, who shares French as an L1 with the writer, «opens the review in English but then continues in French, interspersed with English words and phrases (*please update soon!*)» (Franceschi, 2014: 160).

A similar alternation of languages is also common in Vettorel's data, whereby participants mix codes, often in small formulaic chunks, as in the following exemplification (Vettorel, 2014: 222):

(6) C (GB) *I love the icons! Molto bella! The animation is ♥*  
 B *Ahah, Grazie! :D*

In this comment to a post in English the insertion takes place in Italian, the blogger's L1, possibly also to affective accommodation aims; in other cases, other Ln are used, such as Spanish or Japanese, as will be seen below.

#### 4.2.2 *Interest-based affiliation*

As outlined, the internet and Web 2.0 environments in particular provide a range of modes and spaces where users communicate via ELF, often in groups built around professional and personal interests; in these virtual environments users from all over the world interact regularly, also for prolonged periods of time. These interest-based communities, similarly to imagined communities (cf. Anderson, 1991; Mauranen, 2012) are constructed upon a sense of affinity and membership shared by all participants, and are neither geographically-bound nor linguistically homogeneous. Affiliation to these communities can be expressed through linguistic behavior, including language choice and language alternation phenomena such as those described above for primary linguaculture.

In the fan fiction universe, as in other Web 2.0-based environments, interest-based plurilingual practices are very common. Indeed, international fans of Japanese comics and animation (manga and anime), frequently intersperse English with words and expressions drawn from Japanese (Black, 2008; Leppänen *et al.*, 2009; Franceschi, 2014). In the case of fan fiction, in Franceschi's data Japanese may be used as an authenticity device within the stories, that immerses the readers in the linguacultural setting of the story and provides a thorough characterization of the Japanese characters by including, in the dialogues, words or catchphrases that are typical of the characters in the original text as in (7) below.

(7) “See, you can improve if you work hard.” He showed him the grammar exercises he'd done and there were a few correct answers.

“*Sugoi*,” Hiro sighed in a sarcastic tone. (Awesome, jp)

“*Mada mada da ne, Senpai!*” Aki chuckled. (You still have a long way to go, jp)

(emphasis added)

In addition, Japanese is also employed by aficionados of manga and anime as a marker of membership and affiliation to the community of fans, and this emerges in both our sets of data. The fan fiction writers do not only use Japanese in the text, but in the paratext, too: profile pages, Author's Notes and comments to reviews often include Japanese formulaic language such as greetings, opening and closing formulas. Readers, as well, tend to include Japanese words and formulaic expressions in their comments so as to position themselves as fellow fans and in order to show solidarity and affiliation to the writers. Similarly, in Vettorel's personal

blogs data short, often formulaic insertions in Japanese could be identified as markers of affiliation (2014: 223-224). This use of Japanese positions the participants as fans of manga and anime highlighting, within the community, their knowledge of that linguaculture. In addition, in the fan fiction dataset informal opening formulas such as *Konnichiwa* (hello) are especially common in both Author's notes and reviews. Other Japanese formulas found in reviews are *onegai* (please), 'ja ne' and its formal correspondent *ja mata* (see you later) and *ganbatte* (good luck)<sup>6</sup>, some of which can also be found in the manga and anime-related blogs in Vettorel's data.

To sum up, polylingual languaging and heteroglossia are not uncommon in social spaces where the main interest is related to a specific linguaculture that is likely to be extraneous to the majority of the users involved: interspersing ELF with Ln elements, in this case Japanese, makes users immediately recognizable as members to the specific interest-based community as well as add an element of authenticity.

## 5. Conclusions

As was seen, ELF has acquired a very active and dynamic social dimension in the super-diverse context of CMC, where it is used alongside the user's L1(s) and other Lns to foster social contacts and share content. People who may not need to use English in their daily life offline, may still use ELF extensively online as they engage in social practices on SNSs (Barton and Lee, 2013: 60). The use of ELF is consistent with the notion of translocality, as both fan fiction writers and bloggers have created social bonds in a virtual, de-territorialized global environment, using other languages to achieve and negotiate cross-cultural communication. While fan fiction writing and blogging are two different modes of CMC, the data have shown similarities in the social and communicative functions language alternation practices fulfill in the text and comments.

English in online social spaces is employed to address international audiences, but it was seen that other languages in the participants' repertoires, be they L1(s) or Lns, are frequently used in these two modes in relation to audience design, whereby language choice can be seen as an identity marker in addressing more localised audiences on the one hand (cf. example 1), and to express affiliation to primary linguacultures and interest-based communities, or constellations of participants, on the other. The adaptation of ELF for these purposes contributes to audience design in a way that may be both inclusive and exclusive. As exemplified, when English is adapted, the

underlying aim is to clarify the local concept to a global audience, as well as to involve readers more fully in the narration of fiction or personal content. On the other hand, when code-switching is employed, an additional translation or explanation is generally provided, too, for the switched element to be accessible to a wider audience. While in the fan fiction universe, this use could have a more functional role, as it provides readers with the means to access the text in its entirety (cf. examples 2,3), in blogging it serves primarily a social role, aiming at involving the international audience in the localised, culturally-bound experience (4). At the same time, as was seen, in these online social spaces code-switching may also be used to restrict the audience from a global to either a local one, as in the case with switches into the L1, or an interest-based group, as illustrated in relation to the manga and anime fan community (cf example 7), where speakers intersperse their texts with Japanese elements. Ln(s) may also be used by commenters in blog posts and fan fiction as a means to show affiliation and solidarity with the writers by addressing them in their L1.

The data analyzed here confirms the nature of ELF as a protean, fluid code in Web 2.0-based contexts as well as face to face ones; the introduction of non-English and hybrid forms in online interactions does not hinder communication, but allows users to communicate linguacultural and affiliation content internationally and position themselves as members of specific communities through a skillful use of their plurilingual repertoires and ELF, carefully and effectively exploiting their plurilingual repertoires to audience-design aims.

<sup>1</sup> <<http://www.internetworldstats.com/emarketing.htm>> (last access 27.07.2014).

<sup>2</sup> <<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm>> (last access 27.07.2014).

<sup>3</sup> Lee (2014) draws from Crandall's 2007 definition of 'presentational culture', where users have a heightened awareness of the image of their self that they present through social media: «within these presentational environments, performance and role-playing reign supreme [...] and new forms of subjectivity emerge» (Crandall, 2007. Retrieved from <<http://jordan-crandall.com/main/+SHOWING/index.html>> [last access 01.02.2016]).

<sup>4</sup> With the exception of 'appealing for assistance', presumably because of the specificities of the online setting (Vettorel, 2014; Franceschi, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Notes that are written at the beginning or the end of a story/story chapter, which provide additional background and information on the plot, characters and process of writing.

<sup>6</sup> The first one is employed generally by readers in reviews to urge writers to update the story with new chapters, while *ja ne* and *ja mata* are closing formulas which may be used to conclude a review (Franceschi, 2014). Japanese interjections were also identified in the comments, namely *wah* and *kyaaa*, which expressed enthusiastic approval for the stories (Franceschi, 2014).

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*Student Attitudes Towards Accented English: The American  
College of Greece Context*

ABSTRACT:

In a globalized world, English has become the lingua franca in socio-economic and educational settings. Research indicates that while some English language users might be tolerant towards non-native accents and satisfied with their being just intelligible and comprehensible, yet not native-like when speaking English, others might opt for a native-like model. Attempting to address student real needs and to revisit teaching materials used, we investigated the case at The American College of Greece.

*Introduction*

In an increasingly globalized world today, English has unprecedentedly become the commonly shared language spoken in a variety of English and non-English-speaking contexts dominating international business, socio-political and educational domains. Therefore, English has justifiably established itself as the world lingua franca (ELF), allowing entrepreneurs, educators, scientists, politicians and the like from heterogeneous cultural, national, and linguistic backgrounds to communicate in a new, unrestricted border-free manner.

The educational benefits of English use are acknowledged as «real and powerful» (Prodromou, 2001: 590). However, as the use of English is spreading worldwide, in the Expanding Circle (Kachru, 1985), English language users are exposed to linguistic varieties other than the Native speaker (NS) model like Standard American or Standard British English. New, L1 linguistic and culture-bound features are integrated in people's Englishes. Varieties, such as China English, Turkish English, Brazilian English, are constantly emerging leading to discussions like the ownership of English as well as which model of English should be taught in class and

why (Jenkins, 2006; Widdowson, 1994, 2003; Zoghbor, 2011). Despite these new developments and research in the field, classroom practices<sup>1</sup> still firmly adhere to native speaker model. Since the global scene and the nature of English language use is changing, user views cannot be ignored. It is within this scope that people's attitudes, namely «opinions, beliefs, ways of responding, with respect to some set of problems» (Johnson and Johnson, 1999: 14) as well as their importance in language learning (Lightfoot *et al.*, 2009) are widely acknowledged. Therefore, English language users' perceptions about Native (N) and Non-native (NN) language norms, in particular accent norms, have been rightly discussed and widely researched (e.g. He and Zhang, 2010; Jenkins, 2009; Pilus, 2013; Sifakis and Sougari, 2005; Timmis, 2002; Tomak, 2011; Tsuda, 2003; Wach, 2011; Walker, 2010) in order to assist educators make informed judgments about classroom practices. If the objective of English language learning (ELL) is to enable learners to communicate effectively worldwide in a variety of settings, English language teachers should not encourage the predominance of the N accent norm in teaching contexts and the ELT classroom in general. Implications from research (He and Zhang, 2010; Kirkpatrick, 2006; Moussu and Llurda, 2008) indicate that there is an emerging tendency to identify and possibly adopt a new, and more realistic, pedagogical model for the ELT classroom which would focus on intelligibility, an essential constituent of the very concept of pronunciation itself (Morley, 1991: 488-489), rather than a N model stemming from the Inner Circle. In this new pedagogical model, implications from ELF research could also be considered although, due to inconclusive findings from previous studies, discussions on ELF and its applicability in the ELT classroom are still controversial.

### *1. Attitudes Towards N and NN Accents of English*

Research on learner and teacher attitudes towards N and NN English accents abounds both in the Inner as well as in the Expanding Circle. Studies relate findings not only to classroom practices but also to socio-cultural and educational viewpoints that the participants formulate towards N or NN accents. On the one hand, several studies have indicated preference for NS norms. Timmis (2002), for instance, investigated whether learners would conform to NS pronunciation norms or not. Participants favored NS norms, probably as a benchmark of achievement. Accordingly, Jenkins (2007) conducted a questionnaire survey of Expanding Circle English speakers' attitudes towards English accents. Results evinced an «attachment to "standard" Inner

Circle N speaker models among many NN speakers of English (NNSs), despite the fact that they no longer learn English to communicate primarily with native speakers» (Jenkins, 2009: 203-204).

Further research on user attitudes towards N and NN accents of English, though, have not indicated consistency. Recent studies (He and Zhang, 2010; Tomak, 2011) showed high levels of tolerance for NN accent of English, as long as communication is facilitated. In He and Zhang's (2010) study, 55% out of the 820 non-English majors studying in Chinese universities expressed preference towards NN accented English. They indicated that NNSs of English can maintain their L1 accent as long as it did not hinder communication. Similarly in Tomak's (2011) study, 70% of the respondents reported that «it is not a must to speak it [English] just like a native speaker» (281), clearly revealing that a NS accent is not vital in interactions.

Regarding student preferences towards native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) and non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs), studies prove inconclusive as well. Pilus' study (2013), conducted among ESL adolescents in Malaysia, indicated preference to the British accent, despite the participants' satisfaction with the Malaysian accent. Pilus, therefore, emphasizes N accent as a model for pronunciation, serving as a source of reference and not as a norm. On the other hand, Cheung and Sung (2010), when investigating secondary school Hong Kong students' attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs, revealed that exposure to NESTs' accent facilitates student communication with the other foreigners.

Teachers themselves also seem to favor N accent (e.g. Coskun, 2011; Sifakis and Sougari, 2005; Timmis, 2002). In Greece, an Expanding Circle Community, ELF has been researched in terms of teacher perceptions and teacher education (e.g. Prodromou, 2001, 2011; Sifakis, 2009, 2011; Sifakis and Sougari, 2005). Sifakis and Sougari (2005), for example, report that NNESTs teachers themselves, serving at Greek public schools, seem to favor N pronunciation models when it comes to their classroom teaching practices, although they recognize that this is a rather unrealistic target even for themselves.

Braine (2006) cites a number of different studies that have been conducted on NNESTs' self-perceptions and their students' perceptions towards them. The research findings he cites conclude that students' perceptions towards NNS teacher accents change over time. In fact, it seems that the longer students are taught by NNESTs, the more tolerant and supportive they become towards them.

In addition, accented speech seems also to constitute a salient feature in making judgments about the speaker's intellectual abilities and educational

level, as literature in English as well as in other languages reveals (e.g. Georgountzou, 2005; Rubin, 2012; Ryan *et al.*, 1984 [as cited in Cargile *et al.*, 2006]; Scheuer, 2005; Balogh, 2014). In Georgountzou's (2005) study, Greek university students were asked to rate on a scale 0-6 people's accented speech. Subjects reported that people speaking standard varieties are «very educated», rating them from 3.5 to 5.5, and «intelligent», rating them from 3.3 to 4.8 (624). Similarly, Balogh (2014) investigated Hungarian secondary school students' attitudes towards different English accents. Results revealed that there was an overt preference among some participants towards the learning of proper pronunciation because this way «biases, prejudices and negative stereotypes that insufficient pronunciation might evoke» (160) are avoided; specifically, a respondent claimed that learning pronunciation is important, otherwise «people can be prejudiced towards you or believe you are uneducated» (160). Regarding N accent, in particular, standard N speech varieties tend to be evaluated more positively in terms of competence; namely, speakers of UK and US accented English are identified as intelligent (McKenzie, 2008a; 2008b [as cited in Tokumoto and Shibata, 2011]).

## *2. ELF and The American College of Greece Context*

ELF is defined as the language «used among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option» (Seidlhofer, 2011: 7). More recent research though (Jenkins, 2014) includes also N English speakers in the ELF communication. With the above definition in mind, participants sharing diverse linguistic backgrounds can interact effectively provided they are prepared «to tune into each other's accents and adjust both their own phonological output and their receptive expectations accordingly» (Jenkins, 2000: 96). In other words, both speaker and listener can develop their accommodative processes to cater for each other's communicative needs. The interlocutors' main concern is to sound intelligible rather than native-like. However, not all speakers feel comfortable with the idea of non-nativeness.

Stimulated by the aforementioned and more recent research in ELF (e.g. Siqueira, 2013; Hino, 2012; Matsuda and Friedrich, 2012), we embarked on an ongoing empirical study to investigate tertiary sector student attitudes toward N and NN accent(s) of English at the American College of Greece (ACG). This is an initial attempt to fill in the gap in the ELF research in Greece, a country belonging to the expanding circle (Kachru, 1985). In spite of the thriving research on users' attitudes and beliefs towards ELF, no

previous study in Greece, to our knowledge, has investigated tertiary level students' attitudes towards N and NN English accent till September 2013.

In Greece, EFL teaching and learning are huge components of foreign language pedagogy. Particularly, Greeks learn English from an early age and the majority sits for standardized exams (such as those developed by the University of Cambridge and the University of Michigan). English language is a compulsory subject taught throughout primary and secondary sectors, 3 hours per week. Private schools design their English curriculum differently in terms of hours and content<sup>2</sup>. On average, 55% of Greek students learn English at school. Furthermore, in preparation for English language certificates, a considerable number of students also report learning English with a teacher outside school in group language lessons (48%) or having one-to-one lessons with a teacher at home (13%) (European Commission, 2012).

The ACG is a private, 140 year old institution, the largest and oldest US accredited college or university in Europe, located in Athens. The students come from Greece as well as from different countries and cultures, majoring in business and/or arts and sciences and are, mainly, EFL learners<sup>3</sup>. They are admitted upon evidence of their English Language Proficiency based on specific criteria ([Appendix A](#)).

Applicants who do not submit evidence of the required language criteria take the Oxford Online Placement Test (OOPT). If the OOPT result is below the English language criteria required, applicants are placed in a pre-collegiate course, English for Academic Purposes Programme, henceforth (EAPP), or even in a Pre-Academic English course. Student level admitted to these programmes ranges from B1-B2. These courses «introduce students to the culture of an academic community» and help non-native students to enhance their receptive and productive skills in an academic environment (American College of Greece [ACG] Handbook, 2013: 54). The textbooks used in the programme aim at preparing students for an English-speaking environment and academic discourse. The reading and listening material of the EAPP courses is taken from textbooks used in North American Universities. In fact, listening material is based on Native-American accent(s). Thus, the material used is culturally-bound both in terms of content as well as accent(s).

Many faculty members and most of the administrators are NNSs of English coming from European as well as Asian countries. The NSs of English, faculty and administrators, come from Inner Circle countries.

Within this context, student responses are important since English is used at ACG as the medium of instruction (EMI) and interactions in formal and informal teacher-student and student-student encounters. What is more, upon completion of their studies, ACG graduates are quite likely to: i) be

employed and/or opt for employment in multinational companies in Greece and abroad and/or ii) follow graduate studies in a number of universities worldwide. Consequently, ACG is a typical ELF domain (Mauranen, 2010) given its international nature and its dependence on English.

The aim of this study is to investigate tertiary level student attitudes towards N vs NN accents of English in relation to effective communication, student expectations of their teachers' accents, and their own perceptions towards speaker's level of education. Student attitudes will be examined following age, gender, major, level of English upon admission, and current level of English proficiency. The results of the study are expected to lead to pedagogical implications on the models and practices followed at a tertiary level institution in Greece.

### 3. Method

#### *Participants*

A sample of 173 undergraduate Greek and international students was recruited. Participants were college students (18 years old and above; 82% of the sample was between 18-23 years of age), both male ( $N = 68$ ) and female ( $N = 105$ ), coming from 17 different majors as well as 5 different levels of English proficiency (Appendix B). Table 1 shows participants' information.

*Table 1 – Student variables examined in relation to attitudes towards english accent*

Gender	Male, Female
Age	18 - 20, 21 - 23, 24 - 26, 27 - above
High-School Education	Public, Private
Student Major	Liberal Arts and Sciences: English, Psychology, Communications, History, Art History, Sociology, Economics, Information Technology, Performing Arts Business: Accounting and Finance, Marketing, Management, Tourism and Hospitality, Computer Information Systems, Shipping Management, IBEA, Business Studies Undecided
Level of English upon Admission	Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, Post-Intermediate, Other
Current Level of English	Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, Advanced, Native-Like, Native

The sample was drawn from twelve classes of different disciplines, namely Linguistics, Psychology, History, Accounting and Finance, Economics, Mass Media and Communication, Professional Communication, Sociology, Performing Arts, English for Academic Purposes, and Writing Program.

### *3.1 Measures*

Considering methodologically similar studies (Tsuda, 2003; Wach, 2011), a questionnaire was constructed to study ACG student attitudes toward N and NN accent. The questionnaire consisted of six (6) items where students had to express on a 5-point Likert-type scale (*1 Strongly Agree, 2 Somewhat Agree, 3 Somewhat Disagree, 4 Strongly Disagree, and 5 No Opinion*) their opinions about N *vs* NN accent, their expectations for their teachers' accent, and their perceptions towards speaker's level of education. In addition, participants were asked to indicate their gender, age, high-school education, major, current level of English proficiency, as well as level of English upon admission to College ([Appendix C](#)).

### *3.2 Procedure*

The survey lasted two months. A questionnaire was initially designed and piloted in two classes of 15 students each. Piloting resulted in the refining of the questions so that issues of clarity may be addressed.

For the main study, questionnaires were distributed to the classrooms. To ensure a greater response rate, questionnaires were distributed in the presence of the teacher who had been contacted, fully explained the purpose and the nature of the study and had agreed for his/her class to participate in the survey. Students who wished to participate provided their informed consent ([Appendix D](#)), acknowledging the aim of the study, the procedure, the benefits that the study would yield, and their right to refuse or withdraw from participating. They then proceeded with the revised questionnaire. To ensure the best comprehensibility of the questionnaire, all questions were fully explained prior to its completion. Greek translation was also given in cases that participants had still minor issues of understanding. The procedure lasted 15-20 minutes.

## *4. Results*

The study sought to explore college students' attitudes towards N and NN

English accents. Descriptive statistics were used to examine data on student attitudes in relation to levels of tolerance to NN accent and communication, their expectations of teachers' accent, and their beliefs of speaker's level of education. Table 2 shows participants' responses (percentages) on the six items.

*Table 2 – Students' attitudes (percentages) toward native vs non-native english accent*

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
Tolerance towards Accented Speech	43.9	42.2	8.1	4	1.7
Accented Speech Mediating International Communication	21.9	39.1	17.8	5.9	15.4
International Accent as Medium of Instruction	15.1	46.5	18	9.9	10.5
Student Expectations of English Teachers' Accent	35.5	41.9	12.8	5.8	4.1
Student Expectations of ACG Teachers' Accent	23.7	39.3	18.5	14.5	4
Accented Speech and Speaker's Level of Education	16.3	31.4	22.7	26.7	2.9

Regarding student tolerance towards accented (NN) speech, students were asked to rank how acceptable it is to sound NN as long as they are understood by others. ACG students were found to be highly tolerant to NN accent(s). The vast majority of students (86.1%) thought that N accent is not vital in order to communicate successfully.

Regarding accented speech and communication, students were asked whether, in an international community, a NN accent can facilitate communication. The majority of the ACG participants (61%) saw NN accent as a facilitating factor in international communication, whereas 23.7% of respondents favored N norms for effective communication. It should be noted that a considerable percentage (15.4%) remained neutral.

Students were further asked whether it is acceptable to be taught 'international'<sup>4</sup> NN accent of English. Two-thirds of the respondents (61.6%) were positive to the idea to be taught international NN accent whereas less than a third (27.9%) indicated a negative attitude to the idea of international English. About 10% of the participants did not show any preference.

Regarding student expectations of English teachers' accent, participants were asked whether they expected their teachers of English to have native-like accent. The majority of ACG students questioned (77.4%) showed clear preference towards native-like accent by English language teachers. Only a relatively small percentage (18.6%) is open to NN pronunciation by English language teachers.

Accordingly, when students were asked whether they expected teachers of all disciplines at ACG to have native-like accent, more than half of the students questioned (63%) expected teachers of all disciplines at ACG to have N accent(s).

Last, regarding accented speech and speaker's educational level, participants were asked whether a native-like accent indicates a higher level of education and knowledge than NN accent. Almost half of the students (47.7%) associated N accent with level of education of the speaker, whereas the other half (49.7%) did not. Moreover, of those who were positive towards N accent, only 16.3% showed a very strong association between N accent and level of education.

Correlations were also carried out between student attitudes towards NN accent and communication, expectations of ACG teachers' accent, beliefs on speaker's level of education, as well as student gender, major, level of English upon admission, and current level of English proficiency.

Low but significant correlations were found between student beliefs in that it is acceptable to sound NN as long as you are understood by others, that NN accent can facilitate communication, and that it is acceptable to be taught international accent. A moderate correlation was found between students' expectations of ACG teachers' accent and English teachers' accent ( $r = 0.6, p < .005$ ). A low but significant correlation was also found between students' expectations of ACG teachers' accent and their beliefs of speaker's educational level ( $r = 0.3, p < .005$ ). No other correlations were found significant at the 0.05 level.

## 5. Discussion

The present study sought to explore ACG students' opinions about N and NN English accents. More specifically, student perceptions regarding the effectiveness of interactions, their expectations of their teachers' accent, as well as perceived speaker's level of education were measured and analyzed in relation to personal variables. Given the methodology followed, the scope of the research, the targeted participants, and the results obtained, this study

presents both similarities as well as differences with other studies conducted in different countries as well as in Greece.

First of all, in relation to NN accent tolerance and effective communication, on the whole, the participants voiced positive opinions about NN accent. Responses indicate that ACG students do not regard N accent(s) a significant feature in the context of their international communication. While these findings may contradict previous research (e.g. Timmis, 2002; Jenkins, 2009), they corroborate the results of other studies (He and Zhang, 2010; Tomak, 2011); in those studies, participants explained that «English is just a tool for communication» (He and Zhang, 2010: 778-779) and as such accent is of minor importance as long as speakers are intelligible and communication is achieved.

These findings might suggest a gradual shift in student attitudes towards NN accents and are in accord with Cogo (2010) who claims that perceptions might be slowly changing. Students in international settings are now more open to NN accents than before. This shift eventually could lead to re-evaluation of ELT practices and redesigning of ELT materials. Following Rubin's (2012) suggestion, training listeners to different Englishes should be given thorough consideration because pronunciation issues, and not grammar, are the most important causes of communication breakdowns (Walker, 2010).

The second question is related to student expectations for teachers' accent. The vast majority of the ACG participants showed a clear preference towards native-like accents. Seventy-seven percent expected English language teachers to have native-like pronunciation and surprisingly, sixty-three percent expected teachers in all disciplines at ACG to have native-like pronunciation.

Previous research confirms that the majority of students expect English teachers to have N accent (e.g. Jenkins, 2009; Pilus, 2013; Timmis, 2002). This is in accordance with teachers' attitudes as, in Greece, English language teachers themselves also favor N accent (Sifakis and Sougari, 2005). The conclusion we can draw is that ACG students have formed perceptions based on previous experience; their beliefs stem from teacher perceptions (Jenkins, 2007) which are N norm oriented as well as the textbooks used in ELT language classrooms, which are also heavily N norm bound. Factors as such are of fundamental importance in shaping student attitudes and perceptions towards N or NN English language accent(s).

Respondents also clearly associate teachers from all disciplines teaching in an English speaking institution (ACG) with particular 'standard' norms, such as RP and/or General American, possibly «as points of reference and

models for guidance» which can be approximated and used «more or less according to the demands of a specific situation», as Dalton and Seidlhofer suggest (1994, as cited in Jenkins, 1998: 124). Clearly, participants expect ACG teachers to have N accent which could be provided not as a norm but as an optimum option to which they can be exposed to, «given the freedom to approximate accordingly» (Pilus, 2013: 143). However, it may also be presumed that this is the case because students come to ACG presupposing teachers have N accent as ACG is an American institution despite its international nature.

When participants were asked to draw associations between accent and the speaker's educational status, they did not seem to indicate a clear stance. Almost half of them (47.7%) indicated a positive association between N accent with speaker's level of education and knowledge. These findings partly align with the Tsuda (2003) study where the majority of the Japanese students respect or envy good speakers of English at large. However, this is in contrast to previous research in which N accents are rated more favorably in reference to competence (Georgountzou, 2005; Jenkins, 2007) and intelligence (Scheuer, 2005).

Overall, small variation was observed among students in their beliefs about effective interactions and expectations of their teachers' accent, also reflected in low correlations. Accordingly, students' attitudes towards N and NN accent did not vary significantly with personal variables, such as, age, gender, major, or level of English proficiency.

### *5.1 Pedagogical Implications*

The study has a number of pedagogical implications. Our first concern as educators is to raise our learners' awareness to accept English as a diverse and multifunctional language (Matsuda, 2009), employed in several socio-economic and educational contexts. This will be possible if, following Jenkins' (2007) recommendation, both N and NN teachers as well as curricula designers make more informed decisions on selecting and designing materials which will address learner realistic needs.

This seems imperative since many students prepare either for graduate studies or employment in international business in various countries. Consequently, in alignment with the ELL objective set at the start of the paper, students need to become more accustomed, for example, to the accent and pronunciation of different interlocutors coming from diverse geographical locations. Hence, development of appropriate audio material as well as classroom activities that will increase learners' perceptive ability

towards the various phonological features of English language users should be incorporated in ELT teaching material.

The findings of the ACG study in fact indicate that EAPP materials may well be reconsidered. Inclusion of phonetically diverse audio material that would amplify student-users phonetic repertoire should be taken into consideration. Materials as such will emphasize «the legitimacy of variation» (Seidlhofer, 2004: 214) in different contexts and will ease our students' communication «in diverse language groups» (Bjørkman, 2011: 83) and intercultural contexts. Actually, a more detailed ACG students' needs analysis could lead to development of local (Canagarajah, 2005) or more precisely institutional material so that ACG students' realistic needs are better met.

### *5.2 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research*

The present research was a quantitative study. Future research should also employ qualitative methods, such as interviews and/or narratives and open-ended questions, which will probe into student minds. These may further explain participants' attitudes towards accented or not accented language. Students' possible unwillingness to strive for N accent, for example, may lend itself to further investigation; likewise, the paradox of choosing NN accent for themselves while at the same time expecting ACG teachers of all disciplines to have N accent(s) can be further researched using qualitative methods.

In addition, a comparative study between ACG and other tertiary or secondary level institutions in Greece – where English is used as the medium of instruction – would generalise subsequent findings on student attitudes. Adolescent population, in particular, could also be researched, as children have been found to vary in their beliefs and practices following their age (Lightfoot *et al.*, 2009).

## *6. Conclusions*

Summarising the findings on student attitudes, high tolerance levels towards international, NN accent(s) are identified. At the same time, participants consider that NN accent facilitates communication in international settings. Although English is necessary in international transactions and interactions, N accent is not vital as long as communication is achieved. In addition, N or native-like accents are not necessarily linked to speaker's level of education.

It is worth exploring issues surrounding particular opinions about N or NN accent(s) so as to present a more composite picture of student perspectives on teacher N or NN accent(s). We hope the present study will provide an attempt to further investigate student attitudes towards English accent(s) across the secondary and tertiary sectors. Learner input can contribute to the ELF theoretical considerations and particular pedagogical implications, taking into account student «subjective wants and their objective needs» (Prodromou, 2011).

<sup>1</sup> CLASSROOM in this paper refers to tertiary level as well as English language classroom as a whole. PRACTICES in this paper refers to methods as well as choices of English language material used.

<sup>2</sup> Hours of instruction range approximately from 4 to 7 per week and the course material includes inner circle commercially published textbooks as well as culturally bound literature.

<sup>3</sup> EFL learners: learners who have learned English by the use of the mainstream EFL material.

