LEARNERS' AWARENESS AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS ELF
A pilot study in an Italian University context

ANNA MARIA DE BARTOLO
UNIVERSITÀ DELLA CALABRIA

Abstract — This paper presents the initial results of a pilot study conducted at the University of Calabria, (Italy). The purpose was to investigate learners' attitudes and beliefs towards ELF issues and the relationship between ELF awareness and classroom practices. In particular, it aims to explore learners' awareness of the plurality of English in evolving sociolinguistic environments and their attitudes towards learning and teaching English as a second language at the University level. It is argued that although ELF empirical findings and theoretical arguments have raised profound concerns about current principles and practices in ELT, the classroom world has not been greatly affected by these issues. Through the analysis of the findings, this paper draws attention to the need to reconsider learners' established beliefs in terms of learning and teaching goals. It is highlighted that learners need to be encouraged to become critical language users, capable of evaluating the cultural and linguistic input provided in class, from an ELF-oriented perspective, and therefore become actively engaged in their learning process.

Keywords: ELF Awareness; language attitudes; intercultural communication; critical pedagogies; expanding horizons.

1. Awareness and attitudes towards ELF

Language awareness (LA) has long enjoyed a high status in language education (see Carter 2003; Hawkins 1992). LA encompasses 'knowledge about language' (Carter 2003, p. 63) which traditionally focused on form-orientation with attention to grammatical, lexical, phonological features and the effect on meaning brought about by the use of different forms (Carter 2003). On the basis of this, second language teaching has drawn attention to the importance for learners to notice linguistic devices and features used by native speakers. While many studies on Language Awareness were traditionally concerned with grammar aspects (Svalberg 2001; Valeo 2013), recent LA research has expanded beyond linguistic forms to cover areas related to pragmatics, culture and pedagogy (Cross 2010; Murray 2010; Porto 2010). Nonetheless, a Language Awareness approach has focused on knowledge about the English used by native speakers, limited to the linguistic features developed in NES (Native English Speaking) contexts, meaning by this, contexts where standard varieties of English are used (Wang 2015). The development of ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) as a research field has definitely widened the scope of Language Awareness research to include knowledge of the relationships of non-native speakers with English, the identification with their L1 cultural groups, the impact of the encounters between different linguacultural groups and how the language has evolved and expanded as a consequence of this. In other words, new knowledge about English challenges the traditional approach to LA focused on native English awareness. Becoming aware of how the English language functions in evolving linguistic scenarios represents a significant change in the traditional approach to Language Awareness. Therefore, English as a Lingua Franca awareness becomes a new area that needs to be further explored for the purpose of ELT (Wang 2015).

The fast-changing scenario of global English usage, the complexity of English as a lingua franca in plurilingual contexts and its emerging roles and functions pose new challenges to commonly held assumptions about language use and education (Matsuda 2003; Seidlhofer 2004; Canagarajah 2005; Jenkins 2006; Matsuda, Friedrich 2011; Cogo, Dewey 2012). As Seidlhofer (1999, p. 234) has claimed: "there is a sense of breaking the professional mould, with a broader conception of what it means to teach languages going hand in hand with a more comprehensive view of the languages to be taught". A deeper understanding of English as currently being used by non-native speakers in "naturally occurring interactions" (Cogo, Dewey 2012) in multilingual contexts, becomes the first step to endorse this change.

However, being aware of the changes that are taking place in the English language nowadays and that non-conformity to established norms of English does not hinder successful communication in intercultural contexts (Cogo, Dewey 2012; Jenkins 2000; Mauranen 2012; Seidlhofer 2011; Mauranen, Ranta 2009), does not necessarily lead to acknowledging ELF legitimacy especially within classroom practices (Dewey 2012; Jenkins 2007; Seidlhofer 2011). Despite developments and research in the field, classroom practices firmly rely on the native speaker model. Nonetheless, since the nature of English language use is changing, users' attitudes towards these changes need to be addressed and researched (Jenkins 2009; Pilus 2013, Sifakis and Sougari 2005; He and Zang 2010, Sougari and Faltzi 2015) in order to develop useful insights for teachers and educators and help them make more informed and realistic judgements about classroom practices. It is within this framework that the present study has been conducted.

