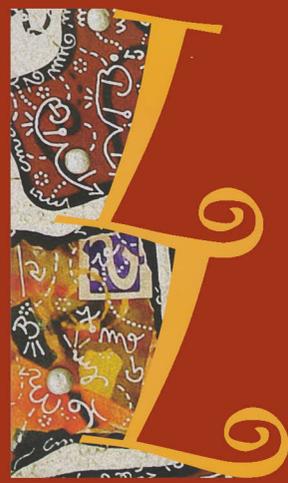


This special issue of *Lingue e Linguaggi* collects the contributions presented at the International Conference *Uses of English as a Lingua Franca in Domain-Specific Contexts of Intercultural Communication*, which took place at the University of Salento, Italy, in December 2019. The Conference represented the conclusion of a PRIN Project co-funded by the Italian Ministry of University and Research, which started from the assumption that ELF is an area needing a more principled systematic investigation since, so far, it has not been recognized as a use of English that is independent from English as a Native Language. The chapters of this special issue concern ELF variations employed in: (a) institutional, professional, as well as 'undeclared' migration settings (UniSalento Unit); (b) digital media employed for global communication (UniVerona Unit); (c) multicultural and multilingual classrooms characterizing contemporary western societies (UniRoma Tre Unit). The contributions enquire into the ELF uses in domain-specific discourses that demonstrate the extent to which the English language comes to be appropriated by non-native speakers who, indeed, do not experience it as an alien 'foreign' language, but rather as a 'lingua franca' through which they feel free to convey their own native linguacultural and experiential uses and narratives, rhetorical and specialized repertoires and, ultimately, their own socio-cultural identities. The contributors' research has provided evidence in support of an acknowledgement that people from different linguacultural backgrounds appropriate English by making reference to their own different native semantic, syntactic and pragmatic codes through which they convey their own communicative needs.



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Uses of English as a Lingua Franca in Domain-specific Contexts of Intercultural Communication

a cura di
Maria Grazia Guido

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COMITATO SCIENTIFICO DELLA CONFERENZA INTERNAZIONALE PRIN “*ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA IN DOMAIN-SPECIFIC CONTEXTS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION*”

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INTRODUCTION

ELF in specialized domains of intercultural communication

MARIA GRAZIA GUIDO

This special issue of the *Lingue e Linguaggi* journal, entitled *Uses of English as a Lingua Franca in Domain-Specific Contexts of Intercultural Communication*, collects the contributions presented at the International Conference with the same title that took place at the University of Salento, Italy, in December 2019. The Conference represented the conclusion of a PRIN Project (PRIN being the acronym for ‘Project of Relevant National Interest’) co-funded by the Italian Ministry of University and Research, whose title (summing up the topics that were explored) was: “English as a Lingua Franca in domain-specific contexts of intercultural communication: a cognitive-functional model for the analysis of ELF accommodation strategies in unequal migration contexts, digital-media virtual environments, and multicultural ELF classrooms”. Three academic Research Units were involved in this Project: the proposing Unit of the University of Salento (Principal Investigator and Unit Coordinator: Prof. Maria Grazia Guido); the Unit of the University of Roma Tre (Unit Coordinator: Prof. Lucilla Lopriore); and the Unit of the University of Verona (Unit Coordinator: Prof. Roberta Facchinetti).

This PRIN project started from the assumption that ELF is an area in need of a more principled systematic enquiry since, so far, it has conventionally been referred only to a general view of Global, International English based on native-speakers’ norms of usage, which actually omit to recognize ELF as a use of English that is independent from English as a Native Language (ENL). On such grounds, the aim of the PRIN Research Team has primarily been to challenge the accepted Anglocentric principle according to which the so-called Standard-English code and even ENL pragmatic usage represent shared norms in intercultural interactions and international transactions adopted worldwide across cultures, specialized contexts and communities of practice. As a consequence, this PRIN research has provided evidence in support of an acknowledgement that people from different linguacultural backgrounds appropriate English by making reference to their own different native semantic, syntactic and pragmatic codes through which they convey their own communicative needs.

The chapters of this special issue enquire into the uses of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in domain-specific discourses that demonstrate the extent to which the English language comes to be appropriated by non-native speakers who, indeed, do not experience it as an alien ‘foreign’ language, but rather as a ‘lingua franca’ through which they feel free to convey their own native linguacultural and experiential uses and narratives, rhetorical and specialized repertoires and, ultimately, their own socio-cultural identities. The domain-specific discourses explored in the course of this research project and illustrated in the various chapters concern ELF variations employed in: (a) institutional, professional, as well as ‘undeclared’ migration settings (UniSalento Unit); (b) digital media employed for global communication (UniVerona Unit); (c) multicultural and multilingual classrooms characterizing contemporary western societies (UniRoma Tre Unit).

On such grounds, the Contributors – who are internationally recognized ELF scholars (among whom the illustrious academics Henry G. Widdowson and Barbara Seidlhofer stand out), as well as young and promising ELF researchers – starting from the hypothesis that non-native speakers make ELF their own by exploring its possible meaning potential that may not conform to native speakers’ conventional usage, enquire about the ways in which ELF users communicate with each other, how they come to an understanding of each others’ ELF variations informed by their respective native-language formal and functional structures and, conversely, what types of misunderstandings occur when one set of native-language formal and functional structures, as well as of domain-specific register conventions – transferred into their respective ELF variations – comes into contact, and frequently into conflict, with another.

This special issue, therefore, explores the consequences of such issues on spoken, written and multimodal communication, with a special reference to Italian multicultural contexts. To this purpose, a number of original models were developed with the aim of challenging conventional constructs in the fields of cognitive and functional grammars, text linguistics and discourse pragmatics which are traditionally centred on native-speaker norms of English usage. The ultimate objective has been to explore ways by which ELF-mediated communication, on the one hand, can be improved by developing effective strategies of meaning co-construction and register hybridization that could take into account ELF speakers’ diverse native linguacultural schemata and, on the other, can instead be prevented because of a failure in accommodating the interacting speakers’ different ELF variations.

The adopted methodological approaches are applied to the domains of: sociolinguistics and intercultural pragmatics (enquiring into the relations between ELF variations and non-native speakers’ identity in multilingual

societies); a multilingual comparative view of cognitive-experiential linguistics (investigating processes of transfer of typologically different L1-structures to ELF); intra- and inter-lingual translation and mediation in specialized discourse; a multicultural view of language pedagogy; and methods for describing ELF variations in intercultural communicative contexts (regarding data collection, analysis and interpretation).

By taking a multicultural and multilingual stance, the common objective has been to promote a more extensive understanding, on the one hand, of the processes of unconscious cognitive-experiential transfer of ELF-users' native typological-syntactic, lexical-semantic and discourse-pragmatic features into their respective ELF variations, and, on the other, of the ELF variations resulting from such an L1→ELF transfer as an essential factor determining communicative success or failure in today's intercultural interactions. The ultimate objective is to promote a critical debate on these domain-specific topics so as to foster a deeper understanding of the nature of ELF as an essential factor in contemporary international communication.

THE ELUSIVE CONCEPT OF CULTURE

HENRY WIDDOWSON
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Abstract – It is widely assumed that communication in English as a lingua franca is of its very nature inter-cultural. But the concept of culture is itself indeterminate. It is generally defined as the socially shared conventions of belief and behavior of particular communities, but the concept of community is similarly indeterminate. Communities exist and co-exist in different sizes from micro to macro across a spectrum of specificity, and each can be said to be associated with its own particular culture. Although it may be sociolinguistically convenient to focus on the macro end of the spectrum, communication is enacted at all levels by the same process of bringing about schematic convergence by means of varied linguistic resources. From this pragmatic perspective, the use of ELF is no more and no less intercultural or multilingual than any other communicative activity.

Keywords: intercultural; culture; community; schematic convergence; ELF communication.

1. Introduction

This conference is the culmination of the research that has been carried out in the project of the same name under the directorship of Professor Guido. Let me first of all congratulate Professor Guido and her colleagues on their achievement. Their research is a major contribution to ELF study, engaging as it does with issues of socio-political significance concerning how ELF communication is enacted in unequal encounters, which is such a pervasive phenomenon in the contemporary globalized world. This research is not only in the national but very definitely in the international interest.

The title of both project and conference refers to this communication as intercultural, and this term is routinely used in discussions of ELF, so much so that it seems to be supposed that ELF communication is distinctive in being intercultural, just as it has recently been proposed that ELF communication is distinctive in being multilingual. So are these two concepts implicationally related, one presupposing the other? I want to be provocative on this occasion, play the role of Devil's Advocate, and raise questions about this way of conceptualizing ELF – about what it means for an interaction to be intercultural or multilingual. Since the term intercultural denotes a relationship between cultures, the first question to consider is what actually

we mean by a culture?

2. The concept of culture

People react to the idea of culture in different ways: some positive, some negative. One way finds expression in the saying “When I hear the word culture, I reach for my gun”. The origin of this saying is itself highly controversial since it is actually a somewhat inaccurate translation of “Wenn ich Kultur höre ... entsichere ich meine Browning!” in a play by the German writer Hanns Johst in 1933 – and performed to celebrate Hitler’s birthday.

I also react rather negatively to hearing the word culture, but let me hasten to add, for very different reasons. When I hear the word, I reach for a dictionary. Here we are offered a number of different definitions of the term. In the Cambridge dictionary,¹ for example, one of them tells us that culture is

music, art, theatre, literature, etc.

Another that culture is

the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time.

These entries define two general ideas about culture which are very different, and the difference has sometimes been indicated by graphological variants of the word itself. Culture, with an upper case C is generally recognized as different from culture with a lower case c – big C and little c. This suggests that these are also versions of essentially the same thing. But the question then arises as to what this sameness is conceived to be. Big C is generally taken to refer to works of art of one kind or another, as represented in theatres, cinemas, concert halls, art galleries. Big C can be said to be something that people can engage with without overt participation, without themselves directly and productively involved.

Little c, on the other hand refers to the values, beliefs, practices of everyday social life which people are directly involved as participants, and which indeed define them as members of their community. People are part of little c but apart from big C. The distinguishing feature of big C is that it represents a different dimension of reality, one that does not conform to conventionalized norms of common and communally accepted ways of thinking but one that can nevertheless be apprehended as related to it – a reality, one might say, other than the actual. There is, in this sense, an

¹ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/culture>.

imagined correspondence between Big C and little c but no direct connection. I am aware that this way of conceiving of their relationship is not one that everyone would agree with – indeed it runs counter to the prevalent view is that art should directly address current socio-political issues, thereby effacing what I see as a defining distinction. In my view, if the Big C of art is conventionalized in terms of the social commonalities of little c it ceases to exist. What art does is to represent what is ultimately an individual vision for which there can be no socialized version.

I have argued for making a distinction along these lines before – indeed here at the University of Salento some years ago when I had the honour of giving a *lectio magistralis* (Widdowson 2017, 2020) and it is not my purpose in this present talk to dwell upon the distinction. My concern here is with investigating little c: the concept of culture that informs the sociolinguistic study of language use in general. And what makes the investigation pertinent to the present occasion is that this concept also figures prominently in the more particular study of English as a *lingua franca*.

Culture in this sense is, as the dictionary definition puts it,

the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time².

Since the group is defined by what its members have in common, it constitutes a community. And since their shared and customary ways of thinking and behaving are naturally given linguistic expression, culture and language are taken to be inseparably intertwined and interdependent. So culture, community and language are assumed to be bound together in a kind of indivisible trinity. Hence the traditional assumption that learning the language of a particular community must involve an understanding of its culture.

This is made explicit in the title of the well-known *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*, now in its third edition, which, it tells us on its cover

Gets to the heart of the language.³

Here two elements of the trinity are presented as implicationally related: knowing English culture gets you to the heart of the English language. The third element, community, makes an appearance in the blurb of the book:

² <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/culture>.

³ *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*. 3rd ed. (Summers 2005).

This dictionary is designed to get to the heart of American and British English language and culture.⁴

So the English language is represented as inextricably meshed with the culture of these two native speaking communities, those that reside in Kachru's privileged Inner Circle (Kachru 1985).

3. The concept of community

But the concept of community is as elusive as that of culture. The term is used indiscriminately to refer to any group of people no matter how tenuously they are seemingly connected by common concerns. Thus, reference is frequently made to the international community, and to the community of the 27, nations of the European Union. But the term is also used to refer to other smaller groups linked by local networks of interaction: residents in the same village or neighbourhood, members of the same religious fraternity or sorority, people who share the same hobby, or belong to the same golf club. The term is applied equally to almost any group of people, great and small, as if they were all, in some way, conceptually equivalent.

One must suppose that there is something these different groups have in common that prompts the use of the same term to refer to them and it can only be that their members are assumed to share certain beliefs, values, interests and therefore certain ways of using language to express them – in short, what makes them a community is their shared linguaculture. So the trinity of community, culture, language works its mysterious and universal way in all manifestations of communicative interaction, vastly different in scale though they be.

One conclusion that might be drawn from this is that it is fundamentally mistaken to represent English, as the Longman dictionary does, as having a uniquely privileged association with the culture of Inner Circle communities. This, as is well known, was challenged by Kachru, whose initiative led to the recognition of World Englishes as equally valid varieties of the language, expressive of the cultures of ex-colonial Outer Circle communities. But these communities are already established, readily identified as associated with nation states. What of the other small scale communities I mentioned earlier? Presumably they too have their own distinctive cultures. But if a community and its culture are defined by common concerns, interests, values and so on, the term should logically apply to any group of people that satisfies these criteria: not only members of the

⁴ *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*. 3rd ed. (Summers 2005).

same nation or even the same church or club or neighbourhood, but also of the same family, or indeed any couple of people who share what W.H. Auden refers to as ‘the tiny world of lovers’ arms’.

So it would seem that we have a proliferation of communities and corresponding cultures ranged along a scale of magnitude from macro to mini to micro: different varieties of community and culture, with varieties of language, the third element in the trinity, to go with them: an infinity of dialects, sociolects, registers and genres. This, one might object, is simply a *reductio ad absurdum* and to give these terms such a wide range of reference robs them of any conceptual significance. Perhaps so, but then where on the continuum does one draw the line between what is cultural and what is not? On what criteria is a linguistic variety in principle defined?

4. Monolingualism and multilingualism

In practice, it is convenient to draw the line so as to include large scale communities and cultures and disregard the others – not only convenient, but necessary, if sociolinguistics is to make any statements of significance at all. But this, of course, inevitably leaves out of account not only the small scale communities, but also how communities and cultures of all sizes interact with others through the co-existing multiplicity of their membership. For of course people communicate with each other across communities as well as within them. This is the pragmatic process whereby interlocutors negotiate meaning and relate to each other by taking account of their differences of world view, ways of thinking and so on, adjusting and accommodating to each other as they see fit. In cases where communication is enacted between members of large scale communities, especially those identified by different languages, this pragmatic process is said to be intercultural, or crosscultural, or transcultural. Thus interculturality is closely associated with multilingualism.

It might be sociolinguistically convenient to assume this association, but there is no reason to suppose, as far as I can see, that the actual pragmatic process of so-called inter-cultural multilingual communication is essentially different from any other. Much has been written about the difference between monolingualism and multilingualism, usually, these days at least, representing multilinguals as having a wider range of cultural experience and linguistic resource available to them than monolinguals, who are assumed to be lingually and culturally impoverished in comparison. I am not myself aware of any empirical findings that would lend credence to this assumption.

For there is nothing mono about the actual language use of monolinguals. That too draws variably on a wide range of linguistic resource as appropriate to context and purpose. Where this resource can be identified as a ‘different language’, this can be described as the multilingual

phenomenon of code switching, and distinguished from style shifting which is taken to occur within the ‘same language’ (Ervin-Tripp 2001). But the style shifting of monolinguals is pragmatically not an essentially different phenomenon from the code switching of multilinguals. Even the linguistic distinction between them is of very doubtful validity since when languages are brought into contact in the communicative process, encodings from each are naturally appropriated in different degrees of assimilation so that it is often impossible to distinguish a code switch from a style shift on formal linguistic grounds.

The opposition of mono and multilingualism depends on the supposition that language takes the form of bounded and enclosed languages or language varieties, each with its own distinctive linguistic features. And each with its own distinctive culture. So cultures are correspondingly multi also. Multilinguals are thought to be more linguistically and communicatively adept than mere monolinguals because they have acquired more than one linguacultural competence, monolinguals only one. So multilingualism is taken to be unquestionably a good thing, and there is an extensive literature praising its merits and promoting its cause. Nobody, as far as I know puts in a good word for monolingualism – it is generally considered somewhat reprehensible: something to be deplored and where possible opposed.

5. ELF, multilingualism and interculturality

How you might reasonably ask has all this got to do with the theme of this conference? I think it has everything to do with it. It has recently been declared that because ELF usage often bears traces of other languages, this should be recognized as its defining feature and so accordingly ELF should be radically reconceptualised as English as a *multilingua franca*: EMLF (Jenkins 2015). These multilingual features, it is insisted, are not simply instances of code-switching, but something less clear-cut, more nuanced – more like shifting than switching indeed, more shifty, one might say perhaps. Be that as it may, these multilingual features can obviously only be recognized by identifying them as originating from different lingual codes. So although it is insisted that ELF is not a linguistic variety what is said to make it distinctive is that it is a kind of varied linguistic usage which is a composite of different languages.

But this multilingualism does not make ELF distinctive as communicative use. As I have argued, all language users, whether they are categorized as monolingual or multilingual draw on a varied range of lingual resources. The fact that in the case of ELF users these can be identified as deriving from different linguistic codes – different languages associated with different communities and cultures – may be of sociolinguistic interest, but it

does not make the communicative process they are engaged in pragmatically different. ELF users communicate in just the same way as everybody else. They too use whatever means they have at their disposal to negotiate meanings and relationships, shifting expediently along their repertoire as they go along.

ELF communication is said to be different not only because the means are multilingual but also because these means are inextricably bound up with the multicultural concepts and values embodied in the different languages that ELF users bring to their interactions. So their negotiation of meanings and relationships involves taking cultural differences into account. In consequence, it would seem to follow that if ELF is defined as multilinguistic usage, then what is distinctive about its communicative use is that it is intercultural. ELF users exploit multilingual means to interact across the cultures of their different communities. So it is not surprising to find that interculturality figures prominently in the first section of the ELF Handbook in which ELF is conceptualized and positioned as an area of study (Jenkins et al 2018).

The term culture, as I pointed out earlier, has a wide and indeterminate range of reference, making the concept elusive of definition. So how is it conceptualized in the inter-cultural communication of ELF? We turn to the article on inter-cultural communication in the ELF Handbook (Baker 2018). Here it is made clear that culture is not conceived as being only associated with large scale communities like nations, but also those of smaller scale, although where the line is to be drawn on the continuum I referred to earlier is left unclear. Nor is culture conceived of as a stable construct, but rather, like language, as variable, dynamic, emergent. For this reason it is said to be preferable to think of ELF not as an inter-cultural activity, which implies a relationship between separate and stable entities, but as trans-cultural, whereby ELF users transcend cultural boundaries and fuse or mesh their cultures to create a third space of cultural identity.

6. Cultural third space and schematic convergence

But if culture is defined in terms of shared assumptions, beliefs, values and so on it is no different from the preconceptions and expectations of what is customary or normal, the schematic representations of reality, by which we all take our bearings in communicative activity. These schemata are what characterize the way of thinking of all communities from the macro to the micro, and indeed all the way down to the individual, for ultimately we all have our own schematic identity, formed by our individual histories. And these schemata are projected into our intended meanings and influence how

we interpret the meanings of others. The creating of a third space is not confined to certain kinds of communication deemed to be inter-cultural. There is always a third space in that the very act of communicating necessarily involves schematic convergence, some correspondence and inter-connection between different conceptions of normality, mind-sets, ways of thinking. Without such convergence, no communication would take place at all.

In communication people negotiate a relationship with each other by a continual process of schematic adaptation and identity-positioning in flight – acculturating we might say – as they go along. All communicative interactions are what Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) refer to as ‘acts of identity’ and as the participants in a communication position themselves in relation to each other, so are their identities adapted accordingly. All communication is trans-schematic. Canagarajah (2013, p. 162) suggests that what is distinctive about people engaged in what he calls ‘translingual practice’ is that

they accommodate the different norms of English that people bring from different places to the translocal space.

But communication always involves some accommodation to deal with such differences to achieve convergence in different contexts, or translocal spaces. In this respect, from the perspective of pragmatics there is nothing specifically translingual about such a practice: it is just lingual.

Of course, the degree of convergence or shared space will vary, and the difficulty in achieving it will obviously depend on the degree of difference in the initial schematic states of mind of the interactants, and what purpose they have in engaging in the interaction in the first place. But this also applies to the ‘monolingual’ communication that is enacted between people from diverse minor communities where different cultural preconceptions need to be reconciled. ‘Monolinguals’ who differ in ethnicity, social class, or religious and political belief are confronted with the same problem of schematic convergence as people involved in ‘translingual practice’, as, to take just two examples, the current conflicts in Afghanistan and Syria make all too obvious. Even the communication within the micro cultures of the smallest of communities, that of the married couple, will, in spite of having a language in common, on occasion call for the negotiation of differences to achieve pragmatic convergence, as is well, documented in Tannen 1990. I am trying to converge with you as I speak, but I do not think of this as creating a cultural third space or that I am engaged in inter-cultural communication. I am just trying to communicate. And I am doing so, I should add, by using English as a lingua franca that has no obvious traces of multilingualism.

It seems reasonable to suggest that the term culture should be restricted

to apply to the socially shared schemata of large scale communities, as indeed has generally been the practice of sociolinguists and ethnographers. And it may well be, as the Salento research reveals so impressively, that such schemata are of particular significance in the unequal encounters that are the object of its enquiry, in that it is the difference between them in the minds of the interactants that poses particular problems of convergence. In this case, it can be said to be appropriate to refer to the inter-schematic communication as inter-cultural.

But I think we need to note that these encounters are not only unequal because of the cultural schematic differences between the interactants. They are unequal also because of the different role and status assigned to the interactants, and the different, often conflicting purposes and outcomes they seek to achieve in the interaction, and these inequalities will often be forbidding obstacles to convergence. And ultimately it is how interactants make pragmatic use of language as individuals that will determine the outcome.

So what I am suggesting is that although ELF communication might bear traces of other languages, and the presence of other schematic presuppositions identified as cultural, these, though of sociolinguistic interest, are not its defining features. All communication involves the use of variable pragmatic use of a range of linguistic resources and the bringing together of schematic differences into convergence. In this respect, ELF is no different in kind from any other natural language use.

7. The distinguishing feature of ELF communication

So what does make ELF different? I think what distinguishes ELF from what has been taken to be typical language use is that it is a way of communicating that denies the trinity of language/community/culture which has traditionally been invoked in the sociolinguistic description of communal communication. ELF reveals the process of communication in general that underlies its manifestations in particular languages and communities. It shows how people can bring very different schematic representations of the world into convergence by using linguistic resources without conforming to the encoding rules and conventions of usage that define the real or proper English of native speaking communities (for further discussion see Widdowson 2015, 2020). The product of this process, the text of this discourse, as I would say, will of course bear traces of different ‘languages’ and different ‘cultures’, and these will no doubt be of sociolinguistic interest. But they are incidental to an understanding of the more general lingual and schematic pragmatics of ELF communication.

Understanding English as a lingua franca, as Barbara Seidlhofer pointed out several years ago in her book that bears that very title (Seidlhofer 2011), calls for a radical reconsideration of the relevance for ELF of established ideas about competence and community, and, I would add, of the elusive concept of culture.

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COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY

An ELF perspective on critical contexts

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Abstract – This paper examines current ways in which the concept of ‘community’ has been operationalized in sociolinguistics and how they relate to thinking about communication. It argues that in the age of globalization, well-established ideas about community need to be radically re-thought in order to ensure compatibility with contemporary life, characterized by de-territorialization, fluidity and virtuality. This is particularly crucial when it comes to high-stakes encounters in critical contexts, such as international conflict mediation, interpreting, asylum procedures and international publishing. These are very often carried out via (English as) a lingua franca, (E)LF for short. Describing and analyzing these encounters is not just a matter of carrying out sociolinguistic, ethnographic and anthropological research but is essentially an applied linguistic undertaking, in that the conditions of ELF communication are inextricably interwoven with significant socio-political, socio-economic and humanitarian issues of misunderstanding, inequity and disenfranchisement. It is therefore imperative to think clearly about the concepts that provide the basis for wide-reaching decisions in these critical contexts. The contribution of ELF research is thus that it not only helps us to understand how “communication communities” work; but also has an important part to play in the critical appraisal of well-entrenched but potentially unsuitable and anachronistic notions in sociolinguistics and in bringing our conceptual and methodological tools in line with the realities of globalization.

Keywords: globalization; communication; community; English as a Lingua Franca; high-stakes encounters.

1. Introduction

Throughout the sections, The contributions to this issue were prepared for publication in a “critical context” that none of the authors imagined when they met at the Lecce PRIN conference in December 2019, when they were still able to hold extensive discussions, without masks covering their mouth and nose, at the sessions in a tightly filled auditorium and at a lively conference dinner. During the Covid-19 crisis that followed less than 3 months later, the French sociologist and philosopher Edgar Morin gave an interview to the weekly news magazine *L’Obs* (previously *Nouvel Observateur*), which he began with this enlightening characterization of globalization:

Cette crise nous montre **que la mondialisation est une interdépendance sans solidarité**. Le mouvement de globalisation a certes produit l'unification techno-économique de la planète, mais il n'a pas fait progresser **la compréhension entre les peuples**.

[This crisis shows us that **globalization is interdependence without solidarity**. The globalization movement has certainly produced the techno-economic unification of the planet, but it has not advanced **understanding between peoples**.] (Le Bailly, Courage 2020, my trnl., emphasis added)

The relationship between “solidarity” and “understanding between peoples” that Morin refers to requires communication among people for its realization, and for this, in this globalized age, a lingua franca is frequently a necessary – but of course not sufficient – prerequisite. More often than not, this lingua franca is English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). As essentially implicated in globalization, ELF communication necessarily involves the reconsideration of the concepts of culture, community and communication. How these relate to inequality, and thus a lack of solidarity, is an issue that is particularly prominent in the present collection of papers. My purpose in this contribution is to consider how all of these notions are intrinsically inter-related in a conceptualization of ELF research as an area of applied linguistic enquiry.

2. Communication and community: Traditional notions

The first thing to stress, as is evident from the projects that are discussed in this special issue, is that the values and beliefs that represent ‘the culture’ of a particular community are not transferable to other communal contexts. On the contrary, the attempt to make them so, can, and very often does, create conditions of inequality. We see this very clearly in the entrenched assumption of the transferability of the norms of Kachru’s (1985, 1992) Inner Circle English usage as necessary for effective communication in and across the other Kachravian circles. If there is one thing that ELF study makes obvious it is that conformity to these norms is neither necessary nor sufficient, and that people are quite capable of exploiting the potential in the language expediently in non-conformist ways to meet their communicative needs.

The main problem here is that in following the well-established tradition of ‘thinking in circles’, what is in focus is how communication is enacted in a particular language/variety by a particular community, and this actually tends to deflect attention from how language generally is used as a communicative resource. Thus there is an assumption that communication is a function of language – but what becomes particularly clear from the study of ELF interactions is that, as with all natural uses of language, the reverse is

the case: **language is a function of communication**. So the crucial question to be asked about ELF users is not what kind of language they produce but how they manage to communicate with each other.

This is not a question that the established tradition I have referred to is equipped to address. Both the disciplinary description of language and the pedagogic prescription derived from it focus on how members of a particular community use their shared language to communicate with each other. So it is that Hymes defines communicative competence as the communal knowledge on the basis of which a judgement can be made as to how far a particular sample of a language is possible (in accordance with encoding rules), feasible (easy to process), appropriate to context, and actually performed. He comments:

There is an important sense in which a **normal member** of a community has knowledge with respect to all these aspects of the communicative systems available to him. (Hymes 1972, p. 282, emphasis added)

What is important about this sense is not explained, nor indeed how a “normal member” would be identified. But it has to be pointed out that, particularly in today’s globalized world, there is an important sense in which there is no “normal member of a community”. So if being able to communicate depended on being one, communication via ELF, or any other lingua franca, would be an impossibility.

But the way we have come to live over recent decades – and which may of course be about to change drastically again – means that Hymes’ definition of a (speech) community as “a local unit, characterized for its members by common locality and primary interaction” (Hymes 1962, p. 30) is definitely a thing of the past. The impact of digital communication and digital media on contemporary social life has revolutionized our sense of what it is like to participate in a community. And the Covid-19 crisis has dramatically increased the momentum of this change: while on-site socializing, conferences and travel have become impossible, university and school teachers and students, for example, over just the first half of the year 2020, have developed their expertise in online teaching and learning, conducting exams and holding meetings of various sizes, via a great variety of software tools, at a rate most of them never thought possible.

In the wake of these drastic changes, the view of communication as intrinsically linked to traditional notions of ‘community’ that has been so pervasive in sociolinguistics will require reconsideration. Consider what Labov has to say:

the linguistic behavior of individuals cannot be understood without knowledge of the communities that they belong to (Labov 2006, p.380)

How then, one might ask, does it come about that individuals from different local communities using English (or any other lingua franca) do manage to understand each other's linguistic behaviour even if they have little or no knowledge of the communities their interlocutors belong to? And if, as researchers, we want to understand their behavior as communication, there seems to be little if any point in trying to track down linguistic or cultural traces of the communities they 'come from'.

The phenomenon of ELF as the currently most widespread lingua franca thus challenges the validity of traditional ways of conceiving of communication as associated with clearly pre-defined languages and communities. As an intrinsic aspect of globalization, it calls for a radical change in sociolinguistic thinking. As Blommaert puts it:

I believe that *globalization* forces us – whether we like it or not – to an *aggiornamento of our theoretical and methodological toolkit*. Much as modernism defined most of the current widespread tools of our trade, the transition towards a different kind of social system forces us to *redefine* them. Such an exercise, however iconoclastic it may seem at first, cannot be avoided or postponed. (Blommaert 2010, p. xiii)

In keeping with this *aggiornamento*,

[...] many of the *traditional concepts of sociolinguistics* will have to be sacrificed in favour of more open and flexible ones, capable of capturing the unpredictability of sociolinguistic life in the age of globalization. (Blommaert 2010, p.196, emphases added)

One traditional concept that stands in need of sacrifice if we are to capture the reality of global communication is that of the significance of a variety of a language. This is particularly evident when considering the relationship between ELF and World Englishes (WE) thinking. In Kachru's well known concentric model (Kachru 1985), English in the world is divided according to its occurrence in three kinds of user domain. In the Inner and Outer Circles these uses are socially conventionalized as communal means of communication and their linguistic regularities can be identified as constituting distinct varieties. This is what lends them equal status, each a World Englishes variety in its own right. Beyond these are users in the so-called Expanding Circle, whose English, like that of the Outer Circle, has a marked tendency to vary from the normative conventions of Inner Circle native speaker usage, but whose variations are not regular enough to have stabilized into a variety. Since these users are not normal members of a variety-using community, they would, on Hymes' account, be deficient in communicative competence – still, in SLA terms, at some interlanguage stage of acquisition. But they obviously are capable of variously exploiting the

language as a communicative resource. And in this respect there is no difference between these users of English and the variety users of the Inner and Outer Circles: the distinction between them is based simply on formal linguistic grounds. All uses of English, whether they are assigned variety status or not, are variable in that they are adaptable to communicative requirements, and in this sense, all are expanding. If they were not, they would be dysfunctional. And of course, especially in the current globalized world, the use of English is not enacted within the confines of any circle. Its communicative use as a lingua franca cuts across all three circles.

The Kachru concentric model is based on just the kind of traditional concepts of variety and community that Blommaert suggests need to be abandoned in “the age of globalization”, and ELF researchers have long since pointed out that insistence on these concepts impedes an understanding of the nature of English as a global means of communication (Seidlhofer 2011). But globalization, in which ELF communication is so intrinsically implicated, is not only a matter of academic sociolinguistic interest. It is something which is experienced as having a direct and decisive effect on the everyday reality of people’s lives. What linguistic forms ELF communication takes and what features of other linguistic resources can be traced in its usage may be of descriptive linguistic interest, but its users, like any other language users, are not focused on what form their language takes, but on its effect, on the communicative expediency of getting their message across in ways that best serve their purposes. If this pragmatic fact is ignored, this poses problems in all human communication, but these can be especially acute in contexts of ELF interaction.

One obvious reason why this should be so is that these contexts are outside the comfort zone of familiar experience. Despite the increasing influence of digitalization, the primary socialization of human beings is generally speaking within their own local communities, where they can presuppose shared knowledge of a common language and the socio-cultural customs and conventions that regulate its use. But ELF users, who by definition come from different linguacultural communities, obviously cannot rely on such presupposition. Communication always requires some negotiation for interlocutors to converge on some common ground of understanding, but this is, of course, more difficult if there is a lack of common ground to begin with. The problem for ELF interactants is essentially how to find ways of communicating with strangers.¹ They

¹ ‘The stranger’ is another concept in sociology worth reconsidering in the light of globalization; it goes back to Georg Simmel’s (1921) original categorization (‘stranger’ vs ‘outsider’ vs ‘wanderer’) and has been widely used in the sociological literature, e.g. by Erving Goffman (1963) and Zygmunt Bauman (1991). See also Best (2019).

obviously cannot do this by conforming to the communal norms of some native speaker usage. What they seek to do, as ELF research shows very clearly, is to draw expediently on those features of English, or any other lingual resource available to them, which have the most communicative value in getting their meaning across and achieving their communicative purpose. This is not always easy to do, however, for the use of language in this freewheeling way runs directly counter to the orthodox doctrine of communicative competence that most ELF users have been schooled in. This is likely to have an inhibiting effect on their effective use of language, especially of course when such use continues to be stigmatized as incompetent and in need of correction.

To summarize. The reality of globalization, and so of global ELF communication as one of both its causes and consequences, calls for a radical rethinking of traditional concepts. This is particularly obvious with the concept of communication defined in reference to established communal norms. The correlative form-function mappings that result from it cannot account for inter-communal communication, for how members from different lingua-cultural communities manage to interact with each other. But it is this anachronistic normative concept that still has the status of institutional authority and imposes a frame of reference within which uses of English are evaluated. This poses major problems in what I have called high-stakes domains of interaction and in effect creates or aggravates conditions of inequality in one way or another. These are the critical contexts I refer to in the title of this paper.

3. Critical contexts

One such domain, for example, is that of diplomacy, international conflict mediation and resolution, arbitration and peacebuilding (Kirkpatrick *et al.* 2016). This typically takes the form of negotiation by means of (English used as) a lingua franca by speakers of different languages. It is hard to imagine any communicative activity more complex than this, involving as it does the attempt at some reconciliation of opposing positions, some convergence on common ground in adverse conditions. But this is communicative convergence without linguistic conformity: the whole process is enacted through the expedient use of whatever lingual and other resources the participants have at their disposal. What matters is the communicative affordance of the language, not what form it takes.

Conflict resolution negotiations are, of course, not only carried out via the use of ELF but also by means of interpreters. But adherence to a normative concept of communication is also problematic for interpreting. When mediating meaning across expressions in different languages,

interpreters would generally assume that the expressions would conform to established norms of usage. But where negotiations involve the use of ELF, as is commonly the case, interpreters clearly cannot rely on this assumption. They are confronted with a disparity between the English that conforms to native speaker norms, which they are accustomed, and trained, to translate, and the non-conformist uses they now find they have to cope with: For such ELF uses, the customary practice of identifying equivalences between the rules and usage conventions of different communal languages is no longer feasible or appropriate (Albl-Mikasa 2013; Albl-Mikasa, House 2020; Pöllabauer 2004; Taviano 2013).

I want now to consider two other critical contexts in more detail. The first of these is one that the PRIN project has been centrally concerned with and which the research of Maria Grazia Guido and her colleagues has explored so impressively at the University of Salento (Guido 2008, 2012, 2018; Guido *et al.* 2018). I refer to asylum seeking situations and intercultural mediation exchanges in these settings. The Salento research has also been an enquiry into disparity and its consequences, in this case the disparity between the linguacultural attitudes and preconceptions of interactants in the unequal encounters between asylum seekers and immigration officials. What seems to happen is that meanings are assigned to ‘what is normal’ that both officials and asylum seekers bring to these encounters. The more powerful side tends to prevail and impose their norms on the interpretation of the interaction. Such (albeit often unwitting) norm imposition by the immigration officials and social welfare officers on the disadvantaged/weaker party has the effect of penalizing the refugees by misrepresenting their meanings. But their language can also be used to penalize them by misrepresenting their identity, and this is an aspect of the critical context of asylum seeking that is intrinsically problematic in all such procedures all over the world (see also Seidlhofer 2021, and references therein).

The main purpose of the interrogation of asylum seekers by immigration officials of any state is to determine the validity of their claims for asylum status. Their narratives are interpreted and assessed with a view to establishing the plausibility of what they say about their experiences. But what kind of language they use can also be taken as evidence of ‘who they are’, whether they ‘come from’ the countries they say they do. For this purpose, some governments make use of a procedure called ‘Language analysis for the Determination of Origin’ LADO for short. This is one of several forensic methods, officially approved and paid for by many governments, to investigate the reliability of information supplied by immigrants about their national or regional origin. In actual practice, it is often used to justify the rejection of applications by asylum seekers and their subsequent deportation. The method involves the analysis of phonological

and other linguistic features of short recorded samples of speech on the assumption that these will necessarily bear traces of where their speakers ‘are really from’. The procedure is effectively a more elaborate version of the Shibboleth test, and can have similarly dire consequences for those subjected to it (McNamara 2015, 2020).

The interrogations we are concerned with are ELF interactions. Many of the speech samples taken for LADO analysis are from the English spoken by asylum seekers in the course of their ELF interaction with interrogators. It is supposed that it is possible to identify in these samples features of a variety of English unequivocally associated with a particular community. So, for example, a certain lexical or grammatical form, or way of pronouncing certain sounds, is taken to be typical of Nigerian English and so evidence that its occurrence marks the speaker as Nigerian, whatever he or she may claim to the contrary. The obvious problem with this procedure is that it is based on the belief that however the individual’s linguistic repertoire may have developed as the natural consequence of varied communicative experiences, the association with a primary ‘language’ or ‘variety’ remains as an indelible lifelong marker of origin and identity. But if language is emergent and adaptive, then so is the language of the individual, and so is her/his identity. And anyway even where there are traces of origin in an individual’s speech, how would they be recognised as distinctive from other features that have accrued over time (Ammer *et al.* 2013; Dorn *et al.* 2014)?

The essential problem with this procedure is that, even more than the face-to-face encounters between refugees and Italian officials, it links traditional concepts of language and community in disregard of the communicative process. What is subjected to analysis is a sample of linguistic text extracted and isolated from the interactive context of the discourse of its occurrence (Widdowson 2020a, Section 4). In communicative encounters in general, people adapt their linguistic behaviour according to who they are communicating with and what outcome they seek to achieve. In the unequal encounters that we are concerned with, the suppliant party is seeking to convince the other party of the validity of their case for asylum – and against deportation. What they say is naturally designed to have that effect but it is conceivable that how they say it is also designed to carry conviction. Thus they might make use of linguistic features which they believe to be prestigious and more likely to be effective in presenting their case. Such features are pragmatically motivated, indicative not of the atavistic origins of asylum seekers but of the immediate exigencies of the kind of communicative encounters they are involved in.

There is no recognition of these exigencies in the sampling of textual data dissociated from the communicative context of the discourse that produced them. As Maryns (2014, p. 315, emphasis added) has pointed out:

In the data it could be seen how an enormous diversity of people enter the procedure, people of heterogeneous socio-cultural backgrounds who are supposed to motivate their often very complex and contextually dense cases in a bureaucratic context, addressing an internally diversified **group of public officials** with different socio-cultural backgrounds, different relevance conditions and expectations of appropriateness and different ways of speaking.

This leads her to conclude that “the officials’ treatment of the cases is based on a preconception of the applicants’ belonging to particular **categories of refugeeness**”. (Maryns 2014, p. 341, emphasis added). So here again people are expediently being put in boxes of ‘belonging’, however badly they may fit.

The problems that arise for asylum seekers in the procedures of these interactions are well documented in the work of Guido and her colleagues. However, they are entirely disregarded in the LADO procedures of text analysis – procedures that are claimed to be endorsed by forensic linguistics:

In principle, LADO is a reasonable endeavor. It is well known that people’s lifelong speech patterns are shaped by their regional and social background, and language analysis is used to provide evidence of origin in other areas of forensic linguistics. (Fraser 2013, p. 1)

But the point is that people’s regional and social backgrounds may well shift and change and their speech patterns are likely to be reshaped accordingly; in these times of high mobility and migration, this applies to everybody to some degree, but it will certainly be true of refugees that often spend several years on the road. Fraser (2013, p. 1) acknowledges as much:

Asylum seekers frequently come from communities featuring complex multilingualism or diglossia, and many have been displaced from their home region for long periods, often in mixed refugee camps, resulting in significant modification to their speech. Factors like these can make decisions about who counts as a “native speaker” of a particular language variety genuinely problematic.

But in LADO nevertheless the assumption is made that the procedure can decide which feature of migrants’ speech is significant as evidence of origin and which is to be dismissed as subsequent modification. Fraser seems to assume that, though problematic, it is, in principle, possible to discover permanent traces of a particular native speaker variety. But the principle is based on the highly questionable assumption that there are clearly defined varieties tied to stable communities and that these are retained through life as a kind of lectal palimpsest. I would suggest that it is precisely because of displacement, together with the kind of encounter asylum seekers have to

cope with, that their speech samples do not provide evidence of origin, and why LADO is, in principle, not a reasonable endeavour, but on the contrary one that is based on false premises. In spite of the impression of objective scientific rigour suggested by the term ‘analysis’, and its apparent endorsement by forensic linguistics, it is hard to see the LADO procedures as anything other than *ad hoc*. It is also hard to resist the suspicion that their scientific semblance is used to lend authority to expedient decision making and so in effect as a justification of injustice (Busch 2012, 2017; McNamara *et al.* 2016, 2019).

It seems that the way the LADO procedure operationalizes the notion of community, and what it means to ‘belong to’ and ‘come from’ a particular community, is akin to the 19th-century concept going back to Tönnies (1991) characterized by permanence and territorial fixedness. In sociolinguistic terms, it harks back to Hymes’ definition of a speech community (quoted above) as intrinsically linked to community members’ “common locality and primary interaction” and thus is a far cry from the contemporary reality of de-territorialization, virtuality and fluidity (Delanty 2018; Jansen 2020; see also Widdowson 2020b, this volume). Here the relevance of ELF research, which by definition studies communication **across** what would traditionally be community boundaries, is that it has long realized that we need to overcome these traditional notions of community and to operate with concepts more attuned to contemporary life.

Another critical context in which it seems as if different communities are pitted against one another, despite the well-worn catchphrase of the ‘international scientific community’, is international academic publishing. This is another setting where the use of ‘English’ is necessary/obligatory but inequitable, putting as it does some of its users to a disadvantage by being evaluated by gatekeepers against the benchmark of established norms of communicative behaviour in ‘native speaker’ communities – ignoring the fact that there is no such creature as a ‘native speaker/writer of academic English’. In international academic publishing, the predominant means of communication is English, so predominant indeed that it is an essential condition for being international. But it is not enough for a publication to be in English, it also has to be the English that conforms to the established norms of native speaker usage. As with asylum seekers, the lack of conformity is assumed to result in defective communication, and in the case of international publishing this seems to be taken as indicative of defects in academic content as well. So if you want your academic work to be taken seriously and have an impact by being internationally published, you need to make sure that it conforms to the accepted norms. And so it is that many journals advise their potential contributors to get their articles proof-read and corrected by native speakers. These discriminatory practices are due to the

lack of recognition that ‘academic English’ in this day and age by definition means ‘English as a lingua franca’ (Mauranen 2012; Seidlhofer 2012).

The still prevailing but anachronistic assumption is that if your English does not measure up to approved norms, not only might its intellectual quality be undervalued, but, more seriously from the publisher point of view, it is likely to reflect negatively on the reputation of the journal. As an example of the kind of reaction it might get, Robert Phillipson in his review of a major book written in English by the German sociolinguist Ulrich Ammon criticizes the language for “countless German-influenced forms that disrupt, without impeding, comprehensibility”. (Phillipson 2009, p. 250) How these forms can both disrupt comprehensibility and yet not impede it is itself difficult to comprehend, and anyway if these forms do not impede comprehensibility, what is there to criticise? It would seem that Phillipson is taking objection to what is being said on the grounds that it departs from the Anglophone usage conventions that he, as a native speaker of English, finds comfortable and therefore assumes academic writing should conform to.

One consequence of this normative hegemony is that it privileges the Anglophone academics in Kachru’s Inner Circle. This is also where so-called international publishers have their base and so in effect act as gate-keepers who, as is argued in Lillis *et al.* (2010), control the production and circulation of academic work by favouring that which conforms to Anglophone conventions and discriminates against that which does not. They quote what they refer to as a ‘telling case’ of comments made by a North American reviewer of a journal submission:

As a general comment the style needs to be polished. In any instance sentences follow each other without logical connections and **the authors often refer to other publications that may not be available to the ordinary unilingual or even bilingual North American reader.** By themselves these two points make it difficult to evaluate the results or the comments passed.” (Lillis *et al.* 2010, p. 118, emphasis added)

The clear implication here is that the acceptability of academic work depends not only on conforming to Anglophone usage conventions but as also on meeting the scholarly requirements of Anglophone readers in the North American Inner Circle. Lillis *et al.* comment:

The significance of this text history is that it raises important questions about the ways in which the global status of English is impacting not only on the linguistic medium of publications but on the linguistic medium of works that are considered **citable** – and hence on which/whose knowledge is being allowed to circulate. (Lillis *et al.* 2010, p.121)

The consequences of being judged and disadvantaged on the grounds of not appearing sufficiently ‘Anglo’ are thus far-reaching and indeed of existential significance – even in the relatively privileged circles of academics and certainly in the asylum seeking contexts considered above.

What is particularly apparent from this brief discussion of these critical contexts is that in our attempt to understand contemporary life and the human condition in the current globalized world, we need to rise to the challenge of radically rethinking the concepts of communication and community. We need to overhaul what Blommaert in the quotation above refers to as our theoretical and methodological toolkit. And this is what ELF researchers have actually been doing: building on but also going beyond work in sociolinguistics, education, linguistic anthropology and ethnography, they have been exploring conceptual alternatives since the early 2000’s (Dewey 2009; House 2003; Seidlhofer 2007; and many studies to follow. For a succinct overview see Pitzl 2018). These include, most prominently, the notion of Communities of Practice (CoP) based on Wenger (1998) and Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992). Of course, not all ELF interactions take place in contexts that provide conditions for community formation and over a period of time long enough for the process of social learning to evolve that fulfils Wenger’s CoP criteria of “mutual engagement” in a “joint enterprise”, making use of a “shared repertoire” (Wenger 1998, pp. 72-ff.). Many ELF interactions are carried out in much shorter-term contexts, sometimes just one-off encounters, where people come together for a particular purpose, in a planned or unplanned fashion, and socialize and/or work together for a while until the group dissolves again. For such constellations and the communicative events unfolding in them, the notions of Transient International Groups (TIGs) (Pitzl 2018, 2021) and Transient Multilingual Communities (TMCs) (Mortensen 2017) have been proposed, giving rise to further innovative approaches to the study of lingua franca communication.

So a considerable volume of descriptive research on ELF communication in CoPs, TIGs and TMs is ongoing. But crucially, this is not ‘just’ a matter of academic sociolinguistic, ethnographic, anthropological, etc. interest but essentially an applied linguistic undertaking, inextricably interwoven as the conditions of ELF communication are with the significant socio-political, socio-economic and humanitarian issues of contemporary life. And in this globalized world in which, as we have seen, (apparent) stability, permanence and territorial fixedness have given way to de-territorialization, fluidity and virtuality, the significance of communication cannot be overstated. This is why the sociologist Gerard Delanty, in his monograph dedicated to the investigation of the evolution of the concept of community, proposes that

contemporary community may be understood as a **communication**



community based on new kinds of belonging. By this is meant a sense of belonging that is peculiar to the circumstances of modern life and which is expressed in unstable, fluid, very open and highly individualized groups. (Delanty 2018, p. 229, emphasis added)²

In his concluding chapter entitled “theorizing community today”, Delanty (2018, pp. 234-ff.) summarizes his arguments as follows:

Community is relevant today because, on the one hand, the fragmentation of society has provoked a worldwide search for community, and on the other hand, as already argued, cultural developments and global forms of communication have facilitated the construction of community; released from the fetters of traditional social relations in work, family, consumption, the state and education, the individual is both more free and more reliant on alternative social bonds.

[...] globalization, neo-liberalism and information and communication technology have not led to greater inclusion. The opposite has been the case, with social exclusion, insecurity and exploitation rising. The social bond has been seriously fragmented, ... The atomization of the social has created the conditions for the resurgence of community. On the other side of the double-edged sword that is globalization, it must also be recognized that the emerging structures of the global age provide individuals with many opportunities to build communities in which the promise of belonging may at least be something in which they can believe.

In such “global forms of communication”, ELF interactions play a pivotal role. The contribution of ELF research, I would argue, is thus on the one hand to help us understand how what Delanty terms “communication communities” work; on the other hand, understanding ELF communication has an important part to play in interrogating well-entrenched but potentially unsuitable and anachronistic notions in sociolinguistics and in developing our conceptual “toolkit” in keeping with contemporary life. As an applied linguistic enterprise, it is the task of (E)LF research to transcend code-fixation and to work on understanding and supporting communication – in the interest of furthering the “solidarity” and “understanding among peoples” the lack of which Morin deplors in the quotation at the beginning of this paper – however elusive these ideals at times may seem to be.

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² Compare also Wright’s (2000, 2009) notion of ‘community of communication’ with specific reference to EU language policy.

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PATTERNS OF METAPHYSICAL DISCOURSE IN WEST-AFRICAN MIGRANTS' ELF-MEDIATED TRAUMA NARRATIVES

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Abstract – This chapter focuses on an ongoing ethnographic research enquiring into West-African migrants' and refugees' trauma narratives mediated by a use of English as a 'lingua franca' (ELF) in Italian contexts of intercultural communication. The six case studies under investigation apply a construct built on models of Cognitive-Experiential Linguistics, Possible-Worlds Semantics and Modal Logic to the discourse analysis of Nigerian migrants' ELF-mediated trauma narratives. Ethnographic data show that such trauma narratives are prevalently characterized by features from the migrants' typologically-different native languages which come to be transferred into their ELF variations at the levels of: ergative clause structures, modality, idiomatic lexicon, and metaphorical patterns of a metaphysical kind. More specifically, it has been observed that, in such narratives, migrants often employ modal operators in the description of much-desired 'possible worlds' projected into a transcendental dimension triggered by their strong feelings and emotions which transfigure traumatic events and their effects into personifications of supernatural entities taking the animate agentive shapes, in ergative-subject position, of cruel Yoruba deities, or imaginary monsters often generated by a process of hybridization between parallel mythological creatures in both native and host cultures. In the case studies in point – making reference to a wider corpus of ELF-mediated West-African migrants' and refugees' trauma narratives (Guido 2018) – it has been noticed that the Nigerian migrants' degree of psychological resilience to traumatic experiences is determined by their more or less optimistic prospects on the achievement of the much-desired 'possible worlds' which they represent in their minds as a sort of 'utopia', in contrast with the 'dystopian real world' that they have sadly experienced. In particular, the corpus of trauma narratives reveals the frequent occurrence of specific patterns in association with a four-level gradient ranging from possible, unreal, and impossible utopian worlds up to – as a more recent development triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic – a much-too-real dystopian world. Each of these degrees have been defined as trauma narratives of, respectively: 'hope', 'frustration', 'despair', and 'urge of stampede'.

Keywords: English as a Lingua Franca; metaphysical discourse; migrants' trauma narratives.

1. Modality in migrants' ELF-mediated trauma narratives

This chapter focuses on an ongoing ethnographic research enquiring into West-African migrants' and refugees' trauma narratives mediated by a use of

English as a ‘lingua franca’ (ELF) in Italian contexts of intercultural communication. In such contexts, the definition of ‘ELF-mediated trauma narrative’ includes also those reports that migrants convey not only through variations of non-native English regarded as a ‘lingua franca’ in cross-cultural interactions, but also through nativized English varieties which, once displaced into ‘foreign’ settings in Italy, come to be regarded by Italian receivers as any other variant of non-native English. Both non-native and nativized English variants, however, are subject to the same processes of semantic, syntactic and pragmatic transfer from their speakers’ native linguacultural uses (Guido 2008, 2018).

The case studies investigated in this chapter apply a construct built on models of Cognitive-Experiential Linguistics (Sweetser 1990), Possible-Worlds Semantics and Modal Logic (Hintikka 1989; Stalnaker 1994) to the discourse analysis of Nigerian migrants’ ELF-mediated trauma narratives (Guido 2008, 2018). It has been observed that, in such narratives, migrants make a frequent use of non-truth-functional modal operators (Guido 2018) in the description of a reality projected into a metaphysical dimension (Guido 2005) triggered by the migrants’ strong feelings and emotions which transfigure events perceived as hostile to human beings into intentional cruel deeds performed by merciless autochthonous deities and mythological monsters that, indeed, represent native folk idioms of distress. The personification of the causes of traumatic events into imaginary metaphysical entities, whose belief is shared by the communities the migrants belong to, has been observed in data collected principally within migrants’ rural slums during harvest periods and in reception camps hosting migrants on their arrival in Italy. More specifically, it has been noticed that violent experiences that they underwent in their home countries, during the migration voyage and, then, also in the host country, are differently reported in their ELF-mediated narratives through ELF as more or less painful, depending on their more or less optimistic prospects on the realization of their longed-for utopian ‘possible worlds’. In particular, the corpus of such data reveal a recurrence of four prevalent discourse patterns in West-African ELF-mediated trauma narratives associated with four degrees of, respectively, possible, unreal, and impossible utopian worlds, and a dystopian real world (Guido 2018). Such degrees can be identified with the migrants’ feelings of:

- a) *Hope* for the realization of a much desired ‘utopian dream’ considered at hand at the conclusion of the migration voyage. Thus, trauma-affected migrants inspired by an ‘intense hope’ for the fulfillment of their longed-for ‘possible world’, report the traumatic experiences they underwent in the past (both remote and more recent past) by making a frequent use of ‘belief reports’ (Lau 1995; Schiffer 1996; Stalnaker 1987), deontic modal verbs and phrases, along with folk proverbs that rationalize such brutal

experiences in terms of 'necessary rites of passage' leading them to a substantial improvement of their life conditions;

- b) *Frustration* at having to undergo difficulties in the host country that drastically reduce the chances for the realization of their much-desired 'possible world'. This may be due to limitations imposed upon individual freedom by the new legal norms that, if infringed, may result in the migrants' repatriation or detention. Such feelings of frustration tend to trigger in the migrants' minds processes of metaphorical embodiment and re-elaboration of their past traumatic experiences which come to be recontextualized within the new distressing events undergone in the host country, thus re-elaborating 'epistemic' representations of possible worlds which become, suddenly and disappointingly, contrary to present facts (Hintikka 1989);
- c) *Despair* at realizing that the chance to fulfill their 'utopian dream' is definitively denied, thus turning the migrants' desired 'possible world' into an 'impossible' one (Zalta 1997) (this may be caused by sudden adverse events that subvert their expectations). West-African migrants' trauma narratives, in cases like these, show evidence of a frequent use of native 'idioms of distress' (Mattingly 1998) rendered into ELF, by which migrants express their sense of hopelessness that 'deontically' compels them to continuously re-experience their past trauma by intensifying its effects in the present, often as a consequence of more recent traumatic experiences undergone in Italy;
- d) *Urge of stampede* from Italy – i.e., the host country that until just before was considered as the 'utopian possible world' to be reached, but that, after the recent coronavirus pandemic emergency (Covid-19), has suddenly become a terrifying fatal dystopia – no longer a 'possible' or an 'impossible world', but a 'real world' turned into a nightmare from which migrants wish to get away immediately. Latest data collected during the first months of 2020 – plagued by such a deadly pandemic, raging at that time most of all in Italy – though belonging to a still very small additional corpus of West-African ELF trauma narratives at the moment under construction, show evidence of a new compelling feeling of anguish mounting in migrants who long for returning to their home country, now even perceived as a reassuring utopia – an 'impossible world' where they are prevented from returning because of the lockdown imposed by the Italian law. This feeling seems to be frequent especially among 'economic migrants' (such as Nigerian ones). It is instead less frequent among refugees who fled from their home countries because of persecutions and civil wars.

It has been observed that these three feelings actually affect the semantic, syntactic and metaphorical patterns of the West-African migrants' ELF-

mediated trauma narratives (Pietrovski 1993). Furthermore, in all the cases in which such feelings are involved, a protocol analysis (Ericsson, Simon 1984) on the transcription of such trauma narratives reveals that the tone of these reports is frequently quite assertive, this being principally due to an extensive use of deontic modality of a high value (Halliday 1994, pp. 357-358) that makes reference to the traumatized migrants' compulsive sense of obligation and determination to take action in order to induce a radical change that would start a recovery process – which is triggered by their own condition of distress following the dreadful experiences they went through. West-African trauma narratives, therefore, may be said to represent the migrants' attempts at turning the shocking effects of traumatic events into the cause of possible repairing actions. Such a 'deontic prompt' to take action against adversities shows evidence of how trauma, in West-African narratives, is not simply represented as a personal experience of distress in need of removal through a psychiatric therapy – as is conventional practice in Western Psychiatry. Indeed, conceptualizing and expressing trauma in ways that may diverge from conventional forms of its representation is an option that is excluded from the biomedical definitions found in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-V) issued by the American Psychiatric Association (APA 2013). On the one hand, such definitions represent the scientific terminology that categorize and describe the psychiatric consequences of single-trauma exposure generally identified with the vague expression of 'Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder' (PTSD). As such, they fail to include the complex trauma syndromes experienced in non-Western environments. On the other hand, the APA definitions were just devised to appropriately describe the impact of traumatic events on Western populations (Summerfield 1999) and, therefore, they have proved inadequate for the typical metaphorical description of traumatic effects in many narratives from non-Western cultures (Peltzer 1998). More specifically, in West-African cultures, traumatic experiences can have many and diverse causes that may range from natural and physical reasons to supernatural and spiritual beliefs up to socio-political motivations. Such trauma causes are often metaphorically represented and expressed by means of the West-African migrants' native 'idioms of distress' (Gibbs, O'Brien 1990) which come to be transferred into their respective ELF variations through which they report their trauma experiences. And yet, such peculiar narrative patterns come to be interpreted by Western psychiatrists with reference to their conventional Western clinical paradigms (Eisenberg 1981; Mattingly 1998). Recognizing this would therefore contribute to the restoration of a culture-specific sense of identity which migrants often experience as disrupted once they find themselves displaced – both socio-culturally and pragmalinguistically – from their own native injured community in the desperate attempt to achieve their

much-desired utopian 'possible world' – which often suddenly reveals itself as another painful dystopian disillusionment.

2. Metaphysical patterns in migrants' trauma narratives of 'hope'

Case Study 1 introduced in this section represents an instance of ELF-mediated trauma narrative of *hope* that takes distressing experiences as an ordeal to be faced in view of the realization of a much-desired 'possible world'. The subject of this case study is a Nigerian young man, speaking his native Yoruba language (belonging to the Niger-Congo group), and Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE) as his nativized variety. Yet, NPE is usually perceived in the host country as an ELF variation due to the fact that it is displaced from its native context of use. This migrant had run away from Nigeria after having been involved in a terrorist attack by Boko Haram¹ that killed his mother and, once in Italy, he hoped for a better life. Central feature in this Nigerian migrant's ELF-mediated trauma narrative is Ori, the Yoruba god of individual fate, who affects his metaphysical belief according to which a person's destiny cannot be modified (Ali 1995; Oduwole 1996). To give good reason for his hope for a possible better life, despite the shocking experience he went through, the Nigerian migrant adopts an intricate argumentation by which he tries to bring to bear his Yoruba metaphysical belief on the fact that his mother's tragic destiny was just a fated prompt (reflected in the use of the deontic modal "must") encouraging his search for the longed-for 'possible world' in Italy – meant as the realization of his 'predestined fate' according to Ori's will. The migrant's narrative structure, therefore, is built on an interplay of *Accept-Deny* moves, till achieving a compromise reflected in the *Accommodation* move as he strives to still believe in his metaphysical Yoruba religion, even by relying on popular beliefs reflected in native folk proverbs – despite the memory of the traumatic event induces him to reject such an illogical religion.

The following *Transcript 1* reproduces the migrant's trauma narrative in his nativized Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE) – regarded as an ELF variation in Italy – along with its Standard-English version to facilitate understanding. The transcript is tagged with the *Opening*, *Accept-Belief*, *Deny-Belief*, and *Accommodation* moves.

¹ The terrorist group's name 'Boko Haram' refers to the expression that in Hausa means 'Western education is sin'.

Case Study 1: Transcript 1*Opening (Traumatic-Fact):*

Boko Haram bin kill my mama. One *gbosa*, one explosion big big bin chop my mama body. Piece dem kata-kata na ground. Mama eye dem look my eye dem and say: tear race, my pikin, you must to run run fo beta life.

[Boko Haram killed my mum. A 'gbosa', a huge explosion reduced my mum's body to pieces. Pieces were scattered all over the ground. Mum's eyes looked into my eyes and said: run away, my child, you must run immediately to find a better life.]

Accept-Belief:

Na tru tru no clear se Ori decision fo pipul destiny dem fo no change finish. We say: "Chicken wey run way go still end up inside pot of soup"—so pipul can no be able fo change dem destiny.

[It is truly unclear that Ori's decision about people's destinies should not change totally. We say: "when the chicken runs away, it still will end up inside a pot of soup"—so people should not be able to change their own destiny.]

Deny-Belief:

But we fo tink se no bi good, o, like my mama bad destiny.

[But we should think that it is not good at all, like my mum's bad destiny.]

Accommodation:

But yes, Ori decide destiny fo beta and my mama bin die fo push me fo beta life. Life na difficult fo Italy, o, but we say 'if life dey show you pepper, make pepper soup'.

[But yes, Ori decides destiny for better and my mum died to push me to find a better life. Life is difficult in Italy, but we say: 'if life shows you pepper, make a pepper soup'.]

Noticeably, the Nigerian migrant's trauma narrative of 'hope' is built on two dimensions which determine the counterfactual logic of his metaphysical argumentation since he tries to come to terms with past trauma (conveyed through the typical NPE preverbal past-tense marker "bin"), seeing it as an opportunity of realizing his hope for a longed-for possible world. In this view, the migrant tries to bring together the religious determinism of Ori's divine design for individual fate, and his own individual action aimed at determining by himself his own destiny so as to enhance his life conditions. These two conflicting dimensions are:

- 1) an *indexical dimension of the real world*, according to which the conventional sense (or 'primary intension') of a concept in the real world determines its truth-conditions (Lau 1995) (in the case in point, the terrorist attack meant as a traumatic fact);
- 2) an *iconic dimension of the possible world*, according to which the referent for a concept (or 'secondary intension') deviates from its conventional sense in the real world insofar as its truth-conditions are determined by the sense that the concept acquires within an alternative counterfactual world (Lewis 1973; Zalta 1997) (i.e., the terrorist attack as a prompt for a better life).

In trying to put together such opposite dimensions so as to come to accept his

metaphysical 'Yoruba Ori belief', the Nigerian migrant adopts the following two *possible-world maxims of cooperation*:

- a) *experiential pliability*, involving the adaptation of his narrative to the counterfactual logic of his religious belief;
- b) *suspension of disbelief*, involving a determination to believe in such a counterfactual 'possible world'.

In this way, the migrant builds his trauma narrative on a *hypothetical syllogism*, which is a typical feature of metaphysical discourse (Guido 2005). A syllogism is a logical argument grounded on deductive reasoning aimed at reaching a conclusion based on two propositions assumed to be true. In this case, the two propositions are just 'hypothetical':

- a) *Accept belief*:

People, like the 'chicken' of the proverb, 'cannot' ("can no be able fo") change Ori's destiny;

- b) *Deny belief*:

but Ori's decision "no bi good" (*is not good*), as evident from "my mama bad destiny" (*my mum's bad destiny*);

- c) *Accommodation*:

yet Ori decided for better: in fact, the migrant's mother died to encourage him to find a better life;

hence, it is up to the migrant himself, not to Ori, to change his own destiny by making his 'difficult life' in Italy possibly become a 'better life' (as in the Yoruba proverb about the unpleasant spicy "pepper" turned into a delicious "pepper soup").

The reference to the Yoruba god Ori seen as the source of trauma represents an instance of a feature which is frequent in West-African migrants' narratives in that they are built on a native cause-effect structure which, in native Niger-Congo languages, does not follow the SVO transitive clausal structure typical of Western languages, but the OVS ergative structure (Langacker 1991, p. 336). Such ergative structure, then, comes to be automatically transferred to the ELF variations used by West-African migrants, especially when they report events that affected them physically and emotionally. Indeed, it is precisely such a trauma recall that eventually becomes a trigger inducing migrants to unconsciously resort to their native language which automatically allows the most immediate expression of distress. Hence, in their trauma narratives, West-African migrants frequently make use of clauses characterized by an ergative structure where the cause of action is not, as expected, an animate Subject (S), or Agent (as in the SVO transitive clause structure), but rather it is:

- a) an inanimate Object (O), or Medium (Halliday 1994, p. 163), collocated in a grammatical and logical subject-position within the clause (the typical OVS ergative clause structure) and, thus, represented as the animate source of action and even characterized by conscious volition and autonomous force-dynamic motion;
- b) a ‘supernatural causation’ rendered by inanimate objects collocated in subject position as animate agents personifying autochthonous deities (such as Ori in Case Study 1) that affect people’s lives at their mercy.

Another instance of type b) outlined above is represented in the following Case Study 2, where the subject is a Nigerian young man, speaking a Nigerian ELF variation, who survived a shipwreck in the Mediterranean sea where three of his friends drowned. His dream in Italy was to go to university (he had attended a high school in Nigeria), but he ended up picking tomatoes as an undeclared labourer with no workers’ protection. Here he was also injured in a car accident in which two of his close friends died on their return to their shacks in Southern Italy after a day of hard work during the tomato harvesting season. Yet, despite his friends’ tragic deaths, this migrant’s report represents another instance of the trauma narrative of ‘hope’.

In his narrative, both types of native ergative cause-effect structures can be observed:

- a) *an ergative causation*, according to which inanimate objects (the ‘sea’, the ‘ship’, the ‘van’, the ‘road’, the ‘hospital’) become animate subjects and agents in narrative clauses, causing actions;
- b) *a supernatural ergative causation*, which represents the ‘greedy road’ as an animate agent that comes to be personified as Ogun, the cruel Yoruba god of the road, causing accidents to devour the victims’ bodies.

The following transcript shows how this migrant’s trauma narrative is not exactly in Nigerian Pidgin English, but in a variation of Nigerian ELF that reflects his Standard-English education:

Case Study 2: Transcript 2

The sea swallow the boat and three friends when we go to Italy. *A ship* rescue us. I want go to university, but here I only pick pick tomato all day. *This van* take us for our shack after tomato picking all day and *the road* quick crush the van against a lorry and kill two friends, cut them body for eat them. I remember the poet Soyinka say “the road waits, famished”, I learn this in school. He say *Ogun*, the god of road, become road and cause accidents for kill and eat people. But *he can no* kill me, no. My leg break, my arm, but *hospital* make me well because I *must* go to university.

Noticeably, in this narrative, the Nigerian migrant makes a frequent use of a ‘conceptual simple present’ representing as actual some traumatic events that affected him in the past. The use of the simple present, indeed, suggests that

the previous shocking accidents he went through are still experientially actual, vivid, and painful in his mind (Guido 2018). Yet, his strong determination to change his fate despite the adverse destiny is underscored by the use of:

- a) the deontic modal *cannot* (“can no”) that denies Ogun’s divine power to kill him, thus asserting the superiority that the migrant attributes to his own willpower which is stronger than the god’s will;
- b) the deontic modal *must* following the first-person pronoun ‘I’ by which the migrant asserts his determination to pursue his desired ‘possible-world’ objective for a better life in Italy.

3. Metaphysical embodiment of disappointing experiences in migrants’ trauma narratives of ‘frustration’

Case-Study 3, under analysis in this section, introduces an instance of ELF-mediated trauma narratives of *frustration*, occurring at the West-African migrants’ distressing realization that their dream for a better ‘possible world’ has indeed become unreal and very hard to realize. Hence, the new traumatic trials experienced by migrants in the host country exacerbate the effects of past distress undergone in the home country. And yet, in the corpus of collected West-African migrants’ ELF-mediated trauma narratives of *frustration* under analysis (Guido 2018), personifications of distress in ergative subject position are quite rare. This may be so insofar as such a typology of trauma narrative is principally focused on the migrants’ extreme disappointment with actual, practical (legal, institutional, etc.) obstacles on their way towards the fulfillment of their longed-for life goals that they expected to achieve in the host country. Indeed, the only instance of metaphysical personification of trauma symptoms and states of minds found in the corpus is the one reported below in transcript 3 related to Case-Study 3. The subject of this case study is another Nigerian migrant who left his family behind in Nigeria to flee from a severe state of hunger and poverty he suffered at home. He faced the crossing of the desert, the forced labour in the uranium mines in Niger, and torture in a detention camp in Libya before being able to cross the Mediterranean sea on a battered boat to come to Italy where he hoped to make his dream for possible better life conditions come true. Yet, once in Italy, the Committee for Refugees’ Rights decided to reject his asylum application and, therefore, he was risking repatriation because, according to the Italian laws, he was classified as an ‘economic migrant’. In his trauma narrative of ‘frustration’, this Nigerian man, then, expresses his inner anxiety – intensified by a sharp remorse for having abandoned his

family in poverty at home – by projecting it into an external metaphysical dimension where he represents it in the personified likeness of the mighty and vindictive Yoruba god Ẹ̀ṣàngó. This migrant, indeed, came to believe that all his suffering and frustration derive from the fact that he had incurred Ẹ̀ṣàngó's wrath and revenge for having forsaken his homeland, Nigeria, and the sacred bonds of his own family, to egoistically search for self-gratification and personal wealth in a foreign land under the protection of his own guardian god (Chi) – as reported in the following transcript of his Nigerian-ELF trauma narrative:

Case Study 3: Transcript 3

My asylum application no good, no. Committee say so, 'cause I'm Nigerian and here for work, not because war, so I *must* come back for my country 'cause Italy *must* no give no work for me. I vex because Nigeria give no work, no food, I *must* lef (*leave*) my house and my family for find a better life here. The desert no bin stop me. And hard work for the mine there na Niger, no break my back. My Chi bin care for me well well. But when I bin lef my country and my family with no money and no food, Ẹ̀ṣàngó *must* think se (*that*) I shame my people and my land and my Orisha (*Yoruba gods*). He bin don de throw (*he had started throwing*) his thunder for me when jail bin keep me na Libya and split my skin and bone and head, o. But I no die and I bin lef for the sea for come here. But Ẹ̀ṣàngó bin throw thunder and wave them, tall tall, for grasp the boat and kill me. Now he *must* send me back na Nigeria. Yes, o. Ẹ̀ṣàngó get all power. My Chi must fight fight for help me for stay here.

In this trauma narrative of 'frustration', the Nigerian migrant recognizes the constraints imposed by the Italian law on 'economic migrants' like him, as well as the hardships he underwent in his home country compelling him to leave Nigeria – and, regrettably, his dear ones – to take his chances for a better life in Italy (emphasized in both cases by the deontic use of the modal verb 'must'). But, as soon as he realizes that the fulfilment of his dream is in danger and he is running the risk for repatriation, then he projects his sense of frustration on a metaphysical level, rather than considering practical possibilities for a legal solution to his problem. He assumes (by using 'must' in epistemic modality, this time) that the cause of his failure – despite all the traumatic experiences he went through during his journey to Italy under the protection of his guardian Chi deity – should be ascribed to the powerful Yoruba god Ẹ̀ṣàngó who, by objectifying and embodying his own feelings of guilt for having abandoned his family in serious economic difficulties in Nigeria, enacts a fierce revenge against him. Hence, regardless of all the migrant's struggles against huge difficulties – personified by inanimate objects in animate subject position within ergative clause structures, such as the "desert" and the "mine" – vengeful Ẹ̀ṣàngó first commanded hostile natural elements at his service – the 'thunder' and the 'huge waves' ("wave them, tall tall") – to kill him while crossing the sea on the boat to come to

Italy, and then, once in the host country, the god was putting legal obstacles to the realization of his dream. Hence the feeling of intense frustration that the migrant expresses in his trauma narrative.

4. Metaphysical idioms of distress in migrants' trauma narratives of 'despair'

The two Case Studies 4 and 5 reported in this section regard instances of what are here defined as ELF-mediated trauma narratives of *despair*, characterized by the West-African migrants' agony as they become aware that the 'possible world' that they longed for cannot any longer come true – which, indeed, would affect both their emotional and social conditions. It has been observed in the collected corpus of West-African migrants' ELF-mediated trauma narratives that the more 'despair' prevails, the more migrants resort to their own native 'idioms of distress' (Gibbs, O'Brien 1990) that they unconsciously transfer into their ELF variations. Furthermore, data show evidence that in their ELF-mediated trauma narratives of 'despair', West-African migrants make a frequent use of a high-value deontic modality ('must') revealing their determination to attempt even impossible repair deeds. Such deeds may range from socio-political actions (often characterized by intense feelings of revenge), up to self-destructive feelings which eventually come to be compulsively objectified and projected onto a supernatural level where inner symptoms are perceived as external vengeful metaphysical entities haunting them (Guido 2008, 2018). The persistence – and even recrudescence – of such trauma symptoms is seen reflected in the recurrent use of tense indefiniteness, rendered by the 'conceptual simple present' that conveys the sense that West-African migrants' past traumatic experiences are indeed still vividly actual and perceptible in their minds (Guido 2008, 2018).

The following transcripts 4 and 5 report two Nigerian migrants' trauma narratives of 'despair' that exemplify the process by which agony and affliction resulting from traumatic events come to be voiced through ELF by resorting to native ways of conceptualizing and expressing trauma by means of metaphorical idioms of distress. These are native idioms that need to be interpreted at all their levels – which include socio-political, psycho-physical, and even supernatural-metaphysical dimensions. What is of specific interest in the analysis of the collected data regarding such a trauma-narrative typology is that West-African migrants show a tendency to share such idioms not simply with their native community that, like them, lives displaced in the country of arrival (Italy, in the case in point), but they also sometimes feel the need to communicate their anguish to the host community by activating a sort

of ‘hybridization’ instinctively aimed at incorporating native idioms of distress into parallel ones used to embody trauma in the host community. This may be seen as an unconscious strategy to make their psychic discomfort better understood within the new environment in which they now live.