<sup>4</sup> INTERNATIONAL refers to pronunciation of English which is not identified by any specific variety.

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## APPENDIX A

Acceptable evidence of proficiency in English:

- Pearson Test of Academic English
- Michigan State University Certificate of English Language Proficiency (MSU-CELP)
- Michigan Proficiency Certificate
- Cambridge Proficiency Certificate
- Cambridge Advanced English (CAE) with Grade A only
- TOEFL (score 87 or higher on internet-based test)
- IELTS (score 6.5 or higher)
- GCE
- International Baccalaureate
- Graduation from an accredited English language high school/ institution
- Exchange/International students should have:
  - a grade point average [GPA/CI] of 3.00 or higher
  - remain in good academic standing throughout their participation in the Study Abroad On-Campus (ACG Admissions FAQs)

If none of the above is available, the candidate must take the English Placement Test administered by the College. Based on the results of the test, students are placed into the appropriate English for Academic Purposes Program or Writing Program course. The College uses the Oxford Online Placement Test (OOPT), which measures test takers' English language proficiency according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (American College of Greece, 2013).

## APPENDIX B

### *Frequencies of Student Variables*

	Frequencies
Age	
18-20	83
21-23	58
24-26	20
27-	12
Gender	
Male	68
Female	105
High-School Education	
Public	91
Private	82
Student Major	
English	16
Psychology	21
Communications	32
History	5
Art History	3
Sociology	4
Economics	4
Information Technology	6
Performing Arts	4
Accounting and Finance	29
Marketing	8
Management	19
Tourism and Hospitality	5
Computer Information Systems	4
Shipping and Management	5
IBEA	4
Business Studies	4

APPENDIX B

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Level of English upon Admission	
Pre-Intermediate	49
Intermediate	41
Post-Intermediate	70
Other	13
Current Level of English	
Pre-Intermediate	3
Intermediate	29
Advanced	84
Native-Like	38
Native	19

## APPENDIX C

### QUESTIONNAIRE

We are trying to identify perceptions towards the English language of students studying at The American College of Greece -DEREE (ACG). The findings of this study will help us address student needs, revisit teaching material, and raise awareness levels of current issues and practices in the teaching of English as a foreign language.

Gender                      M                      F  
                                                         

AGE \_\_\_\_\_

Names of Primary & Secondary Schools \_\_\_\_\_

Major at ACG \_\_\_\_\_

Identify (by circling the appropriate letter) your level of English.

a) Pre-Intermediate b) Intermediate c) Advanced d) Native-like e) Native

Tick the English class you were admitted to at ACG:

EN 1000     EN 1001     EN 1002     EN 1010     Other

Specify \_\_\_\_\_

Answer the following questions by ticking the appropriate box.

1. It is acceptable to sound non-native, as long as you are understood by others.

strongly agree		strongly disagree		no opinion	
somewhat agree		somewhat disagree			

2. In an international community, a non-native accent can facilitate communication.

strongly agree		strongly disagree		no opinion	
somewhat agree		somewhat disagree			

3. A native-like accent indicates a higher level of education and knowledge than a non-native accent.

strongly agree		strongly disagree		no opinion	
somewhat agree		somewhat disagree			

4. It is acceptable to be taught 'international'\* (see note below), non-native pronunciation of English.

strongly agree		strongly disagree		no opinion	
somewhat agree		somewhat disagree			

\* International Pronunciation of English is pronunciation not identified by any specific variety (i.e. American, British etc.).

5. I expect teachers of English to have native-like pronunciation.

strongly agree		strongly disagree		no opinion	
somewhat agree		somewhat disagree			

6. I expect teachers in all disciplines at ACG to have native-like pronunciation.

strongly agree		strongly disagree		no opinion	
somewhat agree		somewhat disagree			

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND PARTICIPATION!

## APPENDIX D

DEREE COLLEGE  
DEPARTMENT OF  
ENGLISH & MODERN  
LANGUAGES (LINGUISTICS)

APPROVAL FORM  
FOR RESEARCH  
INVOLVING HUMAN  
SUBJECTS

We are trying to identify perceptions about the English language of students studying at the American College of Greece-DEREE (ACG). The findings of this study will help us address student needs, revisit teaching material, and raise awareness levels of current issues and practices in the teaching of English as an International Language. If you accept to participate in this study, we can reassure you that your anonymity will be strictly kept.

Name and contact address of Researchers:

M. Ilkos <ilkosm@acg.edu> or A. Tsantila <ntsantila@acg.edu>

1. I agree to take part in the above study.
2. I confirm that I had the opportunity to ask questions to the questionnaire administrator.
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.
4. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications

Name: (optional)                      Date                      Signature

Name of Researcher                      Date                      Signature

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN OUR STUDY

NB: Please indicate whether you would like to be debriefed orally about the findings of this study. In case you want to be debriefed, please give us an email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Irena Vodopija-Krstanović

*Using ELF: Insights into Erasmus Students' Intercultural Experiences at a Croatian University*

ABSTRACT:

This paper is based on qualitative interviews with ten exchange students in the Erasmus Program at the University of Rijeka, Croatia. The aim of the study is to explore non-native English students' experiences in the light of their use of English in intercultural contact with speakers from different countries. The findings show different uses of English and complexity of interactions, and suggest that ownership of English no longer belongs to any particular group as ELF is negotiated through efforts and adjustments by all parties involved.

*Introduction*

Departing from the position that English is the undisputed lingua franca in academia central to international mobility (Mauranen, 2010) and effective intercultural contact among students from different L1 backgrounds, this paper explores Erasmus students' perceptions of their use of English at a Croatian University. In recent years, Europe has seen an unprecedented expansion of student and staff mobility through the Erasmus programme, which has sparked an increased demand for English as a common language of communication, and for practical knowledge of intercultural communication (IC). The Erasmus programme has numerous benefits as it «enriches students' lives in the academic and professional fields, improves language learning, develops intercultural skills, self-reliance and self-awareness» (Erasmus website, n.d.). It is evident that, «[i]ntercultural competence is both the outcome and the essential prerequisite of student residence abroad» (Coleman, 1998: 197).

One of the greatest impacts of the Erasmus programme is that it has directly contributed to the internationalization of academia (cf. Doiz *et al.*, 2011: 346), and to “the adoption of English in [higher education]...” (Coleman, 2006: 4). Given that traditionally «the vast majority

of European universities recruited students nationally or even locally» (Doiz *et al.*, 2011: 346), Erasmus has changed the face of academia. Consequently, «Erasmus students have become pioneers of a networked Europe, based on personal relationships [and] communication in new *lingua francas...*» (Olive-Serret, 2009: 102). It is estimated that by 2020 as many as 6 million students will be studying outside their home countries (Hughes, 2008), many of whom will be using English, the most popular language in Erasmus (Coleman, 1998).

Evidently, with the internationalization of Universities English has become the dominant language (Coleman, 2006; Phillipson, 2006) which has transformed traditionally monolingual universities into contexts where students are exposed to and use a diversity of Englishes. The students use English for academic purposes as well as exchanges in everyday situations, and in the process, they adapt the language in *lingua franca* interactions.

However, in order to be able to function with individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds during mobility and residence abroad, knowledge of (the English) language is not sufficient, and apart from linguistic knowledge, students also need to acquire intercultural communicative competence (cf. Byram and Zarate, 1997; Fantini, 2012). Specifically they need an amalgam of knowledge, attitudes, skills and awareness i.e., a complex of abilities to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself (Fantini, 2007: 12). Given that international communication in ELF is, by its very nature intercultural (Meierkord, 2000), students in foreign contexts need to be prepared for intercultural communication not only to be able to make themselves understood but also to be accepted behaviorally and interactionally (Fantini, 1997; 2012).

In brief, in today's globalized world and internationalised European academic settings, the use of English is central to the multifarious intercultural contacts. The use of English as a *lingua franca* in intercultural communication in academia involves the functional use of a language to achieve communication in a non-native English speaking *lingua franca* cultural setting. This is particularly the case of institutions "in countries whose national language(s) are little taught elsewhere and mobility is possible only through a common language, i.e. English (Coleman, 2006: 5).

In light with these views, the aim of this paper is to provide insight into Erasmus students' perspectives on their experiences of use of English as a *lingua franca* for IC at a (predominantly monolingual) Croatian University. The paper is organised as follows: in the next section, we look at the notion of English as a *lingua franca* relative to intercultural communication in

academia. In section 3, the study and the findings are presented. Finally, in the last section, some concluding remarks are offered.

### *1. English as a lingua franca and intercultural communication in academia*

It is widely known that today English has become the global lingua franca for international communication. With more non-native speakers than native speakers of the language, the ownership of English has become 'denationalized', and it is no longer the sole property of the native speakers (House, 2003; Widdowson, 1994). In fact, «many non-native speakers may never encounter a NS of English, let alone have the need to communicate with one» (Bucklede, 2010: 141). Hence, ELF used between any L2 users and L2-L1 users of English (McKay and Bockhorst-Heng, 2008) reflects the diversity and complexity of using English internationally (Rudby and Saraceni, 2006). Moreover, it is the realistic language (Seidlhofer, 2003) which primarily has a communicative function in international multilingual contexts (cf. Freidrich and Matsuda, 2010). As such it comprises the uses of English within and across Kachru's circles for intranational as well as international communication, and features that do not conform to native speaker standard are widely used and accepted (Seidlhofer, 2005, 2011). According to this, it follows that ELF is characterised by «functional flexibility [in] many different domains» (House, 2003: 557) and «[t]here is no one variety that is or can be used successfully in all situations of international communication» (Matsuda, 2012: 19).

If English reflects the reality of uses across the world, it is a «contact language between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common national culture for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication» (Firth, 1996: 240). As speakers of different L2 backgrounds communicate in English they make use of their multilingual resources. These multilingual speakers will use English for utilitarian purposes, i.e. as a communication tool (Bjorkman, 2003; Saraceni, 2008; House, 2003) and their pragmatic competence is not centred on the native speaker (and conventional native speaker norms), but rather on the intercultural speaker.

Clearly, in ELF intercultural communication the interlocutors come from different L1 backgrounds; however, they have probably also learned lingua-cultural English NS norms (Meierkord, 2000). Nevertheless, in the use of ELF, they do not necessarily follow the native speaker norms as they negotiate their sociolinguistic identities (cf. Grazzi, 2010), and multifaceted

cultural backgrounds. Hence, the speakers of ELF will not develop a cultural affinity with the language or attempt to represent their identities through English but merely use it as a communication tool while maintaining their own cultural identities (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). As Fiedler (2011: 79) explains, «a language of communication is used for practical communicative purposes, and due to its primary functional nature, correctness or particular stylistic and cultural features associated with the speech community from which this language originates are less important». On the other hand, as she points out, a language of identification means a language which is learnt in order to be integrated into and identify with the respective speech community, which is hardly the case of the majority of speakers of English. Hence, users of ELF do not identify with English and concerns with culture are irrelevant for ELF (Edmondson and House, 2003) as they create a 'linguistic masala' and assume membership distinct from the native speakers (Meierkord, 2002).

In line with these views, it is doubtful whether native speaker communication patterns and cultural beliefs (Kumaravadivelu, 2012) are relevant in ELF intercultural interactions in academia. Hence ELF in intercultural communication is a negation process of knowledge attitude skills and awareness of the 'other' (cf. Fantini, 2012), distinct from a specific native-speaker culture and as such reflects negotiation of a variety of pragmatic and cultural norms. However, the use of ELF in intercultural communications may be a challenging feat as it is difficult to predict the interlocutors and their (scanty) shared lingua-cultural knowledge (Mauranen, 2005). In the diversity of contexts in which ELF is used, speakers cannot rely on «preconstituted forms of meaning» but rather have to resort to «complex pragmatic strategies that help them negotiate their variable form accordingly» (Pedrazzini and Nava, 2010: 288). In fact, there has been much debate as to whether «the lack of shared knowledge and sociocultural framing between ELF speakers of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds is likely to lead to misunderstanding and communication difficulties, as participants will rely on the norms of their mother tongue and native culture to interpret meaning» (Cogo, 2010: 296).

Curiously, though, in spite of the global spread of English as a lingua franca used in intercultural communication, research on intercultural communication has largely focused on non-native speaker – native speaker contact and interaction, and rarely on interaction among non-native speakers of a language (Meierkord, 2000). A case in point is Fantini's claim that it is necessary to help «students develop the knowledge, attitude, skills, and awareness that will foster development of the competence

they need for English-speaking contexts» (Website *eslminiconf*, 2011). However, he does concede that «we need to rethink how to prepare individuals for intercultural participation using multiple languages», as not all interaction will take place in English (Fantini, 2012: 270). The dominance of NS norms in intercultural communication could be due to the fact that «English is the lingua franca in most intercultural research, and it may seem obvious to use [...] norms established in an English-speaking country», which are however, usually based on American or British English (Van de Vijer and Leung, 2009: 414). In view of the fact that NS norms dominate intercultural communication, direct objections should be raised against the prominent role of native-speaker English as it does not reflect the multitude of uses and users of ELF in international academic communities.

An interesting observation regarding the unrealistic supremacy of native-speaker English in academia is that it probably stems from the fact that the international educational scene and student mobility have been dominated by institutions from English-speaking countries (Hughes, 2008). In fact, only recently have universities in non-English-speaking countries joined the bandwagon to compete on the higher education markets with «Anglo-Saxon cultures» (Hughes, 2008: 119). Hence, the changing academic realities have raised awareness of the variety of contexts of uses of English in non-English speaking academic environments. Indeed, «most of the uses that language is put in academia brings English in contact with other languages and is being carried out in ELF» (Mauranen, 2010: 10). After all, academia is a typical lingua franca domain as it is «international», «mobile», and «dependent on English» (Mauranen, 2010: 7).

## *2. The study*

### *2.1 The aim and research questions*

The aim of the study is to explore international students' perceptions of the use of English as a lingua franca in a non-native English speaking academic context.

This study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1. What are Erasmus students' experiences of ELF communication at UNIRI?

RQ2. What skills and competences are needed for successful intercultural interaction?

RQ3. To what extent is native speaker English and the notion of correctness relevant for non-native interactions in English?

### *2.2 The participants and context*

The participants in the study comprised 10 Erasmus students from Poland, Spain, Slovenia and Slovakia studying at three Faculties at the University of Rijeka, namely The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management. All the students were non-native speakers of English studying in English and/or Croatian. The mean age of the participants was 20.7 years. In terms of their level of English, they reported to be at the B1/B2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

The context where the research took place is the University of Rijeka (UNIRI), which with approximately 16,800 students, is the second largest University in Croatia. Mobility to UNIRI was initiated in 2008 when the precursor to Erasmus, the *Mobility Pilot Programme*, was launched (Lenac, 2008: 41). A year later, in 2009, UNIRI was awarded the Erasmus Charter. By the end of the academic year 2013/2014, UNIRI had signed 260 Erasmus agreements and realized 154 incoming and 366 outgoing student mobilities. In 2012/2013, when the research was carried out, there was a total of 80 incoming students at UNIRI.

It should be noted that the sample in this study is not considered to be in any way representative of Erasmus students at UNIRI, but rather provides insights into the participants' views and understandings regarding the use and dominant discourse on English.

### *2.3 Method*

The method used to collect the data comprised of qualitative interviews which lasted between 20-30 minutes. All the interviews were audio recorded and conducted in English. Following the qualitative paradigm, the objective of the interviews was to gain understanding of the participants' views and experiences (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003). In other words, the interviews provided opportunities for the participants to present their understandings and experiences of use the English as a lingua franca in a non-native English-speaking academic context (cf. King and Horrocks, 2010). The interview questions elicited, among other, the participants' use of English and their understandings of intercultural communication. Another aspect that was investigated was the notion of «knowledge of English» and the role of English

at the University and the broader context. The students were also invited to elaborate on their prior English language learning experience, and its relevance for the use of English in the mobility programme. Based on their experience as students in a foreign context, they were encouraged to explain what knowledge and skills were necessary to be able to interact appropriately in culturally diverse settings, and to identify the potential challenges they faced. In addition, questions were posed to inquire as to why the participants had decided to take part in the Erasmus programme and study at UNIRI.

### *2.3.1 The conceptual framework*

The conceptual framework used for analysing the data is based on the four dimensions of intercultural communication KASA (*knowledge, attitudes, skills, and awareness*) (Fantini, 2012: 272). Specifically, KASA consists of the following components: a) knowledge about language norms, behaviour and culture, b) positive attitudes, openness and tolerance towards others, c) skills to adjust behaviour and interact appropriately, and d) awareness of differences, similarities and levels of competence.

While all these dimensions are fundamental for intercultural communication, questions are raised as to what knowledge, attitudes, awareness and skills are relevant for ELF interactions in academic contexts. Specifically, if we consider language norms, cultural understanding and appropriate behaviour, in the light of ELF, a justifiable argument is that they will differ from the ones needed in English speaking countries or in interaction with native speakers of English. This being so, the four domains of intercultural communication are contingent on context and participants. Let us now turn at the findings in the light of the data and KASA conceptual framework.

## *2.4 Findings*

In general, the findings suggest that knowledge of English is limited to the use of language skills. Linguistic knowledge and accuracy are not deemed important in student interactions, and English is viewed as a shared language used for socializing with other students and members of the host community. When used for specific academic purposes, however, reference is made to accuracy and competency and the participants have reported some difficulties using the language appropriately. In terms of students' attitudes towards English, they view it as a tool that will enable cultural contact. The participants also display awareness of their levels of language competences and notice differences between students' English. The notion of the native speaker of English and native speaker discourse

seems to be relevant only to one student (language major). Overall, when using ELF, the students do not report misunderstandings or communication difficulties, regardless of interlocutors and their L1 backgrounds.

*i. Knowledge of English for socialisation and academic purposes*

In terms of the knowledge needed, students point to differences in needs when using English for academic purposes and socializing. In both cases, the ultimate goal is to be communicatively competent and be able to interact appropriately with speakers of different lingua-cultural backgrounds. Accuracy, though desirable, is not central to interaction and establishing relations, while it is primarily important to be able convey the message in English and to be understood. When using the language, the students do not reflect on the language and its pragmatic components, but rather use it intuitively focusing on establishing relationship with others.

«I never think about how well ... I'm speaking English ... I'm just using it. When I am go out with the students I am using English and it's important that we're understanding each other.»  
(Interview extract S1)

«I have luck because I find friends here... they are nice, yes very. I think you only need to know how to speak and then there is no problems. It doesn't matter where am I from or where are the students from. We speak in English.»  
(Interview extract S8)

The extracts suggest that English, by default, seems to guarantee understanding among participants and the students, regardless of the fact that they come from different L1 backgrounds, and thus share little cultural knowledge. They make no reference to NS norms of interaction and the country of origin of the speakers does not appear to be a barrier, as students share other commonalities which helps them find mutual grounds that foster intercultural communication (cf. Cogo, 2010). For the majority of the participants, this is the only realistic and authentic situation in which they have used the language in intercultural communication (cf. Seidlhofer, 2003), as the following extract suggests:

«I learn English from 8 years but in Poland ... I don't have opportunity to speak English ... so I went to Erasmus and I knew I would speak in English.»  
(Interview extract S9)

It would appear that non-native (ELF) contexts are seen as the only relevant situations of language use appropriate for the development of English. In fact, the opportunity to practice English is seen as a valid reason for taking part in Erasmus. The participants explain that the main reason for using English is for interaction in intercultural contact and socialization. Nationality and origin of the interlocutor is not deemed relevant. While it has been suggested that for appropriate language use it is necessary to understand the cultural dimension of language to avoid becoming «fluent fools» (Bennett, 1997: 16-21), it is questionable whether these particular students have an understanding of the cultural dimension of native-speaker English, and whether it is relevant in the contexts of Erasmus mobility. For the participants, the UNIRI academic context provides an authentic use of English.

Reference is made to the Croatian language as a means of enhancing students' lingua cultural understanding of the host community. The Erasmus students take Croatian intensive language courses; however, they rarely use the language due to inadequate language skills. They make use of the cultural understanding of Croatian gained in the course and resort to the use of English as a language of communication (but not cultural identification) (cf. Felder, 2011). The extract that follows illustrates this point.

«I'm using English ... I learned Croatian in language course here but just some basic so I mean I don't know enough so I have to speak in English ... but it's like ... like with computer you just have to know how and to use it and ... you don't think about it. What you learn about the Croatian people and your country helps us so we can speak better, understand better ...»

(Interview extract S9)

In line with the above, English in intercultural contact seems to have little reference to native speaker English and native-speaking contexts, but rather depends on the shared interpretation of the local context.

*ii. Attitudes towards English (lingua franca) and the native speaker ideal*

Mention has been made that students of different backgrounds use English as a lingua franca at UNIRI. However, they said that the teaching of English as a foreign language at school primarily focused on standard British and/or American English, and no reference was made to English as a lingua franca. This is not surprising as English language teaching methodology is premised on the belief that students need to learn the language to interact with native speakers and to function in inner circle countries. However, reality is far removed from this ideal and participants

seem to have little use of the native speaker standard as they actually rarely speak with native speakers, let alone visit English-speaking countries (cf. Buckledee, 2010). Moreover, unequal symmetry in native speaker – non-native speaker interaction may set unrealistic expectations on students, and thus cause language anxiety resulting from an extensive focus on the language in the interaction process.

«It's same ... if it's British or it's American at school we had British it's the original one but ... I only spoke three times to British, I don't really think there are these opportunities ... If I would speak to English I would be more focused ... on mistakes.. if you think you make a mistake ... then you feel nervous.»  
(Interview extract S2)

«I like American and I learn it from movies and I would like to go to America but until now I didn't and I didn't speak with real Americans.»  
(Interview extract S2)

The extracts show that while language may be associated with inner circle countries, these contexts are not particularly relevant for non-native English speaking students who mainly interact with other non-native speaking students in higher education institutions throughout Europe. Nevertheless, the status and leverage of the native speaker ideal was underscored by a language student who stated that she would have rather gone to an English-speaking context, but due to financial constraints, opted for mobility to Croatia, as second best. In her opinion, the advantage of native speaker countries is that it provides better opportunities to learn the language.

«S: And I haven't found yet the chance to go to the UK ... I don't want to be a babysitter...  
I: Ok  
S: And I wanted to go there to try to do something else ... not ... not by myself  
I: So ... that ... you think that you would need to go to an English speaking country?  
S: Definitely ... because I am hearing things that we never heard before... we watch American films and they are not that sophisticated as the English ones and they ... there're a lot of expressions that I've never heard and people would ask me ... never heard of that?  
I: What do you mean never heard of that?  
S: Yes ... Yes ... some expressions...that are very common there ... but we never heard of them or we don't think of them that

fast [...] it just improves your language because I mean ... language is something that's ... very vivid ... so that's why.»  
(Interview extract S10)

Evidently, the student associates English-speaking countries with authenticity and considers them to be the only place where the language can be learned appropriately. In terms of knowledge of English, the participant believes that she should improve her level and should be able to understand aspects of the language that are not used frequently. She seems to aspire towards the unattainable native speaker ideal, and fears negative evaluation if she doesn't demonstrate appropriate knowledge of the language. Furthermore, she holds that in English-speaking contexts, fluency would be gained. This attitude could stem from the social pressure and unrealistic expectations (of teachers of English) regarding the attainment of native speaker ideal.

### *iii. Skills for interacting and studying in English*

As for the skills needed, students believe that English at the B1 or B2 level is sufficient for studying abroad, in particular as their skills improve through interaction and practice.

«We have to pass the exam of language before going to Erasmus ... I wanted to go to France but I didn't pass the exam of French and then ... I focused on English ... I did my best to study English [...] We have to be at B1 or maybe ... B2. It's difficult at the beginning but later it's easier when you use it more.»  
(Interview extract S6)

However, when considering their academic language competencies, it would seem that a somewhat higher level is needed for studying in English. In fact, it is necessary to make a distinction between knowledge of English for communication (Basic Interpersonal Skills) and academic English (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) (cf. Cummins, 1999; Doiz *et al.*, 2013) and students admit facing some challenges in using productive skills, i.e. speaking and writing for academic purposes, as the extract shows:

«Sometime I have problem writing in English because in Poland I didn't have subject in English this is the first time ... but ... the professor they don't ... look at English but if you learned something ... so it's not such big problem.»  
(Interview extract S4)

Students indicate that English is important in academic contexts for understanding and conveying the content and concede that knowledge of specific language skills like writing are necessary for studying in English. However, English has an instrumental purpose in academia, and the professors conceptualize English as ELF, and thus pay little attention to language accuracy, but rather focus on what they deem to be important, knowledge of the subject content.

Another point raised relative to intercultural interaction in academic settings is that speakers who come from different L1 backgrounds may lack background cultural knowledge of appropriate student-teacher interactions (cf. Hofstede, 2001). In the following extract, a student explains that it is difficult to gauge one's communicative competence in English, prior to use of the language in authentic situations, and expresses some concern regarding appropriate student-teacher interaction.

«I didn't know if I ... my English is good ... or If I would have problems but they don't speak very fast so I can understand everything ... only I had problem in consultations and professor ... she gave us a lot of papers and we didn't know what's more important what's not important ... material in English and ... It was difficult. I didn't know what I could ask the professor and should I come to her when I need something»  
(Interview extract S3)

In brief, the skills needed to perform in the academic environment are speaking and writing. In formal interaction, the participants use ELF in accordance with local norms, and underscore the importance of understanding the cultural aspects of the Croatian educational context. Again, native English speaker (cultural) norms do not appear to be relevant for communication and academic work as student focus on the communicative potential of the language.

#### *iv. Awareness of English in intercultural communication*

It is generally accepted that Erasmus raises awareness of others, and through international experience, develops intercultural communicative competence. The participants emphasize the role of English in the Erasmus programme, and underscore that mobility would not be possible without a common language. They are aware of the transactional value of English used for communicative purposes and maintain that English brings people together. Indeed, it is perceived as a lingua franca, which fosters intercultural awareness and understanding.

«We are all students ... few foreigners ... but the majority they are from Croatia ... but also some Erasmus students and we had a really good experience here with everything and ... you know ... I will come back for sure next summer ... I learn a lot and I have the chance to speak English I am using it more ... yes and ... I never been before away from home ... I learn much about life here and people ...»  
 (Interview extract S7)

Interestingly, the students make no mention of problems in communicating or establishing relationships, although they had no formal training in intercultural communication. In fact, they believe knowledge of English is sufficient for effective intercultural communication. Overall, they have positive attitudes towards the host culture and, for many, Erasmus is the first opportunity to study abroad and live in a different lingua-cultural context.

«Did you have any training at home ... preparation for studying and living in a different culture? Intercultural communication training?  
 S: In English?  
 I: In general, or possibly when you studied English or any other language ... the intercultural aspect?  
 S: No ... not ... we just have to know English, but if we know English we can speak and learn in different countries ... no? I think you are competent with English. You don't need more ... just need to be open, friendly, nothing else, only speak, communicate.»  
 (Interview extract S5)

The extract shows that students believe that intercultural communication will take care of itself, as long as they can communicate. The students do not express an orientation to linguistic and cultural norms of native English speakers, but maintain that the English language enables understanding, and no additional skills and competences are necessary for successful cross-cultural contact.

«English is very useful for ... how could we study in different countries? If we didn't have English ... I couldn't be in Croatia ... yes I don't know how would I speak with everyone ... German, Spanish Romanian [...].»  
 (Interview extract S1)

In light of the data presented, it is evident that English is paramount to international education and student mobility. The language helps develop

a sense of interconnectedness among students from different countries. Through experience in an international context, students use English to negotiate intercultural understanding in academic-related matters and everyday situations.

### *Concluding remarks*

This study has gone some way towards enhancing understanding of the use of English in a non-English speaking academic context in Croatia. Given that English is the lingua franca of academia, insights into students' understandings of the use of English and the challenges they face could help develop more accurate expectations in intercultural communication and raise awareness of the need to develop a more relevant language pedagogy for teaching English. Furthermore, the findings have shed light on what type of pre-Erasmus preparation students might benefit from.

Generally speaking, the participants see English as a functional tool for social interaction and academic activities. Furthermore, English is perceived to be sufficient for establishing intercultural contact among peers. While some participants acknowledge the significance of inner circle countries and relate English to the US and UK, only a language major made reference to the significance of the NS ideal. Overall, the participants use English to establish and maintain relationships, learn about the local culture and negotiate understandings in interaction with peers. Socialization seems to be a significant aspect of the use of English as a lingua franca in academia and a central feature of Erasmus. In our particular context, ELF is «... a communicative instrumen[t ] an individual has at his/her disposal, a useful and versatile tool, a 'language for communication'». (House, 2003: 561).

Finally, as directions for further research, it would be necessary to conduct studies in different academic contexts and include a wider sample of participants from different lingua-cultural backgrounds (including members of the host culture) to gain a more comprehensive insight into the role English plays in intercultural communication and the Erasmus programme.

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ELF IN BUSINESS AND ACADEMIA



Alessia Cogo

*'They all Take the Risk and Make the Effort': Intercultural  
Accommodation and Multilingualism in a BELF Community  
of Practice*

ABSTRACT:

ELF research has showed that processes of accommodation are more important than linguistic correctness according to a NS model. Recently more studies have explored accommodation, pragmatic and multilingual strategies in different ELF corpora of naturally-occurring exchanges. However, what research still needs to address is how the participants themselves orient to these phenomena, how they view the idea of prioritizing effective communication instead of accuracy, as well as issues of ownership and nativeness versus the multilingual speaker. This paper addresses the views of business professionals through ethnographic interviews in a BELF community of practice. Findings show that professionals tend to prioritize intercultural accommodation and show open attitudes towards multilingual resources and non-nativeness in ELF. They also report challenges to their communication, which they overcome by relying on a shared repertoire and multilingual resources. Other reported challenges concern the company's language policy and the access to languages other than English. Finally, it is argued that more research needs to address the link between sociolinguistic investigations of naturally-occurring corpus data with ethnographic explorations of practices and ideologies at the local level, both in ELF groups generally and ELF communities of practice specifically.