2. Investigating learners' attitudes to ELF: a pilot study

2.1. Theoretical background

Studies so far have especially focused on teachers' awareness and attitudes towards ELF issues (see Jenkins 2007, 2015; Dewey 2012; Ranta 2010; Wang 2013; Sifakis 2014). A number of studies have especially addressed the native/non-native speaker dichotomy and revealed a prevalent belief in the superiority of native English-speaking teachers (see Baker 2008, 2009b; Kachru 2005; Toh 2003; Tsui, Toleffson 2007) with native speaker norms accepted as norm providing. A good amount of research has investigated teachers' attitudes towards ELF (Dewey 2012; Jenkins 2007; Ranta 2010; Wang 2013; Sifakis 2014) by eliciting teachers' perceptions about English in today's globalized era and their understanding of current sociolinguistic realities. Jenkins (2015) offers an overview of issues concerning the development of English, and in particular, Standard English ideology, the centre-periphery relation between NESs (Native English speakers) and NNESs (Non-Native English speakers) and the ownership of English are crucial issues she examines in the process of raising awareness towards ELF. Jenkins (2007) has extensively explored attitudes towards ELF. Her interviews conducted with non-native speaking teachers have covered a range of issues concerning the "participants' attitudes towards NNS (Non-Native speaker) and NS (Native speaker) English accents, their own English accent aspirations, any negative experiences they had where they felt their accent was involved, and their position on ELF accent" (2007, p. 208). Her research illustrates the conflicting and ambiguous attitudes teachers have towards native speakers and local norms. The results show a prevalent belief that NS English accent is the right one and NNS accent is wrong (2007, p. 217). In addition, while the participants are aware of the concept of ELF at a theoretical level, they express their doubts on the possibility of presenting ELF accents in their classrooms.

There seems to be no preference for teaching a variety of English other than British/American (e.g. Singapore, Indian English and so on) and teachers, particularly in Asian contexts, seem to be more attached to Western culture and to the American English variety (Shibata 2009; Shim 2002). On the whole, most of the studies in the field emphasize that despite acknowledging the lingua franca status of English and its complex roles and functions, teachers remain attached to NS/standard norms. Regardless of ELF empirical findings (Cogo, Dewey 2012; Mauranen 2012; Seidlhofer 2011) which question the assumption that non-conformity to established norms of English hinders intelligibility, the majority of classroom approaches still prioritize standard norms as tied to successful communication (see Jenkins 2015; Canagarajah 2005; Seidlhofer 2004; Matsuda 2003). In terms of learners' attitudes towards ELF-related issues and the native/non-native speaker dichotomy, studies prove overall inconsistent. Recent studies (He and Zhang 2010; Tomak 2011) showed high levels of tolerance for NN (Non-Native) accents of English, in as far as non-native accents facilitate communication. In He and Zhang's (2010) study, 55% out of the 820 NNSs of English studying in Chinese universities, expressed preference towards NN accented English. Similarly, in Tomak's study (2011), which surveyed Turkish students' attitudes, 70% of the participants' responses revealed that "it is not a must to speak English just like a native speaker" (Tomak 2011, p. 281), showing that a native accent is not considered to be vital in interactions. On the other hand, Pilus' study (2013) conducted among ESL (English as a second language) students in Malaysia indicated preference for the British accent, despite the participants' satisfaction with the Malaysian accent. Similarly, Cheung and Sung (2010), when investigating Hong Kong students' attitudes towards NESTs (Native English-speaking teachers) and NNESTs (Non Native English speaking teachers), revealed that exposure to NESTs' accent facilitates student communication in intercultural contexts. 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 conclude that students' perceptions change over time. It seems that the longer students are taught by NNESTs, the more tolerant and supportive they become towards them.

2.2. Research design

Exploring teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards ELF is definitely useful to understand how learners' beliefs are affected and shaped by current teaching practices. Nonetheless, the study presented here goes the other way round, it starts from exploring learners' attitudes and beliefs towards English language use (Wang 2015; Galloway, Rose 2014) and then moves on to the teachers. Stimulated by the aforementioned empirical studies, this small-case study aims to provide further hints for reflection by exploring learners' attitudes in a specific teaching context. In particular, the research has been conducted to investigate attitudes and awareness concerning the plurality and cultural diversity of English, learners' willingness to accept novelty and variability in well-established teaching practices and their purposes for learning English. Secondly, the paper draws attention to the need to stimulate learners to become more critically involved in teachers' pedagogical choices, which do not often entail learners' participation (see Yu 2015, p. 35; Baker 2015; Matsuda 2012), and aims to spur reflection on the input provided in class and how it contributes to shape learners' attitudes. It is further suggested that awareness-raising activities towards non-standard varieties, World Englishes (Kachru 1986, 1991) and ELF may be incorporated in class in order to better address learners' intercultural skills.

The study was conducted at the University of Calabria (South of Italy) in the academic year 2016-17, it follows both a quantitative and qualitative design. Since the qualitative design is still in progress, at the interview stage, only the first phase will be

reported on and discussed.