Such a strategy seems to be reflected in Case Studies 4 and 5 reported below that reproduce the trauma narratives of ‘despair’ by Nigerian migrants who live in the Southern-Italian region of Salento. Indeed, the two migrants activate in their minds processes of appropriation of some idioms of distress typical of the host community which, emblematically, turn trauma symptoms into personifications of local folk-mythological entities. By appropriating them to their trauma experience, these Nigerian migrants actually hybridize such idioms of distress with parallel ones typical of their own native community which, similarly, represent trauma as an embodiment of symptoms turned into supernatural, metaphysical entities possessing the migrants, both physically and mentally. Therefore, in the cases in point, in hybridizing native Nigerian and non-native Southern-Italian idioms of distress, these case-study migrants operate a dislocation of their state of distress into the new socio-cultural contexts they now live in. The unconscious reason for this may be that West-African migrants’ trauma symptoms, to be understood as such within the Western (Italian) community, need to be embodied by resorting to specific idioms of distress typical of the host culture – which are perceived as parallel to equivalent native idioms – rather than adopting conventional and unfamiliar APA biomedical lexicon. This is here interpreted as the migrants’ attempt to share their state of anguish not only with their own native community dislocated in Italy (Kirmayer 1989), but also by involving the Italian host community that may help them towards a possible healing process.

Case-study 4 precisely reports a trauma narrative of this kind. The subject is a Nigerian woman who describes her trauma symptoms by appropriating an idiom of distress typical of the Southern-Italy region of Salento where she resides, hybridizing it with references to some parallel idioms of distress from her country of origin. Specifically, the Salentine idiom she makes her own in expressing her anguish regards a local folk-mythological creature – a poisonous spider named ‘Taranta’ (Tarantula) that, with its toxic bite, causes in women severe seizures and haunting hallucinations.

In her trauma narrative transcribed below, this migrant woman reports that in Nigeria she had the misfortune to have her husband and both her sons killed in an ambush. Since the murderer was not identified, then her own native community started blaming her as the actual cause of the death of her family members – in fact, suddenly people became convinced that she was a

witch. Besides, she was also associated with barren women who are not allowed to access the reincarnation cycle. Indeed, all these slanders against this woman were to be taken as social attempts to stigmatize and marginalize her because, after all, she was regarded as worthless – i.e., a social and economic burden with no children that could contribute to the community's prosperity. Thus, eventually, she felt socially compelled to leave Nigeria and undergo a risky sea-voyage to Italy where she ended up being exploited as a farm labourer, working hard harvesting wheat – which exhausted her (in fact, in Nigeria, she did not need to work as she was quite well-to-do). She hated her labour conditions as she did not expect to undergo such a hard work once in Italy. Hence, she started to believe that she was really a witch unintentionally cursing her family members and causing their death, thus deserving her present slave-like conditions of forced labour. Such obsessive thoughts provoked in her a trance-like seizure – fits, convulsions, tremor, and outbursts of restless frantic motions, such as running around, leaping, and twisting and writhing on the ground. These physical reactions to her mental anguish are alike, in many ways, to the self-blame trauma symptoms suffered by socially-marginalized barren women in Guinea Bissau, defined as 'Kiyang-yang', an idiom of distress meaning 'the Shadow' – i.e., worthless, nonexistent women (Einarsdóttir 2004). The Nigerian woman in Case-Study 4 believed that she was cursed by the 'Taranta', the demonic spider whose 'poisonous bite' causes frantic convulsions in peasant women. Indeed, the 'Taranta's Bite' is an idiom of distress for the trauma suffered by socially oppressed and physically exploited and abused female farm workers in Salento, which the migrant woman appropriated to her own traumatic experience, hybridizing it with her native Nigerian idiom of distress of 'Ghost Possession' and its symptoms. She reported that, during such seizures, she was actually possessed by her murdered children's ghosts, as is evident in the transcript 4 from her trauma narrative of 'despair' reported below:

Case Study 4: Transcript 4

In my village, people think se (*that*) my children bin die because I'm witch. Only blame for me, o, no value for me. No children for till land, no new life after death for me. Here they say se (*that*) after hard, hard for harvest work my body shake shake, jump, run, and brain go out my head when see my dead pikin them (*my dead children*), and I speak with a pikin voice (*child's voice*), o, my dead pikin voice them. Here they say se (*that*) Taranta bin bite me and they say se (*that*) only a drum can calm me, but they no know my pain, no, o, they no understand, no, Taranta curse me and bite me because I'm witch.

What is evident in this trauma narrative of 'despair' (reported in a Nigerian variant of English displaced from its native context of occurrence and perceived as an ELF variation in Italy) is the collocation in an ergative subject position within the clause structures of 'abstract notions', such as

“blame”, “value”, “new life”, as well as ‘bodily parts’, such as the woman’s trauma-affected frenzied “body”, and her distressed “brain” obsessed with thought of her murdered children – a “brain” that “sees” her dead children before their ghosts come to possess her whole body and mind, making her “speak” with their voices during the seizure caused by the ‘Taranta’s Bite’.

Case-study 5 introduces another trauma narrative of ‘despair’ by a Nigerian migrant who, in reporting the trauma symptoms that affect him, hybridizes his native idioms of distress with a Southern-Italy idiom that personifies a state of malaise and anguish as a folk-mythological malevolent elfish creature – and that also finds a parallel in an evil pixie-like deity of the West-African Yoruba folklore tradition. The trauma symptoms, metaphorically described by this migrant, correspond to the West-African idiom of distress identified as ‘Brain Fag’ – namely, a mental fatigue resulting from ‘thinking too much’ about traumatic experiences undergone in the past – often correlated to other idioms of distress, such as ‘Worm Creeping’ and ‘Heavy Chest’ (Guido 2008). His present condition of physical fatigue due to his brutalizing undeclared work of picking tomatoes during the harvest season, have triggered in his mind the memory of his past trauma that he experienced in the past as an adolescent in Nigeria, when he was kidnapped by the Boko Haram terrorists who forced him into becoming a ‘child soldier’ and murdering people. Past and present distress, therefore, informs his trauma narrative of ‘despair’ reported in the following transcript 5, where the recollection of his past atrocious deeds that he was obliged to perform still haunts him, generating in him an agony whose excruciating symptoms come to be embodied as living creatures collocated in subject position within the ergative structure of clauses. Such symptoms range from sensations of numbness and tickling in the brain – represented in his narrative as worms creeping under his skin – to unbearable chest tightness when he is half-asleep after his hard day’s work – which he identifies with a personified Southern-Italy idiom of distress, as suggested by his Italian fellow workers, i.e., the ‘Sciacudhi’. This is a folk-mythological pixie roaming in the countryside of the Salento region at night-time, searching for fatigued peasants to spitefully press their chests as they sleep, as well as for horses to inextricably plait their manes. In his trauma narrative, the Nigerian migrant hybridizes this personified idiom of distress from the Italian host place with a parallel Yoruba idiom representing a wicked elfish demon with an assonant name – i.e., the ‘Shugudu’ – at the commands of a wronged person looking for revenge, who orders this dwarfish demon to squat on the breast of his enemy to press his breath out and kill him. Indeed, probably both fantastic creatures share the same etymological origin from some folk divinity common in the Mediterranean basin.

What follows is the transcript of this trauma narrative of ‘despair’ in

Nigerian ELF:

Case Study 5: Transcript 5

My brain think think the murders I done. Worms creep in my brain, and chest, here, is heavy heavy when sleep come after hard hard work. My Italian friends in the tomato field think that Shakudi, like small monkey, sit on my heart the night to choke me. They laugh and say Shakudi make also the plaits of my hair but I cry when I think se (*that*) he *must* be the little pikin (*child*) I bin kill, I cut him throat and he look my eyes and die and he innocent like my little brother. He now *must* kill me, I know. I bin think se (*that*) I bin escape for Italy for find new, better life, so I no think think all this, but here when I finish hard work in the field I dey (*am*) tired tired, o, I come for sleep but the pikin family send Shugudu on my chest, yes, send Shugudu 'cause he *must* crush my heart like a tomato for revenge.

In this Nigerian man's narrative of 'despair', the figurative representations of the symptoms of post-traumatic disorders come to be hybridized with the idioms of distress belonging to both the native Yoruba culture and the host Southern-Italy peasant culture (where he presently works), personified as the fantastic figure of the wicked mythological dwarf named Sciacuddhi/Shugudu. The typical Nigerian-English emphatic verb and adjective reduplications ("think think", "heavy heavy", "hard hard", "tired tired") stresses the obsessive recurrence of the same unbearable thoughts about the past crimes that he was obliged to commit as a child soldier. This atrocious memory is so vivid in the present that in his narrative this migrant often shifts from the reference to the past (marked by the Nigerian-ELF pre-verbal past-tense particle "bin") to a 'conceptual simple present' that renders his past traumatic experience still painfully actual in his mind. This state of distress seems to occur especially when this migrant feels extremely tired and dejected at the end of a hard day's work in the tomato fields in Italy and he would only like to sleep. The metaphorical image of the 'worms creeping in his brain' in ergative subject position in the clause represents an objectified personification of the typical trauma symptom of numbness in his head. Likewise, the sensation of chest-tightness is a characteristic symptom of trauma-induced anxiety overwhelming the sufferer when he falls asleep – which, in this migrant's narrative, comes to be personified as the nightmarish evil creature of the Sciacuddhi, or Shugudu, crouching upon his chest to press his breath – and life – out of him. This Nigerian man assumes (as conveyed by the epistemic modal verb "must") that this demonic creature is the ghost of a little child that he was forced to brutally slaughter in order to obey the commands of the Boko Haram soldiers who kept him prisoner ("he *must* be [*epistemic deduction*] the little pikin I bin kill"). This migrant actually believed that the murdered child's ghost was indeed sent by his family under the shape of Sciacuddhi/Shugudu as he was obliged to get revenge and kill

him (conveyed by the deontic use of the modal “must” – “He now *must* kill me”) by pressing his breath out of his body and crushing his heart while asleep (“cause he *must* crush my heart”) – metaphorically associating his heart with a ‘crushed tomato’ (an image drawn from his present work experience). Hence, far from finding his longed-for possible utopian world in Italy where he would have liked to start a new and more serene life, this Nigerian migrant met, precisely in the host country, the most traumatic of his nightmares.

5. Metaphysical representations of the Covid-19 pandemic in migrants’ trauma narratives of ‘urge of stampede’

The last Case Study 6 reported in this section represents a recent development of the ‘modal gradient’ identified in the corpus of West-African migrants’ and refugees’ trauma narratives collected so far (Guido 2008, 2018), setting the conditions for the realization of the migrants’ longed-for utopian new life in the host country (Italy). As illustrated so far, such conditions have been projected onto a series of imaginary, metaphysical dimensions ranging from ‘possible’, to ‘ureal’, up to ‘impossible’ worlds which respectively inform the typologies of trauma narratives of ‘hope’, ‘frustration’ and ‘despair’.

With the advent of the coronavirus pandemic emergency (Covid-19) in Italy during the first months of 2020, this host country – that up to that time migrants regarded as the dreamt-for ‘utopian possible world’ where they could start a new life – all of a sudden came to be perceived as a deadly and ‘even too real dystopian world’, triggering in migrants an urge to hastily escape from it. Latest data collected at the beginning of 2020 in Italy during the period of raging pandemic (though at the moment still constituting a very limited additional corpus of West-African ELF trauma narratives) reveal a trend towards an urgency of stampede increasingly experienced by ‘economic migrants’ (less so by refugees). These migrants who left their West-African home countries to move to Italy in search of better life conditions, suddenly started longing for a hasty return to their home countries in Africa, still almost immune from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. In fact, such a novel increasing agony in West-African migrants, suddenly yearning for going back to their home country, compels them to perceive the place from which they had previously fled as a sort of safe, almost Covid-free utopia – indeed, an ‘impossible world’ where they are not allowed to return because of the border closure imposed by the European laws in order to contain the pandemic.

The following transcript 6 reproduces a Nigerian woman’s trauma

narrative representing such an ‘urge for stampede’ in metaphysical terms (the only one referring to supernatural causes among the very few trauma reports of this fourth type collected so far). This Nigerian woman in Case Study 6, is a building cleaner who, before the pandemic outbreak, was very satisfied with her steady job in Italy, but now she feels in danger in the host country plagued by the Covid-19 pandemic. She starts viewing Nigeria like a utopian ‘blessed land’ populated by healthy people who honour the mighty Yoruba god Ọbalúayé “Lord of the Earth” and are, in return, protected by him from any kind of epidemics. She believes that the blame for the pandemic in the Western World and in Asia rests with the scientists’ out-of-control ambition to challenge and overcome the power of the almighty god who, in his wrath, has cast the pandemic curse on the offenders for revenge. Western scientists, however, still persist in their aim to defeat epidemic and pestilence but, in doing so, rather than showing gratitude to Ọbalúayé for his warning, they go on defying him. Hence, in his fury, Ọbalúayé has unleashed the Covid-19 plague to infect Western and Asian sinful humankind, and if African people keep on staying in these doomed places, they will be all the same blamed and punished by this vengeful god. That is why African migrants (in this woman’s opinion) are frightened and long for returning immediately to their safe home countries. This is the transcript of this ELF-mediated trauma narrative:

Case Study 6: Transcript 6

This job is good, yes, give money for honest life, yes. But I *must* come for Nigeria quick now, I no want stay here now, no o. I bin happy here but Italy now na (*is*) sick, sick, o. All Europe go die soon. All people here go die soon, yes. Why? ‘cause Ọbalúayé, our great god, now na mad o mad, angry for white men and for Chinese men, ‘cause they think se they better pass him (*that they are better than him*). They think se (*that*) their science can heal sick people and win Ọbalúayé power for kill people when he curse them. They *must* thank the god for tell people when they make wrong thing and punish them with Covid. Only he can order virus for kill people for their sin, only he can heal people, no medicine, no science can heal Covid. And if we African people stay here, he go (*will*) punish us ‘cause he think se we love Italy for in sin dem (*its sins*) and he go punish me, kill me like Italian people. Nigeria na safe place, we respect our land and our gods and they bless us and give health for our people. So I *must* come for Nigeria quick quick, but the law say se we *must* no lef (*leave*) Italy. Fear now grab me, yes, I no want die here, no. We African people dey (*are*) strong strong people o. No desert, no big sea, no sun bin no stop us, no kill us when we come for Italy. But if we stay here we go (*will*) die, o.

This trauma narrative of ‘urge of stampede’ is emblematic of the fact that a past distressing state which the migrants seemed to have overcome with the achievement of a stable and peaceful condition in a ‘utopian’ host country, all

of a sudden comes to be reactivated in their minds by the advent of other traumatic conditions that totally subvert their perception of the ‘much-desired possible world’. In fact, once become ‘actual’, such a world has turned into a ‘dreadful real world’ triggering in migrants an urge for a hurried escape back to their safe, and now ‘longed-for’ home country.

The Nigerian woman’s emotional involvement in her narrative becomes particularly evident when she shifts from a more detached first-person-plural narrative to the use of the first-person-singular pronoun making reference to her own state of distress (“And if *we African people* stay here, he [Ọbalúayé] go punish *us* ‘cause he think se *we* love Italy for in sin dem and he go punish *me*, kill *me*”). The migrant woman’s emotional involvement in what she says can be likewise identified, on the one hand, in her sudden shifts from the use of a diatopic Nigerian variation of English to her pragmalectal variety of Nigerian Pidgin English, which emerges in her narration every time she is overwhelmed by anguish (“‘cause they think se they better pass him” – “because they think that they are better than him”), and, on the other, in her use of adjective reduplication, a typical feature of her native African language transferred into Nigerian Pidgin English (“sick sick”; “mad mad”; “quick quick”; “strong strong”). Furthermore, similarly to the other subjects of the previously examined case studies, this Nigerian migrant makes a frequent use of the deontic modal “must” to emphasize her sense of urge to return home (“I *must* come for Nigeria quick now”; “So I *must* come for Nigeria quick quick”), as well as the reverence that Western and Asian people should owe to the almighty god (“They *must* thank the god for tell people when they make wrong thing and punish them with Covid”), and also the obligations and limits imposed upon people’s movements by the Italian laws in the critical period of ‘lockdown’ (“but the law say se we *must* no move out Italy”). Another typical feature of the migrant’s Nigerian English variation used in her narrative is the frequent occurrence of ergative subjects in the clausal structures transferred from her native Yoruba language. In the case in point, ergative subjects are represented by abstract entities (i.e., “science”, “medicine”, “law”, “fear”) and inanimate natural elements (“desert”, “big sea”, “sun”) that come to be personified as animate entities that turn out to be hostile to human beings. As animate entities, they are collocated in force-dynamic logical and syntactic subject position within the clause structures (Langacker 1991). Eventually, in this specific trauma narrative, even the quite aggressive virus causing the pandemic (i.e., “Covid”) has come to be personified into the metaphysical entity of the vengeful Yoruba god Ọbalúayé who has unleashed the plague against Western and Asian people because – differently from African people – they have dared to defy his absolute power of life or death over humankind.

6. Conclusions

In this chapter, ethnographic data have shown that Nigerian migrants' trauma narratives are prevalently characterized by features from their typologically-different native languages which come to be transferred into their ELF variations at the levels of: ergative clause structures, modality, idiomatic lexicon, and metaphorical patterns of a metaphysical kind. More specifically, the six case studies under analysis have revealed that the migrants that constitute the subjects of enquiry often employ modal operators in the description of much-desired 'possible worlds' projected into a transcendental dimension. It has been observed that every obstacle to the achievement of the migrants' longed-for goals triggers in their minds intense emotions that turn traumatic events and their effects into personifications of supernatural entities taking the animate agentive shapes – in ergative-subject position – of cruel Yoruba deities, or imaginary monsters, often generated by a process of hybridization between parallel mythological creatures in both native and host cultures. Indeed, in all these cases, such personifications of the causes of traumatic events experienced by West-African migrants represent culture-specific 'idioms of distress' that significantly diverge from the Western clinical categories classified in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* issued by the American Psychiatric Association (APA 2013) – which, in fact, are almost inadequate for the analysis and report of the effects of traumatic events on non-Western populations (Guido 2008; Peltzer 1998). In the case studies in point, illustrated in the present chapter and making reference to a wider corpus of ELF-mediated West-African migrants' and refugees' trauma narratives (Guido 2018), it has been observed that the degree of psychological resilience to traumatic experiences is determined by the migrants' more or less optimistic prospects on the achievement of the much-desired 'possible worlds', which they represent in their minds as a sort of 'utopia', in contrast with the 'dystopian real world' that they have sadly experienced. In particular, the corpus of trauma narratives reveals the frequent occurrence of specific patterns in association with a four-level gradient ranging from possible, unreal, and impossible utopian worlds, up to – as a more recent development triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic – a much-too-real dystopian world. Each of these degrees have been defined as trauma narratives of, respectively, 'hope', 'frustration', 'despair', and 'urge of stampede'.

In the light of such non-Western divergences from the conventional clinical ways of categorizing trauma effects and symptoms in the Western world, it seems necessary to foster the development of hybrid ELF registers which could accommodate in their narrative structures different culture-

specific categorizations of traumatic experiences which could be subsequently employed in specialized intercultural communication within migration contexts (e.g., in the field of ‘transcultural psychiatry’).

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THE DYNAMICS OF QUESTION / ANSWER MOVES IN ELF SPOKEN DISCOURSE IN CROSS-CULTURAL MIGRATION DOMAINS

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Abstract – In this paper we will analyze question and answer moves in a corpus of approximately eight interviews taken from transcripts published on the site *Storie migranti* (www.storiemigranti.org). Our focus will be the different ways questions are employed and formulated to elicit ideational information (Halliday 2004) and also the way in which answers to these same questions are formulated. A major point of interest within cross-cultural migrant domains (Guido 2008) and in particular in the context of asylum seekers using ELF is how the delicate balance of the demands of questioner and answerer are negotiated and satisfied, or not, as the case may be. In addition to purely lingua-structural concerns, we also consider pragmatic considerations within the specific theoretical contexts of relevance (Sperber, Wilson 1986) and conversation implicatures (Grice 1975). With an in-depth analysis of individual cases, we will seek to identify the instances where answers satisfactorily provide the information elicited by the question in view of being able to describe successful strategies both from the perspective of questioner and answerer within the specific context of spoken interaction between ELF users in cross-cultural migration domains.

Keywords: discourse moves in ELF; cross-cultural migration domains; relevance.

1. Introduction

In this paper, we discuss the dynamics of question / answer moves in ELF spoken discourse involving interviews between non-EU migrants and journalists asking them about their typically frustrating, sometimes traumatic, experiences as migrants and asylum seekers, whose motives and accounts are often viewed with suspicion by those in authority.

The discourse domain of official interviews, undertaken by border police or other gate-keeping officials, is one where there is an inherent power asymmetry between those applying for assistance and those in a position to grant it (Guido 2008). It is also a domain that, in the last few years, has existed against a background of stretched resources on the part of the authorities, in the face (until very recently) of rapidly rising numbers of asylum seekers and would-be migrants. Italy lies at the centre of the Mediterranean. This puts it at the crossroads of the some of the world's main

migration routes. It is directly north of countries like Libya and Tunisia, from which many migrants from North and Sub-Saharan Africa try to make their way into the European Union, and also just west of the Balkans, from which many migrants and refugees from the various conflicts in the Middle East (e.g. Afghans, Iraqis, Syrians, Kurds, Yazidis) have also arrived with similar objectives.

The system to deal with such arrivals has had to be put in place at short notice and in a manner that even its architects would probably recognize as improvised and only partially fit for purpose. This situation has of course led to tensions between various officials and politicians in Rome and the rest of the EU¹ because the former believes that it has been swamped by applicants and received too little aid, material or otherwise, from its EU partners.

At the level of individual applicant, the problem can be illustrated by these words of three asylum seekers (A, B, and C) who tell a journalist of the inadequacy of the whole system by which asylum seekers' applications are processed in particular during the final hearing where they were supposed to be able to put their cases:

C: they are using us, trading us! And I want to say something more about these commissions, I don't understand these commissions: what are they thinking? If you are going to make one mistake in your commission, you are done, they give you negative. We are not normal people, living normal life, we make mistakes, we have families, problems, we are not as lucid as you are. People make mistakes for example with dates: on your report you said that something happened on the 19th and during the commission you say it happened on the 21st: it's a straight denial.

A: But even their own spelling mistakes give you denials, their spelling mistakes with your names. And if you should correct them for their own spelling mistakes, then it's negative: straightforward. They do spelling mistakes of my own name, and I am correcting them and say 'this is not the way we spell my name' then they give me negative because what they have in their computers is unchangeable. If your name is spelled a different way you get a denial.

A: the [sic] downfall all the denials is because they don't talk good English. We don't believe them also because some of the translators are filled with the blood of racism. Don't forget how it is: in the US, someone from Oklahoma doesn't like someone from Texas, and it's racism. We've got the same sickness in the blood of the black race and that is passed along with the translators who translate for you into Italian. And we don't trust they are doing a fair job.

B: let me tell you my story. I went in front of the commission last month and as I was starting to embroid my story they tell me: this is enough, sing [sic] your paper!

¹ Especially in the period between June 2018 and September 2019 when Matteo Salvini of the *Lega Nord* served as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior.

How long was your meeting?

B: I spent 5 hours but they translated only 45 minutes. Because most of the time they are distracted, they disturb you. Understand? You enter the commission and they tell you, wait now I am going to smoke, then they come back after a long time and you want to start telling your story and they interrupt you again saying: now I am going to urinate leaving you there. And then they chat with their friends and you are there waiting. And your interview lasts 5 hours but you got to tell you story only for 45 minutes. And after two hours they ask you the same stupid question again and you are frustrated and you.²

The problem then is not merely linguistic but also regards funding, training, procedures, attitudes of officials, and, last but not least, the level of linguistic competence in English of those involved in the process (whether migrant or official). No doubt, a contributing factor is also the fact that, as with any other group of human beings in any context, not all migrants are what they claim to be. Inevitably, some will try to abuse the system in order to gain entry to the EU (among them, those directly involved in smuggling, people trafficking, other criminal activity or worse). Officials may consequently be more preoccupied in identifying such cases than helping those with a legitimate case to be allowed in. This is shown by the fact that the first interviewee in the extract (C) above laments that the members of the commission seem to attach a lot of importance to details that s/he considers minor and seems to leap on each and any apparent contradiction in his or her account. It is almost as though they are being treated more as a suspect than as an applicant.

In this article, we will focus on the dynamics of the discourse that takes place in interviews between journalists and migrants with a view to identify those strategies that would seem most effective at reducing an imbalance between participants in more official contexts (such as that described in the quote above). It is hoped that such strategies would allow each to get the most from the interaction in terms both of getting the information required and of having a chance to tell their story (including any details that the applicant deems relevant, but which otherwise may not be enquired about) and to make their application also on the basis of facts and events chosen by the applicant in question and not only on those specifically elicited by an official.

² Interview with three asylum seekers at the processing centre in Mineo, Catania (Mineo, Catania-Gela State highway, December 2011): *Storie migranti* (www.storiemigranti.org).

2. The corpus

In this study, we will use published transcripts of interviews between journalists and migrants published on the site *Storie migranti* (www.storiemigranti.org). In all, nine speech events, comprising approximately 15,200 words, were analysed.

This is an admittedly small dataset by the standards of corpus linguistics. By definition, almost all the speech events constitute “successful” interactions between the speakers involved by the simple reasoning that, had they not been so, then presumably they would not have been published. In this sense, it is impossible to say how representative they are of the genre of journalistic interviews of migrants as a whole, but this is not a major concern for the current study.

A greater problem is the fact that the transcripts provided were written not by trained transcribers like those who compiled, for example, the VOICE Corpus (2011). However, given the nature both of the discourse and of the settings in which it takes place, adequate quality recordings and transcripts are hard to come by. Labov (1994, p. 11) famously described historical linguistics as “the art of making the best use of bad data” and added that historical documents typically “are riddled with the effects of hypercorrection, dialect mixture, and scribal error.” The same observation is often applicable to studies such as this that look at the ELF variations³ that spontaneously occur in specific speech events involving participants from quite different linguacultural backgrounds. Like the historical linguist, the researcher looking at ELF in migrant domains cannot afford to be perfectionist.

A relatively small corpus does make it possible to thoroughly analyse the data and explore different means of classifications, which is important in this kind of study that is principally explorative in nature. Any investigation of the pragmatics of discourse, especially that realized through ELF variations, which are by their nature, improvised, transient and not norm-oriented, is something that, for now at least, requires a human interpreter. Such a process involves much trial and error, given the fact that the dynamics of discourse moves are not easily modifiable into discrete and objective categories. Furthermore, no discourse, norm-oriented or not, is easily analysable using the tools of corpus linguistics for the simple reason that, unlike text (its physical product), discourse is not something tangible: comprising as it does, the process itself of interaction (Christiansen 2011; Cornish 1999; Widdowson 1984). A small corpus then, given these

³ See Widdowson (2015).

limitations, is an advantage. Future studies on larger corpora may however be planned to test and refine the system of categorization proposed here.

3. Theoretical concerns

Some approaches view spoken discourse as a well-defined series of moves each constituting a specific element in the discourse structure, for example: Question – Answer, or Initiation-Response-Feedback (Sinclair, Coulthard 1975). Such schemes tend to focus on interaction as a series of “adjacent pairs” (Schegloff, Sacks 1973), where moves are interlaced with what immediately precedes or follows them, neglecting the fact that within a discourse more complex, subliminal patterns may hold (Levinson 1983, pp. 303-304).

The latter observation finds confirmation in even the most cursory glance at a text that manifests a discourse. In Example 1, different colours are used to highlight the different topics being discussed in each turn (e.g. plain white related to one topic, light grey to another – the colours having no significance in themselves). It can be seen how the initial request for information (Turn 1) does not receive a reply until Turn 4: after it has been rephrased and repeated (3). Within Turn 4, the speaker (the migrant) returns to the topic of Turn 2 (the unfilled reply to the question in Turn 1).

1)

Turn	Text
1	Q: But do they put you always in the same prison?
2	A: If you have money you can go in the better cell, but only for one week. When you buy the flight ticket you are put in one of these cells for two weeks up to the time of the departure. People who are arrested could pay (for instance, someone who had a business and so had a little bit of money, or Syrians who have a bit of money) for better conditions of detention, and are then moved to barracks in the vicinity.
3	Q: But is it still the same structure?
4	A: Always at Al Wardia, but not in the same building. Cells are part of the same complex but they are located in another building, in barracks. A section of the building is for the Garde Nationale, and then there is another building. Besides: since Syrians have a little bit more of money, the police increases the price and in this way they have to pay more, and they have to pay in dollars, not in dinars. Syrians have to pay 300 dollars. During the time I was there, the following deportations happened: 240 Syrians deported to Algeria and 180 to Turkey; it is more than 300 people in total—I will search for the piece of paper where I wrote all this information and I will tell you the exact details.

In Example 2, it can be seen that when the interviewer poses two questions, the interviewee may choose the answer the last first and vice versa, thereby creating at once an adjacent and a non-adjacent pair:

2)

1	Q: Is this what happened to the Somalians who were in jail with you? What happened to them afterwards?
2	A: Some of them got lost and died, while the Nigerians who were with them walked a lot but finally they ended up in Tunisia again, and came across some Tunisian policemen. As far as the Somalian people who were in the cell with me, they have been deported;

In Example 3, by contrast to Example 1, the questioner, when faced with an unfilled reply to their initial question (Turn 1), lets the topic drop so to speak, and instead asks a new question directly related to the unelicited information that the interviewee has provided (Turn 3). This shows how, if given the freedom to do so, as typically happens in an interview with a journalist but not in an official hearing, the interviewee can be allowed to set the agenda and volunteer relevant information, which the interviewer may wish to follow up on.

3)

1	Q: Could you describe the center where you have been detained in Tunis? We would like to understand if we could maybe do something to denounce this situation and to help other people who are still detained there.
2	A: Tunisian policemen arrest foreigners in the street, and they force them to pay the ticket for their own repatriation.
3	Q: Are there only migrants at the center of Al Wardia are there, migrants who were arrested in the street, and others who arrived directly from prison?

The above three examples give some idea of the difficulties of analysing the pragmatics of discourse of the kind manifested as text in our corpus. There is often a mismatch between the information that the interviewer wants the interviewee to provide and the information that the interviewee wants to give. Reading the entire corpus, we are struck by the sense that many interviewees see these interviews as a rare chance to tell their story to an outsider (someone who is not a fellow migrant / asylum seeker or immigration official) and are therefore eager, desperate even, to recount what has happened to them and what they have seen, often viewing the actual questions asked by the interviewers not as requests for specific information but rather as general invitations to speak about what concerns them.

That which we have could be described, not as a single discourse, but rather as a set of different discourses that coincide and converge only at

certain points. Such a situation can best be investigated, not only through the lens of conventional corpus linguistic analysis of texts, but by experimenting with an array of different approaches that take into account the more complex and multi-dimensional nature of discourse in cross-cultural migration domains.

Wittgenstein (1889-1951) in the later stages of his career introduced the technique of the “language-game” as a means of investigating language (Wittgenstein 1953). This involved the invention of imaginary (sometimes implausible) situations in which language is used for some “tightly defined practical purpose”:⁴ The idea of language-game, where meaning is inextricably linked to use in a given situation, and of language use as a kind of game, is an interesting metaphor that can be used in ELF because games are an example of a set of items whose members, rather than sharing the *same* characteristic feature, all resemble each other in *different* ways, drawing *different* features from a *common* pool of items like members of the same family.⁵ In another analogy, Wittgenstein likens language to a box of tools. Language can be used for different purposes. Using tools is essentially performative, as is playing a game. Language users are, like players, involved in different games, each with its own rules.

In the context of cross-cultural migrant domains, the analogy of games is appropriate because ELF users typically come from a vast variety of different linguacultural backgrounds. These may resemble each other in diverse ways. It is of course also important not to assume that even being fully familiar with a participant’s socio-cultural and ethnic background, as well as their first language, will necessarily remove all obstacles to understanding their objectives and strategy. As van Dijk controversially states (2009, p. 4):

[...] *contexts – defined as the relevant properties of social situations – do not influence discourse at all.* There is no *direct* relationship between aspects of the social situation (such as Blair’s role as Prime Minister, etc.) and discourse. This is a widespread determinist fallacy, also prevalent in sociolinguistics when it assumes that gender, race, age or status influence the way we speak. *There is no such direct influence, simply because **social** properties of the situation are not directly involved in the **cognitive** processes of discourse production and understanding.* These are phenomena of a different kind, of different levels of analysis and description. Only cognitive phenomena can directly influence cognitive processes. Moreover, if such a direct influence between social situations and discourse were to exist, all people in the same social situations would probably speak in the same way,

⁴ Monk (1990, p. 330)

⁵ Wittgenstein used the analogy of family likenesses as an alternative to the Aristotelian theory of categories.

which they obviously don't. Whatever the social influence of the "context," there are always (also) personal differences: each discourse is always unique.

To answer these and other questions, I have taken a rather obvious theoretical decision: contexts are not "objective," but "subjective." They are not a relevant selection of "objective" social properties of the situation, but a *subjective definition* of such a situation. This is perfectly compatible with the notion of *relevance*, because this notion is also inherently *relative*: something is (ir)relevant *for* someone. In other words, *a context is what is defined to be relevant in the social situation by the participants themselves.*

To many researchers, especially those working in the field of sociolinguistics, this view may be extreme, but in van Dijk's assertion that each discourse is unique we find echoes of the observation by Benedetto Croce, the idealist philosopher, that each text is a unique unrepeatable speech event wherein meaning is inextricable from the specific context of use.⁶ Such a realisation implies that any means of analysis and system of categorization has to be at once general enough to allow the comparison of different discourse events yet specific enough to capture the distinctive features of individual events which may not be directly comparable to anything encountered elsewhere. Van Dijk also stresses the role that relevance plays in establishing what constitutes context and this is something decided by the participants themselves. The extract quoted in Section 1 complaining about the way application proceedings are conducted clearly highlights how the distribution of power between participants in much interaction in cross-cultural migrant domains is unequal. As a consequence, it must be concluded that the context is something over which migrants and asylum seekers in such situations have little control. This obviously puts them at a disadvantage as they are being judged on their ability to provide pertinent and clear answers, without knowing what *pertinent* and *clear* mean in the unique discourse of the unique speak event.

Furthermore, in the specific context of the processing of migrant and asylum seeker applications for entry visas, there is ample scope for different participants to have quite different agendas and to have quite different perceptions of the discourse that they are engaged in. This poses the question of whether participants in such ELF discourse events are even playing the *same* game, let alone playing this same game by the *same* rules. A glance at the extract quoted in 1 raises this suspicion clearly.

These are two considerations not normally considered within *Speech Act Theory* (Austin 1962; Searle 1975) as it assumes that participants in an interaction have fixed predetermined roles and that they share objectives and work towards similar outcomes. SAT foresees three clearly defined moves:

⁶ (1908, p. 23) "Ogni espressione è espressione unica" [every expression is a unique expression].

the locutionary act (the utterance); the illocutionary act (the desired effect envisaged by the addressor); the perlocutionary act (the actual effect on the addressee) and recognises only certain types of illocutionary acts (five in all). For Sperber and Wilson (1986), Occam's razor argues against SAT (especially Searle's concept of indirect speech acts). SAT can only be made to work through a complex system of coding and codes within codes (and codes within codes within other codes and so on *ab infinitum*).

In contrast to the complexities of SAT, Grice (1975) offers a simpler solution, introducing the concept of *conversational implicature* that shows that communication is based not only on *what* is said but also on *how* it is said. Grice identifies the key cooperative principle that underlies all communication, which can be broken down into four specific maxims. These are not so much rules but conventions by which addressors and addressees "play" their part in the interaction, rather like the way in which poker players play their cards in ways which, though not exactly rule-defined, are interpretable in the context that each wants to win as much as possible from the game and cannot see each other's cards and knows that the other players are there for the same reason.

However, the four specific maxims, as laid out in Grice's very brief yet seminal paper, are clearly only relevant to certain cultures and speech communities. It is not clear, even within the specific social contexts he talks about, which maxims take precedence, and whether the list of maxims that he provides is exhaustive. Relevance theory (Sperber, Wilson 1986) provides a broader, more universal principle, but the very concept of *relevance*, even if it can be given a precise cognitive basis (*mutual manifestness*), is still relative to the individual speaker and their own objectives.

4. Tracking the dynamics of question / answer moves

One way that we can look at the speakers' different perspectives, and the different narratives that they want to air, is to compare what they say, taking the perspective of the questions that the interviewers asked (i.e. the information that they appear to be looking for) and the answers that the interviewees give: whether and how far they answer the questions (i.e. to what degree they provide the information required / elicited) and how far they volunteer unelicited information, thus contributing actively, pro-actively even, to the interaction.

For our analysis, we look not specifically at *speaker* turns, but at what we will call *topic* turn (TT). As the name suggests, a topic turn is a distinct stretch of discourse (uninterrupted by any other similar stretch of discourse) produced by a single speaker and dedicated to a readily identifiable topic. For

instance, in Example 2 (slightly modified below as 4), above, we have two speaker turns, but four different TTs, which we number for convenience:

4)

1	Q: [1] Is this what happened to the Somalians who were in jail with you? [2] What happened to them afterwards?
2	A: [3] Some of them got lost and died, while the Nigerians who were with them walked a lot but finally they ended up in Tunisia again, and came across some Tunisian policemen. [4] As far as the Somalian people who were in the cell with me, they have been deported;

Topic turns 1 and 4 and 2 and 3 deal with the same topics but neither pair are considered to be part of the same TT, because in the first case, the different contributions are separated by two other TTs and are also uttered by different speakers. Topic Turns 2 and 3 are adjacent but are uttered by different speakers, so they constitute different turns.

In Table 1, we give a brief summary of each interview⁷ focusing on the number of TTs produced by interviewers and interviewees:

Interview	No. interviewer TT	No. interviewee TT	Ratio interviewer TT to interviewee TT (to 2 decimal places)	Average length in words of interviewee TT (to nearest whole number)
1	14	12	1.17	158
2	3	4	0.75	57
3	2	3	0.67	30
4	25	26	0.96	64
5	5	5	1	74
6	9	9	1	37
7	11	22	0.5	320
8	10	33	0.33	67
9	29	39	0.74	32
Correlation coefficient <i>r</i> ratio: interviewer TT to interviewee TT and average length of interviewee TT				-0.19

Table 1
Summary of interviews.

⁷ The interviews can be found online at the following addresses:
 Interview 1: www.storiemigranti.org/spip.php?article104;
 Interviews 2 and 3: www.storiemigranti.org/spip.php?rubrique128;
 Interviews 4, 5 and 6: www.storiemigranti.org/spip.php?article1080;
 Interview 7: www.storiemigranti.org/spip.php?article650;
 Interview 8: www.storiemigranti.org/spip.php?article1020;
 Interview 9: www.storiemigranti.org/spip.php?article62.

It can be seen from Table 1 that in six of the interviews there were fewer interviewer TTs than interviewee TTs. However, with an r value of only -0.19,⁸ there is no correlation⁹ between average length of interviewee TTs and the ratio of interviewer to interviewee TTs. In other words, the number of topics brought up by the interviewer does not affect the number of topics brought up by the interviewee, or vice versa.

Once the various TTs in the corpus had been identified, the next stage was to go through them all and label each individually. Labels were applied not only to the TTs themselves (e.g. “Comment on immediately previous topic”; “Returns to topic of previous unfulfilled reply”; “Initiates topic shift by eliciting story”) but also to elements within them (“Injects humour”; “Translanguaging”; “Mimesis”). As we explain in Sections 2 and 3, this involved the reading of the texts on the part of a human interpreter (the author). Then, following the principle of Occam’s razor, these different labels were grouped into as few general categories as possible. Below in Table 2, we list the 36 different categories of TTs and 14 diverse discourse features that, after much trial and error, we succeeded in identifying in this particular corpus. We do not of course claim that this list is exhaustive or necessarily directly applicable to other corpora. Our analysis, includes the category of “ambiguous”, which was allocated to the relatively few cases where we were unable to label or classify the TT in question either because it could be interpreted in different ways or because the utterance showed such divergence from standard norms that it was, for us at least, impossible to decode with a reasonable degree of certainty.

⁸ Calculating the correlation coefficient involves a complex set of calculations. It can be done automatically using a special tool in Microsoft Excel (which uses the classic Pearson formula).

⁹ The correlation coefficient r ratio is a value between -1 and +1 which shows how strongly two variables are related to each other. A score of ± 1 indicates a perfect correlation; above ± 0.70 , a strong correlation; above ± 0.50 a moderate correlation; and above ± 0.30 a weak correlation. Any figure below ± 0.30 , as is the r value that we calculated, indicates no correlation at all.

Topic Turns	
1. Acknowledgement of indirect request	19. Initiates topic shift by volunteering unelicited information
2. Closer	20. Justification for comment
3. Comment on new topic	21. Justification for question
4. Comment on immediately previous topic	22. Partially fulfilled reply
5. Comment on non-immediately previous topic	23. Rephrases question
6. Delayed indirect reply	24. Request clarification related to immediately previous topic
7. Delayed reply	25. Request confirmation
8. Fulfilled reply	26. Request confirmation related to immediately previous topic
9. Indirect open question framed as request specific information related to immediately previous topic	27. Request confirmation related to non-immediately previous topic
10. Indirect reply	28. Request for opinion
11. Initiates new topic by means of indirect open question framed as request specific information	29. Request specific information related to immediately previous topic
12. Initiates new topic by means of open question	30. Request specific information related to non-immediately previous topic
13. Initiates new topic by requesting specific information	31. Returns to topic of previous unfulfilled reply
14. Initiates topic shift by eliciting story	32. Scene setting
15. Initiates topic shift by means of indirect open question framed as Request specific information	33. States opinion
16. Initiates topic shift by means of open question	34. Unfulfilled reply
17. Initiates topic shift by requesting confirmation	35. Volunteers unelicited information
18. Initiates topic shift by requesting specific information	36. Volunteers unelicited information related to previous topic

Discourse Features

1. Ambiguous
2. Expresses fear
3. Expresses frustration
4. Expresses personal ethos
5. Expression of difficulty expressing themselves
6. Injects humour
7. Injects pathos
8. Interrupted
9. Lengthy elaboration
10. Makes accusation
11. Makes complaint
12. Mimesis
13. Rhetorical question
14. Translanguaging

Table 2
Different TT types and Discourse Features as identified by an interpretative analysis of corpus.

In the next two sections, we will compare the frequency of these two different sets of categories in the contributions of interviewers and interviewees with a view to identifying any correlations between the occurrences of any pair of features in the same way that we did in Table 1.

4.1. Analysis of topic turns

In Table 3, we contrast the frequency of the different types of Topic Turns for both interviewers (IR) and interviewees (IE). The figures given are weighted according to the size of the interview in question (measured in words).¹⁰ The weighted values for each interview were added up so that we could compare frequencies across the whole corpus.

▼ Topic Turn type ▼	IR	IE
Acknowledgement of indirect request	0.00	23.47
Closer	0.00	10.44
Comment	2.76	51.34
Comment on immediately previous topic	22.53	121.49
Comment on non-immediately previous topic	0.00	4.36
Delayed indirect reply	0.00	3.78
Delayed reply	0.00	13.14
Fulfilled reply	0.00	983.60
Indirect open question framed as Request specific Info related to immediately previous topic	3.78	3.78
Indirect reply	0.00	80.61
Initiates new topic by means of indirect open question framed as request specific information	31.10	0.00
Initiates new topic by means of open question	5.52	0.00
Initiates new topic by requesting specific information	38.26	0.00
Initiates topic shift by eliciting story	3.78	0.00
Initiates topic shift by means of indirect open question framed as Request specific information	49.71	0.00
Initiates topic shift by means of open question	28.43	309.28
Initiates topic shift by requesting confirmation	10.37	0.00
Initiates topic shift by requesting specific information	428.99	0.00
Initiates topic shift by volunteering unelicited information	0.00	832.35
Justification for comment	0.00	4.36
Justification for question	8.20	0.00

¹⁰We did this by applying the equation of $(X / Y) \times 10,000$, where X is the number of times a given item occurs, Y the number of words in that specific interview. The 10,000 is an arbitrary number adopted purely to avoid figures so low that they contain too many zeros after the decimal place. For example, the “Closer” topic turn occurs once in Interview 4. The latter consists of 2601 words so that one occurrence is weighted as $(1/2601) \times 10,000$, which equals 3.84 (given to two decimal places).

Partially fulfilled reply	0.00	12.95
Rephrases question	17.31	0.00
Request clarification related to immediately previous topic	10.14	14.18
Request confirmation	0.00	14.08
Request confirmation related to immediately previous topic	192.46	3.76
Request confirmation related to non-immediately previous topic	7.59	0.00
Request for opinion	8.60	0.00
Request specific Info related to immediately previous topic	173.02	0.00
Request specific information related to non-immediately previous topic	163.71	0.00
Returns to topic of previous Unfulfilled reply	0.00	4.84
Scene setting	0.00	157.69
States opinion	0.00	14.08
Unfulfilled reply	0.00	28.85
Volunteers unelicited information	0.00	145.60
Volunteers unelicited information related to immediately previous topic	0.00	9.28
▲ Topic Turn type ▲	IR	IE

Table 3
Frequency of different TT types as produced by interviewers and interviewees.

It is immediately obvious that interviewers and interviewees produce quite different TT types. This can be seen quite clearly looking at the two graphs below (Figures 1 and 2) showing the ten most frequent types of Topic Turns for both interviewers (Figure 1) and interviewees (Figure 2):

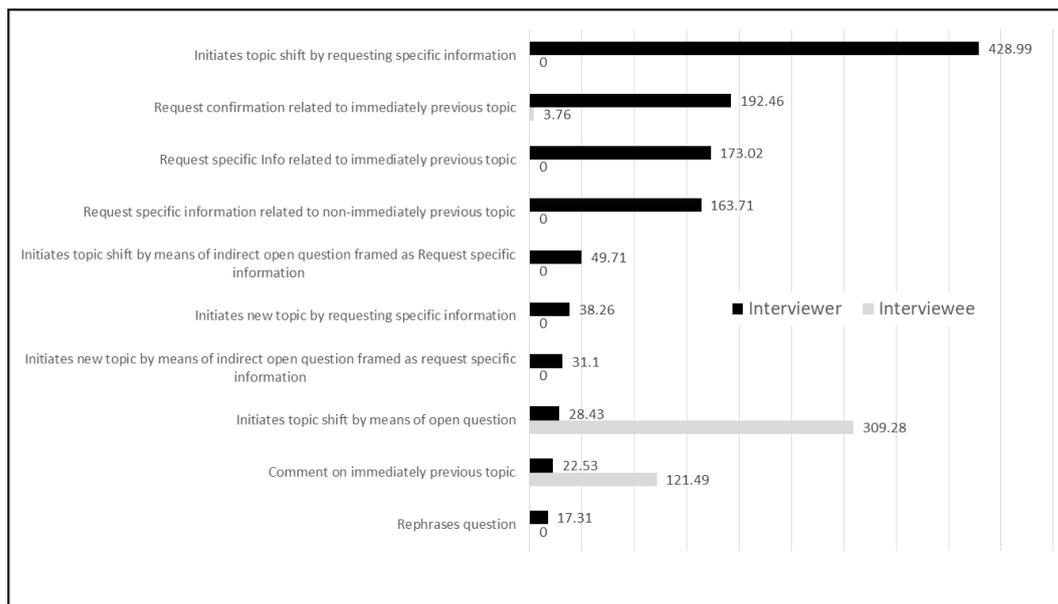


Figure 1
Ten most frequent TT types for interviewers compared with frequencies of same TT types for interviewees.

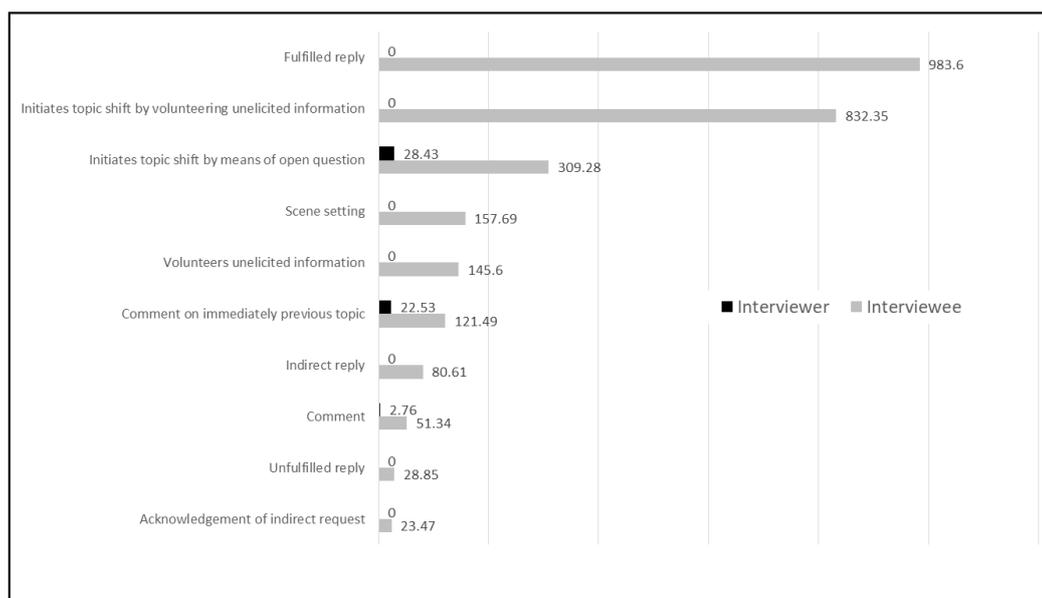


Figure 2

Ten most frequent TT types for interviewees compared with frequencies of same TT types for interviewers.

It can be seen that for almost every TT type, the list of the most frequent for interviewers and interviewees is completely different. The only two items which occur on both lists are “initiates topic shift by means of open question” and “comment on immediately previous topic.” It is also worthy of note that the figures for interviewees are much higher than those for interviewers – for example the top item for the latter is 428.99 (Figure 1) while for the former, it is more than double, 983.6 (Figure 2). This is indicative of the fact that, in the interviews analysed, the interviewees contributed much more of the discourse than the interviewers did.

Also evident on Figure 3, is the fact that the interviewees are not only cooperative – the highest category is fulfilled reply (i.e. providing the information required)¹¹ – but also play an active role in the discourse, the next two most frequent categories both involving their taking the initiative (i.e. “initiates topic shift by volunteering unelicited information”; “initiates topic shift by means of open question.”). In fifth position, there is also “Volunteers unelicited information”, where the interviewee adds something to the discourse that has not been requested by the interviewer, thereby taking

¹¹ It would of course be naive to assume that all such information freely given is in fact truthful and not intended to deceive (see following footnote about DOD). However, we do not have the tools here to ascertain objectively whether interviewees are in fact telling the truth or not. Nonetheless, in general, it can be said that an openness to answer questions and to volunteer information is usually taken as a sign of sincerity and a willingness to cooperate, which is of course, paradoxically, precisely why a proficient liar will probably try to pretend to adopt this behaviour.

an active, even leading, role in plotting the course of the discourse, so to speak.

The fact that “unfulfilled reply” also occurs in the ten most frequent types of interviewee TT type may not so much be a sign of a lack of cooperation on the part of the interviewee, as a sign that often they will use interviewer’s questions not as *instructions* on what their contributions should contain but more as *indications* as to the general topics they may take up next: that is if a given question raises another related issue that the interviewee views at that point as more relevant, then they may ignore the specific question and pursue that topic instead.

It is this phenomenon that we see clearly in Examples 1-3 above, where we show that the classic model of adjacent pair does not really hold in this corpus, and especially in Example 3, where there is a clear case of an unfilled reply. It is notable that at no point in the corpus does the interaction break down because of this apparent non-compliance on the part of interviewees. The interviewers never interrupt interviewees demanding a precise answer, as an official in a hearing may do to an applicant, but let the interviewee finish. Often, the interviewee does return to answer the question originally asked by the interviewer of their own accord (Example 2). Alternatively, if the interviewer does feel the need to repeat the question (Example 1), the interviewee does not diverge from a fulfilled reply a second time. This shows that if the interviewees are given some freedom to manage their part of the interaction, they are also perfectly able to select and furnish much relevant information of interest to the interviewer without the need for the strict specific question / specific answer format that an official might be more used to.¹²

4.2. Analysis of discourse features

In Table 4, similarly to Table 3, we contrast the frequency (which has been weighted in the same way) of the different types of discourse features for

¹²Some interrogation techniques used by Police Forces and other interrogators are based on the traditional, and rather crude, procedure of posing of specific questions, repeated until they are answered, and then repeated again and again at various intervals to see whether the interviewee’s replies change. Other more recent methods are more sophisticated (but not always more effective). For example, there is the three-stage, nine-stepped *Reid technique* (which permits such strategies as deceiving and cajoling suspects into confessing on the premise that an innocent person would never under any circumstances do so, and has been blamed for some documented false confessions). Still others, employed within the broad scope of the new field of Detection of Deception (DOD), allow interviewees more freedom to put their side of the story in their own way, but with the object of analysing closely what they actually say (or do not say as the case may be). The investigators here closely analyse the actual expressions and structures that they use for signs of inconsistency within the narrative that they construct (Vrij 2008).

both interviewers (IR) and interviewees (IE). Again, the weighted values for each interview have been added up:

▼ Discourse Feature ▼	IR	IE
Ambiguous	46.06	154.36
Expresses fear	0.00	3.84
Expresses frustration	0.00	114.09
Expresses personal ethos	0.00	14.15
Expression of difficulty expressing themselves	0.00	6.59
Injects humour	0.00	16.96
Injects pathos	0.00	11.92
Interrupted	0.00	19.78
Lengthy elaboration	0.00	446.69
Makes accusation	0.00	27.43
Makes complaint	0.00	21.80
Mimesis	0.00	57.16
Rhetorical question	0.00	18.44
Translanguaging	116.47	347.49
▲ Discourse Feature ▲	IR	IE

Table 4

Frequency of different Discourse Features as produced by interviewers and interviewees.

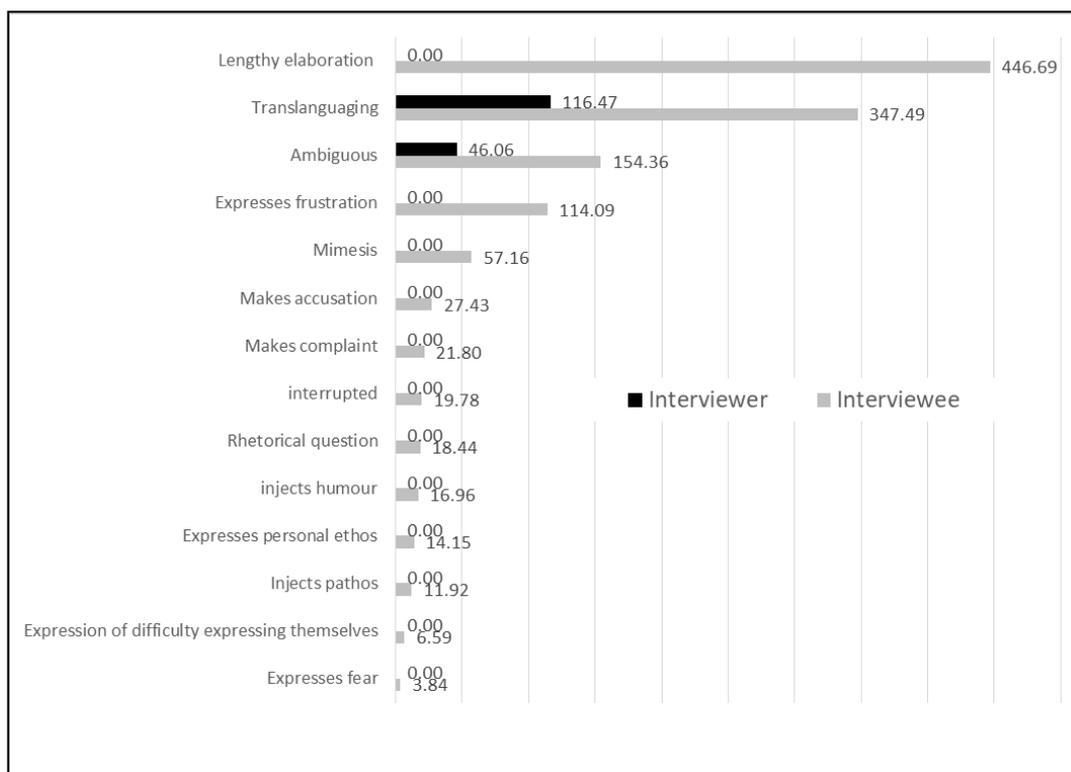


Figure 3

Discourse Features for interviewees compared with frequencies of same Discourse Features for interviewers.

Figure 3 shows that most of the discourse features found in the corpus relate to what the interviewee says, not the interviewer. This is not too surprising seeing that, in the classic interview scenario, the interviewer tends to restrict themselves to asking questions (*initiation* in the terms of Sinclair and Coulthard 1975 – see 3) and maybe adding feedback to the interviewees' responses. The interviewees do also contribute much more to the discourse than the interviewers: by our calculation over thirteen times more.¹³ It is interesting how the two discourse features that both interviewers and interviewees use are “translanguaging”¹⁴ and of the production of utterances deemed “ambiguous” (i.e. impossible to interpret with enough certainty to classify). If one takes into account the fact that interviewers only produce about one-thirteenth of the discourse that the interviewees do, then it transpires that, proportionately, the interviewers use translanguaging more than interviewees and produce utterances that are ambiguous more frequently than them too.

This fact is also echoed in the comment in the extract about commission hearings to decide asylum seekers' and migrants' applications for visas in Italy, quoted in Section 1, namely that “they [the commissioners] don't talk good English.” In the context of an interview with a journalist, such a phenomenon is not so serious, as the interviewee can either ask for clarification or answer in whichever way they like in the expectation that if the interviewer is not satisfied then they will ask again, perhaps rephrasing or clarifying. However, during an official hearing, where the applicant is expected to provide clear, precise, and, not least, prompt answers (at the risk otherwise of appearing uncooperative or untruthful), not being completely sure of what one is being asked is obviously a problem of a much greater magnitude.

The most common discourse feature found in this corpus is “lengthy elaboration”: TTs that were over 50 words in length. In fact, the longest such contribution amounted to 1,422 words and the average length of the contributions categorised as “lengthy” was 143.47 (two decimal places).¹⁵ The fact that this is the most common discourse feature that one can attribute to the interviewees' contributions is of course indicative of the fact that they

¹³In the corpus, the interviewers produce approximately 921 words, the interviewees 12,325. Dividing the latter by the former gives a result of 13.38.

¹⁴A strategy often used by plurilingual users who may, sometimes use whatever linguistic resources that they have at their disposal (be these L1, English, or some other language) – see Garcia and Li Wei (2014).

¹⁵It should be noted that there was a relatively large amount of variation between the number of words in these “lengthy contributions”, the standard deviation (the average difference between the figures for the individual lengths and the figure – 143.47 – calculated as the average of the whole selection) being 181.28.

prove to be open and cooperative in the answers that they provide. That said, we have to remember that, as these interviews were published, they must constitute, as we say in Section 2, successful speech events. What the interviews which never made it to publication (where perhaps interviewees were less forthcoming) were like or how many of them there were, we have no way of knowing.

Among the discourse features related to personal psychological discomfort that are common in the contribution of interviewees are frustration, the making of accusations and complaints, the injection of pathos, and the expression of fear: all understandable given the extra-linguistic context in which the discourse occurs. Related to these, perhaps, is also the expression of difficulty in expressing oneself, which may be associated merely with a lack of sufficient linguistic competence to speak about certain things but may also be associated with stress (if not, in extreme cases, with such specific conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder: PTSD).¹⁶ Studies into trauma discourse (Sarkar 2009) have shown that it is often difficult for subjects to conceptualize and make sense of traumatic experiences. Indeed, one very common psychological effect is that the subject subconsciously disassociates themselves from the events in question. This means that sufferers do not process such memories in the same way that they do other less traumatic memories. Such stress makes it very hard to memorize traumatic events clearly (especially the chronology of what happened), and indeed false memories may even be created. Such confusion at a cognitive-psychological level will naturally make it very difficult to communicate such events to others, especially in periods shortly after they have occurred. Unfortunately, taking their lead from criminal investigations, consistency over details and about the times and orders of different events, is conventionally what immigration officials are trained to look for when assessing so-called claimant credibility (another point which is highlighted in the extract quoted in Section 1).¹⁷ Because of this, sufferers of various kinds of trauma may come across as unreliable or even as mendacious, precisely because of their inability to, as the expression goes, “keep their story straight.”

¹⁶ Many researchers have argued that such psychiatric categories as PTSD based on the Western experience and its sociocultural norms (often, as in the case of PTSD, those of the US military) are inadequate in describing refugees’ and migrants’ mental states – see Guido 2008, Gojer and Ellis 2014 – and may actually hinder rather than assist the applications of asylum seekers and migrants who genuinely have suffered or witnessed events that have left them traumatised or psychologically dysfunctional in some way.

¹⁷ Sarkar (2009, p. 9): “Someone who has not experienced such trauma may not understand the trauma experienced by the survivor. Accounts then can easily be discarded as false. In the United Kingdom, official immigration guidelines state that ‘discrepancies, exaggerated accounts, and the addition of new claims of mistreatment may affect credibility’ of survivors.”

It is interesting also to see the use of mimesis (the use of direct speech to re-enact speech events), humour and the expression of personal ethos. These latter two may be seen as indicators of a more positive mind-set: on the one hand, the desire to make light of things, to step back and find some relief in looking at the funny side of something; on the other, the sense of self-esteem that leads one to want to set out one's own value system even at the risk of the disapproval, or even the ridicule, of others. It is also interesting (and a relief) to see that the most negative of emotions, fear, comes last on the list of discourse features in these interviews.

5. Conclusion

In this brief explorative study, we have shown how it is possible to analyse and categorise various features of spoken discourse in cross-cultural migration domains in a manner that avoids using models of analysis based purely on contexts that are quite different to those where ELF variations of the kind found in this corpus would be used, namely norm-oriented native speaker varieties of English. Our approach – which is based on description and avoids assumption based on preconceived ideas of how a “typical” participant may behave in such a speech event – has been aimed primarily at the collection of objective data which may be used, eventually, for comparison with other objective data collected in other more or less similar or comparable studies. It is hoped that such future work will allow practitioners of all kinds working in cross-cultural migration domains to be able to participate more effectively in interaction with migrants and asylum seekers using ELF variations in the interest of all concerned.

In particular, as we have outlined in our analysis of moves (Section 4), it requires a flexible and multi-model approach taking into account the different goals that the participants have and the ways that they hope to achieve these: i.e. the “games” that we spoke about in Section 3. It is our belief that no single analysis, which can be consistently applied to different discourse events, will ever be comprehensive to give the whole picture. It is therefore important for researchers to be open-minded and to recognise that other interpretations and alternative analytical frameworks may also exist.

For the time being, it should be a priority for researchers to work on ways to obtain objective (i.e. observable and measurable) data with a view to eventually being able to compare results and see which specific techniques and conceptual tools provide the most relevant and interesting answers in the widest varieties of contexts in which the same may prove useful.

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“DO YOU UNDERSTAND?” INTERACTIONAL STRATEGIES IN ELF NARRATIVES OF MIGRATION

A case study

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Abstract – This article investigates the use of interpersonal discourse markers and comprehension checkers in elicited migrant narratives in English and Italian Lingua Franca with a view to identifying and describing their pragmatic function in the situated exchanges in which they occur. The study was conducted on a small corpus of interviews to asylum seekers living in Southern Italy. The interviews were clearly framed (and fully understood by the participants) as non-institutional encounters (Sarangi, Roberts 2008) and, as such, not subject to the constraints normally applicable to migration narratives produced within the framework of asylum seeking procedures. This resulted in a reduction in the goal-orientedness of the narrative, with a parallel increase, in some cases at least, in interpersonal focus. The analysis of the linguistic resources deployed by the interviewees indicates that they are fully cognizant of the expressive potential of interpersonal discourse markers, which they use to establish rapport with their interlocutor and to create a shared common ground where both parties are construed as being on an equal footing with respect to linguistic, discursive and relational resources.

Keywords: English as a Lingua Franca; discourse markers in ELF; interpersonal metadiscourse; migrant narratives; identity negotiation.

1. Asylum seekers' narratives in scholarly research

Narratives have long been recognised as an important aspect of asylum seeker and refugee experiences, not least because it is through them that asylum claims can be established (see Blommaert 2001; Maryns, Blommaert 2001; Shumam, Bohmer 2004 for early research into discursive aspects of asylum procedures; for more recent studies see Dhoest 2019; Lehner 2018; Puumala *et al.* 2018; Sorgoni 2019; Zambelli 2017). They have also been shown to be crucial to fostering an understanding of refugee experiences (Appadurai 2019; Sabaté i Dalmau 2018; Sell 2017; Shahar, Lavie-Ajayi 2018; Woolley 2014), including those aspects of such experiences which are difficult or impossible to put into words (Gorashi 2007), and of the trauma they involve (see Guido 2018 for an in-depth analysis). Storytelling has also been extensively used in refugee mental health assessment and treatment (despite some ethical misgivings; De Haene *et al.* 2010), and has been shown

to offer insights into sensemaking practices of displacement experiences (Baynham, De Fina 2005; see Catedral 2018; Slootjes *et al.* 2018 for recent investigations), as well as into migrants' strategies of identity construction (De Fina 2003; see Catedral 2018 for more recent insights; cf. Macías, de la Mata 2013; Macías-Gómez-Estern 2015 for studies combining analyses of identity construction and sensemaking). More recently, the literary value of migrant narratives has also started to be recognised, giving rise to a small but steadily growing body of literature (Guido *et al.* 2017; Mathers 2020; Ni Loingsigh 2020; Palladino, Woolley 2018).

As this (by no means exhaustive) overview suggests, the investigation of migrant narratives has focused on a plethora of aspects, some of which falling *strictu sensu* within the purview of linguistic analysis, but often having further goals. In many cases research has targeted practices and assumptions typically deployed in institutional interpretations of migrant narratives, pointing out their inadequacy and unfairness. For instance, in asylum proceedings it is common practice to use linguistic analysis to ascertain country or region of origin – a practice which does not always take into consideration all the sociolinguistic variables of language use; and asylum seekers' narratives are checked for internal cohesion not only to ascertain the groundedness of the claim, but also to identify inconsistencies which might point to fabrication. A considerable body of research, starting with Blommaert's (2001) seminal study, has denounced the shortcomings of many of these practices, exposing the ideologies of power underlying them, and seeking to redress the balance, an aim pursued, amongst others, by Guido (2004, 2005). An interesting aspect of this strand of research is that alongside studies highlighting the asylum seekers' inability to meet institutional conventions and immigration officers' cultural expectations (a persistent problem; Sorgoni 2019), there are investigations that reverse the perspective, with findings suggesting that asylum seekers have become culturally and institutionally savvy, and capable of engaging in cultural adaptation practices designed to meet institutional demands. As Barsky (2000) has shown, if non-canonical stories risk being dismissed as inconsistent or unconvincing, stories that are too canonical may also be looked at with suspicion because they are "too good to be true".

A common denominator of these studies is the nature of the exchanges examined, which is characterised by a high level of communicative complexity. The factors which contribute to this complexity are many, and include linguistic, cultural and experiential gaps which make it difficult for interactants to find a shared common ground. In the analyses of these exchanges, the focus is typically on the logical-experiential (ideational; Halliday 1994, p. 106) organization of the asylum seeker's original narrative and on the recipient's understanding of it. In this respect, it is often pointed

out that asylum applicants and immigration officers pursue diverging aims; because of this, the cooperative principle can be somewhat impaired on the part of immigration officers; moreover, the gatekeeping role they play places them in a firm position of power, which extends to their ability to impose their own interpretive authority (Briggs 1996). In these interactions, the socio-pragmatic competence of interactants – and in particular the migrants’ ability to use the linguistic and discursive resources available to them to successfully convey their intended meaning to an audience with whom they have limited common ground – is also called into play. This is especially important in the case of lingua franca conversations, where no professional cultural mediation is available. As Guido (2018, Chapter 9) has shown, socio-pragmatic competence plays a crucial role in such conversations, in which the use of an apparently “neutral” code may in fact obfuscate the extent of the gaps (cultural, experiential and expressive) between the participants in the interaction. In fact, in many migrants’ narratives conducted in English Lingua Franca (Catenaccio 2015) it is possible to detect an awareness of the cultural distance and of the ensuing mediation needs of the audience (real or imagined), as well as clear efforts to bridge it.

Migrants’ narratives offer therefore ample scope for linguistic analysis from a variety of methodological perspectives. This article aims to contribute to this already substantial body of literature by focusing on an aspect that has so far received only limited attention, i.e. explicit strategies of interpersonal engagement in asylum seekers’ narratives indexically signalled by means of verbs of cognition, more specifically *know* and *understand*.

2. Exploring metatalk in migrants’ narratives: Dataset, aim, and methodological approach

2.1. Interpersonal engagement in migrants’ lingua franca narratives

In much research on migrants’ narratives, interpersonal meaning-making resources have been investigated in terms of their effectiveness in conveying the intended message and as indexical signs of socio-cultural awareness. By contrast, the rapport building function of interpersonal resources has rarely been investigated in its own right. This may be due to different reasons. In many cases, conveying ideational meaning (i.e. reconstructing facts) in the most effective way is the main issue at stake: in asylum seeking interviews, for instance, the point is to get over to the interlocutor the events which led to the decision of leaving one’s country, hoping that they are understood as a good enough reason for being granted refugee status. In this kind of interactions, the power imbalance, and the transactional nature of the

conversation, reduce the scope for the deployment of rapport-building interactional resources, especially on the part of the asylum applicants. In so far as asylum hearings are aimed at ascertaining facts which may or may not meet the conditions for granting asylum, the deployment of interactional resources directed at establishing rapport is not envisaged; in fact, it may be felt to be counterproductive in a situation which is typically perceived – given the current political climate – as at least potentially hostile.

Narratives elicited in other, less hostile contexts are presumably not subject to the same type of both institutional and self-imposed constraints, or at least not to the same extent; in theory, they may be expected to allow for a more marked interpersonal component. It is indeed somewhat surprising that interpersonal metadiscourse geared towards rapport building has not been studied more extensively. This may be due to the fact that research conducted on narrative data often rests on an implicit assumption of “spontaneous” monologue, or at least of non-interactive, monologising discursive production, even when the data are obtained by means of interviews. This is, however, a fallacious assumption: migrants’ storytelling is bound to be affected both by the perceived aim of the event (even when the purpose is to “give voice” to the asylum seeker or migrant on her/his terms), as well as by the presence of the interviewer, whose role may be more or less prominent, but never neutral, as much as interviewers may aim at invisibility (Slembrouck 2015).

This article seeks to fill a gap in the existing scholarship by investigating selected aspects of interpersonal metatalk in a small corpus of migrant narratives elicited from a group of asylum seekers living in a refugee housing structure in a village in the vicinity of Lecce, a city in the southern Italian region of Apulia. The contextual coordinates of the interviews created the conditions for partly neutralizing the power imbalance which typically affects institutional encounters. Within this context, the interactionally produced narratives of the asylum seekers interviewed offered an unprecedented opportunity to gain insights into rapport building strategies under conditions of reduced power imbalance.

2.2. Aim and rationale

The rationale for the study rests on the acknowledgment – long recognised in constructivist approaches to linguistic investigation, and in particular in conversation analysis – that meaning is essentially an effect of negotiation, which relies on principles of cooperation. This is especially evident in dialogue, where constant adjustments of meaning and perspectives occur, and where meaning is co-constructed by the participants in the communicative event both in relation to the situation itself, and with respect to the

participants’ ability (and willingness) to communicate. This general feature of communication has been extensively studied with reference to institutional encounters involving migrants (De Fina 2003, p. 7), where accommodation has been shown to be especially important for successful communication (Guido 2012). More generally, strategies of meaning co-construction and negotiation appear to be particularly prominent in communicative situations where, due to gaps in common ground or unequal access to expressive resources, mutual understanding may be at risk. Lingua franca encounters are a prime example of such communicative situations (Cogo 2009; Firth 1996, 2009; Gallois *et al.* 2005; Howard *et al.* 1991).

This study takes its move from these considerations, and investigates migrant narratives in an interactional perspective with a view to identifying the linguistic strategies whereby interlocutor alignment is explicitly sought, and the relational meanings embedded in and pragmatically conveyed through selected interactional metatalk. While building on well-known principles extensively studied in ELF literature on migration discourse, it aims to add a new dimension to it by highlighting the rapport building function of metadiscursive signalling and the multiple functions it can have in conversation. In particular, the research aims to assess the metapragmatic competence displayed by asylum seekers in relation to the situational coordinates of the communicative event, arguing that conversations occurring under conditions of reduced power asymmetry can offer an opportunity for exploring hitherto little investigated aspects of migrant discourse.

2.3. Materials and method

The study relies on fieldwork carried out in 2018 by a student enrolled in the MA Languages and Cultures for International Communication and Cooperation offered by the University of Milan, Eleonora Malatesta. In April 2018, Eleonora was granted access to an institution located in the Southern Italian area of Salento (near the city of Lecce, in Apulia) which hosts asylum seekers either waiting for their cases to be heard, or awaiting appeal. The facility is run by a charity (not by the government) which provides a friendly environment for the guests and helps them with the asylum application process. Eleonora was able to interview eleven guests and transcribe their interviews, nine of which were in English, with the two remaining ones in Italian. In all cases, the code used qualified as a lingua franca, as the interactions involved either two non-native speakers of the language used (when this was English), or a non-native and a native speaker (in the case of Italian). The interviews were carried out on the premises of the charity. The event took therefore place in an institutional environment (a fact that was underlined by a series of permissions that had to be obtained from the charity before interviews could go ahead), but it was made clear from the beginning

that its purpose was purely academic. Eleonora introduced herself to the interviewees as a young researcher interested in understanding the experiences of asylum seekers and in how they saw themselves and their current position in Italy.

The narratives were elicited by means of semi-structured interviews conducted at specifically appointed times. This meant that during data collection the asylum seekers were aware that they were producing a discursive performance which would be recorded and later studied; they knew the researcher's goals, and – all of them having lived in Italy for some time – were familiar with the cultural and experiential distance between them and their interviewer. They were also aware that the interview was unrelated to their asylum application. However, all of them had been engaged in application-oriented narratives before. Indeed, they might even have been briefed (when preparing for asylum interviews with the relevant authorities) about what to say and how to say it. It is obviously impossible to know their orientation in the interview. It is clear from the transcripts, however, that some of the interviewees were very experienced storytellers, in some cases with an obvious flair for telling an engaging story, while others appear to have been more naïve in their approach.

The dataset comprises eleven short interviews of various length, ranging from 700 to 4,000 words each, for a total of about 22,000 words. Nine of the interviews were in lingua franca English (approximately 14,000 words) and two in lingua franca Italian (8,000 words).

The participants were 11 migrants, all of them males, with variable times of permanence in Italy. None of them were recent arrivals; as mentioned above, they were all guests of a charity which provides support (including legal aid) for asylum seekers. Table 1 below provides an overview of the interviewees' age and country of origin, as well as of the language of the interview and the total number of words recorded.