*Introduction*

When professionals communicate in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) their main aim is not to display their language ability, or to improve their proficiency, but to deal with their business, to carry on with their professional practice. Language is still an important aspect of their work, but their concern is not with how to sound or speak like native speakers, but with how they can make their communication effective, despite linguistic and socio-cultural differences. More recent studies on ELF

have placed considerable attention on accommodation processes— the work done by a speaker to change and adapt one's communication to the interlocutors, their socio-cultural background or the socio-cultural context of the exchange. Accommodating difference in ELF communication (Cogo, 2009) has actually been found to be more important than linguistic correctness in terms of grammatical or lexical features, especially in facilitating and negotiating understanding (Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey 2011; Mauranen 2012; Seidlhofer 2011). In business context particularly, content and clarity are considered to be more relevant than correctness according to a normative, English 'native speaker' model.

The recently developed interest in ELF processes rather than features has also contributed to an increase in research into pragmatics, especially the strategies used to make communication effective (Cogo, 2010; Kaur 2009; Mauranen, 2006; Pitzl, 2005). Among these, multilingual strategies, both avert and covert, have been explored (Cogo, 2012; Hülmbauer, 2011; Klimpfinger, 2009) as part of ELF communication as a contact language in a contact zone (Pratt, 1991). However, especially in recent years, research in professional and workplace communication has increasingly become corpus-based and it has provided interesting findings in terms of sociolinguistic descriptions. What corpus-based research cannot provide, though, is the perspective of the participants, how they feel about communication or other aspects of their profession. The view of the participants, as ELF users, is the interest of this paper, which focuses on attitudes and orientations towards ELF communication, including the central aspects of accommodation and multilingual strategies. This study also focuses on a specific business community of practice that has been working with English in international contexts for a while, and may thus provide more 'developed' views of communication in their field and of the potential challenges.

In the remainder of the paper, I will briefly explore the research in BELF before introducing the business community of participants working in corporate investment that I investigated. Their views on intercultural accommodation and multilingual aspects will be the focus of the central part of the paper. I will then argue that the emphasis on the native/non-native dichotomy when describing ELF users does not seem to hold for this BELF community. Instead, the key aspects of BELF communication are expertise in the business and knowledge of the common repertoire, which also includes intercultural accommodation.

1. *A brief introduction to Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF)*

I use the term BELF in relation to the domain of use of English as a Lingua Franca by business professionals (Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Louhiala-Salminen *et al.*, 2005). The 'B' of Business is, in other words, an indication of the area of expertise within which professionals operate in an international English environment (see Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey, 2011 for domain of ELF use), where their use of English is closely connected to their work practices and to the global business communities they are part of and interact with.

Most BELF research so far has pointed to a general awareness that content and clarity are more important than form and 'correctness' in relation to an ENL model. In Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2010)'s study of BELF everyday communication English is seen as part of the job – it is 'simply work'. They conducted a questionnaire and interviews concerning BELF communication and found that professionals need to be able to discuss business-related issues, which are key for communicative success in BELF interactions, rather than using English according to ENL norms. Their results confirmed previous studies (see, for instance, Ehrenreich, 2009) in relation to the fact that work in BELF is more effective when the parties share the topic and the specific practices of their genre. BELF participants report that misunderstandings are extremely rare since the shared business context helps when other aspects might be lacking.

This should not be surprising since in general we tend to understand people better when they are similar to us, either because they work in the same field or because they have the same interests. This is also justified in terms of perceived relevance: people may perceive certain aspects as more relevant to them in general, and to their professional life in particular, than others. So, knowledge of the specific professional area of expertise is considered more important than linguistic knowledge, because people tend to focus on aspects that more are relevant to their life and work. So, while in linguistic areas professionals tend to remain attached to ENL standards (Jenkins, 2007) because these remain relevant in their work perspective, in BELF studies, professionals tend to focus on getting the job done (Ehrenreich, 2009). The difference can be seen along a cline of more language-oriented individuals and more content-oriented individuals. This seems to be the case even when age difference is considered. Cogo (2011) found these diverging tendencies in her study of school pupils' perceptions of ELF and language change where the young linguist constructed her comments in terms of necessity to conform to and protect standard

English while the young non-linguist displayed positive perceptions to ELF and its communicative effectiveness. Jenkins (2007)'s monograph on attitudes of ELT practitioners' also found prevalent negative perceptions of ELF among adult linguists.

It is now an established finding of BELF research that business professionals have been shown to prioritize clarity of message over grammar accurateness as an essential aspect of their communication. Competence in English is commonly conceptualized as strictly related to business knowledge of a particular genre and communicative practices of the professionals' own business areas. Being or becoming a professional in a business context is therefore about learning and contributing to an enterprise-centred repertoire and practicing a more pragmatic approach to communication (Cogo, 2012; Ehrenreich, 2009; Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2010) even when this conflicts with the professionals' previous education and educational requirements concerning English.

Most BELF studies agree on certain main aspects of BELF communication. For one, as highlighted above, content and clarity are more important than correctness according to ENL model. Secondly, that accommodation skills are a key component of successful intercultural BELF communication. In fact, research has shown that competence in business ELF is associated with accommodation skills and business knowledge (Cogo, 2012; Ehrenreich, 2011; Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen, 2010), including the use of and reliance on multilingual resources. Cogo's (2009) work on accommodation strategies in ELF small talk conversations emphasizes the key role of a number of convergence strategies, among which repetition and code-switching, and more recently, translanguaging (Cogo, 2012). This work has shown that «adaptive accommodation skills along with appreciation and acceptance of diversity» (2009: 270) are crucial for the successful accomplishment of communication. Other strategies include pre-realization and post-trouble source strategies that can be used to prevent and solve non-understanding problems (Cogo and Dewey, 2012). All these strategies underline the importance of intercultural accommodation skills and the need to engage with, and possibly negotiate, sociocultural differences in BELF communication.

### *1.1 The question of nativeness versus a multilingual speaker*

Another important focus of (B)ELF work so far has been on the nature of the 'English' aspect of communication and the emphasis on the English native/non-native dichotomy. Hülmbauer (2009), for instance, finds that

the speakers' shared non-nativeness is one of the main characteristics of ELF communication and possibly the main ingredient for successful exchanges.

The emphasis on nativeness is also common in BELF-related studies. Charles and Marschan-Piekkari (2002) investigated communication within a multinational corporation (henceforth MNC) that had adopted English as the company's official language. The survey and interviews revealed that there were a number of communication problems within the company, and one of their most interesting findings (for this study) is the identification of a native speaker problem. The researchers found that English non-native speakers had more difficulties understanding native speakers rather than non-native speakers of English. As a result, the authors recommended that the native speakers too be included in communication training. This was the result of a large study of a big MNC covering various aspects of communication and did not concentrate on communication among members of local or domain specific teams. However, Rogerson-Revell (2008) researched communication between professionals at the European Commission meetings and also noticed that native speakers of English had the tendency to create problems in the meetings. And although the participants in Rogerson-Revell's study are part of a community of professionals that work in a specific domain, they did not form a community of practice in the sense that they had not established regular exchanges and the 'mutual engagement' aspect of the CoP was not present. In these studies, which may deal with different parts of a business and produce large-scale surveys of the whole MNC, attitudes and practices of specific teams or smaller groups are not necessarily considered. In other cases, such as the Rogerson-Revell's study, the community is smaller and deals with a specific area of business, but the members are not necessarily in regular contact.

Similarly, Sweeney and Zhu Hua (2010) also focus on the native/non-native distinction. They research the extent to which native and non-native respondents accommodate in discourse completion tasks and find that native speakers are less efficient at accommodating in communication than non-native speakers of English. The authors also suggest that native speakers would benefit from intercultural training so as to raise awareness of their own communication style.

The papers explored so far, while informative and relevant for the present research, focus on a number of business institutions, but do not concern communities of practices. In those studies the linguistic criterion is found to be crucial for successful communication. However, as I will

suggest in the rest of this paper, when we engage with communities of practice the linguistic criterion, and especially the native / non-native distinction within it, is only one aspect of communication, and not necessarily the most important one for successful intercultural exchanges. Being part of the same business community seems a lot more relevant in domain specific communication, as shown by participants in Section 3. Before I analyse participants' views on this topic, I would like to introduce the community under study.

## *2. The BELF community of practice*

The study is based on a BELF community of practice (CoP) working in corporate investment. The investigation focuses on a team of 17 participants, who share the same business area of expertise and have established regular contacts among team members. The emphasis on a specific CoP makes this study different from previous, larger studies in BELF, which focused on big corporations or on large communities. And though not all ELF/BELF communities need to be CoPs, studying ELF in CoPs provides rich contexts for the investigation not only of language use, but the important aspect of how attitudes, ideologies and identities influence language use and how repertoires are co-constructed and emerge in this interaction.

The team in this study works for a multinational banking corporation, with branches all over the world, and with a financial hub in Italy. They share an office and engage in a specific aspect of the MNC work, corporate investment, which constitutes their practice. There are 10 core people, who work together on a daily basis and share various projects, but each individual is also part of other CoPs inside the MNC. In this study, both core people and more marginal members were interviewed for a total of 17 participants and almost 20 hours of interviews recording.

This study is not an attempt to generalize in relation to ELF practices, and it is not meant to provide tendencies in relation to attitudes in intercultural contexts. The interviews, which form the basis of this study, are very much co-constructed events where the interviewer is as much involved in constructing a certain direction and interpretation of the interview discourse as the interviewees. In this respect, the observation data helped in providing insights into their interpretation of business intercultural practices. However, the interest here has been on how participants make sense of intercultural experiences; what especially came out of this is the emphasis on them being a special community, an international

community of practice, where intercultural experiences are their daily practices. This is a community of practice from the participants' perspective, rather than the researcher, and the emic insights into their practices are important for how they construct intercultural encounters in ELF.

Although based in Italy, the team works in international investment and English is a key aspect of communication at work. Their use of BELF, however, is not concerned with being native and, instead, it is rather multilingual in practice. In fact, English is mixed with Italian in Italian business communication. Previous studies of Italian companies' communication practices confirm the tendency of seeing English as a necessary and inevitable component of business communication, whereby English is not only used as a *lingua franca*, but is integrated in the Italian corporate genre. As Poncini and Turra explain, 'The use of English specialized lexis in Italian interaction in corporate settings has now become a linguistic routine, especially for the younger generations of managers' (2008: 177).

The community explored in this paper reflects on how being a member of the CoP makes communication smoother, by allowing the creation and co-construction of a shared repertoire of resources, such as shared ways of communicating, like jargon, procedures, policies, all tools that they use and co-construct to make communication easier and possible. It is clear that this community shares '[w]ays of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations' (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992: 8) and not only 'non-nativeness'. What they also share is beliefs, values and power relations, which are not normally given much space in the CoP concept, but they are very important to understand the specific practices and how the community orients to them. In fact, the analysis of attitudes is paramount for understanding practices and participants' membership of the community. Gee (2005) and Meyerhoff (2005) caution viewing CoPs in a positivist light and concede that the perceptions of membership need further consideration. In the remainder of the paper it will become clear that the attribution as members is not based on the native-speaker/non-native speakers of English distinction, but on the international and multilingual aspect, as much as on the knowledge of the practice.

### *3. Analysis of professionals' perceptions of BELF communication*

This study is part of a bigger project on BELF communication divided in two phases. The first one focuses on language attitudes of professionals in this field in relation to ELF and multilingualism. The second phase

deals with ideologies and corporate practices (see Cogo and Yanasprarat forthcoming). One general aim of the first phase is exploring the perceptions of difficulties encountered in international communication, the role of nativeness and accommodation, and generally business people's perceptions of how communication works.

### *3.1 Shared repertoire and challenges*

In this part I am going to explore the attitudes and ideologies towards English and multilingual practices, coming out of participants' interviews and the fieldwork period. The overall findings confirm previous studies in BELF, which show that business people in international communities find working in English rather 'common' and generally do not question its key role in international business. They also comment on their international use and on how they find BELF «reassuring»<sup>1</sup>:

P8m: Now a rather important thing is that often when we have a meeting or conference call it's not that everybody speak English like Cambridge 'super fluent' and this helps you it reassures you (.) it's not that you are the one who cannot speak English or Italian, this field is a bit mixed a bit international and it reassures you

This reassuring feeling makes participants feel confident about their English because other people seem to be in the same situation as them. The sense of reassurance is then linked to the similarity of their profile and the situation. Being part of the same experience and sharing similar situations is of course another common element of a community of practice, but also a recurrent finding in ELF literature too. For instance, Hülmbauer (2009: 328) refers to it in terms of «shared non-nativeness» and Cogo (2010: 304) mentions common «foreignness» in her study of institutional talk among colleagues. Both «shared non-nativeness» and «foreignness» are about finding common ground where there are different lingua-cultural backgrounds, and this, according to the participants, is also what makes BELF more understandable:

P5m: you always find someone that more or less is in your conditions so it's easier to understand each other

Although participants usually refer to English as the «official language of business», there actually is an interplay of languages in their work practices, which involves the use of not only English, but also French

and Italian. The participants are generally involved in a constellation of activities in different languages, which are constantly interconnected. For example, they may deal in Italian or French in a conference call and then write up the decision reached in that call in an English email and then continue their discussion on the phone in French with managers located in Paris. This complementary use of various resources is an implicit negotiation of language choices available from the participants' repertoires and the company's working languages (English, Italian and French). The employees confirmed that they could not operate in English only, but also that languages in their workplace are not always kept distinct and separate. When dealing in Italian and French, business discourse is always imbued of and inter-mixed with English, so much so that sometimes the distinctions between languages may become irrelevant.

The participants also commented on how English is a key aspect of their work but being an English native-speaker is not essential. Instead, finding a common ground or a common denominator is as important for participants in this study:

P12m: surely it is easier to understand the English spoken by people who are not English because you are obliged to find a common denominator which often is really basic and then you can just say that we are not speaking in a polished English but the important thing is to understand each other

The idea of common denominator is recurring in the interviews as something that non-native speakers of English have worked at, but they also can rely upon when the common denominator is established.

In fact, participants' comments seem to suggest that in international business contexts the communication difficulties around English are less important than expected. This was also signaled by the fact that I often had to probe my participants in different ways to get them to elaborate on the linguistic challenges or difficulties. This did not mean, as they explained, that English communication was always smooth, but that in their specific (international) community communication was not the main challenge. After elaborating on the possible challenges the participants explain why communication generally proceeds smoothly. The follow quote is representative of what most participants reported:

P5m: yes yes I would say it works well you know (.) we now have expressions a kind of language and terminology that we share (.) so we actually understand each other (.) now the expressions may not

be one hundred per cent correct as I was saying but in the end there is a company culture and the language becomes that one and you share certain kinds of communication and the important aspect is that we understand each other

This emphasis on sharing expressions, language and terminology and sharing certain kinds of communication is, in my participant's terms, the «shared repertoire of resources» typical of communities of practice. This kind of «business speak», a mixture of Italian and English mainly, with possible French expressions, is the company's co-constructed, shared and emergent repertoire which is something all members of the community refer to in one way or the other. This is a shared pool of resources that is continually developed and maintained and that members contribute to. It contains not only linguistic resources, but also ways of doing things, tools, symbols, and references that the community shares.

Another aspect that has important influence on the repertoire and also on the mutual engagement of the members is the ideologies and discourses around languages in the company. In fact, for most people using English seemed just 'commonsense', while other languages could be problematic. Two of the younger members of the community expressed their concerns in relation to the use of French, which they found more challenging.

P7f: No, I cannot speak French and this this is why I cannot read the official documents sometimes

The participant refers to the official documents issued by the headquarters in France, which are kept in French unless an English translation is provided for some reason. Higher positions in the company are encouraged to speak French because the company's headquarters are in France, therefore knowledge of French is gatekeeping non-French-speaking participants away from possible higher career progression. However, language is used for gatekeeping purposes not only in higher positions but at the very beginning of the process too, for instance, in the selection of the members of the international team. All participants said that 'English is a must in job interviews for these positions' (P16f) and all confirmed that they were asked to speak English at the selection process. Certain gatekeeping practices can be enforced at different levels and with different languages, and linguistic challenges do not only concern English but other linguistic resources in the community. In fact, possibly because in Italy there has been a shift in state-funded foreign language teaching from French and English as main foreign languages to English and Spanish (with French to

a much lesser extent), and because of more higher-education institutions offering English-medium-instruction programmes, the new recruits enter businesses with more English knowledge than French.

### *3.2 Intercultural accommodation and understanding*

Participants overall agree about the common and understandable use of BELF, which is possible partly because of the shared repertoire of resources that they mention. Another aspect they emphasise is the strategies used to make up for difficulties in communication, especially the accommodation strategies. For instance, a participant's tendency to accommodate is specifically indicated in refraining from speaking quickly when using English.

P5m: often if I hear the other has a certain difficulty then I try to speak slowly and speak in a I mean a slower manner (.) I will never do like the native speakers they always speak fast

The accommodation strategies of the BELF speakers are compared and contrasted with the ones used by native speakers, who seem to have the tendency to talk fast. Native speakers of English also seem to have advantages, such as they know more words and can more easily express themselves, as P5m explained in his interview, but here the participant thinks of possible solutions and strategies to overcome the native problematicity.

P5m: because I often happen to talk with a mother-tongue speaker and they are much more facilitated in expressing a concept you know (.) especially when you talk about technical aspects and you would have difficulty understanding that term (.) then I would say there you need to learn to ask questions and interact with the interlocutor without being ashamed [...] you are not a mother-tongue speaker so you can have difficulties

Native speakers may also - or seem to - create problems. The same participant goes on to comment extensively on the native English speakers' 'spocchia' or 'arrogance' when they speak to English L2 interlocutors as if they were speaking to the L1s, that is, without any accommodation in terms of speed or idiomatic expressions:

P5m: arrogance of the English I mean they think they are always the ones who dictate the rules of the game from a linguistic point of view [...] as a tendency the native speaker does not question or check

that the counterpart is understanding perfectly (.) they go straight (.)  
make their point and then I stop them and say 'oh speak slowly!'

In the extract below, P2f recounted the instance where her accent was not understood and created problems in her trip to the United States. Problems with intelligibility related to accents were mentioned in all the interviews, and they do not relate to production only, as in the example above, but to reception too.

P2f: I remember it even now @ the first time I was in the United States when I went and asked for a glass of water and I said it in English and they what? What? Because in English you pronounce the t or not and then [...] after three times I repeated it finally [...] well they told me that here you speak american english and so I was traumatized

For others it is not a question of English native speakers but a question of any speaker who is not sensitive to intercultural issues. For instance, the participant below recalls situations where Italian colleagues were speaking Italian as if they were among L1 Italian speakers, while the French colleagues had some difficulties understanding and therefore switched to English.

P8m: but look it's the same with Italians (.) when I arrived here I had a few meetings with some of the French people who had just arrived and the Italians were talking thinking that the people could speak Italian could have the meeting in Italian but the French people would switch to English (.)

AC: and then what happened?

P8m: then the Italians started talking in English without any problems (.) but I understand the position of the person who spoke Italian but not a perfect Italian (.) in the situation of a negotiation in the end they prefer to do it in English because as a French speaker you take the risk of speaking English (.) the Italians too take the risk they all take the risk and make the effort of speaking another language

According to P8m being insensitive to intercultural issues and accommodation can happen with any speaker, from any background, not only English native speakers. In the situation he was recalling in the interview the participant showed how speaking a second language (as the French who could speak Italian) may sometimes give the impression that the whole meeting and negotiation could be conducted in that language. In fact, in that specific situation, the French participants were just trying to do some relational work by speaking the local language (Italian) and did

not expect to conduct the meeting in that language. And in those situations switching to English is the obvious choice because, according to the interviewees, speaking English is putting all interlocutors on the same level, they all take the same risks as second language speakers and they all need to 'make the effort of speaking another language'.

When asked if there were any differences between native and non-native speakers in general business communication, the participants became more specific in their comments and two of them in particular indicated a clear difference not among native and non-native, but among business people in their community and other people outside their working group.

P12m: I would say that no there are no real differences (.) you know what could be the difference is that inside the institution where I work the English often realise they have an advantage and so they make the effort of speaking a simple English or to speak slowly and so on (.) while if we compare with the English person outside the working world the English person always speaks in the same manner and with the same speed the same intonation and does not make any effort to make you understand

The participants in this research, like P12m, make the distinction among people who are part of a community of practice and are familiar with certain linguistic practices and people who are not part of that working community. The native speakers of English who work in the international environment where these participants operate are aware and seem more sensitive to intercultural accommodation, which, according to the participants, involves using simpler words and speaking in slower tempo. P12m also adds that the native speakers he works with also try to be sympathetic with the L2 English speakers as in the example he provides below:

they try to adapt it because they understand the difficulty you may encounter (.) and it often happened to me that [...] I wanted to preempt myself and I would say I am sorry but my English is not perfect as I'd like and then they say but I wish I could speak Italian as you do English (.) you know it's like they are trying to help like opening the doors to facilitate communication (P12m)

Commenting on language abilities is a way of pre-empting possible problems and almost asking interlocutors to be more flexible and understanding. This strategy is amply used and seems to be rather common in intercultural encounters. For these participants what helps is the fact they are familiar with these intercultural and international settings.

I think the difference is in the background (.) the person who works for an international organisation is already used to understanding the difficulties in communication (.) maybe they make an effort to lower the level [...] if you can lower a level and speak a common language a more understandable language (P12m)

Here he brings in the idea of working in an international environment and how this influences the way BELF is used, because in an international workplace the expectation is that of making an effort for communication to be effective. The idea of making an effort is here linked to changing or adapting the way you speak by simplifying, or 'lowering the level'. The association of BELF with lowering the level, or with a simplified version of English, is sometimes mentioned by my participants and constitutes an ideological position (usually compared with native-speaker varieties of English) that I have explored elsewhere (see Cogo and Yanaprasart, forthcoming). Unlike situations typical of an international working environment, exchanges outside the international business world may be problematic. In the following extract, P18m provides an anecdote to exemplify this:

P18m: the other time I was in London and I was asking the taxi driver to tell me what we were driving by because I realised it must have been a famous building and I asked him three times and for three times he replied with the same sentence and the same speed and the same intonation and I still do not know where we were [...] he was like a broken record repeating the same things

The lack of accommodation skills is mentioned in the interviews but only when the participants refer more generally to their experience of English in their everyday life, rather than at work. When they specifically talk about work relations, they do not seem to associate native speakerness directly with lack of accommodation.

Instead, participants show affiliation with the idea of a multilingual or intercultural expert, rather than a native speaker. When they explore their multilingual practices the distinction between those who associate with the multilinguals and those who want to emulate the English native speaker is drawn attention to:

P6m: unlike other colleagues that try in any ways to show that they know the language and so they bend over backwards and speak English eh I am the opposite (.) I speak English if I have to speak English but if I can throw some Italian expressions to make my interlocutor understand that after all I am Italian (.) I had stays in London and

Paris and my italianity has been one of my cornerstones

For this participant the Italian aspect of his business persona is an important element of his professional life. He specifically compares himself with people who do not want to show they are Italian and try to 'bend over backwards' to speak what he means to be native-like English. He differentiates himself by the multilingual practice of 'throw[ing in] some Italian expressions', which in his international context is a way of standing out, not specifically as an Italian, but as a business professional. Various studies also confirm the reliance on local languages to stress belonging, to show strong rapport management and solidarity with the other employees (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles and Kankaanranta 2005). This does not mean to say that identity and culture are concepts that can only be related with the use of local languages (rather than English for instance), but that practices of language mixing are used effectively for professional work and construction of professional identity. It is not a matter of English in opposition to other languages, but of English and multilingualism as one thing, i.e. BELF.

#### *4. Conclusion*

The focus of this paper has seen on how international business people orient towards BELF communication, but it would be interesting to explore how their attitudes and orientations can influence or affect their communicative practices. For this we need more research that combines corpus data with qualitative data on attitudinal orientations. In fact, while corpus findings alone do not tell us about the attitudes of speakers, their construction of identity, power relations and ideological influences, they can give us a glimpse of BELF users accommodation strategies in action, so to speak. So qualitative work (especially in CoPs) on how participants orient to communication in conjunction with corpus results can shed light on how orientations can alter the way they communicate in ELF situations, in other words how orientations can affect accommodation strategies.

In this study, BELF professionals seem to be aware of the importance of being multilingual rather than native speakers of English, especially in international business communication, where intercultural accommodation and multilingual sensitivity are more valued than native speakerness. Apart from these there are other important aspects that are constantly constructed and replicated to contextualize or shape communication. These are the discourses, ideologies and power circulating in the wider

institution and in the participants' larger context. In that sense, the participants I interviewed are not only members of a specific CoP, but also part of a bigger institution where they share other practices and discourses with other communities both within and outside of their own business. These discourses are expressed and generally reproduced at different levels and in various CoPs to which employees have access. They can be, for instance, the discourses that are constructed in their relation with the headquarters, which hold the decision power of the company and work mainly in French, or the gatekeeping practices at MNC level and the specific level of the international team, among others.

ELF studies have sometimes excessively emphasised the native/non-native dichotomy in relation to discussions of the 'ELF user'. In fact, while 'non-nativeness' as a concept has been highlighted as something BELF users share (at least for some, but not necessarily for all, as ELF users can be native speakers too), there are two other aspects that are more important to their CoP: knowledge of the business practice and co-construction of their shared repertoire. And in terms of the second, more linguistic, aspect of the repertoire, what seems particularly important to BELF users is the intercultural sensitivity of the business interlocutors. Being a member of a BELF community of practice, therefore, is not a matter of nativeness, but fore and foremost a question of knowledge of the business practice and understanding of the intercultural aspects of business communication. For my participants, it is not about sounding as native-like as possible, which for some is actually considered counterproductive, but about managing differences, accommodating to difference and being aware of intercultural issues. This means being able to accommodate to different ways of using English and to multilingual aspects of BELF communication, or, in their own words, being able to 'take the risk and make the effort'.

<sup>1</sup> All the quotes from the interviews are translations from Italian. The underlined parts are the specific sections of text on which the main analysis is focused.

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Costanza Cucchi

*BELF and National Cultures on European Corporate Websites:  
A Cross-cultural Investigation*

ABSTRACT:

The present study explores website discourse in English in a corpus of national companies. The companies are located in four European countries, selected with reference to Hofstede's cultural model (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010).

Following on a qualitative analysis, which confirmed that the English used in the website texts can be qualified as BELF (Business English as a Lingua Franca), a corpus-assisted approach was adopted for the study of the noun phrase 'our + [members of the company]'. The findings revealed that some aspects of the field of discourse (Halliday and Hasan, 1989) may be interpreted with reference to Hofstede's framework, thus further illuminating the relationship between language and culture.

*Introduction*

In her chapter in the *Handbook of Business Discourse*, Louhiala-Salminen (2009: 311), who first introduced the acronym BELF (Business English as a Lingua Franca) in the literature (Louhiala-Salminen *et al.*, 2005), stated that «the majority of international business is done in English, but not in native-speaker English». In writing, the growing popularity of English among non-natives within the business domain was enhanced by the use of faxes and e-mails. In the 1990s, faxes were reported to be «the most frequently used» channels for written business communication (Louhiala-Salminen, 1996: 46), while at the beginning of the new millennium e-mails were defined as «crucial» in shaping the discursive activities in a multinational company (Louhiala-Salminen, 2002: 217). In oral interaction, English was increasingly used by non-native speakers due to the rise of multinationals as a result of mergers and acquisitions (Louhiala-Salminen *et al.*, 2005), since it was the language most business professionals mastered as a second or foreign language.

Two important issues raised in the literature on non-native English in the business domain were the specific purpose for which English was used and its lexico-grammatical features. With respect to the purpose, English was found to be more used in internal business communication as compared to external business communication. For example, in the mid-nineties internal written communication was estimated to account for 55% of the overall business communication conducted in non-native English (Louhiala-Salminen, 1996: 44). A decade later and in a different context, internal communication, both oral and written, was estimated to account for 80% of the overall communication among non-native speakers (Louhiala-Salminen *et al.*, 2005: 406).

When asked about the form of English, non-native English informants reported that it did not always conform to native speaker models. Discussing non-standard features of English, Kankaaranta and Planken (2010: 402) formulated what they defined «an interesting question», namely:

«is the domain of written BELF restricted to nonpublic communication products such as emails, company-internal product specifications and protocols and if so, can we expect it to ever cross over into the public domain, and to corporate websites, for example?».

A partial answer to this question was offered in Aaltonen (2005), who found deviations from Standard English in the English versions of websites of Finnish export companies.

Another main concern of the literature on non-native English in the business domain is culture. Non-native informants working in various Finnish firms defined English as used in the business context as ‘cultureless’. As they put it, communication in the business domain was «pure business», «100% subject matter, the culture behind [...] [the message] cannot be seen», «the text is the same, wherever it comes from» (Louhiala-Salminen 1996: 44). However, when business professionals from different countries interacted regularly in English, they became aware of differences in cultural discourse practices (Louhiala-Salminen *et al.*, 2005). For example, the Finnish were perceived by the Swedes to be more direct and more economical with words, while the Swedes were considered by the Finnish to be more wordy and more dialogic (Louhiala-Salminen *et al.*, 2005: 413; 417).

The present study intends, firstly, to determine whether the English used on national corporate websites of selected European countries can be qualified as BELF and, secondly, to contribute to the study of cultural traits in non-native English discourse. Rather than investigating national discourse practices, the present research focuses on the field of discourse,

namely «the general sense of what is going on» (Halliday and Hasan, 1989: 24). In particular, by using a corpus-assisted approach, it is attempted to unveil whether any of the national cultural tendencies illustrated in Hofstede's model, the most utilised one in intercultural communication, emerge in the field of the discourse of European corporate websites.