2.3. Methodology

A questionnaire was prepared and used as a research instrument to collect quantitative data from the participants. It was based on a study by Inal and Ozdemir (2015, p. 142) and adapted from their research on teachers' beliefs about ELF issues in Turkey. Moreover, questions 3, 4 and 9 are adapted from Sougari and Faltzi (2015, p. 161) on Greek pre-service teachers' beliefs about ELF-related issues.

The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part is a preliminary/general information section aimed at identifying students' language background and experiences. Students were required to respond to Yes/No questions, in the specific, state whether they had studied English previously and specify the number of years; secondly, whether they had ever visited an English-speaking country and whether they had contact/exchanges with people from other countries. Students were asked to answer the following: Have you ever visited any English-speaking country? Do you have friends or relatives who live abroad? Do you use English in your exchanges with them? This section was designed to identify a possible correlation between learners' use of English in intercultural contexts and ELF-aware perceptions. Correlation between scores is shown in tables 3 and 4 and analyzed and discussed in sections 3.4 and 3.5.

The second section of the questionnaire included 10 items. Respondents were required to record their responses on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree, as shown below.

Now for each of the following 10 statements circle one number on a scale from 1 to 5 to express your beliefs.
1=strongly disagree   2= disagree   3=neither agree nor disagree   4=agree   5=strongly agree
1. I need to learn English to communicate with Native Speakers of English.

1   2   3   4   5
2. I need to learn English to communicate with Non-native Speakers of English.
3. The variety of English to be used in the classroom should be Standard British/American English.
4. Learners should be exposed, in the classroom, to varieties of English (Indian English, Chinese English, Singapore English, African English, etc.) other than Standard British/American English.
5. Classroom materials should include cultural aspects/topics other than Standard British or American.
6. In learning/teaching English, developing students' proficiency in Standard British/American grammar forms is of crucial importance.
7. In learning/teaching English, the focus on intelligibility (e.g. being able to understand each other) is of crucial importance.
8. Any linguistic use that does not conform to Standard English is incorrect and should not be used in the classroom.
9. Teachers of English should have a Standard native-speaker accent.
10. When I speak English, it doesn't matter if I make mistakes as long as people can understand me.

2.3.1. Participants and context

The above questionnaire was administered to 120 participants. The participants were all undergraduate, second year university students, belonging to the degree courses of Biotechnology and Biology. All of them were native Italian speakers, their proficiency level was B1 level, as tested after completion of the first module *English for basic academic skills*. Studying English as a second language is compulsory for Science students who are required to pass a first module of English and a second more advanced module in their second year. In the advanced modules students enhance their academic skills, aiming for a B2 level as a final

course target, but they do not cover scientific English. The syllabi present a variety of academic topics not particularly related to their field of study. In terms of the participants' learning experience prior to their enrolment in the University, all of them declared that they had studied English for between 8 and 14 years. Although students study English for so many years, their proficiency level is overall much lower than expected when they enroll in university.

Students were administered the paper questionnaire during the English class, at the beginning of the course module, and they were asked to complete it individually. The teacher gave time to the students to read the 10 items carefully and ask questions in case something was not clear. In particular, the teacher explained terms that may have proved difficult or unfamiliar to the students, such as intelligibility, native/non-native, standard-nonstandard varieties of English, World Englishes. Being an English class, it was decided to administer the questionnaire in English and no translation into Italian was provided. The teacher also explained what the objective of the questionnaire was in terms of identifying learners' attitudes towards particular aspects of the English language and culture, however she did not give any detailed explanations in order not to influence students' answers and opinions.

It must be highlighted that in the teaching context object of the study, course materials and textbooks mainly target native speaker English norms and do not cover issues and contents related to cultures other than standard British/American, as research in the field has highlighted (see Matsuda 2003; Gray 2002; Akbari 2008; Pennycook 2000). In this specific teaching environment, the notion of English as a global Lingua Franca is not contemplated in syllabi and course materials.

2.3.2. Survey design

As regards the survey design, it has to be highlighted that the first two items as well as item 9 were constructed to elicit learners' beliefs related to the native/non-native, standard/non-standard dichotomy as far as the role of the native speaker in language learning is concerned. As shown in previous research (see Jenkins 2007, 2015; Baker 2008, 2009) the native speaker is considered to be the ideal model to imitate and aim for. The idea, in the present study, was to investigate whether this belief was perceived by the learners as well. Overall, it has to be emphasized that the objective of the study was to stimulate learners to reflect on their goals when learning English in a social and linguistic context that has inevitably changed and therefore, to what extent learners are aware of these changes.