Name	Age	Country	Language of interview	Number of words
Al.	32	Ghana	English	1,465
As.	26	Nigeria	English	2,189
D.	28	Nigeria	English	3,018
G.	21	Nigeria	English	838
J.	20	Nigeria	Italian	3,165
K.	24	Nigeria	English	650
Mo.	32	Senegal	Italian	4,834
Mu.	27	Gambia	English	870
P.	23	Nigeria	English	1,725
S.	26	Nigeria	English	2,737
W.	25	Nigeria	English	707

Table 1
Dataset details.

The interviewer was a female student (24 years of age); she was not involved in any way with the charity, nor had she had any contacts with the asylum seekers prior to the interviews.

The methodological approach adopted for the analysis is mainly qualitative but relies on corpus linguistics (using WordSmith Tools; Scott 2016) for the identification of recurrent lexical and phraseological units flagging overt strategies of interpersonal engagement. Following Cogo and House (2018), metadiscursive features are interpreted as indexical signs pointing to sites of engagement where co-construction of meaning may be at issue for linguistic, cultural or experiential reasons. The contention here is that besides offering insights into the way in which difficulties can be overcome on the ideational plane, the analysis of metatalk can also shed light on the speakers’ positioning in respect of the nature of the difficulty identified, and on their awareness of the reasons why such difficulty may have arisen. The focus of the study is therefore on the conversational dynamics of situated meaning making, which are explored in their multiple facets by means of qualitative analysis carried out at the interface of conversation analysis and discourse analysis (Wooffit 2005).

Before moving on to the analysis, it is important to point out some limitations of the corpus, which will be further discussed in the conclusions. The first one concerns corpus size. Because the corpus is very small, one has to be wary of drawing generalising conclusions: this is not a corpus driven study, and corpus linguistics methods are used in the service of qualitative analysis. The second has to do with corpus composition. Interviews vary greatly in length, which heightens the risk of having a skewed dataset reflecting individual idiosyncrasies. This was indeed the case, with one particularly discourse marker rich interview providing most of the examples of usage. However, the lemma identified as significant did appear in all

interviews, though not with the same frequency. Despite these limitations, the uses of metatalk identified in the analysis suggest that the analysis of aspects of interpersonal engagement hitherto left in background is worth pursuing and may yield unexpected results. Because of the characteristics of the corpus, however, caution must be used when interpreting results, and this should be considered as a pilot study preliminary to more extensive investigation.

3. Sites of interpersonal engagement in migrants' narratives: The role(s) of metatalk

As highlighted in the previous sections, studies of migrants' narratives have shown that interpersonal, socio-pragmatic competences play a role whenever communication failures occur or are perceived to be likely to occur. In many cases, strategies of meaning negotiation and discursive accommodation take place without the speakers' perceived misalignment being explicitly signaled through metadiscourse: a speaker may decide to reword a concept, or to provide additional background information, even without the interlocutor verbally manifesting a lack of understanding. By the same token, there is no need for speakers to openly inquire about their interlocutor's comprehension for them to decide that a supplement of information is required. Adjustments and negotiations are the bread-and-butter of communication, and do not necessarily require signaling. When signaling does occur, however, the possible misalignment (which can be of various origins and nature) is foregrounded, as is the interlocutors' intention to overcome it. Linguistically flagging the cognitive acts of understanding can therefore indexically signal potential loci of engagement in which interpersonal resources are deployed in ways that openly invoke cooperation. This study takes its moves from this hypothesis: do migrants' narratives explicitly refer to mutual (lack of) understanding, or to (lack of) shared common knowledge in an interpersonally oriented way? If so, how salient are these references? And what role do they play in the complex negotiations taking place in lingua franca interactions in migration contexts?

As a starting point for the exploration of this topic, wordlists were extracted for the two subcorpora (in English and Italian as lingua franca respectively) and checked for occurrences of verbs of understanding and cognition. This preliminary exploration indicated that the lemma *understand* was indeed featured with remarkable frequency in the ELF subcorpus, ranking 37th in the wordlist (the fourth lexical verb to appear) with a normalized frequency of 0.46 per hundred words. In the Italian subcorpus, the lemma *capito* ('understood') ranked 13th, with a normalized frequency of 1.29. The number of occurrences found for *capito* suggests an overuse likely

to be part of an individual speaker’s idiolect. This proved to be indeed the case; with reference to *understand*, on the other hand, its frequency was accompanied by an even more robust presence of *know* (rank 23, normalized frequency of 0.67 per hundred words, the first lexical verb in the wordlist), another potential candidate (and indeed a better one) for the investigation of references to shared background and meaning negotiation in the corpus. Both *understand* and *know* are verbs of cognition often used in discourse marker function for interpersonal engagement purposes. In particular, *know* has been studied extensively its multiple discourse marker functions, though most often in native speaker usage (Östman 1981; Schiffrin 1987). It is to be noted that these lemmas were not selected on the basis of their relative frequencies, but rather on the ground of their potential significance as indexical signs of sites of meaning negotiation; as a result, the analysis below makes little reliance on quantitative methods, focusing instead on qualitative aspects.

The figure below shows selected concordances of *understand* and *know* from the ELF corpus:

in desert from Nigeria to Niger. You in Nigeria, they two hundred euro. You and another one. Boko Haram, you I don’t know if you don’t know if you know Ghana, do you was belong to one of two societies, you five children, two boys three girls, you So my mother was a Catholic, you was:: wueden, wueden work do you that is why I decided to leave. You	know? know? know? know know understand? understand? understand? know understand?	There is a difference between And they would be due as Terrorism group called Ghana, do you know Ghana? Ghana? Mhm.. So when he get ((...)) they So he has only two boys. So my father was what is wueden work? So my mother was a
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Figure 1
 Selected concordances for *know* and *understand*.

As can be seen from this limited sample, both verbs are consistently used for interpersonal engagement. In all the examples but one, they occur in formulaic question forms (*you+verb+?*) directly addressing the interlocutor and aimed at what can be provisionally defined as comprehension checking or confirmation. In actual fact, *you know* is not always used in question form in the corpus, but this usage is common, reflecting what appears to be a widespread (and fairly predictable, in light of the findings of previous research on migrants’ narratives) pragmatic intent.

In the next sections, the discursive functions of English *you know[?]* and *you understand?* will be investigated with a view to identifying with greater precisions their situated meaning(s) in interaction; the analysis will then move on to the Italian expression *capito?* (‘understood’), whose role in

the migrants' narratives will be compared to that of the corresponding English expression *you understand?*.

3.1. Pragmatic functions of 'you know'

The expression '*you know*' is very frequent in English, where it functions as a poli-functional discourse marker. Early studies by Östman (1981) and Schiffrin (1987) investigated the pragmatics of *you know* in naturally occurring native speaker data, showing its multiple uses and meanings. Östman (1981, p. 5) refers to pragmatic devices such as *you know* as linguistic items that "'implicitly anchor' the utterance in which they function to the speaker's attitudes towards aspects of the ongoing interaction". Devices such as *you know* are linguistically overt, but pragmatically implicit. That is, while they convey the speaker's positioning in respect of the utterance (similarly to attitudinal adverbials), their meaning is not semantically inscribed, but rather contextually determined, and "they have to be interpreted as conveying the external-world speaker's attitudes" (Östman 1981, p. 6).

An interesting feature of *you know* is that it tends to occur in narrative parts of conversations in which the speaker "steps out of his propositional frame, and metacommunicates his attitude and feelings" (Östman 1981, p. 10). Östman identifies several functions carried out by *you know*, including attention-getting and pleading for cooperation. A further function identified by Schiffrin (1987, pp. 267-ff.) is that of marking transitions in information states which are relevant for participation framework. Moreover, *you know* has also been shown to be used as a rapport building strategy to switch from an attitude of Deference to one of Camaraderie along the politeness continuum (Östman 1981, p. 19).

Both Östman and Schiffrin insist on both the situatedness and social conventionality of the pragmatics of *you know*. Östman also points out that similar pragmatic devices occur in other (European) languages, where they appear to cover analogous functions, often relying on the same lexical resources (i.e., forms of the verb 'to know').

With reference to the present study (and to studies of lingua franca interactions in general), the complex nature of discourse markers such as *you know* may be expected to pose problems to non-native speakers. As we have seen, the use of these devices requires advanced socio-pragmatic competence, an ability to distinguish among (and use appropriately) their multiple functions, and an awareness of the language specificity of a specific device *vis-à-vis* similar expressions present in the speaker's native language whose features may be "carried over" into foreign language or lingua franca usage.

These intriguing aspects have not failed to be noticed by scholars of

ELF. Two studies (House 2009; Müller 2005) have specifically addressed the use of *you know* in ELF interactions. In her in-depth analysis, Müller (2005), who refers to the discourse marker *you know* as “one of the most versatile and notoriously difficult to describe” (Müller 2005, p. 147), distinguishes between discourse marker and non-discourse marker functions, stating that *you know* only functions as a discourse marker when it is syntactically optional (Müller 2005, p. 157). Müller’s account of *you know* identifies both textual and interpersonal usage. At the textual level, “it marks the speaker’s search for lexical expressions and/or the content of what s/he is going to say next” (Müller 2005, p. 188), or to suggest that “a word, phrase, or clause lacks exactness and thus is only an approximation to what the speaker had in mind” (Müller 2005, p. 188). The same function is also found to be salient by House (2009), whose data show that the expressions is mostly used to signal difficulty in finding “the right word” and to invoke collaboration. This leads House to conclude that, in her corpus at least, *you know* is eminently speaker oriented, and is used to create salient coherence relations and to help the speaker when s/he is having difficulties in planning the utterance. In addition, *you know* has been shown to be used to introduce explanations and, on occasion, quotations (Müller 2005).

As for interactional functions, *you know* is consistently used – in native as well as ELF interactions – to involve the hearer. Müller paraphrases the two most frequent interpersonal usages as “you can imagine the scene” and “you can see the implication” (Müller 2005, p. 189), adding that “it serves to express two types of appeal” – for understanding despite a deficit in the expression of meaning, and “to accept and acknowledge the speaker’s opinion” (Müller 2005, p. 189).

The studies of *you know* discussed above provide detailed accounts of the functions of the expression in all its forms, i.e. both when it is pronounced with a falling intonation (*you know...*) and with a rising one (*you know?*). The intonation is, of course, a cue to the pragmatic intention encoded. In the corpus analysed, as we shall see, the greatest majority of the occurrences displays a rising intonation, indicated in the transcription by a question mark. This suggests that the range of functions used by the asylum seekers is functionally limited to a reduced selection of pragmatic meanings.

3.2. Uses of ‘you know’ in the corpus

The occurrences of *you know* in the corpus under investigation suggest that the versatility of the expression is knowingly used by some of the speakers for both interactional and textual purposes. Consider, for instance, excerpt 1 below. One of the asylum seekers is telling the interviewer why he left Nigeria. He is describing the reasons why Nigeria “is not safe”, and to get his point across he mentions Boko Haram. The passage following the mention of

Boko Haram features several instances of the lemma *know*, used in both its discourse marker function and as a verb of cognition, with multiple pragmatic meanings being activated in the short space of a few seconds' talk.

Excerpt 1

281 D: I told my story
 282 and that, the place is hell, is hell.
 283 Even as I'm speaking to in:: eh::
 284 if you check news Nigeria it's not safe for now.
 285 NIGERIA IS NOT SAFE (.) FOR NOW.
 286 Sometimes because they, what to call (.) Boko Haram and another one.
 287 Boko Haram, **you know**?
 288 Terrorism group called (.)
 289 **you don't know** @@@
 290 you don't check news.
 291 That's what to call (..) terrorism group,
 292 **you know** that's Al Qaida,
 293 **you know** Al Qaida, as ISIS,
 294 that's Boko Haram
 295 E: Ah, ok

The first instance of *you know*, at line 287, is a comprehension checker/appeal to shared knowledge. The speaker appeals to the interlocutor to acknowledge her familiarity with the terrorist group. Common ground is both invoked and questioned: it conveys the idea that it is reasonable to expect that the interlocutor knows Boko Haram, but also – at the same time – a suspicion that this might not be the case. Something in the interlocutor's demeanor must have confirmed the speaker's suspicion, as he comments, “you don't know” (line 289). In this line, *know* is used in its core semantic meaning of verb of cognition, with the utterance conveying both a state of affairs (the interlocutor's ignorance) and the speaker's positioning towards it (“I suspected you might not know and my suspicion is confirmed”). The two occurrences of *you know* that follow have the function, respectively, to invoke – again – common ground (line 292), this time by making reference to something that the speaker is reasonably certain will be understood, and to introduce an explanation (line 293). The passage closes with the interviewer signaling that she understands.

In excerpt 2 below, interpersonal usages of *you know* combine with the use of another interactional discourse marker, *I mean*. *You know* and *I mean* share many similarities in uses and functions. In their discussion of both, Fox Tree and Schrock (2002, p. 727) state, following Jucker and Smith (1998) and Schiffrin (1987) respectively, that “*you know*'s basic meaning is “to invite addressee inferences”, and *I mean*'s “to forewarn upcoming adjustments”. Fox Tree and Schrock go on to argue that “*you know* encourages listeners to focus more on their own thoughts, and that *I mean*

encourages listeners to focus more on speakers’ thoughts” (2002, p. 744), often introducing explanations or elaborations of a previous statement or implicitly conveyed idea.

Excerpt 2

379 D: [Mh:: so that was why I have stopped,
 380 **I mean,**
 381 that has been so difficult for me in general,
 382 even I:: I tought when I arrived here
 383 I think it’s over,
 384 maybe the sufference it’s over,
 385 I came, **I mean,** get a good job, **you know,**
 386 start my life, maybe,
 387 probably:: establish myself here,
 388 but, five years now I’m still looking for documents
 389 and suffering,
 390 even there wasn’t tha::t crossing problems,
 391 they have document, **you know,**
 392 they check my record,
 393 I have no::
 394 I have no:: bad record (.) on me
 395 so:: it’s been tough
 396 I’m suffering a lot since I came here,
 397 yes, I have been suffering,
 398 especially (.) for this document issue, suffered a lot,
 399 those have been there will:: **you know,**
 400 looking to the matter
 401 and see how they can help me.

In this excerpt, the speaker repeatedly engages interpersonally with the interlocutor, shifting from initial reliance on *I mean*, which he uses to introduce his own thoughts (but with a hint that his thoughts, expectations and even reactions are somewhat “normal”), to *you know*, which invokes alignment and refers to shared common ground. Line 385 is especially significant in this respect: the speaker expected that arriving in Italy would put an end to his suffering, which he translates in the chance of beginning a new, stable life. This desire for stability is encoded in the expression “get a good job”, which is bracketed between the speaker-oriented discourse marker *I mean* and the interlocutor-oriented *you know*. The two discourse markers effectively construct a bridge between the speaker’s desires and objectives and the listener’s invoked acceptance of their legitimacy. Their joint deployment strengthens an idea of commonality of aspirations which goes beyond the difference in background and life experiences of interlocutors who might otherwise be worlds apart.

3.3. 'You understand?' and 'capito?'

Another verb of cognition which appeared with remarkable frequency in the ELF corpus is *understand*, matched by *capito* – the past participle form of the Italian verb *capire* (*to understand*), in the Italian subcorpus. In both subcorpora, the two expressions are clearly used as discourse markers.

Differently from *you know*, *you mean* and the like, *you understand?* does not seem to have received much attention in the literature on English discourse markers. This may be due to the fact that its metapragmatic meaning is closely linked to its core meaning, its function being basically that of carrying out a comprehension check (though with varying illocutionary force, depending on context of occurrence: think, for instance of the use of *[do] you understand?* in the context of a lesson or lecture, and of the same expression used by a mother when scolding a child: in the first case, the comprehension check requires a cognitive response; in the second, it demands formal assent and a perlocutionary uptake).

Italian *capito?*, by contrast, has attracted considerable attention in the literature on Italian discourse markers. *Capito?* belongs to an extremely productive category of deverbal discourse markers (Bazzanella 1990; Manili 1986, 1990). Like the English *you know* and *you mean*, *capito?* is polyfunctional, its pragmatic meaning depending on contextual factors. In fact, the functions of Italian *capito?* would seem to overlap, at least in part, with those of English *you know*. Indirect (and admittedly partial) confirmation of this can be found in a study of Spanish *¿me entiendes?* (which is formally and functionally close to Italian *capito?*), which is conventionally translated by the paper author with English *you know* (Chodorowska 1997, p. 356, note 1). The researcher does indicate that other translations are also possible, but her preferred choice suggests that the “politeness function” of *¿me entiendes?* (and, by implication, of Italian *capito?*) may be best conveyed, pragmatically speaking, by *you know*.

In the corpus under examination, *you understand?* is used in different contexts for different purposes. In excerpt 3 below, it works mainly as a comprehension (or rather confirmation) check and as an attention-getting device whereby the speaker monitors the interlocutor’s comprehension and engagement. In turn, the addressee shows her cooperation by providing frequent backchanneling, her phatic responses serving the purpose of displaying her involvement:

Excerpt 3

02 S: Yes, of course. Eh:: in the beginning (..) I:: work (.) in my country,

03 **you understand?**

04 My work “carrossiere”(..) painting ca[r,

05 E: [Ah (.) ok ok

- 06 S: you know?
 07 S: So there is my friend,
 08 we always wo:k together with my friend,
 09 so:: one day (.) his brother is staying i::n California, in America,
 10 that's my friend brother,
 11 he's staying in California, in America,
 12 so:: (.) the brother used to send moto from America (.) to Nigeri[a,
 13 E: [Mh::
 14 S: some accident moto,
 15 **you understand?**
 16 So I used to repair the (..) car,
 17 E: Ok, yeah.
 18 S: **You understand me?**
 19 E: Yes.
 20 S: So:: (.) later (..) the brother call him,
 21 that (.) the guy that we are working with ((...))
 22 say there is no problem,
 23 say there is a lot work in their side,
 24 say there is nobody can (.) do the work there,
 25 say maybe that they have interest to (..) work there,
 26 I say:
 27 << Yes, I'm interested>>,
 28 **you understand?**

In this part of the narrative, *you understand* is used to monitor understanding of the propositional meaning. As the story progresses, however, the speaker finds himself in the position of having to convey aspects of his experience which require that the interlocutor understand the underlying motives which made him accept the offer of a job:

Excerpt 4

- 29 S: So:: (.) later on (.) he asked me (.)
 30 which time did I would be free to come,
 31 I say:
 32 <<Which time do you want me to come?>>
 33 so:: just tell me
 34 said I need more money
 35 and I no have much money,
 36 **you understand?**
 37 My family (.) we do no have much money,
 38 **you understand?**
 39 Those through good to:: (.) make it,
 40 **you understand?**
 41 So later (.) he asked me (..)
 42 I needed money so that (..)
 43 so that maybe they used to for (.) transport,
 44 so there is no problem,

In this part of the narrative, the use of *you understand* does not trigger addressee backchanneling, but rather prompts further elaboration on the part of the narrator. This suggests that the speaker is aware that a supplement of information is likely to be required, *you understand?* functioning more as a plea for understanding of unspoken meanings than as a simple comprehension check.

Still different is the use of *you understand?* in excerpt 5. In this passage, the narrator is explaining the reasons why he decided to leave. The explanation is far from clear, and requires that the interlocutor have access to considerable knowledge of the socio-cultural reality of the speaker's country.

Excerpt 5

43 K: There's many work there,
 44 so just that (.) the:: the matter was having
 45 so my (.) parents, it was so very difficult to me.
 46 To stay (.)
 47 so I could no live like that,
 48 I will lose my life,
 49 that is why I decided to leave.
 50 **You understand?**
 51 So my mother was a Catholic, (.)
 52 **you understand?**
 53 so my father, just the he's not a christians,
 54 I don't even know how I will say it
 55 so he was belong to one of two societies,
 56 **you understand?**
 57 so when he get ((...)) they was trying to put me inside the:: (.) the society,
 58 I said: <<No>> ((...))
 59 because my father have a:: five childre,
 60 E: [Ah
 61 K: [five children, two boys three girls,
 62 **you understand?**
 63 So he has only two boys.
 64 so that what I don't even know ((...))
 65 ((...))
 66 still no (.) we just left (.) the:: place
 67 so that is just the thing that make me to came to Italy,

The occurrences of *you understand?* featured in the excerpt may at first sight appear to function as comprehension checks, and in part they do. However, they also serve other purposes of an interpersonal nature. The first instance of *you understand* (line 50), for instance, asks for confirmation not so much of the understanding of the propositional content conveyed, as of the underlying motives whereby the speaker feared for his life. In this, it is similar to the use found in excerpt 4. However, the speaker is not equally successful in providing further explanations. Despite attempting to elaborate on his

message, adding more details, he fails to successfully convey his intended meaning, the cultural and experiential gaps proving too large to be bridged. The speaker seems to be aware of this; in the following lines, he has recourse to *you understand?* three more times, each with increasing frustration at the difficulty of conveying the message. This frustration is voiced twice, at lines 54 (*I don't even know how I will say it*) and 64 (*so that what I don't even know*), which are examples of discourse reflexivity (Mauranen 2010) testifying to the speaker's awareness of the inadequacy of his linguistic and discursive resources. The addressee's only attempt at backchanneling occurs at a point (line 60) when the propositional meaning of the utterance (the number of brothers and sisters) is at stake, but her focus on this aspect seems to suggest that the more complex point implied escapes her, to the extent that the speaker concludes his turn by giving up trying to explain. After a pondering pause, he cuts his story short (line 66 and 67) saying that “*we just left (.) the:: place so that is just the thing that make me to come to Italy*”, where *just* (repeated twice within a short number of words) conveys a sense of inevitability which suggests that no further explanation is necessary, or indeed possible.

In the Italian subcorpus, attention monitoring and comprehension checking are entrusted to the discourse marker *capito?*, which works much in the same way as *you understand?* in excerpts 4 and 5 above. This can be seen in excerpt 6 below, where the speaker is telling how he travelled from his village to Tripoli, from where he would later sail to Italy. In the first part of the story, *capito?* is used primarily to monitor that the receiver is following the steps of the story:

- 332 M: eh:: noi abbiamo separati, **capito?**
We became separated, you understand?
- 333 Quando noi abbiamo separati
When we became separated
- 334 io ho fatto una settimana per (.) per (.)
I spent a week to
- 335 non è arrivato a Bahe, ma tra Bahe è arrivato uno piccolo paese,
I did not arrive in Bahe, but before Bahe I arrived in a small village
- 336 quello che sono (.) rimangono, **capito?**
Those who are there stay there, you understand?
- 337 E quindi altre persone sono andato,
And so other people went
- 338 quando noi aveva di qua,
when there was no work here
- 339 ho lavorato anche di là (.)
I also worked there
- 340 ho lavorato:: ho lavorato così aveva i soldi
I worked so I would have money.
- 341 E purtroppo non puoi tornare dietro, **capito?**

- And unfortunately you cannot go back, you understand?*
- 342 Devo prendere la mia responsabilità di venire a:: (.) Tripoli,
I had to take my chance and go to Tripoli
- 343 ho pagata la macchina per venire a Tripoli, **capito?**
I paid for a car to take me to Tripoli, you understand?
- 344 Quando sono arrivo a Tripoli,
When I arrived in Tripoli
- 345 noi abbiamo arrivato Tripoli la notte, **capito?**
We arrived in Tripoli in the middle of the night, you understand?
- 346 E: In macchina?
By car?
- 347 M: Sì, con la macchina (.) Quando noi abbiamo Tripoli,
yes, with the car. When we arrived in Tripoli
- 348 ma tra Murzu, Tripoli abbiamo fatto quattro giorno
but between Murzu, Tripoli we had four days
- 349 però (.) la strada, noi non ha prendo la strada direttamente,
but we did not take a direct route
- 350 per esempio quando, quando come si per esempio, Tripoli sta a Bari,
for instance, as if, for instance, Tripoli is like Bari
- 351 qualcuno va (.) ti prende qua, da qua a Brindisi.
somebody goes, takes you from here to Brindisi
- 352 Quando lui arriva a Brindisi,
When he arrives in Brindisi
- 353 lui rimangono di là
he stays there
- 354 e lui deve avere un contact da Brindisi a:: a chi:: come si chiami, altro paese.
and he has a contact from Brindisi to the other city
- 355 Sì fanno così, **capito?**
It works like that, you understand?
- 356 Sì sì, piano piano, ogni paese c'è i persone che ti portano l'altro paese.
Little by little, in every village there is someone who takes you to the next
- 357 E: Ok
- 358 M: **Capito?** E quando noi aveva arrivato a Tripoli la notte,
You understand? And after we arrived in Tripoli at night
- 359 noi abbiamo arrivato Araz che è una grande:: una grande partita che tanti africano,
we arrived in Araz which is a big a big departure place where there are many Africans
- 360 quando noi arrivato di là (.) eh:: la macchina,
when we arrived there, the car
- 361 la proprietà di macchina ha detto:
the car owner said
- 362 "scendi dalla macchina"
"get out of the car"

The occurrences of *capito?* are fairly evenly spaced out throughout the story, but become more frequent when the speaker comes to a turning point in his narrative (lines 341-345, where he mentions the impossibility to go back and describes the momentous decision to go ahead with his journey). Recourse to

capito? seems thus to intensify as a result of the speakers’ desire to have his motives acknowledged. In the lines that follow this turning point, as the speaker reverts to the narration of the events, interpersonal engagement devices are used more sparsely, and with a clearer intention of checking comprehension of the line of events. In this case as well, the interlocutor understands the pragmatic intention of the speakers and responds with appropriate backchanneling. It is to be noted that the speaker’s awareness of possible comprehension failures is testified not only by his constant recourse to comprehension checks, but also by his choice to explain the instalment structure of his journey using examples that refer to the addressee’s experiential background (the cities of Bari and Brindisi being both located in the Apulia region where the interview took place). The iterated use of interpersonal discourse markers and the display of an understanding of the need to adjust his narrative to make it comprehensible to the addressee confirm the speaker’s awareness of the socio-pragmatic competences required to tell a complicated story, as well as his ability to deploy them successfully.

4. Conclusions

The analysis conducted in this study, albeit subject to the limitations described at the end of Section 2, has shown that interpersonal metadiscourse plays an important role in migrant narratives. While these narratives have long been shown to display an awareness of the need to find ways to mediate one’s experience so that it can be understood by an audience with a different sociocultural and experiential background, interpersonal discourse markers explicitly engaging the interlocutor in the storytelling have received limited attention.

The study has shown that some of the asylum speakers interviewed were able to convey a variety of interpersonal meanings through the use of discourse markers such as *you know[?]* and *you understand?*, the latter matched by Italian *capito?* in one of the interviews conducted in Italian.

These discourse markers are used for the relatively straightforward functions of comprehension checking/monitoring and attention getting (*you understand?*), but also for more sophisticated purposes, including pleading for understanding (again cued by *you understand?*), often based on the invocation of a shared common ground (*you know?*). On those occasions when the asylum seekers realize that the sociocultural and experiential gap is too wide, the invocation of alignment may be followed by explanations or elaborations aimed at reducing the sociocultural and experiential distance. The speakers whose stories have been investigated in this article, however,

are not always successful in their efforts. When communication failures occur, interpersonal discourse markers can take on the additional meaning of indirectly conveying frustration at the inability to get the message across. In these cases, the speakers engage in limited but significant episodes of discourse reflexivity (i.e., they explicitly declare that they are unable to explain). However, their “loss for words” does not appear to refer to propositional meaning, but rather to more implicit and hard-to-get-to areas of experience. Thus, the use of interpersonal discourse markers is not confined to checking understanding of the facts represented, but extends to forms of rapport-building, “interactional monitoring” typical of ELF (Cogo 2009; House 2009; Lichtkoppler 2007; Mauranen 2012; Pitzl 2005), whose relevance in the context of migrant narrative research is therefore confirmed.

Also confirmed is the presence in these narratives of “negotiation strategies” (Cogo, Dewey 2012, p. 120) referred not simply to “local”, situated meaning but more generally to experiential “otherness”. Monitoring is used to negotiate meaning and solve problems of understanding, until a shared understanding of the migrants’ experience is achieved (Cogo, House 2018). This understanding is not limited to its factual dimension but extends to assumptions, desires and expectations.

Communication effectiveness and interpersonal engagement remain a priority in migrant narratives in lingua franca. But these are not the only goals pursued in interaction. The construction and display of identity is another key objective, and while migrants’ narratives convey a story of ‘otherness’, they also contribute to constructing a sense of belonging. The expert use of discourse markers plays a role in this construction. The ability to use poly-functional expressions such as the one discussed indicates that the speaker possesses a level of linguistic proficiency which covers also the most “native-like” aspects of social interaction. Although “native-like” proficiency is a concept hardly applicable to ELF, confident usage of socio-pragmatic norms is generally interpreted as a sign of “belonging” to a recognizable social group. Extensive use of discourse markers such as *you know*, *you understand?* and *capito?* might therefore signal an implicit claim to language competence and, therefore, membership of the same social group to which the interlocutor belongs. With reference to Italian, Giuliano and Russo (2014) have shown that migrants use interpersonal discourse (including *capito?*) to foreground their integration in Italian society. A similar aim may also be pursued by asylum seekers in their storytelling, though the “belonging” may be not so much to a speech community as to an international, albeit deterritorialized (Jaquemot 2000; Rampton 1998), community of proficient speakers whose linguistic skills are part of a social capital that can be spent to improve one’s condition.

Finally, one last word must be said about the contextual coordinates

and participation framework of the interviews through which the data were collected. I mentioned at the outset that the lack of institutional goal-orientation of the interviews, and the identity and social position of the interviewer, could be expected to affect the discursive framing of the narratives, relaxing the institutional constraints usually applied to asylum seekers’ narratives. The analysis suggests that this was the case. Of the multiple functions of the discourse markers investigated, that of creating a form of what Östman (1981, p. 19) calls “Camaraderie” (in contrast to the Deference likely to dominate institutional encounters) was probably among the most interesting. The findings suggest that asylum seekers may well possess a broader range of expressive resources than those they rely on when telling their stories in institutional settings. The fact that such settings only allow a limited range of expressive options is not a problem in itself – in fact, constraints on allowable contributions apply to participants in all types of communication encounters. The problem is that those stories too often become the only stories available, and that they are routinely interpreted via cultural schemata which are alien to the speakers themselves.

In light of this, Guido’s call for a radical shift in the very conceptualisation of communication practices in migrant contexts becomes even more urgent. Her reformulation of Grice’s cooperative maxims for the purpose of granting mutual accessibility in migration encounters assume that

all the participants in the ELF mediated communicative interactions in migration contexts should try to achieve a cooperative accommodation of their different discourse parameters by overtly disclosing their own ‘ideational’ (world-schematic) and ‘interpersonal’ (pragmatic) identities [...]. This is expected to foster the establishment and maintenance of social relationships despite the participants’ different native linguacultural background. (Guido 2018, p. 204)

Such overt disclosure is only possible if the pretextual conditions (Maryns, Blommaert 2001) are created that may enable a fairer access to and deployment of discursive resources – an eminently political goal which it is also the task of the researcher to contribute to achieving.

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THE EXPERIENTIAL NATURE OF ELF REFORMULATIONS IN THE MULTIMODAL REPRESENTATIONS OF MODERN AND ANCIENT SEA-ODYSSEYS

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Abstract – This chapter explores the latest stage of a research project carried out at the University of Salento, which aims to investigate the effects of emotions on the positive reconsideration of mass migrations and intercultural socialization. In particular, this study illustrates the linguistic and multimodal strategies of production of four videos that are informed by an unbiased discursive frame for the multimedia representations of sea-journeys. In these clips, the linguistic and audiovisual associations between samples of Western and Non-Western migration narratives are meant to assist viewers in acknowledging that travelers from past and present times experience shared emotions and feelings when leaving their native countries in search for better life conditions. The activation of this perlocutionary effect is pursued by means of hybridizations between written and oral accounts of sea-voyages and between ‘epic movie’, ‘mockumentary’ and ‘journalistic interview’ genres. Narrations are retextualized into ‘experiential reformulations’ that resort to modern variations of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in order to underline, through their structural and phonetic characteristics, the dramatic and life-threatening nature of migrations. The audiovisual composition mixes factual and cinematic properties so as to attract envisaged viewers’ attention and then induce, in them, the positive reconsideration of the objects of representation. After detailing the main phases of experiential reformulation and illustrating the multimodal composition of the four videos, this chapter comments on the results of a reception study of the multimedia research products, in order to enquire into the empirical reception of genre and text hybridization, as well as into the accessibility level of the ELF variations that represent the verbal dimension of the videos.

Keywords: English as a Lingua Franca; Promotional Discourse; Multimodality; Sentiment Analysis; Responsible Tourism.

1. Introduction, rationale and research objectives

This chapter reports on the latest stage of a research project that is implemented at the University of Salento. The main aim is to investigate the

¹ The authors have contributed equally to the overall drafting of this chapter. Pietro Luigi Iaia is responsible for sections 1, 3, 4 and 5; Lucia Errico for section 2.

effects of emotions on the positive (re)consideration of mass migrations, by devising an innovative discursive frame characterized by a particular association between verbal and nonverbal elements. The initial purpose of this project was to conceive novel strategies for the promotion of Responsible Tourism (Lin *et al.* 2014; Prayag *et al.* 2013), according to which occasions for decommitment or recreation can be experienced as possibilities for personal and cultural growth, whereby fostering “access for all, in particular vulnerable and disadvantaged communities and individuals”, and maintaining and conserving world’s diversity, along with natural and cultural heritage.² Precisely, through the interaction between images, sound and words, the multimedia messages that are produced in the context of this research rely upon emotions to provide alternative representations of migrations, in opposition to their conventional, biased depiction in mass media (Bruno 2016; McAuliffe, Weeks 2015), thus increasing interest in those tourist destinations from southern Italy, and Apulia in particular, which are affected by migrants’ arrivals. The ultimate objective has, then, become to account for these forms of ‘emotional promotion’ (hence the adjective ‘premotivational’) of local areas as tools of cross-cultural interactions helping recipients to reflect upon the actual reasons leading people to leave their countries.

This research has involved two main groups of subjects – namely, tourists/local people and migrants that are present in the seaside resorts that were selected for this research. They have become the actors and targets (in the pilot stage of this project) of cooperative pedagogic and cultural activities, which are aimed at letting participants rediscover the shared common sea-journey experiential schemata belonging to Western and non-Western migration narratives (Guido *et al.* 2019). In the light of this objective, oral reports and written narratives of sea journeys are collected from Western and Non-Western sources. A corpus of migrants’ oral accounts was recorded in reception centers (Guido 2018) to investigate their organization into spontaneous verses by means of an Ethnopoetic approach (Hymes 2003), so as to explore the extent to which such structures reproduce the rhythms and progression of human actions and emotions related to the association between dramatic ‘odysseys’ across the sea and the traumatic experience of violent natural elements (Phase 1). At the same time, a number of narrations of epic sea-journeys are also considered, in order to guide both groups of interactants towards experiencing the chosen tourist destinations as a ‘shared Utopia’, through the appraisal of common cultural/experiential schemata and narrative structures. This result is expected to overcome the most common cases of misunderstandings between tourists and migrants, which have to be ascribed to the two groups’ dissimilar experiential ‘schemata’ – namely, the

² <http://responsibletourismpartnership.org/>.

linguacultural background knowledge that the two groups share with their respective primary or native speech communities (Carrell 1983). Indeed, Guido *et al.* (2016, 2018) clarify that the divergence between tourists' and migrants' schemata is rooted in their respective perception of such seaside resorts as the representation of the 'Utopia vs. Dystopia (anti-Utopia)' archetype. An archetype that is intrinsic in the term 'Utopia', as is inferred from its two Ancient-Greek etymological sources – eu-topos ('place of good and harmony') and ou-topos ('no place', 'nowhere') – the latter often representing the migrants' displacing experience of their landing site.

The main research hypothesis is that the combination of epic and modern, written and oral reports can contribute to the cognitive twist triggering the positive reconsideration of the reasons behind and impact of migrations. Because of the different native contexts of texts and participants, an essential role has been attributed to language in the creation and conveyance of Promotional Discourse from the international and cross-cultural perspectives. Subjects are, in fact, asked to examine together the construction of the narrations under discussion, in order to acknowledge to what extent language reflects the sensations of fear, despair and, finally, hope, which migrants perceive. This contact has led participants to select English as the tool enabling them to communicate their experience of sea crossing, as well as their reception of the research's multimodal products. The resulting development of a hybrid use of ELF, and the rediscovery of their common sea-journey experiential schemata and narrative structures (Guido 2018) start from the translation, in Phase 2, of some extracts from literary works such as Homer's *Odyssey* and Virgil's *Aeneid*. Then, such reformulations interact with the uttered accounts to become the verbal features of multimedia products that deliver an audiovisual implementation of Promotional Discourse (Phase 3). Translations and oral narratives are therefore found in four videos that actualize the process of interaction between cultures and people through genre hybridization. By merging images of epic 'Observers' and modern 'Travelers', natural sound and cinematic soundtrack, the experiential reformulations into English and actual migrants' voices, the multimodal representations (Kress 2009) of ancient and modern sea-journey narratives are aimed at connoting Salento as the mythical Utopia welcoming voyagers, with the ultimate objective of inducing in viewers the alternative perception of Responsible Tourism as an intercultural and ethical experience. The final focus of this project is a reception study enquiring into the empirical receivers' reaction to the multimodal products of this research. The goal is to start assessing the validity of the hypothesis that sees such text types as tools that take advantage of recipients' emotions to provoke the advocated cognitive twist concerning cross-cultural interactions. At the same time, its execution attempts to investigate the influence of the relationship

between extralinguistic and linguistic strategies of unbiased representations of mass migrations on the preservation – or even enhancement – of the role of English as a Lingua Franca to foster cross-cultural exchanges and spread anti-ideological messages.

The following section will present the main features of the experiential reformulations – through English – of the selected corpus of oral and written reports of epic and ancient voyages. Then, after exploring the multimodal construction of promotional videos and their strategies of actualization of genre hybridization (Section 3), a critical examination of viewers' reactions will be performed by means of Sentiment Analysis (Section 4). This will help to test the role of images, sound and words at the time of delivering the positive messages about migrations, as well as the importance of the interaction between the linguistic dimension of English and the extralinguistic dimensions of the videos to prompt the final recipients' emotional reading.

2. Experiential reformulations of sea-odyssey narrations

This section covers the experiential reformulations – through ELF – of the selected group of epic narratives of Mediterranean dramatic odysseys towards 'Utopian places'. Their creation is one of the cultural activities that were carried out with the two groups of participants (Guido *et al.* 2019). In fact, these translations are not produced for aesthetic reasons. They are meant to make participants aware of the shared linguacultural features of the epic narratives of Mediterranean 'odysseys' belonging to the Western cultural heritage, starting from the cognitive association between the character of the 'Observer' – that is, the voyager in the structure of the Utopian genre – and the 'Traveler' – namely, the modern migrant landing in Utopia after a perilous sea-voyage. The epic sea-voyagers of the classic narrative, such as Ulysses and Aeneas, represent indeed cognitive archetypes that have shaped the Western travel literature over time, but which are also present in the experiential schemata of other non-Western populations. These retextualizations are expected to create a more accessible version of the selected verses, trying to underline, through the linguistic characteristics of the reformulations, the feelings that reveal the actual nature of sea-traveling. The main hypothesis is that, by becoming aware of the similarities between odysseys belonging to different cultural contexts, viewers can be guided towards the re-evaluation of what causes migrations – and what migrations cause. The analysis of epic stories and oral reports are both performed in English, for the choice of a common language helps participants to discuss the sensations that these accounts provoke in them, thus finding common sentiments of despair, fear and hopelessness. The subjects' comments on the

verbal, structural and phonetic choices of their translations demonstrate that the collective interpretation and re-interpretation of literary and oral sources disclose the commonality of feelings and emotions. Such knowledge is praised by subjects as an epiphany urging them to continue the process of obtaining more information about their interlocutors' journeys, as well as to offer these texts to other receivers, thus spreading what they learnt. The latter objective is pursued through the inclusion of their retextualizations in the promotional videos that are analyzed in Section 3.

Since the linguistic characteristics of the rewritten narrations are meant to underline the elements of fear in the dramatic sea-journeys by means of the structural and rhythmic properties of language, these reformulations are defined 'experiential'. This adjective is proposed here to remark that the chosen phonetic and rhythmic features are expected to help readers and viewers infer the dramatic nature of ancient and modern odysseys towards 'Utopian places' – in fact, on the grounds of the positive effects associated with the instance of Promotional Discourse under examination. Since these texts are devised to address international viewers, English is adopted as an international communication means characterized by specific features that seem to justify the consideration of these language uses as ELF uses, such as simplified lexis and syntactic structures; preference for past simple and present simple; phonetic properties that reproduce the changing emotional rhythms of narrations.

The epic accounts that are described in this chapter come from the twelfth book of Homer's *Odyssey*, Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and the first book of Virgil's *Aeneid*. These passages are used to complete the multimodal composition of the latest promotional video, whereas the literary sources of the other three multimedia products of this research can be found elsewhere (Guido *et al.* 2016; Guido *et al.* 2019; Iaia, Errico 2018). The fourth video focuses on conveying the sense of abandonment and rejection that migrants experience when they are left in the open sea. In the first passage, from Homer's epic poem, Ulysses and his companions are crossing the Mediterranean Sea, when they reach the Straits and get attacked by Scylla and Charybdis. Both personify the wild violence of the stormy sea: Charybdis is an enormous swirling vortex that swallow voyagers; Scylla is a six-headed monster snatching travelers up. The proposed retextualization is provided below:

Odyssey 12, 530-534

Then we entered the Straits in great fear of mind,
 for on the one hand was Scylla,
 and on the other hand dread Charybdis kept sucking up the salt water.
 As she vomited it up, the spray reached the top of the rocks on either side.
 Scylla pounced down suddenly upon us,
 and snatched up my six best men,
 and in a moment I saw their hands and feet struggling in the air
 as Scylla was carrying them off.

From a strictly linguistic perspective, the reformulation mainly displays past simple and words that participants deem as more familiar to international addressees. The ‘experiential’ nature is confirmed by some rhythmic and phonetic characteristics. By way of example, the “and” conjunction is repeated to speed the rhythm up, stressing the voyagers’ mounting terror, whereas fricative, velar and plosive consonants are chosen to denote harsh sounds. Another interesting aspect is the personification of Charybdis and Scylla as monsters. This strategy reflects the personification of inanimate objects in ergative languages’, which is one of the traits of modern lingua-franca variations used by non-native speakers from a non-Western background (Guido 2008; Talmy 1988).

Another textual reference is Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, which is chosen to indicate the frantic sentiment of the approaching storm that threatens voyagers:

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, 41-50

And now the STORM-BLAST came, and he
 was tyrannous and strong;
 he struck with his overtaking wings
 and chased us south along.
 The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
 and southward we fled.

In the above passage, the focus is on the dramatic personification of inanimate objects and natural elements, such as the sailors identifying themselves with the ship, or the ferocity of the “storm blast” – the latter characteristic being rendered also through the use of capital letters. By including this written extract in the pre-motional video, authors try to let viewers empathize with the subjects that are represented in the clip, while resorting to a rhythm that respects the emotional account of the event. Phonetic features are very similar to the ones that are adopted in the first excerpt. Hence, the selection of fricative and plosive sounds, along with the use of the vibrant /r/, delineate an experiential rendering of sea movement,

the approaching of the storm, and the travelers' desperate condition.

Finally, another fragment that is used in the clip is from the first book of Virgil's *Aeneid* (verses 539-543). The following passage is included to help receivers reflect upon the migrants' struggle to reach a utopian Wonderland at the mercy of the open sea, escaping from poverty, war and famine:

Aeneid 1, 539-543

What race of men is this? What land is so barbarous
to accept this custom? We are not welcomed
on the sand; we are not allowed to rest our feet
on the border of their land. If you don't believe in humans
and their mortal arms, at least look unto gods
who will remember right and wrong.

Subjects decide to create their experiential version by highlighting the elements of violence and fear for international recipients. This is pursued by inserting lexical and phonetic characteristics of English that are meant to educate tourists to become "acting interpreters" (Guido 2013) of the stories of travelers from ancient and modern times. Vibrant (/r/), plosive (/b/, /p/) and velar (/k/, /g/) sounds, for example in "barbarous", "accept" and "custom", alternate with liquid (/l/), dental (/d/), plosive (/b/) and glide (/w/) sounds, in "land", "don't believe", "right and wrong", when the rhythm has to be slowed down, thus entailing the end of the journey, as well as resignation.

The above experiential reformulations are combined in the latest promotional video with the actual voice of a migrant. This connection is actualized in the form of an interview to a "modern sea traveler", as is claimed in the initial scene. The young man narrates his story and answers the questions by uttering the selected passages from epic odysseys. This peculiar interaction reflects the viewers' awareness of the similar experiential schemata of dangerous sea journeys, notwithstanding the native socio-cultural contexts. A type of awareness that is meant to be triggered by all the promotional videos that represent the multimedia output of this research. In them, the interaction between cultures, ancient and modern times, and epic and actual odysseys is the pivot of their multimodal compositions, as is now going to be discussed.

3. Multimodal genre hybridization in Premotional Discourse

The central function of the notion of ‘hybridization’ in provoking the positive effects that are expected from premotional discourse is reflected by its multimodal realization. For this reason, a cognitive-functional approach (Langacker 1991, 2008) is adopted when selecting the visual and acoustic components that have to interact with the experiential reformulations that are examined in Section 2. Besides the uses of English when producing the experiential retextualizations, also images and sounds are connoted by an accessible, international and intercultural nature, to guide both groups of participants towards the positive (re)interpretation of the object of premotional representations. Hence, videos of fictional reproductions of epic odysseys are blended with real images of migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea, generating a discursive frame informed by the interaction between the emotional representation that is typical of epic movies, such as Ulysses’ fight against Scylla and Charybdis, the cinematic soundtrack, and the non-fictional depiction of migrants left alone in the open sea. In the fourth video, the conventional narrative structures of epic movies (Kress, van Leeuwen 2006) alternate with visual strategies belonging to the ‘journalistic interview’ (Broersma 2010) and ‘mockumentary’ genres (Campbell 2017). The rationale behind these multimodal associations (Kress 2009) is the attempt to attract envisaged viewers through the initial conveyance of an expected – or known – situation, which is gradually modified as the clips continue. Videos 1-3 aim to ‘promote emotionally’ (hence the newly-coined adjective ‘premotional’ – Guido *et al.* 2016) the seaside resorts of the Salento area by mixing epic and modern migrations and past-time and current, Western and non-Western accounts of sea-voyages. The promotion of Responsible Tourism becomes explicit only at the very end of these clips, when viewers read the final claims that eventually create cultural connections with plays or other literary works, and which are offered to international viewers as a further source of personal growth. Apart from the last seconds, the illocutionary force of videos 1-3 leans towards the emotional tone, whereby the local resorts of Salento are presented as hospitable towns and places where peace, harmony and unspoiled nature coexist. This is expected to represent an actualization of the mythical Utopia welcoming voyagers after their perilous journeys. The multimodal composition (van Leeuwen 2005) of those videos and the ratio between the emotional and promotional dimensions is represented in Tables 1-3 below:

T	VISUAL FRAME	VERBAL CAPTION	DIMENSION
00 : 00 : 03	 <i>The ship struggled against the heavy sea in the night.</i>	Oral narration	Emotional
00 : 00 : 06	 <i>The waves were rising like towers.</i>	Experiential reformulation	Emotional
00 : 00 : 12	 <i>Then we entered the Straits in great fear of mind.</i>	Oral narration	Emotional
00 : 00 : 20	 <i>The boat sailed against a strong wind.</i>	Oral narration	Emotional
00 : 00 : 31	 <i>Scylla pounced down suddenly upon us.</i>	Experiential reformulation	Emotional
00 : 00 : 35	 <i>And snatched up my best six men.</i>	Experiential reformulation	Emotional
00 : 00 : 38	 <i>I saw their hands and feet struggling on the air.</i>	Experiential reformulation	Emotional
00 : 00 : 45	 <i>The boat sank, heavy and deep!</i>	Oral narration	Emotional
00 : 00 : 50	 <i>Plates floated, vesting from everywhere.</i>	Oral narration	Emotional

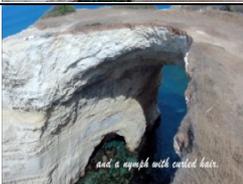
00 : 00 : 57		Experiential reformulation	Promotional
00 : 01 : 02		Experiential reformulation	Promotional
00 : 01 : 09		Final claim	Promotional

Table 1
 “Castro. The Coast of Utopia” (Guido *et al.* 2016).

T	VISUAL FRAME	VERBAL CAPTION	DIMENSION
00 : 00 : 01		Oral narration	Emotional
00 : 00 : 03		Oral narration	Emotional
00 : 00 : 07		Experiential reformulation	Emotional
00 : 00 : 09		Experiential reformulation	Emotional
00 : 00 : 13		Experiential reformulation	Emotional

00 : 00 : 17	 <i>No movement was possible inside</i>	Oral narration	Emotional
00 : 00 : 21	 <i>not to make the ship torn</i>	Oral narration	Emotional
00 : 00 : 25	 <i>The ship went round and round</i>	Experiential reformulation	Emotional
00 : 00 : 30	 <i>The ship struggled against the rough sea</i>	Oral narration	Emotional
00 : 00 : 36	 <i>And every wave grew dark and furious</i>	Oral narration	Emotional
00 : 00 : 42	 <i>And the men fell into the sea</i>	Experiential reformulation	Emotional
00 : 00 : 48	 <i>And only sky and sea were around us</i>	Oral narration	Emotional + Promotional
00 : 00 : 52	 <i>And only sky and sea were around us</i>	Oral narration	Emotional + Promotional
00 : 00 : 55	 SALENTO <i>Look back in relief</i>	Final claim	Promotional

Table 2
“Salento. Look back in Relief” (Guido *et al.* 2017).

T	VISUAL FRAME	VERBAL CAPTION	DIMENSION
00 : 00 : 01	 <i>And when he reached the distant life.</i>	Experiential reformulation	Extralinguistic + linguistic features: emotional
00 : 00 : 07	 <i>And when he reached the distant life.</i>	Experiential reformulation	Extralinguistic + linguistic features: emotional
00 : 00 : 12	 <i>And when he reached the distant life.</i>	Experiential reformulation	Linguistic features: emotional Extralinguistic features: promotional
00 : 00 : 17	 <i>and a nymph with curled hair.</i>	Experiential reformulation	Linguistic features: emotional Extralinguistic features: promotional
00 : 00 : 20	 <i>And when he reached the distant life.</i>	Experiential reformulation	Linguistic features: emotional Extralinguistic features: promotional
00 : 00 : 25	 <i>and alders, and cypresses and poplars more.</i>	Experiential reformulation	Linguistic features: emotional Extralinguistic features: promotional
00 : 00 : 29	 <i>He first stared at all these things</i>	Experiential reformulation	Extralinguistic + linguistic features: emotional
00 : 00 : 34	 <i>and then entered the cave.</i>	Experiential reformulation	Linguistic features: emotional Extralinguistic features: promotional
00 : 00 : 42	 <i>They gazed with no fear in your hearts.</i>	Experiential reformulation	Extralinguistic + linguistic features: emotional

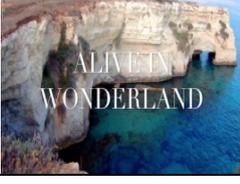
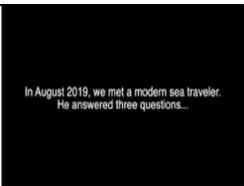
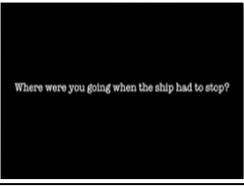
00 : 00 : 50		Experiential reformulation	Extralinguistic + linguistic features: emotional
00 : 00 : 56		Experiential reformulation	Extralinguistic + linguistic features: emotional
00 : 01 : 04		Final claim	Extralinguistic + linguistic features: promotional
00 : 01 : 07		Final claim	Extralinguistic + linguistic features: promotional

Table 3
“Salento. Alive in Wonderland” (Iaia, Errico 2018).

The fourth – and latest – video posits, instead, a particular unbiased discursive frame, with a different relationship between oral and epic accounts of migrations. Only images of real voyages are depicted, but verbal texts remain the selected extracts coming from the experiential reformulations that are produced in Phase 2 of this research. The multimodal composition of video 4 is characterized by hybridization between ‘mockumentary’, ‘journalistic interview’ and ‘epic movie’ genres to mirror the specificity of the envisaged viewers of the fourth clip, who are expected to be mainly Western tourists and web users. Narrative images are used to depict “unfolding actions and events” (Kress, van Leeuwen 2006), while viewers hear the real voice of one of the migrants that left their native countries and crossed the Mediterranean Sea to reach Italy and, in particular, the Apulian district of Brindisi. When the clip ends, the claim addresses viewers that are accustomed to using social media and communicating online. In fact, the inclusion of the hashtag and the exploitation of creativity – one of the characteristics of English when it is used as a ‘lingua franca’ (Pitzl 2017, 2018) – aim at evoking the action of sharing the video online, while guiding the receivers’ interpretation of the message of the film. The claim is “Searching and finding #anormalife”, with “#anormalife” entailing both an ideological reading – i.e., migrants abandon their countries only to live what

Western viewers may perceive as a ‘normal’, or conventional, life – and the comprehension of the traumatic and dramatic conditions of dangerous sea-crossing. According to the latter interpretation, an ‘anormal (a non-Standard form to mean ‘not normal’, ‘not conventional’) life’ is, instead, found:

T	VISUAL FRAME	CAPTION + GENRE	DIMENSION
00 : 00 : 01		Experiential reformulation + Journalistic Interview	Emotional
00 : 00 : 09		Experiential reformulation + Journalistic Interview	Emotional
00 : 00 : 14		Experiential reformulation + Mockumentary	Emotional
00 : 00 : 20		Experiential reformulation + Mockumentary	Emotional
00 : 00 : 23		Experiential reformulation + Mockumentary	Emotional
00 : 00 : 27		Experiential reformulation + Journalistic Interview	Emotional
00 : 00 : 33		Experiential reformulation + Mockumentary	Emotional
00 : 00 : 39		Experiential reformulation + Mockumentary	Emotional

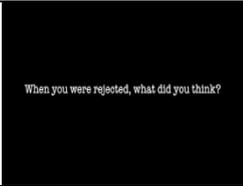
00 : 00 : 45		Experiential reformulation + Journalistic Interview	Emotional
00 : 00 : 50		Experiential reformulation + Mockumentary	Emotional
00 : 00 : 59		Experiential reformulation + Mockumentary	Emotional
00 : 01 : 04		Final claim + Mockumentary	Emotional

Table 4
“Searching and Finding #anormalife” (Iaia, Errico 2019).

The creation of these videos is followed by the last focus of this research project. It coincides with a reception study of these multimodal texts, in order to enquire into their actual perception and assess whether empirical reactions reflect the research hypothesis contending that the audiovisual compositions under discussion can support and indeed inspire the recipients’ personal growth. The final core of this research project is the object of the following section.

4. Reception of audiovisual Premotional Discourse

The four videos representing the multimedia output of this research (Section 3) are submitted to 70 viewers. The latter include both tourists who have reached Salento and the visitors to the ‘Premotional Discourse’ stand in the course of “2019 Researchers’ Night”.³ After watching the files, subjects are asked to talk about the reactions that the short clips triggered in them. Data are collected by means of the Think-Aloud Protocol (Ericsson, Simon 1984),

³ <https://www.laricercaviendinotte.it/lecce/strategie-audiovisive-di-ri-narrazione-del-fenomeno-migratorio/>.

since recipients are free to communicate anything they want as concerns their response to the videos. Answers are examined by means of Aspect-based Sentiment Analysis (Liu 2015, p. 22), in order to perform a critical measurement of the subjects' evaluation of Promotional Discourse (Eagly, Chaiken 1998). The analysis is carried out by pointing out the entity (e) and aspect (a) that are evaluated, along with the sentiment (s) expressed by the opinion holder (h) and, finally, the date of the latter's judgement (t). In formula, the above list is indicated as:

e, a, s, h, t.

Aspect-based Sentiment Analysis allows researchers to deduce the respondents' positive or negative orientation concerning the specific "aspects", or qualities, of audiovisual products. The receivers' responses are approached as messages where the "positive and negative opinions expressed or implied in text" (Liu 2015, p. 3) help to appraise viewers' "alignment/disalignment" (Martin, White 2005, p. 95) with the multimodal composition of the discursive frame that is devised in the context of this research. The investigation focuses on the "sentiment" that is associated with four "aspects" of the "entity" – that is, the multimodal composition of Promotional Discourse: (i) the reconsideration of the nature of sea voyages; (ii) the connection between past-time and current migrations; (iii) the accessibility of English uses in the verbal elements of the videos; and (iv) the meaning-making role (Halliday 1978) of the interaction between images, sounds and words.

As for the "sea voyage" aspect, all participants underline sentiments of "anguish" and "agitation", due to the fact that the visual representations entail that it is "very difficult" to witness the migrants' "sadness" that turns to "agitation [...and] anxiety". These feelings are suggested by the music and images from the short clips, which were, in fact, selected to stress the dramatic nature of the object of multimodal representations (Section 3). Everyone reveals a progressive passage from a sentiment of fear and, hence, disalignment with the action of crossing the sea, to the perception of peace and hope that is instead found at the end of videos 1-3, in particular when the images of Salento's destinations are visible or the inclusion of natural sounds, such as the noise of calm sea, induce more positive thoughts in the final moments of "Look back in Relief" (video 2) and "Alive in Wonderland" (video 3). This does backup the research hypothesis according to which those segments can provoke a sensation of relief, as is underlined in the multimodal transcriptions above (Tables 2 and 3). The connection between entity, aspects, viewers' sentiments and their alignment/disalignment can be expressed as:

e	a	s	Alignment/Disalignment
Premotional Discourse	sea voyage (departure)	anguish; agitation; difficulty; sadness; anxiety	disalignment

Table 5
Sentiment Analysis 1.

e	a	s	Alignment/Disalignment
Multimodal composition of Premotional Discourse	sea voyage (arrival)	relaxation; peace; positive thoughts	alignment

Table 6
Sentiment Analysis 2.

As concerns the aspect “connection between epic and actual migrations”, participants agree that the visual transition from fictional to actual odysseys connotes history as something “immobile” and characterized by “a constant [sense] of non-evolution”. “[O]nly clothes have changed”, as one of the participants says, when epic and modern odysseys are compared. The perception that history repeats itself is confirmed when a female subject notes that “it is absurd that [epic verses] still fit today’s context”, whereas the premotional association between images, music and natural sounds creates an immersive atmosphere, whereby “it was like you felt like you were there [...] being rejected”, as another participant acknowledges. From the analysis of the second aspect’s appraisal emerges the subjects’ disalignment with the repetition of history – and, actually, this does validate the research hypothesis seeing premotional videos as a potential tool that can help viewers reconsider the causes and nature of migrations. In other words:

e	a	s	Alignment/Disalignment
Multimodal composition of Premotional Discourse	connection between epic and actual odysseys	stationary situation; non-evolution of history; absurd situation	disalignment

Table 7
Sentiment Analysis 3.

It is very interesting, then, to enquire into the evaluation of the aspect that is called “accessibility of English uses”. Participants recognize that the language in the video is “more comprehensible”, both when subtitles are read

and when the Nigerian boy’s voice is heard. As concerns the “modern traveler” that is the protagonist of the latest video (Section 3), people claim that even though “this boy may not speak proper English”, receivers “get his message”. This response is very significant from the perspective of using videos as means of cross-cultural communication, for it seems that this task is pursued thanks to the conventional traits of lingua-franca variations, such as simplified lexical and syntactic structures. In fact, the experiential reformulations are judged more accessible and, therefore, simpler to understand. In particular, one of the participants – a BA student of linguistic mediation – approves the inclusion of “simplified reformulations”, since they “help receivers go straight to the core of the topic”. It follows that:

e	a	s	Alignment/Disalignment
Multimodal composition of Premotional Discourse	accessibility of English uses	simplified lexis; simplified structure; more comprehensible; you get people’s messages	alignment

Table 8
Sentiment Analysis 4.

When words and images are contextually examined (final aspect), viewers infer that the core of the topic is the “dramatic scenario of migrations today”. As a result, the sentiment towards the specific use of English is positive, since it suits the illocutionary force that coincides with reaching wider, international audience by mixing linguistic and extralinguistic elements. The latter, multimodal nature is worth exploring, as is proved by the response that is given by an Italian child. The boy – the only underage participant in the group of people taking part in this reception study – claims that he “didn’t understand everything” he read, due to his level of English knowledge. And yet, he adds that “images let [him] realize that the videos compare past and present migrations” and that they “end badly” for “people are still in the middle of the sea”. To summarize, viewers show alignment with the multimodal connotation of English:

e	a	s	Alignment/Disalignment
Multimodal Composition of Premotional Discourse	interaction between images, sounds and words	powerful; useful; images let me realize the video’s meaning	alignment

Table 9
Sentiment Analysis 5.



The final consideration is of vital importance when one aims to enquire into the possible consequences that multimodality and technology may have on lingua-franca uses of English. By acknowledging that images, sounds and words cooperate and guide viewers' interpretation of senders' intentionality – and by ascertaining that such interpretation coincides with the envisioned perlocutionary effects on the part of addressers – it seems appropriate to surmise that the connotation of English as an international, cross-cultural means of communication can benefit from a multimodal implementation. The latter scenario does outline the profile of a promising research path, albeit this path is – at the moment – still unexplored.

5. Conclusions

This chapter has reported on an interdisciplinary approach to the polisemiotic representations of ancient and modern sea-voyages, developed at the University of Salento in the context of a research project on Responsible Tourism. While this project initially aimed to devise strategies for the emotional promotion of local seaside resorts, so as to mark tourism as an activity that can lead to personal and cultural growth, the research focus has gradually shifted towards the creation of a multimodal framework serving the unbiased depiction of migrations in audiovisual texts. Multimedia representations are conceived as means that can help to make the nature of migrants' journeys more accessible to modern receivers – and this chapter has presented a video that is meant to be shared online, for example through social networks – in order to avoid those cases of miscommunication and misunderstanding that are detrimental to intercultural socialization. The conventional multimedia discursive frame is, in fact, informed by the association between the notion of 'culture clash' and migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea in search of better life conditions. The promotional videos that were examined, instead, try to guide viewers towards reconsidering the reasons behind mass migrations and their life-threatening nature. Actually, the reception study that was presented in Section 4 seems to indicate that Promotional Discourse can help to induce in viewers a cognitive twist about migrations, as is exemplified by the recipients' alignment with the emotional nature of the visual juxtaposition of past-time and recent migrations, and their contextual disalignment with the repetition and immobility of history, which is one of the main themes of the analyzed videos.

For all these reasons, it is important to keep on monitoring to what extent the experience of Promotional Discourse helps to expand people's empathic understanding of today's migrations, while investigating the connotation of media representations as tools that promote cross-cultural

integration. Finally, an aspect that is worth exploring is the meaning-making role of the interaction between English uses and extralinguistic elements in the contexts of intercultural communication. As the critical examination – through Sentiment Analysis – of viewers’ reactions has underlined, images and sound can help to make senders’ intentionality even more accessible, thanks to the selection of visual and acoustic representations that rely on the emotional response from addressees to prompt their novel interpretation. If other studies confirm the effects of multimodal compositions between English and extralinguistic elements on the appropriate inferring of the interlocutors’ intentionality, it may be time to start theorizing, observing and investigating a specific form of lingua-franca uses. An example of language variation that could be labelled as M-ELF, or “Multimodal-English as Lingua Franca”.

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TEACHING AS NARRATIVE

The use of ELF in the IFL class in the migration setting of Southern Italy¹

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Abstract – This article illustrates the results of a three-year research project conducted in the migration setting of Southern Italy from 2015 to 2018 focused on: 1) theorising English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) as a “translingual practice” in migratory settings across the Mediterranean; 2) scrutinizing the possibility of a pedagogy of contact in the Italian as a Foreign Language (IFL) classroom; 3) highlighting issues of self-translation and reflexivity in teaching and learning practices in the migration setting. Considering teaching as a narrative phenomenon, the article explores the third phase of the project², which was based on a series of interviews with the IFL teachers, conducted in 2017–2018, aimed at highlighting such issues as the use of ELF as a co-learning language, of autobiographical elements and self-translation practice and of self-reflexivity and improvisation. Results show the extent to which approaching students, who are also beneficiaries in a national humanitarian project, required an effort to eliminate the ideal of linguistic purity, as well as all cultural and linguistic prejudices.

Keywords: ELF; IFL; migration; teaching; narrative, translingualism, self-translation.

1. Introduction

In the following pages we will illustrate the results of a three-year research project conducted in the migration setting of Southern Italy from 2015 to 2018. According to UNHCR, in Italy, 153,842 migrant people arrived and 2,913 were dead and missing in 2015, whereas 23,370 arrived and 1,311 were dead and missing in 2018. Sea arrivals at islands including Cyprus and Malta, and sea and land arrivals at Greece and Spain, increase the figures: in 2015, 1,032,408 people arrived and 3,771 were dead and missing, whereas 141,472 arrived and 2,277 were dead and missing in 2018.³ The impact of such a

¹ Although the authors conceived the paper together, Lorena Carbonara is mainly responsible for the Introduction and section 2; Section 3 was written by Annarita Taronna. The authors wrote Conclusions together.

² The results of phase 1 and 2 of the project are available in Taronna 2015, 2019 and Carbonara and Taronna 2017, 2018, 2019.

³ See <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>, last accessed 12.02.2020.

humanitarian and socio-political phenomenon on our ontological narratives, as women living in Southern Italy, and on our research and teaching practices as linguists was important, since we acknowledged the necessity to become involved in the master narrative of migration. More specifically, we felt the urge to: 1) theorise English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) as a “translingual practice” in migratory settings across the Mediterranean; 2) scrutinize the possibility of a pedagogy of contact in the Italian as a Foreign Language (IFL) classroom; 3) highlight issues of self-translation and reflexivity in teaching and learning practices in the migration setting.

In the first phase of the research, which took place in 2015-2016, we interviewed volunteer interpreters, translators and cultural mediators who worked for non-profit organizations (e.g., Connecting People, Arci, CRI, CIES) facilitating the transition for newly-arrived migrant people. These interviewees fell into three main categories: a) the native informants working within a given ethnic community and providing inside information; b) amateur bilingual translators and interpreters (including students of translation, interpreting and language-related degrees); c) activists working in the field of humanitarian, international and intercultural cooperation and diplomacy. The results obtained from these interviews testified not only to the crucial role of English as a Lingua Franca in the communication process in such a complex setting, but also to the creation of a hybrid and inclusive language resulting from the contact with other languages. Mediation was indeed influenced by the permeable nature of ELF that can be defined as a form of “translingual practice” – a practice that, although recognizing norms and conventions established by dominant institutions and social groups, is focused on the speakers’ ability to negotiate such norms according to their own linguistic repertoires (Canagarajah 2013).⁴

The second phase of the project was devoted to observations conducted in 2016-2017 in the Italian as a Foreign Language mandatory courses for migrants in Bari and Lecce (SPRAR/ARCI), Martina Franca (SPRAR/Salam ONG) and Taranto (Centro d’Accoglienza/Salam NGO).⁵ The students were people enrolled in the national SPRAR project and they came from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Senegal, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, Ghana, Mali and Northern Africa. The teachers were all Italian women, speakers of at least one European language (English and/or French), and in one case also Arabic. In the context of such multicultural classrooms, factors like tolerance, respect and conflict are central, and the use of ELF becomes a

⁴ For the results of this first phase of the research project see Taronna 2015, 2019.

⁵ The Law no. 189 of 30 July 2002 institutionalized the PNA (National Asylum Programme) by establishing SPRAR, the “Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees.” See <https://www.sprar.it/english>, last accessed 11.02.2020.

little controversial. On the one hand, it allows teachers to facilitate communication and ground their pedagogical approach on the idea of contact, exemplified by the image of the bridge that they often use to describe the role of the lingua franca; on the other hand, it can foster forms of discrimination against the students who are illiterate or lacking in English competence (Arabophones and Francophones). In the IFL class we observed the way in which ELF is used as a self-translation practice and the delicate yet important role of autobiography. This part of the research allowed us to: 1) examine the various communicative forms generated in the interaction between the IFL teacher and the migrant students through the use of ELF and the different native languages; and 2) show how the passage of English from hegemonic language to contact language brings with it the re-thinking of an Anglocentric lingua-cultural dominance.⁶

Phase three was eventually based on a series of interviews with the IFL teachers, conducted in 2017-2018, aimed at highlighting such issues as the use of ELF as a co-learning language, of autobiographical elements and self-translation practice and of self-reflexivity and improvisation. Results of this phase show the extent to which approaching students, who are also beneficiaries in a national humanitarian project, required an effort to eliminate the ideal of linguistic purity, as well as all cultural and linguistic prejudices. Such an attitude is indeed fundamental to creating the best conditions for learning, teaching, and also researching. The teachers involved in the project showed a certain degree of awareness of their role of educators, and we all benefited from a temporary immersion in such a complex educational environment where emotions played an essential role.⁷ Developing reflexivity and awareness of the socio-cultural and emotional setting in which IFL teachers in the migration context work is indeed necessary because “language educators worldwide are being called upon to produce effective human capital” (Byrd Clark, Dervin 2014, p. 129). Furthermore, a consistent questioning of the teaching/learning process allows teachers to monitor their own feelings and enables students to build a more significant relationship with the external environment, which is accomplished also through the use of ELF. This last part of the research project constitutes the focus of the present study, which is intended to investigate more deeply teaching as a narrative phenomenon and the positive implication of all this in educational and humanitarian terms.

⁶ For the results of this second phase of the research project see Carbonara and Taronna 2017.

⁷ For the results of the third phase of the research project see Carbonara and Taronna 2018, 2019.

2. Theoretical framework and methodology

2.1. Narrative inquiry and reflexivity

Our aim is to contribute to the examination of IFL teachers' testimonies as significant examples of reflexive practices in migration settings. To do this, it is necessary to acknowledge the role of narrative in reflexivity and the crucial role it plays in the creation of more ethical teaching and research practices. Narratives are indeed part of everyday life since we are all storytellers and we need stories to make sense of the world and of our place within it. Since stories and narratives are used as data in thematic, linguistic, structural and visual analysis, and as forms of representations in different qualitative and quantitative methodologies, such as translation in health science, education, and other professional disciplines, it is necessary to clarify our use of the term narrative (Clandinin 2013). This notion of narrative draws on Mona Baker's sociological approach, which explains it as the specific way in which individuals participate in the configuration of reality. According to Baker, both institutions and individuals create and circulate stories "complete with characters, settings, outcomes or projected outcomes, and plot." (Baker 2014, p. 159) In 2006, she pointed out four different types narratives: 1) Ontological narratives, existing within a culture and transmitting also collective narratives to individuals; 2) Public narratives, namely, narratives circulating around groups that can vary with time as public perceptions change; 3) Conceptual narratives, namely, disciplinary narratives which exist within a field of study; 4) Meta/Master narratives, namely, the narratives which can surpass geographical and temporal narratives (Baker 2006).

Researchers, as well as teachers, must pay attention to their role in the production of individual and circulation of collective/public narratives, and this is especially true when confronted with such a complex setting as the migration one. A lot has been said about the narratives of migration, which can provide interesting insights into how migrant people try to understand, tell and retell their story of displacement and violence and to reconstruct a sense of self after a great trauma. Less work has been done on the narratives that teachers use to describe their own teaching practice and their experience in such delicate settings. Narrative inquiry – since it is "situated in relationships and in community, and it attends to notions of expertise and knowing in relational and participatory ways" (Clandinin 2013, p. 12) – has been chosen as a qualitative research methodology. It allows one to study experience as a narrative phenomenon highlighting the importance of the relationship among all actors in the communication setting. In Connelly's (2013, p. 18) words:

The focus of narrative inquiry is not only valorizing individuals' experience but is also an exploration of the social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences were, and are, constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted. Understood in this way, narrative inquiries begin and end in the storied lives of the people involved. Narrative inquirers study the individual's experience in the world, an experience that is storied both in the living and telling and that can be studied by listening, observing, living alongside an other, and writing and interpreting texts. Through the inquiry, we seek ways of enriching and transforming that experience for themselves and others.

As already mentioned above, the portion of corpus analysed for this study contains the interviews conducted with four IFL teachers, and it is focused on three main narratives: 1) the controversial use of ELF and the students' native languages; 2) the importance of self-translation and autobiography; 3) the relationship with the teaching practice. At the root of the discussion there is the idea that reflexivity considers the ways in which meaning is created through complex and multiple modes of representations, including gesture, movement and voice (Byrd Clark, Dervin 2014, p. 3). It is extremely interesting to examine the ways in which teachers talk about their teaching experience and practice, making sense of their role as instructors and educators in the complex migration setting, where the narratives by migrant people are usually the protagonists. Teachers were easily guided, in the course of the interviews, along the path of reflection on their practice and responded with enthusiasm to the possibility of being heard and considered an essential part in the educational growth of their students.

2.2. Ethnographic approach

The three phases of the research were conducted in the participants' real-life environment because observation and interaction were crucial for the study, in line with a qualitative ethnographic approach, and because of the contingent situation: migrant people have to follow a specific daily program as they are enrolled in a national humanitarian project (especially if they are unaccompanied minors). Aware of the danger of potential bias, we focused on the lesson observations and on the interviews, collecting data when possible and acknowledging the contemporary de-territorialization and de-traditionalization of language and identity as essential for approaching the study of language in migration contexts. Words like 'hybrid', 'contingent' and 'fluid' are now frequent in the social sciences, and there is a general tendency to acknowledge that in order to understand the new complexities of

the contemporary world, vocabulary needs to be reshaped.⁸ A reference to Dell Hymes's ethnography of communication seems necessary here, since his studies have been crucial in the investigation of "how communities contend with the 'detraditionalization' brought on by demographic change, shifting relations of capital, communications technologies and systems of representation" (Hymes 1996, p. VIII).

Demographic change in migration settings is indeed a key factor in the de-traditionalization process, which goes hand in hand with the evolution of ELF and the subsequent changes in the role of standard English worldwide. Echoing Mary Louise Pratt's notion of the "contact zone," Suresh Canagarajah and Yumi Matsumoto (2016, p. 3) point out that

the outcomes of contact zones negotiations are not always guaranteed. While there is immense creativity in certain encounters, there is misunderstanding and silencing in others. Much depends on the nature of the negotiation, and much cannot be predicted beforehand. The attitudes and motivations of those engaged in these contact zone encounters will shape the outcome. While some may exercise their power and insist on their norms, others will be prepared to collaborate in co-constructing meaning. In either case, the very process of contact engenders new genres and indexicalities for literacy.

In our experience, we actually saw language in motion, the very nature of a lingua franca that is used as an anchor, and the creative possibility embedded in the relationship between ELF and the students' native languages. Moreover, as researchers working in the field, conducting interviews and observing lessons, we came to terms with our own interiorized narratives about migration and migrant people. And so did the teachers we worked with. Eventually, the fruitful exchange that occurred in the course of our research project could be described as a reflexivity practice. As stated by Ben Rampton *et al.* (2014),

Ethnography recognises the ineradicable role that the researcher's personal subjectivity plays throughout the research process. It looks to systematic field strategies and to accountable analytic procedures to constrain self-indulgent idiosyncrasy, and expects researchers to face up to the partiality of their interpretations (Hymes [1978] 1996, p. 13). But the researcher's own cultural and interpretive capacities are crucial in making sense of the complex

⁸ It is useful to briefly clarify the difference between linguistic ethnography and linguistic anthropology. The first one was born in Great Britain in the mid-'90s when applied linguists and ethnographers shared an interest in how language and society are created and influenced by their mutual interaction; the second one was born in the United States in the '60s and was mainly centered on questions of ethnicity and race, as descriptors of social difference. See, among others, Copland and Creese 2015 and Duranti 2004.

intricacies of situated everyday activity among the people being studied, and tuning into these takes time and close involvement.