Despite various applications to linguistic research (e.g. Bjørge, 2007; Clyne, 1994; Cucchi, 2010b; Guillén-Nieto, 2009; Hatipoğlu, 2006; Katan, 2006; Lukianenko Wolfe, 2008; Poppi, 2012), to the best of my knowledge Hofstede's model has not been used for the study of corporate websites in linguistics, except in Cucchi (2010a, 2012). In my previous research, the model proved useful in accounting for linguistic and communicative differences observed in an Italian and a comparable British corporate website (Cucchi, 2010a). The model was also helpful for predicting some formal and content differences in two comparable corpora of websites, respectively from Greek and Swedish companies (Cucchi, 2012). The present study aims to extend my previous findings with a corpus-assisted investigation of four comparable corpora of websites from other selected European companies. In order to explore whether any of the national cultural tendencies illustrated in Hofstede's model emerged from the corpora, it was decided not to start from predetermined hypotheses. The analysis began from an examination of the collocates of 'our', since it was assumed that they might shed light on the aspects which companies considered so important as to refer to them in a personalised way and that these aspects may well vary across cultures.

### *1. Study design and methodology*

Before discussing the criteria underlying the compilation of the website corpora, a short explanation of Hofstede's model is appropriate. The model, devised in the 1970s on the basis of questionnaires given to IBM's employees in various nations, aims to provide a way to compare different cultures along four dimensions, to which two dimensions were later added (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010). In the present study reference is made to Hofstede's original four dimensions, since most linguistic works rely only on them (Cucchi, 2011).

The cultural dimensions represent basic human issues, to which Hofstede's model assumes that people from a specific nation tend to respond in similar ways. The first issue is the extent to which people perceive themselves as independent individuals or as members of a group. On

this basis, nations are scored along the dimension Individualism (IDV) versus Collectivism (COL). The second issue is the degree of tolerance of inequalities in the distribution of power, for example between parents and children, teachers and students, bosses and employees, and the corresponding cultural dimension is Power Distance (PD). The third issue is the degree of tolerance of uncertain and unknown situations, which is associated to the dimension termed Uncertainty Avoidance (UA). The fourth issue is the degree of assertiveness or tenderness which is generally considered desirable. Since assertiveness and tenderness are traditionally seen as, respectively, masculine and feminine values, the corresponding dimension is termed Masculinity (MAS) and is opposed to Femininity (FEM). In the model, nations were scored along the dimensions on a scale from 0 to 100: scores below 50 are intended as comparatively low, while scores exceeding 50 are intended as comparatively high. A few countries, which were added later to Hofstede's research, score above 100 on a dimension, since their score was found to be above the one obtained by the countries already included in the model.

It is worth mentioning that the validity of Hofstede's work has been the object of scholarly debate. For example, McSweeney (2002) rejected Hofstede's model, arguing that the methodology used has a number of unacceptable shortcomings, such as the conflation of the concept of 'culture' with 'nation', which causes the model to fail to consider individual and ethnic differences within nations. Williamson (2002: 1374) warned both against the dangers of disregarding Hofstede's model, stressing that «[t]he considerable knowledge built on [...] [it] may be rubbished», and the dangers of ignoring McSweeney's criticism, for example by «[a]ssuming that all members of a culture homogeneously carry the same cultural attributes, that a culture can be uniform» (Williamson, 2002: 1391). Jones (2007: 5), after examining arguments against and in support of Hofstede's work, concluded: «While the level of controversy surrounding this work is still quite high, it remains the most valuable piece of work on culture for both scholars and practitioners».

For the present investigation, Hofstede's model was referred to for the selection of four European countries, which were meant to represent different scores along the cultural dimensions as well as different geographical areas. Austria was selected because, among the 76 countries considered in Hofstede's research, it has the lowest PD score, which is related to a tendency to equality. The Netherlands were chosen because of their very low MAS score, a feature which they share with other Northern European countries such as Sweden, Norway and Denmark, and which sets them

apart from other European countries, Portugal being the only exception. A low MAS score is associated with caring for the quality of life and people's well-being. The Netherlands also have, with Hungary, the highest IDV score in Europe, which suggests an emphasis on single individuals rather than on groups. On the contrary, Portugal is the Southern European country which scores the lowest on IDV. Portugal also has a particularly high UA score, exceeded only by Greece, which is related to a tendency to avoid unpredictable situations. Poland's score is also very high, and the highest in Central Europe, while its scores on the other dimensions are not particularly high, although they are all above 50. [Table 1](#) illustrates the four countries' scores on the four dimensions.

*Table 1 – Country scores on Hofstede's cultural dimensions*

Hofstede's scores	Austria	Netherlands	Poland	Portugal
IDV	55	80	60	27
PD	11	38	68	63
UA	70	53	93	104
MAS	79	14	64	31

A corpus was compiled of ten corporate websites per country. On the basis of the assumption that the food and drink sectors are particularly suitable for the study of national cultural values as portrayed on websites (Turnbull, 2008), companies were chosen in the food sector. Due to its importance for European food cultures<sup>1</sup> and for the EU cheese market<sup>2</sup>, the cheese sector was selected. An essential requirement for inclusion in the corpus was the national or local character of the companies, since national values were assumed to be more visible on national corporate websites, as opposed to the websites of multinationals. Another requirement was, clearly, the existence of an English website version, along with a version in the national language.

The process of finding national websites with an English version was not straightforward and involved following various search paths. In addition, many corporate websites of national companies could not be considered since they did not have an English version. [Table 2](#) lists the companies whose websites were included in the corpus.

*Table 2 – National companies included in the corpus*

<i>Austrian companies</i>	<i>Dutch companies</i>	<i>Polish companies</i>	<i>Portuguese companies</i>
Käsehof	Bastiaansen Bio	Ceko	Indulac
Käsemacher	Bettine	Lactima	Insulac
Käsebellien	Eyssen	Lazur	Lactinios Paiva
Pinzgaumilch	Hekkingkaas	Michowianka	Lourenço
Rupp	Henri Willig	OSM Gizycko	Monforqueijo
Schärdinger	Kaaspack	Rotr	Monte da Vinha
Sennerei Zillertal	Noordhoekkaas	Sertop	Queijaria Nacional
Vorarlberg Milk	Schippercheese	Serwar	Saloio
Wiesner	Visser Kaas	Spółdzielnia Mleczarska Ryki	Senras
Woerle	Veldhuyzen Kaas	TMT Lomza	Tété
74, 659 tokens	29, 552 tokens	29, 552 tokens	27, 811 tokens

The website texts were first analysed qualitatively to verify whether they could be considered as BELF texts (Section 3) with reference to the features of BELF established in previous literature, which are illustrated in Section 2.

## *2. Features of BELF in previous studies*

The acronym BELF derives from the ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) paradigm, pioneered by such authors as Seidlhofer (2001), House (2002), Meierkord (2002) and Mauranen (2006), being transferred to the business context. Interestingly, in 2011 the ELF paradigm attracted attention at European level, where multilingualism is traditionally guaranteed. *Lingua Franca: Chimera or Reality?*, the resulting publication by the Directorate General for Translation of the European Commission (2011: 29), summarises the principles of the ELF movement as follows:

«Under the ELF approach, English becomes a global asset belonging to all users, regardless of whether it is their mother tongue. [...] It belongs to everybody and nobody at the same time and no longer embodies a single culture».

Since English is regarded as a global asset, non-native speakers are

granted the right to appropriate the language and shape it. English may thus deviate from native speaker norms, provided that the users' communicative purposes are achieved. In other words, communicative effectiveness becomes more important than native-like command of English.

With reference to the business context, Louhiala-Salminen *et al.* (2005: 403) claimed that the fact that «none of the speakers can claim [...] [English] as her/his mother tongue» made BELF 'neutral'. The claim for neutrality was supported by European businesspeople interviewed about the oral use of BELF. As reported by Kankaaranta and Planken (2010: 388) «[t]he interviewees hardly ever associated English with any specific native speaker model or with a national culture or its values such as the United Kingdom, the United States, or Australia; rather, the majority saw it as global and *neutral*» (emphasis added).

Beside neutrality, sharedness is another property postulated as pertaining to BELF, «in the sense that it is used for conducting business within the global business discourse community» (Louhiala-Salminen *et al.*, 2005: 404). Therefore, although they have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, BELF users «share the 'B', i.e. the context and culture of business» (Kankaaranta, 2008). Interestingly, summarising the key findings on oral BELF interaction, Kankaaranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2013) have recently suggested that the acronym BELF, which they had originally intended as «“Business English as Lingua Franca” should [...] be understood as “English as Business Lingua Franca”». The authors (Kankaaranta and Louhiala-Salminen, 2013: 17) specified that: «[w]ith this change we want to emphasize *the domain of use* rather than the type of English» (emphasis added).

According to this interpretation, the function of being a common code, performed by English within the business community, is considered to be more important than the form which English takes for it to be labelled BELF.

### 3. BELF on national corporate websites

The reason why national and local companies provide an English version of their corporate websites is arguably to target international customers. Since this function clearly pertains to the business domain, the English used on the websites included in the corpus can certainly be considered as BELF from a functional point of view. In Louhiala-Salminen *et al.*'s (2005: 404) terminology, the English used on the websites in the corpus is 'shared' by the companies and the potential customers.

With respect to the form of the English used on the websites, a qualitative observation of the texts revealed that they did not always fully conform to native standards. Examples 1 to 3 show deviations in spelling, which may result from the way the misspelled words are actually pronounced.

(1) «Traditional values such as faith, *responsability* and *trustworthyness* are practiced to this day. On the other hand Mario Wiesner also adopts new *approches*. Workmanship is *develloped trough inovation* spirit, the sense for business and personal *envolvememt*». (Wiesner, Austria)

(2) «Welcome on the website of Ceko company  
Cheese producer *witch* 20 years of experience». (Ceko, Poland)

(3) «‘The best in Poland’ is one of the oldest and most prestigious competitions, *wich* promotes producers and their products». (Lactima, Poland)

Various morphological deviations were also observed. Examples 4 to 6 regard articles, which are missing where they would be necessary or inserted where they are not necessary according to Standard English norms.

(4) «Veldhuyzen Kaas is a well known name in *Æ* cheese business since 1884». (Veldhuyzen Kaas, Netherlands)

(5) «On August 15 1957, fifteen members established *Æ* District Co-operative Dairy Plant in Michów. In *Æ* first few years of its business activity, there was a gradual augmentation of its property by erecting new production buildings and milk purchasing centers» (Michowianka, Poland)

(6) «*The* ISO 22000 is the first of a set of international standards relating to food security and was published in July 2005. This standard establishes the requirements for any company operating in the food chain. *The* Insulac considers the awarding of this certificate as a “milestone” for *the* company that operates fourteen years in the dairy market». (Insulac, Portugal)

Other morphological deviations regard the use of relative pronouns (Examples 7 to 9) and tenses (Examples 10-11).

(7) «As time passed, the trade in cheese began to grow, *what* eventually led to the opening of the first cheese warehouse of Visser Kaashandel in 1959». (Visserkaas, Netherlands)

(8) «1956 was the first year *that* Austria produced an excess amount of milk, meaning more milk was produced than was needed for domestic use» (Käsehof, Austria)

(9) «Our production capabilities are flexible *it* means that we can fully come up to customers expectations and easily can manage with their fancy orders». (Osm-Gizycko, Poland)

(10) «As the first in Poland *we has started* the production of processed cheese in slices, basing on the most modern technology and equipment» (Lactima, Poland)

(11) «Follow Saiolo. *Became* a cheese lover» (Saloio, Portugal)

Some syntactic deviations are also observed (Examples 12-13):

(12) «In 1878 *it were already twelve* farmers and in the course of the years the number grew and grew». (Käserellen, Austria)

(13) «In spring 2008 the area of the “Anderswelt” was acquired, *there will be (in the year 2012) opened a cheese experience world*, our products were enjoyed already in over 38 countries». (Käsemacher, Austria)

It is noted that many of these deviations were described by Seidlhofer (2004) as being typical of non-native users of English in oral communication. Since they do not fully conform to native speaker standards, the texts included in the corpus can be qualified as BELF from a formal point of view. In Louhiala-Salminen's (*et al.*) terminology (2005: 403), they can be considered as 'neutral'.

#### 4. Cultural attitudes on national corporate websites

In an attempt to verify whether national cultural attitudes were represented in the field of the discourse of national corporate websites, the collocates of 'our' were examined with *Wordsmith Tools 4.0* (Scott, 2004). [Table 3](#) shows the five most frequent full words which collocate with 'our' in the four corpora.

*Table 3 – Full words collocating with ‘our’*

Austria	Netherlands
1 products/farmers	1 Hekking
2 new	2 cheese/own
3 cheeses	3 customers
4 nutrition/production/delicious/customers	4 sales
5 hay/dairy/team/Schärdinger	5 product/company
Poland	Portugal
1 products	1 products
2 offer	2 cheese
3 company	3 cheeses
4 cheeses/cuisine	4 customers
5 e-mail	5 values

Unsurprisingly, some of the collocates, such as ‘product/s’, ‘cheese/s’, ‘customers’, appeared in more than one corpus, since the website texts shared the same field of discourse. The fact that ‘farmers’ appeared only in one corpus invited further investigation, considering that Hofstede’s dimensions were devised on the basis of attitudes related to work. It was thus decided to focus on the noun phrases ‘our + [people who worked for the company]’ in the four corpora and to explore their co-text, so as to observe how workers were portrayed in website discourse. The descriptions of the workers were then compared to national tendencies with reference to Hofstede’s model.

#### 4.1 ‘Our farmers’

While there were thirteen occurrences of ‘our farmers’ in the Austrian corpus, this phrase never occurred in the other national corpora. All the occurrences of ‘our farmers’ belonged to five companies – Käsehof, Käeserebellen, Pinzgaumilch, Schärdiger, Woerle. An examination of the co-text of ‘our farmers’ revealed, in ten out of thirteen cases, words belonging to the lexical field of quality, freshness and naturalness of the cheese (Examples 17 to 26).

(17) «The *quality* cheeses from KÄSEHOF exist strictly because of their most important element: milk. And because traditional, *naturally pure* cheese can only be produced with *top quality* milk, *our farmers* only produce “*natural goodness in white*” par excellence: HAY MILK». (Käsehof)

(18) «Hay milk (also called pasture milk) - a premium product of dairy farming - requires silage-free fodder, meaning that *our farmers* have pledged to only feed their cows *fresh* grass (in the summer) or tasty hay (in the winter). The bulk of the fodder must come from *natural* sources (*with only a minimal amount of concentrated feed*)». (Käsehof)

(19) «*Our farmers* pay close attention to *quality, purity* and *native-ness* and each gives an individual, unadulterated flavor to our pasture milk». (Käsehof)

(20) «All *our farmers* dedicated themselves to feed their cows according to the “*natural* hay-milk regulations” only with *silage-free food*, i.e. *non-fermented food*, and *100% GMO-free*». (Käserebellen)

(21) «Our products are made exclusively from *fresh* milk. The cows of *our farmers* graze [...] on the numerous mountain pastures full of *full-flavoured mountain herbs* and meadow flowers». (Pinzgaumilch)

(22) «Pinzgau Milch focuses on taste and pleasure! Our products are made exclusively from *fresh milk*. The cows of *our farmers* graze from May to September on the numerous mountain pastures full of full-flavoured mountain herbs and meadow flowers». (Pinzgaumilch)

(23) «*Our farmers* only give their cows feed that is produced *without genetically modified ingredients*». (Schärdiger)

(24) «*Our farmers* supply around 60,000 litres of *high-quality* milk to Woerle every year». (Woerle)

(25) «All *our farmers* are located within a 50 km radius of the cheese dairy. This ensures that you can taste the *freshness* of the Salzburg milk in every single piece of Woerle cheese». (Woerle)

(26) «All *our farmers* are from the regions of Salzburg and Mondsee, renowned for their succulent and nutritional grass meadows. This has to be the real foundation of our *high-quality* milk production». (Woerle)

In two cases, the co-text of ‘our farmers’ did not exhibit words belonging to the lexical field of naturalness, but indicated the origins of the milk, which came from Austria or Germany. Quality, freshness and naturalness may therefore be implied by the farmers’ proximity. (Examples 27-28).

(27) «Where our products are produced, ripened and packed  
Sulzberger Käsebelln Sennerei GmbH  
Dorf 2 - 6934 Sulzberg - Austria  
Here, the milk from *our farmers* from *Germany* and *Austria* comes  
together». (Käsebelln)

(28) «*Our Farmers*  
Our milk comes from approx. 60 suppliers from the *surrounding  
region*». (Woerle)

The search was extended to ‘our \* farmers’, of which there were five occurrences in the Austrian corpus, two in the Dutch corpus and none in the other two national corpora. The Austrian occurrences, which belonged to two companies, confirmed the association of the noun phrase ‘our farmers’ with quality, freshness and naturalness (Examples 29 to 32).

(29) «*Our Dairy Farmers*  
*Our dairy farmers* deliver the *foundation and starting point* for our entire cheese production or what we consider our *white gold: milk*. Our farmers pay close attention to *quality, purity* and *nativeness* and each gives an individual, *unadulterated flavor* to our pasture milk. Whether it’s an organic or a conventional farmer, each takes great care to farm as *naturally* as possible». (Käsehof)

(30) «All *our Bio farmers* produce milk according to the “*natural hay-milk regulations*”, as well as *Bio regulations* of the European Union and additional regulations of national *Bio associations*». (Käsebelln)

(31) «*our Bio farmers* committed themselves to run their farms according to the regulations of national *Bio associations*». (Käsebelln)

(32) «Hay-milk from *our Alpine farmers*  
It is for a good reason that hay-milk is called the *purest* milk. No other milk is produced in such a *natural* and traditional manner». (Käsebelln)

Instead, the two Dutch occurrences of ‘our \* farmers’, on the website of Bastianseen, had a different collocational profile as compared to the Austrian occurrences. The farmers were portrayed as being invited to act responsibly and stimulated to increase their awareness of environmental issues (Examples 33-34).

(33) «we [...] stimulate *our member cattle farmers* to work in a *responsible way* at their own company development on the farmyard». (Bastianseen)

(34) «[...] *our member cattle farmers* are offered to join *workshops about animal welfare, energy and climate, landscape and environment*». (Bastianseen)

Significantly, one of the key differences between low and high PD societies is that, in the former, «[m]anual work has the same status as office work» (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010: 76), while in the latter «[o]rganizations centralize power as much as possible in a few hands» (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010:73) and «[w]hite-collar jobs are valued more than blue collar jobs» (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010: 76). This could explain the mention of ‘our (\*) farmers’ only in the corpora of the countries which score low on PD – Austria and the Netherlands – and its absence in the Polish and Portuguese corpora. In particular, the portrayal in the Austrian corpus of the farmers as valuable collaborators who have the essential task of guaranteeing the freshness and high quality of the cheese is in keeping with Austria’s extremely low PD, which reflects an egalitarian attitude, implying that «subordinates and superiors consider each other as existentially equal» in the workplace (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010: 74). This attitude clearly emerges in Example 35, taken from the Austrian corpus, where the close, symmetrical relationship between the company and the farmers is stressed.

(35) «Good *Co-operation!*  
*We personally know and look after our farmers. This personal relationship with milk suppliers is as important to us as the best quality milk.*» (Woerle)

Despite the fact that the Netherlands also have low PD, the farmers’ portrayal in the Dutch corpus seems more in keeping with the Netherlands’ very high IDV score. Indeed, the only company which mentions ‘our farmers’ describes itself as being engaged in enhancing the individual responsibility of the farmers for their own work. In addition, the mention by the company of itself as concerned with developing the farmers’ environmental awareness is in keeping with the Netherlands’ low MAS score, associated with concern for the quality of life, rather than with «challenge, earnings, recognition and advancement», typical values of high MAS countries (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010: 155).

## 4.2 'Our employees/team/staff'

The attitude to the company employees was explored by observing which words, collocating with 'our', were used to refer to them. Table 4 shows that various synonyms of 'employees' occurred in the four national corpora, the number of the occurrences is indicated in parentheses.

Table 4 – Synonyms of 'employees'

Austria	The Netherlands	Poland	Portugal
staff (2) team (2)	employees (3) personnel (2) sales department (3) sales people (5) salesteam (1) team (1)	sales department (1) staff (1) personnel (1)	employees (4)

Interestingly, the Dutch corpus contained the higher number of words referring to the company's employees, in keeping with the Netherlands' high IDV, which suggests more emphasis on single individuals. In addition, 'team', which suggests equality among its members, only appeared in the Austrian and the Dutch corpora, the countries whose PD is lower, while it was absent in the website discourse of the other countries, whose PD is higher.

In the Austrian corpus, Example 36 mentions both experts and employees as a guarantee of quality, thus suggesting a certain equality among them, which reflects Austria's very low PD. In Example 37 an egalitarian attitude is particularly evident: All the members of the team, referred to as 'coworkers', are described as having the same concerns, no matter what their difference in status is.

## (36) «Our Staff

*Well trained dairy experts and 130 motivated employees ensure that the quality of our products is guaranteed from our production facilities through to the customer.*

*Pinzgau Milch has been certified pursuant to IFS (at a higher level) and ISO 9001:2000.*

*Our staff is of course available at all times to provide you with more detailed information!» (Pinzgaumich)*

(37) «*Our team* covers today, divided on our locations, approx. 130 coworkers, who worry passionately from the apprentice to the quality manager about „the taste experience». (Käsemacher)

In Examples 36 and 38 the staff is portrayed as always available, thus suggesting low PD between the company and the consumers.

(38) «During the winter months, *our team* from Käsewelt are *waiting to welcome you from Monday to Saturday*, from 8 – 12 a.m.». (Käsehof)

In the Dutch corpus, the mention of various channels to get in contact with the staff – e-mail, telephone and face-to-face (Examples 39 and 40) – suggests that it is extremely easy to get in touch with the employees, in keeping with the Netherlands' low PD. In addition, most occurrences of the words referring to the staff in the Dutch corpus are found in sentences containing one or more relational markers (Examples 39-41). These are «devices that explicitly address readers, either to focus their attention or to include them as discourse participants» (Hyland, 2004: 113) and include second person pronouns, imperatives and questions. In other words, the company gives «the impression of treating each of the people 'handled' *en masse* as an individual» (Fairclough, 2001: 52), which seems in keeping with the Netherlands' very high IDV score.

(39) «Would *you* like to know more about our assortment? Please *email our sales department or call +31 (0)0528 - 26 82 46* to make an appointment». (Kaaspack)

(40) «For more information about our quality system, please *contact our sales team* on +31 (0)528 - 26 82 46. They would be happy to tell *you* all about it during a *telephone conversation or guided tour* of our factory».

(41) «Are *you* interested in one of our products, or do *you* have a suggestion or comment? Please *feel* free to contact one of *our employees*». (Visserkaas)

One Dutch company, Noordhoekkaas, also mentions a possible collaboration between the company staff and the customers, so as to create a personalised product (Examples 42 to 44). This may reflect the Netherlands' low PD, suggesting equality between company's experts and the customers, and their very high IDV.

(42) «Is *your specific product* not listed on our site? Please *contact our sales people*. We gladly [sic] would develop a product that suits all your needs». (Noordhoekkaas)

(43) «Also, a mix of several cheese types are possible. *Our salesteam* [sic] *will help you to make the perfect mix*». (Noordhoekkaas)

(44) «*Our team* of qualified *employees* is perfectly capable of bringing you the best *tailor-made products* [...]». (Noordhoekkaas)

The mention of ‘our + employees’ in the Portuguese and Polish corpora occur in completely different co-texts. In the Portuguese corpus company activities targeted at the families’ of the employees (Example 45) reflect the importance recognised to belonging to groups which is typical of high COL countries, as does commitment to the surrounding community (Example 46).

(45) «Examples of motivational activities amongst *our employees* are recipe competitions for dishes which include cheese and some *activities involving parents and their children*». (Saiolo)

(46) «Our *essential operating value* is the *commitment to the community*. SALOIO has been developing a sustainable project in the area of social accountability. In 2007 Saloio was awarded the prize for “equality in diversity” of the region, for the good practices of social accountability which we have been implementing since the beginning of October 2008, which was named “Project 2Live”, with the *mission of promoting interaction with the local community and our employees*».

In the Polish corpus high expertise and qualifications are stressed (Examples 47 to 49), in keeping with Poland’s very high UA, which implies «[b]eliefs in experts and technical solutions» (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010: 217) in the workplace.

(47) «The base of quality system in our firm is *our staff*. Their *qualifications* are brought up through permanently training system». (Lomza)

(48) «The *high qualifications* of *our personnel* and continuous *introduction of modern technology* and solutions enable us to compete with the *best producers* at home and abroad». (Spółdzielnia Mleczarska Ryki)

(49) «Since many years we have been cooperating with networks producing goods as their trademarks. Having *enormous experience* in this domain we also offer other parties the possibility of cooperation. If you are interested please contact *our Sales Department*». (Rotr)

### 4.3 Other workers

Apart from farmers and employees, other workers were qualified as ‘our’ in the national corpora, albeit rarely (Table 5).

Table 5 – Other workers mentioned in the corpora

Austria	The Netherlands	Poland	Portugal
cheesemakers (1) cheese maker (1)	Cheese makers (1)	Engineers (1)	Cheese mongers (1)

In the Dutch corpus, ‘our cheese makers’ were portrayed as loving and caring, typical feminine values which reflect the Netherlands’ low MAS score (Example 50).

(50) «The cheese is produced with *a lot of love and attention from our cheese makers*». (Bastianseen)

Instead, in the Austrian corpus the cheesemakers were portrayed as experts, as shown by the use of the premodifiers ‘master’ and ‘experienced master’, which may reflect Austria’s high UA (Examples 51 and 52), linked to «[b]eliefs in experts and technical solutions» (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010: 217).

(51) «*Our master cheesemakers* in Voitsberg, Styria *make sure that only the best possible ingredients* make their way into our cheese». (Schärdiger)

(52) «*Our experienced master cheese maker* allows it to mature for 4 months under his care, so that the Rahm-Emmentaler can develop its *unmistakeable taste*». (Woerle)

Interestingly, the cheesemakers’ high expertise emerged even more markedly in the Portuguese corpus, where the cheesemakers are depicted as carrying out a very specialised task, which is, in turn, described using

highly specific terminology (Example 53), thus mirroring Portugal's very high UA.

(53) «Reserve cheeses are the ones which, after manufacture, undergo a *specific maturation process*. This maturation culminates with a last *organoleptic examination* done by *our cheese mongers* to assess whether this *batch* is to be considered Reserve». (Indulac)

In the Polish corpus, the cheesemakers were never mentioned but there was a mention of 'our engineers' who, rather curiously, were responsible for the creation of new types of cheese (Example 54). This is in keeping with Poland's high PD, reflected in the fact that «[w]hite-collar jobs are valued more than blue collar jobs» (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010: 76), combined with its very high UA (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010: 217).

(54) «*Our production engineers* have developed *several kinds of cheese* among which the greatest acclaim has been won by Rycki Edam, Ramzes, Zamojski wedzony (smoked Zamojski) and a cheese with a very low fat content called Hit z Ryk (Hit from Ryki)». (Spółdzielnia Mleczarska Ryki)

## 5. Conclusions

The present study has shown that English, already proven in previous literature to be widely used for internal communication in European multinationals, is also used for external communication by national European companies. From the point of view of the function it performs, the English used on the corporate websites in the corpus can be referred to as BELF, as intended in Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2013), because it has the specific function of making communication possible in the business domain, between companies and potential customers who have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

From a formal point of view, the qualitative analysis of the texts has revealed that deviations from Standard English are sifting through business oral communication and written internal communication through national corporate websites, a form of external, public communication which grants companies potentially limitless visibility. The presence of grammatical deviations from Standard English suggests that the website texts were written in English, or translated into English, by non-natives who are not language experts and that the latter did not have their texts

edited by native speakers or by specialists in English. In turn, this implies that non-specialists in English mastered English well enough to write intelligible website texts, albeit with some inaccuracies.

From a cultural point of view, although based on a limited number of occurrences, the examination of the co-text of 'our + [members of the company]' in four national website corpora has shed light on different attitudes, which it was possible to explain with reference to Hofstede's model. Therefore, the model has proven useful not only for predicting specific linguistic and communicative cross-cultural differences in websites (Cucchi, 2012), but also for accounting for aspects of the field of discourse which emerged from the corpus analysis.

While Louhiala-Salminen *et al.* (2005: 404) had already made it clear that culture pertains to BELF because of the different «discourse practices stemming from [BELF users'] respective mother tongues», the results of the present investigation indicate that, despite globalisation, national cultures affect the very field of discourse of apparently similar BELF texts in subtle ways, which corpus tools can help unveil.

<sup>1</sup> <<http://www.eufic.org/article/en/nutrition/salt/artid/Cheese-European-tradition/>> (last access 02.02.2016); <[http://www.euromilk.org/eda/content\\_html.aspx?cid=426](http://www.euromilk.org/eda/content_html.aspx?cid=426)> (last access 02.02.2016).

<sup>2</sup> <<http://www.thedairysite.com/articles/2875/european-cheese-market>> (last access 02.02.2016).

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## CORPORA

### AUSTRIAN COMPANIES

Käsehof <[www.kaesehof.at](http://www.kaesehof.at)>; Käsemacher <[www.kaesemacher.at](http://www.kaesemacher.at)>; Käserebellen <[www.kaeserebellen.at](http://www.kaeserebellen.at)>; Pinzgaumilch <[www.pinzgaumilch.at](http://www.pinzgaumilch.at)>; Rupp <[www.rupp.at](http://www.rupp.at)>; Schärtinger <[www.schaerding.at](http://www.schaerding.at)>; Sennerei, Vorarlberg Milk <[www.vmilch.at](http://www.vmilch.at)>; Wiesner <[www.wiesner.at](http://www.wiesner.at)>; Woerle <[www.woerle.at](http://www.woerle.at)>; Zillertal <[www.sennerei-zillertal.at](http://www.sennerei-zillertal.at)> (last access 09.02.2016).