We know that nowadays university students often travel, participate in mobility/exchange programs, they are often involved in international communities where non-native speakers of English from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds get together and use English increasingly as the international language of communication. They use online resources, chat, social networks, which allow them to exploit and expand their multilingual repertoires, "the repertoires in flux" (Jenkins 2015), to experiment the real-life use of the language, the hybridity and creativity of ELF in which languages mix and interweave together. The assumption when designing the questionnaire was that, compared to language teachers, learners are more willing to accept and tolerate differences, variability, flexibility in the language, they are less likely to be concerned with issues of correctness and native standard forms/varieties as teachers may be and more interested in getting their message across, becoming intelligible to the people they are communicating with, despite the presence of language mistakes. Questions 6, 7, 10 especially were designed to investigate these points. A further but important issue regards learners' exposure to classroom materials and how they perceive and evaluate the input that inform classroom teaching in relation to an ELF-aware perception. As section 5 will point out, classroom materials are dominated by an

almost exclusive concern with native British/American topics and varieties and do not include issues related to World Englishes and varieties of English beyond Native Standard forms. Questions 3, 4, 5 and 8 in particular address these issues.

2.4. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the data. SPSS version 21 was used for all statistical processing (percentages, standard deviations, means). Table 1 below shows the means calculated for the 10 items in the questionnaire. Table 2 shows the percentages of learners' beliefs in terms of agreement/disagreement. If we look carefully at the data, and in particular at the percentages for agreement (ranges 4 and 5) and disagreement (ranges 1 and 2) for each question set (see Table 2 and Figure 1), an interesting picture emerges as far as participants' attitudes and beliefs are concerned.

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Means	Std. Deviations	Variance
QUESTION 1	119	3	2	5	4.27	.606	.368
QUESTION 2	119	4	1	5	3.87	1.013	1.026
QUESTION 3	120	3	2	5	3.84	.622	.386
QUESTION 4	120	4	1	5	3.08	.975	.951
QUESTION 5	120	3	2	5	4.03	.804	.646
QUESTION 6	120	3	2	5	4.19	.652	.425
QUESTION 7	120	2	3	5	4.36	.646	.417
QUESTION 8	119	4	1	5	2.66	.906	.821
QUESTION 9	120	4	1	5	3.45	.995	.989
QUESTION 10	120	4	1	5	3.13	1.115	1.243
Valid N (listwise)	118						

Table 1
Descriptive statistics calculated for the 10 items in the questionnaire.

	Q. 1	Q. 2	Q. 3	Q. 4	Q. 5	Q. 6	Q. 7	Q. 8	Q. 9	Q. 10
Disagree or strongly disagree (%)	0.8%	8.4%	1.7%	32.5%	2.5%	0.8%	0.0%	45.4%	18.3%	30.8%
Neither agree nor disagree (%)	5.9%	17.6%	23.3%	30.0%	23.3%	10.8%	9.2%	37.0%	24.2%	30.0%
Strongly disagree or agree (%)	93.3%	73.9%	75.0%	37.5%	74.2%	88.3%	90.8%	17.6%	57.5%	39.2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 2
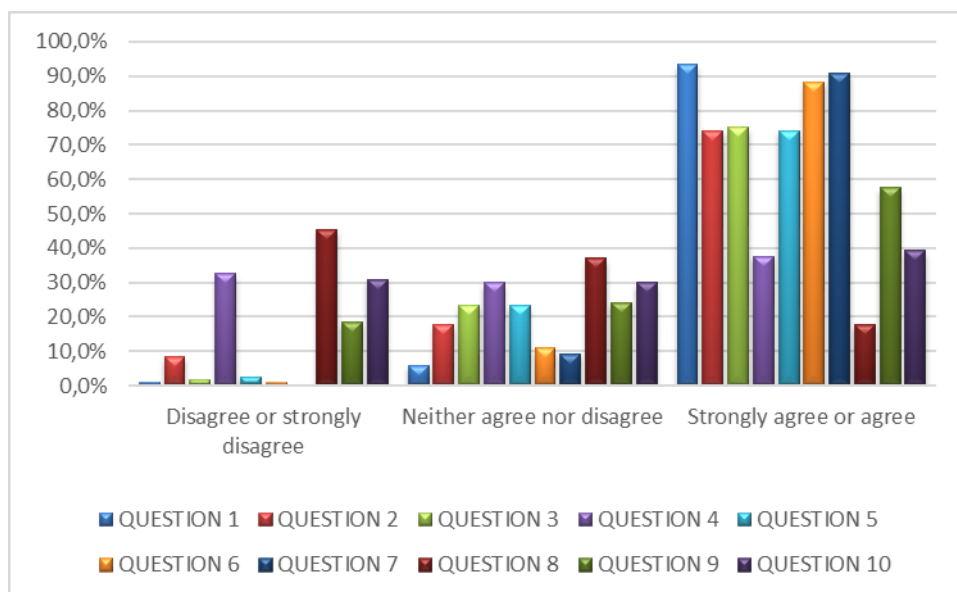Percentages of learners' beliefs.