Participant observation plays an important role since the researcher's presence in the setting introduces a series of contingencies that need to be considered. In our case, the phase of lesson observation that preceded the interviews with the teachers was particularly interesting in this regard. The presence of an external element was indeed felt in the classroom, a place where, on a daily basis, teachers strive to create intimacy and establish contact.

3. Data analysis

3.1. Use of ELF as a co-learning language

The interviews with the IFL teachers provided us with a substantial narrative set of data which can be analysed according to three main thematic cores: 1) an in-depth reflection on the use of ELF as a co-learning language in multicultural classes; 2) a close focus on teachers' and students' personal narratives embedded in autobiographical elements and self-translation practice; 3) an examination of reflexivity and improvisation as central distinctive factors in IFL teaching. The first thematic core develops from the analysis of the following excerpts:⁹

Interviewer: Ti capita a lezione di utilizzare degli elementi della cultura italiana come spunto. E ti capita mai della loro cultura?

Teacher 1: Sì, per esempio parlando del mio matrimonio, mi sposerò a breve, abbiamo fatto un confronto su come il matrimonio funziona in Italia o in un altro Paese. Oppure anche sulla condizione della donna in Italia, nel mondo, nei loro Paesi.

I: E loro come percepiscono l'interesse per la loro cultura? Gli piace parlare?

T1: Sì, a volte per iniziare gli faccio vedere dei filmati dei loro Paesi, li coinvolge molto. Questo li avvicina molto perché possono scoprire anche la cultura del loro compagno di stanza, che non conoscono. Crea un rapporto più stretto tra di loro, oltre che con me. Imparare la loro lingua è difficilissimo, io generalmente uso l'inglese per comunicare con loro, però aiuta molto imparare delle parole della loro lingua.

I: Questa è una strategia molto interessante.

T1: Si tratta anche di creare un rapporto di fiducia, perché se capiscono che io cerco di imparare la loro lingua, loro sviluppano un maggior interesse nell'imparare il mio modo di pensare e di parlare. In questi casi cambiano proprio espressione, ti sorridono; perché capiscono che con te possono avere

⁹ Teacher 1 – 30 years old, Degree in Political Science – No CEDILS.

un rapporto diverso che magari, anche per mancanza di tempo, non riescono ad avere con un operatore. Io ci passo cinque ore con loro, si crea un minimo di amicizia. Cerco anch'io d'immedesimarmi in loro.

The leitmotiv underlying the above excerpts is the shaping of IFL classes as the ideal place in which teachers can activate intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding as strongly advocated by the Council of Europe. Specifically, in the Council's *White Paper* (2008) the concept of intercultural dialogue is defined as follows: "(...) an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups belonging to different cultures that leads to a deeper understanding of the other's global perception."¹⁰ In a very similar way, intercultural dialogue is built by IFL teachers as the space between cultures, attitudes, skills and such values as attention to diversity, communication, connection, acceptance, openness, positive attitude, a dynamic process. To this end, IFL teachers actively encourage their students to talk about their personal stories or the cultural traditions of their own countries. As a consequence, the intercultural dynamic activated and reported by the teachers implicitly recalls some of the crucial conditions suggested by the Council of Europe (Oprescu, Lungoci 2017). Such conditions must be assured from the very outset, or achieved during the process:

- Equal dignity of all participants;
- Voluntary engagement in dialogue;
- A mindset (on both sides) characterized by openness, curiosity and commitment, and the absence of a desire to "win" the dialogue;
- A readiness to look at both cultural similarities and differences;
- A minimum degree of knowledge about the distinguishing features of one's own and the "other" culture
- Resorting to a common language to assure intercultural communication.

The very last condition is precisely what the interviewee teacher mentions above as the most important element which can contribute to create a true, meaningful intercultural dialogue in an IFL classroom. In her case, ELF is used as the common language for understanding and respecting cultural differences, as much as to learn some basic vocabulary from the foreign students' languages as a way to build trust and to create a safe, inclusive, and culturally responsive learning environment. All the interviewed teachers agree with the fact that they occasionally shift to using ELF combined with some L1 vocabulary to form a connection with students and to establish a rapport in their classrooms. In doing so, they attempt to lower the students' affective filters to create a learning environment where they feel more at ease

¹⁰ See https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/concept_EN.asp, last accessed 4.4.2020.

and have more confidence speaking and participating in class.¹¹ Furthermore, evidence from both cognitive linguistics and neuroscience point strongly towards the successful use of the co-learning languages (e.g., their mother tongue, second or foreign languages) in the classroom since new knowledge is constructed on a basis of old knowledge (Safonova 2014).

In this study the use of ELF as a co-learning language along with Italian and students' native languages can stand as a further successful teaching move in IFL classes in the way that communicative education with multicultural and bilingual/trilingual orientations is expected to prepare students to use a variety of forms of communicative interaction and demonstrate communicative flexibility and creativity. In choosing and pursuing communicative strategies that help to find a way out of cultural misunderstandings and gaps, IFL teachers reveal themselves as a sort of linguistic peacemakers and intercultural speakers or mediators (Byram 2009; Houghton 2009). The intercultural speaker or mediator is translingual, cosmopolitan, consensus-oriented, supportive and open to negotiation, that is, they negotiate meanings with others on equal terms departing from their own positionalities. To this end, the selection of excerpts reported below can show how IFL teachers play as intercultural speakers by using language as a means for establishing empathy and creating trust, as much as a means for humanizing the beneficiaries' stay in our country:¹²

I: Veniamo alle domande più specifiche, linguistiche. Quindi, quale lingua franca viene utilizzata per facilitare la comunicazione tra te e gli studenti provenienti da lingue madri diverse?

T2: Per rispondere bisogna procedere su due piani diversi ma connessi. Lo svolgimento reale di un corso d'italiano è ben diverso da quello che ho studiato, bisogna capire quando la metodologia può essere applicata o quando deve subentrare il lato umano. Chi parte da zero utilizza espressioni semplici come "buongiorno" perciò è molto più semplice con loro fare riferimento ad immagini, gesti o espressioni del volto di modo da utilizzare solo la lingua italiana. La lingua inglese è molto utile quando si passa alle parole astratte, ai verbi che non possono essere spiegati graficamente. I nepalesi e i pakistani conoscono benissimo l'inglese, le somale che ho seguito non avevano una grande dimestichezza ma vivendo con le nigeriane, capivano comunque l'inglese. La ragazza eritrea che ho adesso non parla bene l'inglese, mentre i nigeriani, che sono la maggioranza, lo parlano benissimo, anche se non è la loro lingua madre. La lingua inglese è uno strumento utilizzabile [...]. Bisogna far riferimento anche all'aspetto umano, in nessun caso di docenza può essere escluso: se le persone vogliono parlare e gli s'impone l'italiano perché si è

¹¹ On this specific topic we suggest Cook 2001 and Edstrom 2006.

¹² Teacher 2 – 32 years old – Degree in Philosophy – CEDILS; Teacher 3 – 41 years old – Degree in Modern Italian Literature – DITALS.

all'interno del corso...è brutto, perché, che accoglienza dai a delle persone che magari vorrebbero aprirsi?

I: L'elemento autobiografico interviene sempre, sia nella loro storia sia nel rapporto umano con l'insegnante, aldilà del fatto che insegna la lingua?

T2: Sì non c'è mai una concezione distaccata rispetto anche agli aspetti quotidiani come la lite con il fidanzato, la lite con la coinquilina...il duro compito dell'insegnante d'italiano è cercare di comunque fare lezione perché loro devono imparare, siamo lì per quello; però anche fargli capire che non sono solo il file di lingua italiana che si accende e si spegne ma che sono lì per aiutarli, naturalmente in lingua inglese. In quel caso si fa uso dell'inglese, quando siamo in pausa parliamo inglese. Mi diverte molto durante la lezione fare domande in italiano e loro mi rispondono in inglese, però hanno capito tutto.

I: Conoscere la loro lingua può essere vista come una forma di accoglienza?

T3: Ovviamente sì. Si sbloccano, hanno qualcosa di cui parlare. Quando hai la lingua di mezzo è davvero un sollievo per tutti. Un giorno sono arrivata a lavoro e l'educatore mi ha detto che c'era una ragazza che parlava solo francese, analfabeta. Quando ho risposto, in francese, che non c'erano problemi, lei si è illuminata.

I: Usi materiale culturale proveniente dalle tradizioni d'origine?

T3: Vorrei ma non posso poiché dovrei mettermi a studiare. Bisognerebbe che gli insegnanti si aggiornassero sui contenuti politici in divenire. Ciò che stava accadendo in Afghanistan io l'ho saputo dal mio allievo! Bisogna anche sapersi porsi nei confronti del loro paese, della loro cultura. La linea del fraintendimento è in agguato, è pericoloso. La competenza interculturale è importantissima.

All of the testimonies gathered here refer to language as hospitable by its own nature because we all are invited to live a broadened intimacy with the other and to welcome those who are in transit. Hospitality is not only crucial to the teachers' language practice, but also to their model of plurilingual, participative and active citizenship that recalls Derrida's sense of welcoming the other with her/his diversity, of unconditionally offering one's hand to all that is new and alien (Derrida 2000). In the migration emergency context a double threshold of hospitality is coming to light. The approach of the migrant subject – entering our space, appropriating our language, touching us and forcing us to change – compels the IFL teacher who works in migrant contexts to move to the other side, to a decentred point from which she/he can observe herself/himself and the world. The teacher, positioned between languages, responds to the partiality of each language with a border crossing, thus exposing the richness entailed in language plurality. Each teacher, with her/his own story, proves how this language plurality is fundamental: without it, it would not be possible to teach and construct an intercultural dialogue, and it would not be possible to explore the unknown and experience the difference of the other. More specifically, taking into consideration the

intercultural communication and language dynamics experienced by IFL teachers during their interactions with migrant students in their language classes, it might be interesting to conceptualize language as a form of hospitality for the other, of her/his difference, of her/his distance that requires forms of responsibility towards the guest.

In this respect, the figure of hospitality is also at stake in the hybrid, permeable and translingual nature of ELF as experienced by numerous Italian teachers who describe it in particularly meaningful terms:

I: Quindi l'inglese lo consideri come una lingua-ponte?

T2: Sì. Mi diverto anche a imparare il *pidgin English*, la lingua parlata dai nigeriani, che sta contagiando anche gli altri beneficiari. Per cui, invece di dire "How are you?" glielo chiedo in *pidgin English* "How far?" che è molto divertente. Ci identifica come gruppo perché è una cosa che facciamo tra di noi ma non con altre persone.

T3: Sì, è un'interlingua.

This brief statement echoes Canagarajah's (2013, p. 2) "motto" according to which "we are all translinguals" in contact zones: we speak a flexible, contingent, unstable bridge language that is suited for the cooperative co-construction of meaning, and that leads toward successful intercultural communication. A consequence stemming from this practice is not only the sense of ease and familiarity that Italian and non-Italian mediators feel about the lingua franca, but also the creation of hybrid and inclusive language formulas resulting from contact with other languages, re-territorialization needs, and the will of the speakers.

The use of ELF in IFL classes can also entail asymmetric and conflictual interactions when, for example, teachers clearly state that they perceive English as a barrier to the construction of the relationship and to the immediate interaction with the migrant. In such cases, the knowledge and use of the migrant's native language is better at creating a bridge for communication, as we see in the following testimony:

I: Nascono conflitti interculturali? E come vengono gestiti? Possono essere di natura linguistica?

T2: Sì, ci sono varie tipologie di conflitti soprattutto quando vivono sotto lo stesso tetto [...] In questi casi, facendo da mediatrice, naturalmente non si può che fare ricorso all'inglese. In momenti di confronto non si pensa alla coniugazione del verbo irregolare ma l'inglese può funzionare per sedare i conflitti, imporre di non utilizzarlo perché si è al corso d'italiano, sarebbe una forte imposizione e probabilmente questo potrebbe potenziare i conflitti e coinvolgerebbe anche l'insegnante. L'inglese è una lingua fondamentale perché quasi tutti la comprendono, ma bisogna capire quando diventa discriminante. Se immagino una situazione di conflitto al primo livello, con due studenti nepalesi, una studentessa nigeriana e la new-entry eritrea che non parla inglese, lei sarebbe tagliata fuori perché siamo in quattro a capire l'inglese contro una.

The excerpt reported above also brings together the perspective on mediation as a basis for understanding how teachers mediate an intercultural orientation in language teaching. In doing so, the notion of mediation moves beyond a process of transferring meaning in communication or scaffolding knowledge for learning. Instead, it can be understood as the act of bringing (at least) two linguistic and cultural frameworks into a relationship, with an educative purpose. As a consequence, in these vulnerable situations ELF is used as a language of mediation no longer embedded in one national framework and in a strict set of standard rules, but in multiple nuances in terms of phonetics, lexicon and morphosyntax due to the contamination of global cultural flows. In this logic, as suggested by Canagarajah (2013) we should re-think English as a contact language that needs to be regarded as a variety in its own right, moving and transforming along with the migration flows of subjects passing through border zones who resort to personal varieties of English. Such considerations inevitably recall Pratt's (1987) idea of a "contact linguistics" that allows observing the formation of new geo-localities and new language policies in the light of the numerous contaminations of global cultural flows escaping from neo-colonial dystopias and hegemonic discourses of abuse and language extinction and to embrace new practices of linguistic and cultural crossing.

3.2. Use of autobiographical elements and self-translation practice in IFL classrooms

The second thematic core provides a close focus on teachers' and students' personal narratives embedded in autobiographical elements as it emerges from the following excerpts:

I: Ti capita di raccontare di te? E loro raccontano di sè?

T1: Sì, per esempio parlando del mio matrimonio poi loro raccontano ad esempio del matrimonio della sorella.

T4:¹³ Io considero molto l'aspetto autobiografico. Per creare nella mia aula un ambiente che li accolga, loro rivedono in me una figura femminile materna (che hanno lasciato). Quando s'insegna, sai, si arriva ai domini. Quello della famiglia mi crea difficoltà. Insegnare i nomi madre, padre...loro spesso abbassano lo sguardo. Altri hanno bei ricordi e vogliono stare qui e aiutare la loro famiglia ma non parlano mai del viaggio. Racconto anche di me, per creare empatia. Scherzo. Io estrapolo molto dalla vita reale per le lezioni, per esempio, hanno l'abitudine di lasciare i rubinetti aperti, dunque, prossima

¹³Teacher 4 – 26 years old – Degree in Foreign Languages and Literatures – Didactics courses taken as an undergraduate.

lezione: l'acqua! Poi io chiedo molto delle loro culture, il cibo per esempio. E loro mi fanno domande e lamentele.

I: A proposito di questioni personali, loro parlano della loro esperienza? Capita che raccontino dell'attraversamento?

T3: Dipende. Quando li incontro la prima volta parlo di me: I have two kids etc. Questa cosa li rassicura. Il fatto che loro colgano che tu non hai problemi a parlare di te, va bene. Ma allo stesso tempo meglio non chiederglielo. A volte ho chiesto della famiglia e mi rendevo conto che pensare lì era motivo di sofferenza. Non lo faccio più. Arrivano a parlare di sé quando li hai conquistati. Di alcuni allievi sono arrivata a sapere morte e miracoli: mi hanno anche mostrato le ferite di guerra. Questi racconti avvengono sempre in lingua veicolare. In due casi mi è capitato ed è stato significativo che usassero alcune parole in italiano perché ci tenevano che io capissi tutto. A un certo punto iniziano a vederti come alleato...anche se alleato dà di guerra. Come vicino, come una persona di cui si possono fidare.

The excerpts reveal the perspectives of three IFL teachers as they pertain to the development of basic language skills in multilingual classes where students are asylum seekers, refugees or unaccompanied minors. The emergence of teachers' and students' personal involvement in this context reflects the distinctive features of the narrative inquiry method and of the ethnographic approach as introduced in section 2. The rationale here is based on the idea that when migrant students enter the classroom IFL teachers enhance their specific belongings and stories, and allow them "the right to narrate." Telling their own stories protects democratic practice by creating a classroom in which students have equitable access to learning and in which they are not dehumanized by having to accept ascribed identities.

On the basis of such assumptions, it is particularly interesting to examine how the IFL teachers make sense of their teaching and learning experiences in relation to various discourses of autobiography and self-translation. Questions and answers were collected in order to show the teachers' attitudes towards their role as cultural mediators and educators, their awareness of cross-linguistic practices and socio-cultural conflicts, and the incidence of autobiography and self-translation. Throughout the whole research, attention was focused on four main aspects: creation of trust, autobiography/self-translation, linguistic dynamics, and teaching practices. As already mentioned earlier, the creation of trust appears as a *conditio sine qua non* in all interviews, as well as the necessity to establish a relationship with the students, based on shared autobiographical elements (when possible). The peculiarity of such a teaching environment helps the teachers develop a stronger sense of awareness of their role as mediators and educators.

As it stands here, the exchange of autobiographical material is important for both the relationship and the learning practice. Indeed, in different ways

and to various degrees, all of the interviewed teachers consider teaching as a life practice and reflect on their personal engagement in the job. Since the ultimate objective of Italian L2 courses for refugees and asylum seekers is the acquisition of a sufficient level of written and spoken language in order to interact in the social context of the country, the teachers have to mediate between this and the human factor, urging them to consider biographical aspects. In this process, they become personally involved as human beings and start to share, rethink and reshape their own pedagogies and autobiographies. This is particularly easy to observe when they describe the language teaching/learning dynamics in the following terms:

T3: Allora, sì, è complesso. Io insegno italiano in inglese e chiedo loro di “think in Italian” mentre io sto pensando in inglese! Quando le due parti si auto-traducono si crea una lingua di mezzo. Il codice che devi trovare sta lì dentro. Tutti adattiamo la lingua che stiamo usando per farci capire.

The result of such a cutting-edge dynamics is an unconventional form of self-translation that holds in its interstices the double threshold of a contagious and unexpected hospitality in a new language. In the IFL student-teacher interactions, an unprecedented vision of language and language contact is unfolded with different linguistic and cultural heritages, thus problematizing the traditional understanding of language as a social projection of territorial conviviality held together by shared behavioural norms, beliefs and values. Indeed, this old view of language originated at a time when society consisted of human populations confined within geographical boundaries and structured by local imaginings of their social identity. As a consequence, self-translation can be also conceived here as a form of translanguaging practice that lead both teachers and students to go beyond the mother tongue. This move may situate them in the path of a new generation of speakers who experience and narrate from a post-monolingual condition.

Crucially, crossing language boundaries and shifting from mother tongues to Italian and vice versa is experienced by both IFL teachers and students as an intimate process of daily self-translation or of translation of themselves in the double time dimension of an active intercultural citizenship and of a new space for shaping identity. Echoing Rainier Grutman and Trish Van Bolderen (2014), we must admit that nowadays self-translation¹⁴ deserves close attention because in the context of migration, mobility and intercultural exchanges it can help to raise critical questions and assumptions about translation. Indeed, by drawing attention to the overlap between its

¹⁴Today, the definition of the term “self-translation” (or “auto-translation”) has been extensively studied by a number of researchers, such as Boyd (2016), Evseeva and Kozlova (2016), and Hokenson (2007).

metaphorical and literal meanings, self-translation is not only a question of texts, but also a question of what happens to the subject in the overlap between languages and cultures: it is a translation of the self, and thus of the self in translation. The potentiality of such an epistemological move may be the catalyst for positing self-translation as an important and more nuanced domain for scholarly engagement in language teaching in multicultural classrooms that may privilege the investigation of daily experience and the modes of expression used by such translingual learners. Consequently, the constant act of self-translation, which is unavoidable in such multilingual contexts, can be seen as a possibility to explore multilingualism and hybridity, a way to give voice to plural autobiographies and to enhance intercultural communication-oriented pedagogies.

3.3. Use of reflexivity and improvisation as central distinctive factors in IFL teaching

The third thematic core is based on the interviewed teachers' testimonies that report on reflexivity and improvisation as central elements to IFL teaching. By narrating her own training experience, one of the teachers sheds light on the fact that the lack of a specific language training is often underestimated since it has been traditionally relegated to the field of volunteering within Catholic or non-profit organizations:

I: Qual è il titolo di studio?

T2:¹⁵ Ho una laurea specialistica in Filosofia e Storia delle idee dopodiché l'insegnamento dell'italiano agli stranieri è nato come volontariato. In seguito ho conseguito la certificazione CEDILS [...] Pensare di poter insegnare italiano solo perché si è madre lingua italiana è la cosa più stupida che si possa fare, si può anche avere una predisposizione, però se non si hanno gli strumenti o delle indicazioni precise, si fanno dei grossissimi errori. Quindi, questo è il mio percorso formativo [...] Nell'ambito del volontariato, solitamente promosso da associazioni cattoliche ma non solo, come vi dicevo, spesso ci sono queste improvvisazioni, ma d'altro canto io stessa ho improvvisato creativamente la mia prima lezione. Ve la racconto... Entro in classe e comincio a "didattizzare" l'aula: prendendo spunto dai colori dalle pareti ho spiegato i colori, ho insegnato il nome degli oggetti presenti in inglese e in italiano e poi soprattutto le frasi più utili, come "Sto male, ho bisogno di aiuto". I beneficiari all'inizio sembrano spaesati, poi si lasciano andare e si fanno sempre più coinvolgere fino a mostrare grande entusiasmo per le mie improvvisazioni. Questo è stato il mio esordio come insegnante d'italiano, poi capisci che si ha bisogno di molti più strumenti e non solo la lingua. Rimane importante il fare riferimento a quello che si ha intorno e quindi ho pensato di specializzarmi in questo perché mi piaceva parecchio.

¹⁵ Teacher 2 – 32 years old – Degree in Philosophy – CEDILS.

I: L'altra domanda riguarda la motivazione, ma in realtà hai già risposto.

T2: Se volete vi posso anche specificare che impegnarsi per fornire alle persone uno strumento che possono spendere per inserirsi positivamente in una società, secondo me è molto filosofico. La mia concezione della filosofia è assolutamente concreta. Per questo la mia formazione è così variegata e non è strano per me insegnare italiano, anche se ho studiato filosofia. Devo anche alla mia formazione filosofica l'uso che faccio dell'auto-riflessione ed auto-critica nella mia pratica di insegnamento dell'italiano come L2 in classi multiculturali in cui cerco di incoraggiare una trasformazione personale e sociale dei partecipanti.

The excerpt is an example of the extent to which IFL teachers resort to reflexivity as a self-critical process when approaching the complexities of developing and applying intercultural communicative competence in foreign language education. Such a process may coincide with what Byram (1997) defines in terms of “critical cultural awareness”, that is an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries (p. 53). The development of criticality has been taken up by others (Byram, Guilherme 2000), and Houghton (2012) argues that criticality triggers and helps to manage personal and social transformation through intercultural dialogue. In this perspective, ‘transformation’ coincides exactly with what the teacher states above, that is, a process of conscious and deliberate personal and social transformation flowing from the critical exploration, analysis and evaluation of self and other. It becomes central to intercultural citizenship experience in the (foreign) language classroom when students in one country (or one cultural group) create a sense of transnational identification with learners in another country (or another cultural group) and develop a new transnational way of thinking and acting.

A further research issue which emerges from the narrative analysis of the excerpt is the teacher’s resort to improvisation in teaching as a way to repair or compensate for a lack of specific training or competence, which is not intended to be negative. Indeed, as the teacher states, improvisation is a source for creativity and a tool for developing students’ competence in the foreign language. Improvisation in English is the act of using alternative resources to facilitate instruction for teaching wherever there is a lack of specific first-hand teaching aids (Tikon 2006). After decades of educational research, it has been discovered that improvisation offers unique benefits for certain types of learning. In effective English Language teaching/learning, the topic and the flow of the class emerge from the collaboration between teacher and student. Social constructivists have found that the unpredictability of multiple competing voices is what makes improvisation a uniquely effective teaching tool and an unscripted, unrehearsed, spontaneous set of actions in

response to minimal directions from a teacher, usually including statements of who one is, where one is and what one is doing there (Bearison *et al.* 1986; Cobb 1995; Doise, Mugny 1984; Landy 1982; Perret-Clermont 1980). Despite all this, it must be considered that at the beginning improvisation for teaching purposes in an IFL classroom is not always easy to be implemented (see above: “I beneficiari all’inizio sembrano spaesati, poi si lasciano andare e si fanno sempre più coinvolgere fino a mostrare grande entusiasmo per le mie improvvisazioni”) and students will be hesitant and shy to participate in the activities. But after a few sessions they will become more enthusiastic, and there will be a phenomenal improvement in their confidence level. Finally, improvisation provides learners with opportunities not only to improve their language communication skills, but also to improve their confidence, which will ultimately lead to the development of positive concepts.

4. Conclusions

The data analyzed for this study confirm that a constant questioning of the teaching/learning process and practices allow teachers in the migratory context to monitor their own attitudes, feelings and intercultural competence, and permit migrant students to establish a more useful relationship with the external environment, which is achieved also through the use of ELF. In these vulnerable situations, ELF is used as a contact language no longer embedded in a strict set of standard rules, but in multiple nuances in terms of phonetics, lexicon and morphosyntax due to the contamination of global cultural flows. The use of ELF also stands as an effective strategy to prepare students to use a variety of forms of communicative interaction that help to find a way out of cultural misunderstandings and conflicts in intercultural settings, as much as to demonstrate communicative flexibility and creativity. In this light, the act of self-translation, which is unavoidable in multilingual IFL classes, can be seen as a way to give voice to plural autobiographies and to enhance intercultural communication-oriented pedagogy. The practice of teaching has been investigated here as a narrative phenomenon – with specific attention paid to the positive implication of self-reflexivity in educational and humanitarian terms – that is able to shed light on: the shaping of IFL classes as the place in which teachers can activate intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding as strongly advocated by the Council of Europe in the *White Paper*; the development of basic language skills in multilingual classes where students are asylum seekers, refugees or unaccompanied minors; the practice of reflexivity as a self-critical process when approaching the complexities of developing and applying intercultural communicative competence in foreign language education. Narrative indeed has proven to serve as a medium and

method in IFL classrooms in the migratory context, allowing for meaningful engagement with migrant students' experiences and with their self-perception and self-representation in different situations. Finally, their narratives are a powerful mixture of interactive discussions and interweaving issues concerning monoculturalism and interculturalism in IFL classrooms, multidimensional identities, the tensions between the local and the global, and the relevance of the migration experience.

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A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF CASES OF ELF REFORMULATION OF EUROPEAN AND ITALIAN LEGAL TEXTS ON MIGRATION¹

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Abstract – The present chapter focuses on a parallel corpus of legal texts from the EU and the recently issued Italian legal text dealing with Migration, the so called “Decreto Sicurezza bis” (“Safety Decree”), of June 2019, and it aims to point out the textual difficulties arising from the interpretation of such legal documents. This is all the more true if we think of the technical limitations and practical difficulties that reading a legal text may pose to a layperson using English as a lingua franca (ELF). Unlike previous studies dealing with the same topic of Immigration (Provenzano 2008), here the focus is on a small corpus from the EU and an Italian text, with the aim of defining cultural similarities at the level of text production. Furthermore, the texts are also relevant to the receivers and, yet, they are often likely to cause unintelligibility. Hence, both the EU texts and the Italian one are here submitted to a process of reformulation, as preliminary to the translation stage, in order to make them more accessible to international receivers (Widdowson 1984).

Keywords: ELF; EU Legal Discourse; Italian Legal Discourse; accessibility; reformulation strategies.

1. Introduction

The present chapter introduces a cognitive-functional approach to the interpretation of a small corpus of legal texts from the EU and an Italian text, all of them dealing with Migration. The objective is to present relevant case studies in terms of the functional characteristics of such texts, as well as of their discursual shortcomings. Unlike previous studies (Provenzano 2008, 2015) on which the present one however draws, the main focus is especially on: a) the textual limitations posed by the original EU texts, and (b) the pragmatic parallelisms between them and the Italian one in focus, the so-called “Decreto Sicurezza bis”, “Safety decree” (June 2019). The main claim of the study is indeed that practically these texts are unlikely to be accessible

¹ Although the authors worked on the planning of the article, Mariarosaria Provenzano worked on sections 1, 2, 2.1, 4, 5.1.1; Chiara Capone worked on sections 3, 5.1.6.

in the way they are drafted, in that they may show spaces of unintelligibility and even fail in their communicative aims (see, for instance, the use of the passive voice in context).

Accessibility is indeed the crucial theoretical concept that justifies the study, and is based on Widdowson's (1984) interpretation of meaning in context, in the sense that the role of the reader's knowledge in making the text viable is considered crucial. This underlies the study and also justifies it in probing the actual levels of accessibility of these texts by proposing an in-depth, comparative and critical analysis. Such levels of text accessibility are, thus, to be probed through the application of a multidimensional perspective based on Critical Discourse Analysis, as will be shown in the following sections, and grounded on 'Schema Theory' (Carrell, Eisterhold 1983). Finally, the study suggests that, since this is mainly an analytical work, a further step in the empirical work could be considered in order to verify the results of the study.

2. Theoretical background

At the basis of the present section there is the need to focus on a reconsideration of the legal discourse of the EU regarding Immigration and Political Asylum, integrating such an awareness with a focus on a new Italian legal text recently issued (in 2019), the so-called 'Decreto Sicurezza bis', whose specific provisions concern limitations to the entry of immigrants, especially asylum seekers, into the Italian State. As this is the main concept, or 'gist' (van Dijk 1980) of the discourse, the aim of the analysis is to point out the strategies applied in the phase of text production, and see how they reflect the arbitrary ideological choices of the drafter.

As generally known in the context of legal discourse studies, and in particular in the domain of Western legal discourse (Bathia *et al.* 2003), recurrent and characteristic features of this language are: prevalent use of passive clauses or impersonal ones, formal Tenor in association with other written-register modes, which result in making the overall text complex and inaccessible to non-experts. Thus, the main task of the analyst is to verify such layers of inaccessibility and, as previously mentioned, make the actual receivers of the texts, in the case of the present study involving both immigrants and asylum seekers but also the original text producers, aware of the communicative gaps generated by this textual production. The nature of these gaps in communication, (for example, in the formalization and thematization of prescriptions concerning eligibility to entry), will be explored in the section of the analysis. In the following sub-sections, instead, the focus will be on aspects of the theoretical background which are considered relevant to the understanding of the context, i.e. interpretative

models justifying a cognitive-functional approach to text analysis.

2.1. Theoretical model: de Beaugrande and Dressler's standards

The aim of the present section is to focus on the main aspects of the theoretical model underlying the linguistic analysis, in particular on those ones informing the communicative aspects involved in the process of interpretation of the texts. Based on this claim, the theoretical model that is described here is the one by de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981), which is functional to the understanding of the texts in that it provides some textual parameters to be applied to legal communication, which are: coherence, cohesion, informativity and intertextuality, whose role is described below.

Coherence is considered in the perspective of functional meaning, involving both semantic sense and, more extensively, the meaning potentialities underlying texts, as well as comprehension requirements. With specific reference to the present study, coherence is also to be intended as the meaning assigned to specialized concepts, such as ‘application for asylum’, which is to be considered as new and potentially incomprehensible to implied receivers. As mentioned in the previous sections, coherence in association with a passive voice still represents a limit in the text production and, eventually, will affect the translation process.

The second parameter, ‘cohesion’, is thus to be considered in association with ‘coherence’, in that by defining the syntactic organization of the elements in the passive voice, the passive form displaces the actual logical Subject that should perform the action collocating it at the end of a clause – or omitting it – to the detriment of the ‘beneficiary’ of the process (Halliday 1994). In this perspective, the two standards of textuality co-create an unfavourable textual environment, if the actual receiver of the text is taken into account. Although it is an old technical issue in legal discourse, such depersonalization of the register would represent a serious shortcoming, also limiting informativity.

Intertextuality is also a relevant textual parameter to be considered, which particularly applies to the Italian case study, insofar as this aspect affects the whole comprehension process. In details, specific examples connected to intertextuality are pointed out in the analysis, so as to show the effects that the surface structures of the paragraphs connected through intertextuality may have in terms of comprehension. Just to exemplify here, some crucial technical concepts concerning practical life are considered: not only terms as ‘application for asylum’, but also other similar ones such as ‘permit for humanitarian motives’, or paragraphs connected to ‘health issues’.

Hence, before passing to the ‘methodology’ section and pointing out the aims of the analysis, the next section will explore and illustrate the

geopolitical context in which the selection of texts has occurred, by primarily referring to the official texts of the EU and the Italian law.

3. Contextual legal background

The legal documents taken into account for analysis are representative of the International EU background, which is all the more recent in scope and actualization if we think of some specific documents such as the Dublin Regulation, which is here considered in its lastly approved version as of 2013. Such a diachronic approach to the drafting of the Regulation is relevant insofar as this may introduce the practical/procedural aims of this legal text within the space of the European Union, as well as its textually evident shortcomings despite its previous version of 2003.

The selected texts, based on the *European Charter of Fundamental Rights* (2000) as well as on the Dublin Regulation, may affect interpretation and, thus, require both a focus on (a) equivalence in translation, and (b) a whole process of text reformulation, not simply of a translation. As regards the first text, it legally recognizes and consolidates the rights of European citizenship, while the second document textualizes the rights for an asylum seeker to get his/her asylum request processed. In a few words, both texts are considered because they provide formal guarantees to an International asylum seeker asking for asylum in Europe, and such an aim is represented as opposed to the formal and textual schemata within the recently approved text in Italy, the ‘Decreto Sicurezza bis’ (in Italy the normative reference texts on immigration are Law n. 189 of 2002, that is also known as the Bossi-Fini law and the consolidated text on immigration passed with Decree n. 286 of July 25, 1998. This text has undergone constant changes, the most recent of which is ‘Decree’ of June 14, 2019, n. 53, also known as ‘Decreto Sicurezza bis’). The main problem in the ‘Decreto Sicurezza bis’ is in the reading and interpretation both as far as the formal structure of the text is concerned and in the development of the content. Analysing these aspects is the objective of the following sections.

4. Methodology

The aim of this Methodology section is to point out the processes that allow for an overall reformulation process to overcome the original conditions of text limitations. The method applied is Critical Discourse Analysis, aiming at tackling such textual gaps and discontinuities especially in the terms of specialized concepts and ‘intertextuality’ links that make legal texts more complex (de Beaugrande, Dressler 1981). This qualitative methodology is,

thus, applied in the perspective of the translation process as a means of intercultural mediation (Guido 2008), which entails a consistent renegotiation process by which some Western specialized concepts are to be translated in a functional perspective. Selected case studies from the Italian corpus of the ‘Decreto Sicurezza bis’ aim to show such a need for reformulation, for instance with words or concepts requiring a ‘simplification’ or an ‘extension’.

Another relevant analytical approach is represented by the identification of the textual ‘macrostructures’ (van Dijk 1980) – i.e., the ‘macrorules’ for text simplification enacting an overall process of reformulation, insofar as they may allow a reduction of the original text complexities and favour the comprehension process. These rules, defined as ‘Deletion’, ‘Generalization’, and ‘Construction’, are considered useful in the light of the reader’s accessibility and may lead to an ELF-based process of reformulation. In the ‘analysis’ section, case studies based on the application of these rules are qualitatively considered, so as to focus on reformulation and to propose pragmatic alternatives to the original ones. In this perspective, reformulation is meant as an intra-lingual translation (Provenzano 2008, 2015).

5. Analysis and reformulation processes

The selected texts are considered in both European and Italian texts as mostly relevant to the practical needs of the implied audience concerned, i.e. made up of immigrants and refugees travelling to Europe. An important element is represented by some cultural similarities associated with the pragmatic configurations of the texts, in the sense that preferred syntactic structures represent a pragmatic choice (see, for instance, the use of an agentless passive voice). In the following extracts, the focus is thus on a comparative analysis between the original legal texts and their reformulations, so as to highlight the relevant changes occurred and the possible advantages brought about through simplification. The texts analysed are: the Dublin Regulation III, on the one hand, and the Italian ‘Safety Decree’ so as to show the conceptual and the structural differences between them, which also are indicative of an ideological ‘stance’ (Fairclough 1995).

To start with, the ‘Dublin’ text aims to guarantee the right to transit to third-country citizens and it is particularly interesting to look at the textualization of the norms. Below is an extract from Art. 17 of the Regulation dealing with ‘taking charge’ of an application for asylum from a Member State. From the procedural point of view, the clause implies the possibility for an asylum seeker to move from a State to another one so as to get a request processed; from a linguistic viewpoint, however, the use of the non-finite verbal voice as a pragmatic marker of the norm would make the

interpretation more accessible to an expert in the field rather than to a non-expert (Gotti 2005; Widdowson 1984). In fact, the implicit Tenor and the lack of the logical subject expressing the process represent a recognized aspect of the modern discourse of the EU in the field of Immigration and Political Asylum, as shown in recent studies (Guido 2008). On the basis of these studies, it is possible to state that the lack of a subject could also imply in these contexts, serious effects on the reception and application of a norm, thereby triggering the need for a process of reformulation.

In fact, the whole co-text where the above clause from Art.17 is situated, reports that “an application for asylum *has been lodged*” and that “a MS considers that another MS is responsible”. Hence, the lack of the Subject performing the action due to the passive structures makes discourse interpretation harder, and even unacceptable from the viewpoint of the intended receiver, i.e. an asylum seeker. This ‘conventional’ usage of the passive voice in European texts is thus to be seen as a pragmatic marker of this written register, depersonalizing the speech act. What follows is a proposal of reformulation meant as a communicative strategy for simplifying discourse, which is also the essence of ELF. The reformulation could be based on the addition of an Agent and be displayed as such: “an application has been lodged *by an asylum seeker*”. This addition, which is allowed through the application of van Dijk’s (1980) macrorule of Extension may thus make the text more accessible to the receiver. Similarly, there is another text considered for analysis, which is the Italian ‘Bossi-Fini’ law (2002), that is currently still applied in the domain of immigrants’ work.

In particular, the text considers the need for the immigrant to hold a permit to stay as the legal requisite linked to the working contract (Provenzano 2008). As mentioned, it’s possible to identify some similarities in the shaping of European and Italian texts especially when talking about the *permit to stay*. Below is an example from art.5 of the BF:

«Possono soggiornare nel territorio dello Stato gli stranieri entrati regolarmente ai sensi dell’art. 4, che siano muniti di carta di soggiorno».
 (“*Foreigners can stay in Italy if they have entered* regularly and only if they have a valid *residence permit (document)*.”)

The text in brackets represents a proposal of ELF reformulation, in the sense of an extended retextualization of the original Italian text, in that informativity is rendered in a different, even more direct style than the parallel Italian text, as it is visible through the elements in italics. Thus, ELF can be perceived in the perspective of simplification, which does not mean to reduce, but in fact to extend it syntactically (“*if they have entered*”), and also through a paraphrasis (“*valid residence permit (document)*”) and a different Subject-verb order (“*Foreigners can stay*”).

In addition, the main difficulty in the Bossi-Fini concerns intertextuality. For example, in the Bossi-Fini law the articles of law have a complex structure due to intertextuality, as in the formula “ai sensi del decreto legislativo n. 186 del 1998”; “as of the decree n.186 as of 1998”), or in other cases through the insertion of a ‘Note’ to the article (‘Nota all’art.’), where the entire updated version of the article is displayed.

Intertextuality has been identified as one of the most typical characteristics that shape the framework of western legislation and the Bossi-Fini law represents one of such examples, because it is rich in references to previous laws or other government documents, and also anaphoric references or cataphorical to other articles.

It is interesting to note that the text has two intertextual references: it recalls art. 4 of the same law, for the purpose of identifying immigrants as "regular", and to international agreements governing the procedures for the regular issue of the residence permit.

Furthermore, the complexity of the text also derives from the terms used as verbal constructs (different past and present participles with a nominalization value: *stranieri entrati; che siano muniti; Stato appartenente*) and the presence of uncommon words such as the expression "titoli equipollenti" (“equivalent titles”).

5.1. “The Italian Safety Decree”

As previously anticipated, the text of the ‘decree’ has been considered because contextually it is linked to the previous text of the Bossi-Fini, but in fact it extends it and cohesively redefines it in terms of the content and the particular legal functions. Indeed it restricts the opportunity for immigrants to enter the national State and thus represents from the normative viewpoint a limitation as compared to the International corpus taken into account. The point in the analysis is to see whether such a text may be reformulated so as to make such limitations more accessible and to avoid, where possible, spaces of misinterpretation.

5.1.1. ELF reformulation processes

In this section, the focus is placed on some extracts taken from the ‘Decree’ with a suggestion for a reformulation taking into account van Dijk’s macrorules. This model should aim to simplify discourse especially in this context, where the supposed receiver is expected to be aware of the Western frames of reference, such as ‘intertextuality’ and the specialized concepts embedded within. The first case considered is the one about ‘special permits’, as referred to in Art.1 of the decree, which restricts interpretation by disregarding monoreferentiality (Gotti 2005). Below the complete extracts

from the Italian text, the unofficial English translation and the ELF proposal are given:

- 1) “Disposizioni in materia di permessi di soggiorno per motivi umanitari e disciplina di *casì speciali di permessi di soggiorno temporanei* per esigenze di carattere umanitario.” (my italics)
- 2) “Provisions for residence permits for humanitarian protection, and regulations on *special cases* of temporary permits to stay for humanitarian protection.” (my italics)
- 3) “*Special case permits* are meant as temporary permits to stay.” (my italics)

If comparing the three versions, two elements need to be pointed out: one concerns the absence of an official translation of this text, while the other relates to the parameter of monoreferentiality attributed to the issue of ‘*special case permit*’. In essence, this adjective ‘special’ may limit interpretation as for its biased nature, i.e. its ‘speaker-oriented’ perspective. In the proposal of reformulation, the thematization of the clause may address the audience towards the main concept and propose its definition. Finally, this redefinition is also allowed through the creation of a new sentence based on the use of the relational verb ‘to be meant as’.

As concerns the second case study based on the decree, the focus is as well on a lexical and textual aspect. Specifically, the main issue is about the lexis used in the definitions of the different categories of ‘request for protection’. As they represent typical examples of ‘definitions’ and are introduced in the first part of the Decree, these lexical definitions are embedded within repetitions of almost similar concepts, such as ‘request for asylum’, ‘subsidiary protection’, ‘request for humanitarian protection’, that are finally substituted by only one category (“subsidiary protection”). This gets the effect of redundancy and is of no use for the non-expert reader of the text. Hence, the need for a different proposal which has been developed as follows:

Art. 1 (This is a) ‘permit for subsidiary protection’.

Such a reformulation proposes a reduction of the content in favour of the only category allowed within the general one of ‘protection’ and this is based also on van Dijk’s macrorule of Deletion.

There is finally a third case study that has been considered and is based mainly on intertextuality. Unlike the previous cases, this parameter makes the text hardly accessible to non-experts, as can be seen from the following statement:

“(art.1) le parole “per motivi umanitari” sono sostituite dalle seguenti: “per

cure mediche nonché' dei permessi di soggiorno di cui agli articoli 18"; (...) (art.18) "Il personale dei Corpi e servizi di polizia municipale (...) accede, (...), al Centro elaborazione dati (...) al fine di verificare eventuali provvedimenti di ricerca o di rintraccio esistenti nei confronti delle persone controllate."²

The above text should in fact provide relevant information as regards the 'permit to stay', by means of an intertextual link, but disregards either the simplicity and the Relevance parameter by Grice (1975). In fact, it ends up with a focus on a different topic from the one expected, precisely with 'people under suspect', representing in fact the immigrants. In order to avoid possible misunderstandings due to this intertextual link, a suggestion for reformulation has been advanced.

Here is the text reformulated through ELF, here meant as a variation of English accessible to international non-specialized readers:

(from art.1) "terms as "humanitarian permits" are replaced by the term "permit for health care services".

The above example represents another application of van Dijk's model, specifically of the Deletion macrorule, because of deleting intertextual links, ("permessi di cui all'art.18"; "other residential permits"). Also the remaining part of the paragraph could be deleted if the implied receivers of the text are taken to be the immigrants, and not 'people under suspect', as quite arbitrarily referred to in the text. As previously anticipated, the application of van Dijk's macrorules, particularly of Deletion, could allow a reduction of the content and provide clear information. In this specific case, deleting the whole intertextual link to art.18 could be a strategy for achieving this aim, and to render the legal content more accessible interculturally. To conclude, this is also an interesting example of how to reconceptualize Western legal discourse through ELF, i.e. by adapting translation according to the readers' culturally-marked legal experience and specific aims (Provenzano 2008).

In fact, although this is quite an old issue in the Western discourse analysis, translating this kind of texts could still represent a challenge, if attention is not paid on the whole context, and not simply to the text producer's background. From this perspective, it would be possible to rethink even the standards of textuality, in particular 'coherence', and to see how to apply simplification processes for improving it. In practice, the above example of 'residence permit' is clear evidence for such a technical issue and the reformulation proposals are meant to achieve this aim. As a conclusive

² Unofficial translation: "the words 'humanitarian permits' are substituted by the following: "health care permits or other residential permits as of art.18. (...) The local police may access the computerized database so as to verify any research measure, or identify people under suspect".

remark, it would be possible to describe ELF here as a connection between language, culture and communication, in the sense of rethinking the non-standard uses of English within the domain of legal discourse as an intercultural issue.

6. Conclusions

This last section aims to point out the main results of the work of the analysis and the reformulation produced on the parallel corpora of texts from the EU and the recently approved ‘decree’ in Italy, the ‘Safety decree’ as of 2019. Starting from the rationale, based on the assumption of a culturally grounded understanding of these Western texts, CDA as a methodology has shown how difficult communication may result within these contexts, especially when dealing with normative issues concerning ‘entry’ or ‘permits to stay’ for immigrants. Besides a concern for the international legal domain of migrations, the communicative dimensions are particularly relevant within the Italian context nowadays, with this decree restricting, even textually, the accessibility of foreign nationals into the Italian State.

The awareness of this communicative issue has, thus, led to the application of an analytical and integrated model based on both Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis and van Dijk’s macrorules. Through this integration, it has been possible to point out the textual limitations characterizing the shaping of the parallel corpora analysed, and then to propose a reformulation model accounting for the communicative gaps of the original texts.

From this perspective of discourse analysis, ELF has been considered as enabling a new interactional approach between the participants to the communicative act. In fact, the focus being not on an empirical context, but mainly on the stages of the analysis, this procedure has allowed visibility to the pragmatic failure of the original texts, both the European and the Italian ones, and has suggested that a parallel reformulation proposal could be carried out to enhance accessibility.

Furthermore, the use of ELF would make it possible to implement the immigration provisions of the Lisbon Treaty: to allow integration. It is added that the simplicity of English could lead to an improvement in the bureaucratic language and in the way of speaking of officials to the advantage not only of foreigners but also of European citizens.

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THE IMPACT OF ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA ON EMOTIONS

The role of individuals' native language vs. second language¹

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Abstract – This chapter aims to contribute to the current understanding of how languages impact the emotions elicited by textual messages. Grounding on the *episodic trace theory* – a theoretical framework originally developed in the field of cognitive psychology – we examine the role of ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) in affecting the emotional reactions of individuals having different linguistic backgrounds. Across two studies, we investigate the role of ELF in international communication by focusing on the dichotomy of native (L1) vs. second language (L2). Study 1, conducted online through the use of self-reported measures, shows that the use of ELF arouses more positive emotions among individuals having English as a native language (L1), rather than as a second language (L2). Study 2 employs an *Automated Facial Coding* (AFC) software, namely FaceReader™, able to track human basic emotions, and confirms how textual messages in L1 produces a greater emotional reaction than L2. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications of the findings, followed by some directions for future research.

Keywords: ELF; emotions; neuromarketing; intercultural communication.

1. Introduction

English is actually recognized as the new lingua franca. The pervasive use of English as a world language represents one of the most evident aspects of globalization. Regardless of native language, consumers are continuously exposed to marketing messages in English through TV, advertisements and the Internet. Although it allows the conveyance of the same information to an international audience, consumers' emotional reaction may differ with regard to a number of factors. Indeed, prior academic research has emphasized the need to improve the current knowledge of how languages influence consumer response to marketing messages (Johar *et al.* 2006). To this end, past research

¹ Although this paper is the result of collaboration between the authors, Cristian Rizzo is responsible for the sections 1 and 2, Virginia Barbarossa for section 3, and Antonio Mileti for section 4.

has stressed the perceived emotionality of marketing messages delivered in different languages (Puntoni *et al.* 2009). This chapter focuses on consumers' native language (L1) and second language (L2), and examines the emotional reactions conveyed by such stimuli.

Marketing messages are increasingly delivered in a language that is different from consumers' native tongue. Among the others, this represents the case of tourists' accommodation whose marketing initiatives are targeted to an international audience with the aim to convey positive feelings and emotions. However, consumers exposed to these messages may differ significantly from each other with reference to a number of factors, such as ethnicity and cultural contexts. As a consequence, the study of how such stimuli affect the perceived emotionality of consumers speaking different languages could allow the tailoring of marketing plans suitable for each group of consumers.

The present research contributes to clarifying the impact of language type on consumers' positive emotion (i.e., happiness) in two ways. First, as previous studies (Puntoni *et al.* 2009) that examined the perceived emotionality of marketing messages in consumers' native language (L1) versus second language (L2), study 1 builds on *Episodic Trace Theory* (Raaijmakers, Shiffrin 1992) to examine possible differences across tourists. This theory postulates that the retrieval of words encountered in consumers' memory lead to experience a greater emotionality. The application of this framework in the field of linguistics has already allowed explanations of how textual information (e.g., marketing slogans) expressed in consumers' native language (L1) are perceived as more emotional than messages in the second language (L2) (Puntoni *et al.* 2009). Consistent with this finding, this study aims to show how more positive emotions are experienced when individuals speaking English as a native language (L1) read a written text in ELF (English as a Lingua Franca). By examining the case of Italian old manor farms, we provided evidence that tourists having English as a native language are happier when reading a textual description of these farms in ELF.

Second, study 2 provides more insightful explanations of this mechanism by adopting a neuromarketing approach to study consumers' emotional reactions. This research applied an automated facial coding (AFC) software, namely FaceReader™ (Noldus 2014), that is a neurophysiologic tool able to track human basic emotions. By creating a 3D Active Appearance Model (AAM) (Cootes, Taylor 2004), the software captures a person's face and compute a score for each analysed emotion on a scale from 0 to 1 (see Van Kuilenburg *et al.* 2005). Typically, FaceReader™ recognizes seven categories of basic emotions: neutral, happiness, sad, angry, scared, surprised, and disgusted (Ekman, Cordano 2011; Ekman *et al.* 1969). In an experiment setting, facial data were collected through a remote webcam. In the last years,

research that examined consumers' emotion via FaceReader™ have dramatically increased due to the possibility of dealing with the issues of self-awareness (Pryor *et al.* 1977) and social-desirability (Arnold, Feldman 1981). As a consequence, its application has proliferated in a variety of research contexts, such as social psychology (Chentsova-Dutton, Tsai 2010), marketing (Danner *et al.* 2014; De Wijk *et al.* 2014; Garcia-Burgos, Zamora 2013; Lewinski *et al.* 2014), and technology (Goldberg 2014). In line with Lewinski *et al.* (2014), we focused on happiness as it represents the final aim – in terms of perceived emotion – of marketing communication (Belanche *et al.* 2013). For instance, many brands (i.e., Coca Cola) choose happiness as emotion to arouse through advertising strategies (Grisaffe, Nguyen 2011). Overall, the study of tourists' emotional reactions with the support of this neuromarketing tool provided meaningful explanations of the results obtained in study 1.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. ELF (*English as a Lingua Franca*)

The acronym ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) concerns the use of English in intercultural and international communication among people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Kachru 1992). ELF was initially used in the British post-colonial areas (or Anglophone countries) due to commercial aims (Kachru 2005). As a consequence, the use of English proliferated beyond the boundaries of native-speakers' countries subsequently leading to the formation of variations of English used in other territories. Therefore, ELF is characterized by a hybrid nature due to the impossibility to separate cultural knowledge from linguistic ones (MacKenzie 2014; Seidlhofer 2011). Based on this reasoning, Ostler (2010) defined the “lingua franca” as a convenience language that originates from the interaction between the language and cultural factors of non-native speakers. This language is grew up spontaneously, and its features allowed it to be used both in local and global contexts (Jenkins, 2000, 2007). Many researchers highlighted its practical utility and, as a consequence, its social spread (Jenkins 2000, 2007; Seidlhofer 2001).

Many studies (Lowenberg 1993, 2000) have tried to differentiate Anglophone norms, which are used by highly educated people, and English of non-native speakers. ELF is the language used among non-native speakers, especially in social and professional setting, and it has many differences with Standard English. Blommaert (2015) noted that the use of a specific language, such as English, is characterized by many aspects (i.e. varieties, registers, styles) that need to be analysed in their effective contexts of use.

Elder and Davies (2006) and McNamara (2011) pointed out how ELF has changed over the last decade because of its use by people speaking different languages. Indeed, ELF is an important means of communication among non-native speakers, both in formal and informal social contexts, as it does not only allow the exchange of information, but also cordial relationships among people (Leung, Street 2014). The main feature of ELF is, therefore, its nature grounded on multilingualism, so its assessment must go beyond socially-constructed languages and educational systems (Jenkins 2015).

ELF is significantly influenced by non-native speakers and their culture. Such a flexibility determined a growing numbers of non-native speakers using ELF as a common and useful means of communication (Seidlhofer 2001, Jenkins 2007).

To date, globalization processes are pushing linguistic evolution in the direction of English as ‘Lingua Franca’, since most interactions in English are among non-native speakers (Jenkins 2012; McNamara 2014). Therefore, the study of the consequences of the diffusion of ELF in the marketing communication acquires a remarkable importance.

Two different streams of research analysed the effect of ELF on emotions and individuals’ behaviour (Costa, Sebastián-Gallés 2014; Pavlenko 2012). The first builds on the link between lexicon-semantic representation and emotion regulation (Benelli *et al.* 2012; Berkman, Lieberman 2009; Burklund *et al.* 2014; Kalisch 2009; Kohn *et al.* 2014; Kross *et al.* 2014; Messina *et al.* 2015; Morawetz *et al.* 2016). According to this approach, lingua franca shows a limited emotional content because of the low frequency of emotional words (Opitz, Degner 2012). The second approach focused on the mechanism of mother-tongue inhibition that occurs when speaking in non-native languages (Gao *et al.* 2015; Jończyk *et al.* 2016; Pavlenko 2012). Nonetheless, research about ELF emotional effects is ambivalent. Some authors showed that reading a text in the mother tongue determine greater levels of *arousal* than ELF (for example, Caldwell-Harris *et al.* 2011). Conversely, other research has highlighted that the use of foreign languages does not influence the motor activation of facial muscles and diminishes the perception of negative information in reading (Dudschig *et al.* 2014; Foroni 2015; Pulvermüller 2005; Pulvermüller, Fadiga 2010; Winkielman *et al.* 2008).

Therefore, if on the one hand previous studies (for example, Caldwell-Harris 2015) evaluated the emotional aspect of word processing in a second language, on the other hand, there are other authors (for example, Hayakawa *et al.* 2016) focusing on the cognitive side of word processing.

Emotion regulation, that is the effect of second language on the cognitive and affective processing, could be either conscious or unconscious

(Gyurak *et al.* 2011; Koole 2009); in both cases, it is related to verbal and semantic processing and mediated by speakers' inner thinking (Messina *et al.* 2015; Morawetz *et al.* 2016). Specifically, emotion regulation is more effective when reading a text in the second language because of cognitive control processes that reduce the perception of affective stimuli (Griner, Smith 2006; Gyurak *et al.* 2011).

2.2. The Episodic Trace Theory

The *Episodic Trace Theory* represents a theoretical framework that could allow an examination of perceived emotional differences across people characterized by different cultural and linguistic contexts. It is a theoretical framework originally developed in the field of cognitive psychology (Raaijmakers, Shiffrin 1992). This framework is based on the assumption that experiences leave an episodic trace in memory and remain integral to later perception. When exposed to new stimuli, individuals activate an echo – an array of activated traces in memory – that contain information stored in memory that is absent in the stimulus. This cognitive mechanism lead individuals to associate new stimuli to past emotional experiences. The explanatory power of this framework has been proved in the field of social psychology by showing, for example, how auditory details (e.g., intonation and vocal pitch) are unconsciously stored in memory (Palmeri *et al.* 1993).

The predictive ability of this model has been recently demonstrated in the field of linguistics. The mechanism of episodic memory resulted helpful to explain how memories originally experienced in consumers' native language tend to be easily activated when triggered by words expressed in individuals' native language (Marian, Kaushanskaya 2004; Marian, Neisser 2000). Puntoni *et al.* (2009) extended such result to the marketing field by showing that marketing slogans tend to be perceived as more emotional when reported in consumers' native language than second language. Therefore, it seems plausible that the episodic trace mechanism could be applied to study differences between individuals having English as a native or second language. Formally, it is possible to say that:

H1: The use of ELF arouses more happiness for individuals having English as a native (vs. second language).

3. Methodology and results

3.1. Study 1

Study 1 aims at examining the linkage between language type and emotions. Moving from past studies showing how stimuli reported in consumers' native language (*versus* a second language) are more likely to arouse a greater emotionality (Puntoni *et al.* 2009), this study tried to extend such a framework to examine how the use of ELF impacts the perceived emotionality of tourists having English as a native (L1) or second language (L2).

3.1.1. Method

This study was carried out on a sample of 237 participants (91 females, 146 males; $M_{Age} = 30$ yrs; $SD_{Age} = 9$). The respondents were randomly recruited from an online paid pool of international respondents. Only respondents who reported being fluent in English were included in the study.

In the first part of the survey, participants were asked to imagine they were going to visit Southern Italy, and then they read a booklet featuring the description of four ancient manor farms. Then, respondents were asked to report how they felt after reading this text on a 5-point scale (1 = "Not at all happy"; 5 = "Very happy"). In order to identify their linguistic background, we asked respondents to report their nationality, as well as their native and second language. Finally, respondents reported their socio-demographic data (e.g., gender, age).

3.1.2. Results

We identified language type according to consumers' native language versus second language. In particular, 116 individuals reported speaking English as a native language, 113 individuals reported speaking English as a second language, while 9 tourists did not report English neither as a native nor as a second language. Therefore, these remaining tourists were dropped from the analyses. In order to examine the impact of language on emotions, we performed an ANOVA in which language type was coded as -1 for consumers speaking English as a native language, and 1 for consumers speaking English as a second language. The results confirmed that reading a text in a consumer's native language (L1) has a greater effect on positive emotions (i.e., happiness) than reading in a second language (L2) ($M_{L1} = 4$, $SD_{L1} = 0.70$, $M_{L2} = 3.45$, $SD_{L2} = 0.77$, $F(1, 227) = 16.01$; $p < 0.01$).

Overall, Study 1 provides our first empirical evidence of how the use of ELF in international communication is unable to convey similar positive

emotional reactions among consumers with different linguistic backgrounds. First, the obtained results confirmed that the use of ELF is more likely to arouse positive emotional reactions for consumers speaking English as a native language.

Despite this evidence, there are some aspects that require further investigation. In particular, the assessment of positive emotions with a single item related to happiness does not provide a meaningful measurement of positive emotions. Therefore, by comparing ELF with other languages (e.g., Italian), the next study aims to provide a better assessment of the role of language type on positive emotional reactions.

3.2. Study 2

Study 2 was carried out in-field with the final aim of analysing positive emotions (i.e., happiness conveyed by texts for tourists having English as a native or second language). The study was conducted at a tourist information-point located in a medium-sized Italian city.

In order to examine the differential impact of communication type on perceived happiness among individuals with different linguistic backgrounds, we used Italian (i.e., a Romance-based language) and ELF.

This study employed a novel method for measuring consumers' emotions: FaceReader™, an *Automated Facial Coding* (AFC) software able to track basic human emotions. By creating a 3D Active Appearance Model (AAM) (Cootes, Taylor 2004), the software captures a person's face and computes a score for each analysed emotion on a scale from 0 to 1 (Van Kuilenburg *et al.* 2005). Typically, FaceReader™ recognizes seven categories of basic emotions: neutral, happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, and disgust (Ekman, Cordaro 2011; Ekman *et al.* 1969). This study focused on happiness, which is the final aim – in terms of conveyed emotions – of much of the marketing communication. The use of this methodology allowed us to measure emotions in a more reliable way, even while working with small samples of consumers.

3.2.1. Method

Ninety-nine participants (56% female; $M_{Age} = 40$ yrs, $SD_{Age} = 15.98$) were randomly recruited at a tourist information-point of an Italian tourist city. Participants were included if they reported that they had both a fluent English and Italian.

Participants were invited to watch a two-minute video presenting four manor farms located in the same province. Specifically, the video showed the descriptions of the four manor farms, each one presented in two different ways: i) through a text description in Italian; and ii) through a text description

in English. Participants saw all the descriptions in sequence and in a randomized presentation order so as to mitigate all possible order effects. While exposed to the different descriptions, participants' happiness was registered through the FaceReader™ software, which measured and analysed individuals' facial expressions (through a webcam) in order to provide data summarizing the strength of the displayed emotion.

As the experiment involved a comparison between tourists having English as a native (N = 26) vs. second language (N = 63). Participants who did not fall into these groups were not considered for the subsequent analyses. At the end of the survey, respondents reported some socio-demographic information (e.g. gender, age).

3.2.2. Results

To compute usable measures for perceived happiness, we averaged the item scores related to the four Italian text descriptions, and the four English text descriptions. Next, we conducted a one-way repeated measures ANOVA to compare these two scores for individuals' perceived happiness.

Results showed a significant effect for language type, Wilks' Lambda = .90, $F(2, 85) = 3.50$, $p < .05$, multivariate partial eta squared = .09. Subsequent pairwise comparisons showed that, when considering texts in Italian, no statistical differences emerged in the mean perceived happiness of tourists having English as native (M = 0.079, SD = 0.08) vs. second language (M = 0.053, SD = 0.07). Conversely, when considering texts in ELF, mean perceived happiness was higher for tourists having English as a native (M = .104, SD = .08) than a second language (M = .048, SD_{Eng} = 0.05).

Overall, the findings of this study reveal that tourists having English as native language displayed greater levels of happiness when confronted with ELF, thereby confirming our research hypothesis.

4. General discussion

The use of English proliferated through various territories, pushing it further in the direction of a "Lingua Franca" (Ostler 2010). Therefore, the linguistic analysis represents a growing area in consumer research, and many studies have adopted a psycholinguistic approach in order to examine the emotional processes determined by language (Luna, Peracchio 2001; Puntoni *et al.* 2009; Tavassoli, Lee 2003).

The present study aimed at contributing to this stream of research by analysing the differential impact of written texts stimuli used in the marketing communication. More specifically, its main objectives were to examine the emotional responses generated by stimuli represented by English texts on

consumers' native language (L1) and on consumers' second language (L2), and to investigate the emotional reactions delivered by such stimuli. In particular, it has been analysed the communication strategies implemented by old manor farms that are typical types of Italian accommodations.

In contrast with past research that mainly focused on the differences between L1 and L2, this article examined the impact of ELF on individuals having English as native or second language. From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the knowledge of how the use of English as Lingua Franca can represent real stimuli to the individual's perception, facilitating or obstructing the negative positive/emotional reactions. The results confirm that ELF has a limited emotional content and that reading a text in one's mother tongue produces greater emotionality. More specifically, the outcomes of this research indicated that the use of English texts in international communication generates a greater emotional reaction among individuals having English as a native language rather than second language.

From a managerial perspective, in line with Puntoni *et al.* (2009) that examined the perceived emotionality of marketing messages in consumers' native language (L1) versus second language (L2), this study built on the Episodic Trace Theory (Raaijmakers, Shiffrin 1992) to examine emotional differences between consumers. The results confirmed our prediction that more positive emotions are experienced when reading a written text in a familiar language. In this perspective, not only in the tourism market, it would be appropriate to calibrate the use of promotional texts in English or in the tourists' mother tongue, relating them to their linguistic origins. This would facilitate an increase in positive emotional responses to the message, rising their purchase intention.

This study has some limitations that might offer opportunities for future research. First, we built our studies by focusing on the dichotomy of native (L1) vs. second language (L2). Although this may represent one of the most renowned theoretical frameworks, it is also possible to analyze differences between consumers having a different linguistic background by considering other aspects, that is, for instance, the language group (i.e., Romance versus Germanic). Second, from a methodological point of view, our empirical studies did not analyze possible interactions with consumers' socio-demographics. Indeed, one might argue that certain effects on emotions may vary according to age or sex. Even though we did not specify an interaction of these factors in our analysis, it is worth noting that consumers socio-demographics were added as control variables.

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OVERVIEWING RESEARCH ON BELF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

From professional practice to ELT materials

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Abstract – The present paper focuses on the use of English in BELF contexts, bearing in mind both teaching and practice in the professional field. After an overview of the state of the art in ELF and BELF research over the last twenty years, the topic is tackled from three different perspectives, which mirror the studies carried out by the unit of the University of Verona in a three-year-long nationally funded research. Firstly, we will address BELF in professional settings, to shed light on what facilitates success in online interactions, with a special focus on e-mail exchanges. Secondly, still addressing e-mail exchanges, we will suggest a broadening of the notion of BELF communication strategies that goes beyond sheer successful, mutual understanding in the professional field. Finally, bearing the first two steps of our research in mind, we will turn to the teaching environment, overviewing if and to what extent international business ELT coursebooks deal with BELF communication strategies at different levels of competence, so as to provide hints and suggestions for more effective materials in this field.

Keywords: BELF; communication strategies; ELT coursebooks; online interactions; business e-mails.

1. ELF and BELF: Twenty years on

The present paper is intended as a theoretical introduction to three successive papers in this issue, authored respectively by Poppi, Caleffi, and Vettorel and Franceschi; these papers are interconnected in so far as each of them contributes to the study of BELF communication strategies from a different perspective, thus mirroring the research carried out by the unit of the University of Verona in a three-year-long nationally funded project on ELF and particularly BELF, with special reference to professional practice(s), ELT materials and training activities.

ELF studies have been a thriving area of research over the last two decades, investigating processes connected to the increasing spread of English as a language of global communication, with BELF focusing specifically on aspects pertaining to successful communication in the

business workplace. Indeed, while *lingua francas* have existed throughout history, the scale of the English phenomenon is unprecedented; English is no longer used only by its native speakers: the majority of uses of English nowadays involve speakers from contexts where the language has either established as a result of Anglo-American colonialism, or where it is increasingly present in the environment and studied as a foreign language. English can be extensively found in the Linguistic Landscape and in the media also in territories where it is neither a first nor a second language, and it is the most common language of cross-cultural communication on the Internet (Sangiamchit 2018; Vettorel 2014; Vettorel, Franceschi 2016). In addition, its importance as the language of business and higher education has grown significantly over the past decades, becoming unrivaled.

As a consequence, it is no longer possible to conceive English as a monolithic entity: the language exists in multiple varieties, each of which possesses its own distinctive features: in international contexts involving speakers from multiple linguacultural backgrounds, we move past the notion of codified, self-contained varieties of English, and we talk of Global Englishes, an umbrella term that includes both World Englishes, nativized varieties, and English in its *Lingua Franca* function (Galloway, Rose 2015).

Research pertaining to ELF has examined multiple aspects related to the international use of English, including phonetics and phonology (Jenkins 2000), lexico-grammar (Seidlhofer 2004, 2011), idiomaticity (Franceschi 2013; Pitzl 2012), phraseology (Mauranen 2009; Vetchinnikova 2014), and linguistic creativity at various levels (Hülmbauer 2013). In addition to looking at the phenomenon from a linguistic point of view, the specificities of different contexts of use have similarly been investigated, especially those where English has become the *de facto* language of communication, namely, academia and business.

ELF studies also analyse communication in English from a variety of sociolinguistic perspectives, placing a special focus on the accommodation and meaning-negotiation strategies speakers utilize when communicating in international contexts. In ELF interactions, speakers may not necessarily adhere to native-speaker norms, but rather employ the linguistic and non-linguistic resources (Birlik, Kaur 2020) at their disposal, engaging in language accommodation practices in order to achieve successful communication. In ELF communication, speakers from multiple linguacultural backgrounds need to negotiate meaning as well as pragmatics and social relationships to ensure the success of the communicative event. ELF talk has therefore been associated with dynamicity and fluidity as well as linguistic creativity, as speakers adapt and tweak all the language resources at their disposal, orienting to the listener to maintain mutual intelligibility and to negotiate meaning in a given communicative situation.

Findings from ELF research have raised the interests of scholars also in relation to the implications of English used as a lingua franca for English Language Teaching (ELT). It is now agreed upon in many sociolinguistic (Blommaert 2010) and ELF-oriented studies that ELT traditional tenets, based on native-speaker norms and proposing near-native competence as a target, are no longer appropriate for speakers who need to be able to function in a variety of contexts in a globalized society. Furthermore, it has been argued that well-attested notions – among others that of Communicative Competence (Widdowson 2003) and Intercultural Communicative Competence (Baker 2015) – need to be revisited in the light of the complex reality outlined above. While in traditional ELT models the main focus is placed on language forms and accuracy, in ELF conversations it is the communicative function expressed by the speakers that plays a preeminent role, which may be fulfilled through strategies and/or marked linguistic choices, including language alternation or translanguaging practices (Cogo 2012; Hülbauer 2013). 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” (2007, p. 56). Furthermore, the role that Communication Strategies (henceforth CS) play in such interactions is fundamental to effective interaction and meaning negotiation (Cogo, Dewey 2012; Seidlhofer 2011). Thus, a shift in perspective that acknowledges the importance of ELF-aware pedagogic approaches, materials, and ELF-informed teacher education has been called for over the last few years, resulting in several publications (e.g. papers in Bowles, Cogo 2015; Lopriore, Grazzi 2016; Sifakis, Tsantila 2018) as well as pedagogic and teacher education proposals (Grazzi 2017; Matsuda 2017; Vettorel 2016, 2017).

Against this background, scholars have focused more and more on the study of ELF in the business setting, coining the term BELF (Louhiala-Salminen *et al.* 2005) – English as a Business Lingua Franca. The specificity of BELF lies in the contexts where it is used, which require not only linguistic competence but also domain-specific knowledge and vocabulary, which is the common code through which corporate goals are fulfilled (Poppi 2012b). English is widely used in communication with partner firms and companies, but, as noted by Galloway and Rose (2015, p. 127) and shown in Cogo’s empirical research (2012, 2016), it is increasingly used as the in-house language and as the language to promote companies internationally (Poppi 2012a, 2012b, 2016), too. In the globalized market, corporate communication no longer occurs exclusively during face-to-face or telephone meetings: computer-mediated communication and digital media also play an important role both in communication among employees and in corporate websites, which are “the visual on-line external representation of a

company”, and therefore of paramount importance in providing potential customers with information about the company (Poppi 2012a, p. 42). All these uses of English reflect the reality of how the language is employed – with its lingua franca characteristics – in order to sell a locally-based product, or service, in the global market; in these contexts, clarity, both in face-to-face and digital communication and in corporate websites, “is of paramount importance” (Poppi 2012a, p. 49), with the accuracy of content information being prioritized over linguistic correctness.

Flexibility and dynamicity in the use of all the linguistic resources as well as co-operation among speakers are characteristics of ELF that cross over into BELF, together with a focus on communicative and pragmatic strategies rather than on conformity to native-speaker norms. However, in its specificity, BELF combines the knowledge of specialized vocabulary and jargon with a heightened linguistic and intercultural awareness that also contributes to the success of business transactions in cross-cultural contexts.

Cultural and intercultural awareness, alongside pragmatic competence and knowledge of CSs (Cogo 2012, p. 104) are identifiable as essential skills for successful international interactions in the workplace. Although international business communication is sometimes regarded as being culture-neutral, actually, the speakers’ linguacultures play a relevant role, particularly in BELF communication: “not only do BELF speakers bring into business interaction their own culture-bound views of how encounters should be conducted but also discourse practices stemming from their respective mother tongues” (Louhiala-Salminen *et al.* 2005, p. 404).

Thus, in order to communicate successfully in the workplace at a global level, three different though interweaving elements of “global communicative competence” come into play. The model theorized by Louhiala-Salminen and Kaakanranta (2011, cf. also Kaakanranta, Louhiala-Salminen 2013) stresses in the first place the importance of multicultural awareness, that is, “knowledge and skills in managing communicative situations with representatives of different national, organizational and professional cultures” (Kaakanranta, Louhiala-Salminen 2013, p. 28). The other two layers are respectively BELF competence and business knowledge; the former requires competence in the language as used in BELF contexts, including CSs pertaining to “clarity, brevity, directedness and politeness” (Kaakanranta, Louhiala-Salminen 2013), while the latter represents business-specific knowledge and practices.

The issue of mutual intelligibility in English communication in the workplace – or lack thereof – has been repeatedly highlighted outside academia as well (cf. Galloway, Rose 2015 for a brief account); however, it has recently been pointed out that “to date, little systematic attention appears to have been paid to (B)ELF research in curriculum design” (Pullin 2015, p.

33), except for a small number of studies (Kankaanranta *et al.* 2015; Pullin 2013). The same can be said for business-oriented ELT course-books and materials proposals specifically oriented at BELF-aware teaching/training (Caleffi, Poppi 2019); this is therefore a still largely unexplored research area.

Bearing in mind the need for more in-depth BELF-related empirical research both on CSs and on ELT materials, the English language unit of the University of Verona has carried out a set of studies in this field, based also on corpora compiled thanks to the help of Italian enterprises whose business activities and communicative practices are internationally oriented; this has further contributed to shed light on BELF communication practices and on what working professionals consider to be essential elements of successful – or problematic – BELF communication. Three successive papers in this issue, authored respectively by Poppi, Caleffi, and Vettorel and Franceschi, will illustrate in-depth each of the topics of analysis theoretically overviewed in this paper. Hence, in the following sections, first we will address BELF in professional settings, to shed light on what facilitates success in online interactions, with special focus on e-mail exchanges. Secondly, still drawing on e-mail exchanges, we will suggest a broadening of the notion of BELF CSs that goes beyond sheer mutual understanding. Finally, we will turn to the teaching environment, overviewing if and to what extent international business ELT coursebooks deal with BELF CSs at different levels of competence, with the final aim of providing hints and suggestions for more effective materials in this field.