DUTCH COMPANIES

Batiaansen Bio <[www.bastiaansen-bio.com](http://www.bastiaansen-bio.com)>; Bettine <[www.bettine.nl](http://www.bettine.nl)>; Eyssen <[www.eyssen.eu](http://www.eyssen.eu)>; Hekkingkaas <[www.hekkingkaas.nl](http://www.hekkingkaas.nl)>; Henri Willig <[www.henriwillig.nl](http://www.henriwillig.nl)>; Kaaspack <[www.kaaspack.com](http://www.kaaspack.com)>; Noordhoekkaas <[www.noordhoekkaas.nl](http://www.noordhoekkaas.nl)>; Schippercheese <[www.schippercheese.com](http://www.schippercheese.com)>; Visser Kaas <[www.visser-kaas.nl](http://www.visser-kaas.nl)>; Veldhuyzen Kaas <[www.veldhuyzenkaas.nl](http://www.veldhuyzenkaas.nl)> (last access 09.02.2016).

POLISH COMPANIES

Ceko <[www.ceko.pl](http://www.ceko.pl)>; Lactima <[www.lactima.pl](http://www.lactima.pl)>; Lazur <[www.lazur.pl](http://www.lazur.pl)>; Michowianka <[www.michowianka.pl](http://www.michowianka.pl)>; OSM Gizycko <[www.osm-gizycko.com.pl](http://www.osm-gizycko.com.pl)>; Rotr <[www.delik.com.pl](http://www.delik.com.pl)>; Sertop <[www.sertop.com.pl](http://www.sertop.com.pl)>; Serwar <[www.serwar.pl](http://www.serwar.pl)>; Spółdzielnia Mleczarska Ryki <[www.smryki.com.pl](http://www.smryki.com.pl)>; TMT Lomza <[www.tmt-lomza.pl](http://www.tmt-lomza.pl)> (last access 09.02.2016).

PORTUGUESE COMPANIES

Indulac <[www.indulac.pt](http://www.indulac.pt)>; Insulac <[www.insulac.pt](http://www.insulac.pt)>; Lacticínios, Paiva <[www.lacticiniospaiva.pt](http://www.lacticiniospaiva.pt)>; Lourenço <[www.queijarialourenco.com](http://www.queijarialourenco.com)>; Monforqueijo <[www.monforqueijo.pt](http://www.monforqueijo.pt)>; Monte da Vinha <[www.queijaria-montedavinha.com](http://www.queijaria-montedavinha.com)>; Queijaria Nacional <[www.queijarianacional.pt](http://www.queijarianacional.pt)>; Saloio <[www.queijosaloio.pt](http://www.queijosaloio.pt)>; Senras <[www.queijosenras.com](http://www.queijosenras.com)>; Tété <[www.tete.pt](http://www.tete.pt)> (last access 09.02.2016).



Franca Poppi

*Balancing Local Identity and Global Audiences: Localized and Globalized Instances of EIL in Corporate Websites*

ABSTRACT:

The English language is nowadays the primary means of world-wide communication to the extent that non-native speakers outnumber native speakers by many times. In the business arena, for instance, more and more companies choose English as the lingua franca for external communications, in order to address the widest possible number of international stakeholders.

It is however important to bear in mind that the English language is 'international' in two different ways and has given origin to instances of both localized and globalized EIL (cf. Seidlhofer, 2011: 4). On the one hand, English has developed into many localized instances of EIL or World Englishes (primarily through colonization), with variations in usage which have naturally evolved endonormatively and have been analyzed by a variety of scholars (Schmied, 2004; Kirkpatrick, 2010; Schneider, 2011). On the other hand, English has been adopted by people all over the world who use it as a means of mutual understanding or lingua franca.

The present analysis focuses on a small-scale case study, centering on the website of the Agency for International Business Promotion of the Modena Chamber of Commerce. In the case of websites, since the audience is completely unpredictable, the webmaster does not know who exactly will access a particular website and cannot therefore adjust it to the readers' specific expectations. In addition, the abundance of information available while surfing the Net could provoke a feeling of disorientation or anxiety in the users. This is why companies should devote particular care to the consistent and neat organization of their websites, with the ambitious goal of making their users 'feel at home' so that they «surely will pay with their attention and maybe even with their loyalty» (Nielsen/Loranger, 2006: XXII). Relying on both a quantitative and a qualitative approach, the present study will compare different versions of the homepage of the Agency's website with a view to showing how, by modifying its linguistic and structural organization it is possible to guide the global stakeholders to better apprehend the agency's local identity.

The evidence provided will confirm that international communication can be enhanced by strategies of accommodation, which may take the form of code glosses, explanations, explications, piling up of information (cf. also Poppi, 2012). Moreover, thanks to globalized EIL (or ELF), it is possible to exploit the language not only for communication, but also for identification purposes, in computer-mediated interactions.

## *Introduction*

As the world becomes more and more globalized and connected, transnational encounters have exponentially risen at a very rapid pace and in a multiplicity of domains: tourism, diplomacy, science, technology, politics and business. These new dynamics are posing significant challenges to global corporations and companies willing to extend their activities beyond their national borders, and have made them aware of the need for a shared language that facilitates exchanges (Louhiala-Salminen and Rogerson-Revell, 2010: 92). Although business interactions are rarely monolingual events and most companies often mix their strategies of language choice according to the situation (Vandermeeren, 1999: 276), in the past few decades English has been widely accepted as the principal means of communication in international business settings. This is confirmed by a poll conducted by Reuter/Ipsos in 26 countries in 2012, the results of which show that over two thirds (67 percent) of workers who deal with people beyond their national borders said that English is the language they used most often.

However, it is not enough to claim that English is the most extensively used language in the globalized business world. In fact, it is necessary to determine *what kind of English* is going to be adopted as the chosen means for addressing international stakeholders and establishing new forms of work and collaboration on a large scale, bearing in mind that the way information is phrased is extremely important, as after all: «language matters» (Louhiala-Salminen and Rogerson-Revell, 2010: 91).

Nowadays, thanks to the Internet and its unique tools, organizations are able to reach an unpredictably wide audience without being subject to time restrictions as in the case of traditional mass media (Insch 2008). Therefore web-mediated documents have come to play a fundamental role for companies. In particular, corporate websites perform the two-fold function of projecting the company's image and promoting the company's products. Hence, when it comes to drafting the English version of their websites, rather than insisting on a 'monochrome' native-speaker standard companies should remember that, in view of the present globalisation through English and of English, they will have above all to be intelligible to other non-native speakers, rather than to native speakers only. Accordingly, they should devote particular care and attention to the features of the language employed, if they want their message to be conveyed in a clear and consistent way, so as to create an easily recognizable identity and reinforce the corporation's vision and values.

Relying mostly on a qualitative approach, the present study analyses a series of texts which should have been posted<sup>1</sup> on the website of the Agency for International Business Promotion of the Modena Chamber of Commerce with a view to showing that it is possible to guide the global stakeholders to better apprehend the agency's local identity by modifying their linguistic and structural organization.

### *1. Corporate identity*

Over the years companies have become increasingly aware of the importance of developing and managing a distinct and recognizable corporate identity which, in turn, has become an essential strategic instrument and the primary source for achieving competitive advantage.

Despite the vast array of studies carried out in this field, there is a lack of consensus on which elements to include in the definition of corporate identity. However, it is now widely accepted that a multidisciplinary approach to corporate identity is necessary (Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006: 846-848). This perception is the result of many years of studies on the topic, which have given rise to three major approaches:

- the first one is based on the idea that corporate identity is rooted in design, i.e. in visual elements such as the logo, the corporate graphics, the colours, the name, the slogan and the typography;
- the second one suggests that corporate identity is an expression of corporate culture which is the set of shared values, beliefs, principles and goals of a company;
- the third one considers corporate identity as a concept resulting from corporate communication. Consequently, if we want to understand corporate identity, we have to study the company's way of communicating and behaving both internally and externally (adapted from Van Riel, 2008: 63).

The present study will investigate corporate identity by focusing on corporate communication in order to gain an insight into how the company under scrutiny conveys its local identity to a global audience.

### *2. Corporate communication*

Corporate communication has become the most valued and tactical tool for big corporations and small and medium-sized companies to

generate credibility and visibility in the eyes of their audiences (Connolly-Ahern and Broadway, 2007).

In the first place it is necessary to distinguish between controllable and uncontrollable corporate communication. The former refers to communication that is consciously provided by the management to reach predefined objectives. In contrast, the latter indicates the diffusion of information that is unintentionally determined by the daily behaviour of the corporation's personnel or that is influenced by the stakeholders' perceptions. Together they stand for *total corporate communication*, namely all the ways in which a company communicates with its various stakeholders. The most important type of communication for achieving success is controllable communication, which encompasses three main forms of communication, each addressed to a different target audience, but with the same common goal of creating corporate identity: management, marketing and organizational communication<sup>2</sup>.

The introduction of new technologies together with a considerable change in market conditions has had a great impact on corporate communication. As a consequence, computer-mediated communication has acquired an increasing importance, as it enables companies to convey an unlimited amount of multimodal information to a vast array of users anywhere in the world, without losing too much time and money. Today, the most visible sign of this technological evolution is the appearance of the *corporate website*, one of the most powerful and essential communicative tools for corporations. It is a sort of captivating shopping window for promoting products, increasing the public's awareness of the company and catching the attention of potential customers with the final goal of building a favourable corporate image and reputation.

### 3. *Corporate websites*

The importance of corporate websites as a privileged medium of corporate communication has long been recognized by many scholars. They often focus on the functions and communicative potential of these sites in their research (e.g. Esrock and Leichty, 2000; Perry and Bodkin, 2000; Hwang, McMillan and Lee, 2003; Planken *et al.*, 2007; Pollach, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2011). Websites are the visual online external representation of a company and potential customers rely on them in order to find out more information about a company and its business. They may consist of many sections: they can be compared to complex buildings with offices,

conference suites, corridors, lifts and other areas, each containing bits of information about the company. These parts are all linked to each other and together portray a composite picture of the company and of its activities (Boardman, 2005: 22).

A website's audience is completely unpredictable (Roussinov and Chen, 2001). On the one hand, since the author of the web text does not know who exactly will read the website, he or she cannot adjust to the readers' specific expectations. On the other hand, the reader of a website does not know who is responsible for the text of the website (apart from some personal blogs, etc.) and he or she cannot directly address the provider of the information to ask for further clarification while reading the text. As a consequence, the neat organization of the text, the use of tables or charts, a functional and clear layout, as well as the choice of the language employed are of vital importance to facilitate the comprehension of the website message.

#### *4. Objectives, materials and methods*

Nowadays English is the international language par excellence. However, it is important to bear in mind that the English language has achieved this status in two different ways. On the one hand, it has developed into many localized instances of EIL (English as an International Language) (Poppi, 2012: 32-33) or World Englishes (primarily through colonization), with variations in usage which have naturally developed endonormatively and have been analyzed by a variety of scholars (Schneider, 2011; Schmied, 2004; Kirkpatrick, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c). On the other hand, English has also been adopted by people all over the world who have decided to add it to their first languages and use it for the purpose of international communication, as a means to achieve mutual understanding or as a lingua franca. The latter is a globalized EIL (cf. Seidlhofer, 2011: 4), and non-native speakers are currently contributing to its development and its global uses as «agents of language change» (Brutt-Griffler, 1998: 387). When referring to instances of globalized EIL, the acronym ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) can also be adopted.

Since by adopting English, people inevitably also adapt it, it is possible to state that in international interactions there is no such thing as a single monolithic standard of English, as advocated by Quirk (1985). Accordingly, in international communication, a fifth language skill is nowadays needed, which involves understanding how to use language, to

accept differences, to be flexible and to be tolerant of ways of doing things which might be different from one's own (Tomalin, 2008).

One of the tenets underpinning the present study is that the different ways in which people use English can be said to unfold along a continuum which goes from localized to globalized EIL, depending on the features of the language employed. Localized EIL is characterized by local traits which can take the form of words and expressions that only enjoy local currency, culture-bound terms, instances of code-mixing and code-switching. Globalized EIL is more easily accessible to an unpredictable audience (Poppi, 2012: 32-33).

This contribution claims that since modern organizations have become widely aware of the importance of strategic communication, they should make sure that they employ globalized EIL when communicating with their stakeholders. To support this claim, reference will be made to the texts which were meant to become part of the website of the Agency for International Business Promotion of the Modena Chamber of Commerce. As already mentioned, these texts were handed over by the person who was the Director of the Agency for International Business Promotion of the Modena Chamber of Commerce in 2012. Even though he had already had the texts translated from Italian into English, he felt that they were not effective enough to express the kind of message he wanted to convey to international stakeholders. Therefore, he contacted the author's department at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia and asked for suggestions. Section 5 retraces the steps of the analysis that were undertaken following the Agency's Director request.

The analysis will refer to all the texts which were handed over, but for the sake of economy only a sample of these texts will be reproduced. They have been selected with the aim of providing an overall presentation of the Agency and its activities. Since they deal with the institutional presentation of the company, they can be considered as part and parcel of the so-called About Us or Company section, where corporate values and principles are usually set out.

## WHO WE ARE

We are an **empowering agency** that supports the enterprises of our region - Emilia-Romagna - in the **economical development and internationalization**.

We are committed to furthering the well-being and wealth of our district through the sale and promotion of our many top-quality products.

We work to help our entrepreneurs to expand their activities abroad and to attract new business in our territory.

Fig. 1 – The Agency's presentation

## OUR PURPOSES

- Promotion of our land and **business growth**
- Enhancement of our **excellences** in the world
- Development of **business networks** to deal with the challenge of global markets
- Implementation of strategies for the **promotion of international business**
- Improvement of **territorial marketing**

Fig. 2 – The Agency's Aims



Fig. 3 – The Agency's Activities

## WHERE WE ARE



Modena is at the heart of Emilia-Romagna, the land with the most friendly people

Fig. 4 – The Agency's geographical location

## THE INDUSTRY

The Modenese economy is characterized by a solid industry based on a district-type organization



[www.modenaemiliaromagna.it](http://www.modenaemiliaromagna.it)

Fig. 5 – The range of local enterprises

## Modena and Emilia-Romagna

Some features

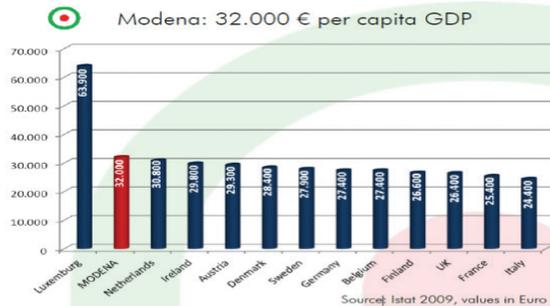


Fig. 6 – Per capita GDP

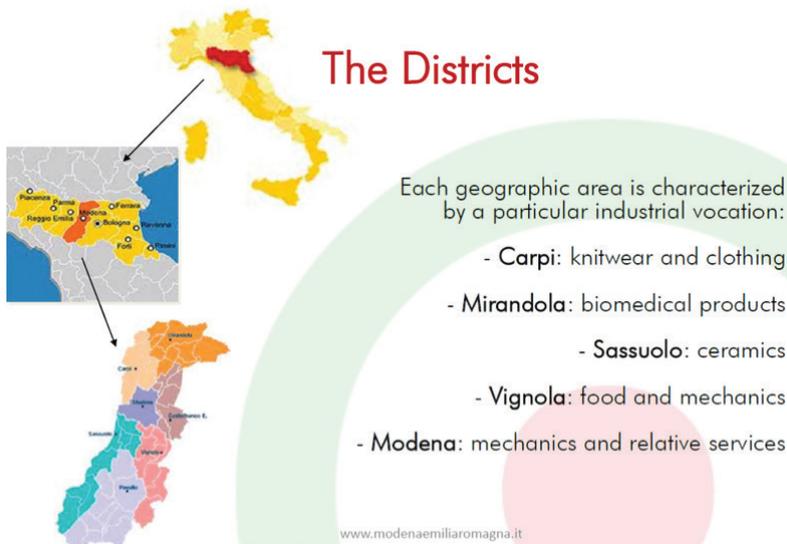


Fig. 7 – Business clusters

### MODENA: AN EXCELLENT PLACE

Modena is one of Italy's most highly developed provinces. The population's GDP pro capita is 31,999 Euros, one of the highest in the country, placing it well above the average for EU countries. The Modenese economy is characterised by a solid industry based on a district-type organisation and with diffuse relations with international markets.

- 🕒 8° exporting province of Italy
- 👤 1 company every 10 inhabitants (67,876 totally)
- 🌐 Sales abroad represent 40% of the turnover of the entire manufacturing sector (approximately 9.3 billion Euros in 2010)
- 📊 Emilia Romagna region system alone accounts for **7%** of Italian imports and **12,5%** of its exports.
- 👥 Employment rate at 66,3% of the population between 15 and 64 years.



The industrial structure is characterized by a prevalence of **SME** (small and medium-sized enterprise), which accounts for 99% of the business base. The competitive force of the province's economy does not exist only inside companies, but also in a complex of resources closely rooted to the territory to form a system.

Fig. 8 – More information about Modena

The analysis was meant to explore the way information is provided to international stakeholders, both in terms of lexical choices and of the linguistic strategies deployed, with a view to ascertaining where the language originally employed, positioned itself along the globalized-localized EIL continuum.

To do so, the chosen texts were investigated in the first place by making reference to a taxonomy geared to assess the degree of localization/globalization of the language employed in the agency's website<sup>3</sup>. The model can help identify the presence of lexical choices typical of localized EIL, as its six categories are arranged in such a way that proceeding from top to bottom, it is possible to find more and more localized instances of language choice:

1. technical words with international currency;
2. technical words with national currency;
3. common words used with new shades of meaning;
4. names of people and places;
5. culture-induced expressions;
6. code-mixing.

(Poppi, 2012: 154)

## *5. The analysis*

Looking at the selected texts it is immediately evident that the influence of the Italian language and culture gives rise to localized forms.

### *5.1 Technical words with international currency*

In the first place, there are words which can be considered instances of technical words with international currency:

1. CE marking<sup>4</sup> (Figure 4 – Specialised courses and seminars);
2. ISO 9000<sup>5</sup> (Figure 4 – Specialised courses and seminars);
3. CENELECT<sup>6</sup> (Figure 4 – Counselling and training about UNI);
4. ETSI<sup>7</sup> (Figure 4 – Counselling and training about UNI);
5. B2B<sup>8</sup> (Figure 4 – Expo.MO.com).

All the above words can be said to enjoy international currency, in the sense that international stakeholders active in business contexts are bound to be familiar with them.

### 5.2 *Technical words with national currency*

The following terms, however, only enjoy local currency:

6. UNI (Figure 4 – Counselling and training about UNI);
7. ISTAT (Figure 7);
8. In order to promote and protect the typical products of Modena's agro food system that are not yet covered by EU acknowledgements, the Chamber of Commerce has established a joint brand '*Tradizioni e sapori di Modena*' – Traditions and flavours of Modena <[www.traditionalfood.it](http://www.traditionalfood.it)> (last access 10.02.2016) – which is granted to those manufacturers who undertake to observe the production regulations containing rules on the production area, organoleptic characteristics, farming, production or harvesting methods, storage, packaging and labelling. The initiative has been operative since 2003 and relates to a number of products including: *Patata di Montese*, *Tortellini di Modena*, *Crescentina (Tigella) di Modena*, *Nocino di Modena* and *Sassolino di Modena* liqueurs, *Amaretti di Modena*, *Mirtillo nero dell'Appennino modenese*, *Tartufo Valli Dolo e Dragone*, *Marrone di Zocca* and *Marrone del Frignano*, *Croccante artigianale del Frignano*, *Croccante friabile di Modena*, *Miele di castagno dell'Appennino modenese*, *Miele millefiori dell'Appennino modenese*, *Miele millefiori della pianura modenese* and *Salame di San Felice* (Modena Agro food industry).

UNI refers to *Ente Nazionale Italiano di Unificazione*, the Italian Organization for Standardization, which publishes standards for the industrial, commercial and tertiary sectors, with the exception of electrical and electro-technical products. ISTAT is the National Institute for Statistics, a public research organisation which has been present in Italy since 1926, and is the main producer of official statistics in the service of citizens and policy-makers. It operates in complete independence and continuous interaction with the academic and scientific communities.

Unfortunately, since the Italian acronyms are provided without any further explanation, it is not certain that foreign stakeholders will be able to understand what they refer to. The same is true for the long list of typical products of the area around Modena, which is provided in example no. 8. It is true that it may prove important to mention them, in order to underline the wide range of choices available, but the lack of any kind of explanation or code-glosses runs the risk of merely making them a confusing and incomprehensible list. A much better solution would be the provision of an explanation or a code-gloss in English, so as to safeguard

both the local and the global appeal of the website.

This is for instance what can be seen in the first lines of the above text (example n. 8): *‘Tradizioni e sapori di Modena’* – Traditions and flavours of Modena”, where the name of the new brand established by the Chamber of Commerce is accompanied by its translation into English, to make its meaning understandable to a foreign audience. The same strategy has been adopted in the following example, where the terms *zampone*, *cotechino*, *coppa* and *mortadella* are accompanied by a brief explanation in English, which is meant to make a foreigner better understand what they refer to.

9. The typical products of local industry are: Traditional Balsamic Vinegar from Modena, Balsamic Vinegar from Modena, Lambrusco, Parmigiano Reggiano, Modena Ham and more generally all cold meats (especially *zampone* – stuffed pig’s trotter – and *cotechino* – a pork sausage – as well as salami, *coppa*, *mortadella*, etc.) and canned food (Modena Agro food industry).

Accordingly, a new version of example no. 8 drafted in globalized EIL could read as follows:

10. The Chamber of Commerce has established a new brand, *‘Tradizioni e sapori di Modena’* – Traditions and flavours of Modena <[www.traditionalfood.it](http://www.traditionalfood.it)> (last access 10.02.2016) – to promote and protect the typical products of Modena’s agrofood sector which have not received the EU institutions’ stamp of approval. The *‘Tradizioni e sapori di Modena’* brand is awarded to those manufacturers who comply with strict requirements concerning: the exact production area, organoleptic characteristics, farming, production or harvesting methods, storage, packaging and labelling. The brand was established in 2003 and has been granted to a number of products including: *‘Patata di Montese’* (potatoes from Montese), *‘Tortellini<sup>9</sup> di Modena’*, *‘Crescentina (Tigella) di Modena’* (savoury flat bread from Modena), *‘Nocino di Modena’* (walnut liqueur from Modena) and *‘Sassolino di Modena’* (aniseed-flavoured alcoholic drink from Sassuolo and Modena), *‘Amaretti di Modena’* (almond macaroons from Modena), *‘Mirtillo nero dell’Appennino modenese’* (black blueberry from the Modena Apennine mountains), *‘Tartufo Valli Dolo e Dragone’* (truffle from the Dolo and Dragone valleys), *‘Marrone di Zocca’* (sweet chestnut from Zocca) and *‘Marrone del Frignano’* (sweet chestnut from Frignano), *‘Croccante artigianale del Frignano’* (artisan almond toffee), *‘Croccante friabile di Modena’* (almond toffee crunchies), *‘Miele di castagno dell’Appennino modenese’* (chestnut honey from the Modena Apennine mountains),

*'Miele millefiori dell'Appennino modenese'*, (multiflower honey from the Modena Apennine mountains), *'Miele millefiori della pianura modenese'* (multiflower honey from the Modena area) and *'Salame di San Felice'* (sausage from San Felice).

### 5.3 Names of people and places

The influence of the local culture is also to be seen in the following examples:

11. As is well-known, the Parmigiano Reggiano area includes the provinces of Modena, Reggio Emilia, Parma and parts of the provinces of Bologna and Mantova to the left of the Reno river and the right of the river Po (Modena Agro food industry);

12. Carpi, Sassuolo, Mirandola, Vignola (Figure 8 – The Districts);

The above names referring to local places might prove a bit confusing to a reader who is not well-versed in the local geographical setup of the area. However, in example 12) considerable help is provided by the maps which make readers clearly visualize what these toponyms actually refer to and where they are positioned in terms of geographical location.

### 5.4 Culture-induced expressions

In Figure 1 we can find the word 'region', which is used to refer to a *regione*, an autonomous entity with powers defined in the Constitution. In Italy a *regione* is the first-level administrative division of the country<sup>10</sup>. This word is not used here with its most general meaning of: «an area, especially part of a country or the world having definable characteristics but not always fixed boundaries»<sup>11</sup>.

In Figures 5 and 7 we come across the word 'district', employed to describe an agglomeration of small- and medium-sized companies, located in a circumscribed and historically determined area, specialized in one or more phases of a production process and integrated by a complex web of interrelationships of an economic and social nature. Once again this term is used in one of its different available meanings, without any further explanation being provided<sup>12</sup>. Finally, in Figure 8 the word 'province' is mentioned. In Italy a *provincia* is an administrative division of intermediate level between a municipality (*comune*) and a *regione*. By looking up the meaning of this word in a dictionary, one is often confronted with the following definition «One of the principal administrative divisions of a country or empire»<sup>13</sup>.

It is therefore possible to conclude that the three terms ‘region’, ‘district’ and ‘province’ are employed here with the meaning that is typically attributed to them in the Italian language. In these cases the people who prepared the texts privileged literal translation over equivalence of meaning. In doing so they inadvertently fell into the trap of using a local term charged with the cultural meaning typical of a specific culture, which the other participant may not be able to understand.

However, an initial effort is made to clarify the concepts of ‘region’ and ‘province’, as Figures 4 and 7 provide a graphic representation of these two terms by means of maps.

### 5.5 Code mixing

In Figure 5 we read: «The Modenese economy is characterized...». The term ‘Modenese’ can be considered an instance of code-mixing: *Modenese*, where the English suffix *-ese* has been added to the word stem *Moden* – (deriving from *Modena*). Instances of code-mixing had already been found in the articles of *The Hindustan Times* and *The Baltic Times* (Poppi, 2012: 82) and can be said to attest to the creativity of the English language, as it is adopted, but especially adapted by users for whom it is not the native language, in order to express localised meaning.

### 5.6 Communication strategies

In the analysed texts, an effort is at times made to reach out to the readers and enable them to apprehend the message which is being conveyed. In example 8 the translation into English is provided, while in example 9 the meaning of some terms typical of the local culinary tradition are explained e.g. ‘*Crescentina (Tigella) di Modena*’ (savoury flat bread from Modena). In fact, at times it is not enough to simply provide the translation into English. This is for instance the case for the following example:

13. In 2005 the *Consorzio del Gran Suino Padano* (Padania Great Pig Consortium), was established, as breeders and slaughterhouses wanted to promote, supervise and protect the world-famous PDO<sup>14</sup> deli meats.

In fact the term ‘Padania’ could prove obscure to an international audience, unless its link with the geographical area called *Pianura Padana* is made explicit.

Moreover, visual support is provided to possible stakeholders in the form of maps, colours and even shapes. The colours refer to the agency’s

nationality (white, red and green) and combine the elements of the composition into a congruent whole by referring to the Agency's Italianness. Its mission, sense of drive and determination are evoked by the shape, which is reminiscent of a shooting target.

Another typical strategy adopted is the piling up of information. Obviously, the provision of detailed descriptions serves the purpose of avoiding possible misunderstanding. However, excessive informational density may prove confusing, especially when it concerns computer-mediated communication. In fact, it should not be forgotten that the abundance of information available on the net could provoke disorientation or anxiety, so particular care should be devoted to the consistent and neat organization of websites to make users 'feel at home' so that they «surely will pay with their attention and maybe even with their loyalty» (Nielsen and Loranger, 2006: XXII).

In conclusion, it can be argued that the kind of globalized EIL which should be adopted by companies willing to address international stakeholders does not only involve the use of a particular kind of lexis, i.e. words with international rather than local currency. In fact, it actually entails an attitudinal change that is expressed through the deployment of communicative strategies meant to facilitate the external readers' reading process.

These strategies might include:

- accommodating, by rephrasing and explaining (never taking anything for granted, as there are differences amongst possible stakeholders, due to their culture, nationality, etc. which will inevitably result in differences in background knowledge);
- adopting a wider cultural perspective;
- building rapport (reaching out to one's interlocutors by making the reading process as easy as possible);
- using local terms or concepts, rather than looking for a generic translation in English, but providing an explanation of the meaning of the culturally-bound term<sup>15</sup>.

The present small-scale case study has focused on some of the possible applications of the above-mentioned communicative strategies. However, these very same strategies can then manifest themselves in different ways according to the different contexts of use.

## 6. Conclusions

Companies often avail themselves of an English version of their websites so as to widen their participation framework as much as possible. These

websites may present features at times of a hybrid language which may not be intelligible to all its addressees given the incidence of instances of extreme informational density, convoluted syntax and uncommon collocations.

Moreover, English is also affected by the companies' L1 when idiomatic forms are created which are not codified in English, but which can be retrieved from the language spoken in the country in which the company is based. These forms might not be transparent enough to the multicultural audiences addressed by companies' websites.

Given that English is employed all around the world as a common code, it is inevitable for it to get in contact with a large number of languages and cultures. It is therefore almost inevitable for each speech community to create their own variety, thus establishing a common lingua-cultural scenario which enables its members to highlight their distinct identities. However, in international contexts, it is better to opt for a globalized kind of EIL, which provides reliable parameters to guarantee the understanding of each participating culture's perspective rather than of a single culture alone. This does not necessarily imply the need to strip the language bare of all the references to local culture. On the contrary, the evidence provided by the present small-scale case study has shown that international communication can be enhanced by strategies of accommodation, which may take the form of code glosses, explanations, explications, piling up of information (cf. also Poppi, 2012). Moreover, by relying on globalized EIL (or ELF), it is possible to exploit the language not only for communication, but also for identification purposes, in computer-mediated interactions, as the participants skilfully draw upon their plurilinguistic pragmatic repertoires.

<sup>1</sup> The choice of the tense is deliberate. In fact, the Director of the Agency for International Business Promotion of the Modena Chamber of commerce has left his position, and the new version of the Agency's website that he had been working on, was never implemented.