Figure 1
Distribution of the overall scores (%).

The mean scores for question 1, *I need to learn English to communicate with Native Speakers of English,* emphasize that, for this group of learners, communicating with native English speakers is considered to be a primary goal when learning English (mean scores of 4.27). On this question, respondents showed 93.3% of agreement (ranges 4 and 5 together) as shown in Table 2.

However, from a further observation of the data, it appears that students manifest mixed attitudes. If on the one hand, it seems that they need to learn English to communicate with its native-speakers, on the other hand, communicating with non-native speakers should be part of their language learning goals, as the percentage for question 2 (*I need to learn English to communicate with Non-Native Speakers of English)* suggests. This perception is less predominant than in question 1, nonetheless, the level of agreement is important, 73.9%, and needs to be drawn attention to.

Participants' responses also seem to reveal that Standard British/American English is perceived as the main variety to be used in the classroom (see question 3, with mean scores of 3.84 and 75% of agreement for ranges 4 and 5). On the other hand, their responses suggest that learners may be willing to embrace a teaching approach which is not exclusively standard-oriented and possibly open to some variety and flexibility in pedagogical objectives. In particular, question 8, *Any linguistic use that does not conform to Standard English is incorrect and should not be used in the classroom,* had a mean score of 2.66, which means that the percentage of disagreement (ranges 1 and 2) with this statement was of 45.4%, while another 37.0% could not decide, and only 17.6% agreed with it.

Question 6, *In learning/teaching English, developing students' proficiency in Standard British/American grammar forms is of crucial importance,* highlights that the focus on standard grammar forms is still considered as a crucial aspect of classroom teaching and approach (mean score of 4.19). On this question, respondents showed 88.3% of agreement (ranges 4 and 5) as shown in Table 2. An interesting result, however, is revealed by question 7, *In learning/teaching English, the focus on intelligibility (e. g. being able to understand each other) is of crucial importance*, which is the question that got the second highest score in terms of agreement with a percentage of 90.8% for ranges 4 and 5 and mean score of 4.36. This result possibly shows that besides the focus on standard British grammar, which is what textbooks, teaching materials and final course tests target and assess (see Matsuda 2003; Gray

2002; Akbari 2008; Pennycook 2000), these learners perceive the importance to be as intelligible as possible to the people they are communicating with, to convey their messages, to focus on communication primarily, which is what an ELF-oriented approach aims to highlight. Nonetheless, when we specify the role of mistakes in communication, as in question 10 (*When I speak it doesn't matter if I make mistakes as long as people can understand me*), the level of agreement decreases (with a percentage of 39.2% for ranges 4 and 5 and 30% of undecided).

Questions 5, *Classroom materials should include cultural aspects/topics other than Standard British/American*, is also interesting to discuss. The results (a mean score of 4.03 and a percentage of 74.2% for ranges 4 and 5) possibly mean that these students are willing to expand their knowledge and competence beyond native, mono-cultural issues but need to be encouraged and stimulated to enlarge their perspective further and acquire those intercultural skills they will surely need in increasingly cross-cultural contexts.

On the other hand, question 4, which investigates whether or not they agree to being exposed in the classroom to varieties of English (e.g. Indian, Singapore, African English) other than standard British/American, produces a certain level of uncertainty. The results show that 32.5% disagree (ranges 1 and 2), another 30.0% is undecided, while 37.5% agree (ranges 4 and 5). This, in my opinion, suggests that learners are likely to accept novelty and variety, even if only to a certain extent. What they perceive to be valid and legitimate classroom practices are not easily challenged. This idea is also confirmed by the belief, as in question 9, that it is desirable that English teachers have a native-speaking accent which is often considered as the target model learners should ultimately attain (see Jenkins 2007; Baker 2008, 2009b). This question presents 57.5% of agreement, 18.3% of disagreement, while 24.2% are undecided.