2. BELF in the professional setting: The case of e-mails

During the past decades the world has become incredibly smaller and far more interconnected than it was 30 years ago. This is basically a consequence of ‘globalization’,¹ a phenomenon which has created new needs for the world population, also in terms of communication. In fact, in the past, language was seen as a system that had to be studied and learned by a reduced number of experts, as only few people had contacts across borders (globalization stage 1.0); the actual turning point was represented by the globalization of companies, which occurred in stage 2.0. This was in fact characterized by a real need to ‘communicate’ in English, in order to reach out to stakeholders in

¹ It is beyond the scope of this chapter to talk about the benefits and drawbacks of globalization, but it is nonetheless worth mentioning that Friedman (2005) distinguished three fundamental stages: stage 1.0 at the end of the 15th century, referred to as the ‘globalization of countries’; stage 2.0 from 1800 to 2000, or the ‘globalization of companies’; and finally stage 3.0 from 2000 to the present, or the ‘globalization of individuals’.

different parts of the world. Finally, nowadays with stage 3.0 and the subsequent globalization of the individual, supported and driven by new powerful technologies, the need for another approach to language has emerged (Poppi 2012a, 2012b). Indeed, business professionals are faced with the challenge to adopt a common working language which best caters for the need of increasingly hybrid and dynamic business settings (Caleffi, Poppi 2019).

It goes without saying, therefore, that the awareness of the importance of linguistic and communicative skills is gradually increasing, as the perception of new communication needs has reached both big, small-and medium-sized enterprises. In fact, the relationship between language, trade and economic performance has indirect but discernible effects on business practices, to the extent that economists have established that development is based on specialization and trade and that trade is facilitated by a common means of communication, in other words, the use of a lingua franca (Incelli 2007).

Current reconceptualisations of English, as suggested by the ELF paradigm, testify to the conceptual broadening of the very notion of language, conceiving it as a (virtual) resource characterized by plurality, fluidity and community-based interaction. Indeed, the new plurilithic conceptualization of the English language has been a source of inspiration and strong appeal also to the Business English research community, where practitioners “are no longer confined to any nationality or locality” (Caleffi, Poppi 2019, p. 93) and need to get the job done (Kankaanranta, Planken 2010) by resorting to any possible language repertoire they have at their disposal. In fact, the adopted language is continuously internationally negotiated, because the priority of both native and non-native speakers is mutual understanding and intelligibility. As a consequence, one of the biggest challenges for business professionals is to become global communicators (Kaankanranta, Louhiala-Salminen 2013; Louhiala-Salminen, Kaankanranta 2011), namely to be at the same time both aware of and able to opt for what is possible, feasible and probable in terms of grammar, sociolinguistics, discourse and strategy use (Louhiala-Salminen, Kankaanranta 2011, p. 250). A global communicator is, therefore, well equipped to tackle intercultural and multilingual BELF interactions (Vettorel 2019a), which are carried out both face-to face, and also at a distance.

2.1. What to bear in mind when exchanging e-mails

Thanks to the rapid growth of Internet systems all over the world, there is more and more e-mail communication speedily taking place, eliminating any geographical distance. A survey in 2002 reported that already eighteen years ago approximately 80% of business communication was conducted via e-mail

(Davis *et al.* 2009). For businesses purposes, e-mail exchanges have become one of the most popular media in the enterprise (Sumecki *et al.* 2011), a ubiquitous tool utilized so predominantly that it has substituted traditional communication methods such as letter, fax, and telephone (Lightfoot 2006).

However, on the one hand e-mails are such valuable assets in all modern, internet-based business enterprises that no one can underestimate their revolutionary influence upon business operations as well as employees (Hewitt 2006); on the other hand, it must be borne in mind that the lack of contextual cues in e-mails may pose a barrier to effective communication (Caleffi, Poppi 2019) and therefore people run the risk of being misinterpreted or regarded as being cold, detached, or even impolite.

It is true that e-mails are often more informal than other written forms in business settings, especially because of the frequent presence of abbreviations and short forms, in that they partake of the characteristics of both spoken and written language (Baron 2001; Incelli 2013). Moreover, as initiations of and replies to e-mails are usually quicker than with other means of written communication, there is usually less time available for consideration, and more misspellings and other typing errors may therefore occur (Crystal 2006).

In addition, e-mailing in business contexts is inherently intercultural and is inevitably influenced by the perception people have of themselves and of their interlocutors, as well as the different cultures operating in the business environment. This is actually the rub, in that when interacting with individuals coming from different cultural backgrounds, the sometimes extreme cultural diversity of backgrounds, experiences, and assumptions resident in communicators has the potential to make intercultural communication very difficult. It is therefore of paramount importance to be aware of possible cultural differences and to be prepared to accommodate and reach out to one's interlocutors, in the knowledge that the same person may, at different stages of his or her life, or even simultaneously, be part of more than one culture. First of all there is in fact corporate culture, which is embedded in a particular sector, and derives from the general business culture, which in turn draws upon the national culture of a certain area or population; finally, there is individual culture (cf. Beamer, Varner 2008). Accordingly, given the challenging character of e-mailing in business contexts, it is extremely important to carefully tackle risk management, which is usually associated also with other communication forms, by establishing and maintaining common ground and good relations, so as to compensate the absence of the physical presence (Nadler, Shestowsky 2006)

This can be accomplished by deploying, for instance, CSs, which represent the means by which ELF speakers proactively work towards the anticipation of interactional disorder (Björkman 2014, p. 124). In fact, given

the distance separating the sender and the addressee in e-mail exchanges, which is both physical and more often than not also cultural, CSs can prove particularly useful, especially when it comes to mitigating the directness of potentially face-threatening acts like requests and directives.

3. CSs in BELF: Beyond successful communication

It is undeniable that the increasing escalation of business globalization has been accompanied by an exponential growth in the number of international mergers, acquisitions, and partnerships. Such a growth has generated a worldwide network of business professionals whose working language is no longer their own mother tongue, but, instead, English, the language that has contributed to “connect the world linguistically” (Galloway, Rose 2015, p. 11). In turn, the heterogeneity of the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of global-business professionals has resulted in heightened pressure for them to develop cross-cultural communication competence to cope with the overwhelming challenges posed by an extremely dynamic environment (e.g. Ayoko *et al.* 2004). Indeed, the dynamism of global business arouses not only from the crossing of languages and cultures, but also from “the constant development in technologies that allow a rapidly expanding number of messages to be exchanged within a short span of time and across large geographical distances” (Ayoko *et al.* 2004, p. 157). In this highly-technological borderless context, where face-to-face contacts are mostly replaced by digital interaction, “[c]ommunication skills that bridge cultural boundaries are [...] critical to both employee and organizational effectiveness” (Ayoko *et al.* 2004, p. 157).

For scholars in the area of language and communication, such a significant change in the world of business has arisen great interest in organizational communication, both internal (i.e. communication amongst the company’s staff members) and external (i.e. communication with the company’s suppliers, customers, and their external partners in general). Particularly, research in the use of English as a lingua franca has expanded to the world of work, and scholars in the field have started to investigate not only the role of English in global-business contexts (Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen 2007; Kankaanranta *et al.* 2015; Ehrenreich 2016), but also the pragmatics of global-business interaction conducted in ELF (Cogo 2012; Cogo, Pitzl 2016; Kankaanranta, Planken 2010). Thus, CSs have become a focus of investigation in BELF research, with a gradual (though still limited) expansion from the analysis of oral interactions (Franceschi 2019) to the exploration of interactions in digital written contexts (Ren 2018).

However, as highlighted in Caleffi’s contribution to this volume, CSs

have mainly been analyzed from a merely linguistic point of view, with scant attention to the fact that business relationships are undoubtedly part of a company's asset, and that CSs, therefore, may also be used to build relationships (Zhu *et al.* 2006). In other words, CSs are worth being observed with aims other than that of describing how users resolve or pre-empt problems of (mis)understanding. Indeed, CSs may also have a rapport-building function which goes beyond the achievement of mutual intelligibility. This implies an approach to the analysis of BELF CSs that is rooted on a broadening of the very notion of 'communication strategy' *per se*. Such broadening should include the attainment of interpersonal goals amongst the purposes that lie behind the use of certain strategies, bearing in mind that in BELF contexts successful communication may mean more than getting the message through. In fact, the success of business is highly dependent on mutual trust between business partners, and this can be achieved through the establishment and maintenance of smooth interpersonal relations as a core value.

Rapport-building can be even more demanding when interaction between business partners occurs via digital media like e-mails, where the use of non-verbal tools of communication may be constrained by the medium itself. Still, establishing and maintaining smooth relationships is crucial in business, given the high stakes involved. This requires global-business professionals not only to be able to quickly perform the task at hand in the extremely dynamic context of digital communication, but also and foremost to be increasingly aware of the challenges posed by a cross-cultural setting, where business practices may be, and indeed are, extremely heterogeneous. Interpersonal CSs need to be used with the utmost care for the business partner's (business) culture, both in the initiating and in the maintaining phase (Zhu *et al.* 2006), and this can be far more demanding when interaction can rely neither on the sharing of the same mother tongue, nor on the possibility to exploit non-verbal semiotic modes, which, instead, may be helpful to cope with the complexity of intercultural communication.

The findings of the analyses carried out by the Verona team on a corpus of real-life business e-mail exchanges seem to suggest that users themselves do feel the responsibility of getting the job done fast and smoothly even when operating in constraining contexts like that of digital interaction. This sense of responsibility is a driving factor for them to use all the resources they can count on, including their pragmatic competence in dealing with the most diverse (business) cultures. This is a type of competence that certainly develops 'in the field', and through practice. Still, the design of tailored training materials that focus not only on language issues, but also and foremost on a conscious use of CSs may be helpful for them, especially if the design of these materials is supported by solid

research. Which is why the Verona team has deemed it crucial to investigate the state-of-art also in this respect.

4. BELF in ELT materials

Pedagogical issues have been discussed since the early days of ELF, and this area has come to the forefront as a major research topic in ELF studies, as testified by the numerous recent publications related to pedagogy and classroom practices (e.g. papers in Bowles, Cogo 2015; Matsuda 2017; Sifakis, Tsantila 2018). However, a specific focus on teaching business English, above all with proposals of activities and materials, has not yet been fully taken into account from an English as a Lingua Franca perspective, and the work carried out by the Verona team aims at providing a significant contribution in this area, also in terms of the relevance CSs have in teaching materials and practices.

CSs have recently started being investigated in BELF, from two main different approaches: analysis of naturally-occurring BELF data, such as meetings and e-mails, and user perceptions. The first has highlighted the widespread use of pragmatic strategies to both prevent and solve communication problems in BELF interactions (Caleffi 2019, forthcoming; Franceschi 2019; Ren 2018), whereas the second has underlined the weight professionals involved in international business put on the need for clarity and accuracy in information exchanges (Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen 2013; Franceschi forthcoming). A third line of research also looks at the use of languages other than English as additional resources for meaning negotiation and relationship management (Cogo 2012, 2016a, 2016b; Franceschi 2017; Louhiala-Salminen, Kankaanranta 2011). Data output has shown that BELF users make tactical use of CSs in order to avoid communication breakdowns and solve any misunderstanding – real or perceived – that may have negative consequences in terms of company money and resources spent: requests for repetition, clarification and confirmation, as well as comprehension checks and rephrasing/paraphrase emerge as important tools for effective communication in business domains, both face-to-face and digital. It should also be noted that CSs appear to be used deliberately, too, with attention to face-saving – both the speaker's and the hearer's faces (Franceschi 2019). CSs are integral part of the 'Competence in BELF' layer of the Global Communicative Competence model (GCC, Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen 2013; Louhiala-Salminen, Kankaanranta 2011), which comprises the three interrelated layers of Multicultural Competence, Competence in BELF and Business Knowledge, thus further testifying to their relevance in BELF communication. Indeed, strategic competence is a fundamental skill in communication, especially so

when combined with cooperative behavior and active listening.

In BELF, skillful use of CSs goes hand in hand with knowledge of relevant business practices and of specialized registers in English, as different business cultures may exploit different vocabulary. Making sure that meaning nuances are shared among the participants to a given interaction is paramount to the success of a business transaction.

These findings from BELF research have significant implications both for business-related language curricula and for ELT materials, in order to adequately prepare (future) professionals to effectively communicate in international business contexts. Recent investigations on business ELT materials, however, show that a BELF perspective on CSs is not consistently adopted, and the importance these pragmatic tools retain in BELF communication is not addressed; when present, in the greatest majority of cases it is not accompanied by awareness-raising activities, or connected to active practice in freer, authenticated (BELF) communication contexts (Caleffi, Poppi 2019; Franceschi 2018; Vettorel 2019b). Furthermore, despite the inclusion of work on some strategies in the ELT materials examined, other CSs that have been found to be used in VOICE business-related data and/or in digital communication via e-mail, or in both areas, are not presented. On a more positive note, these materials include aspects related to the Global Communicative Competence model, with a variety of accents in listening activities, and attention to the multicultural competence layer, particularly as to differences in cultural and business cultural practices, or ways of doing business. CSs in BELF appear to intertwine closely with other crucial aspects of BELF interactions, acting in multiple ways and with varying purposes, and for these reasons they should be addressed more explicitly in textbooks.

The need to take into account BELF findings in pedagogic contexts has recently been tackled (Kankaanranta *et al.* 2015; Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen 2013; Pullin 2015; Vettorel forthcoming), together with the need to include authentic, real-work BELF data (Bremner 2010; Faltzi, Sougari 2018; Nickerson 2002; Planken *et al.* 2004; Poncini 2013). Either starting from exemplifications, when present, in ELT business materials, or implementing the coursebook with additional tasks and activities, examples of actual language usage from (B)ELF corpora would for instance provide important opportunities to raise awareness through noticing tasks, discussing how they are used in actual business interactions and how they are closely interweaved with know-how of business registers and practices. Such examples could then function as a springboard for active practice in business-related contexts and through localized task-based projects (Pullin 2010, 2015). Similarly, tasks can be created to practice relevant CSs first in class, and then in a realistic work environment for an EPP course, where an activity on CSs included

noticing tasks, a reflection task and a production task in a simulated encounter

Within an English as a Multilingua Franca viewpoint, literature has amply shown that the use of languages other than English in BELF is a widespread accommodation and identity practice (Cogo 2012, 2016a, 2016b; Franceschi 2017). Therefore, opportunities to reflect upon such practices as to BELF speakers' multilingual repertoires should also be accounted for in pedagogic materials. Indeed, CSs are to be considered as part of 'normal pragmatic practice' (Widdowson 2003) in any language; rather than 'perfect communication', it is negotiation of meaning through CSs and accommodation that can lead to effective communication, and overt reflection and practice – drawing on BELF corpora, too - including languages part of the trainees' repertoires ought to be integral part in business-oriented ELT.

Orientation to the hearer and active listening are also a crucial aspect to communicative success that has been included in some of the textbooks analyzed: providing actual, real-life examples of its use can highlight to students the importance of active co-operation from both parties involved in the exchange.

To conclude, given the relevant role CSs have been shown to play in effective communication, particularly in BELF settings, they should be included in ELT materials and classroom practices if we aim at preparing students and professionals to effectively communicate in business international contexts. BELF-related corpora can certainly represent valuable data to reflect upon, and exemplify, how CSs are used in real contexts, giving way to activities aimed at practicing such tools for effective communication through simulations and/or real work settings.

5. Conclusions

As interest in BELF has been increasing over the last few years, this paper has aimed at contributing to this area of research both in terms of description of the state of the art in this research field and in terms of the implications for the teaching and the practice of Business English. Special attention has been paid to CSs in digital environments and in textbooks.

With reference to digital communication, the analysis of real-life business e-mail exchanges can be revealing for an understanding of how and to what purposes CSs are actually employed by business professionals when performing their communicative tasks by means of digital tools. E-mails are easy to store, retrieve and forward whenever need be, and are increasingly used as an official method of communication in organizations and

institutions. However, using e-mails effectively in interaction requires knowledge on how to structure this interaction at a distance in an effective way, as it is not possible to refer to structural characteristics and style of language alone. In fact, given the close relationship between language and economic performance, it is particularly important for language professionals to accommodate to their addressees and make sure that their communicative purpose and messages prove intelligible enough and are not misunderstood. And of course this can only be done by deploying a series of CSs.

Indeed, CSs are becoming increasingly globalized in BELF contexts, and more and more dependent not only on the linguistic resources of the interlocutors involved in interaction, but also on their awareness of culture-bound business practices. These need to be taken into account for the consolidation of smooth business relationships, which are an asset in the world of work. Companies are progressively becoming aware that, as global competition intensifies, the establishment of strong intercultural relationships is becoming crucial. CSs play a major role in the development of such relationships, whose effectiveness largely depends on the ability of business professionals to understand and improve their global intercultural communication skills. Communication with multilingual and multicultural partners (whether colleagues, customers or suppliers) having their own organizational business practices may be extremely demanding, especially when interaction occurs via digital media, particularly those where the use of non-verbal semiotic modes is hindered, as is the case of e-mailing. A focus on the multiple functions and purposes of CSs in the workplace seems therefore to be recommended, both in the area of BELF research and in that of Business English materials development for the training of business professionals.

Moreover, we advocate the integration of actual examples of BELF in pedagogic materials as a way to increase the attention to CSs in education and training of future and already active professionals using English in international settings. This would allow trainees to experience real-life instances of successful (and unsuccessful) CS use, raising awareness as to their use and fostering reflection on the trainees' part about their own linguistic and strategic practices as well as the development and fine-tuning of their strategic abilities through production activities and simulations. Studying existing courses and materials as well as developing – and testing – more BELF-informed courses may contribute to the education of increasingly successful internationally-oriented professionals operating in today's global markets.

All in all, although competence in business intercultural communication certainly develops 'in the field', scholarly investigation of naturally occurring (digital) data may largely contribute to a redefinition of

the theoretical framework within which communication strategies are described, analyzed and classified in the world of work.

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“WAITING FOR YOUR INFO”

An explanatory look at the communicative strategies deployed to mitigate potentially face-threatening acts in emails

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Abstract – Emails are perhaps the most common form of communication in business contexts. In spite of their prominence they are, however, still a common source of misunderstanding and stress. Drawing upon the integration of linguistic and genre aspects, a previous study (Poppi 2015) showed that in order to be able to decide how to draft an email, it is not possible to refer to structural characteristics and style of language alone, as in business communication the boundaries and expectations of the genre are often overruled by inventiveness and creativity. In particular, inventiveness and creativity may especially prove useful when composing emails containing potentially face-threatening acts like directives or requests. The present contribution focuses on 41 email chains written and received by the employees of companies dealing with car-trading, manufacturing of tights and socks, ICT (Information and Computer Technologies) assistance, transport and logistics, who were in charge of customer services. At first, reference was made to Goldstein and Sabin’s (2006) categorization of email exchanges on the basis of the speech act they entail. Out of the twelve main categories identified by them, it was decided to concentrate on those messages which proved to be the textualization of requests and directives (requesting someone to do something), with a view to disclosing the strategies employed to downgrade or mitigate the directness of these potentially face-threatening speech acts. In order to perform this latter stage of the analysis, it was decided to refer to the adaptation of the studies by Blum-Kulka *et al.* (1989) and Sifianou (1992) provided by Darics and Koller (2018), as well as to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain’s classification of levels of directness. The preliminary results of the analysis confirm that email writers are generally aware of the importance of mitigating the directness of face-threatening speech acts like information requests, and especially directives, as shown by the variety of strategies employed in the samples under scrutiny here.

Keywords: email acts; information requests; directives; face-threatening acts; communication strategies.

1. Introduction

Nowadays emails are an essential part of daily business and consumer communication. In 2018, 281 billion emails were sent and received every day

and the figure is expected to reach 347 billion daily emails in 2023 (Statista 2020). At the same time, the number of worldwide email users will grow from 40 billion in 2020 to nearly 4.5 billion by 2024 (The Radicati Group Inc. 2020). In the business arena, several studies have documented the different functions performed by emails (Darics 2015; Darics, Koller 2018; Dop 2001; Louhiala-Salminen, Kankaanranta 2005; Nickerson 1999; Rice *et al.* 1998;), which have become a ubiquitous tool utilized so predominantly (Sumecki *et al.* 2011), that they have substituted traditional communication methods such as letter, fax, and telephone (Lightfoot 2006). In fact, emails are so cheap, easy to store, retrieve, forward, and send to multiple recipients whenever it is needed (Crystal 2006; Louhiala-Salminen, Kankaanranta, 2005) that even small companies can generate an enormous volume of email traffic to fulfill their daily tasks, with tremendous amounts of data (Laclavík, Maynard 2009). It goes without saying, therefore, that the revolutionary influence of this medium upon business operations as well as employees cannot be underestimated (Hewitt 2006).

However, in spite, or perhaps because of their prominence, emails are still a common source of misunderstanding and stress. In fact, as Evans points out, they “are not the one-off, memo style messages that tend to appear as models or exercises in textbooks, but rather are chains of pithy, purposeful messages that connect and expedite flows of business activities” (2013, p. 288). Moreover, since the expected degree of (in)formality, (in)directness and mitigation, the presence or absence of formulaic expressions and cues, as well as the required forms of address can vary a lot, it is clear that email writing may require a high level of pragmatic competence, in order to have their writers’ communicative intentions appropriately encoded.

Indeed, pragmatic awareness and communicative strategies have been investigated in ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) contexts (Björkman 2011, 2014). Nonetheless, the business arena has somehow been devoted less attention, especially when it comes to computer-mediated communication. Therefore, drawing on Pérez Sabater *et al.*’s (2008, p. 84) remark that: “given the complexity of email communication, its main features are still in need of research”, the present study will analyse 41 email chains (corresponding to 230 emails) of standard work-related discourse, with a view to disclosing the different communicative strategies employed to mitigate the impact of potentially face-threatening speech acts like requests and directives (requesting someone to do something).

2. BELF and emails

Hoermann stated that “e-mail, like other genres of writing, is a

communicative correspondence that comes with its own specific reader expectations or conventions” (2013, p. 2). For instance, since initiations and response of emails are usually quicker than with other means of written communication, in the fast-paced and highly connected global economy, where communicators operate within a tight time frame, emails can be expected to be relatively informal. In addition, the speed of the communicative exchanges, which often leaves less time available for consideration, may lead to the use of abbreviations and short forms, and possibly misspellings and other typing errors (Crystal 2006), but also to a mixture between spoken and written language (Baron 2001; Incelli 2013).

In today’s business contexts, most e-mails among stakeholders coming from different countries are drafted in English, which is used as a common working language. In the past, this common means of communication was referred to as BELF, i.e. Business English Lingua Franca (Lohuiala-Salminen *et al.* 2005). Recently, however, it has been redefined as English as Business Lingua Franca (Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen 2013, p. 17), in order to emphasize the domain of use rather than the type of English, and the fact that the English language is normally the main, but not the only component of a ‘continuum’ of linguistic manifestations (Caleffi, Poppi 2019).

When it comes to providing a better definition of BELF, there are three important features that can be of help, i.e. neutrality, practicability and cultural diversity. First of all, BELF acts as a neutral tool shared among speakers of different first languages, as it puts everybody at a disadvantage (Lohuiala-Salminen *et al.* 2005 pp. 403-404). Secondly, it is of a highly practical type, in that it does not focus on errors, but rather on successful communication and understanding (Rogerson-Revell 2008), to the extent that in the business arena, it may sometimes happen that a “grammatically and lexically ‘correct’ message doesn’t necessarily do the job, but a message with many mistakes may do so” (Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen 2007, p. 56). Finally, the fact that BELF may be influenced by the different cultural identities of its users, rather than preventing successful communication, acts as a trigger for acknowledging individual differences and adjusting accordingly (Martins 2017, p. 63).

3. Different types of emails

The aim of business communication is normally to achieve mutual understanding, in order to get the job ‘done’ (Kankaanranta, Planken 2010). However, communication failures can occur at times, because of lack of comprehensibility, cultural differences and stereotyped associations. (Gerritsen, Nickerson 2009, p. 182). Email exchanges can be seen as a dialogue, but there are some differences with the traditional conversational

dialogues, in that, for instance, there is no interruption in emails, as an addressee can never interrupt the message composed by the sender. Moreover, in principle, emails can be used with no words at all, for instance when they are used to forward documents. Finally, since emails are exchanged via computer, they lack emotional cues and body language.

As a consequence, email messages are at times misinterpreted or regarded as impolite, as discourtesy could at times originate “from the need for haste and brevity” (Evans 2012, p. 208). Obviously, there is a wide range of email types, drafted on the basis of the situations which they address, the rhetorical action the writer intends to accomplish and their conventional layout.

Several attempts have been made to provide a comprehensive taxonomy of different types of emails. A very popular one was Lohuiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta’s tripartite model (2005), which includes noticeboard genre messages, (meant to inform the employees’ about the company’s activities); postman genre messages, (serving the function of delivering other documents for information and/or comments); dialogue genre messages, (whose purpose is to exchange information about the corporation activities).

Goldstein and Sabin (2006), heavily borrowing from the well established Speech Acts theory (Austin 1962; Searle 1969), focused on the concept of *email speech acts*, and made an attempt to categorize email exchanges by examining the speech acts they entail. They identified twelve main categories:

Category	Example	Suggested genres
(S) Self	Email to self	Email reminders/notes
(N) Non-personal	Bulk emails	Spam (Advertising, Phishing, etc. E-Newsletters)
(T) Transmissives	Forwarding documents	Digital cover letter/memo to attachments
(R) Responses	Provide info to question	Email Conversations
(F) Responses with forward function	Provide info to a question and ask questions	Email Conversations
(I) Information request	Ask for information	Email Conversations
(D) Directive	Ask someone to do something	Email Conversations
(C) Commits	Commit/offer to do something	Email Conversations
(A) Assertions	Make a statement or state an opinion	Email Conversations
(B) Behabitive	Express feelings	Email Conversations
(V) Verdictive	Statement of accomplishments, e.g. paper notifications	Official document
(O) other	Phatic communication	Conversation

Table 1
The 12 main Email Acts (Goldstein, Sabin 2006).

Since emails are mainly task-oriented, most of them will inevitably contain requests for information and/or action (directives), that is acts that may go against the receiver’s face wants and as such have been identified by Brown and Levinson (1987) as potentially face-threatening.

A request consists of an “illocutionary speech act whereby a speaker (requester) conveys to a hearer (requestee) that he/she wants the requestee to perform an act which is for the benefit of the speaker” (Trosborg 1995, p. 187). According to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984, p. 201), the nature of requests entails the loss of two kinds of freedom. namely the addressee’s “freedom of action” and “freedom from imposition”. In this regard, strategic employment of linguistic means enables the mitigation of the impositions determined by the act of requesting; specifically, speakers may decide to rely on varying levels of directness to deliver their want (Blum-Kulka, Olshtain 1984, p. 201).

By examining the strategies employed by NNSs (Non-Native Speakers) in downgrading or mitigating the directness of requests, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) realized that although NNSs use lexical politeness markers such as *please*, they very rarely use other lexical or phrasal downgraders, which results in overly direct messages. Therefore,

alongside clarity, considered as an essential feature of communicative success, it is also important to mitigate potentially Face Threatening Acts (FTAs), which might otherwise have a negative influence on how one's message is perceived.

This can be accomplished by resorting to communicative strategies (CSs), that is a set of pragmatic resources which may at first sight prove hard to define in a clear-cut way, because of their “elusive nature” (Kárpáti 2017, p. 5). Originally, they were conceived as recurrent practices among non-native speakers and language learners “as a compensative device to fill the gaps in their linguistic competence” (Franceschi 2019, p. 59). Over the years, however, in ELF research CSs have come up to identify a regular practice common both to native and non-native speakers alike (Franceschi 2019), employed to solve communicative problems and breakdowns.

4. Approaches to the analysis of communication strategies

When talking about communication strategies, it is important in the first place to point out the divergent interpretations advanced by SLA (Second Language Acquisition) and ELF researchers. While the former insist on *problematicity* tout court, as one of the defining aspects of CSs (Dörnyei, Scott 1997 p. 182), the latter distinguish between *real* problems, which have occurred and have been clearly registered in the interaction, and *potential* problems, which might take place (Björkman 2014, p. 124).

In fact, the SLA paradigm established its CS conceptualization for the purpose of language teaching, with the language learner emerging as “deficient by definition” (Kasper, Kellerman, 1997, p.5) as he/she was supposed to reach native-like proficiency. In contrast, in the ELF paradigm, non-native structures are considered means that “[..] can be deployed resourcefully and strategically to accomplish [...] interactional ends” (Firth, Wagner 1997).

Since speakers engaging in ELF interactions display particular awareness to the differences in accents, competence and cultural backgrounds entailed in communicative exchanges of this nature, as a result of such differences, communication strategies represent a means which ELF speakers resort to in order to proactively work towards the anticipation of interactional disorder (Björkman 2014 p. 124). In other words, CSs can be considered as tools that enable ELF speakers to accomplish successful communication and “have been shown to be an essential element of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) interactions, with participants cooperatively building effective communication through a number of pragmatic moves” (Vettorel 2019, p.

72).

Within the ELF approaches to the analysis of communicative strategies, several studies have been conducted. Some of them have focused on the distinct functions of some specific strategy, whilst others have attempted to provide more comprehensive frameworks.¹ In order to analyse the strategies used to mitigate possible face-threatening acts in the email exchanges, the present study will take as a point of departure the list of linguistic and discourse strategies in email communication devised in the first place by Blum-Kulka *et al.* (1989) and Sifianou (1992), which was subsequently adapted by Darics and Koller (2018, p. 292):

Linguistic/discourse strategy	Explanation	Examples
Consultative devices	The speaker seeks to involve the hearer directly, bidding for cooperation	Would you mind? Do you think? Is/would it be all right if? Is/Would it be possible? Do you think I could?
Downtoners	Modifiers used by a speaker in order to modulate the impact his/her requests is likely to have on the hearer	Possibly, perhaps, just, rather, maybe, by any chance at all
Understaters/hedges	Adverbial modifiers by means of which the speaker underrepresents the state of affairs denoted in the proposition	A bit, a little, sort of
Subjectivizers	Elements in which the speaker explicitly expresses his or her subjective opinion vis-à-vis the state of affairs referred to in the proposition, thus lowering the assertive force of the request	I'm afraid, I wonder, I think
Cajolers	Conventionalized addressee-oriented modifiers whose function is to make things clearer for the addressee and invite him/her to metaphorically	You know, you see

¹ To provide a full and detailed account of all the existing studies would fall far beyond the scope of the present work. See Björkman 2014 for a comprehensive survey of the main contributions in this area, which include, for instance, Cogo 2009; Firth 1996; Kirkpatrick 2007; Mauranen 2005 and 2007.

	participate in the speech act	
Appealers	Addressee-oriented elements occurring in a syntactically final position. They may signal turn-availability and are used by the speaker whenever he or she wishes to appeal to his/her hearer's benevolent understanding	Clean the table, dear, will you? OK?

Table 2
Linguistic and discourse strategies in emails (Darics, Koller 2018, p. 292).

5. Data and methodology

In the first place, reference was made to the results of a previous study (Poppi 2015), which showed how homogeneity is not a distinctive characteristics of emails. Relying on the evidence gathered on the occasion of a small-scale study, it was possible to claim that within each of the three categories originally developed by Lohuiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2005), a further distinction can be made, depending on the relationship between the parties involved, their number and the intended communicative purpose. In particular, the analysis showed that when the emails still maintain the rhetorical structure introduced by the traditional business letter, a kind of message is produced, where the generic potential/capabilities of the business letter are used in relatively conventionalized and somewhat standardized ways. These messages could be defined as “business letter-emails”. On the contrary, when a more innovative attempt is made towards a novel construct and the exploitation of established conventions and available generic resources, we are dealing with “email-emails”.

Communicative purpose	Audience	Category	Subgenre	Typical features
To inform about the organization's activities	multiple	Noticeboard	'Business-letter email'	Standardized structure and language
To deliver other documents, attachments or other messages	Multiple. Restricted group of stakeholders	Postman	'Email-email'	Usually short. Mostly informal when addressed to a well-known addressee
To exchange information about the corporate	One interlocutor Restricted	Dialogue	'Business-letter email' 'Email-	Variable nature Language and structure can be

activities	group of stakeholders		email'	informal when addressed to a well-known addressee; but tend to become more formal and standardized when particular care is required
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Table 3
Summative table of what is possible, feasible and appropriate in email interactions (adapted from Poppi 2015, p. 291).

Moreover, the same study (Poppi, 2015), drawing upon the integration of linguistic and genre aspects, showed that in order to be able to decide how to draft an email, it is not possible to refer to structural characteristics and style of language alone, as in business communication the boundaries and expectations of the genre (AlAfnan, 2015) are often overruled by inventiveness and creativity.

In particular, when composing emails containing requests and directives writers can try and mitigate their potentially face-threatening impact by creatively deploying a variety of communicative strategies, which will change depending on the specificity of the company’s intentions and on the relationship with the intended audience. By doing so professionals will end up drafting their messages by conforming to a set of rules typical of each individual workplace, which may not be carried over to the next employer. In this way emails turn into a "chameleon genre," i.e. a genre that does whatever its users want it to do (Droz and Jacobs 2019).

The present study sets out to disclose the communicative strategies adopted to mitigate the directness of requests and directives, considered as potentially face-threatening speech acts, in a corpus of 41 email chains (or 230 emails), written and received by the employees of four companies operating in the field of: car-trading, manufacturing of tights and socks, ICT assistance and transport and logistics during a 4-month period (from November 2018 to February 2019).

In order to analyse the emails, which were arranged into four sub-corpora, it was decided to refer in the first place to Goldstein and Sabin’s (2006) categorization of email exchanges on the basis of the speech act they entail. Accordingly, after manually annotating the emails in the corpus, out of the twelve main categories identified, it was decided to concentrate on those messages which proved to be the textualization of information requests (henceforth IRs) and directives (henceforth Ds), requesting someone to do something.

Then, given the complexity of email communication, and in order to highlight the strategies deployed by the interactants when performing possibly face-threatening acts like requests for information and action, it was necessary to fine-tune the analysis by referring to the three levels of directness concerning the verbalization of requests highlighted by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984, p.201):

- a. the most direct, explicit level, realized by requests syntactically marked as such, like imperatives, or by other verbal means that name the act as a request, such as performatives (Austin 1962) and ‘hedged performatives’ (Fraser 1975);
- b. the conventionally indirect level; procedures that realize the act by reference to contextual preconditions necessary for its performance, as conventionalized in a given language (these strategies are commonly referred to in speech act literature, since Searle 1975, as indirect speech acts; an example would be ‘could you do it’ or ‘would you do it’ meant as requests);
- c. nonconventionally indirect level, i.e. the open-ended group of indirect strategies (hints) that realize the request by either partial reference to object or element needed for the implementation of the act (‘Why is the window open’), or by reliance on contextual clues (‘It’s cold in here’).

Finally, once each IR and D had been classified as: direct, indirect or nonconventionally indirect, reference was made to the adaptation of the studies by Blum-Kulka *et al.* (1989) and Sifianou (1992) provided by Darics and Koller (2018), in order to highlight the various communicative strategies adopted by the interactants.

5.1. The analysis

The four sub-corpora are not homogeneous in terms of number of emails, their length and presence of IRs and Ds, even if the percentage of email messages which enact these two acts seems to be fairly high:

Sub-corpus	Number of email chains	Number of emails	Number of IRs and Ds
1. car-trading	3	20	9 (45%)
2. manufacturing of tights and socks	17	105	50 (48%)
3. ICT assistance	4	22	15 (68%)
4. transport and logistics	17	83	51 (61%)

Table 4
Composition of the sub-corpora.

Obviously, the higher the number of email chains, the higher the number of interactants is, as well as the number of email acts. All sub-corpora refer to B2B (business to business exchanges). However, while three of the corpora refer to well-established business relationships, the manufacturing of tights and socks corpus contains the emails exchanged between the company and a prospective customer. To ensure confidentiality, all sensitive data were deleted and only the initial letter of the names of the people involved were retained.

The four sub-corpora contain a total of 125 potentially face-threatening acts, 73 information requests (58.4%) and 52 directives (41.6%):²

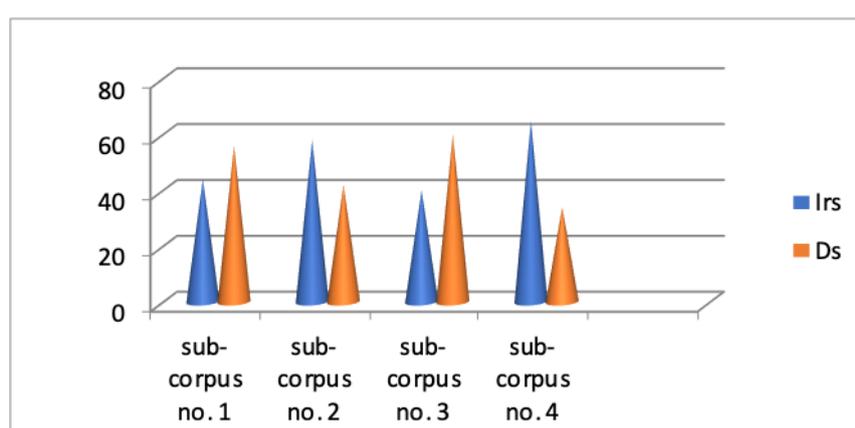


Table 5
Distribution of IRs and Ds in the four sub-corpora.

As we can see, IRs are more numerous than Ds in corpora no. 2 and 4, while the opposite is the case in corpora no. 1 and 3.

5.1.1. Information Requests

For what concerns Blum-Kulka, Olshtain’s (1984), we can see that there are differences levels of directness. In particular it is worth noticing that in corpus no. 3 there are only indirect IRs and therefore no direct IRs or

² Generally speaking, whenever an IR occurs, there is an information gap that has to be filled by the addressee of the message. On the contrary, whenever a D is uttered, it means that the addresser expects the addressee to perform some kind of action. Special attention, however, should be devoted to a special kind of requests, that rather than data, require the addressee to provide some kind of confirmation, normally of a certain course of action. In this case the focus is not on the mere provision of information, but rather on the performance of an action which will in turn set in motion a set of other actions. Accordingly, the few instances of confirmation requests in the corpus (3.2%) were classified as Ds.

nonconventionally indirect IRs. Moreover, corpus no. 4 is the only one which contains instances of nonconventionally indirect IRs.

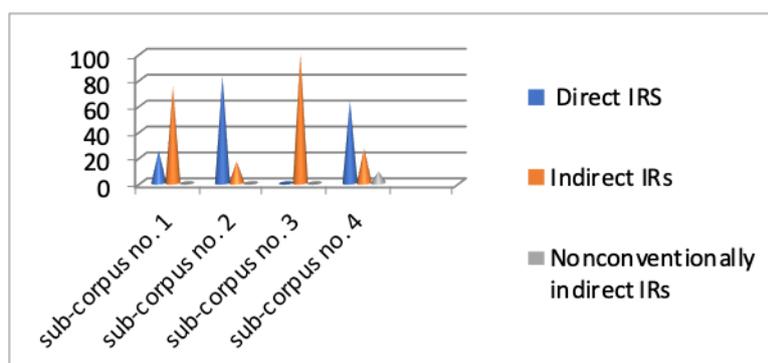


Table 6
Distribution of IRs in the four sub-corpora.

The total number of direct IRs, expressed by means of direct questions, imperatives, nominal groups without any verb, and positive sentences simply followed by an interrogative mark is higher than indirect IRs:

- (1) Is there an easier way? (sub-corpus no. 1).
- (2) Do you have picture of your tights with Crystal? (sub-corpus no. 2).³
- (3) Please tell me the problems so we'll be possible we repair or we'll not commit another time (sub-corpus no. 2).
- (4) Should you tell the length XXL? (sub-corpus no. 2)
- (5) Loading tomorrow, delivery max Thuersday xxy? (sub-corpus no. 4)

This first result is in a way not surprising, in that very often in B2B exchanges there is not much time to lose, in order to get the job done, and since IRs are less of a threat to the receiver's freedom than Ds, business professionals may be more prone to using direct IRs freely, for the sake of brevity and also efficiency. This is in a way confirmed by the fact that at times we have, in the same mail, a series of direct IRs, one following the other:

- (6) Any instruction? (sub-corpus no. 4).
- (7) Sea or Air? (sub-corpus no. 4).
- (8) Vietnam or China? (sub-corpus no. 4).

In some other cases, we can find an indirect IR among a series of direct IRs, as if the writer felt the need to mitigate his/her long list of questions:

³ All the examples have been quoted verbatim.

- (9) Everything ok? (sub-corpus no. 2).
- (10) Just wanted to know if you have already had any feedback about our tights (indirect IR) (sub-corpus no. 2).
- (11) Did you get them tested? (sub-corpus no. 2).
- (12) Good news for us? (sub-corpus no. 2).

The above mentioned use of a mitigating strategy is not isolated, in that very often direct IRs (normally expressed by means of an imperative form) are mitigated by downtoners, (e.g. *please*).

Indirect IRs are accompanied by different communicative strategies, which mostly include consultative devices as in no.13, 14 and 15, subjectivizers, as in no. 16 and 17 and cajolers as in no. 18:

- (13) [...] because he never received an answer from you despite their emails and *would like to know if this is possible or not* (sub-corpus no. 1).
- (14) For socks, *do you think you could make 30% discount* only for this marketing operations? (sub-corpus no. 2)
- (15) *Can you try to change the printer as below?* (sub-corpus no. 3).
- (16) *Should I add twice the product and add on the description line ‘Monthly fee’/‘One time fee’ as a workaround?* (sub-corpus no. 1)
- (17) *I just need to know*, like this I can anticipate (sub-corpus no. 2)
- (18) I make you today transfer of xxxx € *right?* (sub-corpus no. 2)

Sometimes different communicative strategies are employed together, for instance, consultative and downtoners as in example no. 19:

- (19) Could you please give me more details regarding these 2 invoices? (sub-corpus no. 4).

Differently from the other three sub-corpora, subcorpus no. 3 does not contain any instances of direct IRs, but only indirect IRs, some of which (mainly uttered by a Chinese speaker) employ a mixture of strategies, namely consultative and downtoners:

- (20) Kindly ask if I have to change the printer each time when I try to print the document (sub-corpus no. 3).

Finally, in sub-corpus no. 4 we have a few examples of nonconventionally indirect IRs, in which the request is realized by referring to what is needed for the implementation of the action:

- (21) Waiting for your info.
- (22) I need also your bank details IBAN + SWIFT.

5.1.2. Directives

Given that directives pose a threat to another person's freedom of action" and "freedom from imposition" one might reasonably expect them to be more mitigated than IRs. This is the case in corpora no. 1 and 3 (which contain no instance of direct Ds, but only indirect Ds and nonconventionally indirect Ds, differently from what can be observed in corpora no. 2 and 4.

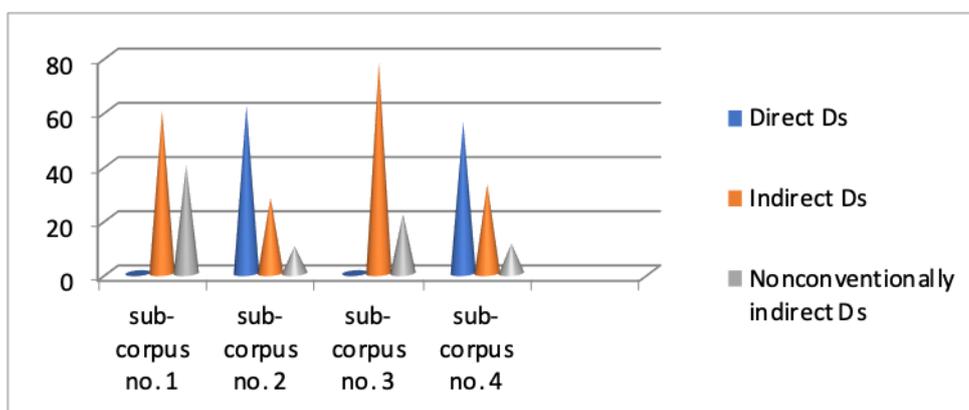


Table 7
Distribution of Ds in the four sub-corpora.

All in all the most frequently used directives are the indirect ones, which are mostly mitigated by consultative devices like, for instance, *Is it possible*, sometimes accompanied by downgraders: (cf. examples no. 24 and 26):

- (23) Is it possible to make it available for selection? (sub-corpus 1)
- (24) Would you be so kind to give support? (sub-corpus 1)
- (25) Could you please send me a size chart for your tights? (sub-corpus no. 2)
- (26) If you confirm very quickly, we'll start prepare your goods (sub-corpus no. 2).
- (27) Can you help me to solve the situation, please? (sub-corpus no. 3)
- (28) Could You please send me the xxx's details? (sub-corpus no. 4)

Sometimes, as in example no. 28 we can see that the second person singular and plural pronoun is written with a capital letter, possibly as a sign of deference. However, this is an idiosyncratic use on the part of two interactants in corpus no. 4 (an Italian and a Polish one), rather than a ubiquitous feature.

Direct Ds are often expressed by means of imperatives, mitigated by the presence of please:

- (29) Please be so kind to cnfirm the truck loading tomorrow.

In all sub-corpora there are also instances of nonconventionally indirect

directives, mostly accompanied by consultative devices, as in:

- (30) Is it possible that I am not able to set up a password manually anymore? (sub-corpus no. 1)
- (31) Okay, I wait your reply as soon as possible (sub-corpus no. 2)
- (32) I have to print out the invoice as above xxx, as follows the steps from our colleague in Italy, I still have problem to print (sub-corpus no. 3).
- (33) So we wait for a confirmation from you. (sub-corpus no. 4).

6. Conclusions

Kramsch and Huffmaster (2015) hold that globalization has modified the expectations of foreign language users, who are now required to be ready to communicate in transcultural and translingual situations. This is clearly a challenge for everyone who is involved in communication practices, including language trainers and language teachers, who have been used to teaching the language following the principles of monolingual immersion, and using a communicative pedagogy based on the monolithic paradigm of the ideal native speaker model. In contemporary society, however, an innovative approach to language teaching is required, which acknowledges that learning is a process that takes place within social interaction. This is especially true when it comes to mastering business discourse, which consists of “a web of negotiated textualizations, constructed by social actors as they go about their daily activities in pursuit of organizational and personal goals” (Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson, 2002, p. 274).

The samples analysed in the present study represent some of the most frequent uses of email communication in the companies under scrutiny, in the selected time –span. The preliminary results of the analysis confirm in the first place that there is no such thing as ‘the language of emails’, and that it is unrealistic to think that it is possible to teach (and learn) ‘how to write emails’ as such. What can be taught and learnt is that not all emails are the same and that it is necessary to gauge the context before deciding what is appropriate. In particular, attention should be especially devoted to those email messages which enact potentially face-threatening acts like, for instance, information requests and directive.

In the data under scrutiny here, despite the differences among the various sub-corpora, overall IRs are more frequently employed than Ds. As already stated, this is in a way not surprising, given that IRs can be perceived as less threatening than Ds and business professionals may be more prone to using direct IRs freely, for the sake of brevity and also efficiency. This does not mean, however, that mitigating strategies are never deployed. Actually, the opposite is true, in that all direct IRs expressed by means of an imperative form are mitigated by the downtoner please. Moreover, at times writers

employ a combination of strategies together, mostly consultative and downtoners. Finally, for what concerns Ds, we can say that indirect Ds are more common than direct Ds. In fact, two corpora, no. 1 and 3, contain no instances of direct Ds, but only indirect Ds and nonconventionally indirect Ds. Also indirect Ds are mitigated, mostly by means of consultative devices like, for instance, *Is it possible*, sometimes accompanied by downgraders. There are also a few examples of nonconventionally indirect Ds, as well as IRs, in which the request is expressed by means of indirect strategies (hints) that realize the request by either partial reference to an object or element needed for the implementation of the act, or by reliance on contextual clues.

Summing up, it is possible to conclude that the evidence gathered does not confirm what claimed by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011), according to whom although NNSs use lexical politeness markers such as *please*, they very rarely use other lexical or phrasal downgraders, which results in overly direct messages.

In fact, the present analysis showed that email writers are generally aware of the importance of mitigating the directness of face-threatening speech acts like information requests, and especially directives, as shown by the variety of strategies employed in the samples under scrutiny here, especially consultative devices, downtoners and subjectivizers. In other words, we can state that they seem aware of the need to adopt proactive measures (communicative strategies) in order to work towards the anticipation of interactional problems.

Obviously, the evidence gathered on the occasion of the present study is limited in size and cannot therefore be meant as a representative sample of business settings in general. This is why more extensive research will be necessary to provide new evidence and further the investigation of communicative strategies in computer-mediated ELF interactions, possibly taking into account also the implications deriving from the writers' cultures and/or their specific business culture

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COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN BELF

From users' perceptions, corpus and textbook analysis to pedagogical implications

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Abstract – English as Business Lingua Franca (BELF) has become an important domain of study within ELF research, where strategic competence, in addition to business know-how and multicultural awareness (Louhiala-Salminen, Kankaanranta 2011), is extremely important due to the high-stakes nature of many business interactions. Meaning negotiation through Communication Strategies (CSs) has been shown to contribute to clarity and accuracy as well as to preventing and solving comprehension problems in both oral (Franceschi 2019) and digital (Brunner, Diemer 2019; Caleffi 2019; Ren 2018) interactions. BELF users' own perceptions confirm the importance of an effective use of strategies in addition to knowledge of relevant business practices and of specialized register (Franceschi forthcoming). However, their importance is not reflected in Business English coursebooks, where attention to CSs and their functions is scarce both in terms of raising awareness of the relevance of these strategies and of practicing their use in BELF communication (Franceschi 2018; Vettorel 2019). This paper combines reflection on the state-of-the-art of communication strategies in BELF, their presence – or lack thereof – in current teaching materials and the actions that may be undertaken in order to integrate CSs in Business English training. Exemplifications on how to foster reflection and implement guided and freer activities involving the use of common communication strategies, including clarification, multilingualism and paraphrasing/interpretative summary, are also provided.

Keywords: ELF; BELF; Business English; English Language Teaching.

1. Introduction

Functions, uses and users of English have deeply changed as a consequence of – and in connection with – globalization processes. Most world communication takes place in ELF contexts, with profound repercussions also on traditional conceptualizations of 'English' as a monolithic entity, as well as of its users (Seidlhofer 2011; Sing 2017; Widdowson 2003).

Business and business communication have been greatly impacted by the modifications caused by the global role of the English language. English has indeed largely become the lingua franca of commercial and work interactions, in communicative contexts that are characterised by hybridity,

fluidity and a diversity of linguacultures, combining elements of locality and globality.

English as Business Lingua Franca (BELF) has become an important domain of study within ELF research, where strategic competence, in addition to business know-how and multicultural awareness (Louhiala-Salminen, Kankaanranta 2011), is extremely important due to the high-stakes nature of many business interactions. In BELF contexts, English represents a shared resource, where “Business English users will be languaging, using adaptive communication strategies, such as accommodation, in order to achieve a common communicative and professional goal” (Sing 2017, p. 324). Indeed, meaning negotiation through Communication Strategies (CSs) has been shown to contribute to clarity and accuracy as well as to preventing and solving comprehension problems in both oral (Franceschi 2019) and digital (Brunner, Diemer 2019; Caleffi 2019, forthcoming; Ren 2018) interactions. BELF users’ own perceptions confirm the importance of an effective use of strategies in addition to knowledge of relevant business practices and of specialized register (Franceschi forthcoming). However, their importance is generally not reflected in Business English coursebooks, where attention to CSs and to their functions is scarce both in terms of raising awareness of the relevance they have and of practicing their use in BELF communication (Franceschi 2018; Vettorel 2019).

This paper combines reflection on the state-of-the-art of communication strategies in BELF, their presence – or lack thereof – in current teaching materials and the actions that may be undertaken in order to integrate CSs in Business English training. Main findings from recent research on CSs in BELF in face-to-face business-related interactions (VOICE) and from BELF users’ perceptions, as well as from CS use in digital e-mail interactions, will be reported in the following sections, to be then intersected with research on business ELT coursebooks. The studies briefly illustrated in the following sections were carried out by the Verona research unit working within a national PRIN project.¹ Suggestions and examples to foster reflection and implement guided and freer activities involving the use of communication strategies commonly employed in BELF, including clarification, multilingualism and paraphrasing/interpretative summary, will be provided.

¹ PRIN 2015 Prot. 2015REZ4EZ, “English as a Lingua Franca in domain-specific contexts of intercultural communication: A Cognitive-functional Model for the analysis of ELF accommodation strategies in unequal migration contexts, digital-media virtual environments, and multicultural ELF classrooms”.

2. CSs in the VOICE PO and PB subcorpora

While Communication Strategies in ELF academic settings have been widely investigated, studies on their use in workplace contexts - either in oral or digital communication - have not been as numerous. Studies on professionals' perceptions of English as the language of international business interactions (Ehrenreich 2010; Louhiala-Salminen, Kankaanranta 2011), however, have highlighted the importance of "clarity, brevity, directness and politeness" (Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen 2013, p. 28). In this respect, the authors further underline the role of "strategic skills, such as ability to ask for clarifications, make questions, repeat utterances, and paraphrase" (Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen 2013).

These statements appear to be corroborated by studies carried out on naturally occurring BELF spoken (Franceschi 2019) and written e-mail (Caleffi 2019; Ren 2018) data, as well as by further recent studies on BELF users' perceptions (Franceschi forthcoming). For example, a list of self-initiated and other-initiated strategies, developed on the basis of existing CSs (Dörnyei, Scott 1997) and ELF taxonomies were investigated in oral interactions for meetings and conversations in the Professional Business (PB) and Professional Organizational (PO) subsections of the VOICE corpus, for a total of 291,000 running words. The analysis appears to show that CSs are employed frequently in the data to prevent or solve communication issues. BELF users are aware of both the need for accuracy and clarity in information sharing and of their own status as non-native speakers, which in turn leads them to pay increased attention to potential communication breakdowns and act proactively. In this data self-initiated strategies aimed at enhancing explicitness (such as rephrasing, word-coinage, etc.) are not employed as often as strategies used to solve perceived or actual comprehension issues: requests for repetition, clarification and confirmation seem to be common ways for participants to ensure they have obtained all the correct information. Such requests are indeed almost always attended to, as the data shows very few unattended requests. Those are usually easily justifiable by looking at their context: such requests might not have been heard or not considered relevant enough to the conversation at hand to warrant disrupting the communicative flow to start a clarification sequence.

Research on digital communication, especially e-mail, has also recently been undertaken with the purposes of identifying which CSs are employed in this increasingly common means of international interactions (Caleffi 2019; Ren 2018). Findings show that several strategies are employed in digital business email communication, too, such as requests for clarification and comprehension checks, as well as repetition and interpretative summary.

The exploitation of linguistic resources beyond English from the participants' Individual Multilingual Repertoires (IRM) (Pitzl 2018), and their adaptation to the specificity of communicative contexts, has also been shown to be a useful asset for meaning negotiation in BELF, in addition to other functions (Cogo 2012, 2016a; Franceschi 2017). Indeed, plurilingual competence has recently acquired weight in the current conceptualization of ELF, and its role in BELF has also been investigated, also as a pragmatic strategy that can have the additional function of building rapport.

2.1. Users' perceptions of CSs in BELF interactions

Strategic competence does not only emerge from language use in corpora analysis, but is recognized as a critical aspect for communicative success by professional themselves. Investigations on professionals' perceptions through interviews and questionnaires have highlighted the importance of strategic competence, as well of accuracy and clarity in content, in international business encounters (Ehrenreich 2010; Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen 2013; Louhiala-Salminen, Kankaanranta 2011). A recent study on perceptions and behaviors of BELF users was aimed at identifying which, among a selected number of strategies, are used more frequently in spoken and digital environments. For the 94 respondents in the study, tolerance of others is the most important element for communicative success, alongside CSs use and knowledge of both business practices and specialized registers (Franceschi forthcoming). Results showed that when it came to preference in CS use, the different channel of communication did not affect respondents' choice significantly. Rephrasing with different or easier words appears instead to be a popular strategy to respond to a signal of non-understanding or to a request for clarification, alongside providing an example. Asking for confirmation and comprehension checks are also popular strategies through which participants can verify their own understanding or make sure other participants are following. This suggests that respondents tend to act proactively in their digital and spoken interactions, using CSs to avoid misunderstandings and attending to signs of non-understanding or misunderstanding. Use of rephrasing and providing examples, for instance, can be seen as a "preventative measure" (Franceschi forthcoming) when non-understanding is suspected. In addition, respondents agree in providing what information they consider important for the success of the interaction in advance.

2.2. Recurring elements in the findings from VOICE and users' perceptions' survey

While the questionnaire mentioned above investigated only a number of selected strategies, identified on the basis of previous research - including the aforementioned VOICE studies - results from this data confirm observations from previous research and highlight the importance of proactive and co-operative behavior in the management of international business communication. The let-it-pass strategy of not addressing problematic turns is extremely rare in BELF due to the sensitive nature of the interactions involved, that may result in a loss of company time and money in case of an unresolved misunderstanding. Participants not only tend to address any explicit or perceived communication issues, but adopt strategies, including providing extra information in advance, to prevent such issues from arising. Self-rephrasing, for instance, was not investigated in the survey but it appeared in the VOICE PO and PB subsections as a preventative measure: by making an effort to be as clear as possible, participants try and avoid misunderstandings as well as the need for a repair sequence that may disrupt the interaction. While the survey did not show significant differences in behavior in the use of CSs between oral and digital interactions, it should be noted that the survey measured perceptions, so further research on naturally occurring digital data could shed more light on medium differences in CS use in BELF. It should also be pointed out that CSs do not always have the instrumental purpose of preventing or solving communication breakdown – preliminary investigation in digital interaction via e-mail appears to show that such strategies are also used to build and maintain rapport between interlocutors (Caleffi forthcoming). Indeed, participants seem to be aware of the need for rapport building and face-saving behavior during business encounters, which may result in careful strategic choices (such as rephrasing with different words rather than simplifying the concept) that can ensure communicative success while avoiding potentially offending the interlocutor (Franceschi, forthcoming).

The main overlapping areas for the CSs taken into consideration in our research within – but not only – the PRIN project are summarised in Table 1 below. As can be seen, requests for repetition, clarification and confirmation, as well as comprehension checks and rephrasing/paraphrase emerge as important in all domains, both face-to-face and digital ones. The table also reports findings as to the presence of these CSs in Business ELT coursebooks, which will be dealt with in detail in the following section (cf. also Franceschi 2019; Vettorel 2019).

Communication Strategies	VOICE (oral)	digital (e-mail)	perceptions (oral)	perception (written digital)	Business ELT coursebooks
Direct and indirect appeals	✓				✓
signaling non-understanding			✓		
Request for repetition	✓		✓	✓	✓
Request for clarification	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Request for confirmation	✓		✓	✓	✓
Comprehension checks	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Confirmation checks		✓			✓
Repetition (response)	✓	✓	✓		✓
Response: (rephrasing, expanding, definition, exemplification, etc.)	✓		✓	✓	✓ (only higher levels)
paraphrase (including self-rephrase and circumlocution)	✓		✓		✓

Table 1
Summary of areas investigated and findings.

3. Communication strategies in Business ELT coursebooks

As was seen in the previous sections, CSs play a fundamental role in BELF communication, and their relevance is acknowledged also by professionals who use English as a working language in BELF contexts: a number of CSs that have been identified in BELF research as having a prominent role appear to be considered important for successful communication by professionals, too (Franceschi forthcoming).

Findings from our data, which are in line with other BELF research (Louhiala-Salminen, Kankaanranta 2011), can hence have significant implications for business-related language curricula and for ELT materials. Professional business international relations increasingly occur in contexts that involve speakers from different first languages, different linguacultures,

as well as different work and corporate cultures. In order to prepare students (and professionals) for international communication through English, it appears fundamental for business ELT practices to be informed by BELF research findings, and more particularly to devote adequate attention to the role that CSs play in carrying out BELF communication in an effective way.

Recent investigations on business ELT materials, however, show that a BELF perspective on CSs does not seem to be present/dealt with. Findings from Vettorel's investigation (2019) in elementary, pre-intermediate and intermediate levels business ELT coursebooks shows that, despite the inclusion of some CSs since elementary volumes, these materials do not deal with such strategies in an overt and consistent way, and the importance CSs retain in BELF communication is not addressed. Even when examples of CSs such as repetition, clarification, checking comprehension and paraphrasing are included, a BELF viewpoint is not provided; furthermore, such examples are rarely accompanied by adequate reflection tasks. Similar findings emerged in analogous materials at more advanced levels (Franceschi 2018): despite the inclusion of some awareness-raising activities and opportunities for reflective practice, very few examples were provided for overt reflection, above all as to clarification and confirmation checks. One further aspect to be noted is that not all the CSs employed in face-to-face business-related contexts (Franceschi 2019), as illustrated in the previous sections, seem to be taken into consideration in business ELT materials, as will be seen in the following sections.

Although the inclusion of some CSs can be seen as a positive starting point in didactic terms, several other CSs that have been found to be used either in VOICE business-related data, or in digital communication via e-mail, or in both areas, do not seem to be dealt with in coursebooks, such as for instance lexical anticipation in response to hesitation, repair after request for confirmation, other-initiated word replacement, or metalinguistic comments. Attention to CSs, that are part of the 'Competence in BELF' layer of the Global Communicative Competence model (GCC, Louhiala-Salminen, Kankaanranta 2011), is not consistent in the materials examined, and the relevance they have for effective communication in BELF is not mentioned. Apart from a few cases (Vettorel 2019), they are often relegated to 'language boxes', very rarely accompanied by awareness-raising activities or connected to active practice in freer, authenticated (BELF) communication contexts. Also the notes in the teachers' guides do not provide advice, resources or examples that could lead to a further exploitation and expansion of the examples within a BELF-aware perspective, nor (apart from one case, see below) do they overtly set CSs within an interactional, active listening framework, where it is the joint work of both speaker(s) and listener(s) that constructs meaning and leads to mutual understanding. In addition, the

plurilingual aspect of (B)ELF communication, which has been shown to be an important communicative and rapport-building resource in BELF communication – both face-to-face and digital - is only very partially and minimally included in business ELT materials, and not present at all for lower levels (Franceschi 2018; Vettorel 2019; cf. also Si 2019). In line with this, other elements that have been widely shown to characterise (B)ELF use, as for instance the ability to creatively exploit the resources of the virtual language (Seidlhofer 2011; Widdowson 2003) in, and for, communication do not seem to be accounted for in business-oriented ELT pedagogic materials. Exemplifications for strategies such as approximation, all-purpose words and word-coinage, for example, that are present also in the VOICE business-related subcorpora were not found in the materials examined. This appears consistent with findings for general ELT materials (Vettorel 2017, 2018), and with the overall observation that an ELF-aware, and ELF-informed, pedagogical approach has not yet been consistently taken into consideration in ELT (Sifakis 2019; Sifakis *et al.* 2018).

It should however also be noted that aspects of the Global Communicative Competence model (Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen 2013; Louhiala-Salminen, Kankaanranta 2011), comprising the three interrelated layers of Multicultural Competence, Competence in BELF and Business Knowledge, have been found to be present in these business ELT materials; the multicultural competence layer, for instance, seems to be dealt with more frequently and more in depth, particularly as to differences in cultural and business cultural practices, or ways of doing business. Along the same line, awareness of Global Englishes in terms of exposure to speakers with a variety of accents also seems to be increasingly present in business ELT materials.

4. Pedagogical implications and examples of activities to foster the development of CSs

Given the extensive role that English as a lingua franca plays internationally, in business as in other domains, the need to take findings from BELF research into account in business-related ELT syllabi, curricula, materials and practices has been set forward by a number of researchers (Kankaanranta *et al.* 2015; Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen 2010, 2013; Pullin 2015; Sing 2017). Besides, several studies point to the importance of including authentic, real-work BELF data (Bremner 2008; Evans 2013; Faltzi, Sougari 2018; Louhiala-Salminen 1996; Nickerson 2002; Planken *et al.* 2004; Poncini 2002, 2004, 2013) in materials and pedagogic practices, one that would foster awareness of BELF interactions, and offer opportunities to experience how the language is actually used for communication in business and work

relations (for a discussion see Sing 2017).

As mentioned in the previous sections, CSs are integral part of the GCC model, and particularly of the second layer, that of Competence in BELF. Besides knowledge of business genres, the ability to manage tasks and build rapport, Competence in BELF includes strategic skills such as the “ability to ask for clarifications, make questions, repeat utterances, and paraphrase” and to effectively employ CSs as “clarity, brevity, directness and politeness” in communication (Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen 2013, p. 28). Within the specificity of business communicative contexts as to discursive practices, genres, know-how and cultural aspects – not least in corporate terms – it is the adaptive and effective use of resources and strategies by BELF users that plays a particularly important role in effective communication. In international business contexts, awareness and tolerance of differences in getting the job done are hence fundamental elements in the processes of active listening, where accommodation, negotiation and co-construction of meaning are realised as a joint enterprise by both speaker(s) and listener(s). Taking account of the relevance of these processes, and of the ways in which they are actually carried out in real-work contexts, ELT business-related materials and classroom/training practices should work towards preparing (future) professionals for international communication through BELF, also in connection to the development of the skills part of BELF Competence as outlined in the GCC model.

In the next sections we will provide some exemplifications of how findings from BELF research on CSs show that they are fruitfully employed in internationally-oriented communication through English, and on how these findings can be applied to business ELT contexts. We will focus particularly on the strategies that emerge as most relevant from our previous research findings, and which were to a certain extent included in the examined business ELT materials. Our aim is to set CSs-related activities within a BELF-informed framework, namely a) requests for repetition/clarification/confirmation and comprehension checks; b) responses in terms of repetition/reformulation (rephrasing, expanding, definition, exemplification), and paraphrase. To this aim, we will include examples both from BELF data (VOICE Professional Business sub-corpus), as well as from class work that was carried out as part of the EPP course *English for the world of work: focus on professional speaking and writing skills* held at the University of Verona.

4.1. Requests for repetition/clarification/confirmation – comprehension checks

Some examples for each category (apart from requests for confirmation) were found in the business ELT materials that were examined. For lower levels, we have 6 examples for asking for repetition, 3 for clarification and 5 for comprehension checks (Vettorel 2019); for the upper-intermediate level, the eight books analyzed showed 11 examples of asking for repetition, 25 of asking for clarification, 26 of asking for confirmation, and 4 comprehension checks (Franceschi 2018). Numbers for the higher level appear to be greater; however, it should be noted that many of these examples were not contextualized or marked as Communication Strategies, but rather embedded in activities with a different focus or included in lists of selected key expressions; furthermore, only three books out of eight display any systematic attention to building skills in Communication Strategy use.

Generally, it can be said that coursebook materials include a list of selected key expressions that can be employed to ask for repetition and clarification, such as “Can you repeat ...?”, “Sorry, what did you say?”, “Can you say that again?”. In most cases, brief listening examples are followed by a few guided practice exercises, and sometimes by freer practice ones, generally in connection to the main topic of the unit. Even though, especially for lower proficiency levels, these activities and a recap of useful expressions are certainly important, the relevance these and other pragmatic moves have in (BELF) communication is not pointed to, nor are instances of/for ‘natural’ contextualization offered. Within a BELF-informed perspective, on the other hand, presenting examples of actual language usage from corpora would provide opportunities first of all to raise awareness of how they are employed through noticing tasks. Such contextualised exemplifications could then be used as a springboard for active practice, both in business-related contexts, and through task-based projects in connection to (simulated) real-work contexts (Pullin 2010, 2015). The extract below, drawn from an international meeting in the PB subsection of the VOICE corpus, would for instance represent a useful example to show students a very effective use of Communication Strategies for handling communication problems. The authenticity of the example adds to its value, as it shows how meaning negotiation through CSs use occurs in actual high-stakes workplace interactions.

Extract 1

1454 S1: again e:r the major contributio- -butor. (1) in terms of (.) e:r value (.) e:r among our sales (.) OUTLET (.) ARE (.) those two. so HYPERMARKET and general trade.

- 1455 S4: mhm
 1456 S1: with er thirty-seven and (1) thirty-one per cent. (2)
 1457 S4: <slow> general trade? er (1) you sell DIRECTLY to or
 wholesalers o:r </slow>
 1458 S2: wholesalers
 1459 S4: <3> to er </3>
 1460 S1: <3> wholesalers </3>
 1461 S2: to wholesaler (.)
 1462 S4: mhm (3)
 (VOICE PBmtg3)

In this extract we see a clear example of asking for clarification, followed by an expansion to distinguish the request for clarification from a request for confirmation. As S4 does not understand what S1 intends with *general trade*, he asks for clarification by repeating the trigger word and, after a pause, enhances the explicitness of the request by formulating a more detailed query. The stress on the word *directly* could also have a pragmatic meaning, as S4 may want to know if the sales are direct or involve any intermediaries. This example ties Communication Strategies – and therefore BELF competence, which includes linguistic knowledge of business genres – to another aspect of GCC, that is, Business know-how. As different business settings may involve different procedures or attribute different meanings to the same business words / expressions, here S4 appears to want to make sure that both parties are on the same page regarding the meaning of *general trade*. This example therefore highlights the need for accuracy and clarity in BELF and how they can be effectively achieved through strategic language use, ensuring mutual comprehension and communicative success, and could hence constitute an excellent exemplification of how naturally occurring data can be employed to raise awareness of communication strategies in BELF.

An attempt in this direction was made in the EPP *English for the world of work: focus on professional speaking and writing skills*, held at the University of Verona and aiming at providing participants with a range of transversal skills to be used in the workplace. During the course, work on how a selected range of CSs, including requests for clarification and comprehension checks, can work in effective communication was provided. The following activity, employed in the 2017 and 2018 edition, for instance, exemplifies how participants can first learn how to identify CSs in a model text, raising awareness of their use and functions in communication, and then put their new knowledge and skill to practice through a production task. First, participants were asked to carry out an activity to identify a series of selected strategies, followed by a guided task where they had to think of different expressions to introduce different strategies (request for clarification or confirmation, comprehension check, response with rephrasing). Then, they worked in pairs, talking in turns about their work if they were professionals,

or their university experience if they were still students. Each pair was given action cards (see Fig. 1), that they needed to use during their conversation. The activity ended after both trainees had used all their cards, then they exchanged roles and repeated the exercise.

The person being explained to		
Show your lack of understanding (general)	Point out (exactly) what you don't understand	Check your comprehension
the person explaining		
Check the other person's understanding (general)	Check the other person's understanding (specific)	Add more information

Figure 1
Cards for the Communication Strategies activity.

The examples of activities suggested above would provide students with both an authentic model of CSs use, which would contribute to building awareness of CSs and their importance in day-to-day international workplace communication, as well as give them a chance to practice such strategies in simulated encounters.

4.2. Responses: repetition/reformulation (rephrasing, expanding, definition, exemplification); paraphrase

Communication strategies referring to repetition, reformulation and paraphrase also appear to be widely present in our data, as in BELF literature. Repetition, reformulation and rephrasing are frequently employed by BELF users to cooperatively reach mutual understanding, in a face-saving and natural way (Franceschi 2019 for VOICE data), and seems to be corroborated also by findings from BELF users' perceptions. While this is also true for more general ELF contexts, it appears to be even more important in BELF due to the high-stake nature of business-related interactions. Reaching mutual understanding and conveying correctness in content indeed constitute paramount goals (Louhiala-Salminen, Kankaanranta 2011; Palmer-Silveira 2013).

Findings from coursebooks in this area include some interesting exemplifications, particularly for paraphrasing, that is at times presented in combination with other CSs such as comprehension checks or interpretative summary. For example, in one case, within the regular *Communication Strategies* section in the coursebook, in the elementary volume we find a

“What do you call it?” heading with a series of activities (Barral, Rogers 2011, p. 78). It is worth of note that the activities are introduced by a discussion task where students are first asked to talk in pairs about what they do when they don't know, or cannot recall, a word in their L1, and then about whether they do the same in a conversation in English. The request to reflect on the strategies normally used in their L1 appears particularly interesting, since it can lead to overt reflection on the fact that CSs are part of ‘normal pragmatic practice’ (Widdowson 2003) in any language, as well as to the idea that ‘perfect communication’ is a problematic conceptualization, either in a first or in a second/additional language (Pitzl 2010). Within a Multilingua Franca perspective, the aforementioned coursebook activity could be integrated by overt reflection tasks including other languages part of the students'/trainees' repertoires, too – as literature has shown, the use of languages other than English in BELF is a widespread practice (Cogo 2012, 2016a, 2016b; Franceschi 2017; Poncini 2003), to the aim of meaning negotiation, but also a means to create and maintain rapport, especially when it involves the language(s) in the partners' repertoires (Franceschi 2017; Louhiala-Salminen, Kankaanranta 2011).

In didactic terms, extracts from the VOICE PB subcorpus could also be used to exemplify how the participants' plurilingual resources are naturally integrated in BELF communication, as for instance in the following extract:

Extract 2

2056 S1: i will go for this one i don't know this plate. (1)
 2057 S2: m<6>hm </6> (1)
 2058 S1: <6> (it) </6>
 2059 S7: (no) things (3)
 2060 S2: <LNfre> bon appetit? {enjoy your meal} </LNfre> (2)
 2061 SX-m: <soft><un> x?</un></soft>
 2062 S6: <LNfre> bon appetit {enjoy your meal} </LNfre> (5)
 (VOICE PBmtg300)

This conversation takes place at lunch time, during which the meeting among the participants continues. As they settle in front of their meals, two of them use the French expression *bon appetit* despite none of them being a native French speaker. In this case, we can say that French fills a linguistic and conceptual gap in English: as there is no conventional expression to wish people a good meal as in other European languages, speakers here rely on a common French phrase to convey their message. This choice allows them to express a meaning that could not have been immediately communicated in English as well as reinforce a social bond between the participants.

In the example from the elementary coursebook quoted above (Barral, Rogers 2011, p. 78), the reflection point about strategies the students are

familiar with in their L1 and in English is followed by a series of tasks specifically related to paraphrasing and direct appeal in the form of sentence completion, matching, guided and freer practice. It should be noted that in this case the suggestions in the general introduction of the Teacher's Book set CSs within an interactional rather than a deficit perspective; in the section related to the aforementioned activities, noticing for paraphrasing techniques is encouraged, and a reference to repairing strategies is made: "at elementary level Ss [students] often struggle to find the right word. This lesson gives the Ss strategies for when they don't know a word or can't remember a word in English. They are taught how they can still remain fluent in the conversation despite not knowing a particular word by using paraphrasing language" (Alexander 2011, p. 81). On the whole, these activities could represent a good starting point that could be applied in several other teaching/learning contexts, in order to foster first awareness and then practice of paraphrasing to pre-empt or solve a potential non-understanding.

Another example worth mentioning in relation to paraphrasing in the coursebooks examined is one that is directly connected to listening in an active way, which is the main topic of the unit in another textbook. The relevance of "paraphrasing regularly to show you're paying attention" is mentioned, alongside the importance of seeking "further information, probe with questions" and "clarify any points which are unclear to you" (Powell 2014, p. 27). The 5-point list "L.I.S.T.E.N." ("Look interested, Inquire, Summarize, Test understanding, Encourage", *ibid.*) for good listeners is followed by a listening exercise and a noticing activity, which include the following expressions to be identified in the proposed listening passage:

So what you are saying is...; It sounds like you think...; In other words...; Are you saying...?; so the way you see it is...; so, for you it's a question of...

Are you saying...?; Do you mean...?; What do you mean by...?; Sorry, I'm not quite with you; How do you mean exactly?

Uh huh, go on.; really?; Oh, that's interesting; Right, I'm with you. Good point; Hmm, nice idea. I like it.