<sup>2</sup> Management communication, which takes place between the 'management level' of the organization and its internal and external audiences, serves the purpose of developing a shared vision and mission of the company within the organization. Marketing communication addresses end- or intermediate-users but also commercial distributors and is associated with all those forms of communication that aim to support the sales of an organization's products, services and brands (Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006: 850). Organizational communication, whose general objective is the self-presentation of the company, can be defined as the communication that takes place between the organization and all interdependent stakeholders (internal and external) for the day-to-day running of the company

(Melewar, Karasmanoglu and Paterson, 2005: 63). As a result, it includes different forms of communication such as public relations, public affairs, investor relations, corporate advertising, environmental communication and internal communication.

<sup>3</sup> This taxonomy has been used to assess the level of globalization/localization of the language employed in some parts of the Tetrapak's website (Poppi, 2012: 154).

<sup>4</sup> The CE mark, or formerly EC mark, is a mandatory conformity marking for certain products sold within the European Economic Area (EEA) since 1985.

<sup>5</sup> The ISO 9000 family of quality management system standards is designed to help organizations ensure that they meet the needs of customers and other stakeholders, as well as comply with statutory and regulatory requirements related to a product.

<sup>6</sup> European Committee for electro-technical standardization.

<sup>7</sup> The European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI) is an independent, not-for-profit, standardization organization in the telecommunications industry (equipment makers and network operators) in Europe, with worldwide outreach.

<sup>8</sup> Business-to-business, commerce transactions between businesses, such as between a manufacturer and a wholesaler, or between a wholesaler and a retailer.

<sup>9</sup> The word 'tortellini' is quite well-known also in international contexts (of use).

<sup>10</sup> In Italy there are 20 *regioni*, of which five are constitutionally given a broader amount of autonomy granted by special statutes.

<sup>11</sup> <<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/region>> (last access 10.02.2016).

<sup>12</sup> According to the online Oxford dictionary <<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/district>> (last access 10.02.2016), the three most common meanings of 'district' are: 1) area of a country or city, especially one characterized by a particular feature or activity; 2) region defined for an administrative purpose; 3) division of a county or region that elects its own councillors.

<sup>13</sup> <<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/province>> (last access 10.02.2016).

<sup>14</sup> There are three European Union schemes of geographical indications and traditional specialities, known as Protected Designation of Origin (PDO); Protected Geographical Indication (PGI); and Traditional Specialities Guaranteed (TSG), which promote and protect names of quality agricultural products and foodstuffs.

<sup>15</sup> Even though we are here dealing with written communication, these strategies are applicable to the context given its CMC character and international readership.

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Lanxi Hu

*Content Teachers' Perceptions Towards EMI in Chinese Universities*

ABSTRACT:

In recent years, many universities around the world have increasingly adopted the use of English as an academic lingua franca to teach content courses. English-medium instruction (EMI) has enabled students to pursue their higher education outside their home countries. Since 2001, there has been an expansion of EMI in a growing number of leading Chinese universities. Though a growing body of EMI studies have been published, many of these works were conceptual pieces which focused on the writers' experiences. However, there is not much empirical research on how content teachers perceive EMI as well as how they perceive their use of English in Chinese universities. This study examines the content teacher's perceptions toward use of English to teach content subjects and their views to the English language at 10 universities in China. It is part of my PhD research project exploring the influences and orientations towards EMI in China. Those content teachers are teaching in a wide range of disciplines. The data consist of teachers' perceptions obtained by means of questionnaires and interviews. The preliminary findings show that the majority of the participants are welcoming EMI while at the same time pointing out concerns regarding the difficulties in adapting to the instruction. Several respondents have reported that both English and Chinese were used in class. The initial findings are discussed in relation to the future development of EMI programs in China as well as the ELT.

*Introduction*

Over the last decade, universities around the world have been implementing EMI. The increasing use of English has enabled non-native English speakers to fulfil their higher education study around the world. Implementing EMI courses partly or entirely has been considered as a strategy for universities to attract full-fee-paying international students and to respond to the globalization and internationalization (Björkman, 2010; Coleman, 2006; Jenkins, 2014).

When attention shifts to East Asian countries, it is clear that the global

spread of English has made a significant impact on East Asia. There has been a dramatic increase of EMI courses and programs in some universities across the region (Bradford, 2013; Byun *et al.*, 2011; Kirkpatrick, 2011; Hu and Alsagoff, 2010; Manh, 2012). For example, the Vietnamese government sets the target of implementing 20% of EMI courses in universities by 2015 (Manh, 2012). Similarly, Korean government released 'study Korea project' to attract international students and also introduced funding programs to provide financial support to universities offering EMI (Byun *et al.*, 2011).

Since the year 2001, all Chinese universities under the control of the Ministry of Education were asked to teach the selected subjects, such as bio-technology, information science, international business and law, partly or entirely in English. In some universities, content teachers are also allowed to use Chinese. Thus, Chinese-English bilingual education is another alternative term to describe EMI in China (He, 2011). Initially, the 2001 policy was implemented on a trail basis, but now it is expanding rapidly among many Chinese universities. There are several reasons for promoting EMI in China. First, the English language is considered as a necessary tool to help China participate fully in the international stage. EMI is always associated with China's interest in participating in Global (Cai, 2010; He, 2011; Yu, 2008). Second, College English teaching was criticized for its inefficiency. Many scholars have identified the problems of several years' intensive English learning, students still have low communication skills (e.g. Gao, 2009). As a result, scholars have suggested integrating content teaching with language teaching. For some of them, EMI was similar to an English course and the main purpose was to help students improve language. Third, Chinese universities are aiming to recruit more international students and have an influential international reputation. EMI courses were seen as a useful approach to attract international students and to achieve the public image as international education hubs. Besides, the number of EMI courses has been taken into account in university Assessment Scheme. The EMI course number is listed as one of the evaluation criteria. Consequently, there has been an expansion of EMI courses and programs in Chinese universities.

In 2010, the Ministry of Education issued the '*Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)*'. It sets the target of attracting more than 500,000 international students to study degree-level courses in Chinese universities by 2020 (Wang, 2011). This implies that Chinese universities are aiming to recruit more international students to study in China. Keeping these developments in mind, it is not surprising to find the increase use of

English in Chinese higher education in the following years.

Due to the increasing use of English in the universities around the world, language issues have attracted ELF scholars' interest in studying the use of English as a lingua franca in academic settings (e.g. Björkman, 2013; Jenkins, 2014; Mauranen, 2012; Ranta, 2006). Based on many empirical studies, ELFA users can successfully fulfil their communication purposes. Recent studies have shown that very little misunderstanding emerges in ELFA contexts (e.g. Björkman, 2012; Ranta, 2006; Pilkinton-Pihko, 2010). For example, Björkman (2012) investigates the ELF users' questions in the Swedish higher education. Three types of questions, namely syntax with specific reference to word order, utterance-final rising question intonation and the interrogative adverb/pronoun (in Wh-questions only) are listed. The findings indicate that ELF users adopt rising question intonation as a useful way to achieve communicative effectiveness. Though those participants in the previous studies do not follow the native English speaker's norms, they make themselves understood by adopting their innovative use of question intonation. Empirical ELFA studies add evidence that ELF users can successfully fulfil their communication purposes. Thus, Mauranen (2012: 68) argues «the dominance of the ENL model is likely to diminish, because the determinants of language use lose their connections to a national basis». However, the prevailing language practices in academic settings remain undoubtedly towards native English norms. Non-native English users' English is often considered as problematic. Therefore, scholars highlights the need for more extensive studies to be carried out to investigate higher education contexts around the world. The current study aims to explore how content teachers perceive the English use in EMI in Chinese universities. In the following part, a brief introduction of English in higher education in China will be first presented.

### *1. English in higher education in China*

English has been the primary foreign language in China for more than three decades. Before the Chinese students enrol in the universities, they already have had at least 9 years of English language learning. The current EMI programs are designed both for Chinese and international students. Chinese students have to take the University English Entrance Examination (also called English Gao kao). The total score of English is 150 points. Despite the fact that the requirements vary from university to university, Chinese students should achieve the minimal score of more than

100 points. The entry requirements for international students vary across universities. Generally speaking, the international students whose first language is not English have to provide IELTS or TESOL score. Take the taught Master and Doctoral programs in Beijing Normal University as an example, a minimum score of 550 points /80 points is required for TOEFL and a minimum score of 6.0 is required for IELTS. Although international students are studying EMI in Chinese universities, they still adopt the English exams from Anglo-phone countries to assess international students' English. This has led ELF scholars (e.g. Jenkins, 2011) to assess international university English entry requirements critically. As Jenkins (2011: 934) points out: «it is a contradiction for any university anywhere that considers itself international to insist on national English language norms».

Unlike those native English speaking countries who offer EAP for international students, EAP has not been widely taught in Chinese universities. Thus, the only occasion for most students to learn English is thorough their College English course, which is compulsory for all the university students, regardless of their degree. During students' English learning at universities, Chinese undergraduates are required to pass the College English Test (CET) Band 4 and Band 6. While English majors are supposed to pass the Test for English Majors (TEM) Band 4 and Band 8. Despite the fact that language regulations have emphasized the communication functions of English, the English teaching syllabuses at tertiary level have still taken native-like proficiency as the best learning outcome (Chen and Hu, 2006; Wang, 2013; Wen, 2012). Native English models have still enjoyed an unchallenged privileged status in Chinese college English teaching (Chen and Hu, 2006; Pan, 2011; Qi, 2009; Wen, 2012). Since 2010, there have been emerging studies which consider the implications of ELF approach to ELT in China (e.g., Deterding, 2010; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Wang, 2013; Wen, 2012). However, nothing has changed the ELT so far in China. As Wen (2012: 372) points out: «none of the teaching syllabus of English teaching in China mention a single word about ELF». This indicates that the widespread belief of conforming to native English is still prevailing in universities. In the following part, previous major EMI studies will be discussed.

## *2. Previous EMI studies*

Unlike EMI in many European countries, EMI in Chinese universities has two forms: teaching content courses entirely in English and teaching

content subjects partially in English (Cai, 2010; Yu, 2008). Many of the existing studies in China have considered EMI as a useful way to improve student content knowledge and English proficiency (e.g. Xu, 2008; Yu, 2008). They also associated EMI with students future job-seeking. However, the amount of English used in each classroom and teaching practices vary from university to university. Based on the previous literature, some scholars argue that the amount of English used by lecturers depends on the linguistic competence and the disciplines of both teachers and students (Yuan and Yu, 2005). It seems that the use of Chinese was viewed with bias. Hu and Alsagoff (2010: 372) note that: «there is a severe shortage of teachers who are capable of English medium of instruction». With regard to content teachers' English, teachers' English used in EMI is often seen as problematic (e.g. Hu and Alsagoff, 2010; Xu, 2008; Yu, 2008). Some scholars have expressed concerns regarding EMI teacher's language skills. Xu (2008) questions the effectiveness of EMI and argues that the teacher's low proficiency may lead to inefficient teaching and affect student's academic achievement negatively. Yu (2008) identifies that there are not enough competent teachers who can use English fluently, hence most EMI courses are taught exclusively in Chinese. Similarly, Peng (2007: 50) pointed out, that: «the real EMI means the teacher uses mainly English to teach the subject, and Chinese should be used as a supplement». In addition, there was also evidence that some universities had prescribed the amount of English used in EMI courses. But whether content teachers followed the policy remained largely unknown. Previous studies observed that the actual English use is largely dependent on the university and teacher (He, 2011). Thus, it is necessary to investigate how content teachers perceive their English use and how they accommodate their English to help their students understand the content during the instructions.

In addition, there is not much information about how EMI in Chinese universities is taking account of the spread of ELF and/or findings of ELF research. Although EMI and ELF have been studied recently by many scholars in other countries, there has so far been a serious lack of research linking the two (Björkman, 2013; Jenkins, 2013; Smit, 2010). The selection of the research site in China was motivated by the lack of research which studied EMI from the Global Englishes perspective.

### *3. The current study*

This study aims to explore how content teachers perceive EMI in

Chinese universities. Based on the discussion above, two research questions are listed for the aims of this paper: how do content teachers perceive EMI in Chinese higher education? What are their views about using English to teach content subjects in their daily instruction?

The selected 18 universities offered a certain number of courses or programs in English and presented the public image of the international universities. The major reason to conduct my study in those universities was because I have personal contacts with these universities who could help me to find respondents and participants. The subjects chosen for this study were content / subject-area teachers who are teaching subjects entirely or partially in English in Higher Education contexts. The majority of respondents who took part in the questionnaire study were 'purposively' selected (Patton, 2002). In purposive sampling, the focus is to select «information-rich cases for study in depth (Patton, 2002: 230), which are likely to illuminate the questions under study». The basic criterion applied in the selection of participants was teachers who teach academic subjects in English or partially in English. To ensure more responses from the questionnaire, I approached a wide network of contacts and also adopted 'snowball' sampling (Johnson and Christensen, 2012). I also asked some questionnaire respondents to introduce me to the potential participants who met my criteria.

The interviewees were chosen as they showed their willingness to participate in the interviews on the questionnaires. At the end of the questionnaire, respondent's name and email address were requested if the respondent were willing to take part in the interview. Finally, 14 participants showed their interest to participate in the interviews. This was a small number, but the aim of my study is to conduct in-depth interviews. In this view the amount of participants cannot be considered as significantly relevant. I piloted both of my questionnaire and my interviews before the main study.

#### *4. Data collection*

After the pilot study, the revised questionnaire was distributed to 121 content teachers via email. The questionnaire in the present study served as a starting point to elicit the information I was investigating. The items on the questionnaire were written in Chinese. All the respondents and participants were given an information sheet and consent form. The confidentiality of respondent's personal data and the right to withdraw

from the research at any time were mentioned in both the information sheet and consent form. Finally 106 questionnaires were returned. After the respondents completed the questionnaire, they were asked to participate in an interview which was designed to elicit the deeper thoughts and opinions from the participants. The language chosen for interviews was Chinese. Qualitative interviews provide an opportunity for in-depth understanding of people's personal views. I have adopted semi-structured interviews (Dörnyei, 2007; Kvale, 2007). Two interviews were conducted through QQ online Chatting software. The remaining 12 interviews were conducted face to face. All the interviews were conducted on different days and were audio recorded in an MP3 format. All the interviews were transcribed. The transcription conventions used in my interview are adapted from Jenkins (2014: 220).

### *5. Data analysis*

In the questionnaire analysis stage, Excel will be used to calculate the ordinal data. For the Likert-scale questions in this study, the analysis will include frequencies and percentages. Qualitative content analysis was employed for the analysis of the interview data (Berg, 2007; Schreier, 2012). This analytical method has been widely followed by the scholars who aim to investigate participants' experiences, beliefs, and orientations towards a range of phenomena. Besides, certain major prosodic features such as pauses, laughter, and emphatic stress were also transcribed. The analysis of the interviews followed three stages. First, I read the transcripts and the notes for several times in the attempt to uncover the prominent topics. Then I wrote comments next to the transcriptions to identify the key words. Finally, after careful reading those key words, some prominent topics were identified. The identification of prominent topics was the initial coding (Dörnyei, 2007) of the interview data. After the initial coding, I read the interview data and began a second-level coding. I tried to re-organize the initial coding into themes. In the next section, I will first present questionnaire data and then discuss the two themes which emerged from my interview data.

### *6. Findings and discussion*

Due to the limited space, a few questions from the questionnaire were

selected in this paper. The questions were analyzed according to the major topics. I divided the questions into 3 subsections: The use of English in respondents' universities; EMI teacher's self-evaluation towards their own English; respondents' perceptions to the types of academic English used in EMI.

### *6.1 The use of English in respondents' universities*

It was found that almost 90% of respondents revealed their own institution had set the target to internationalize the university. This means that the internationalization of higher education has become an important development agenda for those universities. Regarding respondents' overseas experience, 80% of respondents have been to other countries for various purposes, studying for a degree, visiting friends, receiving English trainings. The proportion of respondents with overseas experience is quite large and they were more likely to have experienced ELF communication. One question was asked to describe the student's nationalities. 58% respondents said their students were all Chinese students. 8% of the respondents said their courses were designed for the international students only. 34% of the respondents revealed that both Chinese and international students were presented in the classroom. The number of international students varies according to different universities. Those universities under the control of the Ministry of Education seem to have more international students than those under the control of the local Municipal Commission of Education. It was also found the proportion of English use varies from different respondents. The majority of respondents reported they are mainly using English to teach and Chinese is used as a facilitator. The questionnaires also contained a few Likert scale questions. Each question listed one statement. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with the statement, on the choices of 'strongly agree', 'partially agree', 'slightly disagree' and 'partially disagree'. The analysis related to this will mainly focus on one theme: EMI teacher's self-evaluation towards their own English and respondents' orientations towards the English language.

### *6.2 EMI teacher's self-evaluation towards their own English*

Respondents were asked to react to the statement «when I teach in English, I am able to express myself clearly». The majority (95%) of respondents thinks they could clearly express their ideas in English. Only 5% of respondents think they could not do this. This question indicates

that the majority of the respondents are confident to teach in English. They may identify themselves as successful EMI teachers. Similarly, in response to the question: «the majority of my students are non-native English speakers, so I feel less worried about my English accent when I teach in English». 61% of respondents expressed their agreement to this statement. The rest of the respondents showed their disagreement with this idea. Their responses indicated the majority of respondents seem to accept their own English accent. But some seem to care about their English pronunciation. Any divergence from standard was not preferred.

### *6.3 Respondents' perceptions to the types of academic English used in EMI*

Respondents were asked to respond to the statement 'the English used in EMI should aim for international intelligibility rather than near-native-ness'. The results have indicated that 48 respondents totally agreed with this statement. 58 respondents disagreed with it. Thus, this implies the majority of respondents in this study tends to believe native English norms as the most appropriate English in higher education contexts. Similarly, they were asked to respond to the statement 'it's more important for EMI teachers to communicate appropriately and effectively rather than exhibit native-like proficiency'. The results have shown that 57% of respondents agreed with this statement, while the rest of the respondents disagreed with it. The possible reason is that respondents are exposed to the native English ideology, so they still believe exhibiting native-like proficiency in everyday teaching practice is important. However, the extent to which they believe students or teachers need to conform to native English is still unknown. The following part will present the data elicited from the interviews.

### *6.4 Perceptions towards English in the interviews*

A few themes emerged from the interview data. In this section I mainly discuss two themes: perceptions of English use in EMI and concerns about teaching in EMI. The majority of the participants expressed a positive reaction to using English in teaching subjects. They considered English important and many said EMI will help students to find a good job. Many of them accept the role of English as an international language. For example, one participant T3, said: «you need to master English (.)if you could speak English and you can communicate with people all over the world(.) it's an international language». Nearly all my participants pointed out that: «English is an international language». But they had not thought much

about the implication of global Englishes to English use in China, and never questioned the idea that English was regarded as an international language.

When I asked them about their views towards EMI, most of them seemed to have no doubt about EMI. T1 said she liked this form of teaching and believed EMI was beneficial to her students. She said: «it can help students to boost their career perspective and to learn academic terms in English». T14 said: «I find the teaching very delightful (.) my students all have strong motivation to learn and I like to teach in English(.) for the majority of students(.) they will benefit a lot if they take EMI courses». However, some also expressed concerns towards EMI. They seemed to have doubts about EMI, for example, T2 in the following extract (Extract One), described EMI as «a luxury good».

#### Extract One

T2: I think EMI in China is a LUXURY GOOD

L: what do you mean by this?

T2: EMI in Chinese universities is a popular trend(.) It's like a fashion trend(. )You know, the EMI was first initiated by the Ministry of Education in 2001(.) Then EMI becomes a very popular type of instruction in many university (.) in fact I think for the majority universities (.) they are not capable to teach subjects in English but(.) the universities all eager to receive support from the Ministry of Education which would suggest a good reputation and more economic benefit for the them(. ) so(.) those universities strive for implementing EMI courses(.)This is similar like someone want to buy luxury goods (.)but he/she does not have enough money(. )She/he may borrow the money to keep up appearance

Extract One occurred after we discussed different forms of EMI in China. This time, it was T2 who initiated the topic. T2 described EMI as a «luxury good». Thus, I asked her to explain more about it. She described EMI as «a very popular trend» and «a fashion trend». Her emphatic stress on the phrase «fashion trend» might suggest she was having a negative view to EMI in China. This is because the word 'fashion' normally has no correlation with education in China, the word 'fashion' indicates something which is popular at a particular time and it won't last for a long time. She said most universities in China have not obtained enough qualification to teach content courses in English. She also pointed out some universities are running EMI courses simply because of the funding and good reputation which EMI could bring. She

drew an analogy between EMI and luxury goods. It can be interpreted that she thought universities do not have sufficient resources to teach courses in English. But those universities still claim they have those resources to conduct EMI, which is the equivalent of what T2 meant when she said: «to keep up appearance». Four other participants also pointed out that EMI needs some prerequisites, such as competent teachers, enough students to be enrolled in the course, good textbooks or software. Her utterances suggest some universities in China do not have the teaching resources to implement EMI. University administrators might just pay attention to the number of EMI courses they offer without considering whether their universities are ready to offer them or not.

### *6.5 Concerns about teaching in EMI: how much English to use*

The second main theme which emerged in the interviews comprises content teachers' concerns about teaching in EMI. Within this main theme, two sub-themes have been noted. The first sub-theme was about how much English to use. The second sub-theme concerned their difficulties in teaching subjects in English.

During my interviews, many teachers said they used both Chinese and English to teach the content during the interviews. In some universities, the exact percentage of English use is clearly acknowledged in the policy or university teaching documents. But for some participants, they did not follow this or were even not aware of this. For those participants who did not follow this requirement, they expressed strong emotion that there should be no such requirement which could fit in for all the courses and the body of students. Some participants said likewise that they thought the proportion of English they use was very much depending on the origins of the students. For example, a participant said: «all my students are Chinese (.) I think it's very necessary for me to use Chinese as well». As it was found out in the questionnaire data analysis, Chinese students constitute the major body of students in EMI programs or courses. Some said they have a low number of international students in their class. In the following extract, T8 also said her uses of language depend on her target students.

#### Extract Two

T8: Erm I do use Chinese in my teaching (.) my students are Chinese students (.) it's the compulsory course for them

L: are there international students in your class

T8: not many, erm erm about 5 students or 7 students (.) but they are from international department (.) They took my course as the optional course (.) the curriculum is designed mainly for the students from my department

L: but can those international students understand Chinese (.) or are you free to use Chinese if they are present

T8: a little (.) they normally have Chinese lessons (3) but (.) but as I said my course is designed for students from LAW DEPARTMENT MAINLY and I need to ensure the majority of my students could understand but I know it's bit chaotic (.) to be honest there is no clear division between the types of EMI (.) Some course are targeted for Chinese students (.) some targeted for international students and some courses are open to both Chinese and International students. each department has its own curriculum (.) there is no unified approaches (.) really it's depend on the TEACHERS (.) university does not have very clear distinction of different types of EMI

T8 began by saying that most of her students are Chinese and she said many universities have taken on the agenda of internationalisation. I assumed this implied there should be a certain number of international students. Thus, I asked her the number of international students in her class. She admitted there was a very low presence of international students. But T8 mentioned «they are from international college», a different department. And she said her course was designed for the students in her department. She seemed to emphasize there is a very prominent distinction between her department and the International department. She treated the two departments not equally. Thus, I asked her whether those international students could understand Chinese. She said 'a little' which suggested those international students did not have very high proficiency in Chinese. The noticeable long pauses suggest she felt using the Chinese language during the instruction was unfair or inappropriate for international students. So she emphasized that her course was designed for students in her department. This seemed to say she was not behaving unprofessionally. She also referred to the fact that there are no written regulations which stipulate which course is designed for whom. The emphatic stress on the word 'teacher' suggests the proportion of English used will depend on the EMI teacher not on the origin of the students. Although the university is trying to promote more use of English in the classroom, there is a gap in the amount of English used by content teachers. Apart

from talking about her students' origin, later T8 also criticized the aims of EMI and said: «I have been assigned many roles. But I still think my main responsibility is to teach the content knowledge not language». Other participants also talked about the goal of EMI and emphasized teaching content was their primary concern.

### *6.6 Difficulties in teaching subjects in English*

In the questionnaire, many respondents seemed quite satisfied with their own English competence level. Surprisingly, during the interviews, several participants expressed a certain degree of uncertainty towards their English. It is interesting to note initially when I asked them if they had concerns about their English, nearly all the participants were very confident. The majority of the participants said they felt quite confident in teaching subjects in English. Many said they could explain clearly and fully in English. Like one participant, T6 said: «most of content teachers have good English speaking skills otherwise she/he dare not to be an EMI teacher». Similarly, T8 admitted her previous undergraduate studies helped her to have good English skills. She said: «I did English when I studied my undergraduate degree my English is ok to fulfil my teaching task now.»

However, when we discussed some other topic, participants altered their previous perceptions and some expressed their concerns about EMI, especially regarding a low level of competence. Some of them did not overtly say they were having difficulties with EMI; they tended to refer to other teachers' problems. The following extract took place when T7 and I discussed whether EMI teachers are willing to teach in EMI. It is important to note that this participant said previously: «I think my English is fine and I could explain the subject fully (.) I received good feedback from students at the end of term». However, she changed her perception when we started a new topic.

#### Extract Three

L: so you think they feel not enthusiastic to teach in English

T7: the university has one policy to encourage teachers to teach in EMI(.)university assigns the teaching wages according to the number of the EMI lessons she/he teaches erm teachers who teach courses in English will receive 1.2 lesson wages\_

L: what does that mean?

T7: normally you teach one lesson and you receive one lesson's wage  
EMI means you teach one lesson and you receive 1.2 lesson wages

L: not many differences(.) but you think they are not willing to teach

T7: yes our first language is not English(.) it's difficult to explain in English the way we like and difficult to accurately express the subject matter(.) and many teachers had have no experiences to study or living in English speaking countries(.)we are studying in Science subject(.)after getting the PhD degrees(.)their reading and writing skills are acceptable but the pronunciation( they) will speak

English and still will have a Chinese English accent (we) are not living in the English speaking environment(.) YOU KNOW this

T7 talked about the teaching incentives they received from the university. Then she mentioned the difficulties in teaching subject in English. She used 'we' instead of 'I'. This can be interpreted as other EMI teachers do have this feeling as well. Though in the first part of the interview, she did not show any negative perceptions towards Chinese English accent, here in this extract she considered Chinese English pronunciation as a negative feature. She also believed those content teachers, who have no opportunities to go abroad to improve their English, tended to have weak English reading and writing skills. Actually, I found many similar arguments in other interviews. My participants seemed to have very contradictory orientations towards their own English.

## *7. Conclusions*

On the basis of the results of the present study, the internationalization of higher education has become an important agenda for the selected universities. Now Chinese students constitute the majority of students in EMI courses. In some programs, such as Chinese Medicine, Economics and Art, a large number of international students were presented in the classroom. Besides, given the rapid promotion of EMI, it might be expected that there would be an increase of international students who want to study in China by the year 2020. However, many respondents have very ambivalent attitudes towards their English. Although they said they were satisfied with their own English in the questions, interview participants altered their view during the interviews. On the one hand, they consider their English sufficient to fulfil their teaching purposes; on the other hand, they received pressures to improve its proficiency. They still consider their

English as a problem to be repaired, rather than a different way of fulfilling communication purposes. Many admitted they were under language pressure (use English only; to demonstrate 'good' English). However, the majority of respondents never tried to question the kind of English used in their universities. They seem still to believe native English is the most appropriate form in academic settings and they never attempt to show disagreement to native English. Native English is always judged higher than non-native English and is always associated to the standard variety. The participants seem to ignore accommodation skills. What's more, the majority of the respondents does not see themselves as English teachers, but they feel students, other teachers expect them to teach English. Besides, my participants expressed many concerns related to teaching in English, such as the lack of support, difficulties for teachers and students, the vague division between the different types of EMI. Although the official figure indicates the a large proportion of EMI courses or programs are developing in Chinese higher education, many participants said EMI was still in its initial stages and the teaching practices have been ignored. They did not consider the government or their university had offered them enough support or the extra effort they made preparing the courses. According to the responses from my participants, there are a lot of things for the government or university to improve. It seems there is no clear division between different types of EMI and aims of EMI.

With regard to the proportion of English used during EMI, participants said both Chinese and English was used. However, mixing international students and Chinese students in the same classroom may pose difficulties for content teachers. Little consideration is given to some international students' ability in Chinese. Despite my participants said Chinese was used as a facilitator in their classroom, Chinese might not be appropriate for those international students whose first language is not Chinese. Little consideration is given to the fact that teachers will need to teach content courses in multicultural classrooms, where communication takes place primarily in non-native lingua franca contexts. Though the focus of my study is about EMI, the topic still has implications for ELT in China. If ELT in China continues to regard standard British and American English as teaching and learning models, then this would disadvantage both students and teachers who do need to speak English in a lingua franca situation. Since in the age of globalization English has been increasingly used as an academic lingua franca, ELT in China should provide learners with sufficient skills to communicate with people who come from diverse linguacultural backgrounds. Standard native English

should not be considered as the only criterion to evaluate ELF users' English. A distinction should be made between learners whose aim is to use English as a Lingua Franca (their intentions to use English with both native and non-native English speakers) and those who wish to acquire native English competence. But apparently, for the majority of Chinese people, using English to communicate with non-native speakers in the future seems to be more relevant to them. As McKay (2006) pointed out, ELT curriculum development must consider the specific function for which learners need English today. Therefore, It is necessary to raise content teacher's awareness of the diversity of Englishes and the importance of accommodation skills. Teachers can use English confidently in university settings. Policy makers should have a clear idea about the primary goal of EMI and how ELT in China should facilitate students to quickly adapt to EMI. However, there is a need for caution in interpreting my findings. My study was limited to a very small size sample, and it was not possible to generalize its findings to all Chinese content teachers. Obviously this study needs to be empirically extended to a much larger sample drawing from a variety of settings.

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Jennifer Schluer

*Raising Awareness of Culture in Academic Communication:  
A Workshop Concept*

ABSTRACT:

This paper presents a workshop concept to raise students' and researchers' awareness of cultural aspects in academic contexts, including ELF interactions. First results from a student workshop indicate that cultural awareness activities can trigger processes of self-reflection on the role of culture in academic knowledge production. It is argued that greater sensitivity towards cultural factors may ultimately facilitate intercultural and interdisciplinary research communication.