Further to the initial analysis, one-way ANOVA was employed to examine the variability of the scores and identify a possible correlation existing between learners' intercultural experience as reported in the first section of the questionnaire and their beliefs as shown in the second section. One-way ANOVA was used to find out whether there is any effect of the independent variables on each dependent variable (items 1-10). The level of significance was set at .05. The three independent variables were 1. "Have you ever visited any English-speaking country?"; 2. "Do you have friends/relatives who live abroad?"; 3. "Do you use English in your exchanges with them"?

The analysis shows that there is no significant difference between independent variable 1 and each of the 10 items, which means that students' experience of/visits to other countries does not lead to more ELF-aware perceptions. However, a significant difference ($p < .05$) is revealed only in the case of associating independent variable 2 (Do you have friends/relatives who live abroad?) with question 2, *I need to learn English to communicate with Non-Native speakers of English* ($p=.001$); question 7, *In learning/teaching English, the focus on intelligibility (e.g. being able to understand each other) is of crucial importance* (slightly above the significant value $p=.059$)*; and question 8, *Any linguistic use that does not conform to Standard English is incorrect and should not be used in the classroom* ($p=.024$) as shown in Table 3 below.

ANOVA		SUM OF SQUARES	DF	MEAN SQUARE	F	SIG.
QUESTION 2	Between groups	10.730	1	10.730	11.373	.001
	Within groups	110.380	117	.943		
	Total	121.109	118			
QUESTION 7	Between groups	1.482	1	1.482	3.634	.059
	Within groups	48.110	118	.408		
	Total	49.592	119			
QUESTION 8	Between groups	4.171	1	4.171	5.264	.024
	Within groups	92.703	117	.792		
	Total	96.874	118			

Table 3
Correlation between learners' intercultural experiences and dependent variables.

A significant difference also appears in the correlation between independent variable, *Do you use English in your exchanges with them?* with questions 2 (p=.013) and question 8 (p=.019) as Table 4 shows. No other significant differences are revealed by the analysis.

ANOVA		SUM OF SQUARES	DF	MEAN SQUARE	F	SIG.
QUESTION 2	Between groups	8.728	2	4.364	4.504	.013
	Within groups	112.381	116	.969		
	Total	121.109	118			
QUESTION 8	Between groups	6.379	2	3.189	4.088	.019
	Within groups	90.495	116	.780		
	Total	96.874	118			

Table 4
Correlation between learners' use of English in communication exchanges and dependent variables.

2.5. Discussion

The results of the statistical analyses based as they are at the current stage on a Likert scale only, present tentative and limited conclusions also due to the fact that the qualitative data is still being gathered. A follow up analysis will be conducted at the beginning of next academic term and the questionnaire will be repeated at the end of the module. Throughout the English course, awareness-raising activities will be offered (see Lopriore, Vettorel 2015), in order to stimulate students to reflect on ELF-related concepts. These may include extracts from films, documentaries, news which presents non-native English speakers' interactions. The idea is to expose learners to varieties of accents, lexical variations and a diversity of cultural contexts. Such materials will emphasize "the legitimacy of variation" (Seidlhofer 2004, p. 214) in different contexts and will ease our students' communication in "diverse language groups" (Bjørkman 2011, p. 83) and intercultural contexts. In addition, by means of a post-test, final scores will be correlated with the initial results. Therefore, after completion of the second phase of the study, more extensive data and further analysis will hopefully shed some more light on and offer a better insight into the subject. These initial results may suggest only a gradual shift in learners' attitudes from an ELF-aware perspective and are in accord with Cogo (2010) who claims that perceptions might be slowly changing.

Learners appear, in some cases (see in particular results from question 2, question 7 and question 8) willing to embrace new perspectives and accept novelty and variety in their learning goals. Having contacts with people from other countries and using English in intercultural encounters may have a role in developing an inclination towards ELF issues. In particular, the data from table 3, may suggest that learners perceive the need to learn English to speak with Non-Native speakers, as non-native English is what is now commonly spoken in the vast majority of intercultural and multilingual contexts. Therefore, the focus on intelligibility may be viewed as an essential aspect for successful communication, a skill to be developed also within classroom teaching. Moreover, as the results in table 4 seem to suggest, learners may be willing to familiarize, besides standard forms, with the plurality of English and its different uses within classroom contexts. Varieties of English other than Standard British/American should be also included in more traditional syllabi. The point is that if the objective of English language learning, as the paper highlights, is to enable learners to communicate effectively worldwide in a variety of settings, English language teachers should not encourage the predominance of the native norm in teaching contexts and ELT classrooms in general. Learners' engagement with ELF use impacts their learning (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 89), it becomes the springboard for reflecting on and reconsidering their own perspectives about ownership of English and the role of non-native users of English today. "The more learners use English outside their ESOL environment, in their daily lives, the more they appropriate English, which then becomes less a foreign language and more a familiar code of communication" (in Sifakis 2017).