How is that going to affect...?; But wouldn't that mean...?; Why do you say that?: Do you have figures for that?; Okay, fine. Just one question (*ibid.*)

Students are then asked to practice active listening techniques following the guidelines provided in two short written texts. Importantly, it can be noted that the expressions above are set within a cooperative meaning co-construction, either to show interest (building rapport) or as interpretative summary/asking for more details and explanations. The positive point here can be seen above all in the rationale of setting these CSs within an active

listening viewpoint, highlighting how meaning co-construction and effective communication are a joint enterprise reached through cooperation of both speaker and listener (cf. also Chan, Frenco 2014; Chong 2018 for other activities). In this case, too, including real-work exemplifications of how these CSs are used in BELF contexts would provide further opportunities for reflection and examples for real use, as for instance the following conversation from VOICE.

Extract 3

- 138 S5: <slow> i think </slow> probably the goal is of course for all of us to have true: joint degrees. but at the moment (.) in order to be able to do something (.) we need to (1) i think in most of the cases double degrees or triple degrees (.) is the solution so (.) i think at the <loud> same time </loud> (.) as we are <fast> sort of </fast> trying to promote (.) THIS type of curriculum convergence (.) of operation (.) e:r [org2] can (1) <slow> as i think </slow> it has always DONE (.) act as a as a: lobbying
- 139 S1: <soft> mhm </soft> =
- 140 S5: = er <2> machinery </2><3> towards </3>
- 141 S8: <2> mhm </2>
- 142 S1: <2><soft> mhm </soft></2>
- 143 S8: <3> mhm </3> hm
- 144 S5: whatever <4> instance </4> is (at need) (1)
- 145 S1: <4><soft> mhm </soft></4>
- 146 S8: hm =
- 147 S1: = okay so our (.) ULTimate aim is to (.) establish joint degrees (.) joint degree programs.
- 148: S5: <5> mhm </5>
- (VOICE, POmtg314)

In this example, S1 and S8 show active listening by using repeatedly the backchannel *mhm*, which in this context can have the functions of signaling attention and comprehension as well as of encouraging S5 to continue his explanation. Once S5 appears to have concluded his turn, with a pause at the end of the utterance (line 144), S1 summarizes the kernel of S5's speech. Even though S1's turn is not phrased as a question, she is reformulating what she has heard to make sure she has understood correctly. S5's own backchannel may be interpreted as agreement with S1's summary.

The examples discussed above can hence represent relevant didactic opportunities to notice how CSs are effectively and naturally used in real BELF contexts and could be employed as a springboard for further practice, both guided and freer, also in similar work-related settings. Other activities that can be used to develop paraphrasing skills, and which are generally well-received by students, include for example tasks where students are asked to define a word, as in the popular game *Taboo*. A game of this type was used in

the EPP *English for the World of Work* as part of the language focus on strategies, and was planned with workplace vocabulary after the activities on asking and providing clarification illustrated above. The game was played in pairs or in small teams; in turns, participants picked a card and illustrated its meaning to their teammates, who had to guess the word on the card. This type of activity, which is often also used to reinforce and review vocabulary, is very adaptable, as it can be played at different levels of difficulty and with different types of words.

To sum up, fostering awareness of natural CS use in BELF context within business-related ELT appears of the utmost importance, given the relevance they have in effective communication in the international workplace. Such awareness can be promoted through noticing activities based on BELF data, implementing and integrating coursebooks materials with overt noticing and reflection tasks, as we sought to exemplify. Such tasks should also include the students' experience of their L1, of English, and of other languages part of their repertoires, within a 'lingual capability' perspective whereby all resources in the speakers' repertoires are used in communication. Such an approach can first lead to awareness of the crucial role CSs play in BELF, and in turn to active practice, first guided and then freer, through simulations and/or real work settings.

5. Concluding remarks

The impact of globalization has led to an expanded role of English as the working language of communication in the workplace. Communicative needs in these international business contexts are two-fold: while speakers need to be skilled and engage at a global level, localized elements (in terms of practices, policies, and even linguistic conventions) also play an important role. Participants negotiate their use of linguistic resources, including languages other than English, to find a balance between mutual understanding, rapport building, and saving face – others' and their own – in preventing and resolving potential non-understandings. The research carried out within the PRIN project has further underlined the role of Communication Strategies in BELF interactions, expanding existing research; corpora-based studies, both of face-to-face and e-mail interactions, have shown that CSs are employed skillfully by participants with the primary purpose of preventing and solving communication issues; preliminary investigations suggest that they are also used deliberately for rapport building (Caleffi 2019, forthcoming). The importance of such strategies is also recognized by professionals themselves, who report that misunderstandings, when they happen, are very likely to be quickly and efficiently solved through a range of CSs.

However, such strategies do not appear to be adequately included in business ELT materials either in terms of raising awareness or providing opportunities to develop their skillful use in BELF settings. While examples of common CSs are found in textbooks from beginner to upper-intermediate levels, they are very rarely addressed or built upon as an overt and integrated learning focus, and never within a BELF perspective. Given the relevance CSs have been shown to have in BELF communication, students and trainees would indeed benefit from learning about and practicing different pragmatic strategies, first in a controlled and then in a real work environment. As we have tried to illustrate, additional activities can be created using authentic BELF data to highlight how CSs are actually and effectively used in real interactions, and then integrated with the examples of strategies appearing in textbooks by using them as the starting point for CS-focused tasks.

Further research, especially in digital contexts, is needed to investigate the role and functions of CSs in these interactional contexts, and how their use may inform Business English syllabi and materials in a BELF-aware perspective. Additional work on pedagogical implications is therefore also warranted, through the development and testing of courses and training materials that include a more distinctive focus on success in international work environments, not only in the specific area of CSs but also, more generally, in all the aspects involved in Competence in BELF and in the other layers comprised in the Global Communicative Competence model.

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COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN BELF E-MAILING 'Only' a matter of shared understanding?

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Abstract – Research in BELF (English as a Business Lingua Franca) has increasingly focused on pragmatic and sociolinguistic aspects of business communication (Kecskes 2019). In particular, a number of studies has explored the employment of Communication Strategies (CSs) in interactions in the workplace, both in oral communication (Franceschi 2019; Haegeman 2002; Poncini 2004) and in digital written exchanges (Incelli 2013; Ren 2018; Zummo 2018). CSs have mainly been analysed from a perspective of 'problematicity' (Bialystok 1990), in that they are usually presented as moves undertaken to repair (Watterson 2008), signal (Cogo, Pitzl 2016), or pre-empt (Mauranen 2006) problems of understanding, with the aim of achieving successful communication (Pitzl 2010). This paper suggests a broadening of the notion of communication strategy in the domain of BELF that includes the achievement of goals other than, or at least complementary to, shared understanding. It does so by analysing some examples from a collection of business e-mails which seem to suggest that there may be other reasons, besides mutual intelligibility, for business partners to employ certain communication strategies. The pedagogical implications of this broadening are also considered, with reference to the findings of current research concerning Business English (BE) teaching material (Vettorel, Franceschi 2020).

Keywords: BELF; Business English; Communication Strategies; Business E-mailing; Business Rapport-Building.

1. Introduction

In recent years, research in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) has expanded to contexts of international communication within specific domains, particularly in the domain of business. The increasing interest in global business communication and in the role played therein by English as the working language has led to the coinage of a new acronym, BELF, originally standing for 'Business English as a Lingua Franca' (Gerritsen, Nickerson 2009; Louhiala-Salminen *et al.* 2005), and then redefined as 'Business ELF' (Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen 2013). Indeed, globalization has massively changed the business environment, transforming it into a multicultural, multilingual and multimodal context which requires of professionals in the sector a combination of multiple competences. In this

regard, Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011) have developed the notion of Global Communicative Competence (GCC). This includes not only competence in business as such (“business knowhow”), but also the ability to successfully exploit a repertoire of linguistic resources in a fluid setting, where speakers of different mother tongues work together relying on a main shared code (“BELF competence”); moreover, it includes awareness of the challenges posed by the different cultural backgrounds that have come into connection due to cross-border mergers and partnerships, and thanks to the striking development of multimodal communication technologies (“multicultural competence”).

The multilingual and multicultural nature of global business has heightened the need for business partners to develop awareness of pragmatic strategies (Cogo 2012) that may contribute to successful interactions, or, on the contrary, lead to failure in communication, with implications for the achievement of transactional goals. Indeed, the common denominator amongst the multiple abilities of which GCC is comprised seems to be a form of ‘strategic competence’, that is, the ability to accommodate to the communicative event – and to the participants therein – both linguistically and culturally (Cogo 2016). This has aroused interest in the type of strategies adopted in BELF contexts, making communication strategies (CSs) a major topic of investigation in BELF research, with regard to both oral communication (Franceschi 2017, 2019; Haegeman 2002; Poncini 2003, 2004; Rogerson-Revell 2010; Wolfartsberger 2011), and, to a lesser extent, digital written interaction (Carrió Pastor 2015; Incelli 2013; Zummo 2018).

The classification and the analysis of CSs, however, have mostly been carried out from a ‘problematicity’ (Bialystok 1990) perspective, in that CSs are normally presented as strategic moves initiated by BELF interactants to tackle problems of understanding, mainly in the sense of intelligibility.

Based on the analysis of a small corpus of business email-exchanges amongst business professionals, this paper claims that communicative effectiveness in the business world may not depend *only* on the achievement of mutual intelligibility. The completion of transactional tasks, in reality, heavily depends also, and at least equally, on the construction of trusting, harmonious and smooth interpersonal relationships (Crook, Booth 1997; Spencer-Oatey 2005). As the empirical investigation reported on in this paper seeks to show, the use of certain CSs may be driven not so much by the need to negotiate meaning for the sake of shared understanding, but rather by the interactants’ willingness to build rapport as the precondition for successful business.

As explained in the following sections, what emerges from the email-exchanges analysed herein seems to indicate a broader understanding of the notion of ‘communication strategy’ when it comes to the workplace; at the

same time, it appears to call for a reconsideration of the very aim of the business professionals' training that is provided through ELT business materials and resources (Caleffi, Poppi 2019).

2. The notion of 'communication strategy': from SLA to ELF

Although the beginning of CS research dates back to the 1970s, it still seems difficult to provide a rigorous definition of 'communication strategy' on which researchers would agree. The term was first conceptualised in the area of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Selinker (1972) first used it to refer to the ways in which second language learners deal with the difficulties they encounter during communication when their linguistic resources are inadequate. Many more, and often diverging, definitions have been provided since then. For example, Canale and Swain (1980) have included the notion of CSs in their model of communicative competence as one of the constituents of strategic competence. They maintain that strategic competence is made up of "verbal and non verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence" (Canale, Swain 1980, p. 30). Tarone (1981) claims that CSs "are used to compensate for some deficiency in the linguistic system, and focus on exploring alternate ways of using what one does know for the transmission of a message without necessarily considering situational appropriateness" (Tarone 1981, p. 287), the primary function of CSs being "to negotiate an agreement on meaning between two interlocutors" (Tarone 1981, p. 288). Faerch and Kasper (1984) have defined CSs from a psycholinguistic perspective, and related them to individual language users' experience of communicative problems, and their "plans" on how to solve such problems. As Dörnyei and Scott (1997) maintain in their comprehensive overview of CSs literature, CSs research was particularly productive in the 1990s, with the release of the first monographs (Byalstock 1990), further empirical studies and conceptual analyses leading to different conceptualisations and classifications (Yule, Tarone 1991), and work on the teachability of CSs (Dörnyei, Thurrell 1991). Quite interestingly for the topic of the present paper, Dörnyei and Scott (1997) remark the fact that when it comes to establishing the principles based on which CSs can be identified as such, "two defining criteria are consistently mentioned, *problem-orientedness* and *consciousness*" (Dörnyei, Scott 1997, p. 182).¹ As for the former criterion, it seems

¹ Emphasis in the original.

undeniable that in early CSs research problematicity is part and parcel of the conceptualisation of CSs.

Research on CSs has become relevant to ELF studies with the increasing interest in the pragmatics and dynamics of ELF interaction – particularly, with the shift of focus in ELF research from the description of pronunciation (Jenkins 2000) and lexico-grammar ‘regularities’ (Seidlhofer 2004) observed across ELF users, to the adoption of the communities of practice (Wenger 1998) framework (Seidlhofer 2007), and later on to the analysis of “the underlying processes that led to ELF users’ linguistic choices as they negotiated intercultural communication” (Jenkins 2017, p. 8). As Björkman (2014, p. 126) suggests, “the notion of problematicity is surely not irrelevant to ELF investigation”. Indeed, contexts of ELF communication are characterised by “asymmetries” (Linell 1998) strictly connected with the multilingual and multicultural nature of ELF interaction. ELF speakers’ awareness of such asymmetries somehow provides them with a certain degree of “preparedness” (Björkman 2014) towards communication problems that might occur in the course of interaction. Which is why they are more likely to do ‘pro-active’ work to prevent miscommunication, besides adopting remedy strategies when miscommunication does occur (Pitzl 2010). This has increasingly led ELF researchers to ‘group’ CSs – and to accordingly organise their classification – within three main typologies: pre-emptive CSs (Kaur 2009; Mauranen 2006), signalling CSs (Cogo, Pitzl 2016), and repair CSs (Kaur 2011; Watterson 2008). Irrespective of the typology, the common aim these CSs seem to share is that of tackling language-related problems of understanding for the sake of successful communication and the achievement of share understanding (Pitzl 2010).

Yet, empirical studies have shown that problems of understanding occur infrequently in ELF interaction (Deterding 2013; Mauranen 2006; Poncini 2003). Which might in itself suggest that there may be other reasons why ELF speakers use CSs, and certain CSs in particular. These other reasons may be related to the very meaning of the term ‘strategy’. As Dörnyei and Scott (1997) remark, “*strategy* in general has come to refer to the implementation of a set of procedures for accomplishing something” (Dörnyei, Scott 1997, p. 179),² that is, in Bialystok’s (1990, p. 1) terms, to the “wilful planning to achieve explicit goals”. According to Dörnyei and Scott (1997), this implies that, in its broadest and most general sense, “a *communication strategy* [...] is a plan of action to accomplish a communication goal” (Dörnyei, Scott 1997, p. 179).³ Still, the achievement

² Emphasis in the original.

³ Emphasis in the original.

of communication goals may not be dependent exclusively on the ability to tackle language-related problems of understanding, especially when it comes to high-stakes interactions like those characterising business communication, as is discussed in the next sections.

3. Research on Communication Strategies in BELF contexts

The adoption of the communities of practice framework in ELF research, and the increasing interest in the dynamics of interaction in multilingual and multicultural settings have certainly contributed to the expansion of CSs research to the realm of BELF communication.

Similarly to ELF research, most studies exploring the use of CSs in BELF contexts have concerned oral interactions. Haegeman (2002), for example, has analysed business telephone calls in ELF focusing on strategies of simplification of language usage (the so-called 'foreigner talk') to compensate for the co-participant's lack of linguistic proficiency; Poncini (2004) has investigated the exploitation of multilingual resources to effectively participate in multicultural business meetings; Rogerson-Revell (2010) has analysed strategies adopted in international business meetings to accommodate linguistic differences and difficulties; Franceschi (2017) has considered the role of linguacultural repertoires as an asset to ELF talk in business contexts. Some research has also explored the use of CSs in international digital environments such as Instagram (Brunner, Diemer 2019), and, especially, in online BELF interactions, mainly business e-mail exchanges. Indeed, e-mails have replaced other forms of traditional written business communication, like business letters or faxes (Guffey 2010; Louhiala-Salminen, Kankaanraanta 2011). Several studies have examined not only the linguistic and discursive features of e-mails in the workplace (Carrió Pastor, Muñiz Calderón 2012; Gimenez 2000, 2006; Kankaanraanta 2006; Petterson 2015), but also the pragmatics of intercultural business discourse via e-mail (Carrió Pastor 2015; Davis *et al.* 2009; Freytag 2019; Lenassi 2015; Lorenzo-Dus, Bou-Franch 2013; Roshid *et al.* 2018), and, specifically – though to a lesser extent – the CSs used by ELF speakers in business e-mail interaction (Lindgren 2014; Millot 2017; Ren 2018).

When analysing CSs in business e-mailing, once again the focus is usually on their use as a means to signal, prevent or remedy occurrences of misunderstanding mainly related to linguistic asymmetries. Less attention, instead, has been paid to the interactional dimension of e-mailing (Caleffi forthcoming). In fact, business communication does not only have a transactional function, but it also entails an interactional dimension (Köster

2006, 2010; Planken 2005) without which business would not be carried out successfully. This is particularly true when communication occurs via e-mail, having e-mails replaced also face-to-face interactions in business, such as meetings or telephone calls (Louhiala-Salminen, Kankaanranta 2011). Awareness of the importance of building rapport with business partners (Kalocsai 2011) is a fundamental component of the business know-how that professionals are required to have, as “rapport [...] is a business tool which helps in all transactions” (Hollman, Kleiner 1997, p. 194). For this reason, it seems reasonable to think that the employment of certain CSs may be aimed not so much at tackling (possible) breakdowns in communication due to code-related issues. Rather, it may be driven by the interactants’ willingness to establish the solidarity which is expected amongst the members of communities of practice in business. This is even more so in a cross-cultural setting like that of BELF. Here, communities of practice are comprised of professionals who not only have different linguistic backgrounds, but first and foremost different business practices, that is, different ways of doing business, with their own peculiar interactional dynamics. Lack of awareness of asymmetries in this respect may significantly jeopardise business, which is why the communication goals that CSs are supposed to accomplish in business interaction cannot but include relational/interpersonal goals such as the achievement of affinity (Wiemann, Daly 1994), solidarity (Köster 2006) and rapport management (Spencer-Oatey 2000, 2005). This is only possible if business professionals are prepared to take into account and to adjust to their business partners’ interpersonal-pragmatics practices. Such awareness can develop directly in the workplace, but it can also be enhanced by well-designed business training.

The next section provides examples of CSs that are used in BELF e-mail exchanges with the aim of establishing smooth working relationships, and, ultimately, of building rapport.

4. Examples of CSs in e-mail interaction aimed at building rapport

The examples illustrated in this section are taken from a self-compiled corpus of 240 real-life business e-mails written by BELF users of different L1s, namely Italian, German, French, English, Danish, Swedish, and Chinese. The e-mails correspond to 61 exchanges of an average of 4 e-mails each, and were collected over a time span of 4 months, from November 2018 to February 2019. The exchanges were identified based on the topic, in the sense that sometimes they were carried out in different steps during the same day, or even the next day, but still concerned the original topic. The e-mails were

written and received by Italian professionals working in either the commercial or the customer service departments of four Italian companies operating in the fields of car-trading, manufacturing of tights and socks, ICT assistance, transport and logistics. The data were collected after sending the participating companies an informed consent, where they were provided with details about the research project,⁴ and guaranteed anonymity. Anonymity was ensured by removing from the e-mails all personal data such as the names⁵ and e-mail addresses of the writers and of their companies (including those of any other person or company mentioned in the e-mails), and any confidential⁶ information concerning their business (for example prices, product names, etc.). The only personal information that was disclosed in the compilation of the corpus was the L1 of the writers, which was attributed based on the country where the respective company was located.⁷

As explained in the previous sections, the aim of the present study was to address the issue of whether CSs in BELF e-mail interaction are 'only' employed to handle language-related problems of understanding, or, as is claimed here, for other reasons and purposes that are inherent to the dynamics of business communication. Indeed, the analysis of the corpus has identified three CSs that appear to be used for reasons other than that of tackling language-related problems of mutual intelligibility, as the selected extracts provided hereunder show. The first one is metalinguistic comments (Planken 2005), the second is code-switching (Deterding 2013), and the third is small talk (Pullin 2010). In fact, to the knowledge of the author the latter has not yet been classified as a communication strategy in the several categorisations produced so far (see Björkman 2014 for a comprehensive overview). Still, if we adopt the above mentioned broad definition of 'communication strategy' provided by Dörnyei and Scott (1997, p. 179) as "a plan of action to accomplish a communication goal", and if we agree that communication goals may include interpersonal goals, as argued in the previous sections, then it seems reasonable to claim that small talk is a 'planned' form of interaction, whose main aim is to create a smooth environment between interactants as the necessary precondition to carry out successful business transactions.

⁴ PRIN 2015 Prot. 2015REZ4EZ, "English as a Lingua Franca in domain-specific contexts of intercultural communication: A Cognitive-functional Model for the analysis of ELF accommodation strategies in unequal migration contexts, digital-media virtual environments, and multicultural ELF classrooms".

⁵ Only the initial letter was retained.

⁶ The companies were specifically asked to provide a list of the information appearing in the e-mails that they regarded as confidential.

⁷ This seemed a reasonable assumption, although offering no certainty about the actual L1s of the writers.

The first example⁸ (Example 1) is an extract from an exchange between an Italian male speaker (I) and a Chinese female speaker (C).⁹ The two interactants are dealing with the issue of a contract that the Chinese interlocutor seems to need for her company to pay for the order they have just received from Italy. Below is the extract:

Example 1

- (C) Thanks for you sent me our order, for payment we need a contract, and sorry we can't understand French, so would you please sent me the contract for English, thanks *and my name is Y :)
- (I) [...] Concerning the contract, of course we are very happy to start a cooperation with you and we want to make it easy and correct for both of us, however it is not very clear what you do mean with it. [...] Thank you in advance for your cooperation and understanding.
- (C) Sorry I didn't say clean enough, I mean u send me the excel in Franch, but we don't use France at all, although I can understand what is this mean, but we wish all the excel and contract can be in English, and when we pay you, we need a contract, do you have it? [...] sorry to confuse you [...]
- (I) I understand you prefer English, no problem we will send you all documents and information in English, we also use English.

The extract starts with the interactants trying to negotiate the meaning of 'contract'. To this purpose, (I) asks for clarification about what is meant by 'contract' ("it is not clear what you do mean by it"). Interestingly, this request for clarification comes only after (I) having remarked his willingness to cooperate with the business partner (C) to make things smooth for both ("of course we are very happy to start a cooperation with you and we want to make it easy and correct for both of us"). In itself, this can be seen as a hint to the fact that (I) is particularly concerned with the establishment of good relationships from the very beginning ("start a cooperation"), in this case by explicitly offering cooperation (Caleffi forthcoming). The same concern is shared by (C), as can be seen in the first words of her reply ("Sorry I didn't say clean enough") as well as in the final ones, at the end of the same turn ("sorry to confuse you"). Indeed, the interaction goes on with (C) providing what is supposed to be an explanation of what she means by 'contract' ("I

⁸ All examples are verbatim.

⁹ (C) is actually named Y., where Y. is the abbreviation of the real name to guarantee anonymity.

mean [...]”), but in reality is not. The Asian partner only speaks about an Excel document (“the excel”), an explanation that does not appear to actually clarify what is meant by ‘contract’, and therefore does not seem to explicitly respond to the Italian interlocutor’s request. Instead, (C) moves on to comment on the language of such ‘contract’ (“u send me the excel in Franch, but we don’t use France at all”), and soon remarks she would have the linguistic proficiency to understand it (“although I can understand what is this mean”), the real problem being, however, the apparent corporate’s (“we”) need to have a document in English (“we wish all the excel and contract can be in English”). This metalinguistic comments are promptly responded to by (I), who seems to let the negotiation of the actual meaning of ‘contract’ pass, and to focus, instead, on the partner’s metalinguistic comments (“I understand you prefer English, no problem we will send you all documents and information in English”), soon specifying that English is his company’s (“we”) business language too (“we also use English”), thus establishing a common ground which generates ‘solidarity’ (Caleffi forthcoming; Köster 2006).

What emerges from this exchange is that the two interactants seem more concerned with rapport management, namely, the management of “the relative harmony and smoothness of relations between people” (Spencer-Oatey 2005, p. 96), than with meaning negotiation. This is particularly evident in their use of metalinguistic comments. Interestingly, by dealing with the issue of the contract language, they appear to be willing to make each other aware of their companies’ business practices, that is, in this specific case, the practice of doing business in English. English as the working language of both companies becomes the interlocutors’ common ground: neither of them is a native speaker of English, and still it is English that allows them to conduct business, despite their remarking their knowledge of other L2s, French here. And this is another component of the common ground they share and which they want to point out: they are both multilingual non-native speakers of English who come from different cultural-bound ways of doing business, and are yet interested in adapting to each other’s business culture. As Planken (2005, p. 397) puts it, “by pointing out and acknowledging cultural differences, participants try to create a temporary in-group of (fellow) non-natives, whose common ground is the fact that they differ culturally”, which, in turn, is “clearly aimed at rapport-building”.

The second example (Example 2) is an extract from an exchange between an Italian male speaker (I) and a British female speaker (B).¹⁰ The two interactants are dealing with the topic of a delivery from Italy to Britain. Below is the extract:

Example 2

- (I) Hello M.,
Tutto OK?
P.
- (B) Ciao P. Tutto OK. Grande P.!
Please could you ask them to book in slot AM or PM?
All the best,
M.

The extract is from a longer exchange in which the Italian and the British interactants arrange for the delivery of goods from Italy to the UK. In the extract, (I) wants to make sure that the delivery of the goods to the British partner's company has been carried out successfully. While the rest of the exchange is in English, this extract starts with a short e-mail written by (I), whose beginning is in English ("Hello, M."), but which soon switches to Italian ("Tutto ok?"). The Italian phrase is a very common formula, which in itself suggests some kind of 'fellowship', in the sense that it is a very direct and informal way of asking about how things are, and in fact it is especially used in interactions amongst friends and fellows. Quite interestingly, (B) adopts the same strategy, though inverting the direction of the switch: she starts in Italian ("Ciao P. Tutto ok. Grande P.!") and then shifts to English ("Please could you ask them to book in slot AM or PM? All the best.").

In this example, code-switching is not used to handle any problems of understanding. Instead, it appears to be aimed at maintaining a smooth relationship between the two interlocutors. This is obtained by the two interactants showing each other respect for and acknowledgement of their reciprocal languages. More than that, the British partner also shows an understanding of the pragmatics of the phrase "Tutto OK?", as she appears to be perfectly 'tuned in' to her interlocutor's register by adopting the same expression in her reply ("Tutto OK") and, even more tellingly, the expression "Grande P.!", which, again, shows a certain degree of 'fellowship'. This seems to support Deterding's (2013) claim that code-switching may also be

¹⁰In the original examples, the names were anonymised using only the initial letters of the writers, as explained above. They were respectively P. (for the Italian writer) and M. (for the British writer).

successfully used to build rapport between two people in ELF interaction. In this particular case, code-switching helps the two business professionals to maintain rapport by maintaining smoothness (Spencer-Oatey, Xing 2003), a goal which is achieved thanks to the British interlocutor's adaptation to the Italian partner's informal and 'friendly' register, and in the partner's own language, before shifting to English.

The third example (Example 3) is an extract from an exchange between an Italian female interlocutor (I) and a French male interlocutor (F).¹¹ The extract corresponds to the first move in the exchange, which appears to be the first contact after the participation of both interactants, seemingly separately, in an exhibition in Munich. Below is the extract:

Example 3

- (I) Hello C., I'm back from Munich.
How was the end of the show for you? Something interesting?
Do you think it's possible to make [...] in size [...]?
- (F) Hello A.,
yes, thanks. And for you?
In attached you can find a XXL diagram.
What do you think about this?

As we can see, the two business partners have a task that they need to carry out. Indeed, (I) asks about the possibility to realise a certain product in a certain size ("Do you think it's possible to make [...] in size [...]?"), and (F) provides a relevant answer by sending a diagram, and asking for the partner's opinion ("In attached you can find a XXL diagram. What do you think about this?"). Yet, in their exchange they do not go straight to the specific business task. Instead, they ask each other about the exhibition they have both been to, with (I) informing (F) she has just come back from the fair ("I'm back from Munich") and asking her interlocutor about how his visit to the fair was, rather than about the exhibition itself ("How was the end of the show for you? Something interesting?"). To which (F) replies very briefly, but still formulating the reply in a way that shows his interest in (F)'s experience *with* the exhibition, rather than in the exhibition as such ("yes, thanks. And for you?"). The decision of starting the exchange with some small talk seems to be aimed at 'preparing the ground' for the task to be performed by creating a relaxed atmosphere, and showing each other's concern about the degree of

¹¹ In the original examples, the names were anonymised using only the initial letters of the writers, as explained above. They were respectively A. (for the Italian writer) and C. (for the French writer).

enjoyment of their visit to the exhibition. In other words, the two interactants seem to share the belief that just a few words not directly related to the task at hand can be useful to create that sense of belonging to a community of practice (in this case, the community of practice of the fellow business people who work in the sector, and therefore went to the fair in question) that will help each other be more willing to cooperate in the fulfilment of the business task. Indeed, studies on small talk (Holmes 2000; Köster 2006, 2010; Pullin 2010) have shown that “rather than being peripheral to the workplace, ‘relational talk’ provides a space for business interlocutors to liaise, [...] thus contributing to the success of the business” (Caleffi forthcoming). Small talk is therefore a prime means to foster rapport between business professionals. In fact, it increases the probability of avoiding or successfully overcoming communication problems (Pullin 2010).

The relational function of small talk is even clearer in the fourth extract (Example 4), where an Italian male speaker (I) and a Swedish male interlocutor (S)¹² begin their exchange with a comment on (I)’s apparent recent trip to Sweden. Below is the extract:

Example 4

- (S) Hi M.,
How are things with you? Did you miss Sweden yet? 😊
I need your help with.
- (I) Hi A.,
Not missing Sweden yet...😊 I feel pretty fine here down in Italy...
Yes, no problem.

Also in this case, the interaction begins with small talk before moving on to the ‘actual’ business (“I need your help with.”). (S) wants to know if (I) is fine, and whether (I) misses Sweden (“How are things with you? Did you miss Sweden yet?”), from which we understand (I) has just come back from (S)’s country. The emoji (“😊”) at the end reinforces the relational dimension. Indeed, (I) also includes the same emoji, and replies by ‘reassuring’ (S) that everything is ok. Interestingly, in this case the Italian interlocutor seems not to be fully aware that his presumably humorously saying “I feel pretty fine here down in Italy” could be interpreted by the Swedish partner as a hint to the fact that (I) may not have liked Sweden, the south (“here down”, in this case Italy) being more enjoyable than the north (in this case Sweden). This

¹²In the original examples, the names were anonymised using only the initial letters of the writers, as explained above. They were respectively M. (for the Italian writer) and A. (for the Swedish writer).

suggests that some aspects of small talk, like the use of humour (Di Ferrante 2013) – which is often employed to convey solidarity, especially in some cultures, like Italy's, but not necessarily in all – may deserve more attention in a multicultural setting, and require a higher degree of strategic competence. As a matter of fact, humour may be expressed in multiple ways, and these may change depending on a number of factors (e.g. Holmes *et al.* 2001), including the cultural background of interactants. In fact, a misuse of humour may affect the relational dynamics of business interaction, rather than supporting them. In the example examined here, it seems that any possible, and presumably unintentional, 'pragmatic gaffe' in the use of humour is mitigated by (I)'s repetition of the same emoji (a smiling face), and by (I)'s addressing the business task at hand, namely, providing his business partner with help, with a "no problem" reply.

5. Concluding remarks and pedagogical implications

This study was conducted with the aim of addressing two interrelated core questions: (1) Are CSs employed 'only' to handle language-related problems of understanding?; (2) Is successful business communication 'only' the achievement of shared understanding? The examples presented above, which were examined within the framework of BELF research, specifically research concerning CSs in BELF interaction as a means to prevent, signal or repair mis- or nonunderstanding, seem to suggest (1) that CSs can be used also as a conscious and planned technique for the construction of rapport; (2) that successful business communication is also the achievement of "harmony and smoothness of relations" (Spencer-Oatey 2005, p. 96). This is especially true of CSs strategies like metalinguistic comments (Example 1), code-switching (Example 2), and small talk (Examples 3 and 4). As the examples provided seek to show, these strategies appear to be used not so much to tackle language-related problems that may lead to the failure of mutual intelligibility (a situation which in reality does not occur frequently in (B)ELF interaction); instead, they are consciously employed in the awareness of the crucial role of the interactional component for the achievement of transactional goals, the interactional and transactional dimensions being inextricably intertwined in business communication. This is even more so when it comes to *global* business communication, where the diverse cultural backgrounds on which business practices are based may require a higher degree of strategic competence for business professionals to share their common ground as a community of practice. CSs strategies aimed at rapport building thus become particularly important in the context of BELF communication, in that they help the establishment of good working relations amongst partners who need to adjust to one another not only linguistically, but also culturally. A

broadening of the notion of ‘communication strategy’ may therefore offer a new perspective for the analysis of CSs in BELF, by looking at them not only as a means for the negotiation of meaning, but also as a tool for the negotiation and ‘tuning’ of business practices. In this perspective, the construction of harmonious business relationships through rapport building plays a fundamental role, as it is the springboard for successful business, which is the ultimate goal of business communication.

This broadening of the notion of ‘communication strategy’ also has pedagogical implications. It implies the need for business professionals to be trained in how to exploit the potential of CSs – whose fundamental role is acknowledged by professionals themselves (Franceschi, forthcoming) – as a means to adjust to other ways of doing business, and not only as moves to overcome asymmetries in language proficiency and backgrounds. Research on ELT business materials (Caleffi, Poppi 2019; Chan 2009; Faucette 2001; Kankaanranta 2012; Nickerson 2005; Vettorel 2018, 2019; Vettorel, Franceschi 2020) has shown that CSs are only partially and inconsistently dealt with, and “when examples are provided, they are rarely accompanied by reflection tasks” (Vettorel 2019, p. 79). All this may lead to the fossilisation and automation of ‘routinised’ strategies which clashes with the fluid and unpredictable nature of BELF communication. For a consistent and relevant inclusion of CSs in ELT in the business domain there needs to be a shift from linguistic prescriptivism to reflection on what successful communication is, and how this can be achieved by a conscious exploitation of strategic socio-pragmatic competence.

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ELF AWARENESS IN ELT

Emerging challenges & new paradigms in teacher education

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Abstract – This contribution aims at presenting the underlying construct and the research design of a study carried out by the Roma Tre University unit of a 3-year national research project (PRIN), as well as the findings about English language (EL) teachers’ attitudes towards English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) as they emerge from the study and from the in-service teacher education course designed and implemented during the project. The study investigated native and non-native teachers’ understandings, beliefs and attitudes towards ELF and the challenges brought about by the notion of ELF awareness in English Language Teaching (ELT). This investigation was carried out through the online administration of two questionnaires, one for Italian non-native teachers of English teaching in the Italian school system, and one for native English language assistants working at university level. The survey findings informed the design of a post-graduate blended EL teacher education course, with a special focus on developing English language teachers’ awareness of the emerging realities of English, while providing an ELF-aware reflective approach to revisit the EL teachers’ syllabus design, lesson planning and implementation. Course participants’ feedback is presented and pedagogical implications for EL teacher education are illustrated and discussed.

Keywords: ELF-awareness; reflective approach; attitudes; pedagogy; teacher education.

1. Introduction

The Roma Tre Unit (R3U) started its research work from the assumption, underlying the national PRIN Project, that ELF is not “some defective version of the L1 but a use of linguistic resources in its own right, challenging the pedagogic belief that since ELF users do not conform to ENL rules and usage conventions, it is really only learner English at various stages of interlanguage”.¹

¹ The Roma Tre Unit is part of the PRIN 2015 - Prot. 2015REZ4EZ National Project: *English as a Lingua Franca in domain-specific contexts of intercultural communication. A Cognitive-functional Model for the analysis of ELF accommodation strategies in: unequal migration contexts, digital-media virtual environments, and multicultural ELF classrooms.*

The R3U research project *ELF PEDAGOGY: ELF in teacher education and teaching materials* jointly developed by the research team, was originally organized with the aim of devising an ELF-aware pedagogical model for ELT education in the Italian educational context, bearing in mind the emerging needs of learners and teachers of English in a complex plurilingual and multicultural society where English is becoming one of the main tools for effective communication (Lopriore, Grazzi 2019, p. 401).

The main aim of the R3U was to provide evidence that ELF users are capable of achieving appropriate communicative outcomes on their own terms if innovative language teaching and ELT education, are accordingly developed. The notion of ELF is here considered as ‘language authentication’, appropriated by non-native speakers according to their L1 parameters (Widdowson 1979), while including ELF variability, thus challenging the notions of English Native Language (ENL) as the only ‘authentic variety of English’, and ELF as a shared ‘international variety’ of English for efficient and economical communication. The notion of communicative competence based until 2018² upon the native-speaker model conveyed by the *Common European Framework of Reference*, was thus to be revisited within novel EL teacher education programs, course-books, curriculum and syllabi design.

The sociolinguistic landscapes of most European countries have been modified by the unstoppable flow of migration that has, as a consequence, changed also the school population because of the diverse multilingual and multicultural identities of the new learners and of their families. These social and linguistic changes due to the new migration flows have been accompanied and favoured by the rise and wide diffusion of mobile technologies, a global phenomenon that has caused changes in communication patterns as well as English-language use. Broadband connections and wi-fi are used for work, leisure, and shopping, but, as Sockett (2014) underlines, these activities are almost always conducted in English, so that, for many young people, the classroom setting is only one amongst numerous and diverse opportunities for contact with the target language.

Research studies on ELT (Hall 2016; Lopriore 2016; Sockett 2014; Stevens 2009; Tomlinson, Masuhara 2013; Wolf 2013), most recent research findings on ELF (Björkman, 2018; Guido 2018; Jenkins 2015; Jenkins *et al.* 2011) and recent publications on ELF within EL classrooms (Kiczkowiak, Lowe 2019), and in teacher education (Dewey 2012; Dewey, Patsko 2018;

² 2018, Publication of the *CEFR Companion*, where the notion of the ‘native speaker model’ was not used anymore.

Llurda 2018) have revealed how language teaching and language teacher education scenarios have inevitably been transformed over the past 20 years.

The development of a new framework for the knowledge-base of language education to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse, mobile, and globalized world where learning seems to take place more and more outside the classroom and mainly through online communication, is thus needed. If awareness of the current plurality of English is raised in teacher education courses, there are good chances that this perspective is taken into consideration, hence the importance of theoretical concepts linked with hands-on activities in teacher-training courses, to provide chances to experience implications of ELF in a plurilithic perspective. The teaching of English should thus be oriented at fostering language, cultural and inter- and multi-cultural awareness, as well as the use of effective mediation strategies in the classroom.

The R3U based its research design on the aim of developing a pedagogical approach to the integration of ELF into the teaching of EFL. The approach was meant to be applied to the education of EL teachers operating in multicultural environments. The ultimate aim was for teachers to achieve an overall awareness of ELF pragmatic failure and of appropriate accommodation strategies.

2. ELF pedagogy: The project design

The three-year R3U study was designed bearing in mind the emerging needs of English Language (EL) learners and native and non-native teachers of English in a complex plurilingual and multicultural society. The research design of the project envisaged a series of actions in order to respond to the unit main questions aimed at exploring English in a time of change, when English is no longer a 'foreign' language, but largely used as a 'lingua franca'(Phillipson, 2007). Preliminary to these actions was the need to investigate the current conditions of English language teaching & teacher education in Italy as well as to identify ELT teachers' beliefs and assumptions towards the emerging reality of English/es and the challenges of new approaches determined by migration flows and the diffusion of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the language classroom.

A subsidiary aim was to explore the use of ELF variations in multilingual classrooms, in e-twinning projects and in telecollaboration classroom experiences, emerging in face-to-face and online learning and teaching interactions, and in pre- and in-service teacher education contexts. This was meant to develop an ELF awareness pedagogical approach informing English language teaching, assessment and evaluation processes.

This aim could only be achieved within a context, such as an in-service teacher education course, that was the main outcome of the R3U research in the last two years of the project.

The main actions of the study were carried out between 2017 and 2019 (Table 1); the first year actions included: the development and administration of two surveys investigating native and non-native EL teachers' current understanding of English and of their current teaching practices. The design and implementation of an ELF aware teacher education pedagogical model that would take into consideration the results of the surveys were the main actions of the second and of the beginning of the third year. This model was meant to provide participants with both a theoretical and a practicum component informed by current research findings on ELF (Björkman 2018; Dewey 2012) and it was based upon observable English language uses managed by teachers themselves through embedded reflective practices on their daily practice. A third and conclusive action was the one regarding ELF-informed EL teaching & learning material development.

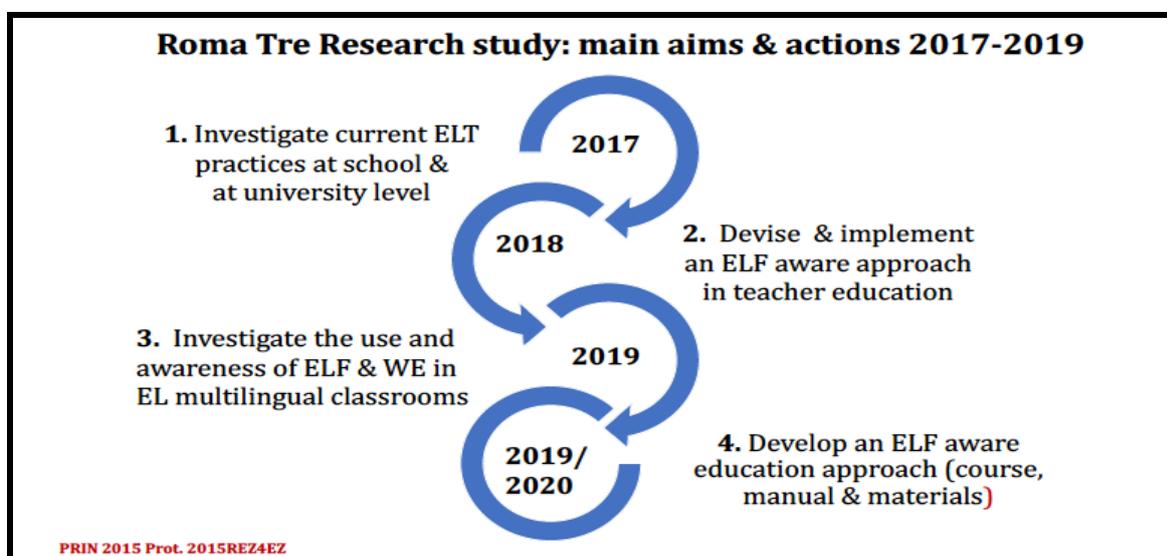


Table 1
Roma Tre Study: main actions.

2.1. The national survey: Investigating ELT current practices

A mixed method approach for qualitative & quantitative analyses (Creswell 2009; Dörnyei 2007; Paltridge, Phakiti 2010) accounting for social, political & resource-oriented needs, was used to carry out the first part of the investigation of teachers' attitudes and beliefs regarding English variations and ELF through the use of a questionnaire and of focus groups³. The first

³ The Focus groups organization was difficult to set up and thus eventually not used.

step for the UR3 team was thus to develop a questionnaire investigating EL current practices of Italian high school EL teachers, predominantly non-native Italian speakers, and of university EL teachers,⁴ mostly native English speakers, and their positioning towards a number of ELT related notions in terms of methodologies and approaches. The rationale for choosing these two categories of EL teachers was that they are the ones predominantly in charge of learners' EL competence and language awareness development in the Italian educational system. The two surveys only differentiated in terms of the context related questions.

2.1.1. *The survey design*

There are different ways for investigating habits, attitudes and beliefs, and questionnaires are frequently used in both qualitative and quantitative research, particularly in language studies, as they can yield three types of data about the respondents: factual, behavioural and attitudinal (Dörnyei 2007). Even Likert scales, multiple choice questions and elicited responses to statements on teaching and learning a foreign language were chosen as stimuli for the questionnaire

A decision was made to use an on-line survey system⁵ that would have allowed to better reach out the survey participants and to ensure and speed up the analysis of the responses to the survey as well as to investigate those two main contexts where EL learners are taught.

The construct of the survey was designed on the basis of the areas to investigate and of previous studies in the field, so questions regarding teachers' demographics, their professional experience and development, their familiarity with ELT notions, with ICT, with assessment and with international projects in their ELT practice, as well as their views about the new status of English, were included within the survey.

Teachers' beliefs and attitudes are relevant for understanding and for suggesting interventions within educational processes, because they are closely linked to teachers' strategies for coping with challenges in their daily professional life, they shape students' learning environment and influence students' motivation and their achievement. Being a teacher is a job where personal and professional life almost always overlap, mostly because of the commitment needed in the job itself. Items that would elicit teachers' personal response in terms of their practices and that would unveil their self-

⁴ *Collaboratori Esperti Linguistici (CEL)*, Language expert collaborators. For further information, see Sperti in this Special Issue.

⁵ *Survey Monkey*

concept as well as their attitudes and beliefs were thus included in the questionnaire (Sifakis *et al.* 2018).

The questionnaire was organised into three main parts and contained 24 questions. The eleven questions of the first part (Demographics) were devised to learn about the respondents' background experience in order to relate their responses to their own professional profile. The questions of the second part, 12 to 14, were meant to explore the respondents' degree of familiarity with 10 ELT terms and notions that were listed in the survey; respondents were also asked to define a few of those in their own terms, because putting into words one's own understanding of a notion that is deeply connected with one's own job, may represent a challenge to move beyond ready-made definitions and it helps unveil people's beliefs. The third, and longer, part – questions 15 to 24 – was mainly devised to understand EL teachers' current practices with questions specifically addressing teachers' most common teaching habits.

2.2. The survey main findings

The two surveys were administered twice – between 2017 and 2018 – in order to collect as many responses as possible. All together there were 74 responses to the university English language assistants' survey while 199 Italian EL teachers responded to the other survey. The survey distribution process was facilitated thanks to the collaboration of the main professional associations of foreign language teachers operating in Italy that helped the survey distribution via email and through the social media.⁶

The main findings in the second part of the survey revealed what concepts teachers feel are part of their professional profile, of their identity in daily classroom routines, as it emerged from their answers to the request of choosing 3 of the notions they felt most comfortable with and define them in their own words. It was revealing of their personal relationship with notions and concepts that are now embedded in their teaching.

It was in the third part of the questionnaire, where teachers' personal understanding of their job and of what they regarded as a successful achievement, that teachers provided the most meaningful answers. Teachers' success in teaching is indeed often related to success in life, and, in the teaching job, success is closely related to learners' achievement.

Among the several statements presented in the third part, the ones regarding possible actions that 'should' be taken by the teachers in order to open their EL teaching practice to non-standard forms, to varieties of English, to reflections on learners' L1, to new forms of communication and to

⁶ TESOL Italy, LEND and ANILS.

learners' ability to negotiate meaning & mediate in communication, were those statements that got the higher number of positive responses (Table 2). This reveals that teachers are already moving ahead, beyond traditional ELT; their answers highlight a transformative process that is already taking place in their local practice. Teachers' responses clearly show a recognition of their readiness to open their learners to new instantiations of English and to English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). Several responses unveil teachers' eagerness to modify their teaching while adjusting to their local practice. If we observe their local practice, we may not actually see them yet exposing their learners to varieties of English, or enhancing their learners' strategies to negotiate meaning, or encouraging their learners' use of translanguaging, still the high percentage of agreement in their responses is a sign of a transformative process that is taking place.

Q.aire - PART 3: ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: CURRENT PRACTICES	
Q.21 : 15 statements	
21.3	The students' L1 and sociocultural identity are resources that can enrich English language teaching (over 70% agreement)
21.5	Teachers should encourage students to experiment with new language forms to communicate meaning (over 70%)
21.6	English language teachers should aim at promoting a "successful user of English" model for their learners (70%)
21.8	English language learners should also be exposed to varieties of English including English spoken by non-native Speakers (over 81%)
21.10	Language learners' communicative competence should include their ability to negotiate meaning with both native and nonnative interlocutors (84,29%)
21.11	English language teachers should include in their teaching video or audio recordings/multimedia of a variety of non native English speakers (70%)

Table 2

Teachers' responses on current practices and possible changes & innovations.

The R3U survey showed that EL teachers are ready to modify their practice to meet the emerging needs of learners of English in a complex plurilingual and multicultural society where English is becoming one of the main tools for effective communication.

In this type of research, it is also important to ascertain what EL learners' current exposure to English is, as well as their perception of their language learning experience and their position towards new instantiations of English. An interesting reference were the results of a recent survey carried out within an international project⁷ – the *ENRICH Project* – investigating

⁷ Erasmus+ Project “*English as a Lingua Franca Practices for Inclusive Multilingual Classrooms (ENRICH)*” 2018-2021-1-EL01-KA201-047894. The 5 countries are: Greece, Italy, Norway, Portugal and Turkey. <http://enrichproject.eu/>

current EL teaching and learning in five different countries; one of the *ENRICH* surveys was meant to investigate adolescents' (age 16-18) opinion of their institutional learning in schools, their perception of how they learnt English, and of their out of the classroom exposure to English, e.g., online gaming, visual media, Skyping, chatting, etc..

The majority of over 500 adolescents from the five countries involved in the project stated that they had learnt more English outside the classroom than inside it. In the case of Italian adolescents (135/505), they declared that they had learnt English mostly by watching movies and TV series (84%), by watching You Tube (70%), by listening to music (94%) or by using social media, FB, Instagram, Snapchat or Twitter (70%).

What emerges from the findings of the *ENRICH Project* needs analysis confirms that also EL learners are already moving ahead, being exposed to English and learning it, beyond traditional language classrooms. EL teachers and learners are as of now undergoing a transformative process whereby their daily use of English is affected by their daily exposure without threatening their self-confidence, still adopting, as in the case of EL teachers, traditional teaching materials and relying upon standard English norms.

3. Teacher education and ELF awareness

We need to think about how teachers can be encouraged and enabled to disentangle current beliefs about competence from association with a definitive set of language forms. (Dewey, Leung 2010, p. 11)

EL teachers' responses to the R3U survey were used to define the overall construct of a teacher education course model aimed at responding to the emerging needs of learners and teachers of English in a complex plurilingual and multicultural society where English is becoming one of the main tools for effective communication.

The survey findings highlighted EL teachers' overall understanding and awareness of the issues related to the new school population and of their diverse communicative needs. In multilingual classrooms, migrant learners may have one or two different mother tongues spoken at home while the country official language is used as the language of schooling, and they may have already used or learnt English with non-native speakers before settling in the new country.

All of the above demands for a different type of language teacher education approach that would sustain what is already happening in the EL

classrooms; an approach where EL teachers value and rely upon their non-nativeness as an asset for preparing learners as successful communicators, accepting their learners' use of forms of translanguaging in communication. It appears crucial to be able to offer teachers an ELF perspective embedded within a teacher education course, through awareness raising activities and an approach based upon individual and group experiences.

The notion of ELF awareness for EL teacher education was thoroughly and jointly developed by Sifakis and Bayyurt in 2018 when they emphasized the unique advantage of engaging teachers in critical reflection upon ELT and ELF, because in the end, it is the teachers themselves who know the context they work in and the exposure to language their learners may have, as it is suggested in the following paragraph..

...the process of engaging with ELF research and developing one's own understanding of the ways in which it can be integrated in one's classroom context, through a continuous process of critical reflection, design, implementation and evaluation of instructional activities that reflect and localize one's interpretation of the ELF construct. (Sifakis, Bayyurt 2018, p. 459)

In an ELF aware approach to teacher education, EL teachers should be encouraged to use authentic input and tasks and to present their learners with different instantiations of English by enhancing ELF awareness through languaging (Swain, 2006), and reflective tasks (Richards and Lockhart, 1994. Schön, 1983) EL teachers should be encouraged to take into consideration learners' out-of-school experience, their use of ICT and of social media, as well as learners' awareness of using communicative and mediating strategies.

3.1. ELF awareness and reflective teaching

(...) 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, pp. 248-249)

In order to enhance ELF awareness and engage teachers in a process of personal commitment to innovation, it is fundamental to rely upon their expertise and involve them in piloting language awareness activities within their classrooms. The approach regarded as the most appropriate one to be adopted in the R3U course was the reflective approach, originally developed in teacher education to elicit teachers' reflection-on-action by asking them to voice their thoughts about their teaching (Richards, Lockhart, 1994; Schön

1983; Wallace 1991). Within this approach, teachers should be elicited to explore English through task-based activities, individually and in groups, in order to identify differences, to discuss norm deviations and their degree of acceptance of non-standard language usage.

In this respect, Seidlhofer (2011, pp. 192-193) had underlined that there is a special need for important shifts in teachers' perspectives: the need to ground their practices in descriptions of actual language usage and of viewing students as users rather than as learners of English, as well as the potential of focusing on practices that facilitate further acquisition of the language in different communicative settings. It was thus through the adoption of a reflective ELF aware approach that the teacher education course was planned and implemented and the notions of World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca were embedded in it as a *fil rouge* all through the course contents.

During the course teachers were thus engaged in discussions upon their readiness and willingness to detach from traditional routines - particularly when they rely so much upon course-books - by taking the risk of exposing their learners to new instantiations of English and/or to accept and include deviations from the norm in the EL lesson (Lopriore 2016).

4. The course: Organization and components

The course *New English/es Landscapes: revisiting English Language Teaching & Learning* was a blended course offered by the University of Roma Tre Department of Foreign languages, literatures and cultures, as a post-graduate course⁸ for English language teachers and subject teachers using English for their CLIL courses.⁹

The online component was run on the Moodle platform of the Foreign Languages Department.¹⁰ It was held for twelve weeks, between 9 November 2018 and 8 March 2019, it was attended and completed by 15 non-native teachers: 14 EL Italian and one Columbian teacher. Each face-to-face (f2f) meeting lasted 4 hours and it was held at the University of Roma Tre. The course main themes and components were:

- English as a Lingua Franca

⁸ <https://www.uniroma3.it/corsi-post-lauream/2018-2019/new-english-es-landscapes-revisiting-english-language-teaching-learning-824/>.

⁹ The course was advertised through the Italian Ministry of Education training platform SOFIA <https://sofia.istruzione.it/> where courses are accessible to teachers who can benefit of particular discounts.

¹⁰ <http://moodle.llcs.uniroma3.it/login/index.php>.

- World Englishes
- Digital Technologies
- Mediation skills & strategies
- New Englishes, ELF & Literature
- New Perspectives on Assessment

The R3U team planned the themes of the course taking into consideration the traditional components of ELT pre-service courses and of the Italian foreign language curriculum, in order to allow teachers to relate to their own context and to ‘revisit their ELT job’ within an ELF-aware perspective. The themes chosen to be addressed in the course were all related to the specific context teachers work in, that is the Italian school system, and to the ELF aware perspective, an approach where learners are predominantly considered as “users” of English, and not just “learners” of English.

Teachers needed to become more familiar with new technologies and be able to use ICT and social media in order to ground their practices in descriptions of actual language usage, as well as to learn how to identify authentic materials most appropriate to their learners’ needs.

Notions such as “mediation” and “mediation strategies” were specifically addressed in the course as they are particularly meaningful and relevant in terms of their role in communication within multilingual and multicultural contexts where students are regarded as “users” rather than just learners of English, since “..in ELF, the native (NS)/non-native (NNS) dichotomy is differently addressed, different usage does not represent deficiency, some types of strategies are used more than others., (Björkman 2011), and “Mediation strategies” (North *et al.* 2018) trigger different pedagogical actions.

The module on literature in English was introduced because linked to the literary component of traditional foreign language curriculum in Italian schools where the English production of non-native authors are often presented to students. A module on assessment was also part of the course components, since revisiting the construct of assessment and evaluation in an ELF aware perspective is unavoidable within an ELF-aware perspective, and it was particularly appreciated by course participants. Teachers are *de facto* interested in identifying appropriate assessment criteria, such as the ability to negotiate & interact (Newbold 2018).

Participants’ involvement in activities had to be scaffolded via specific tasks in order to plan the lessons that had to be implemented in their practicum; this part of the course was meant to allow teachers to “try out” EL activities within a new perspective and then discuss their experience with the course participants and tutors in the f2f reflection-on-action sessions and reported in their course Portfolio.

The course challenges mainly laid in the participants' individual reactions to an experience that asked them to shift perspectives and revisit their traditional teaching practice as well as their personal beliefs in terms of second language teaching and learning processes. But, challenges were also faced by the R3U tutors and lecturers since everybody had very diverse professional background and experiences as teacher educators and as ELF scholars. Devising a course with such a new perspective was somehow overambitious also for the more motivated ones as it asked each of the lecturers to 'reposition' their practice with a new point of view.

4.1. Course participants' feedback

At the end of the course an evaluation questionnaire – 12 multiple choice questions – was administered to the participants and their feedback was very useful to the R3U team, as it helped the R3U team to critically revisit the course pedagogical model.

Course participants were asked questions about the relevance of each course component, their use and appreciation of the Moodle platform, the overall response to the course in terms of their professional development and their intention to implement what they had learnt in the course in their EL classes in the following year. Their responses to this last part of the questionnaire, in terms of their proposed changes in their teaching, are shown in Table 3 below, since this represented their proposed changes.

Key notions such as language authenticity, the use of technologies to "reach out the world", the relevance of ELF awareness to innovate their teaching as well as the value of reconsidering assessment and evaluation, were explicitly mentioned by the course participants. Participants' responses show an eagerness to implement new ideas in their classrooms and suggest the use of more frequent workshops to 'try out' their lesson planning within the group and of a more informed use of the Portfolio.

Teachers' feedback to the course as it emerged in the questionnaire and in the last course meeting, revealed:

- their overall understanding and awareness of the new communicative needs of multilingual classrooms;
- the emergence of English different instantiations (ELF) and their NNS role;
- the need to prepare learners as successful communicators accepting forms of translanguaging in communication;
- the role of authenticity of input and tasks;
- the relevance of out-of-school experience, of ICT use and of social media;
- the value of learners' out-of-school language experiences.

Course participants' end of course evaluation

Q.11. Do you think you are going to use what you learnt in the course in your next year classes?

- Yes, ... because of **my learners' enthusiasm**.
- Yes, mainly ELF oriented activities (videos, audio, literature...) quite **motivating for learning**.
- Yes, mainly to show the **authenticity of the language** my learners will use in real world in the future.
- Yes, because of new ideas from the course I have started introducing innovation in my **teaching and in my assessment**.
- Yes, mainly **ICT because they help us and learners reach out the world**.
- Yes, because I teach in a **vocational school**
- **I have already designed my own "New English/es Unit"** and it was a very interesting experience for me and my students. I consider I can easily **apply EFL awareness in my lessons**. However, I would like to know more about how **EFL and Academic Writing** can work simultaneously, especially in contexts where teachers are preparing students to get into university.

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Table 3
Participants' course evaluation.

5. Conclusions

The emerging notions and issues mentioned so far, highlight the urgency of critically reconsidering language studies and English language teachers' pre- and in-service education. The project and the course represented an attempt to revisit ELT teacher education and a challenge for both the EL teachers and for the teacher educators involved. This last one is a challenge worth considering since it is the one faced by the teacher educators who were involved in designing and running the course. Each of them, as already mentioned, with a very diverse professional background, but all sharing the willingness to engage participants in researching different instantiations of English and sustaining them in revisiting their classroom practice.

This did not just mean adding a new component in the course syllabus, rather reconsidering their own traditional beliefs as teacher educators, because,

Instigating any kind of change in pedagogy is a complex process that must involve close consideration of teachers' contexts and experiences. [...]

We feel strongly that there should ideally be an early focus on ELF in the teacher education curriculum for this to have a lasting impact on teachers' professional learning. It is our hope that by raising awareness of ELF and linguistic diversity early in the trajectory of a teacher's professional development, the practical relevance of ELF in teachers' perceptions of

expertise will feature more prominently in their approach to language learning materials and tasks. (Dewey, Patsko 2018, p. 455).

Language teacher education has recently been researched and revisited within a mindful sociocultural perspective aimed at enhancing a systematic practice in a context of responsive mediation that can bring about transformation in teachers' professional development, most probably this is a path worth considering within an ELF aware approach (Johnson, Golombek 2011, 2016).

5.1. Planning ahead

Both assets and limitations of the course have been taken into consideration in order to plan and launch a new language teacher education course that will take place next academic year. Among the points emerging from the course and from the existing literature in the field, the following are the notions and issues that should be further explored and enhanced within the course, and, hopefully, introduced and discussed by English language courses at university level where most future EL teachers start their studies to become EL teachers.

Learners' 'socio-cultural identities', for example, should be taken into consideration within a diverse perspective, valuing their potential in the course sessions when teachers plan their classroom activities, because,

Learners make a foreign language and culture their own by adopting and adapting it to their own needs and interests (Kramsch 1998, p. 81)

[...] they (learners) are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. They are, in other words, engaging in identity construction and negotiation (Norton 1997, p. 410)

Another relevant notion is that of 'authenticity' in ELF since it is the one that challenges the very nature of authentic materials and highlights the relevance of social context and the notion of localized language use (Pinner 2016).

'Languaging' should be consistently embedded in the course activities, because "...languaging refers to the process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language. It is part of what constitutes learning" (Swain 2006, p. 98), not to forget that language is used to mediate problem solutions.

Last, but not least it is the need to introduce more pragmatics in the course with a focus on the listening processes and on the notion of intelligibility, that is mostly needed, because,

Intelligibility in lingua franca settings has more to do with awareness of linguistic and cultural difference, and a speaker's ability to accommodate towards an interlocutor than knowledge of a single set of linguistic and

pragmatic norms. (Dewey, Leung 2010, p. 10)

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CHALLENGING THE INTERLANGUAGE HYPOTHESIS

The convergence of EFL and ELF in the English classroom

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Abstract – This paper follows from the PRIN Conference (PRIN 2015 Prot. 2015REZ4EZ) on ELF that was held in Lecce, Italy, at the University of Salento, on December 4-6, 2019. Here, the PRIN Unit of the Roma Tre University presented the findings of their three-year study in a panel session entitled: *English as a Lingua Franca: challenges and new paradigms for native and non-native teachers, insights from the language classrooms and implications for teacher education*.¹ One of the main aims of this article is to show how possible it is to find a convergence between English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a lingua franca (ELF) in second language education, by means of the learner's performance. This assumption is based on the author's critical analysis of the *interlanguage hypothesis* in English language teaching (ELT), seen through the lens of ELF theory. One of the fundamental tenets of this study is that today's plurilithic dimension of English as a global language entails a reconceptualization of the second-language learner's 'errors', which challenges the prescriptive role of standard English. Given the dynamics of English as a contact language, it is assumed that a more effective pedagogical approach should take into consideration the sociocognitive processes connected to language variability and the learner's linguacultural identity.

Keywords: ELF; interlanguage; errors; World Englishes; Standard English; teacher education.

*It's scientifically impossible for the
bumblebee to fly; but the bumblebee, being
unaware of these scientific facts, flies anyway.*
(M. Huckabee, Former Governor of the
State of Arkansas, 2008).

¹ PRIN 2015: Prot. 2015REZ4EZ *English as a Lingua Franca in domain-specific contexts of intercultural communication: a Cognitive-functional Model for the analysis of ELF accommodation strategies in unequal migration contexts, digital-media virtual environments, and multicultural ELF classrooms*. Composed by:

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1. Introduction

The *interlanguage hypothesis* (Selinker 1972) is undoubtedly a major milestone in the history of applied linguistics, as it attempted to provide a theoretical framework to understand the process of second-language learning and acquisition within an educational context. In the full bloom of the communicative approach, this theory, which is ingrained in the field of psycholinguistics, focused on the analysis of the adult language learner's output that was taken as an indicator of the mental structures and processes involved in the progression through developmental levels of competence. Tarone (2018) observes that between the late 1960s and the early 1980s

The general idea that the language of second language learners is an autonomous linguistic system, distinct from both a NL and TL, was developed at about the same time by three scholars. [...] Nemser (1971) referred to learner language as an 'approximative system,' and Corder (1967, 1981) called it 'transitional competence.' Eventually, the term 'interlanguage' (Selinker 1972) was the one that caught on.

Today, almost fifty years after these three scholars published their work, the interlanguage hypothesis has become an established paradigm in second language education, whereby the idealized educated native speaker and the standard variety of any foreign language provide the pedagogical reference model to design national language curricula, produce teaching materials, define assessment criteria of language learners' competencies, and certify students' proficiency levels (the CEFR² is a case in point). Nevertheless, my intent here is to re-examine the underlying assumptions of the interlanguage hypothesis, with a focus on English language teaching (ELT) in the age of globalisation, when English has become the world's dominant lingua franca (ELF). In this perspective, the main aim of this paper is to take into consideration the notion of 'error' and compare the way it is intended according to the interlanguage hypothesis, and the way it is intended according to ELF theory.

As Widdowson (2013, p. 193) wrote:

[...] the very reality of ELF as a phenomenon should at least make us think critically about taken-for-granted assumptions about what and how English might be taught as a subject. This is not at all to propose that the conventional practices associated with current English teaching should all be abandoned and replaced by ELF. The teaching of English will always need to be

² Council of Europe 2001, *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

pedagogically designed and the contexts of classrooms can never replicate contexts of use: they represent different realities. In this respect, ELF and EFL, however it is defined, will always be different. The question is how these realities can be most effectively related. The significance of ELF research is that it points to the possibility of a relationship between use and learning and its implications for teaching which are very different from those that inform conventional EFL pedagogy.

It is in this vein that I will reflect on the *convergence* of EFL and ELF by means of the learner's performance, and discuss the central tenets of the interlanguage hypothesis in English language teaching.

2. The convergence of EFL and ELF in the English classroom

Indeed, our contemporary "recognition of pluricentricity and multi-identities of English" (Kachru 2003, p. 20) has led to a different conceptualisation of language deviations from encoded norms (the so-called 'errors') that are usually observed in language contact situations. Consequently, the sociolinguistic dynamics that is intrinsic to the emergence of ELF in intercultural communicative contexts has challenged the monocentric ideology of standard English (SE), and has accordingly questioned the dogma to conform to established standard norms at all language levels, namely phonological, lexicogrammar, and discursal (see for example Seidlhofer 2003, pp. 7-32, where the contentious debate over institutionalised native varieties of English is well exemplified through the re-release of Quirk's and Kachru's thought-provoking contributions).

Before moving on to the analysis of the interlanguage hypothesis within today's changing scenario in ELT, I would like to make my stance clear on ELF. Hence, I would like to quote two definitions that I find particularly illuminating. The first one, by Mauraanen's (2012, p. 29), is based on the theory of language contact and on the assumption that ELF is shaped by speakers' interaction:

[...] ELF might be termed 'second-order language contact': a contact between hybrids. [...] Second-order contact means that instead of a typical contact situation where speakers of two different languages use one of them in communication (first-order contact), a large number of languages are each in contact with English, and it is these contact varieties (similects) that are, in turn, in contact with each other. Their special features, resulting from cross-linguistic transfer, come together much like dialects in contact. To add complexity to the mix, ENL [English as a native language] speakers of different origins participate in ELF communities. The distinct feature of ELF is nevertheless its character as a hybrid of similects.

The second definition, by Jenkins (2015, pp. 73-74), may be considered the end point of a conceptually defined process, whereby the author, after having traced the remodelling of ELF theory over the years, finally proposes her own conceptualisation that is based on multilingualism:

[...] the alternative I am going to suggest is a view of ELF that positions it within multilingualism, rather than the current view which sees multilingualism as an aspect of ELF. In other words, what I am talking about could be called ‘English as a Multilingua Franca’ with the following working definition:

- Multilingual communication in which English is available as a contact language of choice, but is not necessarily chosen.

In other words, English as a Multilingua Franca refers to multilingual communicative settings in which English is known to everyone present, and is therefore always potentially ‘in the mix’, regardless of whether or not, and how much, it is actually used. It follows from this that instead of talking about ELF users, or more specifically NNES/NES ELF users, we can talk about ‘ELF-using multilinguals’ and ‘ELF-using monolinguals’, or ‘Multilingual ELF users’ and ‘Monolingual ELF users’. The first has the advantage of using ELF as the modifier, while the second has the advantage of highlighting multi- and monolingualism by putting them first.

It should be observed that, generally speaking, ELF theories derive from an observation of authentic communication within intercultural settings, where English is used as a mediational affordance to accomplish several pragmatic goals. In this respect, the classification of ELF features – i.e. the classification of deviant forms of English at all language levels, from phonological elements (Jenkins 2000) to creative uses of lexis (Pitzl 2012) – has been the first step towards a deeper understanding of the sociocognitive processes that allow ELF to emerge. As Seidlhofer (2009, p. 241) has pointed out: “[...] the crucial challenge has been to move from the surface description of particular features, however interesting they may be in themselves, to an explanation of the underlying significance of the forms: to ask what work they do, what functions they are symptomatic of.” It is in this perspective that Cogo and Dewey (2012, p. 18) investigate into ELF, which they believe:

- involves online modification of English language resources to suit the particular communicative needs of interlocutors, resulting in innovative uses of lexicogrammatical, pragmatic and sociocultural forms (and so is a legitimate manifestation of English in its own right)

- entails age-old processes that occur whenever speakers interact, including processes of identity signalling, codeswitching, accommodation and language variation (and so is a natural and inevitable part of sociolinguistic realities, including the investment of identity and culture).

Everything said, however, an area of ELF research that seems to have been quite neglected so far is the interplay between foreign language education and ELF, in ELT. On the one hand, most studies on ELF have been focused on samples of authentic texts, in order to collect quantitative and qualitative data from real communication (e.g. through the compilation of corpora of spoken and written ELF like ELFA, VOICE, and ACE³); while on the other hand, studies on the pedagogical impact of ELF on schooling have been mainly concerned with the importance of raising teachers' and learners' awareness (Bayyurt, Sifakis 2018; Grazzi 2018; Sifakis 2018; Tsantila *et al.* 2016) of the plurilithic dimension of English today (Graddol 2006; Pennycook 2009), or with the implementation of innovative intercultural activities (e.g. telecollaboration) that allow language learners to cooperate with students from other countries via the Internet (Grazzi 2013, 2015a, 2015b, 2016; Kohn 2017). In a certain sense, what appears to be a common assumption in ELF studies is that a) when communication is solely confined to the English classroom, it cannot provide samples of real ELF discourse, firstly because ELT is normally based on teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), and secondly because the English classroom is not an authentic communicative environment, unless real communication is carried out (e.g. through intercultural web-mediated telecollaboration, and through the use of English as a contact language in multicultural and multilingual classes); b) when ELF is the primary object of research, the fact that international speakers may use English, albeit with variable levels of command of the language, is taken as an obvious fact. Hence, the variable circumstances where the process of teaching/learning of English takes place is not often taken into consideration. As proof of this, let us read again Jenkins's words in the quotation above, that reads: "English as a Multilingua Franca refers to multilingual communicative settings in which *English is known to everyone present*" (emphasis added). This wording appears to be rather opaque, for it might suggest the idea that English is a *reified, discrete object* that ELFers possess and use on purpose, as an optional tool, to cope with their communicative needs. This, however, is not a common situation in ELF settings, where instead ELFers rather show their uneven competencies and mixed abilities in English, and make use of their "lingual capability" (Widdowson 2015) to exploit all the language resources available to them in order to negotiate meanings.

What I would like to point out, therefore, is that when the impact of ELF on ELT is the object of research, it would be advisable to take into consideration the interaction between the learning context where L2-users

³ - ELFA corpus, 2008, Director: Anna Mauranen. <http://www.helsinki.fi/elfa/elfacorporus>.
 - VOICE, 2009, Director: Barbara Seidlhofer. www.univie.ac.at/voice/index.php.
 - ACE, 2014, Director: Andy Kirkpatrick. <http://corpus.ied.edu.hk/ace/>.

develop their competencies and knowledge, and the opportunities they have to communicate in authentic intercultural and multilingual environments. As Byram (1997, p. 71) claims:

[...] most language learning takes place, or at least begins, in educational contexts. The model does not therefore depend on the concept of neutral communication of information across cultural barriers, but rather on a rich definition of communication as interaction, and on a philosophy of critical engagement with otherness and critical reflection on self.

What is more, since English has become a compulsory school subject in most countries that are involved in the process of globalisation, the relationship between EFL syllabuses and a gamut of other available sources of meaningful input in English (e.g. TV programmes, films, music, digital gaming, online websites, etc.) contribute to the development of the learner's second language skills and abilities. In a nutshell, it would not seem too far-fetched to suggest that, given the student's motivation to learn, there is a direct relationship between a) the process of teaching/learning English in a pedagogical environment; b) extra-scholastic sources of English input; and c) the emergence of ELF as the verbal medium that allows intercultural and international communicative events to take place. This is the process that I (Grazzi 2013, p. 67) have defined the *convergence* of EFL and ELF "in the speaker/learner's performance." Similarly, Seidlhofer (2011, p. 187) observes that what essentially distinguishes EFL from ELF is the different contexts of use of these languages, and the different roles that the language learner assumes in them accordingly: "Learners 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."

Interestingly, Kohn (2011, p. 80), whose theoretical standpoint about second-language learning is based on constructivism, moves in the same direction when he describes the relationship between the role of standard English in ELT, and the learner's development of their personal voice:

[...] people acquire English, or any other language, by creatively constructing their own version of it in their minds, hearts and behaviour. This process of constructing one's language is influenced by a number of factors as, for example, *target language orientation*, exposure to various manifestations of English in pedagogic contexts or in natural ELF communication, mother tongue(s), attitudes and motivations, goals and requirements, language approaches taken, and effort invested. But none of these factors determines the outcome. Acquiring a language is the very opposite of copying or cloning -it is a cognitive and emotional process of sociocultural and communicative construction. [...] Regardless of how powerful the communicative and communal pull towards a 'common core' might be, the English that people develop is inevitably different from any target language model they choose or

were forced to adopt. [emphasis added].

The convergence of EFL and ELF brings us back to one of the main issues we are considering in this article, i.e. a critical analysis of the interlanguage hypothesis through the lens of ELF theory. This will be the central topic of the following section.

3. A critical analysis of the interlanguage hypothesis

Selinker's (1972, p. 210) purpose was to elicit "behavioral events [...] underlying 'attempted meaningful performance' in a second language. The term 'meaningful performance situation' [refers] to the situation where an 'adult' attempts to express meanings, which he may already have, in a language which he is in the process of learning." The keywords contained in these few lines are *behavioral events* and *meaningful performance*, which show that the pragmatic dimension of second-language communication is indeed the primary focus of Selinker's research. In other words, it is the linguistic analysis of the utterances students produce when they carry out communicative tasks that is considered to be the key to a deeper understanding of the cognitive processes involved in second language learning. The logical entailment of this approach is that the starting point of this analysis consists in the linguistic features that distinguish the learner's output at all levels (phonological, lexicogrammar, and discoursal) from standard discourse, i.e. the learner's 'errors'. Consequently, error analysis becomes the primary tool to shed light on the psycholinguistic processes that are embedded in second language development. Corder (1981, p. 10) makes an important distinction between two kinds of learner's errors:

[...] errors of performance will characteristically be unsystematic [e.g. slips of the tongue] and the errors of competence, systematic. [...] It will be useful therefore hereafter to refer to errors of performance as *mistakes*, reserving the term *error* to refer to the systematic errors of the learner from which we are able to reconstruct his knowledge of the language to date, i.e. his *transitional competence*.

The way Corder conceives of learner's errors seems to be perfectly in line with the way ELF scholars define ELF speakers' deviations from standard norms. Let us consider, for example, what Corder wrote in 1981, and what Jenkins says in an interview given to Grazi in 2018. Indeed, the two linguists' points of view show strong conceptual similarities. Corder (1981, pp. 18-19) contends that

The only sentences in anyone's speech which could, I suggest with justice be called *erroneous* are those which are the result of some failure of performance. [...] My principal reason for objecting to the terms *error*, *deviant*, or *ill-formed* is that they all, to a greater or lesser degree, prejudge the explanation of the idiosyncrasy. Now, one of the principal reasons for studying the learner's language is precisely to discover why it is as it is, that is, to explain it and ultimately say something about the learning process. If, then, we call his sentences deviant or erroneous, we have implied an explanation before we have ever made a description.