*Introduction*

With the continuous advancement of English in academic and research settings, especially in research writing, users of English often face particular challenges when communicating in today's *academic lingua franca* (e.g. Björkman, 2013; Mauranen, Pérez-Llantada and Swales, 2010). Efficient knowledge transfer may not only be hampered by linguistic challenges, but also due to different culturally-coined concepts of conducting research and communicating knowledge.

The need for cultural awareness (CA) in academic settings in addition to academic language proficiency and language awareness (LA) should therefore seem obvious. Even though the research findings and developments of the past decades clearly call for suitable methodologies (see e.g. Flowerdew, 2013: 316), an LA and CA perspective on academic discourse obviously has not been thoroughly considered so far. For instance, in a recent paper on multilingual publishing and the dominance of English in academia, Kuteeva and Mauranen (2014: 3) point to the potential avenues a language awareness approach might open: «Raising language awareness among [...] academics may eventually influence language choices and reinforce the use of languages other than English». This

does not only refer to consciousness-raising about ‘non-standard’ uses of English in academic publishing and the marginalization of other academic languages besides English, but also about cultural aspects, e.g. in the form of different «rhetorical traditions» (*ibid.*; cf. Swales, 1997: 381).

Crucially, these different traditions and textual practices can become apparent when a shared language is used. While in general, ELF is accepted as a diverse or ‘multicultural language’ (Honna, 2012: 191), academia somehow seems to be the exception, with a strong orientation towards native speaker norms especially in written academic discourse (cf. Mauranen *et al.*, 2010: 638; see also Koutsantoni, 2007: 210; Mauranen, 2012: 68). Thus, regarding language use, there is a widespread assumption that ‘good writing’ equals ‘good English’ (Mauranen *et al.*, 2010: 638) and that ‘good English’, in turn, «equals that of the educated native speaker, in other words Standard English» (Mauranen, 2012: 68). Evidence from contrastive rhetoric, however, shows that communicative practices vary across cultures, i.e. «there is no universal standard of ‘good writing’» (Mauranen *et al.*, 2010: 638). In other words, «Anglo-American rhetoric is not necessarily the most effective, comprehensible, or ‘natural’ choice for structuring academic texts even if we use English. It goes without saying that it is not more ‘scientific’» (Mauranen, 2012: 242).

It should therefore be obvious that raising awareness of English as a diverse and multi-faceted language that partially reflects the linguacultural backgrounds of the people using it<sup>1</sup> and the hybrid discourses that result from it is an important endeavor (cf. Honna, 2012: 191; House, 2012: 173; Mauranen *et al.*, 2010: 644). Yet, surprisingly few approaches exist that try to put these ideas into pedagogic practice within the academic domain. In the paper at hand, this topic will be approached from a theoretical perspective first and then addressed practically in the framework of a CA workshop (see Schluer, 2013, for an initial project presentation). The awareness-raising approach combines reflection, exploration and analysis with a discussion of strategies and engagement opportunities (cf. e.g. Svalberg, 2007: 292 with reference to Borg, 1994), and may ultimately enhance interdisciplinary and international research communication.

In the subsequent paragraphs, the motivation for the current research will first be expounded, followed by a discussion of relevant terminology (section 2). The proposed workshop concept will be detailed in section 3, before first data from a student workshop will be presented in section 4. Finally, the general discussion in section 5 will summarize the findings and give an outlook on future studies.

### *1. Motivation and terminology*

While the need for cultural awareness-raising has been recognized throughout the business domain, intercultural trainings are still very rare within the academic profession (cf. Thomas, 2010) or insufficiently tailored to the academics' specific needs. Even though the research findings and developments of the past decades (e.g. Clyne, 1987; Connor, 1996; Mur Dueñas, 2012) demonstrate the relevance of culture in research, pedagogical solutions are still scarce (cf. Thomas, 2010: 5; see also Hyland, 2008, cited in Flowerdew, 2013: 316).

The reasons for this are manifold: On the one hand, it is often believed that research follows universal rules and therefore is somehow 'culture-free' – or at least independent of the cultures of the individual scientists<sup>2</sup> (cf. Thomas, 2010: 5; see also Widdowson, 1979: 23). As Widdowson (1979: 51) maintains, «the concepts and procedures of scientific inquiry constitute a secondary cultural system», which is somehow separate from people's personal «primary» sociocultural background. On the other hand, it is conceivable that Anglo-American values, views, methods and standards in academia have superseded those of other research traditions (cf. Thomas, 2010: 5). The supremacy of Anglo-American models might have led researchers to take them as the baseline not just for 'proper' English (Owen, 2011; i.e. conforming to the native speaker norms of British or American English) but also for 'proper' research; and it could have evoked the impression that other traditions are not as appropriate or efficient to meet today's research 'standards' as the 'mainstream' Anglo-American way (see e.g. Mauranen et al., 2010: 639). In this regard, Koutsantoni (2007: 180) has pointed out that

«[r]hetorical conventions of the English speaking scientific world and its preferred ways of organisation, [...] dominate the international scientific scene, and it is expected that students and researchers worldwide, who read materials written in English, cite them and become influenced by their ideas, while they cannot help but become influenced by their rhetoric, their ways of accounting facts, of reviewing the literature, of narrating methodological procedure, and of making claims».

In addition, the fact that English has become today's most widely used language for international knowledge transfer within academia might dilute the importance of culture in research communication («the culture-free status of ELF», as criticized by Fiedler, 2012: 42). Yet, «language can never

be culturally neutral» (Baker, 2009: 588), i.e. interaction (ELF included) is always affected by the unique linguacultural profiles of the participants.

Thus, not only science but also ELF have at times been considered «culture-free», which may reinforce the belief that scientific communication through the use of ELF must be «culture-free», too (cf. Widdowson, 1979: 24). In the meantime, however, research has shown that different culture-specific conventions can lead to misunderstandings or conflicts even in the academic domain. Thomas (2003) is explicit about various potential areas of conflict, which range from different culturally coined conceptions of what research is to diverse methods of conducting and communicating research (see e.g. Bantz, 1993, and Sarapata, 1985, cited in Thomas, 2003: 301). Consequently, cultural factors can influence the research process on almost all levels of scientific endeavor: on the conceptual level, on the methodological level, and on the interpersonal level. Culture should therefore be regarded as a factor which *could* become relevant in each phase of conducting and communicating research (Schluer, 2013; see [Figure 1](#)).

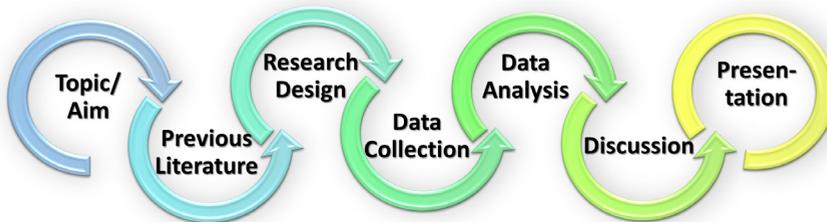


Fig. 1 – Simplified schematic illustration of the research process

Potential discrepancies can become visible in interpersonal (direct) interaction or mediated through products of communication, such as for instance research papers. As Duszak (1997: 3) aptly summarizes:

«Ignorance of, or misconceptions about, the communication styles of others can hinder understanding among academics and ultimately obstruct cooperation and advancement of scholarship. Clearly, therefore, cross-cultural education in matters of academic style plays an important role in making people aware of their own discourse patterns, as well as in enriching their knowledge of other academic cultures».

For this reason, the present paper proposes a workshop concept that can heighten scholars' awareness of the potential effects that culture can have on the processes of academic knowledge production and dissemination. To clarify the basic notions used in this respect, the following subsections will briefly define the terms *academic cultures* and *cultural awareness*, as they are used in the paper at hand.

### 1.1 Academic cultures

Thomas (2003: 299-300) posits that there are several cultures in academia, such as national, general-academic, and discipline-specific cultures. In the present paper, the terms *sociocultural context*, *aspects* or *factors* are preferred over *national culture*, for *nations* are political units with artificial boundaries that should not be equated with *communities*, *cultures* or *societies* (cf. Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005: 18). Furthermore, the term *national culture* cannot reflect the multiplicity and multifacetedness of each individual's cultural background. The current research therefore adopts a culture perspective that is more comprehensive. It starts from the assumption that *culture* refers to a shared set of knowledge, values, views, beliefs and behavior among its members (cf. e.g. Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005: 3), and comprises

- academic culture in general, i.e. a kind of professional culture that is different from other professional cultures in terms of the values and views it holds as well as a particular kind of expected behavior and its resultant products. In this respect, dominant ideologies, trends and standards may more or less strongly affect the norms, beliefs and behavior of subordinate academic cultures and individual scholars;
- academic communities of various sizes, such as disciplines, fields of research, schools of thought, research groups, institutions, research networks etc. (cf. also Mauranen, 2012: 55 on academic discourse communities, and Mauranen *et al.*, 2010: 636, on «the differing methodological, research and rhetorical traditions of different disciplines»). They may favor certain values and hold certain expectations towards their members. It should be stressed, however, that the internal ties of these groups can be more or less strong. The communities do not need to be permanent, but there can be temporary formations as well, which highlights their dynamic character. Their cognitive, affective and behavioral aspects may change over time, with visible products maybe being most susceptible to change (e.g. the use of new communication and knowledge distribution channels as a response to technological developments);

- the individual sociocultural and linguacultural profiles of academics. They consist of various facets that have been shaped during people's lifetime (*before* and *during* their academic life) and are relevant to the values, beliefs and attitudes they hold and the actions they perform as agents in academia.

Of course, there is a certain degree of overlap between the three main layers<sup>3</sup>, not least due to their interaction and mutual influence (cf. e.g. Bronfenbrenner, 1979, in Oerter, 2008: 88, on ecological systems): Top-down changes (set by prestigious institutions, authorities or journals, for instance) can affect the standards, desired goals and actions of smaller academic communities and the aspirations, beliefs and behavior of the individual scientists. On the other hand, this conceptualization of academic cultures offers the possibility of change over time from a bottom-up perspective, i.e. if a sufficiently large number of scholars demonstrates 'non-standard' behavior, e.g. as regards the typical format of a research article or in terms of other kinds of innovations, this may eventually affect superordinate layers. For instance, editors or publishers might show a greater openness towards 'non-standard' varieties of English and adapt their style sheets accordingly (cf. Mauranen, 2012: 68, on today's «standard practice in publishers' style sheets to require non-native writers to have their text checked by a native speaker of English prior to publication»; for examples see Koutsantoni, 2007: 210; for exceptions see Jenkins, 2011: 932-933, who cites editions with a deliberate ELF policy, i.e. in which no 'traditional' linguistic correction procedures have been applied).

In view of this multi-layered construct of academic cultures, the current research takes the individual researcher as the starting point for analysis and reflection, as he or she is affected by higher-order levels of academic cultures, which may nevertheless exert influence on his or her cognitions, emotions, and actions. Naturally, such an approach captures only a snapshot of the entire complexity, but this micro-perspective (see also Schluer, 2014: 3) might be highly illustrative, especially for applied and pedagogical purposes such as the present one.

### 1.2 Cultural awareness

Tomalin and Stempleski (1993: 5) define cultural awareness (CA) as «sensitivity to the impact of culturally-induced behaviour on language use and communication.» This does not only entail an awareness of one's *own* culture and culturally influenced behavior, but also an awareness of the influence of culture on the behavior of *others* (*ibid.*). In other words,

«know thyself and understand others» (Schmidt, 1999) can be taken as a central paradigm to promote cultural understanding.

Raising cultural awareness consequently means making people more conscious of cultural facets that may operate during interaction. In this regard, CA clearly needs to go beyond surface-level features (e.g. overt behavior) by promoting people's understanding of how their perceptions, values, beliefs, norms and attitudes could differ and clash during interaction (cf. the iceberg model of culture according to Weaver, 1993: 159-160). These different layers can be addressed by adopting a reflexive stance both towards self and other(s) (cf. e.g. Deardorff, 2006a: 247). One key aspect of CA therefore is reflexivity (Risager, 2013: 182), with the help of which a more culture-relative standpoint can be achieved.

### *1.3 Cultural awareness in academia*

The CA approach suggested here proceeds on the assumption that awareness of academic cultures and their features is central to foster communication and cooperation in academia. Given the diverse cultural influences that scholars have internalized during their academic enculturation, it is crucial to first raise scholars' awareness of their own cultural imprint and of the fact that other academics are likely to have a differently configured cultural profile. This way, it could be avoided that encounters of 'otherness' during research-related activities (see the phases of the research process in [Figure 1](#)) might adversely affect academic communication and cooperation processes.

Further, it is assumed that despite communication in a shared language, for instance ELF, cultural factors can become important. As Smith (1987: 3) pointed out almost three decades ago, «English already represents many cultures and it can be used by anyone as a means to express any cultural heritage and any value system» (cf. Honna, 2012: 195, on «English as a multicultural language»).

## *2. Workshop concept*

The workshop concept takes into account the central principles of an awareness-raising pedagogy, which are reflection, analysis and action (cf. e.g. Svalberg, 2007: 292, with reference to Borg, 1994, on characteristic features of an LA methodology; and Byram, 1989: 142, in Byram, 1997: 51, on the LA-CA analogy; cf. also Liddicoat, 2008: 282). These three steps

are reflected in the three-fold workshop structure, which will be presented below. In the following sections, also parallels to Baker's (2011) three-level model of intercultural awareness in ELF communication will be drawn, as they partly intersect with the ideas presented within the current framework.

### *2.1 Aims*

The workshop aims to sensitize academics to the significance of cultural factors in research contexts and thus to help them prepare for real-life intercultural communication situations, e.g. in international research projects, at conferences, or when reading and reporting research. It should ultimately assist them in exploring and respecting cultural diversity and in challenging the idea that there is only one type of 'correct' English (i.e. conforming to the native speaker norms of British or American English; cf. e.g. Seidlhofer, 2004, in Jenkins, 2011: 932; Owen, 2011), 'efficient' communication, 'good' presentation style or 'convincing' argumentation (e.g. in terms of Anglo-American patterns of text organization; cf. Mauranen *et al.*, 2010: 639; Mauranen, 2012: 242; see also House, 2003: 574).

### *2.2 Target group*

This workshop is primarily designed for junior researchers (doctoral students, postdocs) who need to communicate for international purposes, e.g. in international teams, research groups, on international conferences or for the publication of research articles in international journals. However, it is also open to senior academics and may even include students as participants (see section 4 below), since a broad expertise spectrum can yield new perspectives from both ends of the continuum of academic experience. Likewise, researchers from a wide range of disciplines are welcome, as the comparison of different disciplines complies with the aim of fostering interdisciplinary cooperation, in the sense of disciplines being one subtype of academic cultures (see section 2.1).

In line with the presumption that cultural facets can be influential despite the use of a shared language (see sections 1 and 2), researchers with diverse first languages are encouraged to participate. To facilitate communication, the recommended level of English language proficiency is approximately B2-C1 (CEFR; see also Schluer, 2014, on potential discrepancies between general and academic language proficiency). Further communication scenarios, such as receptive multilingualism (see Schluer, 2014: 8, 10-11), are of course possible<sup>4</sup>.

### *2.3 Methods and materials*

The CA activities have been developed on the basis of established methods and materials in intercultural education and have specifically been adapted to suit academic contexts (see the task descriptions below and the overview in [Table 1](#)). For instance, authentic scenarios of intercultural interactions among scholars, e.g. in the form of critical incidents, case studies, anecdotes, will be analyzed and discussed (see 3.4.2 below). Such samples of real-life interactions together with reflective activities (see 3.4.1) are also meant to encourage the participants to share their own experience and observations of intercultural communication situations in the research arena.

The workshop setting itself can become an intercultural scenario, when people with different sociocultural backgrounds and professional specializations meet and interact. Moreover, it is likely that the diversity of linguistic repertoires of the participants will result in ELF communication or alternative modes of communication (e.g. receptive multilingualism) during the workshop. In terms of methods, a mixture of individual work and group work will conform to diverse learning styles and preferences.

### *2.4 Structure and time frame*

As sketched in Schluer (2013) and in line with the above-mentioned awareness-raising pedagogy, the workshop consists of three main phases, which are:

Phase 1: (Self-) Reflection

Phase 2: Exploration and analysis

Phase 3: Presentation and discussion, including suggestions for action.

The schedule in [Figure 2](#) is explicit about the contents and aims of each major workshop phase.

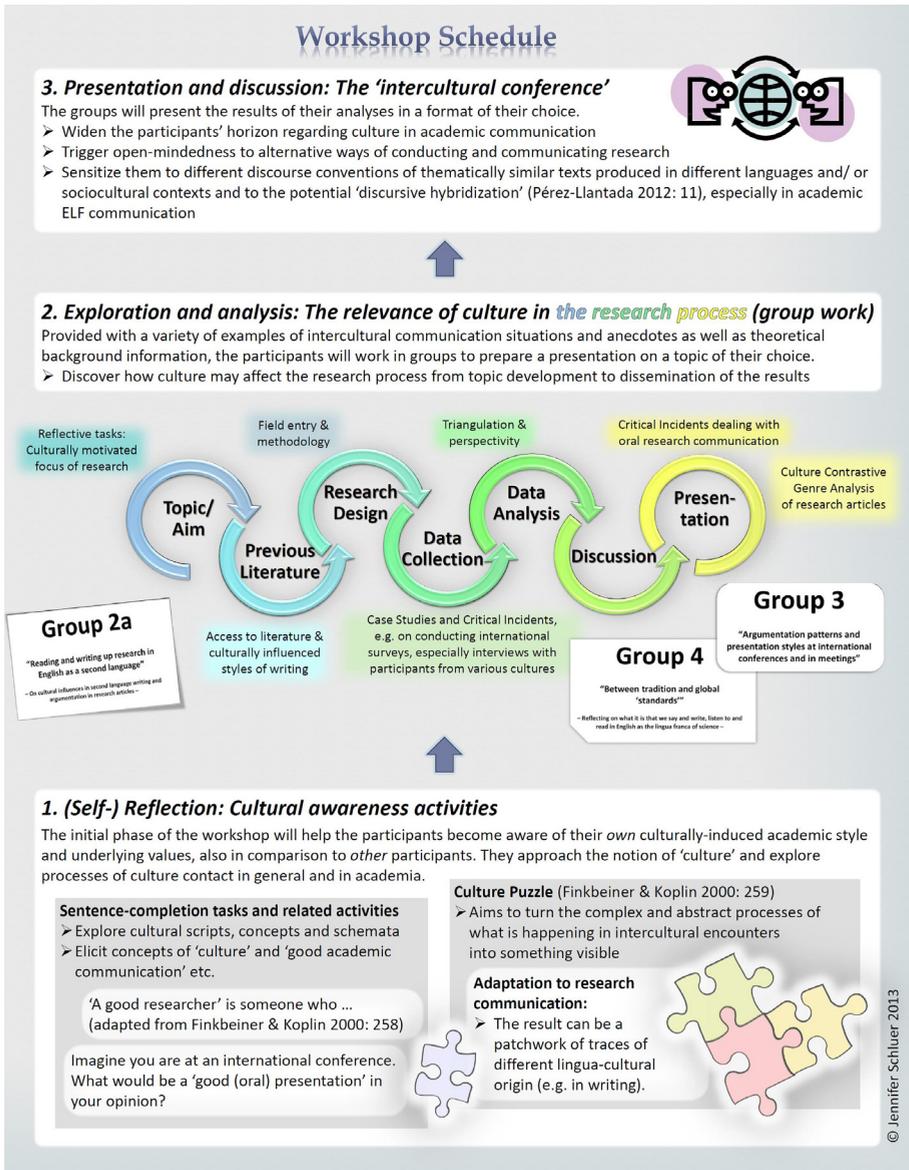


Fig. 2 – Original workshop concept as presented by Schluer (2013) on The Sixth International Conference of English as Lingua Franca in Rome

The following sub-sections will detail the contents of the three main phases and suggest optional and alternative activities which may be chosen depending on considerations of time and target group (e.g. advanced learners or academic novices; international group of scholars or rather homogenous group with respect to their cultural background). The average time frame needed to conduct the workshop will vary accordingly. In its original form (Schluer, 2013), the workshop lasts two days. As section 4 will show, it can however also be split into several consecutive sessions, e.g. 5-6 sessions of 3 hours in a weekly manner.

#### *2.4.1 Phase 1: (self-)reflection: culture in academia*

During the first phase, the training participants will be sensitized to the concept of culture in general and to the role it might play in academic and research contexts in particular. This aim will be achieved through (a) some self-reflection activities and (b) an interactive simulation game called «the textual culture puzzle».

Part (a) of phase 1 consists of a series of short questions and activities to promote self-reflection. Through open-response questions, self-assessments, sentence-completion tasks, and associations, the participants have the opportunity to reflect on their own linguacultural and academic background, as well as their attitudes and beliefs towards central research-related concepts. Thus, aspects from diverse layers of culture in academia (see section 2.1) will be considered.

To explore cultural scripts, concepts and schemata, free associations and sentence completion tasks can be utilized (cf. Finkbeiner and Koplin, 2000: 257-258). Sample items include:

- Please write down the first four words which you associate with 'research'.
- Please write down the first four words which you associate with 'English' in the context of your academic work.
- A 'good researcher' is someone who...

Associative activities give insight into people's mental networks and might reveal which aspects of the concept in question are considered most important by an individual. When comparing the associations with each other, the participants will have the opportunity to discover similarities and differences of these research-related concepts.

The specific concepts may be selected and adapted depending on the targets of the training and the characteristics of the group. For instance, in a workshop focusing on research writing, open-response questions such as the following can be chosen:

- What would you consider central features of a ‘good research paper’?
- What is a ‘convincing argumentation’ in your point of view?

Part (b) of the first workshop stage is an interactive CA activity, which can be culture-general (as in the original by Finkbeiner and Koplin, 2000) or specifically tailored to research writing (as in the adapted version suggested below; see also Schluer, 2013). In the latter case, it is called the *Textual Culture Puzzle* and constitutes an adaptation of Finkbeiner and Koplin’s (2000) *Culture Puzzle* («Kulturpuzzle» in the German original). According to these two authors, the culture puzzle is an activity which relates to the experience of culture contact. It aims to turn the complex and abstract processes that are happening in intercultural encounters into something visible (Finkbeiner and Koplin, 2000: 259).

In its adapted form, the textual culture puzzle focusses on one specific domain of culture contact: cultural influences on writing and the handling of different writing styles in communication. Instead of geometrical shapes as the central pieces of the puzzle, letters from different languages and scripts are used in the adapted version (Schluer, 2013). The result of the ‘puzzling’<sup>5</sup> process can, for instance, be a patchwork of traces of different linguacultural origin, as it is presumed by proponents of discursive hybridity and theorized by researchers in contrastive/ intercultural rhetoric (cf. e.g. the overview by Pérez-Llantada, 2012: Chap. 1). Thus, e.g. L1 traces may surface in L2 texts and/ or L2 traces in L1 texts, and/ or new discursive forms might be created. It thus helps to illustrate the potential hybridity and ongoing negotiation of what is acceptable and what is not in academic writing, as well as the different strategies that can be adopted (e.g. ‘make it fit’ or be open to creative diversity etc.). This activity thereby appeals to the affective, cognitive and behavioral components of intercultural sensitivity.

In sum, the initial phase of the workshop will help the participants become aware of their *own* culturally-induced academic style and underlying values, also in comparison to *other* participants, which may again lead to further self-insights (cf. level 1, «basic cultural awareness», in the model proposed by Baker, 2011: 204). Besides, they approach the notion of ‘culture’ and explore processes of culture contact in general and in academia in particular (Schluer, 2013). Phase 2 will deepen their understanding of potential cultural aspects in academic communication and cooperation, as will be explicated below (3.4.2).

#### 2.4.2 Phase 2: exploration and analysis: the relevance of culture in the research process

The second phase is devoted to the exploration and analysis of cultural factors during the research process by the trainees themselves. They work together in groups on a topic of their choice, which they select from a wider pool of materials dealing with distinct phases of the research process (see [Figure 2](#)). For each phase, a variety of materials (excerpts from the literature, empirical data, tasks and suggested activities) have been prepared prior to the workshop. [Table 1](#) gives an overview of selected activities and their aims:

*Table 1 – Overview of sample activities for phase 2 of the workshop, arranged according to the steps in a research process*

#	Phase	Sample Activities	Main aims
1	Topic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflective tasks on how one's own research topic came about (based on some guiding questions)</li> <li>• Experience reports and observations (bolstered by published literature)</li> </ul>	Discover the sociocultural situatedness of one's research and the potential cultural influences on topic development (culturally motivated focus of research)
2	Literature Synthesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflective tasks on access to literature, language of previous literature, selection processes etc.</li> <li>• Read literature written in an unfamiliar style</li> </ul>	Develop sensitivity towards the selective and always partial nature of literature search due to cultural, linguistic or institutional constraints; become aware of diverse rhetorical styles
3	Development of Research Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze examples of 'Western' vs. 'non-Western' approaches and methods</li> </ul>	Find out about the influence on one's research design by particular schools of thoughts and research traditions
4	Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case studies</li> <li>• Critical incidents (e.g. on communicative style in cross-cultural interviews)</li> </ul>	Discover challenges in cross-cultural research projects, e.g. when conducting interviews with participants who have a different cultural background
5	Data Analysis & Discussion of Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of samples from one's own research and others' projects</li> </ul>	Develop sensitivity in data analysis and interpretation, e.g. with respect to varying meanings of concepts across cultures and the influence of theoretical and methodological frameworks
6	Research Dissemination (oral and written)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical incidents</li> <li>• Culture-contrastive genre analysis</li> </ul>	Prepare the participants for potential cross-cultural challenges when communicating research on international conferences or via international publications, e.g. when co-authoring a paper

While it would be too space-consuming to go into detail about each activity that can be employed, only two basic notions which might need to be clarified will be explicated at this point: critical incidents and culture-contrastive genre analysis. The first term refers to «a narrative that illustrates a misunderstanding between two or more people from different cultural backgrounds» (Jackson, 2003). It describes a situation in which something unusual or unexpected has happened. The conflict, non- or misunderstanding may be due to cultural factors, contextual variables or individual characteristics which clash in that specific situation.

The second notion has been used by Schluer (2014: 10-11) to mean a genre-based approach (cf. e.g. Swales and Feak, 2004) that includes a comparison of disciplinary discourse from at least two different linguacultural communities (see also Pérez-Llantada, 2012: 184-189, on a contrastive approach to scientific rhetoric). In this regard, findings from culture-contrastive studies (see Connor, 2004, on intercultural rhetoric) provide a useful basis for identifying typical textual and culture-related elements of publications (cf. e.g. Clyne, 1987). Such an approach aims to sensitize scholars to different discursive features of thematically similar texts produced in different languages and/ or sociocultural contexts, which may even surface in academic ELF communication.

The analysis of specific examples and the provision of relevant background knowledge lays the foundation for attaining a higher level of cultural awareness by refining the participants' understanding of cultural factors in concrete interaction scenarios (cf. level 2, «advanced cultural awareness», in Baker, 2011: 204-205).

#### *2.4.3 Phase 3: presentation and discussion: the 'intercultural conference'*

In the third and final phase, the single groups will present the results of the collaborative phase 2 to the other participants. The format of this presentation can be chosen autonomously by the group members, though it should fit the contents they are tackling, suit their own abilities and the characteristics of the audience, if possible. This final phase is called «the intercultural conference» and, as the name suggests, it has a real-life relationship to the professional world of the participants, i.e. conferences. At the same time, it also expands on the everyday experience of the trainees by proposing alternative ways of conducting a 'typical' conference.

In addition, the final phase of the workshop includes a «suggestions for action» and «critical reflection» section, which will elaborate on and complement the contents of the group presentations. This final reflective phase aims to trigger the participants' open-mindedness towards further

culturally influenced areas in academia and to encourage a more culturally sensitive stance in their real academic life. This way, the basis for «negotiat[ing] and mediat[ing] between different emergent culturally and contextually grounded [...] frames of reference» (Baker, 2011: 203) might be created (i.e. Baker's level 3, «intercultural awareness»). In total, then, and in line with the idea of an 'intercultural learning spiral' (Deardorff, 2006b), the workshop will lay the foundation for the participants to continuously widen their (cultural) horizon and negotiate supposed 'standards' of academic communication (cf. e.g. Pennycook, 2009: 195, cited in Jenkins, 2011: 931, stating that «English is always under negotiation»).

### *3. Implementation: insights from a student workshop on academic writing*

At the time of writing, the workshop concept presented above is being piloted with university students. It aims at fostering cultural awareness in the high-stake domain of academic writing and publishing from an early stage of the academic socialization process onwards (as was demanded by Schluer, 2014: 10, with respect to multilingual academic enculturation).

#### *3.1 Setting, time frame and participants*

In summer 2014, a course on academic writing was offered by the researcher for students of English (undergraduates and graduates) at a German university. It stretched over the length of a semester and formed part of the cultural studies module of the students' degree program. Written consent was obtained from 21 participants to use their data for research purposes.

#### *3.2 Methods and materials*

The methods and materials from the original workshop (Schluer, 2013) were used, but they were slightly modified to make them more relevant and accessible to the students. For instance, the notion of *academic writing* was consistently employed instead of *writing for publication*, and the discussion of the products of academic writing included student term papers and essays in addition to research reports. The following sections will concentrate on part (a) of phase 1, since the subsequent phases have not yet been fully completed at the time of writing.

### *3.2.1 Questionnaire on academic writing*

Before course started, a questionnaire was distributed to the students, which included several of the items mentioned in section 3.4.1 (see also 4.3.1 below).