Nonetheless, a long road is still ahead, and more efforts are required on the part of teachers and professionals involved in language learning. What needs to be highlighted is that students form perceptions based on previous experience; their beliefs stem from teacher perceptions (Jenkins 2007) which are native-norm oriented as are the textbooks used in ELT classrooms (Tsantila et al 2016). It is therefore necessary to revise classroom input from an ELF perspective and encourage learners to reflect on how classroom topics/materials are presented and approached in class. I believe that we need to address how attitudes are shaped and reinforced through the cultural and pedagogical input that inform classroom teaching, in other words, we need to analyze coursebooks and classroom materials. This issue will be discussed in the following section.

2.6. Implications: towards a critical pedagogy

There is agreement that learners' and teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards English are enhanced and reinforced by the "dominant linguacultural representation of English as it is presented in the textbooks they are exposed to" (Yu 2015, p. 36). Teaching materials affect teaching practices greatly and inform learners' input in class. It is around the use of teaching materials that classroom learning mainly takes place. Therefore, it is clear that the cultural input students receive in class, which contributes to shape their attitudes to what is good and bad in English, is often dependent on the coursebooks they use. Pennycook (2001, p. 78) emphasized that "English is in the world and the world is in English". Though this is true, the question is: where is the world in ELT materials? What kind of world has been presented in ELT materials over the years? Have local voices/cultures ever been heard in the contents of English coursebooks?

As research has shown, (Matsuda 2003; Gray 2002; Akbari 2008; Pennycook 2000), course-book topics have reflected Anglo-centric/NES norms and fostered the belief that it is only worth exposing learners to the cultures of native English-speaking countries. However, if classroom materials are to reflect the main purpose for which English is learnt in the world today, namely communication among non-native speakers in multilingual contexts, they will have to include the different uses of English as a global lingua franca with different

competences, skills and identities. In this light, ELF findings can play a major role in drawing attention to "the contemporary use of English worldwide and its political, ideological and pedagogical implications" (Siqueira 2015, p. 243). Although ELF empirical findings and theoretical arguments have raised profound concerns about current principles and practices in ELT, the classroom world has not been greatly affected by these issues (Seidlhofer 2001; Dewey 2012; Jenkins 2012).

"The world consumes English, it appropriates English, provides English with new colors, new flavors, new forms and perspectives to exactly see the world" (Siqueira 2015, p. 250). Nonetheless, this world is not represented in ELT materials and classroom teaching. The extent of the diffusion of English across geographical contexts, the cultural diversity of the speakers who use it as a global lingua franca in infinitely varied domains, the purposes it serves, the highly variable and creative use of linguistic resources, have no real effect on the way the language is presented in syllabi and teaching materials (Seidlhofer 2011; Dewey 2012). It is argued that the classroom represents a "closed box, an educational context isolated from society" (Pennycook 2000, p. 89). The classroom materials adopted and the way they are used contribute to making the classroom an idealized space detached from the real world (Siqueira 2015, p. 244). A similar point had already been made by Prodromou 30 years ago, however, little has changed since then. As he emphasized:

> The classroom is a small world. A community linked with the big world outside. It is an extension of that world. But we often behave as if our students on entering our little EFL world, […] leave their three-dimensional humanity outside and enter the plastic world of EFL textbooks; textbooks where language is safe and innocent. The life has been taken out of this EFL textbook world (Prodroumou 1988, pp. 76-79).
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> But life has to be brought back into the classroom in order to reflect the wider context of English use in today's world and show the limitation of traditional classroom practices. It is clear that the "the textbook is not an enemy to be combated, but a companion to be critically evaluated in the light of the needs and characteristics of each specific context" (in Siqueira 2015, pp. 252-253). Teachers and learners should attempt to do this, bring to the surface what is invisible, absent or excluded in our daily teaching practices. In order to enable teachers and learners to perform this task as transformative and critical thinker, current research findings need to be incorporated into classroom practices and educational programmes. Therefore, ELF awareness may empower teachers and learners to explore other possibilities through English, to embrace a more pluricentric and pluralistic pedagogy (Canagarajah 2007). A pedagogy which acknowledges linguistic and cultural diversity in the classroom. The fact that current teaching materials propose a monolingual, monocultural teaching perspective does not mean that teachers and learners have no chance to reconsider their beliefs and practices, make more informed decisions about adopting an ELF perspective and adapting it to their own individual teaching contexts. "What is crucial is not what teaching materials are used but how they are used". (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 201).