Similarly, Jenkins (as cited in Grazzi 2018, p. 16) says:

For me, the only thing that counts as an error in ELF communication is something that doesn't communicate effectively. [...] Anything that communicates effectively in the context of the interaction is not an 'error' as far as I'm concerned, and I think it would be better not to even use the term 'error' in respect to ELF, but to replace it with 'ineffectiveness' or something like that.

However, apart from what these two definitions of errors have in common, it is important to notice that according to Corder the purpose of error analysis is to reveal the psycholinguistic process/es that cause deviations from standard norms. In this respect, Selinker's (1972, p. 212) theoretical framework of the interlanguage hypothesis incorporates Lenneberg's (1967) concept of *latent language structure* to investigate the process of adult second-language learning. Here is how Selinker (1972, p. 212) defines this psycholinguistic structure:

I shall further assume that there exists in the brain an already formulated arrangement which for most people is different from an exists in addition to Lenneberg's latent language structure. It is important to state that with the latent structure described in this paper as compared to Lenneberg's, there is no genetic time table; there is no direct counterpart to any grammatical concept such as 'universal grammar'; there is no guarantee that this latent structure will be activated at all; there is no guarantee that the latent structure will be 'realized' into the actual structure of any natural language (i.e. there is no guarantee that attempted learning will prove successful), and there is every possibility that an overlapping exists between this latent language acquisition structure and other intellectual structures.

Notably, according to Selinker (1972, p. 212) the concept of *successful learning* applies to adult learners who reactivate their latent language structure (i.e. the same structure that allowed them to acquire their native tongue) and "achieve native-speaker 'competence'." Moreover, Selinker goes on to say:

[...] This absolute success in a second language affects, as we know from

observation, a small percentage of learners – perhaps a mere 5%. [...] Regarding the study of [...] the vast majority of second language learners who fail to achieve native-speaker competence [...] [t]he notion of ‘attempted learning’ is independent of and logically prior to the notion of ‘successful learning’. [...] We will focus on attempted learning by this group of learners, successful or not, and will assume that they activate a different, though still genetically determined structure [...] Whenever they attempt to produce a sentence in the second- language, that is whenever they attempt to express meanings, which they may already have, in a language which they are in the process of learning.

Selinker (1972, p. 213) uses the phrase “‘target language’ (TL)” to refer to the language the learner is attempting to learn, which in terms of language education corresponds to the standard language spoken by an ideal educated native speaker of the foreign language. It follows from that, that because the utterances produced by most learners usually differ from a corresponding, albeit hypothesized, set of utterances produced by a native speaker of the TL, we should postulate “[...] the existence of a separate linguistic system based on the observable output which results from a learners attempted production of a TL norm. This linguistic system we would call ‘interlanguage’ (IL).” (Selinker 1972, p. 214).

In line with Selinker, Corder (1981, p. 17) classifies IL as an “idiosyncratic dialect”, that is the language that each individual second-language learner develops during the process of learning/acquisition of the L2. On a par with other languages, IL

[...] is regular, systematic, meaningful, i.e. it has a grammar, and is, in principle, describable in terms of a set of rules, some sub-set of which is a sub-set of the rules of the target social dialect. [The learner's] dialect is unstable (we hope) and is not, as far as we know, a ‘langue’ in that its conventions are not shared by a social group [...], and lastly, many of its sentences present problems of interpretation to any native speaker of the target dialect. [...] It is a dialect whose rules share characteristics of two social dialects of languages, whether these languages themselves shares rules or not. An alternative name might be *transitional dialect*, emphasizing the unstable nature of such dialects. (Corder 1981, pp. 17-18)

This conceptualization of IL is essentially the result of observations of adult language learners’ output. It is therefore thanks to error analysis that Selinker (1972, p. 215) could identify five psycholinguistic processes that are “*central to second-language learning: first, language transfer; second, transfer-of-training; third, strategies of second language learning; fourth, strategies of second language communication; and fifth, overgeneralization of TL linguistic material.*” Selinker (1972, p. 229) observes that these processes are not mutually exclusive. Moreover, the attribution of IL phenomena to any of

them may not be always certain. Given that the observation of psychologically relevant data of second-language learning is based on the analysis of surface structures of IL utterances, they might in fact be connected to one or more of the five processes mentioned above. Finally, Selinker (1972, p. 217) claims that “Combinations of these processes produce what we might term entirely fossilized IL competencies.” He goes on to say that it seems that *language transfer* and a *strategy of communication* induce many second-language learners to believe that “they know enough of the TL in order to communicate. And they stop learning.” Selinker (1972, p. 217). Notably, Selinker (1972, p. 217) links the phenomenon of fossilization also to the emergence of what today we had rather call outer-circle varieties of English:

[...] Not only can entire IL competencies be fossilized in individual learners performing in their own interlingual situation, but also in whole groups of individuals, resulting in the emergence of a new dialect (here Indian English), where fossilized interlanguage competencies may be the normal situation.

This synopsis of Selinker’s and Corder’s core ideas about the process of second-language learning and acquisition gives us the opportunity for a critical overview of the interlanguage hypothesis from the theoretical standpoint of ELF theory. Before we move on to the following sub-sections, where a few specific critical issues will be taken into consideration, I would like to point out that although the interlanguage hypothesis and ELF theory were formulated in completely different social, historical and cultural contexts, it seems reasonable to reconsider Selinker’s and Corder’s assumptions in the light of current scientific knowledge and expertise, given the fact that a) despite everything, the interlanguage hypothesis is still a pivotal concept in second-language education; and b) ELF, especially outside the academia, is still mistaken for interlanguage, i.e. a defective dialect used by non-native speakers of English.

3.1. ELF vs. Interlanguage as an idiosyncratic dialect

As we have seen in the previous section, Corder (1981, p. 17) classifies interlanguage as an *idiosyncratic dialect*. This presupposes that even though the interlanguage is systematic and meaningful, its rules are developed by the individual learner as part of the process of second-language learning/acquisition. These rules partially coincide with those of the TL, and it is assumed that the distance between the interlanguage and the TL tends to decrease as the learner improves along a continuum that goes from their L1 to the L2. According to Corder (1981, p. 102): “Part of the task of acquiring a second language is finding out how much we already know of it. The more

we find we know, the less the magnitude of the learning task.” Corder’s focus, as we can see, is on the individual student’s cognitive process of second-language learning, which actually eschews the social dimension of the foreign language classroom.

Let us now consider ELF and see why it should not be categorized as interlanguage. From a sociocultural point of view, ELF is a variable social construct that emerges in authentic communicative contexts where international speakers with diverse sociolinguistic identities and cultural backgrounds communicate. Being a second-order contact language, ELF had rather be intended as a performative language where different linguacultures meet and inform each other by way of the interlocutors’ performance. ELF, we may conclude, is inherently a social construct that, like all natural languages, emerges in the contingencies of usage for interpersonal communication. Tomasello (2003, p. 13), who follows Vygotsky’s (1978; see also Lantolf, Thorne 2006) sociocultural theory (SCT) in language acquisition, argues that in usage-based grammar

[...] processes of grammaticalization and syntacticization [...] are cultural-historical processes, not biological ones. Thus, it is a historical fact that the specific items and constructions of a given language are not invented all at once, but rather they emerge, evolve and accumulate modifications over historical time as human beings use them with one another and adapt them to changing communicative circumstances (Croft 2000).

In addition, we should also consider that while the interlanguage hypothesis postulates native-speaker competence as the ultimate goal of second language teaching/learning, the linguistic reference model of ELF communication is not necessarily standard English. In fact, the multilingual and multicultural dimension of ELF may prove to be more appropriate than monocultural standard English to mediate meanings in international contexts and represent different linguacultural identities (Batziakas 2016). In any case, deciding when it is appropriate to use ELF or standard English is an option that should be left to second-language users.

From a pedagogical point of view, we may also observe that the interlanguage hypothesis, with its focus on the individual learning process, does not seem to be in line with the contemporary sociocognitive perspective (Batstone 2010) in second-language teaching/learning. Indeed, this is a process that largely depends on the variable components of the educational ecosystem (van Lier 2004) where schooling takes place. According to this approach, the teacher and the students take an active participation within a learning community, and their interaction is an essential component of successful learning. For example, the role of the Vygotskian ZPD (zone of proximal development) in second-language development (Lantolf, Thorne

2006) shows that the improvement of the individual language learner may depend on appropriate and timely peer support and companions' corrective feedback.

3.2. *ELF and Interlanguage Transfer*

As we have seen in Section 3, Selinker (1972, p. 215) identifies five psycholinguistic processes that are “*central* to second-language learning.” In this section, I would like to comment on the first one (*language transfer*), and the fourth one (*strategies of second language communication*), the reason being that these are often interconnected in second-language use and take on a different interpretation from an ELF standpoint.

The interlanguage paradigm presupposes that the learner's native tongue ‘interferes’ with the acquisition of the L2 and in the majority of cases results in the ‘fossilization’ of deviant forms (i.e. negative transfer). This negative interpretation of the role played by the learner's L1 in second language development is consistent with the view that this is a linear process between two extremes, namely the L1 and the L2. Therefore, the more proficient the student becomes, the more they should approximate the native-speaker's command of the language and do without their native tongue. This paradigm, which is typical of foreign language teaching, entails that there should be no L1 ‘contamination’ of the TL, which is ideally ‘owned’ by the community of native speakers, and that, according to Selinker, only 5% of non-native speakers are able to fully master (see Section 3). Today, however, the reality of ELF as the primary world's lingua franca, and the unprecedented fact that non-native speakers of English largely outnumber native speakers have challenged the concept of ‘ownership’ of the language (Widdowson 2003, pp. 35-44) and have inevitably outdated the interlanguage hypothesis.

From a constructivist point of view, we may assume that today's progressive differentiation of ELF from the varieties of native-speaker English is part of a sociocultural process of change, adaptation and appropriation of English that takes place in the *glocal* (Robertson 1995) dimension of international communicative contexts. Hence, to understand the nature of ELF it is necessary to connect its non-standardness and variability to the different sociolinguistic identities of those who use it. This implies that the L1 of the English learner/speaker should not be considered a hindrance in ELT, but in fact may represent a valuable resource for successful L2-users. Given the status of ELF as a contact language, we may then conclude that L1 transfer, at all language levels, had rather be conceived of as both a feature of ELF as well as a communicative strategy. As Seidlhofer (2011, p. 208) concludes:

[...] the traditional way of prescribing the English of the subject needs to be reconsidered because it is based on assumptions about the objectives and processes of learning that are outdated, and irrelevant, and unrealistic for most learners. The pedagogic relevance of ELF [...] [i]s that it suggests an alternative way of thinking.”

3.3. *The Interlanguage hypothesis vs. Global Englishes*

As we have seen in the previous sections, the interlanguage hypothesis is based on a monolithic conception of the TL in second-language education. In Selinker’s (1972, p. 213) own words: “[...] the generally accepted notion ‘target language’, i.e. the second-language the learner is attempting to learn, is here restricted to mean that there is only one norm of one dialect within the interlingual focus of attention of the learner.” We may assume that, in the case of English, the TL corresponds to standard English, i.e. the native-speaker dialects that have official status (basically the British RP and the American GA), notwithstanding they are normally spoken by a restricted minority of native speakers. Ergo, a corollary of the interlanguage hypothesis might be that all non-standard English social dialects are irrelevant in ELT. What is more, all indigenized and nativized varieties of English, which mostly originated at the time of British colonization – the so-called Postcolonial Englishes (Schneider 2011, p. 30) – are downgraded to “new dialect[s] [...] where fossilized interlanguage competencies may be the normal situation (Selinker 1972, p. 217). By analogy, this also applies to ELF, that is all the new non-standard, non-native, non-postcolonial forms of English that emerge in transnational, communicative settings. Hence, we may conclude that the interlanguage hypothesis has two major drawbacks: a) it is based on the primacy of *native-speakerism* (Holliday 2005) in second language education that, especially as regards ELT, precludes the possibility for learners to become aware of the plurality of English/es in today’s globalized world; and b) it perpetuates the common stereotype and misconception that postcolonial varieties of English are inaccurate and intrinsically ‘erroneous’. These are two highly controversial issues in ELT still today, where multiculturalism is largely unheard of, and English curricula often ignore the reality of Global Englishes (Galloway, Rose 2015; Jenkins 2015).⁴ We may therefore claim that the interlanguage hypothesis is by now inadequate to meet the new demands of contemporary language education in the age of globalization, which, in the case of ELT, had rather be

⁴ In 2018, the research team of Roma Tre University that participated to the national project on ELF (see footnote n. 2 in this paper) organized a teacher-education course entitled: *New English/es Landscapes: Revisiting English Language Teaching & Learning*. Grazzi was in charge of a part of the course dedicated to the following topic: *Introducing World Englishes for the English Classroom*.

more oriented towards the development of learners' intercultural communicative competence (Byram 1997, 2008; Byram *et al.* 2017; Grazzi 2018; Holmes, Dervin, 2016; Houghton, Hashimoto 2018).

4. Conclusions

This paper has pointed out that in the age of globalisation the spread of ELF as the dominant world's lingua franca has inevitably challenged the concept of English as a monolithic language and has shifted the ownership of this language from the hands of its native-speakers to those of the international L2-user. The direct entailment of this important sociolinguistic phenomenon is that English has become a primary contact language and therefore is subject to changes brought about by the dynamics of the mediation of meaning between different linguacultures, and different sociocultural identities. A peculiar feature of ELF, however, is that language variation, a historical process that is common to all natural languages if considered diachronically, is now taking place in communicative settings where interlocutors often do not often speak English as their L1. Moreover, this article has shown that notwithstanding EFL is still widely considered the exonormative pedagogical reference model in language education, it tends to converge with ELF through the learner's performance. Hence, we may assume that the intercultural and multilingual nature of ELF challenges the interlanguage hypothesis, which instead is centred on native-speakerism.

As this article has tried to demonstrate, although the conceptualizations of the learner's 'errors' in Corder (1981) and Jenkins (as cited in Grazzi 2018) show some interesting similarities, the interlanguage hypothesis and the way it conceives of the psycholinguistic processes involved in foreign language learning/acquisition appear to be antithetic to the way ELF theory conceives of learner's deviations from the norm. A case in point is Selinker's (1972) definition of interlanguage transfer, which presupposes that the learner's L1 interferes with the L2 and is the major cause of the fossilization of deviant language forms. For this reason, we may argue that the interlanguage hypothesis reinforces the ideology of native-speakerism, to the point that it even fails to recognize the status of postcolonial varieties of English. On the contrary, having considered ELF from a constructionist theoretical standpoint, it has seemed reasonable to claim that the learner's L1 is a valuable resource that supports the acquisition of English and may be used strategically to allow the linguacultural identities of ELF users to emerge.

Finally, it was pointed out that according to the interlanguage hypothesis, the student's interlanguage is considered an idiosyncratic dialect that results from a cognitive process that takes place within the individual

learner. On the contrary, according to ELF theory ELF emerges naturally as a multilingual social construct, and is appropriated by interlocutors as a mediational affordance.

Finally, we may conclude this critical analysis of the interlanguage hypothesis and agree with Tarone's (2018) general observation when she says that: "The interlanguage hypothesis provided the initial spark that ignited a field of research on second language acquisition/learning, and it continues to provide a broad and productive framework for research across multiple theoretical orientations." Everything said, it seems reasonable to claim that the time is ripe to develop new educational trajectories in ELT and teacher education, whereby the findings of ELF research could be exploited to implement projects focused on the pedagogical implications of an ELF-aware approach in the language classroom. Indeed, this was the core objective of the PRIN project carried out by the Roma Tre University research unit, which included the implementation of a teacher development course for the integration of ELF and World Englishes into the ELT syllabus.⁵

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⁵ A detailed account of this teacher development course is going to be published in the second part of a book edited by Lucilla Lopriore, the coordinator of the PRIN project carried out by the Roma Tre University research unit.

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EXPLORING ELT PRACTICES, TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL PROFILE AND BELIEFS

Analysing data from the PRIN survey and envisaging pedagogical projections

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Abstract – This paper presents selected findings emerging from the survey related to the PRIN Prot. 2015REZ4EZ questionnaire, created and administered by the Unit 3 of the same PRIN project. This tool of investigation was specially devised in order to research and acquire the main values and beliefs ascribable to a volunteer group of teachers, operating in the Italian territory and catering for different levels of education in the national system. From the authentic data collected, it is possible to draw an overall profile of those professionals engaged in the diversified educational contexts above referred to. Even though still connected to and partially influenced by a SE and native-speaker's model authority, there is evidence of the presence of an active ELF-aware perspective emerging from the respondents; the qualifying questions where this aspect specifically occurs are analyzed in details, particularly in relation to which sociolinguistic model of English are those teachers inspired by in their teaching. Furthermore, those values and beliefs, in connection to the pedagogical approach of choice, are interpreted from a prospective point of view, envisioning their potential developments in the future, also projecting them into the frame of reference provided by a social constructivist model as designed by Kurt Kohn in *MY English* (2018) and further developments (forthcoming 2020). The emancipation of the ELF users and their adaptive appropriation of the lingual capabilities inherent in the ELF-aware approach, together with the acknowledgement of the ELF-users' expressive means affordable according to that perspective, are highlighted, also in terms of individual and collective creativity, from the side of both teachers and learners, in the variegated educational contexts.

Keywords: ELF; ELT; teachers' beliefs; ELF-aware pedagogical approach; *MY English* social constructivist model.

1. Introduction

Drawing on previous ELF findings as expressed in the theoretical premises illustrated in the overall description of the PRIN Research Prot. 2015REZ4EZ, and taking into account the specific aims of Unit 3 of the same project, this paper intends to describe the tools identified to investigate teachers' preferences and choices in terms of attitudes, beliefs and best

practices when it comes to the self-perception of their professional profile in ELT. In particular, reference will be done to the questionnaire and survey specially devised for that research purpose, and related findings will be commented with a focused attention on the resulting gains viewed from a pedagogical perspective.

Therefore, the present investigation revolves around three interlaced perspectives with three main goals in mind:

1. firstly, to identify the extent to which teachers' pre-existing beliefs can influence the ELT practices usually adopted by in-service professionals active in the Italian national territory;
2. secondly, to address the question whether a change in attitude and beliefs, and a deeper familiarity with updated sociolinguistic stances could eventually inspire a different pedagogical approach to support their actual teaching;
3. thirdly, to formulate and launch the hypothesis that applying the gains of an updated sociolinguistic framework to the pre-existing approaches might result as a decisive step towards renovated didactic practices, as expansion of an ELF-aware informed approach.

For this reason, in this paper the three interlaced perspectives generate a threefold purpose: documentative, investigative, and propositive, and the notion of 'exploration' will be applied to both theoretical and practical issues.

More precisely, as for the first level of analysis, we selected - from the larger pool of authentic data provided by the PRIN survey - those elements which proved to be more significant from the point of view of teachers' beliefs as far as their teaching practice is concerned; in the second level, we interpret the data under the light of a possible expansion toward a more conscious pedagogical approach inspired by an ELF-aware sociolinguistic frame; finally, in the third part, we propose the application of Kohn's "MY English" constructivist paradigm, heading towards a stronger conceptualization of learners' emancipation and creativity.

2. Theoretical background to the PRIN Research and Unit 3 specific objectives

2.1. Theoretical background to the PRIN Research

The theoretical frame of reference of this paper is represented by some of the founding tenets which inspired the PRIN Project Prot. 2015REZ4EZ itself since its inception. Namely – as it emerges from the title of the concluding PRIN Conference held at University of Salento, Lecce, on 4-6 December 2019, titled "Uses of English as a Lingua Franca in domain-specific contexts

of intercultural communication” – the areas of investigation were represented by: English as a Lingua Franca, ELF in migration contexts, ELF in digital media and ELF and pedagogy. This last one is the selected field of research constituting the axis around which the present article revolves. Therefore, the specific topics of language learning and processing, ELT practices in the multicultural classroom, teachers' beliefs and values and ELF-aware didactic choices, will be focused on under those perspectives above mentioned. The ELF-aware approach visible in professional discourses and practices is here investigated with the specially devised tool, that is, the PRIN questionnaire which will be described in the following pages.

As a starting theoretical premise, we acknowledge the fact that nowadays there is evidence of an appropriation of the English language by non-native speakers

who no longer perceive it as a ‘foreign language’, but rather as a ‘lingua franca’ through which they can express their own linguacultural uses and rhetorical repertoires, experiential schemata and, ultimately, socio-cultural identities. Such professional discourses regard ELF used [also] in [...] (c) the multilingual classroom in today's western societies.¹

The notion of contact language globally attributed to ELF and universally acknowledged by world-wide scholars as well as international users emphasizes the fact that “ELF communication can be enhanced by strategies of meaning co-construction and register hybridization accounting for ELF speakers' different native linguacultural backgrounds”,² therefore affording for differentiated and adaptive language policies and pedagogies at the educational level. Since the ultimate goal is to open up “this area of enquiry to a critical debate so as to further a fuller understanding of ELF as a crucial dimension of today's international communication”,³ the classroom practices of professionals operating in the field are to be included in the frame of analysis of ELF potentialities and enhancement. As a matter of fact, one of the main purposes of our PRIN research was to find out to what extent ELT professionals, aware of the ELF users' discursive, pragmatic and sociocultural dimension, were also acting, and inter-acting, in their best practices in the classroom, boosting ELF virtual communicative effectiveness without conforming to native speakers' norms and models. Also from a pragmatic standpoint,

¹ Guido M.G., Principal Investigator, PRIN Research Prot. 2015REZ4EZ, “Introduction”, 2015, p. 4 (henceforth, Guido (2015)).

² Guido (2015, p. 4).

³ Guido (2015, p. 4)

it is tenable for teachers to move away from the sole dependence on idealized native speaker models of appropriateness, politeness, and formality in their pedagogical practice and instead incorporate a non-essentialist viewpoint into formal instruction. (Taguchi, Ishihara 2018, p. 80)

Starting from the assumption that “[o]nly lately, has a number of distinguished linguists [...] developed a new line of research on ELF as an independently functioning use of language”,⁴ we reckon that in our present times, even in school environments, ELF is not perceived any more as some defective version of the native language, but rather as the profitable re-appropriation of the linguistic resources of English that all users have at their disposal. With a form of adaptive appropriation, applicable also in educational settings, it is possible to manifest and consolidate a firm criticism to

the established Anglocentric discourse practices reinforcing the conventional belief that the ‘Standard English’ grammar code and the pragmatic behaviours ascribed to English-as-a-native-language usage provide shared norms in intercultural transaction globally adopted across cultures.⁵

Even though a linguistic model based on “an idealized native speaker is still perpetuated”,⁶ “a principled education to ELF accommodation strategies needs to be developed to protect the linguacultural expression of the identities of those who are marginalized”⁷ or, at least, whose voice – as ELF users - is not acknowledged as having the same rights of being listened to as with ENL speakers.

2.2. PRIN Unit 3 specific objectives

In accordance with the overall aims above mentioned, the specific objectives of Unit 3 in the PRIN Project can be illustrated as follows:

The Roma Tre Unit, will also start from the assumption, underlying this Project, that ELF is not some defective version of the L1 but a use of linguistic resources in its own right, challenging the pedagogic belief that since ELF uses do not conform to ENL rules and usage conventions, it is really only learner English at various stages of interlanguage.⁸

More precisely, the focused goal of Unit 3 was to provide

⁴ Guido (2015, p. 4).

⁵ Guido (2015, p. 4).

⁶ Guido (2015, p. 5).

⁷ Guido (2015, p. 5).

⁸ Guido (2015, p. 5).

evidence that ELF users, while 'incompetent' in reference to such prescribed norms, are nonetheless capable of achieving appropriate communicative outcomes on their own terms if innovative language teaching, and language-teaching training, is developed.⁹

In this sense, Unit 3 action and research was strongly inspired by Seidlhofer' and Widdowson's pronouncements, as also reported in "Competence, Capability and Virtual Language" (Seidlhofer, Widdowson 2017), where the two eminent scholars pointed out some research directions and questions to be urgently addressed:

[a]s has been extensively exemplified in the ELF literature, users of English as a lingua franca are capable of using language to communicate in contextually appropriate ways even though in so doing they may not conform to the norms of Standard English or the usage of native speakers, which are generally taken to provide the benchmarks of competence in the language. This raises the question of what kind of construct competence is and how far it accounts for the ability to communicate. And if 'incompetent' users manage to be capable communicators, then what is the nature of this capability? (Seidlhofer, Widdowson 2017, p. 23)

Obviously, the very notion of "competence" is being examined under a critical perspective, and its very definition, "variously labelled as sociolinguistic, strategic, multilingual, inter-cultural and so on" (Seidlhofer, Widdowson 2017, p. 24), questioned. From Chomsky's competence's original formulation – where, as Seidlhofer and Widdowson (2017, p. 24) remind us, "an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech community" was postulated – the concept of competence has undergone a series of re-definitions, moving from Hymes's (1972) "communicative competence" onwards, with the contribution of various linguists: "Hymes' familiar definition of communicative competence is [...] based on the concept of an enclosed community, a 'normal' member of which can make certain judgements about a particular message form" (Seidlhofer, Widdowson 2017, p. 32). On that line of enquiry, Seidlhofer and Widdowson underline the element that in this form of "competence" the pragmatic aspect becomes crucial and that the

[p]ragmatic function is obviously not simply the direct projection of a conventionalized semantic system but the exploitation of the code potential of which this system is one realization. It is of course true that such a system has meaning potential in the sense that, like any grammar, it allows for creativity in the Chomskyan sense – the production of infinite formal permutations. But

⁹ Guido (2015, p. 5).

this is strictly confined creativity bound by conformity to the conventionalized systemic rules that define the actual language. The meaning potential that serves the variable and ever-changing communicative needs of language users cannot be, and clearly is not, so confined. (Seidlhofer, Widdowson 2017, p. 29)

The notion of creativity, which is a fundamental outcome in pedagogical applications, will be further analyzed in this paper, but for now, as earlier underlined, we should ask what happens when “incompetent speakers” become, in full evidence, successful communicators. Seidlhofer and Widdowson argue that “incompetent users can be capable communicators and indeed their capability in many ways depends on their incompetence” (Seidlhofer, Widdowson 2017, p. 32). They suggest that the “linguistic hybridity of ELF use” is the manifestation of

the dynamic interplay of the different factors in the communicative process, these forms are compounded expediently from whatever linguistic resources are immediately available to the participants, whatever their competences in the source languages might be. It is not that they are monolingual, or bilingual or multilingual or plurilingual, or translingual, or interlingual – they are just **lingual**, and being lingual involves the adaptable creative use of the potential of virtual language. In other words, it involves the exercise of a general **lingual capability**. (Seidlhofer, Widdowson 2017, p. 33) (emphasis mine)

Following this line of enquiry, in the Unit 3 of the PRIN project, the notion of ELF was assumed as realization of such “lingual capability”, therefore as an entity capable of creating occurrences of “language authentication”, where non-native speakers appropriate their underlying linguistic resources, also “according to their L1 parameters (Widdowson 1979)”, “justifying ELF variability” and therefore “challenging the notion of ENL as the only ‘authentic variety of English’”.¹⁰

The objectives that Unit 3 identified as research priorities were:

1. tracking down the changes currently occurring in the EU language policies and educational systems, also “geared at facing situations where the main means of communication for people is English. In most contexts English has emerged as a lingua franca (ELF), thus modifying features of communication and extending the notion of contact language and interculturality”;¹¹

¹⁰ Guido (2015, p. 4).

¹¹ Guido (2015, p. 9).

2. investigating how such “change in perspective has inevitably affected the notion of communicative competence and challenged the field of English language teaching and native speakerism”;¹²
3. “revisiting teachers’ [...] beliefs about what English is and what needs to be taught and learnt in rapidly changing societal conditions”;¹³
4. meeting “the need to foster awareness of current developments at school and, especially, in ELF teacher education programs”;¹⁴
5. pointing to the ultimate outcome of developing an ELF-aware pedagogical model for the English Language Teaching and Teacher Education.¹⁵

It is in strict connection with the above mentioned aims that the shaping of the questionnaire - to be submitted in a national survey to a large number of teachers - was envisaged.

2.2.1. *The questionnaire*

The questionnaire was the product of a “joint enterprise” of the participants in the Unit 3 of the PRIN Project 2015REZ4EZ. It was devised as a privileged tool of inquiry to gather authentic data coming from professionals engaged in ELT in the Italian territory, working in different levels in the national educational system.

As formulated by Unit 3 Coordinator, Lucilla Lopriore,

[t]he need to investigate the current status of English language teaching and language education in Italy and to identify teachers’ understandings of what teaching English implies, triggered the research design of this study and led to the development of the two teachers’ questionnaires. (Lopriore 2019, p. 28)

In order to get into further details, we can add that the questionnaire was administered to two groups: 1. one made of 196 teachers – mostly non-native speakers – working in different schools spread in the nation-wide context (covering 12 different regions and 177 provinces), predominantly at high school level; 2. the other one comprising 75 language experts - primarily native-speakers - working as CELs at university level.¹⁶

The questionnaire consisted of three parts: 1. the first one, regarding questions 1-11, was devoted to demographic information; 2. the second part,

¹² Guido (2015, p. 9).

¹³ Guido (2015, p. 9).

¹⁴ Guido (2015, p. 9).

¹⁵ Guido (2015, p. 9).

¹⁶ For a more detailed description of the findings concerning this second group see Sperti and Newbold (2019, pp. 59-74).

with questions from 12 to 14, concerned the respondents' familiarity with terms and notions related to English varieties and their respective conceptualizations; 3. finally, the third section, in questions 15 to 24, investigated the respondents' current practices adopted in ELT. The number of respondents, their distribution in the Italian territory and professional belonging to different educational institutions – as above specified – was significant and reputed valuable in statistical terms. Therefore, the data emerging from the survey were interesting both quantitatively and qualitatively, in accordance with a Mix Method Research (MMR) approach as postulated by Creswell (Creswell 2009).

According to the PRIN project operational premises, the main goal of the survey was

to investigate the use of ELF variations in multilingual classrooms [...] in face-to-face and online teaching, and in pre- and in-service teacher education contexts, to develop an ELF awareness informing ELF pedagogy, assessment and evaluation.¹⁷

The results provided interesting elements attesting the growing significance of ELF in ELT in differentiated teaching contexts and levels. The lapse of time in which the investigation was carried over went from the Fall term 2017 to the Spring term 2018.

The rationale behind the making and shaping of the questionnaire is clearly expressed by Unit 3 coordinating investigator, Lucilla Lopriore:

[t]he team regarded teachers' beliefs, practices and attitudes important for understanding and improving educational processes, because they are closely linked to teachers' strategies for coping with challenges in their daily professional life, they shape students' learning environment and influence student motivation and achievement. It was thus decided to include in the questionnaire items that would elicit teachers' personal response in terms of their practices and that would unveil their self-concept as well as their attitudes and beliefs. (Lopriore 2019, p. 29)

With such agenda in mind, the resource of an online survey is indubitably highly effective, providing a powerful research tool; as a form of investigative instrument – readily available and reliable in the collection of authentic data – it had already been employed in other research cases, and – as for the author of this paper, for instance – also as research tool in an ELF survey run in 2014 (Morbiducci 2016). That survey, made public in 2015, enquired on the main beliefs regarding the use of English in spoken interactions via social media, as expressed by a large group of students

¹⁷Guido (2015).

attending English courses of English at first and second year of the BA curriculum at Department of Oriental Studies – ISO, Sapienza University, Rome (Morbiducci 2015, 2016).

In the case of PRIN Unit 3 questionnaire, it was forged on the specific inspiring principle behind the PRIN national survey, that is, the need “to investigate the current status of English language teaching and language education in Italy and to identify teachers’ understandings of what teaching English implies” (Lopriore 2019, p. 28):

[t]hese questionnaires were meant to investigate teachers’ practice, as well as their attitudes and beliefs in a time of change where English is no longer a ‘foreign’ language, but it is largely the result of several linguacultural exchanges while being more and more used as ‘lingua franca’. (Lopriore 2019, p. 5)

Actually, what emerged in terms of beliefs and attitudes shaping classroom action is that teachers are already well beyond the traditional ELT practices informed on the previously uncontested principle of the superiority of the native speaker model; the findings resulting from the survey showed the transformative progression that the teaching practice is experiencing, not only for the always renewing teaching resources available, but particularly for the newly emerging beliefs related to the current status of English as lingua franca. What is sure is that we are clearly “beyond the native speaker” model, as postulated by Widdowson (1994, 2003), Canagarajah (1999) and other outstanding linguists (Chomsky 2018; Cohen 2018; Holliday 2006; Mahboob 2010; McKay 2002; Seidlhofer 2011).

Vivian Cook, for instance, in his *Going beyond the Native Speaker in Language Teaching*, also suggested not to concentrate only on the L2 native speaker, but rather exploit the students’ L1, as they are “speakers in their own right” (Cook 1999, p. 185). Similar concepts are expanded in following research and works by the same author (Cook 2007; Cook, Li 2016).

Interestingly, Cook pointed out that

[b]ecause L2 users differ from monolingual native speakers in their knowledge of their L2s and L1s and in some of their cognitive processes, they should be considered as speakers in their own right, not as approximations to monolingual native speakers. In the classroom, teachers can recognise this status by incorporating goals based on L2 users in the outside world, bringing L2 user situations and roles into the classroom. [...] The main benefits of recognising that L2 users are speakers in their own right, however, will come from students’ and teachers’ having a positive image of L2 users rather than seeing them as failed native speakers. (Cook 1999, p. 185)

As evident, Cook argues that “language professionals should not take for granted that the only appropriate models of a language’s use come from its

native speakers” (Cook 1999, p. 185); according to the eminent applied linguist, the prominence of the native speaker in language teaching should not “obscure” the success of the L2 users, and should not create unattainable goals for L2 learners who are to be viewed as “multicompetent language users rather than as deficient native speakers” (Cook 1999, p. 185). If, on the one hand, “the prominence of the native speaker in language teaching has obscured the distinctive nature of the successful L2 user and created an unattainable goal for L2 learners” (Cook 1999, p. 185), it is here recommended that “L2 users be viewed as multicompetent language users rather than as deficient native speakers” (Cook 1999, p. 185), since English learners can be seen as L2 users both in and out of the classroom setting.

Ian McKenzie (2016), on his turn, suggests that ESL speakers should not be considered eternal learners who can never reach perfection, but rather, when they effectively interact with native or non-native speakers, successful communicators in ELF.

2.2.2. *The questions*

The questions we would like to examine as evidence of our research hypothesis of a mutated scenario regarding teachers’ attitudes and beliefs are #12, #17 and #21 in the PRIN questionnaire above described, respectively covering the following elements: 1. familiarity with ELT notions; 2. views of successful English teaching; 3. description of best practices. In our opinion, from the answers gathered for those questions, teachers’ main tenets, their professional profile and didactic practices clearly emerge.

2.2.3. *Question #12*

In question #12, for example, which recited: “How familiar are you with the following terms?” and the terms being: Standard English (SE), World Englishes (WE), English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), English as an International Language (EIL), English as a Native Language (ENL), English as a Second Language (ESL), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Communicative competence, Intercultural competence, and Language & Cultural Mediation, the replies were as follows:

	NOT AT ALL	NOT VERY FAMILIAR	SOMEHOW FAMILIAR	VERY FAMILIAR	TOTALE	MEDIA PONDERATA
12.1. Standard English (SE)	0,63% 1	1,89% 3	10,69% 17	86,79% 138	159	3,84
12.2. World Englishes (WE)	5,66% 9	6,29% 10	32,70% 52	55,35% 88	159	3,38
12.3. English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)	1,26% 2	7,55% 12	26,42% 42	64,78% 103	159	3,55
12.4. English as an International Language (EIL)	1,89% 3	11,95% 19	27,04% 43	59,12% 94	159	3,43
12.5. English as a Native Language (ENL)	1,26% 2	8,81% 14	27,67% 44	62,26% 99	159	3,51
12.6. English as a Second Language (ESL)	0,63% 1	0,63% 1	16,35% 26	82,39% 131	159	3,81
12.7. English as a Foreign Language (EFL)	0,00% 0	1,89% 3	13,21% 21	84,91% 135	159	3,83
12.8. Communicative competence	0,00% 0	2,52% 4	16,98% 27	80,50% 128	159	3,78
12.9. Intercultural competence	0,00% 0	10,06% 16	31,45% 50	58,49% 93	159	3,48
12.10. Language & Cultural Mediation	2,52% 4	13,21% 21	38,99% 62	45,28% 72	159	3,27

Table 1
Question #12.

We can see that, if we consider only the “very familiar” range, the replies showed SE being the definition reaching the highest score (86,79%), followed by EFL (84,91%), and ESL (82,39%); these three labels represent concepts that belong to the so-to-say “traditional” values of the in-service teachers who have been only very partially exposed in their university curricular courses to the notions of ELF, WE and EIL. As a matter of fact, in our survey, EIL results being a “very familiar” definition only to just slightly more than half of the respondents (59,12%); the same could be said for Intercultural competence (58,49%) and World Englishes (55,35%). The definition which scores lowest in terms of familiarity is Language & Cultural Mediation, which is probably considered a distinct area in terms of language teaching. It is interesting to note, instead, how Communicative competence scores the fourth highest result (80,50%). This comparison makes us figure out that

the perceived familiarity of the respondents with the labels and definitions of SE, EFL, ESL and Communicative competence proved how the notion of SE is still quite resistant, mitigated, on the other hand, by the familiarity with “Communicative competence” (Morbiducci 2019, p. 53)

Communicative Competence, probably because of the presence of the term “communicative” – therefore evoking the well-known and popular communicative method applied in ELT –¹⁸ paves the way towards the notion of ELF (64,78%) as contact language, in sequence the highest score immediately following. Our interpretation is that ELF, viewed as a linguistics means to communicate among speakers of different languages and linguacultural systems, probably is somehow paralleled to “Communicative competence”;¹⁹ in any case, it is interesting to note that the score of ENL (62,26%) is lower than the one of ELF, therefore discarding the fixity and priority of the native-speaker myth. Furthermore, the space opened by the expressed familiarity with the concept of Communicative competence²⁰ represents

the positive aspect and profitable ground of pedagogical intervention, insofar the strict notion of SE can be made more ‘open’, or ‘porous’ especially if we assume the social constructivist perspective postulated by Kohn as we will shortly introduce. (Morbiducci 2019, p. 53)

The replies showed that there is the possibility of expanding and reinforcing the teachers’ familiarity with these sociolinguistic variables by way of an appropriate professionals’ developmental strategic action.

One of the goals of the PRIN Unit 3, as a matter of fact, was also to forge a teacher trainer plan that was actually realized during the last year of the research experience (2018-2019). It is interesting to note that from the qualitative answers given to the definition of ELF, in particular, it is possible to envisage a great pedagogical potential, as all the respondents pointed out the “contact” and “communicative” interactive aspect of the linguistic means represented by ELF. In connection with this, we should add that approximately 80% of the respondents had taken part in teachers’ education

¹⁸This interpretation is also confirmed in one of the qualitative replies given to question #14: “Please define the terms chosen in #13 in your own words”, where respondent n. 53 specifies: “communicative teaching is the method I prefer”.

¹⁹See also some of the qualitative comments in question #14: “Lingua franca is the language that people of different nationalities use to communicate” (respondent 61); “ELF is used as a ‘common’ language to communicate among non-native speakers” (respondent 84); “English used as a means of communication for speakers of different languages” (respondent 107); “The language as it is used all over the world in different contacts” (respondent 144); “English as a vehicle of communication all over the world” (respondent 149); and so on.

²⁰In the following question in the questionnaire, #13, which asked “Please choose 2 or 3 of the following terms you feel you are ‘very familiar with’”, Communicative competence has a higher score (69,18%) than Standard English (68,55%), a significant figure pointing to the priority of communication as main value and pedagogical aim in the teachers’ mind and corresponding didactic action.

courses (as asked in #15), which proves how crucial teachers' development occasions are in their professional growth and profile.²¹

2.2.4. Question #17

Strictly linked to the ranking of professional values expressed by the very agents, in question #17 participants were asked to “Please indicate what you think would make a successful English teacher today”. Together with the predictable answers regarding the statement “to have a native-like command of English”, we could also find the assertion “to be able to adapt teaching plans, activities and materials according to the learner needs & contexts of use”:

it seems as if, once again, good practices engaging the principles of flexibility, adaptability, exploitation of the unexpected communicative potentialities arising in localized contexts, and – last but not least - creativity, are all qualities which favour success in teaching. (Morbiducci 2019, p. 54)

Let's have a closer look at all the percentages represented in question #17, which are expressed on a Likert scale, ranging from 0 to 5, from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”:

Q17 Please indicate what you think would make a successful English teacher today:

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17.1. To have a native-like command of English	0,71%	0,71%	5,00%	25,71%	32,86%	35,00%	140	3,94
	1	1	7	36	46	49		
17.2. To regularly attend teacher education courses/seminars	0,71%	0,00%	2,14%	22,14%	22,14%	52,86%	140	4,24
	1	0	3	31	31	74		
17.3. To collaborate with colleagues of other subject matters	0,71%	0,00%	5,71%	30,00%	28,57%	35,00%	140	3,91
	1	0	8	42	40	49		
17.4. To integrate the use of digital technology in English language teaching (ELT)	0,71%	0,00%	6,43%	20,00%	32,86%	40,00%	140	4,04
	1	0	9	28	46	56		
17.5. To encourage learners to use social media and to bring samples of authentic English into the classroom	0,00%	0,00%	4,29%	15,71%	31,43%	48,57%	140	4,24
	0	0	6	22	44	68		
17.6. To engage students and develop a good rapport with them	0,00%	0,00%	1,43%	3,57%	25,00%	70,00%	140	4,64
	0	0	2	5	35	98		
17.7. To participate in European projects (e.g. e-Twinning, Erasmus, Tandem, etc.) using digital media & telecollaboration	0,00%	4,29%	7,14%	20,00%	27,86%	40,71%	140	3,94
	0	6	10	28	39	57		

²¹ This is also testified by the reply 17.2: “To regularly attend teacher education courses/seminars” to the following question #17, with an average score of 4,24%, and 52,86 % of “strongly agree” on a Likert scale.

17.8. To be able to adapt teaching plans, activities and materials according to learner needs & context of use	0,00% 0	0,71% 1	0,71% 1	5,71% 8	20,71% 29	72,14% 101	140	4,63
17.9. To prepare students for international English certifications	0,71% 1	4,29% 6	7,14% 10	17,14% 24	35,71% 50	35,00% 49	140	3,88
17.10. To select different forms of assessment & self-assessment and evaluation criteria according to different learning tasks	0,71% 1	1,43% 2	2,86% 4	15,71% 22	35,00% 49	44,29% 62	140	4,16
17.11. To select materials from the Web & use authentic audio/video materials including texts in non-standard English	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	2,86% 4	14,29% 20	29,29% 41	53,57% 75	140	4,34
17.12 To be open to including varieties of English besides Standard English in teaching	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	5,00% 7	17,14% 24	40,71% 57	37,14% 52	140	4,10
17.13 To regularly watch TV series and films in English at home	0,71% 1	2,14% 3	5,00% 7	14,29% 20	31,43% 44	46,43% 65	140	4,13
17.14 To refer to and use the CEFR descriptors when planning activities and assessment tasks	0,00% 0	4,29% 6	8,57% 12	28,57% 40	30,00% 42	28,57% 40	140	3,70
	OSTRONGLY DISAGREE	1	2	3	4	5STRONGLY AGREE	TOTALE	MEDIA PONDERATA

Table 2
Question #17.

The rationale and pedagogical aim behind the formulation of question #17 is clearly explained by Lopriore:

[b]eing a teacher is one of those jobs where personal and professional life almost always overlap, mostly because of the commitment needed in the job itself. Teachers' mental lives represent the 'hidden side' of teaching, as teacher learning and teacher knowledge are central attributes of teachers' mental lives (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Freeman, 2002). It was thus important to devote a substantial part of our survey to the investigation of teachers' personal understanding of their job and of what they regarded as a successful achievement, since success in teaching is often related to success in life, and, in the teaching job, success is closely related to learners' achievement. (Lopriore 2019, p. 31).

As already suggested (Morbiducci 2019, p. 54), in question #17 we consider as the most decisively noteworthy element the fact that the respondents expressed a clear preference for those relational and social factors typifying the teacher/learner rapport. Aspects such as "to engage with students and develop a good rapport with them" got 4,64% average score (Q. 17.6), together with "to be able to adapt teaching plans, activities and materials according to learner needs and context of use" (Q. 17.8), which scored 4,63%

average preferences: these two data – which both present the highest two scores in percentage out of the fourteen different options available – confirm that what teachers consider as most influential in reaching success in their profession is building up a constructive and harmonious interpersonal relationship with their students, based on their professional effort to interpret the learners' needs and contextual situations and on shaping their educational strategic choices accordingly. These social and affective values seem to overcome the more exquisitely technical aspects, paving the way to a reconsideration of their priorities, in which the traditional tenet of a native-like command of English (Q. 17.1), with 3,94% average score, is in any case ancillary to “to be open to including varieties of English” (Q. 17.12), reaching 4,10% average score. As noticed, respondents manifested a great openness to new paradigms in their teaching, in terms of didactic materials to include and sociolinguistics approaches to opt for, this latter element also representing a triggering ideological impulse towards change and innovation.

2.2.5. Question #21

Question #21, reciting as follows:

Q21 Think about your own teaching context(s). Please state whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about English Language Teaching. (Please use the following scale from 0 - (strongly disagree) to 5 - (strongly agree)):

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that is, asking respondents to express their opinions on a Likert scale, comprised the following options:

21.1 English language learners prefer to have native speakers of English as their teachers	4,29% 6	3,57% 5	22,86% 32	34,29% 48	20,00% 28	15,00% 21	140
21.2 Teachers should correct learners' errors in class because these tend to cause a breakdown in communication	3,57% 5	17,14% 24	27,86% 39	30,00% 42	15,71% 22	5,71% 8	140
21.3 The students' L1 and sociocultural identity are resources that can enrich English language teaching	0,00% 0	2,14% 3	7,86% 11	16,43% 23	40,71% 57	32,86% 46	140
21.4 Non-native English language teachers should adopt standard English as their target model	7,14% 10	6,43% 9	15,00% 21	25,00% 35	27,86% 39	18,57% 26	140
21.5 Teachers should encourage students to experiment with new language forms to communicate meaning	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	2,14% 3	13,57% 19	40,71% 57	43,57% 61	140
21.6 English language teachers should aim at promoting a "successful user of English" model for their learners	1,43% 2	2,86% 4	5,00% 7	20,71% 29	30,00% 42	40,00% 56	140

21.7 Developing communicative strategies is more important than learning to use correct grammar	0,71% 1	3,57% 5	7,14% 10	18,57% 26	30,71% 43	39,29% 55	140
21.8 English language learners should also be exposed to varieties of English including English spoken by non-native speakers	0,71% 1	0,71% 1	4,29% 6	12,86% 18	30,00% 42	51,43% 72	140
21.9 English language teachers should avoid using authentic materials which contain non-standard forms of English	42,86% 60	21,43% 30	14,29% 20	10,00% 14	10,00% 14	1,43% 2	140
21.10 Language learners' communicative competence should include their ability to negotiate meaning with both native and non-native interlocutors	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	2,14% 3	13,57% 19	30,00% 42	54,29% 76	140
21.11 English language teachers should include in their teaching video or audio recordings/multimedia of a variety of non native English speakers	0,71% 1	1,43% 2	5,00% 7	22,86% 32	34,29% 48	35,71% 50	140
21.12 When it comes to English language learners' assessment and evaluation, teachers should only refer to standard English	12,86% 18	15,71% 22	19,29% 27	22,14% 31	20,71% 29	9,29% 13	140
21.13 English language learners should preferably be exposed to and asked to notice and compare samples of both native and non-native speakers using English, through the use of authentic videos	0,71% 1	3,57% 5	7,14% 10	25,00% 35	36,43% 51	27,14% 38	140
21.14 English language assessment criteria should include learners' use of communicative and mediation strategies	0,71% 1	2,86% 4	1,43% 2	15,00% 21	41,43% 58	38,57% 54	140
21.15 English language learners should use correct language forms when speaking English	0,71% 1	7,14% 10	12,14% 17	32,14% 45	27,14% 38	20,71% 29	140

As we can see, question #21 articulates fifteen different stances corresponding to the main beliefs and values more frequently endorsed by teachers, as from previously ascertained experience and data.²²

Each of the pronouncements above referred to belong to diversified areas of teaching intervention, from the employment of different didactic resources to the adoption of various criteria of assessment, from error correction to communicative practices enhancement, from native to non-native speakers models of interaction, from affective to cognitive variables, and so forth; however, being ELF our main focus, we will observe more closely only the options in which the ELF sociolinguistic variety and ELF-aware didactic approaches to be chosen are at stake.

²² As for a thorough analysis of ELF-aware didactic practices in Italian educational and professional settings see also Lopriore 2017 and Vettorel 2017.

First of all, the typical prejudice that “English language learners prefer to have native speakers of English as their teachers” (Q. 21.1), at least from what emerges from the respondents’ point of view, is somehow dismantled, as such predicament only reaches 15% average score, proving once again that the kind and quality of human relationship between learner and educator is reputed more important than the mere linguistic variety represented by the teacher (at least from the students’ point of view according to the teachers’ opinion; in any case, an almost similar percentage, 18,57%, is indicated in Q. 21.4, where teachers, this time, were inquired about their view concerning SE models for themselves); secondly, we notice a relevant form of sociocultural openness from the part of the respondents, if we consider their replies in Q. 21.3, for instance, where 32,86% average score shows considerable appreciation of different sociocultural identities as profitable resources in the classroom, valuing them as an opportunity of enrichment; thirdly, we would like to point out the very high percentage of the average score, 43,57%, at Q. 21.5, where teachers were asked about their view in encouraging creativity in communicative resources used by students (“Teachers should encourage students to experiment with new language forms to communicate meaning”). This opinion, which highlights the focus on communicative capabilities, is reinforced in Q. 21.7, scoring average 39,29%, where communicative resources are deemed more relevant than the use of correct grammar; but what is really outstanding is the average score, 54,29%, reached by Q. 21.10 – the highest percentage in the whole articulated question #21 – in which language learners’ communicative competence is seen as including “the ability to negotiate meaning with both native and non-native interlocutors”: once again there emerges the appreciation of diversified sociolinguistic backgrounds and linguacultural systems acting as backdrop to the successful learner of English. The social constructivist model *MY English* described by Kurt Kohn (2018) is an illuminating example in such direction, as we will see in the following paragraph.

3. *MY English*: Kurt Kohn’s social constructivist model and its potential pedagogical projections

Once re-proposed the most indicative findings emerging from the PRIN survey, the challenge is to project them into a pedagogical frame which might enhance the constructive potentialities of growth and development therein contained, for both teachers and students.

Therefore, in this section firstly we will approach the model presented by Kurt Kohn, named “MY English”, featuring in the *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca* in 2018. Subsequently, we will try to juxtapose Kohn’s

predicament to the most qualifying aspects of pedagogical intervention as emerging from the analysis of the questions in the survey above mentioned.

3.1. Kurt Kohn's MY English: main features and possible applications

The seminal model, above mentioned, put forward by Kurt Kohn in 2018 has been object of analysis – by the author of this paper – in different occasions during the academic year 2019-2020: at AIA Padua University Conference, in September 2019; at PRIN Lecce University Conference, in December 2019; at PRIN RomaTre Conference, in January 2020 (in this last event, at the presence of Prof. Em. Kurt Kohn himself). In addition to this, in the *RILA* issue 2019/1, the same model was discussed in the contribution titled “ELT current practices, professional profile and beliefs: exploring implications within a global an ELF-aware perspective” (same author).

In the *RILA* article just referred to, the following points were highlighted as pivotal in Kohn's perspective:

1. Teachers' ELF apprehension and the normativity issue;
2. Speaker satisfaction and success in ELF communication;
3. Teaching towards ELF competence;
4. Intercultural telecollaboration.

In the same paper, it was pointed out how Kohn's pronouncements focused on the teachers' “conceptualization of ELF competence [as] deeply shaped by [their] explicit or implicit attitude and stance towards social constructivist assumptions and beliefs” (Kohn 2018, p. 13), therefore, in full agreement with the topic of this present article which investigates teachers' beliefs and values in the light of ELF awareness.

As for point 1., just above mentioned, “Teachers' ELF apprehension and the normativity issue”, we could see how in the PRIN survey teachers responded showing a relaxed attitude about the sociolinguistic model to adopt in their didactic action: that sort of “apprehension” – meant in its double meaning (Morbiducci 2014, p. 106) – about the priority to be given to nativespeakerism seems resolved in their replies, as previously analyzed in the section 2. In Kohn's conceptualization, teachers' ELF apprehension is juxtaposed with the normativity issue. In describing “the core issue of the conflict between ELF research and ELT practice” (Kohn 2018, p. 7) he clarifies how traditionally “teachers' negative assessment of the pedagogical values of ELF is closely linked to opposing perceptions of SNSE” (Kohn 2018, p. 7). Kohn specifies: “Against this backdrop, teachers are likely to perceive any suggestion to incorporate pedagogical insights from ELF research as rejecting SNSE, the hallmark of their pedagogical beliefs (e.g.

“Do you want me to teach incorrect English?”” (Kohn 2018, p. 7). But what happens when teachers prove that they have gone beyond these typical pedagogical beliefs, endorsing a more flexible view and stance? “The pivotal force driving this antagonism between ELF and ELT is a conceptual fusion of SNSE with normativity” (Kohn 2018, p. 7) which teachers showed to have overcome or at least somehow reconciled and harmonized, as emerging in our PRIN survey. In this way, what Kohn had hoped for: “If we want to successfully create a sustainable ‘pedagogical space for ELF in the English classroom (Kohn 2105)’, we need to address and deconstruct the nature of teachers’ (and learners’?) normativity orientation towards SNSE” (Kohn 2018, p. 8). And this is exactly what is attested in question #21 of the PRIN survey. Teachers replying to that question proved that it is possible to dissociate SNSE paradigms from the preferred pedagogical concept of adoption for their teaching practice. In addition to this, in the same question, also the authentic ELF communicative prerogatives are valued positively, which takes us to point 2. from Kohn’s elements above mentioned constituting “MY English” model, that is: “Speaker satisfaction and success in ELF communication”. The relevance and high appreciation of the communicative aspect in the ELF-aware approach has already been underlined as emerging with strength in the responses and percentages of preference indicated in the PRIN survey. For instance, in question #12, “Communicative competence” is one of the terms which respondents feel most familiar with, and in question #21.7, developing communicative strategies is considered more important than correct grammar. In addition to this, if “[i]n authentic ELF communication, ELT norms have been shown to be frequently ignored, even creatively transformed (Seidlhofer 2008, 2011, 2018)” (Kohn 2018, p. 9), it is exactly the notion of creativity that we would like to emphasize in Kohn’s model. Obviously, creativity in ELF is a topic that has already deserved great attention from the part of the ELF scholars (just to quote one, Pitzl 2018), but what we would like to highlight as emerging from Kohn’s perspective is that focused potential of learners’ emancipation in it contained.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note the development of Kohn’s model from its description in 2018 to its expanded and commented version in 2020. As for K. Kohn’s view, in a recent article titled *Foreign language teaching from a pedagogical lingua franca perspective* (Kohn 2020a, 2020b), he further evolves his model, suggesting that

“[a]ccording to a social constructivist understanding, foreign language teachers should enable their learners to reflectively explore their own foreign language communication and to negotiate and refine their requirements of communicative and communal success” (Kohn 2020b, p. 1).

Following Kohn's view, teachers can provide those appropriate didactic occasions to empower students in such direction, thus "enabling" them to

succeed in activating their communicative capabilities (...) when deploying their verbal resources to understand their partners and to find expression for what they want to convey. The processes and outcomes involved are generally depicted as **strategically creative**, richly variable and **communicatively successful** in terms of intelligibility. (Kohn 2020b, p. 1) (emphasis mine)

This virtuous and "successful" process leads to learner's emancipation in an active and non-ephemeral fashion. Kohn's analysis is convincing as his social constructivist insight seems to reconcile EFL and ELF in a unified pedagogical vision, especially because he recommends that

our pedagogical concern regarding issues of normativity and native-speakerism should not be focused so much on the repertoire and skills specified by the target language model but rather on the conditions of learning and teaching towards this model." (Kohn 2020b, p. 3)

It is the teachers' responsibility to activate the process of learners' emancipation, exactly proposing a pedagogical model that allows the realization of such condition in genuine and effective ways:

are speaker-learners granted the kind of pedagogical space and guidance that would help them appropriate the target model for their own communicative and communal needs and purposes? (Kohn 2020b, p. 3)

According to Kohn (2018b, pp. 3, 38),

[t]he key pedagogical problem in foreign language teaching should not be seen in whether speaker-learners are exposed to some kind of standard native speaker input variety as the language taught. Rather, the problem is whether and to what extent they are **pedagogically encouraged and supported to take on a more emancipated role** by drawing on their ordinary social constructivist creativity when 'acquiring' their own signature brand of the input variety taught. (emphasis mine)

We totally agree with Kohn's social constructivist perspective, because his pedagogical lingua franca approach (Kohn 2018, 2020a) "takes a different stance by shifting the pedagogical scope from ELF 'input' to ELF 'involvement'" (Kohn 2020b, p. 4). Through learners' authentic involvement, teachers can increase the "learner agency from communicative participation to thematic appropriation, collaborative languaging and empathetic rapport" (Kohn 2020b, p. 7), and so doing they can "contribute to the emergence of more emancipated non-native speaker identities" (Kohn 2020b, p. 7). The "speaker satisfaction" element listed in Kohn's model as point 2. is

successfully and constructively accomplished because

[t]he social constructivist perspective on language learning draws attention to the processes of individual and collaborative creative construction by which 'learners' develop and appropriate their own English and their own ways of using it in intercultural ELF contexts guided by their own communicative and communal requirements of success and **their satisfaction as 'speakers'**. (Kohn 2020b, p. 3) (emphasis mine)

In this way teachers can authentically activate a form and style of learning heading towards ELF competence, as indicated by the statutory definitions of the current status of ELF as sociolinguistic variety of use and contact among speakers of linguacultural systems in the whole globe. What we care about as educators is not simply the possibility of means of communication, but also the potentiality of intellectual growth and linguistic emancipation of the users themselves. Teachers can face the challenge, take the risk, and become the inspirers of such important process of change in perspective. The social occasion of co-construction of a different community via language

is influenced by a number of individual and social shaping forces including, in particular, available and perceived input manifestations of the language taught, learner attitudes, motivation and effort, other languages, teaching approach, and the community learners' want to be part of. (Kohn 2020a, p. 4)

In order to conclude our argumentation in support of Kohn's (2020a, p. 4) ELF pedagogical stance,

[p]referably guided by an attitude of emancipated autonomy, learners rely on their personal requirements of success when monitoring their communicative and communal performance, and they use them as beacons for their learning. It is with reference to their requirements that learners **assume agency for their own learning**. (emphasis mine)

We certainly endorse Kohn's view when he claims that "[s]ince the overall goal of school education is to prepare students for life, learner emancipation is an old promise, continuous hope, and ultimate challenge" (Kohn 2020a, p. 5).

Indeed, it is an articulated and ambitious pedagogical project to achieve, but the times are ripe for such shift and achievement, at least the teachers' beliefs and attitudes as unveiled in the PRIN survey seem to encourage ELF experts towards this agenda.

4. Conclusions

As we presented in the Introduction, this paper revolves around three axes, representing respectively: 1. previous theoretical ELF findings creating the foundation of our PRIN research; 2. investigation of teachers' attitudes, beliefs and best practices regarding their professional profile in ELT, with the tool of a specially devised questionnaire; 3. reflection about Kohn's social constructivist model "MY English", and its projection in future pedagogical frames.

The three perspectives are interlaced, and through them we tried to postulate a view able to fill the gap typically and inveterately existing between theory and practice in the teaching profession.

Under the particular light of an ELF-aware approach, our aim was to unify theoretical stances with pedagogical outcomes, keeping in mind, as initial research question, Sifakis's posture, that is, investigating to what extent "research in ELF is able to impact, and therefore inevitably change, English language teaching and learning in all its facets" (Sifakis 2018, p. 156).

In such challenging predicament, many factors are called into question, "most notably pedagogy, language learning material design and implementation, assessment, policy, and, by extension, teacher education" (Sifakis 2018, p. 156).

These are all elements that were explicitly investigated in the PRIN questionnaire which represented the backbone of our research action.

However, reporting about the state of the art of teachers' attitudes and beliefs regarding their teaching practices which involve syllabus design, resources implementation, assessment and evaluation tools, and professional development more in general, is not enough for a real change to take place.

One step further is necessary, and this is constituted, in our view, by a liberatory approach provided by the ELF-aware stance which counts as its main tenets, just as Kohn suggests, "five interlaced ELF competence dimensions", that is, "awareness, comprehension, production, communicative interaction and non-native speaker creativity" (Kohn 2018, p. 1).

If we subscribe ideologically to the learners' emancipatory move in the terms described by Kohn's paradigm, as above reported in part 3., perhaps a substantial improvement in the pedagogical impact of an ELF-informed approach can become a true reality. This is our wishful thinking, in any case.

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SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES ON NATIVE SPEAKER TEACHERS (And new roles for *collaboratori linguistici*?)

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Abstract – In this paper I examine the profile of the *collaboratori ed esperti linguistici* (formerly *lettori*) in the light of a thirty year old and ongoing debate contrasting the role of native English speaking teachers (NESTs) with that of non-native colleagues (NNESTs), and against a background of rapid change in English language requirements in Italian and European universities. The picture which emerges from the PRIN survey of 75 *CEL* is of a professional category which is largely a product of the ‘communicative revolution’ in language teaching, and which is less wedded to native speaker norms than its NNEST colleagues. I conclude that the traditional distinction between native and non-native teacher is increasingly problematic, and potentially misleading, while there are many possible future roles for *collaboratori linguistici* which transcend the basic requirement of ‘nativespeakerism’.

Keywords: native speaker; *collaboratore linguistico*; Standard English; gatekeeping.

1. NEST or Non NEST: An ongoing debate

The debate on the comparative merits of native and non-native English speaking teachers (NESTs and NNESTs), and whether the former have an innate advantage, began more than three decades ago. This notion has been amply discussed, and consistently refuted, in (among others) Phillipson (1992), Cook (1999), Bhatt (2002), and especially Mahboob (2004, 2005, 2010).

For years, professional ELT organizations such as TESOL, in its 2005 ‘position statement’, and IATEFL, in the plenary address given by Silvana Richardson at its 2016 conference, have called for an end to discriminatory practices by employers seeking to recruit only native speaker teachers, but the practice continues. An extract from a recent (2018) job advertisement on an online TEFL website, which makes no mention of teaching qualifications, seems to imply that the untrained monolingual NEST is best suited to deliver a ‘laid back and relaxed style’, and, as a result, presumably, effortless language learning:

The roles involves [sic] teaching young kids in Asia the basics of the English language [sic] in a laid back and relaxed style¹

For Mahboob (2005), the native speaker fallacy – the notion that the ideal language teacher is a native speaker – is grounded in Chomsky (1965) and the claim that the supreme arbiter about what is, or is not, acceptable in a language is the ‘ideal speaker listener’ in a ‘completely homogeneous speech community’. This is an abstraction, of course, which served Chomsky well in his elaboration of deep structure, generative grammar, and ultimately universal grammar, but which (in the opinion of Mahboob) was adopted uncritically by applied linguists in ‘ideologically loaded’ SLA terminology, such as *fossilization* (Selinker 1972) and, more generally, *deviation* from a native speaker norm (Ellis 1994, p 15). Something of this attitudinal loading is to be found in the 2000 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which frequently compares learner levels against native speaker norms which are, for most second language learners, unattainable. This is best illustrated in the much-quoted description of Level B2 Conversation:

Can sustain relationships with native speakers without unintentionally amusing or irritating them or requiring them to behave other than they would with a native speaker.

Significantly, the CEFR contains a scale for ‘Understanding conversation between native speakers’ but no similar scale for ‘Understanding conversation between non-native speakers’, suggesting that the prime reason for learning a foreign language is to understand native speakers and to be able to communicate with them. This is a presupposition enshrined in the rationale of all major English language certifications currently on the market.

In this way, orthodox SLA theory as expounded by Selinker, and the immensely influential classification of levels of proficiency which is the CEFR, reinforced the notion of an unbridgeable divide between native and non-native speakers which in turn contributed to a lack of self-esteem for NNESTs, noted by a number of researchers. Bernat (2009) refers to this as ‘the imposter syndrome’, suggesting that many NNESTs felt that they were teaching under false pretences.

Bernat’s findings were based on non-native teachers working or studying in Australia, but the doubts and inadequacies they experienced are played to in the following advertisement for a summer ‘refresher’ course for

¹ Accessed November 2018, and no longer available at <https://uk.jobrapido.com/jobpreview/543648566>.

English teachers in Italy, seen recently (2019) in the window of a travel agency in Mestre (mainland Venice):

Aggiorna la tua certificazione TEFL con un corso specifico dell'English Language Centre (ELC). I corsi TEFL sono pensati per docenti di inglese non madre lingua che desiderano rinfrescare le proprie competenze didattiche e migliorare l'inglese.²

The announcement reads like a 'two for the price of one' offer, in which the refresher course in methodology will inevitably involve the opportunity to 'improve your English'; the premise being that, whoever you are, and whatever teaching qualifications and experience you may have, as a non-native teacher your English will need 'improving'.³

This deficit model of the NNEST has been countered by arguments stressing the qualities and insights that a non-native teacher can bring to the classroom, such as knowledge of the students' L1 and empathy deriving from awareness of language difficulties which students face. Furthermore, numerous surveys have shown that students do not necessarily prefer to have a native speaker teacher; for a recent overview and survey involving Italian students see Christiansen (2017).

Such is the background to the PRIN investigation of teacher attitudes (of both NESTs and non-NESTs) in Italy to the rapidly growing phenomenon of ELF which is the subject of this volume. Teachers in secondary education (NNESTs) and in universities (NESTs) were asked to reflect on their own status (as NESTs or NNESTs), to share their opinions on methodological practices, and in so doing to reveal their degree of 'ELF awareness'. In this paper we shall examine the responses of the native speaker *collaboratori linguistici* working in Italian universities, compare them with those of the secondary school teachers, and suggest that the NNEST- NEST divide has been attenuated by the advent of ELF, and in any case is not likely to be useful for many new language teaching contexts already developing in schools and universities.

² Update your TEFL certification with a dedicated course at the English Language Centre (ELDC). Our courses are designed for non mothertongue teachers who wish to refresh their teaching skills and improve their English.

³ The window of a language school in the same town judiciously opts for ambiguity by stating that it has 'insegnanti di lingua inglese', ('English language teachers') with no reference to their 'mother tongue'.

2. Native speakers in Italian university language education: The *collaboratori ed esperti linguistici*

No fewer than 75 *collaboratori ed esperti linguistici* (CEL) responded to the invitation to participate in the survey. This represents a considerable percentage of the total number of CEL currently working in Italy (around 1,000, for all languages taught in universities). As far as we are aware, no similar large scale survey has been carried out with CEL; indeed, there is very little published research on their role as university language teachers. This is probably due in part to the ambiguity of their status in the universities, and an extenuating legal battle about whether or not they should be considered as teaching staff ('personale docente'). Daloiso and Balboni, for example, in their (2012) volume on language teaching in Italian universities, make only brief passing references to CEL.

The category was created in 1994 to replace the existing category of *lettori di madrelingua*, a move which downgraded the role to that of technical/administrative support staff. The ambiguity surrounding the role and function of CEL or *lettori* (the earlier term by which they continue to be known) as language teachers is palpable in the Wikipedia entry for 'lettorato':⁴

Il termine lettore indica le mansioni, gli obblighi, i diritti di questo particolare insegnante e si fonde con la sua figura accademica e giuridica, indicando spesso la durata temporale dell'incarico. I lettori di lingua straniera sono presenti in tutte le università italiane, dove circa il 90% dell'insegnamento linguistico è affidato ai ricercatori di madrelingua

in which the writer creates a sense of vagueness by using the word 'particolare' in the phrase 'questo particolare insegnante', and erroneously uses the term *ricercatori* instead of *lettori*. It does, however, identify the role of 'native speaker' (*madrelingua*), which has continued to be a recruiting prerequisite, whereas teaching qualifications (such as British or American qualifications in TEFL and/or TESOL) may take second place as criteria for recruitment, if at all.

However, *madre lingua* (native speaker) is a problematic concept. In job advertisements for CEL (*bandi di selezione pubblica*) it is typically defined with a circular argument, the key factor being 'naturalness' of expression:

⁴ [https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lettorato_\(universit%C3%A0\)](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lettorato_(universit%C3%A0)), accessed 13.01.2020

Sono da considerare di madrelingua i cittadini stranieri o italiani che, per derivazione familiare o vissuto linguistico, abbiano la capacità di esprimersi con naturalezza nella lingua madre di appartenenza.⁵

The difficulty of making judgements in universities about what is, or what is not, someone's 'mother tongue' extends to other recruitment scenarios, such as the decision to waive a language certification requirement on the basis of a 'mother tongue' qualification, adopted by many universities when admitting students to English Medium Instruction (EMI) courses. For example, the fact that a potential student has completed their secondary education in an English medium school, especially if in an English speaking country, may be considered to guarantee competences similar to those of a 'mother tongue' speaker. However, equating the term 'mother tongue' to a level of language competence mapped by the CEFR is at best inappropriate and may lead to wrong choices being made. In the applied linguistics literature, the term L1 is preferred to mother tongue, since it refers less ambiguously to the language with which the speaker is most familiar.

In our survey, four respondents answered 'no' to the question 'Do you consider yourself to be a native speaker of English?', raising further doubts about the usefulness of the term as a defining quality of the CEL. However, most respondents (77%) believed that 'being a native speaker can contribute to making a successful teacher of English today'. The NNEST secondary school teachers were asked a slightly different question, whether 'having a native-like command of English' could contribute to 'making a successful teacher of English today'. Here the responses were even more in agreement (94%), confirming that for both categories 'native' and 'native like' abilities are directly linked to success in the language classroom.

3. Shifting perspectives on the native speaker accent

Teachers' beliefs about the importance of 'native speakerism', or a native-speaker-like command of the language, may have been reinforced by the stance taken by the CEFR, as we mentioned above, and this seems to be particularly the case with pronunciation. We have already quoted the example of the non-native accent perceived as a potential cause of irritation or amusement in the CEFR scales for communication interaction; the brief descriptions in the phonological scales in the same document reiterate this

⁵ See for example the advertisement for a post of *collaborator ed esperto linguistico* at the University of Rome Sapienza: https://www2.uniroma1.it/organizzazione/amministrazione/ripartizionepersonale/documenti/bandi/lettore_madrelingua_inglese_17-11-09.pdf

perspective by referring to a ‘noticeable foreign accent’ (A2) and underlining the effort of comprehension required by native speakers (A1).

This attempt to describe phonological levels soon began to be seen as problematic, particularly in the context of ELF (Harding 2013; Isaacs, Trofimovich 2012). As a result, the CEFR commissioned a report (Piccardo 2016) which began with the premise that

a new sensibility has been emerging in the applied linguists’ scholarly community when it comes to reevaluating the traditional idea of the ‘native speaker’ as a model or perception of the norm in pronunciation. This is especially visible in English considering the movement towards ‘global Englishes’ or ‘English as a Lingua Franca’, but similar considerations have been applied to all languages. (p 6.)

Piccardo comes up with a new scale, or rather three scales, which make no reference to approximation to a native speaker model, but are based on intelligibility, a criterion already adopted in the rating scales for major examining boards.

The three scales, subsequently adopted in the revised (2018) version of the CEFR, are:

- overall phonological control
- sound articulation
- prosodic features

‘Foreign accents’ are no longer mentioned, (since the term is used in opposition to an implied non-foreign, i.e. ‘native’ speaker) and are replaced by a reference to accents which reflect influence from ‘other language(s)’ the speaker may know, thereby giving a positive, multilingual, slant to the learner’s efforts. In addition, the frequent references to ‘intelligibility’ underline the role of the listener and provide a timely reminder that the co-construction of meaning concerns both speaker and listener; the listener, whether native or non-native speaker, is co-responsible in the establishment of intelligibility; and, from the perspective of ‘collaborative listening’ at least, the monoglot native speaker may be at a disadvantage when compared with his or her multilingual counterpart.

In the rapidly changing background of university language teaching in Europe this shift in perspective is particularly relevant. The Bologna process (1999), through the mutual recognition of qualifications and streamlining of degree courses, has promoted teacher and student mobility on an unprecedented scale. The *lingua franca* of European student mobility is of course English; and English is likely to be the language used by visiting professors, but not their L1. Italian universities have followed their partners in the north of Europe by attracting international students as degree seekers, and consequently offering EMI courses. The English to which students are

exposed to on a daily basis is thus far more likely to be of a non-native speaker variety, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that their English language learning should reflect that need.

How should this new reality impinge on English language programmes in Italian universities, and in particular, on the work of the *collaboratori linguistici*? Large scale investigations (Jenkins 2014; Mollin 2006) suggest that university teaching staff across all disciplines would prefer to maintain a native speaker standard English - in Europe usually British – as a model for academia, but, from the front line, as language teachers, the CEL in the survey are not convinced. Although all of them claim that they normally use a standard variety of English when teaching, most of them (67%) do not think that their target model should be exclusively a British or American standard, while a large majority (86%) think that learners should be exposed to non-native accents as part of the course.⁶

4. NEST perspectives on ‘Standard English’ and the gatekeeping function

The notion of ‘Standard’ is, however, as problematic as that of ‘native speakerism’, if not more so. Trudgill (1999), for example, prefers to define ‘Standard English’ in terms of what it is *not* (not an accent, not a style, not a register). Yet it is one of the terms used in the ELT profession with which the *collaboratori linguistici* feel they are most familiar, (‘very familiar’ for 97%). Only ‘EFL’ – English as a Foreign Language – scored more highly (98% ‘very familiar’) in their responses to the question (Q16), *How familiar are you with these terms?*⁷

The ambiguity surrounding the term, however, emerges when respondents are asked to define it. Some relate it to geographical location, native speakerism, or social status:

- Standard English is the most widely accepted form used in a specific geographic area.
- English spoken by a group of people known as native speakers.
- The English spoken by the educated middle classes.

But most conceive of it as an artifact of the classroom, usually embracing pronunciation, as well as grammar and lexis:

⁶ The percentage of NNESTs who agreed with the same statement was even higher, at 94%.

⁷ The terms to choose between were: Standard English, World Englishes, ELF, EIL, ENL, ESL, EFL, Communicative competence, Intercultural Competence, Language and Cultural Mediation.

- English as taught in schools in countries where the main language is English.
- What you find in the text books.
- The most widely accepted correct form of English in terms of spelling, grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary.
- A widely used and understood variety of English taken as a standard for teaching: varies according to teacher's background, will not usually include regional, dialectal or very colloquial forms.