### *3.2.2 Academic writing autobiographies*

Academic writing autobiographies were introduced as a new workshop component during the student seminar. They represent an adapted form of the self-reflective activities of phase 1. It was assumed that the written construction of their experiences might yield more detailed insights into the students' views on and concepts of academic writing than the mere elicitation via sentence-completion tasks or free associations (as in the questionnaire, see 4.2.1). While such an activity is surely also recommendable for doctoral and postdoctoral researchers (cf. Gentil and Séror, 2014), it was considered too time-consuming for inclusion in the original workshop concept<sup>6</sup>.

The students were provided with a list of recommended literature to help them recall and reflect on their academic writing experiences (Garrett and Cots, 2013; Risager, 2013; Finkbeiner, 2012; Clark and Ivanič, 1991; Gentil and Séror, 2014). Their task was to reflect on their academic writing experiences and narrate them in a so-called «academic writing autobiography». A special emphasis was given to the «factors that have already influenced [their] academic writing and might influence [their] future academic writing» (task description). It was stressed that their personal view is asked for and not one that is stated in the literature.

## *3.3 Analysis and findings*

The data were treated in an entirely anonymous and confidential way. An arbitrarily chosen student number will serve as a reference in the ensuing presentation of results, preceded by the shorthand «S» for «student».

*Excel* was used for simple statistical analyses and *MAXQDA 11* (2014) for the qualitative content analyses of the open questions in the questionnaire as well as the autobiographic accounts of the participants. In the presentation of results below, the focus will be set on the students' concepts of «academic writing» and «good academic papers».

### *3.3.1 Initial questionnaire on academic writing*

Altogether, 19 students filled in the questionnaire. 13 of them were female and 6 male. 16 of them originally came from Germany, 1 from

Cameroon, 1 from the Ukraine, and 1 from Russia. Almost all of them have spent most of their university education in Germany (n = 18), with only 1 student having studied most of the time at a Polish university. On average, the students were in their third year of studies. German was the L1 of 14 participants; the other students indicated Ukrainian (1) or Russian (1) as their mother tongues, or that they have been raised bilingually (1 English-French bilingual; 1 German-Norwegian bilingual) or even multilingually (French, Swedish, Spanish, German; n = 1).

«Academic writing» is described as a subtype of writing by the students (S01, S02) and refers both to the process of writing as well as to its various products (text types) (7 mentions). It is part of the research process (2) and a product of research work (5). It serves the dissemination of research results (2 mentions) and usually deals with one specific topic (6 mentions). Researchers display their academic knowledge (3 mentions), intellect (1) and stances (1) in their papers. In general, academic writing is characterized as a «difficult» task (S09), especially since certain academic values and rules have to be obeyed (6 mentions): A paper has to be focused (5 mentions), clearly structured (3), and transparent (2). Writers need to adhere to «strict rules» (S09; 2 mentions), integrate many and appropriate sources in a correct manner (7 mentions), and need to sound professional (1) and well-articulated (2) at the same time. Despite the hard work, they perceived the relevance of academic writing: for oneself (S16), for teaching (S15), and for academia (S16).

After a general question on central features of a «good academic paper», the students were asked whether they think that there might be «[...] differences of 'good academic papers' across *languages*». Only five students responded with a «yes», whereas 14 students denied any differences. By contrast, 10 respondents said «yes», while 9 replied with a «no» to the question «Would you say that there are differences of 'good academic papers' across the *departments or subject fields*?» It was found that the responses obviously depended on the experience the individual students had with academic writing so far. So, once they had written a paper in more than one subject field, they noticed differences. This does not necessarily have to be a distant field (as compared to English) like philosophy, politics or biology, but could likewise refer to papers written in English literature as opposed to English linguistics or English pedagogy.

### 3.3.2 *Students' autobiographies on academic writing*

In total, 11 students provided a reflective text on their personal academic writing experiences and views.

Language awareness and cultural awareness emerged as dominant themes, which was certainly also triggered by the literature that was provided to the students (see 4.2.2). In line with the basic paradigm «know thyself and understand others» (see Schmidt, 1999, in 2.2 above), the text excerpts of the 8 students who addressed cultural awareness in their autobiographies were coded according to «self-awareness» on the one hand and «other-awareness» on the other hand (4 mentions each).

One facet of self-awareness relates to the students' family and cultural background, which may be said to be part of the personal sociocultural background layer proposed in section 2.1:

«[...] I must confess that my parents' education, which shaped my cultural background a lot, was essential in influencing my academic writing because when I was a child most of my characteristics developed and shaped my character of today essentially». (S08)

Another student demonstrated self- and other-awareness on the layer of departmental or subject field culture:

«A thing that is interesting about philosophical texts in German and English is that I sometimes found the English texts I read in the original easier to understand than the German texts (that were written by German authors). Although I have not read anything about this matter, I think that there are different traditions of writing that (classical) German and English philosophers come from. The texts by [A]nglophone philosophers tend to present their thoughts more overtly and in a clearly structured manner, while German philosophers often used to write in a rather obscure way. However, this seems to have changed over the time. Today's German [p]hilosophers mostly have adopted a more overt style, as well». (S06)

This student also shows awareness of change over time, which may be due to mutual influences of style, and reflects the dynamic nature of academic culture, as was claimed in section 2.1.

In terms of the contextual factors which exert influence on the students' academic writing, it was found that the respondents mentioned the influence of their 'home' university in the first place (9 students), the experiences gained at a university abroad (3 students), and the effects of their prior schooling, i.e. before they entered university (2 students). Besides these institutional influences, friends (mentioned by 4 students) and family members (3 students) play a role in their writing processes.

While the comments by the students point to the processes of self-reflection that are taking place in their minds in an often indirect manner, some students also explicitly mentioned the increased self-reflection that has been triggered through writing the autobiography:

«Reflecting on my own academic writing career in this way has been a new experience, since I have never thought about [it] in this way before [...]. I feel like I have taken away some valuable new insights, which might help me in the rest of my academic writing career». (S18)

This kind of self-reflection triggered their interest to consider language and cultural issues more profoundly in the future – not only as part of their studies, but also more generally as part of their life:

«[...] I have never thought about the actual power writing has in reality as well. Sometimes denoted solely as work of art and expression few people think about the influence it has on our daily life». (S21)

In this regard, they realized, for instance, that the use of a particular language is often more valued than another: «Instead of being aware of the advantages people tend to have a negative attitude towards people communicating in a language other than their own» (S20). These kinds of reflections may eventually lead to more linguistic and cultural diversity in academia, as was posited in the introduction (cf. Kuteeva and Mauranen, 2014: 3).

### *3.3.3 Summary of findings*

In total, the data gained from the autobiographies seem to complement the findings from the student questionnaire, as they provide more detailed insights into the students' thoughts about academic writing. While the respondents seem to concentrate on surface-level features and products of writing in the questionnaire, the autobiographic task appears to trigger deeper kinds of reflection, also about 'invisible' aspects of academic culture, such as power issues, processes of language choice and various cultural facets, which are usually hidden behind the written end-product, e.g. a term paper or research article. Awareness-raising activities of the autobiographic type might thus help students «develop a critical awareness of their own life-histories» (Ivanič, 1998: 339) with specific reference to the academic domain (see also Gentil and Séror, 2014).

#### 4. Conclusions

The review of the previous literature has revealed that different cultural styles exist in academic and research settings, which can cause misunderstandings at various points in the research process. For instance, there are different overall conceptions of conducting research, different preferences concerning concrete approaches and methodologies, different styles as to how research should be presented and disseminated (cf. e.g. Fiedler, 2012: 47-48). While different perspectives and approaches can lead to new and fruitful insights (cf. Fiedler, 2012: 40, 47), raising awareness of cultural aspects in academic communication is still an under-researched topic (see e.g. Thomas, 2003: 292). This paper has presented a workshop concept to raise cultural awareness that is specifically tailored to academic contexts. It is originally targeted at postgraduates, but can be modified to suit students' needs.

First results from a student workshop indicate that cultural awareness activities can trigger students' self-reflection on the processes and products of academic knowledge production. As some findings seemed to indicate that their research-related concepts, such as their views on and perceived differences between academic papers, appeared to vary with the experience they have already gained in the academic domain, it would be sensible to collect more data from a wider range of students and academics and to compare their responses. Finally, it should be highlighted that so far only findings from the *initial* pilot phase of a workshop *adaptation* of Schluer's (2013) original workshop concept could be presented. It is therefore planned to

1. analyze the data from later phases of the student workshop;
2. conduct more workshops, both for students and for postgraduates; and to
3. implement workshops in a variety of settings and with diverse target populations.

It is assumed that later workshop phases might heighten the participants' LA and CA even further (cf. the gradual development in the framework proposed by Baker, 2011). Therefore, with respect to suggestion (1), a pre-post questionnaire design on central aspects of academic discourse and ELF communication might provide complementary insights to the qualitative data gained from the various suggested workshop activities. Additionally, the data from steps (2) and (3) could help refine our understanding of variation along the dimensions of academic *experience* (from academic novice to established scholar), *context* (discipline, setting, culture) as well as *individual* (linguacultural and academic profiles).

With research beginning to acknowledge the importance of LA and CA as well as of accommodation and negotiation skills in ELF interactions (cf. the overview provided by Baker, 2009: 588), academia should no longer be treated as an exception (see e.g. Mauranen, 2012: 238-239). Consequently, instead of simply socializing students and academics into one particular type of ‘proper’ academic (linguistic and research) practice, critical LA and CA approaches are needed (Ivanič, 1998: 75, 337). They may help scholars recognize that there are various valid styles of conducting and communicating research and that academic ELF interaction may mirror diverse cultural<sup>7</sup> practices (cf. Baker, 2011: 205). In this regard, awareness-raising activities can be a useful starting point for critical reflection and mutual understanding (cf. Schmidt, 1999).

It is therefore hoped that pedagogic practice, such as through the workshop proposed in the present paper, will encourage academics to more consciously attend to the role that culture plays in their academic life and may ultimately facilitate intercultural and interdisciplinary research projects through dialogue on the processes and products of academic knowledge production. Yet, further work in this area clearly needs to be done.

<sup>1</sup> Here, the extended definition of ELF is adopted based on the work by Jenkins (2006, 2007) and Seidlhofer (2004), as summarized by Baker (2009: 569, 2011: 197). It is conceived of as English-medium communication between people who possess different linguacultures.

<sup>2</sup> Please note that in this paper, the terms *scientist*, *scholar*, *academic* and *researcher* will be used interchangeably, unless otherwise indicated. This alternating use is grounded in the assumption that not only the knowledge-making practices of the natural sciences but also of the social sciences and humanities follow certain ‘research’ standards and are ‘scientific’ in nature (see Salager-Meyer, 2014: 78). Furthermore, *academic* is employed in a very general sense, not only referring to the practices of established authorities and researchers, but also of students in higher education (cf. Russell and Cortes, 2012: 3).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ivanič (1998: 42) who states that one context (here: layer) is embedded in another.

<sup>4</sup> For example, participants may choose to do some of the self-reflective tasks in the local language or the L1, as this language might be activated more rapidly and naturally in such contexts.

<sup>5</sup> In the sense of ‘doing a puzzle’ and having many ‘puzzling’ intercultural encounters during the game.

<sup>6</sup> Writing a piece of text of several pages is very time-consuming and time is regarded as a precious resource among researchers.

<sup>7</sup> In the wide sense expounded above, i.e. individual (lingua-)cultural backgrounds and academic cultures of various sizes.

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Alan Thompson

*Modality Practices Among ELF Users in Academic Discussions:  
Dominant and Peripheral Participants*

ABSTRACT:

This paper investigates the variance in practices for expressing modality in ELF situations depending on a participant's role in the discussion – dominating or peripheral. A subset of a corpus of recorded discussions was examined for the expression of modality – specifically uses of modal auxiliaries and common epistemic and attitudinal markers («think», «like», etc.). Some participants displayed characteristic patterns for expressing modality only when they took a dominant role in the discussion, not when they took a peripheral role. The links observed in the study suggest that discussion dominance is an attribute that is unevenly distributed not only due to personality differences but also due to intercultural factors, and that this dominance is accomplished or enacted by specific language practices.

*Introduction*

The aim of this paper – part of a larger study of ‘English as a lingua franca in Asian intercultural situations’<sup>1</sup> – was to discover the modality practices used in academic and professional discussions in an ELF context. The discussions observed were by three disparate groups in their respective settings: post-graduate interns at an inter-governmental development agency, graduate and undergraduate students in an English-medium Business Administration programme, and healthcare professionals in an NGO-operated training programme (see [Table 1](#)). The commonalities among the three groups/settings were that all were located in Japan, that all employed English as the main language of interaction, and that all were made up (except for 3 of 84 participants) of speakers of first languages other than English. All settings were those for which it could be expected that the interactions (those in English) could be characterised as instances of English as a lingua franca.

*Table 1 – The three groups investigated, event types, and nationalities of participants*

Group A	post-graduate interns at inter-governmental development agency
Event types	meetings, work sessions of 2 and 3 participants
Nationalities	<i>East Eurasia:</i> Japan (3), China (2), Philippines (1), Indonesia (1), Thailand (1), Myanmar (1) <i>Central Eurasia:</i> Jordan (1)
Group B	graduate students in English-medium MBA programme
Event types	discussions, presentations, and question-answer sessions
Nationalities	<i>East Eurasia:</i> Japan (7), Hong Kong (10), China (1), Malaysia (2) <i>Central Eurasia:</i> Kazakhstan (3), Saudi Arabia (1) <i>West Eurasia:</i> France (17), Germany (4), Portugal (3), Sweden (2), Norway (2), Finland (1), Lithuania (1) <i>Africa:</i> Senegal (1) <i>North America:</i> Mexico (3), Canada (2) <i>South America:</i> Colombia (1), Venezuela (1)
Group C	healthcare professionals at NGO training programme
Event types	discussions, role-plays
Nationalities	<i>East Eurasia:</i> Cambodia (1), Indonesia (1), Japan (3), Philippines (1), Thailand (2), Timor-Leste <i>Central Eurasia:</i> Bangladesh (2), Nepal (2), Pakistan (1), Sri Lanka (1) <i>North America:</i> USA (1)

The group as a whole, and the smaller sub-groups in most of the individual interactions, comprised a diverse range of cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds. Thus, it was not anticipated that the practice of English language among the participants would exhibit the kinds of regularities that often obtain in a local, long-term setting for English use. Rather, no assumptions were made except that the English-language interactions would be, by definition, instances of English as a *lingua franca*. Further, it was expected that the participants would practise English from a wide range of cultural and linguistic starting points, including great differences in participants' proficiencies and communication strategies, and that therefore their English language practice might best be described as «interactions across Englishes» (Meierkord, 2012), rather than interactions in any stable variety. Further, following Meeuwis (1994) and Firth (1996), the practices are seen the discursive accomplishment of users in a situation.

Therefore, in choosing the points of focus and the methodologies to be employed, emphasis was placed not on observing or discovering varieties of English, but on observing the practices of English that arise from the specific configuration of situation and users (or participants) attending the use of English as a *lingua franca* in this setting. For different users or in a different situation the practices would be different. (This point, though obvious when stated, can be lost when a researcher holds an *a priori* assumption that what will be observed is a rarified variety of system of language, or an instance of such.)

### *1. Methodology and data*

The raw data collected were audio- and video-recordings of the interactions in the settings in which they naturally occurred. These were transcribed and a small corpus compiled. Next, the corpus was analysed in the following ways, all following from observations grounded in the data as they were collected:

1. It was observed early on that language-switching between the two dominant languages, English ('international language') and Japanese ('local language'), was common in all groupings of participants (whether or not there were Japanese involved). To ascertain whether there was a regular distribution of speech functions assigned to English versus Japanese, a manual analysis was carried out, and a rough correlation of English to functions of ideational exchange and Japanese to interpersonal orientation was observed

(see Thompson, 2009).

2. In interviews, participants mentioned that the social context of their interactions was different not only from their home cultures but also from how they understood Japanese culture to be, and one example, methods of addressing interlocutors, was highlighted. To characterise the representation of social situation among and by the participants, the frequencies of personal pronouns were compared, and their contexts of use were individually investigated. One notable finding (also in Thompson, 2009) was that the English pronoun *you* was relatively infrequent, and in places where it might have been used there was instead the interlocutor's name or a switch to Japanese where a greater range of interlocutor-referring devices are available.

The findings of the above two lines of inquiry suggested that modality was an important organising principle in the ways that participants constructed their interactions. That is, the participants' orientations to objects, events, ideas, and other participants, were realised not only in modal auxiliaries and epistemic/attitudinal markers, but also in their choices of which language to speak, of how to address interlocutors, etc.

3. Thus, it was decided to examine more deliberately how participants expressed modality, i.e. their epistemic and attitudinal orientation to the objects, events, ideas, an other participants in the context of their interactions.

It is a portion of this third line of investigation that is the subject of this paper, brought into focus by a further unanticipated observation. That is, midway through the analysis, it was noted that, especially in one of the groups (Group B in [Table 1](#)) many participants were not consistent in the roles they adopted in discussion; sometimes taking a leading role (asking questions, responding to most other participants' contributions, and continually summarising the group's progress), and at other times taking a much more relaxed stance (only occasionally commenting or making contributions). It was further observed that, for these participants who varied their role in the discussion, their expression of modality varied as well. Thus, it became a focus of the analysis to investigate the variance in these modality practices among participants depending on their role in the discussion – a dominating central role or a peripheral role.

For the stage of the study that is the focus of this paper, a corpus of interactions from the groups and settings listed above was examined. Because a detailed coding of the participants' dominant versus peripheral roles was not feasible for the entire corpus, a subset of the Group B corpus

was selected from interactions where the alternation between dominant and peripheral roles was most distinct. The data thus examined here were 3 group events totalling 98 minutes:

1. Event 1: discussion, 5 students participating.
2. Event 2: post-presentation question-answer session, 3 students participating.
3. Event 3: discussion, 3 students participating.

There were 8 participants involved in the three discussions, some of them taking part in more than one of the discussions. Each student in each discussion was assigned a different number (i.e. one student was Speaker 1 in one discussion and then Speaker 6 in another) for the purposes of analysing the correlation between role and modality practices.

As a representative, but by no means comprehensive, sampling of the practice of expressing modality, the analysis consisted of identifying, counting, and examining the contexts of a) uses of modal auxiliary verbs, and b) common (in this corpus) epistemic and attitudinal markers ('think', 'guess', 'feel', 'like', 'kind of/kinda', etc.).

## 2. Findings and analysis

The relative frequencies of the modal auxiliary verbs, shown below in Table 2, were, by and large, unremarkable, and the practice of this means of expressing modality showed no correlation to the role that a participant took in a discussion (i.e. dominant or peripheral).

Table 2 – Relative frequencies of modal auxiliary verbs in corpus subset

term	count	relative frequency	comment
can*	36	0.59%	
will*	30	0.49%	17 by one participant
have to	25	0.41%	
should*	19	0.31%	
would*	18	0.29%	
could*	9	0.15%	

Note 1: Terms followed by \* include their negative contractions.

Note 2: Terms with a count of 0 (e.g. «may», «had to») are not included in the table.

The investigation of epistemic and attitudinal markers yielded results of greater interest. These markers displayed the participants' orientation to the idea (the ideational content of the utterance) either in terms of the status of their knowledge of the idea (epistemic) or in terms of their affective orientation to the idea (attitudinal). A problem in the initial identification of these terms was distinguishing instances of ideational meaning from instances of orientational meaning with terms such as «think», «like», and «kind of», as is illustrated below.

## Excerpt 1

- 1 S8: the thing is we are not changing our approach because it's  
the same thing in  
2 the case their main objective is just to complete the mission  
that's it (.) we  
3 should try to think long term more Asian way we are  
going to work together  
4 or they are gonna have good relationship (.) they (.) you  
are gonna help us  
5 then we will work together in the future on other projects

## Excerpt 2

- 1 S2: er i think the summary here sums it up pretty well.

In Excerpt 1 the use of «think» (in line 3) is ideational; that is, the speaker is referring to the act of thinking, or, in other words, the idea of thinking is part of the content of S8's meaning, that they should think in a more «long term» manner, or «more Asian way». In contrast, in Excerpt 2, the use of «think» (in line 1) is not in the construction of the content of S2's meaning, but rather, it is used to introduce the statement that «the summary here sums it up pretty well», and to show that S2 is epistemically fairly committed (not absolutely certain, yet not uncommitted) to that idea.

In the corpus subset, out of 55 uses of the token «think», 55 were orientational, and 2 were ideational, illustrating that this is a very common means of expressing modality.

Similarly, the token «like» was used largely as an attitudinal marker, though with much use as well in the ideational content (of 74 uses, 51

were orientational, and 23 were ideational), as seen in Excerpt 3 below.

Excerpt 3

- 1 S2: oh another thing i wrote down in my analysis Louis saw  
the company like
- 2 family like company are really close whereas David doesn't  
understand what
- 3 he is concerned about for him business is just business he  
just made one as
- 4 efficient as possible (.) if you have three staff you have  
three staff so

In line 1, «like» is used as part of the expression of an idea («Louis saw the company like family»), whereas the use of «like» immediately following is used to show a non-committed orientation (both epistemically and attitudinally) to the idea «company are really close».

In this way, epistemic and attitudinal markers were identified (by being a confirmed orientational use) and counted, and the most common of this set of devices for expressing modality can be seen in Table 3 below.

Table 3 – Most frequent epistemic and attitudinal markers in the corpus subset

term	count	orientational uses	relative frequency
think	57	55	0.89%
like	74	51	0.83%
kinda / kind of	28	27	0.44%
maybe	25	25	0.41%
know	28	25	0.41%
sure	7	7	0.11%
guess	6	6	0.10%
if	38	3	0.05%
probably	0	0	0%

To determine the correlation between practices of modality and role (dominant or peripheral) in the discussion, a means of measuring interaction

dominance was needed. For this purpose, two measures of participant dominance were utilised. First, each speaker in each discussion is given a unique identifying number (as mentioned above, so that a given individual would be treated separately in different discussions). Then, for each speaker (S1, S2,...) two measures were calculated:

1. Number of words spoken (in the corpus subset).
2. Average and median number of intervening turns (i.e. the number of floor-changing turns that occur between one of the speaker's turns and the following one, counted from the transcript, with an average and median taken for each speaker).

These two measures yielded a rough characterisation of the role (with respect to dominant or peripheral participation) that each speaker took in a given discussion. There was overall a high correlation between these two measures – those who spoke much also spoke often, as would be expected but not logically necessary – and these are summarised in [Table 4](#).

*Table 4 – Measures of participants' roles in discussions*

participant	words	turns	average intervening turns	median intervening turns
S1	397	48	5.54	2
S2	1543	149	1.59	1
S3	1037	129	1.93	1
S4	207	23	12.17	5
S5	114	15	18.44	5.5
S6	865	82	1.93	1
S7	732	40	4.55	2
S8	747	71	2.22	1
S9	320	38	5.05	2
S10	153	16	14.79	7
S11	1137	94	3.07	1.5

With these measures of the participants' roles, the frequency of the epistemic and attitudinal markers could be viewed alongside, and correlations discovered. When this was done, it emerged that, especially for two of the markers included in the analysis, «kind of»/«kinda» and «like», there was a pronounced correlation, as seen below in [Table 5](#).

*Table 5 – Use of the modality markers «kind of»/«kinda» and «like» arranged by decreasing participation by speaker*

speaker	words	turns	average intervening	«kind of»/«kinda» (relative freq.)	«like» (relative freq.)
S2	1543	149	1.59	0.71%	1.88%
S11	1137	94	1.59	0.36%	0.94%
S3	1037	129	1.93	0.19%	0.29%
S6	865	82	1.93	1.27%	2.66%
S8	747	71	2.22	0.00%	0.94%
S7	732	40	4.55	0.00%	0.21%
S9	320	38	5.05	0.31%	0.37%
S1	397	48	5.54	0.00%	0.36%
S4	207	23	12.17	0.48%	0.48%
S10	303	16	14.79	0.33%	0.49%
S5	114	15	18.44	0.00%	0.00%

While such a correlation does not imply a dependence in one direction or the other arranged according to decreasing level of participant dominance, when we look more closely at pairs of discussion speakers who are actually the same individual in different discussions, the correlation is even more striking, and strongly suggestive of a dependent relation. In the above table, one individual is represented by the speaker identifying numbers S2 (dominant role) vs. S7 (peripheral role), and another by S6 (dominant role) vs. S1 (peripheral role). If we focus on these two individuals, omitting the other rows in the table above, we get [Table 6](#) below.

*Table 6 – Use of the modality markers «kind of»/«kinda» and «like» by two individuals, comparing dominant participation with peripheral participation*

individual	speaker	words	turns	average intervening	«kind of»/«kinda» (relative freq.)	«like» (relative freq.)
A - dominant	S2	1543	149	1.59	0.71%	1.88%
A - peripheral	S7	732	40	4.55	0.00%	0.21%
B - dominant	S6	865	82	1.93	1.27%	2.66%
B - peripheral	S1	397	48	5.54	0.00%	0.36%

For both individuals, when dominant in a discussion (by the measures we have employed here), the marker «kind of» / «kinda» has a relative frequency higher than the overall frequencies of most epistemic and attitudinal markers (higher than all except «think» and «like», see Table 3 above). Yet when only peripherally involved in the discussion, this marker is not used at all by either individual. Similarly, and probably more significantly due to the higher overall frequencies, the marker «like» is used by both individuals more than eight times as often (relative to total number of words spoken) when in a dominant discussion role than when in a peripheral role.

### *3. Conclusions*

Although the significance of these findings is limited by the small sample size of data that have been analysed thus far, several important statements can be made, and speculative interpretations appended.

First, we can measure the differentiation in participant role between that of a dominant discussion participant and a peripheral one. The measures that have been used in this paper are crude, but can be improved in time and with the suggestions and experimentation of other researchers. We can also measure some of the language practices that enact the role of dominant participant.

Second, we have observed a correlation between conversational dominance and frequency of some orientational (epistemic and attitudinal) modality markers. Those who dominate use the markers «kind of»/«kinda» and «like» more frequently, and, thus, appear to mark orientation (or stance) by subtler means. Those on the periphery do not use the above modality markers as much, and appear to mark orientation with more explicit means (for example with auxiliary verbs «should», «could», the negative marker «don't know», and utterance-initial «I think»).

Third, we can see that the appropriation or assignment of the role of discussion leader (the dominant role) is not consistent from speech-event to speech-event. Some participants, however, appear to take the dominant role more often. In this small corpus subset at least, speakers who would self-identify and would be identified as «native speakers» and «near-native speakers» were more often found in dominant roles.

Therefore, the results of this investigation lead to the interpretation that differing language practices are suited to differing roles (enacting dominance and peripheral participation) in a discussion. We can reword this interpretation to say that, as roles are generated and constructed by

language users in social situations, it is not only the participants' perceptions of varieties of English language, but also, or even more so, the context of English as a lingua franca, a context made up mainly of users in situations, that determines what kinds of language practices emerge in a given setting.

The practices observed and revealed in this paper might be understood as instances of «interactions among Englishes» (Meierkord, 2012). The several individuals bring different varieties into contact, and certain Englishes (that is certain practices) have more validity so their users are more likely to take dominant roles. However, we must also complicate this conceptualisation by saying that individuals bring a variety of practices with them – for example, practices for dominating discussions and practices for being peripherally involved. We may also interpret these practices as instances of an ELF-wide characteristic, in the same way as, for example, Baumgarten and House (2010) have suggested that L2 (ELF) speakers use «I think» in subtle verbal routines less, and as overt stance markers more.

Or, stepping back in order to appreciate a more expansive and comprehensive interpretation, we may view these differences in practices as evidence that what determines language practice in ELF settings is not varieties of English or characteristics solely of ELF, but rather a situation- and user- determined meaning system that develops in all interactions (lingua franca or not), and differential use of that system according to an individual's familiarity with the practices for enacting different roles in interactions.

Thus, to a teacher of English language who wishes to maintain an ELF perspective, it is probably best not to view these practices for marking modality as characteristic either of English as a lingua franca or of English in largely monolingual contexts, but instead simply to appreciate that wide differences among participants' practices (and their behaviour vis-a-vis taking a dominant or peripheral role) are more likely in ELF settings. Accordingly, the teacher should simply encourage ELF users to do what they are probably quite adept at doing already, that is, adjusting to a variety of practices for marking modality while negotiating ever-changing situations for English language use.

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La comunicazione interculturale è il filo rosso che attraversa quasi tutti i contributi di questo volume. Negli ultimi venti anni tale nozione è stata esplorata e, più recentemente, rivisitata in una prospettiva ELF in diverse aree di ricerca come, ad esempio, la comunicazione strategica d'affari, la consapevolezza interculturale, l'insegnamento delle lingue, la formazione docenti, i discorsi socioculturali, così come gli stessi studi interculturali. Scopo di questo libro è fornire ai lettori una selezione di articoli recenti e stimolanti, nonché contribuire alla fiorente crescita di pubblicazioni ELF.

Il libro è diviso in tre parti che coprono tre temi principali: 1) ELF, insegnamento delle lingue e la formazione dei docenti; 2) La comunicazione in contesti migratori e plurilingui; atteggiamenti e interazioni; 3) ELF nel mondo degli affari e in quello universitario. Il volume contiene ventiquattro capitoli scritti da studiosi e ricercatori che hanno partecipato al Convegno Internazionale ELF6, svoltosi a Roma presso l'Università Roma Tre nel 2013. I contributi si fondano sulle presentazioni da loro fatte in occasione di tale convegno.

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 most recently in an ELF perspective in several research areas, e.g. strategic business communication, intercultural awareness, language teaching, teacher education, sociopolitical discourses, as well as intercultural studies themselves. The aim of this book is to provide the reader with a selection of recent, thought provoking papers, and contribute to the burgeoning growth of ELF publications.

The book is divided into three parts that cover three main subjects: 1) ELF, language teaching and teacher education; 2) Communication in plurilingual and migration contexts: attitudes and interactions; 3) ELF in business and academia. It contains twenty-four chapters altogether, written by scholars and researchers who participated to ELF6 International Conference, which was held in Rome in 2013. Their work draws on the presentations they gave on that particular occasion.