3. Final remarks and a way forward

As the paper attempts to suggest, this is what an ELF-aware perspective can do, encourage learners to become critical thinkers, to evaluate course-book contents and the mainstream ideologies embedded in them. So far, limited attention has been given to learners' involvement in classroom practices and choices. Canagarajah (1999, p. 91) has emphasized the absence of students' feedback as far as teachers' pedagogical decisions are concerned, claiming that, on the contrary, this is an important part of the process of learning. Similarly, Pennycook (2001, pp. 159-60) and Kumaravadivelu (2012, p. 82) propose "critical engagement activities whereby students can problematise and reinterpret the taken-for-granted learning as a form of language acquisition".

"Critical pedagogical enterprise is not foremost about ideology critiques of schooling or

the curriculum, nor about teaching subject matters we believe may empower students, nor merely opening a space for our students to speak. Rather, it is about ethical and political demands to think otherwise, to develop a form of critical resistance, to see other possibilities" (Pennycook 2012, p. 139). 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), a way of living which questions in depth our roles as teachers, students, citizens, human beings (Guilherme 2002).

It is therefore necessary to encourage learners to re-evaluate old-fashioned and well established beliefs about what teaching and learning a language means in the light of a critical pedagogy approach. This will entail conceiving language as an essential social and ideological instrument which enables learners to question methods and procedures and contributes to learners' self-perceptions as human beings and critical citizens (Siqueira 2016, p. 204). The second stage of the research currently underway will attempt, by means of students' interviews, to further elucidate critical points that need particular attention, as revealed only in part in the first phase. In particular, it is meant to encourage students to reflect on their understanding of varieties of English, the native/non-native, standard/non-standard dichotomy in English and therefore to clarify their beliefs about the current role of global English in language teaching and learning. The interviews will further look into what plays an influential role in shaping students' views towards ELF-related issues, the extent to which they are ready to examine, evaluate and question the nature of the input offered in class, their willingness to engage with a critical pedagogy.

Learners are to be aware that new avenues can be taken besides the traditional ones. The drive towards ELF awareness aims to open new doors, providing learners with the necessary skills and competences to discuss and re-formulate their purposes for learning English. ELF encourages teachers and learners to push boundaries, move beyond a 'monolithic'/NES perspective (Lopriore, Vettorel 2015, p. 16) to ELT practices and develop a wider, more realistic perspective on what learning and teaching English means today.

An enhanced awareness of the multifaceted English world will hopefully challenge both teachers and learners' established principles, foster deeper reflection on sociolinguistic aspects of language use as well as empower learners to explore and analyze language, while becoming independent English users (Lopriore, Vettorel 2015, p. 28). In the long term, an ELF orientation may help learners become capable of:

- personal and social decisions in normal conversational interaction and use (Lantolf, Thorne 2006),
- drawing on their multilingual repertoire (Canagarajah 2007a, p. 229),
- becoming agents of change (Norton, Toohey 2011, p. 419),
- displaying their identities as members of a community (Canagarajah 2007b),
- analyzing critically the context they are inserted in, taking into consideration the highly sensitive nature of the role of English in the world today (Siqueira 2016, p. 203).

"What happens in the classroom should end up making a difference outside the classroom" (Baynham 2006, p. 28), learners and teachers both need to have an active role in this process.

The English world has completely changed, and learners need to become aware of this. They have the chance to become critical language users, competent intercultural communicators and meaning negotiators but they need to be properly guided by professionals and teachers who are not afraid of pushing boundaries further, of expanding horizons, of challenging themselves. "At all levels, education is to be mostly transformative rather than stubbornly reproductive. ELT shall not go on immune to this (Siqueira 2016, p. 194). This is the challenge language professionals will have to come to terms with. I believe an ELF-oriented teaching approach can contribute towards achieving this goal.

$$L \text{ingue e} \atop L \text{inguaggi}$$

Bionote: Anna Maria De Bartolo teaches English for Administration Science in the undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses in the Department of Political Science, University of Calabria. She has been researcher in English Linguistics since 2005 in the Department of Languages and Education and has recently become associate professor. Her major academic interests include classroom talk and behaviour, pragmatic strategies in the language classroom and sociolinguistics within varieties of English. She has published in the area of multilingualism and multiculturalism, and is particularly interested in the debate surrounding the role of non-native English speakers in multilingual contexts as well as learners and teachers' beliefs towards ELF issues.

Author's address: anna.debartolo@unical.it

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