However, even if, as we have seen, 100% of the CEL claim that they use a standard form of the language in the classroom, the relationship they have with Standard English is clearly ambivalent. They appear to be less wedded to native speaker norms than the secondary school teachers, 67% of whom think that 'non-native English teachers should adopt Standard English as their target model.' In the CEL survey, the percentage drops to 33% of respondents who believe that 'native teachers of English should adopt only British or American standard English as their target model', and in partial corroboration of this, 29% of the CEL claim that they 'sometimes use a non-standard variety of English when speaking in class', although it is not clear how they do this: by changing their accents? by using non-standard lexis or syntax, perhaps from a regional dialect they are familiar with? However they interpreted this question, *using* a variety suggests that teachers offer students a model, by personally identifying with a form of the language and adopting a persona, rather than simply by drawing students' attention to non-standard forms, for example in a recorded text.

The message that standard English, and its perceived related characteristic of 'correctness', should not be the be all and end all of their language courses is driven home in further attitude questions, in which they agree that native teachers of English should:

- encourage students to experiment with new language forms to communicate meaning (88%)
- aim at promoting a 'successful user of English' model for their learners (88%)
- expose learners to varieties of English including English spoken by nonnative speakers (86%)

Paradoxically then, although the CEL see a close relationship between native speakerism, a standard form of the language, and correctness – and also, as we have seen, believe that being a native speaker is both a positive attribute for a language teacher and the preferred model for language learners - they do not see themselves as gatekeepers of the standard, whose role is to correct student errors in class. 59% did not agree with the statement that 'teachers should correct learners' errors in class' – rather more than their NNEST

counterparts (44%) who were faced with the same question.

Why should this be so? An explanation may lie in their professional background and qualifications. All of them have a relevant postgraduate teaching qualification, most of them having completed an initial training course in EFL or ESOL, including 26% with a CELTA or DELTA, and 15% with an MA. This is a significant detail, given that a professional teaching qualification, unlike the native speaker requirement, may not be specified in the *bando* or job advertisement. But more significant still is their average age: eighty per cent of respondents were, at the time of the survey, fifty years old or above. They will have done their initial training in the UK during the heady years of the eighties and nineties, on the crest of a communicative wave, when the focus for trainee teachers shifted (at least hypothetically) from structural accuracy to ‘purposeful use’ (Howatt, Smith 2014), and the grammatical syllabi in course books were remapped in terms of ‘functions’.

In this context teachers become facilitators of interaction, and promoters of communicative success, rather than guardians of a standard, or standards. It is a context which predates widespread awareness of the phenomenon of ELF but resonates with it in its approach to communication, especially, as we shall see, in the context of assessment. But it is also inextricably linked with native speakerism, as Mahboob (2010, p. 2) hints when he points out that, from a NNEST perspective:

The problem with the communicative approach is not that teachers in EFL contexts (ie NNESTs) can’t use it (because of their language proficiency) but that the approach was not developed in or for EFL contexts’.

Mahboob is right; the approach was developed in the UK and designed for NNS – NS communication. The emphasis on non-transparent language, such as idioms, and non-core phonology (in Jenkins’ (2000) classification), such as stress timing and in particular the use of the unstressed vowel schwa, are unlikely to have much space in a putative ELF course, but rather seem targeted towards a native-speaker ideal. What’s more, it first surfaced in UK language schools – a boom business in the 1970s and 1980s – which featured small classes, optimal learning conditions, and a focus on oral skills. For *collaboratori linguistici* working in Italian universities, class sizes and working conditions are likely to be very different, and a ‘communicative approach’ hard to implement.

Nonetheless, the common ground uniting a communicative approach and ELF awareness seems apparent in response to Q11, ‘Language learners’ communicative competence should include the ability to negotiate meaning with NS and NNS interlocutors’ (95%), as it does in their belief that ‘developing communicative strategies is more important than learning correct grammar’ (Q8, 88%). The gatekeeping function, for which perhaps they were

intended when they were selected as native speakers, is conspicuous by its absence in this part of the survey.

5. The need to rethink testing

One of the principal functions of the *collaboratori linguistici*, related to the notion of ‘gatekeeping’, is assessment. It is also one of the most time-consuming – perhaps more than it is for the secondary school teachers. This has always been the case, given the number of exam sessions in the academic year, and the number of students enrolled in English language courses. In recent years, however, the assessment function has been extended in many universities to the monitoring of students’ levels on the CEFR for matriculation or exit purposes. Although some students – around twenty percent - may have external certification, the majority have recourse to the services of university language centres, which have become *de facto* test centres operating throughout the year.

In the University of Venice Ca’ Foscari, for example, the CEL are responsible for writing items and administering tests at level B1 for entry to all undergraduate courses, and at level B2 to exit undergraduate courses, or, for those students arriving without proof of level, to matriculate for a second level (‘laurea magistrale’) course. Tests (of grammar, lexis, reading and listening) are typically objective, using multiple choice items. The B2 test also has a speaking component, in which a CEL animates and assesses a discussion between four test takers. With a pass rate of around 50% for the B2 test, and for students having to retake the test maybe several times before they are able to graduate, it can become an increasingly high stakes assessment.

The test thus has an evident gatekeeping function based on a standard description of the language, which the CEL are required to approve and administer, but which may not be relevant to test purpose– which, for the majority of students not enrolled in language departments, is to predict their ability to successfully complete their course, in an (academic) ELF environment. Listening to and interacting with non-native speakers do not feature in the test. Yet listening to visiting academics, and interacting with students on mobility, are two of the most obvious examples of the use of English as a lingua franca which are a consequence of the policy of internationalization now being pursued by many Italian universities. In this context, without any real attempt having been made to identify the kind of language use domain in which students in Italian universities will be required to operate, the tests currently on offer may have only a very limited predictive value.

It is beyond the scope of this article to speculate on the form more

‘ELF aware’ university entrance (or exit) tests might take⁸, but the gatekeeping function of *collaboratori linguistici* is not likely to be part of the specifications. The CEL in our survey, as might be expected given their communicative backgrounds, are themselves skeptical of tests which are based on a construct which is related to a standard. Sixty percent disagreed with the statement:

Q 31.13 When it comes to assessment, teachers should only refer to British or AM standard

Unsurprisingly, given their relationship with standard English which we discussed above, the non-native teachers are more reluctant to abandon a standard, with only 48% thinking the same way as the CEL. For the other assessment-related statement in the survey, however:

Q31.15 Assessment criteria should include use of communicative and mediation strategies

there was overwhelming agreement in both groups (NEST/CEL 86%, NNEST/school teachers 95%), a clear indication that, in both secondary and tertiary education contexts in Italy today, teachers feel the need to assess those skills – or capabilities, to use the term pioneered by Seidlhofer and Widdowson (2017) – which are a fundamental feature of ELF interaction. How this is to be done is by no means clear, but it indicates a shared awareness of assessment needs to reflect new domains of language use for English. As well as pointing to new prospects for CEL in assessment contexts, it implies a range of underlying new needs for English in Italian universities, and consequently new roles for *collaboratori linguistici*, most of which appear to be unrelated to their status as native speakers.

6. Changing needs for English, new roles for *collaboratori linguistici*?

The term *collaboratore ed esperto linguistico* was ushered in to replace that of *lettore* at the height of the legal battle over status and salary of mother tongue language teachers working in the universities. At the time – in the 1990s - it seemed at best unwieldy, and at worst hypocritical and ambiguous; the term was coined in an attempt to avoid making any reference to a teaching role in the job title or description. Unlike other professional roles

⁸ For what a B1 entrance test to Italian universities might look like when based on an exhaustive needs analysis, see Newbold 2015.

which came into being about the same time, such as that of the transparently named *mediatore culturale* (cultural mediator), and which met real new needs in a changing world, the job remained the same: the CEL were, and are, language teachers working in university language centres, or in tandem with academic staff (professors and researchers) in university departments.

But today the term seems well chosen as a potential blanket category to cover a range of specialist roles which could contribute usefully to the process of internationalisation in Italian universities, and which would reflect different ways in which English has become the *lingua franca* of the academic community, in Italy as elsewhere. In this concluding section we propose just some of these possible future roles, all of which require specific, specialist, competences, all of which correspond to real needs in today's post Bologna Process universities and their attempts to attract international degree seekers and promote mobility among their own staff and students.

What follows are a few examples of possible job descriptions, tentative and incomplete, which could fit the title of *esperto linguistico* ('language expert'), not necessarily mother tongue, and not necessarily with a teaching role, in tomorrow's universities.

Experts in testing and assessment

The introduction of entrance (B1) and exit (B2) level English language requirements has put considerable strain on university language centres, which deploy CEL and other human resources to develop and implement tests. External certification is a useful alternative, but it comes at a cost, and most universities offer in-house tests as an alternative. However, valid and reliable tests are not easy to produce; test developers and item writers need to be trained. Of the CEL in our survey, many of them have experience of preparing students for certification, or have attended training courses in language testing; at least three have worked as examiners for Cambridge Assessment. These CEL all appear to have professional profiles which would be appropriate for a post as expert in testing.

Advisors for EMI lecturers

Internationalisation has led to the introduction of courses delivered through the medium of English (EMI) at both undergraduate and graduate level. But many lecturers have no experience of lecturing in English, may not feel confident in using English, and need support (see for example Guarda and Helm (2017) who recount a project in lecturer support at the University of Padova). In some universities in Germany the academic support figure already exists institutionally; it is a role which requires sensitivity and a sound background in applied linguistics, ranging from phonology to discourse analysis. Here, mother tongue status seems irrelevant.

Cultural informants in language departments

In contrast, foreign language departments are likely to continue to require mother tongue assistants for teaching requirements, to provide models for

pronunciation, and to be a source of cultural information. The expert knowledge that the traditional language assistant has is that of being a cultural insider, with the insights (but perhaps also limited perspectives) that this implies. As we have seen, he or she is also likely to be used for gatekeeper functions.

Teachers of academic writing

Pressure to publish in English dominates academic life in Europe; English language publications are usually more prestigious, and a wider readership is guaranteed. Around 80 per cent of articles in the Scopus database are published in English, and any young researcher who wishes to make a career in academia, especially in scientific disciplines, needs to publish in English. This implies the acquisition of writing skills. Many universities offer academic writing courses, where the focus may be native speaker norms, but where transparency and lack of ambiguity are paramount. Teachers of academic writing are likely themselves to have an academic background, and many of the CEL in our survey fit this description. But native speaker status in itself may be less useful than the experience of having successfully published, in English, as a non-native writer.

Creators of online materials

As universities compete with each other for international students, so the need to showcase their courses increases. In recent years, the quality of university websites has improved enormously, as have their webpages in English, at least in their graphics and visual appeal. But as Jenkins (2014) points out, the preference is still to attempt to imitate UK or US websites in the language by using native speaker writers, and with them, culture-bound references to UK or US lifestyles – rather than finding their own voice to communicate with an international audience in a context of English *lingua franca*.

Facilitators of international interaction

With more than 10 million students having participated in the Erasmus programme since its inception, mobility has become a major priority for universities, promoting the exchange of knowledge, but also, and equally importantly, ideals of friendship and tolerance. Most Erasmus students on mobility (and those who stay at home, but who wish to interact with international students) will need to be able to use English as a *lingua franca*. To prepare them for the experience non-native language teachers (perhaps former Erasmus students themselves), aware of the strategies needed for successful interaction, are likely to have more useful insights than (monoglot) native speaker teachers.

The above brief outlines are not meant to be exhaustive, nor are they meant to undervalue the contribution currently being made by CEL to university life in Italy today. However, the sheer variety of these roles, linked to globalization and the rapid development of technology, testify to the *de facto* establishment of English as a *lingua franca*. All of them, except that of the cultural informant, could be taken by qualified non-native speakers. But the

opposition NEST-NNEST is of limited significance in this rapidly developing context; in most cases the job description, and the qualification for the job, will transcend any prerequisite of ‘nativespeakerism’. The survey which this report is based on shows that CEL working in universities, like their counterparts working in secondary schools, are well aware of the shift in focus for English teachers which ELF has entailed. Perhaps the time has come for universities to acknowledge that their institutional needs for English language teaching – and for the English language itself - have changed drastically since the turn of the millennium.

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NATIVE TEACHERS, NON-NATIVE TEACHERS AND ELF

Same aims, different approaches?

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Abstract – The spread of English used as a lingua franca (ELF) in several multilingual communicative settings and the emergence of World Englishes (WE) have inevitably impacted on the field of English language teaching (ELT) calling into question traditional notions and assumptions and highlighting the need to revisiting teachers’ roles and approaches to the English classroom. In this respect a research study was carried out withing a recent PRIN project which aimed at the exploration of ELF pedagogy in the Italian school contexts. The Roma 3-unit members investigated teachers’ current practices in English language classrooms, with the research objective of enhancing WE and ELF aware teaching to be implemented especially in the training of teachers involved in multilingual learning environments. Two online questionnaires were used in order to gather data from non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) and English Language Assistants (CEL) – i.e. native English-speaking teachers (NESTs), to investigate current ELT practices as well as teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about the current status of English both in Italian high schools and at university level. This paper aims at illustrating the findings of the survey administered to almost 80 NESTs working as language assistants in Italian universities and language centres. A 32-question survey was administered in 2017 to investigate native teachers’ ELF-awareness, attitudes and beliefs, especially, in ELT current routines and concerns, models and lesson planning, material development and assessment criteria. The main results will highlight respondents’ emerging identities as native teachers as well as their positions and views towards ELF-awareness and New Englishes (NE). Implications for the need to go beyond the deep-rooted discriminatory dichotomy ‘NESTs vs. NNESTs’ and for the reconceptualization of the role of ELT for the new societal trends will also be discussed.

Keywords: NESTs; NNESTs; ELF-awareness; teacher education; ELT.

1. Introduction

The study aims to explore and analyse the findings emerged from a nationwide survey administered online to native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) working in Italian universities (also known as *Collaboratori Esperti Linguistici* or *CEL*) in 2017. More precisely, data presented in the following sections are part of a research study carried out by the PRIN Roma Tre Research Unit, entitled “ELF pedagogy: ELF in teacher education and

teaching materials". The unit members developed two questionnaires, in order to investigate current practices in English language classrooms, in high schools and at university level. Data emerging from the respondents would provide useful insights for the implementation of a pedagogic approach to a World Englishes (WE) and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) aware teaching, especially in multicultural and multilingual teaching contexts. The two surveys were conceived to gather data from teachers in charge of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Italy to adolescents and young adults. Therefore, the research focus included NESTs since their role and their voices are considered as valid and crucial as NNESTs' one. The questionnaires reached 198 Italian teachers of English in high schools and 75 language assistants (CEL) working in Italian universities.

The main purpose of the two surveys is to draw attention on English teachers' knowledge and perception of the current status of English and on the implications of integrating it in their teaching. In spite of the spread of English varieties in both the Outer and in the Expanding Circle, and above all, of ELF and of the use of English as a global language, the tendency in the education policy of several Western and non-Western countries is still to maintain the notion of standard English, as underlined e.g. by Trudgill (1999). Exploring Italian teaching landscapes aimed at confirming or denying this assumption and at identifying current teaching perspectives and teachers' awareness of new trends and scenarios. Are Italian students, at school first and later on at university, still provided primarily with the traditional model of native English, presented as a standard variety to which learners are prepared to adhere, conforming to the ideal native speakers' model, and ignoring current learners' exposure to English as a global means of communication? Findings will try to give one possible response to this complex but crucial question.

2. Rationale and research objectives

As mentioned before, in the research rationale the exploration of language teachers' attitudes, beliefs and practices could not overlook the multidimensional professional framework where Italian teachers of English often cooperate or at least co-habit with native teachers. Observing both samples and weighing their opinions is here assumed as the best way to lead to a reflective approach towards the current status of English, in order to draw out implications in terms of ELF-aware language policy development and teacher education.

It is an undeniable fact that the spread of English as a global language affects the demand of teachers of English all over the world, and that – as a

consequence – the number of non-native English-speaking teachers overwhelms that of NESTs, as underlined by Maum (2002, p. 1):

In the field of English language teaching (ELT), a growing number of teachers are not native speakers of English. Some learned English as children; others learned it as adults. Some learned it prior to coming to the United States; others learned it after their arrival. Some studied English in formal academic settings; others learned it through informal immersion after arriving in this country. Some speak British, Australian, Indian, or other varieties of English; others speak Standard American English.

It is beyond the scope of this article to speculate on the relationship between NESTs and NNESTs but – though a number of studies were carried out worldwide in order to examine students’ and language teachers’ perceptions on NES and NNES instructors – there are only few studies focusing on the perpetuated dichotomy between NESTs and NNESTs.

In this research study, the survey developed for the NESTs was especially based on two main research objectives:

- a) to investigate NS teachers’ awareness of the role of English as the world’s lingua franca;
- b) to explore their current attitudes in ELT pedagogy and methodology with the aim of gathering data for developing ELF-aware language teacher education programs, course-books, materials and syllabus design;
- c) to inquire into divergences in attitudes and perceptions between NESTs and NNESTs.

To fulfil their research objectives, the research unit decided to consider not only Italian teachers’ voices, but also NESTs working in Italy since they are undoubtedly in charge of the same task, teaching English to undergraduates and adults, even if with different roles and methods. Data and findings emerging from the NESTs’ survey are the focus of the present study and will be presented in the following sections, after a rapid discussion of previous research studies on the main issues regarding the nature and roles of English native teachers.

3. Theoretical background

The present research study stems from the following theoretical background (from the debate around native-speakerism to the role of NESTs in ELT) as well as from the related issue of the increasing importance of ELF, World Englishes and New Englishes worldwide. In other words, the study aims at inquiring into possible attitudinal convergences – or divergences – between NESTs and NNESTs, in conceptualizing current ELT practices and behaviours, drawing useful insights for revisiting language policy and teacher education. A brief literature review around the long-standing controversy is

needed as well as useful for the correct interpretation of data presented later in the analysis.

3.1. The debate around native-speakerism

There has been a great deal of debate about ‘native-speakerism’ and the related area, the ‘myth of the native speaker’. A range of researchers have worked on these aspects (Creese *et al.* 2014; Holliday 2005; Kubota 2009; Leung *et al.* 1997; Park 2008; Pennycook 1994; Phillipson 1992; Seidlhofer 1999; Widdowson 1992) and fueled a scientific debate on several issues, from ideological perspectives to the use of terms such as ‘native speaker’, which cannot accurately describe the nature of many English teachers. Indeed, Kramsch (1997, p. 363) completely dismissed the term, defining it:

an imaginary construct - a canonically literate monolingual middle-class member of a largely fictional national community whose citizens share a belief in a common history and a common destiny.

However, NESTs working in institutions in Inner, Outer and Expanding Circle countries are thousands and in every type of educational institution from pre-school contexts to universities. Some studies report that it is often believed that it is preferable for NESTs to have either a British or American accent (Galloway 2013), but preference also extends even to racial aspects of identity (Chen, Cheng 2010). In other words, as claimed by Holliday (2005, 2011), English language teaching and learning is still related to the belief that NESTs represent the Western white culture.

The constant demand for NESTs is still related to what is termed ‘inner circle dominance’ (Kachru 1985), where the Inner Circle represents the traditional countries where English is spoken as first language (i.e. the UK, USA, Australia, New Zealand). In language learning, the preference for a NS model of English, specifically American English and British English, and in particular their grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, is still prevalent, high status and norm-providing (Hall 2011). Furthermore, testing and materials in ELT remain oriented to a standard model of English (Jenkins 2012) and there ‘appears to be a firm and blind belief that norms and authentic models’ should come from NESTs (No, Park 2008 p.71).

In contrast to the ‘Inner Circle’ countries, in which English is a main language of communication amongst speakers, and ‘Outer Circle’ countries (such as Nigeria, India and the Philippines), in which English has an official function, English in ‘Expanding Circle’ countries (such as Japan, China and Korea) has no official status and there are no colonial links to Britain or the USA (Deterding 2010). In this global linguistic landscape, UK and USA varieties of English continue to dominate the ELT practices (Galloway 2013),

and their testing systems (e.g. IELTS and TOEFL) continue to challenge English language learners with fossilized standard models (Jenkins 2012).

For the past thirty years, an insistent polarity between native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs) has developed in the Teaching English for Speakers of Other Language (TESOL) dimension – the so-called nativeness dichotomy. Scholars in the field and professionals have explored this discriminatory dimension and this controversial issue has been further problematized and discussed, in terms of professional equality and teaching quality in the TESOL context.

Again, even though Medgyes (2001, p. 429) argued that “the English language is no longer the privilege of native speakers”, there is still a generalized prejudice against NNESTs. Especially in recruitment issues in ELT profession, employers still have a discriminatory bias in favour of NESTs. According to Selinker and Lakshmanan (1992), the monolingual bias is due to persistent beliefs that non-native speakers of English are life-long language learners. As opposed to this idea, Mahboob (2010) argues that NNESTs use and consider language as a functional entity where the proficiency of the speaker is more related to a successful use of the language for communicative purposes, giving space to NNESTs for the interpretation of ELT in new perspectives and shapes.

Maum (2002) underlined that differentiating among teachers according to their status as native or non-native speakers contributes to the dominance of the native speaker in the ELT market and to the discrimination in hiring practices. On the other hand, Phillipson (1992) also explicitly denounced the unequal consequences on ELT deriving from the global supremacy and dominance of English worldwide. Thus, he aimed at investigating “the ways in which English rules, who makes the rules, and what role the English teaching profession plays in promoting the ‘rules’ of English” (Phillipson 1992, p.1). He criticized the unethical treatment of qualified and competent non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) as a result of the ‘native speaker fallacy’, i.e. the prevailing assumption that ‘the ideal teacher of English is a NS’ (Phillipson 1992, p.185).

However, at the basis of the terminological debate, there is the assumption, confirmed by several researchers, that defining native and non-native speakers is problematic (Chang 2007; Liu 2008; Medgyes 1994). Being a monolingual speaker of a language and being born in a particular place does not properly adhere to the idea of the native speaker since many native speakers of a language have a multilingual background and monolinguals may be the exception rather than the norm, or even an idealization (Maum 2002).

The issues briefly outlined in the previous section have dominated the international debate in the area of teaching and learning English until the first

decade of the 21st century (Jenkins 2000; McKay 2002). The ‘ownership’ of English (Widdowson 1994), for example, is a worldwide phenomenon, no longer the exclusive domain of native speakers, and NNESTs today unquestionably outnumber NESTs (Canagarajah 2005; Crystal 2003; Schneider 2003). Moreover, Seidlhofer (2011) argues the limits of what she defines as the ‘dogma of nativeness’ as well as the idealistic representation of Standard English, pointing out that ELF users, NES or NNESTs, deserve the same rights to determine their own lingua-cultural expression and manipulation of norms and uses according to specific communicative goals and needs.

As for ELT, the need to go beyond the discriminatory dichotomy ‘NESTs vs. NNESTs’ has led to the reconceptualization of the role of English language teaching and learning towards the promotion of enhancement of linguistic diversity and plurilingualism (Cook 2008).

The debate around the idea that NESTs are more qualified English teachers than NNESTs has been triggered in non-English speaking countries for a long period of time. Medgyes (1994, p.25) advanced that NESTs and NNESTs are “two different species”, “they both differ in terms of language proficiency, teaching practice (behavior), and that both NESTs and NNESTs could be equally good teachers in their own terms”.

In this sense, Medgyes (1994)’s study on the divergences in teaching behaviours and practices between NESTs and NNESTs gives interesting points for reflection. The table in Figure 1 is the result of a survey he carried out to 325 native and non-native speaking teachers:

NESTs	Non-NESTs
<i>Own Use of English</i>	
Speak better English	Speak poorer English
Use real language	Use "bookish" language
Use English more confidently	Use English less confidently
<i>General Attitude</i>	
Adopt a more flexible approach	Adopt a more guided approach
Are more innovative	Are more cautious
Are less empathetic	Are more empathetic
Attend to perceived needs	Attend to real needs
Have far-fetched expectations	Have realistic expectations
Are more casual	Are stricter
Are less committed	Are more committed
<i>Attitude to teaching the language</i>	
Are less insightful	Are more insightful
<i>Focus on :</i>	
Fluency	Accuracy
Meaning	Form
Language in use	Grammar rules
Oral skills	Printed word
Colloquial registers	Formal registers
Teach items in context	Teach items in isolation
Prefer free activities	Prefer controlled activities
Favor group work/pair work	Favor frontal work
Use a variety of materials	Use single textbook
Tolerate errors	Correct/punish for errors
Set fewer tests	Set more tests
Use no/less L1	Use more L1
Resort to no/less translation	Resort to more translation
Assign less homework	Assign more homework
<i>Attitude to teaching culture</i>	
Supply more cultural information	Supply less cultural information

Figure 1

Perceived differences in teaching behavior between NESTs and NNESTs (Medgyes 2001).

Medgyes (1994) conducted a research on NESTs and NNESTs working in ten countries to validate or contradict his assumptions on their success in teaching English. He found that the two groups had the same chance of being successful teachers of English. His results showed that the only area in which the NNESTs seemed to be less qualified is English language proficiency. Compared to their NEST colleagues who can be good language models for their students, NNESTs can be good learning models, thanks to the considerable experience of learning English as a second or a foreign language. In their life NESTs have adopted language-learning strategies as learners of English and these skills make them more qualified to teach those strategies to other learners.

3.2. The role of NESTs in the Italian context

The NEST in Italian universities is generally the mother tongue language teacher who cooperates with the language Professor who (very often) is a non-native speaker. In Italy the general term that has traditionally referred to the L1 Language Assistant is *lettore*¹ or, more precisely, *collaboratore esperto linguistico*, i.e. CEL. In Italy, language assistants may operate in language centres (i.e. CLA) or at university both in Foreign Languages Departments and in other Departments. The NESTs usually have very specific roles: they do not plan the syllabus, but can collaborate with NNESTs in doing it; they can select autonomously the authentic materials to be used in class but not the coursebooks; their relationship with their students is less formal compared to a NNEST teacher or a professor and they can test on students, especially to evaluate their language level and proficiency, and give suggestions for their assessment, yet never without the support and the supervision of the language Professor.

However, bibliographic references on previous studies specifically related to NESTs in Italy are very rare and this confirmed by Balboni (1998) who states that the literature on foreign mother tongue teachers is very poor if not totally absent in Italy. This draws attention on the importance of the research study here presented as well as on its results, in terms of the size of NESTs reached and the quality and value of their response. As underlined by Newbold (2019, p. 66):

Since the inception of the category now known (since 1996) as *collaboratori linguistici* or CEL (*collaboratori ed esperti linguistici*) and formerly known as *lettori*, very little systematic research has been carried out on a nationwide level into their teaching backgrounds, beliefs, and practices.

Therefore the survey and its results, analysed in the following section, are particularly significant, not only because they enabled to compare NESTs and NNESTs voices on ELT in Italy, but also for the contribution to fill in the gap of research investigation into the important role and profile of CEL in Italian universities.

¹ E.g. in the Italian dictionary “Il Sabatini Coletti” the *lettore* is: “Insegnante di madre lingua straniera che svolge esercitazioni pratiche di quella lingua in una università” (Mother tongue language teacher who holds practical courses at university level) (https://dizionari.corriere.it/dizionario_italiano/L/lettore.shtml).

4. The study

4.1. The research design

The survey has been selected as an effective research tool by the unit members with the aim of reaching as many teachers as possible, who could give an extensive feedback on current beliefs, views, perceptions, first of all on the new status of English as a global language and on the current teaching practices in Italian high schools. In the original research design, non-native Italian teachers, and university language assistants (CEL), who are mostly native English speakers, could provide answers and points for further investigation on teachers' practices, as well as new implications for teacher training in a time of change where English is no longer the monolithic 'foreign' language, but it is the result of several linguacultural processes and transfers and it is more and more used as the global 'lingua franca'.

The structure of the questionnaire was designed on the basis of the research criteria that could produce a faithful socio-cultural and professional representation of the sample, i.e. demographics, professional experience, familiarity with ELT notions, ELF-awareness, ELT teaching practices.

In the NEST's questionnaire the research team decided to adapt to the new respondents the same frame and set of questions used for the Italian teachers, with the aim of similarly exploring beliefs, practices and attitudes useful for understanding their perspectives and drawing suggestions to improve educational processes and teacher training courses. By completing the survey, language assistants unveiled their personal beliefs and assumptions, not only on ELT notions and theoretical premises, but also on their self-awareness, on the most challenging aspects of being a native teacher, in terms of professional performance and influence on students' motivation, achievements and even perception. It was thus decided to include in the questionnaire details and further elements that would elicit NESTs' personal thoughts and that would help in the subsequent interpretation of data.

4.2. Participants and methodology

The survey was administered online from November 2017 to April 2018. The questionnaire, consisting of 32 questions, reached respondents recruited throughout Italian state and private universities, and University Language Centres (*Centri Linguistici d'Ateneo*). The participants who completed the survey were 75 NESTs (72% female and 28% male).

The survey was based on a mixed-methods research design. It combines quantitative closed questions and qualitative open-ended questions. The research team decided to include closed questions of different kinds:

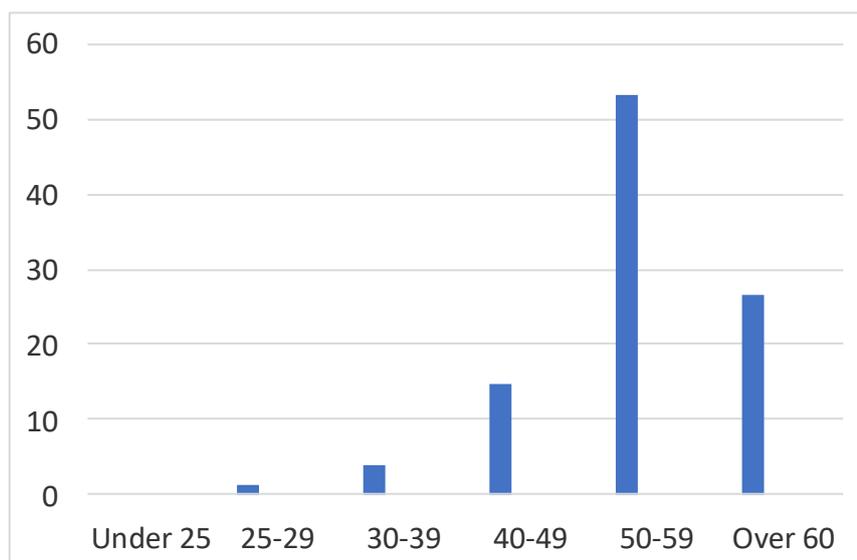
- a) dichotomous questions (e.g. Q13: Do you consider yourself to be a native speaker of English?);
- b) Likert scale multiple choice questions (e.g. Q31: Think about your own teaching context. Please state whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about English Language Teaching. Please use the following scale from 0 - (strongly disagree) to 5 - (strongly agree));
- c) Checklist type multiple choice questions (e.g. Q16: How familiar are you with the following terms?).

Open questions (e.g. Q26 If you answered YES, what contexts do you take into consideration?) aimed at further develop the straightforward responses to closed questions. By writing a short paragraph or adding a personal comment, respondents had the chance to better express their views and provide the research team with further material, especially to avoid ambiguity and ambivalence in the interpretative phase.

4.3. Findings

4.3.1. The respondents' profile

First questions aimed at defining the respondents' demographic profile. The majority of NESTs were over 50 years of age (as shown in Graph 1) and came from Great Britain:



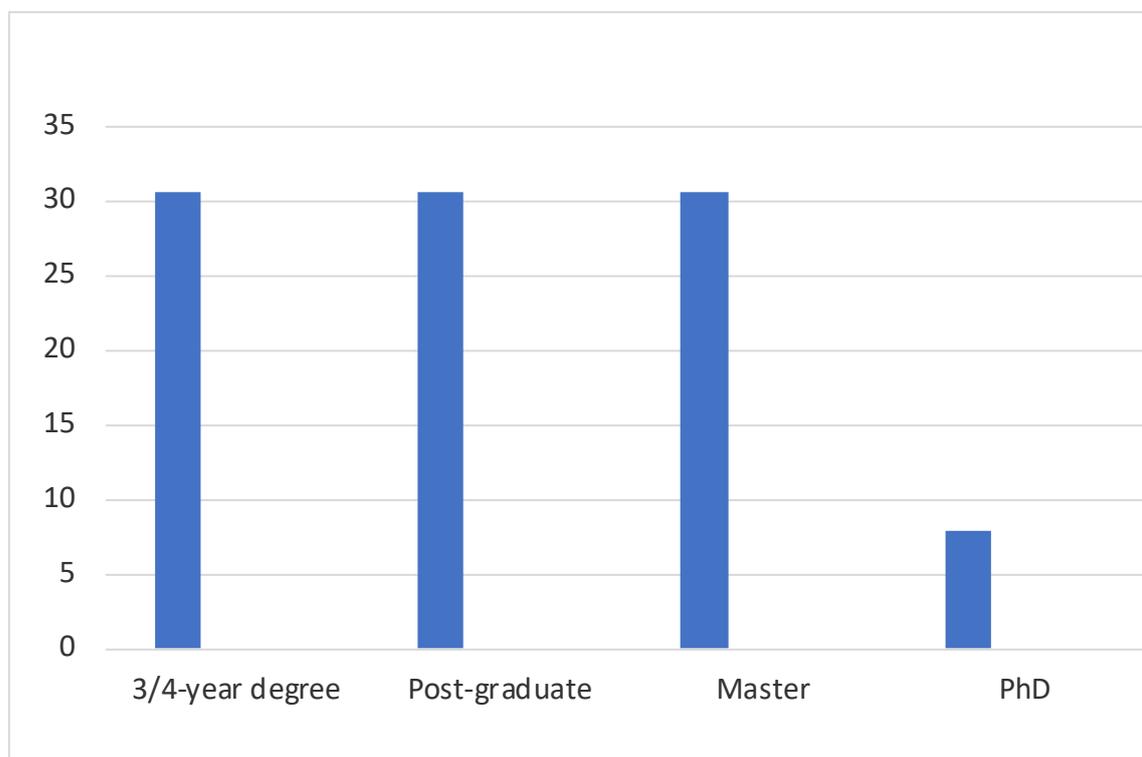
Graph 1
Q2: How old are you?.

Many of them currently work in several cities in the northern (44%) and central (44%) regions of Italy, less in the South (12%).

What other language/s do you know? (Q5)
Please indicate your level of proficiency for each language. (Q6)

Their pluri-linguistic background is quite dynamic: most of them claimed to speak three L2s with a good level of proficiency (B1-B2).

As for their education, as shown in Graph 2, 30 per cent of the respondents had completed a post-graduate course or a master's degree in English Studies or other disciplines (e.g. history, humanities, economics, and political science). As for ELT, most of them had obtained further qualifications, such as PGCE, Italian teaching certification, BA, CELTA, DELTA, TESOL, TEFL,² and 83 per cent had attended at least one English language pre- or in-service teacher-education course:



Graph 2

Q7: What is the highest level of formal education that you have completed?.

² Among the impressive variety of online, blended or face-to-face courses quoted: PGCE - Postgraduate Certificate in Education; TEFL - Teaching English as a Foreign Language; TESOL - Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages; CELTA - Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults; Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults.

Respondents were then asked:

What type of institution(s) have you worked for so far? (Q10)
How long have you taught English? (Q11)

Eighty-four per cent of the respondents have been working in state or private universities, as well as CLAs (69%) and high schools. 28 per cent of them have worked in universities for less than ten years, 30 per cent for less than twenty years, and 41 per cent of them for more than twenty years.

Over 60 per cent had had other previous working experience as language teachers in different private and state institutions such as banks, hospitals, companies, public institutions, and above all private language schools.

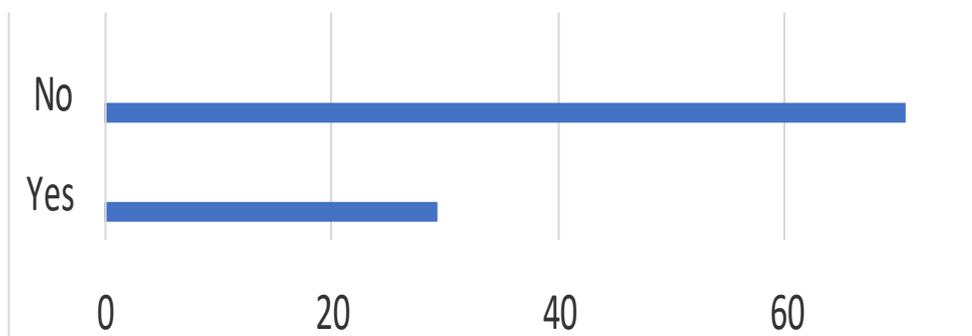
After these demographic background questions, the survey focused on the respondents' attitudes and experiences concerning ELT, ELF and teaching practice.

4.3.2. ELF in ELT: Attitudes and beliefs

NESTs were asked:

Do you consider yourself to be a native speaker of English? (Q 13).

The majority of them answered 'yes' (95%). However, the following questions concerning ELF-awareness revealed interesting attitudes towards the issue: when asked about the use of a standard variety of English in their teaching experience, all of them (100%) claimed that they usually employ a standard variety of English during their lessons. On the other hand, when asked whether they also use a non-standard variety of English in class, 30 per cent of the respondents answered 'yes', as shown in Graph 3, and more precisely World Englishes (88%):



Graph 3

Q15: Do you ever use a non standard variety of English when you speak in class?.

In their comments, teachers claimed that they do not include non-native varieties in their teaching content because:

- (i) their students' objectives and wishes are to learn SE and work in a native context;
- (ii) non-standard materials are incomprehensible, uninteresting or useless, if not counterproductive;
- (iii) International English examination boards do not tend to incorporate NNES variations of English in their exam:

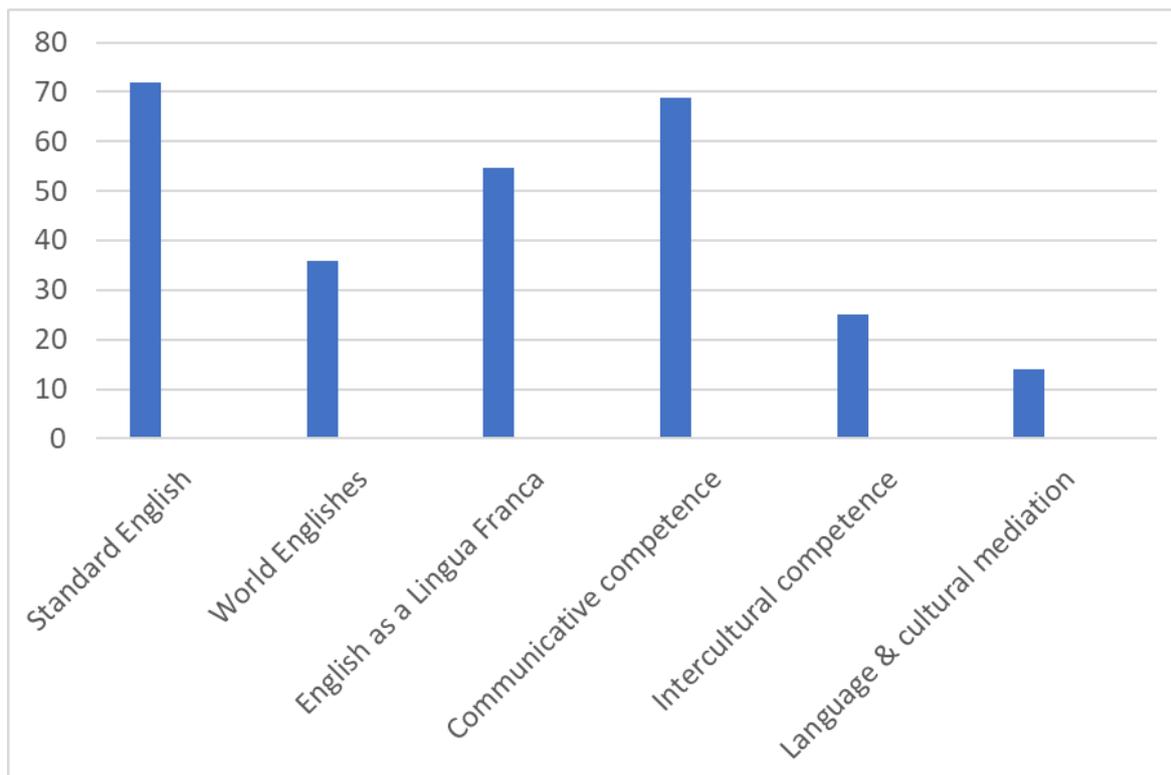
“I am a mother tongue speaker. The definition is a cultural discrimination. I consider Indian English as valid a form as Yorkshire or Alabama”.

“I don't have the opportunity. These Englishes are absent in the coursebooks I use”

“I have to prepare B1 & B2 level students in a university setting for graduate exams in English”.

“Modern textbooks do at times contain examples, if only ‘transatlantic English’”

Teachers were then asked to choose, from a list of well-known terms in ELT, the most familiar ones. The terms listed were: Standard English (SE), World Englishes (WE), English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), English as an International Language (EIL), English as a Native Language (ENL), English as a Second Language (ESL), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Communicative competence, Intercultural competence, and Language & Cultural Mediation (see Graph 4):



Graph 4

Q16: How familiar are you with the following terms?.

Most of the teachers reported being familiar with ‘Standard English’ (72%), ‘Communicative Competence’ (69%), and interestingly, ‘English as a lingua franca’ (55%). In addition, they were asked to find a fitting definition for the selected terms. Among others, words used to define ELF confirmed the prevailing familiarity with the key-concepts of ‘mutual intelligibility’, ‘cross-cultural communication’ and ‘accommodation strategies’; their comments about ELF included:

“English used as a language for communication between non-native (and native) speakers around the world”;

“The majority of language transactions are undertaken by NNS; ELF is the resultant language used”;

“Such as when Japanese jet pilot talks to Italian air traffic controller in English, even though neither is a native speaker”;

“English as a Lingua Franca is a term used for English used for communicative purposes by native English”;

“Use of English for everyday/business communication by speakers of different languages. Focus on communication rather than grammatical accuracy”;

“ELF is the version of English spoken or used to communicate between all speakers of English and represents”.

“Communicative efficiency is more important than accuracy. Cross-linguistic influences that do not impede communication are well-tolerated”.

The awareness of and the attention to the current debate on ‘ELF in ELT’ also emerged:

“Debate still rages about whether it is a separate language form or not, and whether or not it should be taught as such”.

Another set of questions was devoted to their perception of the professional profile of English Language Teachers. Respondents were asked what competences, skills or qualities they thought can contribute to making a successful English teacher today. In a list of 13 options the highest rated were:

- To be able to adapt teaching plans, activities and materials according to learner needs & context of use (100%);
- To engage students and develop a good rapport with them (99%);
- To collaborate with colleagues (83%);
- To integrate the use of digital technology in English language teaching (ELT) (78%);
- To select materials from the Web & use authentic audio/video materials including texts in non-standard English (78%);
- To regularly attend teacher education courses/seminars (71%);
- To encourage learners to use social media and to bring samples of authentic English into the classroom (69%);
- To regularly watch TV series and films in English at home (69%);
- To be a native speaker of English (63%).

4.3.3. *ELT: Practices and perspectives*

One of the key questions in the survey concerned teachers’ perception of their own teaching contexts:

Think about your own teaching context. Please state whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about English Language Teaching.
(Q31)

Respondents replied by showing a clear-cut opinion about each issue, since questions required a 5-point Likert-scale³ answer and most of the teachers

³ The 5-point Likert scale has been chosen for the present survey in order to cover degrees and nuances of opinion that may reveal respondents’ significant positioning and help define feedback and responses in detail.

positioned themselves on the extreme response categories (namely ‘not at all’ or ‘strongly agree’). More specifically, the majority of them agreed that:

- Language learners’ communicative competence should include their ability to negotiate meaning with both native and non-native interlocutors (88%);
- The students’ L1 and sociocultural identity are resources that can enrich English language teaching/learning (83%);
- Native language teachers of English should avoid using authentic materials which contain non-standard forms of English (81%);
- English language learners prefer to have native speakers of English as their teachers (79%);
- English language learners should also be exposed to varieties of English including English spoken by non-native speakers (79%);
- Native teachers of English should aim at promoting a “successful user of English” model for their learners (77%);
- English language assessment criteria should include learners’ use of communicative and mediation strategies (74%).

ELF-awareness was further measured by means of an explicit question:

*Do you ever mention today’s use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) in your lessons?
(Q25)*

83 per cent of respondents claimed that they mention today’s use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) in their lessons. Therefore, they were asked to define the ELF contexts they take into consideration and most of them referred to the specialized discourse of business, advertising and tourism; other respondents stressed the importance of international and cross-cultural interactions in academic and professional settings, and of learners’ intercultural competence.

Some respondents defined ELF contexts useful and effective mentioning ELF in order to present deviations from Standard English phonetics and phonology and non-native speakers’ accommodation strategies:

“I teach business English at university level so often have to make students aware of the fact that they will be using English with other non-native speakers”.

“Advertising in particular, internet, tourism and travel”.

“There is a lot of input, we are surrounded by English as LF - menus, manuals, settings, brand names”.

“Holidays and contact with international students.”

“In a global context -in every sphere from commerce, to education to tourism”.

Do you regularly use a course-book in your lessons? (Q28)

Respondents were also asked about the use of a course-book and the features that guide them in their choice. 83 per cent of them replied that they use a course-book during their lessons. Apart from those who admitted that the course-book is not a free-choice option, others select the course-book according to the balance it offers between skills, topics and (only rarely) the presentations of varieties of English or different cultures. Seventeen per cent of respondents prefer (or are free) to use online materials and authentic resources which are not available in traditional course-books.

4.4. Discussion

As already underlined, the survey administered to NESTs or *collaboratori linguistici* was planned and constructed to investigate on their current working experience and to ultimately compare their responses with those given by Italian teachers about teaching practices and ELF-awareness. The opportunity to hear two voices and to analyse the findings that resulted from them, provided the research unit with a useful setting for a further comparative analysis between NESTs' and NNESTs' responses.

In this sense, first of all, an introductory demographic remark needs to be made: the two samples were quite different since Italian teachers outnumbered the English ones (198 vs. 75), they are considerably younger (47% under 49) and have taught English for less time than the NS respondents (42% less than 10 years). NESTs are undoubtedly experienced teachers and are in control of their teaching environment.

How familiar are you with the following terms?

As for the familiarity with ELT notions, NEST respondents sided with the Italian teachers for the selection of the three most familiar terms: the majority of NNESTs chose 'Standard English', 'Communicative Competence', and 'English as a lingua franca', as well.

ELF is mostly defined as the spoken variation of English used to connect speakers and users from different L1 backgrounds. All in all, the prevailing trend for Italian teachers in defining ELF appears more unidirectional and homogeneous than in the NEST survey.

Please indicate which competences, skills or qualities you think can contribute to making a successful English teacher today:

Italian teachers claimed that:

- (i) regularly attending teacher education courses/seminars (83% of them attended pre- or in-service courses);
- (ii) engaging students and developing a good rapport with them;
- (iii) being able to adapt teaching plans, activities and materials according to learner needs and context of use; and
- (iv) selecting materials from the Web and using authentic audio/video materials including texts in non-standard English are the most important aspects to be taken into account.

This is consistent with the NEST responses, except that Italian teachers are more sensitive towards (i) the advantages of professional development and the potential for authentic materials in ELT (79% of select and employ materials from the web and social media, including non-Standard English, and encourage students to watch TV series and films in English at home, vs. 69% of *collaboratori linguistici*); and (ii) the importance of preparing students for international English Language certificates (71% of NNESTs agree or strongly agree on that point, vs. 62% of NESTs). In contrast, NESTs consider more important the collaboration with colleagues of other subjects (8.3% vs. 64%) and the reference to CEFR descriptors in planning their teaching activities (64% vs. 51%).

Think about your own teaching context. Please state whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about English Language Teaching:

as for the teaching context (s. Q31), NNESTs strongly believe that (i) English language learners should be exposed to English spoken by non-native speakers, and that (ii) language learners should be able to negotiate meaning with both native and non-native interlocutors. Hence, Italian teachers seem to consider plurilingualism and intercultural competence as an asset in language education.

Do you regularly use a course-book in your lessons?

As for course-books, NNESTs claim that the balance among the skills and the supporting video/audio materials are the most influential criteria in their choice. Similarly to what has been seen with NESTs, only 11 per cent of the Italian respondents maintained that they do not use a course-book but a personal syllabus consisting of activities, simulations, games, authentic texts downloaded from the internet, audiovisual materials, edited by both teachers and students, following a “situational approach”.

In conclusion, both groups of respondents revealed a good familiarity with concepts and notions related to their daily professional routines. The open-ended questions further confirmed attitudes and perspectives consolidated by experience and practice. Teachers’ personal views on

achievements and self-awareness, and different understandings of their role as (successful) teachers emerged from both sides.

NESTs' unequivocal positioning towards native-speakerism (Q13 and Q21.1)⁴ and standard model of English (Q14) seems only apparently contradicting the preference for authenticity represented also by non-standard English (s. Q21.5, Q21.10 and Q21.11).⁵ What impresses more than previous responses is the 100% of agreement (Q21.7) on the necessity teachers have:

to be able to adapt teaching plans, activities and materials according to learner needs & context of use.

This is most probably due to native teachers' perception of authenticity seen in genuine materials and in teaching programs rather than in the authentic use of English. Some explicit and clear responses, hence, revealed NESTs' willingness and openness to consider new varieties and uses of English in their teaching as well as their awareness of the potential of their students, who are daily exposed to English language for communicative purposes.

To conclude, most responses, from both sides, clearly indicate that teachers in high schools and at university are already aware of the new socio-cultural globalized scenarios and the effects they inevitably have on ELT and its models. Data confirmed that traditional notions and assumptions are already experiencing a reviewing process. At the same time the new multilingual and globalized communicative dimensions reflect the need to overcome the controversial dichotomy between NESTs and NNESTs (cf. § 3) towards a revisiting of their respective roles and a cooperative endeavour in language education.

5. Conclusions

The analysis of the findings derived from the language assistants working in Italy has confirmed the need for a shift in perspective and in considering traditional assumptions and notions in ELT, in order to develop new paths for the training of teachers able to cope with the latest innovations in communicative dynamics as well as in interpersonal contacts.

⁴ Q13: Do you consider yourself to be a native speaker of English? And Q21: Please indicate which competences, skills or qualities you think can contribute to making a successful English teacher today: 21.1. To be a native speaker of English.

⁵ Q21: Please indicate which competences, skills or qualities you think can contribute to making a successful English teacher today: 21.5. To encourage learners to use social media and to bring samples of authentic English into the classroom; 21.10. To select materials from the Web & use authentic audio/video materials including texts in non-standard English; 21.11 To be open to including varieties of English besides Standard English in the syllabus.

The outline of the NESTs which emerges from the survey is thus one of experienced instructors who are aware of the importance of emerging multilingual and multicultural landscapes. They are also conscious of the spread of New Englishes and ELF but are still faithful to traditional beliefs on native-speakerism and learners' perceptions.

What explicitly emerged is the need for a reappraisal of the role of the native speaker teacher, meant as a language assistant, in his/her traditional gatekeeping function. As argued by Newbold (2019), with the multilingual and multicultural evolution of classrooms, at school and at university, the function of NESTs may be relocated towards the promotion of initiatives useful for ELF communication, or in the training of students for study periods abroad, or in the active assistance to lecturers in English language and translation courses, or in the fostering of international institutional contacts and cooperative project design. In this sense, the concept of 'being a native speaker' is completely revalued and called to action: NESTs may become language facilitators for NNEs because they are successful users of English in an international context, in addition to being experienced teachers.

The contribution that NESTs may also give in the development of courses and teacher education programs, in course-books, teaching materials, curriculum design and, of course, in assessment practices, gives new vital power to their nature and potential, often undermined by the label of 'native-speakerism'. And as established in the research objectives, new roles for both NESTs and NNEs may be considered in the contribution they may have in the revisiting process of education policy and teacher training in the age of ELF, social media and ICTs to which learners are constantly exposed, especially as language users in their out-of-class experiences.

In this respect, further investigation might aim at involving students in the exploration of attitudes and beliefs. Learners' perceptions of teaching models and practices they are offered, as well as their biases or prejudices towards NES and NNEs instructors, would give interesting and essential evidence and suggestions. A successful and balanced reflective process, besides taking into account insights coming from teachers, should not ignore the other side of the second language educational process, that of learners and the amount of inputs it could provide.

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TEACHERS' ICT PRACTICES AND PERSPECTIVES ON ELF AWARE ELT

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MIUR

Abstract – Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) tools, highly representing out-of-school life, can motivate students to be more involved in the process of learning. As these tools can be used by students to communicate with their peers, create, disseminate, store, and manage information, they become integral to the teaching-learning interaction and process. The global society we currently live in requires that individuals develop both digital and cultural integration skills and competencies in order to become successful global citizens; teachers, as educators, not only as language teachers, are 'important actors' on this scene. This contribution discusses the responses to the Roma Tre University PRIN Teachers' survey investigating teachers' awareness and effective use of ICT in their daily English language teaching.

Keywords: ICT; digital skills; ELF; awareness; e-Twinning.

1. Language teaching practice: Current changes

English language teaching practice has in recent years changed both learning objectives and perspectives and for diverse reasons. In the last two decades Italian classrooms have gradually changed their composition: most of their students come from different cultural and linguistic environments, often coming from bilingual or trilingual migrant families recently moved into our country, while the language of schooling is Italian. This has affected not only teachers of different subject matters who had to adjust to the new condition by revisiting their use of Italian, but also English language teachers who had to reconsider their teaching approach. Their approach previously aimed at teaching English to monolingual Italians, while most recently they have been adapting their teaching of English to a plurilingual group of learners, whose English language competence varies according to the context they had learnt to use English and, most importantly, to the way they had been exposed to it, often out of school and through social media (Reinhardt 2019).

The English native speaker model in English language teaching (ELT) in multilingual classrooms has thus become unrealistic, not only because it has failed to reflect the lingua franca status of English, but also because the growing exposure to learners' out of school experiences, thanks to

international exchange projects or through the use of apps and social media, has challenged teachers' traditional ELT and has posed different types of communicative needs for learners.

A new conceptualization of communicative competence in English has thus become necessary, one which recognizes English as a world language spoken by a vast majority of L2 users, and encourages students to focus more on cultural and linguistic mediation rather than focusing mainly on accuracy. This new concept would take successful bilinguals with intercultural insights and knowledge as pedagogical models. Therefore, teachers should aim at the realization of intercultural communicative competence in ELT (Alptekin 2002). In this context the use of ICT is central as it allows teachers to take advantage of numerous tools that create opportunities for their students to use authentic material and real communications with their peers all over the world. When first introduced in the Italian educational context over twenty years ago (MIUR 1995), the use of ICT had initially been overlooked and considered disconnected to learning, both at school and at university level. Its central role for enhancing learning has only recently been acknowledged and a growing number of teachers of diverse subjects, gradually started using them, even though ICT are not fully integrated into daily teaching yet.

Several teacher education programs in ICT, meant to raise teachers' awareness of the relevance of technologies use in classroom teaching, particularly for language learning. These programs were developed and implemented by both national and European institutions. In the last 15 years training courses for the use of the Interactive White Board (IWB) or the National Plan for a Digital School, which supplied schools with infrastructures and expert coordinators (digital animators) in all schools have represented some of the most relevant attempts to integrate ICT in the language classrooms (Cannelli, Morbiducci 2019).

The field of ICT, as perceived, used and implemented by English language teachers in the classroom was among the areas investigated during the Roma Tre unit research study. The survey was administered to almost 200 EL teachers, and it explored EL teachers' knowledge, beliefs and their current teaching practices. Teachers' answers to the survey questions related to the use of ICT and of social media in ELT, highlighted the teachers' perception of the relevance the use of technology has in sustaining teachers in their job, and function and role ICT may have both in daily ELT and in teacher education within an ELF aware perspective.

2. ICT use in the language classroom: Findings from the teachers' survey

The teachers who answered the initial research survey, responded to some questions related to their ELT practice, among those questions, two were specifically related to their use and integration of digital technology and to the inclusion and use of social media in their ELT lessons. This aspect was specifically addressed in Q.17 where teachers were asked to identify those factors that would make a successful English teacher today; three were the factors explicitly mentioned: the integration of ICT in ELT, the use of social media and of authentic materials in the language classroom and the participation in European exchange programs inclusive of forms of telecollaboration. Q. 22 was meant to understand whether and how much EL teachers participate in transnational projects.

<i>Q17 Please indicate what you think would make a successful English teacher today:</i>	
17.4. To integrate the use of digital technology in English language teaching (ELT)	72,86%
17.5. To encourage learners to use social media and to bring samples of authentic English into the classroom	80%
17.7. To participate in European projects (e.g. e-Twinning, Erasmus, Tandem, etc.) using digital media & telecollaboration	68.37%
<i>Q22 Have you ever taken part in transnational projects, such as eTwinning or other European projects?</i>	Yes 34,29%

Table 1
ICT related questions in the teachers' survey.

The responses – 72,86% - to the survey highlighted English language teachers' awareness of the importance of integrating digital technologies in their teaching in order to become successful teachers. Over 80% agreed on the relevance of encouraging learners to use social media and of bringing samples of authentic English into the classroom. They considered essential for a teacher today to be able to select materials from the web and use authentic audio/video materials including texts in non-standard English as well as to be able to integrate the use of digital technology in ELT.

Over 68% also agreed that taking part in European projects and involving learners in forms of telecollaboration would represent a way to enhance teachers' success, even if the responses reveal that only 34,29 % of the survey respondents had themselves taken part in transnational projects.

These data highlight teachers' awareness of the important function of integrating ICT in ELT in order to offer learners the opportunity to use authentic materials, even if ICT, according to their responses, are not always

transferred into classroom practices. This still indicates that a transformation is taking place in the EL teachers' practice, and that they acknowledge the role played by ICT and the professional development implications of bringing international projects into the English language classroom (Cannelli, Morbiducci 2019).

3. Introducing ICT in an ELT training course within an ELF perspective

A course component on digital technologies, inclusive of the introduction to the eTwinning project for European class exchanges used in English Language Teaching, was included in the Post-graduate blended Teacher Education Course: *NEW ENGLISH/ES LANDSCAPES: revisiting English Language Teaching & Learning*, held at Roma Tre University as one of the main outcomes of the research project.

The aim of the ICT component in the training course for English language teachers was to encourage their use of digital technologies in a global perspective, in order to enhance intercultural communication in ELT within an ELF aware scenario.¹ The course participants were encouraged to develop lessons and activities in which digital tools had to be integrated and used to promote an active role of learners in a global perspective, thus opening the classroom to the outside world.

Another important goal of the ICT component was to have teachers acquire those competencies needed to set up collaborations with other European teachers through the *eTwinning* project² and the Erasmus+ projects in order to facilitate their implementation in the language classrooms, while sustaining the tailoring of the appropriate tools and methods proposed to their school and class contexts; all of this was part of the course practicum.

The ICT component supported teachers in identifying appropriate apps and ICT tools and in learning to use them according to their teaching context and their pedagogical and language objectives. Teachers were involved in planning learning activities collaboratively, using these tools to promote and enhance their learners' intercultural communication.

¹ Course ICT component program in ANNEX 1.

² *eTwinning* – the Community for schools in Europe and neighbouring partner countries – is an action for schools funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ programme. It involves teachers from 36 European countries and 8 neighbouring countries. *eTwinning* is a digital platform available in 31 languages. Browsing visitors can access a range of public information about how to become involved in *eTwinning*; explaining the benefits the action offers and providing information for collaborative project work. <https://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/about.htm>.

During the teachers' initial brainstorming and discussions about their practice and their use of ICT, it emerged that traditionally digital tools were considered as detached from usual lesson activities, to be used only with the aim of motivating students on language development. On the contrary, as it came out later in the course, during the lesson planning phase, course participants realized that ICT need to be integrated and strictly connected with pedagogical objectives, both in daily language lesson planning and in international collaboration partnerships.

3.1. Digital tools in the ELT classroom

The digital tools, proposed to the course participants to sustain their ELT practice within an ELF-aware pedagogical perspective, were introduced in the course according to their features and functions and their relevance for exposing learners to authentic input. Diverse were the tools introduced and then implemented in the participants' lesson planning and classroom implementation.

The most commonly used tools teachers use in the ELT classrooms are videos; they often come together with the coursebooks or are provided by publishers since they are the most effective instruments to enhance students' autonomous learning: they can be viewed, stopped, reviewed, and listened to again. And they provide teachers with authentic or semi-authentic materials that would cover a variety of topics and offer an opportunity to explore spoken language.

Videos can be used in the ELT classroom for teaching vocabulary, accents and pronunciation. They offer authentic examples of everyday English as used by people with diverse lingua-cultural background; they can be used by teachers, but also by students who can create their own videos. By creating a context for these short videos, students can be helped to explore a world of online English learning possibilities. There are several websites that offer teachers opportunities to download useful videos as well as supporting teaching guidelines for classroom use.

TED website,³ for example, offers a playlist of videos completely dedicated to issues related to language and communication, bilingualism, multilingualism and intercultural communication in all parts of the world, as well as many regarding migrants and refugees who speak about their experiences; they are freely available on *TED* website. *TED* has recently developed special materials and lesson plans to be used together with the videos.⁴ The course participants were offered the opportunity to try out *TED*

³ <https://www.ted.com/>.

⁴ TES-ED. The TED-Ed project – TED's education initiative – makes short video lessons worth sharing, aimed at educators and students. Within TED-Ed's growing library of lessons, you will find carefully

materials and they did so in order to find voices and experiences in English from all over the world and they started resorting to the *TED ED* website.

Extremely interesting videos and podcasts can be found on the website of the *Centre for Intercultural Dialogue (CID)*, where people from all over the world share their experience and offer useful materials. The *Center for Intercultural Dialogue* serves as a clearinghouse in multiple ways; one is to provide links to sites that publish podcasts or videos on topics related to intercultural and transcultural communication. The CID is closely connected to the UNESCO Crossings Institute for Conflict-Sensitive Reporting and Intercultural Dialogue, University of Oregon, brings together 2 different pursuits: intercultural and inter-religious dialogue on the one hand and conflict-sensitive journalism on the other.⁵

Course participants were presented with diverse platforms and apps to exploit or develop videos, and they learnt how to create games and quizzes on videos, thus stimulating their language creativity. They also involved their students to create their own videos; some of them used, for example, *Playposit*,⁶ a tool that allows teachers to upload any video and ask simple questions, through *Playposit Interactive video*, three times as effective as a standard video, where learners explore and learn how to apply new material at their own pace in a digital setting, thus stimulating their language creativity.

Another popular and useful tool that was frequently used by the course participants was the *YouTube* channel, always a source of videos, songs and interviews; it even offers teachers support to involve learners in the creation of a video of their own and upload it on *YouTube* using the *Studio.Youtube tool*.⁷

The first interactive social tool and scenario that was suggested to the course participants was *Flipgrid*,⁸ a social learning tool for “PreK to PhD”, as it is advertised. *Flipgrid* is a social learning platform where educators can ask learners a question, and the students can respond to the teachers and to each other using a video, creating a “web” of discussion. A list of video capsules appears in a line and any student can add his/her response just entering with a code - either with a computer or a tablet or a mobile - by clicking on a button and recording.

The following link <https://flipgrid.com/etwinners> represents an example of how *Flipgrid* was used to have a web discussion among teachers,

curated educational videos, many of which are collaborations between educators and animators nominated through the TED-Ed platform. <https://www.ted.com/watch/ted-ed>.

⁵ <https://centerforinterculturaldialogue.org/databases/podcasts/>.

⁶ <https://go.playposit.com>.

⁷ <https://studio.youtube.com/channel/UCm7V1hI2COFqYVajim6k89A>.

⁸ <https://info.flipgrid.com>.

coming from different parts of the world, all non-native speakers. We can see some teachers introducing themselves and discussing the validity of this tool in an intercultural context meant to enhance students' awareness of the wide diversity of Englishes spoken all over the world.

Digital storytelling can also represent a way of collaborating on a common narration among international partners; the most interesting tool that fosters both spoken and written skills is *Storyjumper*.⁹ This tool allows the creation and sharing of storybooks with voice narration by the author or partner.

Another interesting area of ICT tools in English language learning and teaching, that was introduced to the course participants, is *Gamebased-learning* that includes both traditional games that allow communication in English among players and games created specifically for language acquisition in telecollaboration. In the first group there are games such as *Minecraft* or *Fortnite* that are very challenging and motivating for students, amplifying their need for communication. In the second group there are simple tools such as *Quizlet* or *Kahoot*, that are created by teachers or students to provide a gamelike feedback, or more complex environments like "escape rooms" or virtual reality worlds. Today, gamification and game-based learning have become buzzwords in education; gamification at school, is the idea of applying some game elements to a non-game situation, using a scoring game mechanic to reward users for certain behaviors, for example, if a student helps a classmate, or if he completes an assigned task within a certain time.¹⁰

3.2. eTwinning: A special place for ELF communication

Participating in international projects, such as *eTwinning* or ERASMUS+, EL Teachers encounter NNS teachers and learners from other countries, they use ICT and adjust to diverse cultural and linguistic environments, they use English in intercultural communication very seldom included in their initial teacher education.

eTwinning partnerships represent a great source of innovative practices for English language learning, and English is used as a Lingua Franca in social media interactions as it gives teachers the opportunity to exchange experiences with the support of international experts. An example of this type of experience took place during the course with the participation of Tübingen University, when a webinar on virtual reality environments in ELT in an ELF aware perspective was held on the European eTwinning platform by Professor Kurt Kohn, supported by the author (Kohn 2016).

⁹ <https://www.storyjumper.com>.

¹⁰ <https://www.game-learn.com/what-is-game-based-learning/>.

The Erasmus+ project *Tecola*, created among the others by Professor Kurt Kohn, from Tubingen University, gives special attention to:

- Authentic communication practice in the foreign language;
- Intercultural experience, awareness raising and competence development;
- Collaborative knowledge discovery in contexts of content and language integrated learning;
- Learning diversity and differentiated pedagogical practices.

Tecola virtual world harnesses gamified telecollaboration technologies to enhance foreign language teaching and learning. Virtual world interaction, video communication and gamification are deployed to support virtual pedagogical exchanges between secondary school students throughout Europe.

Professor Kohn presented the course participants his Erasmus+ project *Tecola*, involving European Universities and schools in virtual environments with the aim of helping foreign language students develop their intercultural communicative competence.

During the webinar Professor Kohn explained how ICT can foster autonomy in foreign language students in a global perspective with the use of synchronous and asynchronous tools such as *Tecola* virtual world, videoconferencing and co-construction of written communication through dedicated tools, offering scaffolding, differentiation and increased communicative production (www.tecola.eu).

In *Tecola* virtual world, Chatterdale English village offers the environment where students from different countries, using their avatars can interact, following their teachers' instructions. The link to the *Tecola* project website¹¹ offers all materials, tools and are available for consultation, while the link in the note refers to the Webinar held in the course.¹²

eTwinning – *The community for schools in Europe* – is an online community working on a safe internet platform that provides a range of activities including joint projects for schools at national and international level, collaborative spaces and professional development opportunities for teachers.

eTwinning has had a particularly positive impact on project-based teaching skills and foreign language skills, as well as other teaching practices such as multi-disciplinary teaching, students' competence development, student-centred discussions, and the development of learning to learn skills. Development in these areas can be said to be mainly supplied within

¹¹ <https://sites.google.com/site/tecolaproject/>.

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcBBTVNc6y0>.

eTwinning, as they are skills and practices which teachers otherwise may have less opportunity to develop.

As far as English language learning and teaching in an ELF perspective is concerned, in the latest EU publication “*eTwinning in an era of change*” (2020), teachers who are taking part in the European community of schools perceive that *eTwinning* has had a strong positive result both for them and their students particularly in their abilities to deal with multi-cultural situations, as the table below shows.

83% Promoting intercultural dialogue through collaborative work between colleagues and learners and with various stakeholders.
82% Ensuring I acquire social, civic and intercultural competence.
80% Ensuring my students acquire social, civic and intercultural competence.
79% Developing my competences to design and use a wide range of teaching strategies to meet the specific learning needs of learners of all abilities with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds.

Table 2

The top 5 priorities that teachers report in relation to their own development and the development of their students (Gillera 2020, p. 11).

As it emerges from the *eTwinning 2020 Report*, multiculturalism is a fact of modern day society and teachers are faced with this challenge in their classrooms on a daily basis. The respondents to this survey place the promotion of intercultural dialogue at such a high level as well as the wish to develop further their competence in designing and using a wide range of teaching strategies to meet all such challenges.

The Teaching and Learning International Survey (*TALIS 2018*) of the OECD asked teachers and school leaders about working conditions and learning environments at their schools to help countries face diverse challenges. *TALIS 2018* pays particular attention to multicultural diversity, where the integration of world economies and large-scale migration contributed to forming more ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse and rich learning environments, creating the need for high-quality learning experiences for diverse student bodies.

The results of the 2018 Monitoring Survey show that *eTwinning* teachers use the *eTwinning* Community to (Kearney, Gras-Velázquez 2018, p. 25):

- ensure that they acquire social, civic and/or intercultural competences;
- promote intercultural dialogue through collaborative work among and between colleagues and learners at different levels;
- develop their competence to design and use a wide range of teaching strategies to meet the specific learning needs of learners of all abilities

with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds;

- provide students with opportunities to learn about and practice democratic values, social inclusion and/or active citizenship.

4. Conclusions

The responses to the Teachers' survey showed a clear understanding of the relevance of ICT in language learning and in teaching materials, and the growing role of international exchange programs, as well as of projects like *eTwinning*, because the use of ICT helps learners become more familiar with a range of non-native accents and raises students' awareness of how features of their own accent could cause difficulty for someone who is not so familiar with it.

Projects such as *eTwinning* enhance the awareness of the multicultural dimension and of the European integration process in students and teachers, and foster students' understanding of globalization while consolidating mutual value of different identities. While working with peers all over Europe, teachers experience pedagogical innovation in an international environment, being supported by a continuous and progressive feedback on the work done.

In the teacher education course *NEW ENGLISH/ES LANDSCAPES* participants expressed their deep interest on the innovative ELF aware approach through ICT and international projects, even if they showed difficulty in detaching from a native speakerist perspective, probably because they are still undergoing a process of change that needs more time to be realized. Awareness needs to be implemented with a sound pedagogical background integrated with the use of technology. ICT tools allow this process to accelerate as they allow out of school real life and different cultures come into their classroom daily practice.

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Annex 1

PRIN PROT. 2015REZ4EZ

CORSO DI AGGIORNAMENTO

New English/es Landscapes: Revisiting English Language Teaching & Learning

A.A. 2018/2019

Prof.ssa Alessandra Cannelli

The use of digital technologies in a global perspective: how to develop intercultural communication in ELT

Aims and Objectives: After examining the results of the PRIN survey about the use of ICT in an ELF aware attitude, the teachers will be guided to have a more reflective approach to tech, with a pedagogical and global perspective.

Skills: The teachers will be able to:

- select tools according to context, pedagogical objectives and skills to be enhanced;
- plan activities by the use of tools that may develop Ss' ELF awareness and intercultural communication;
- interact with other teachers all over Europe in order to start partnerships among schools and improve their own professional development.

Activities: The teachers will be asked to plan class activities/lessons in which digital tools are integrated and specifically used to promote an active role of Ss in a global perspective.

Activities on-line: Teachers will be asked to take part in forum discussions and they will be assigned tasks.

Evaluation: Before final evaluation, peer evaluation of tasks will be object of forum discussion in order to share practices

Practicum: Teachers will be asked to try out what planned and observe results in their classrooms.

PROMPTING MIGRANTS' EXPERIENTIAL PROCESSES OF DECONSTRUCTING AND AUTHENTICATING A HOST COMMUNITY'S LITERARY TEXT THROUGH ELF

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Abstract – This chapter introduces an ELF-mediated on-going research project aimed at involving communities of migrants and refugees hosted in Southern Italy who are encouraged to access and ‘authenticate’ (Widdowson 1979) the Italian theatrical culture according to their own linguacultural and experiential backgrounds. Such an appropriation is assumed to occur by having migrants improvising on the plays (Checkhov 1953; Johnstone 1981), translating and re-writing them (Slembrouck 1999) into their own ELF variations, thus creating parallel texts to the original ones, and then embodying them on an actual stage (Guido 1999). This study specifically presents a case study on migrants’ appropriation and embodiment of Luigi Pirandello’s play *Six characters in search of an author*, where the original characters’ experiences of displacement and identity loss are filtered, reinterpreted and re-contextualized through the subjects’ different schemata, and then rendered into their own ELF variations at the semantic, syntactic, pragmatic and metaphorical levels (Guido 2008). The objective is to make migrants appreciate the original text by re-textualizing it into a new parallel one where their own personal experience of existential displacement and of being uprooted from their own native countries can find an artistic expression.

Keywords: Embodied Stylistics; literary translation into ELF; Think-Aloud Technique; ELF-mediated authentication of literary texts.

1. Introduction and theoretical background¹

This chapter reports on an ongoing research project aimed at encouraging communities of migrants and refugees hosted in Southern Italy to access and authenticate a famous Italian play written by Luigi Pirandello, *Six characters in search of an author*, and focused on a sense of bewilderment that it is

¹ Although the authors collaborated in the outline and actual writing of the paper, they individually devoted more time to the following sections: Adele Errico – Sections 1 and 2; Maria Teresa Giampaolo – Sections 3, 4 and 5.

assumed to be shared by such displaced people. The main purpose of this research is to make migrants acquainted with the literary culture of the Italian host community and, at the same time, to encourage their ‘embodiment’ of the text by deconstructing it according to their own experiential background within the context of communication between migrants and specialists in intercultural education dealing with immigration issues. The present contribution is part of an on-going research that, suddenly, came to an abrupt halt because of the hasty lockdown measures taken by most of the European States following the Covid-19 pandemic emergency, which impeded the collection (and the subsequent analysis) of ethnographic data based on fieldwork with groups of migrants and refugees. This explains why the research reported in this chapter cannot at the moment be other than essentially principle-based and programmatic, illustrating the theoretical background to this study and the methodology meant to be used in dealing with migrants. The migrants are expected to be directly involved in the stages of the research and to benefit from the results: they will approach the text improvising on the play (Chekhov 1953; Johnstone 1981), translating and re-writing it (Slembrouck 1999) into their own ELF variations (Guido 2008; Jenkins 2007; Seidlhofer 2011), with the aim of creating a parallel text to the original one, and then embodying it on an actual stage. The choice of the text is justified by the intention to explore the experience of ‘displacement of the self’ and its reinterpretation within alien contexts through the different experiential and socio-cultural schemata of its recipients. The already uprooted and displaced six characters of Pirandello’s “comedy in the making”, lost without their author, can be embodied and reinterpreted through the migrants’ feeling of estrangement. The six characters, in their attempt to give meaning to their own existence, place their hopes of finding an identity in the meeting with the Scriptwriter, in the same way as migrants place their hopes for a new life in a new landing place.

In order to conduct the research, it is important, first of all, to focus on the theoretical background: by analysing the play through the Structuralist and Post-Structuralist perspectives, it is possible to demonstrate that it is not easy to apply Structuralist theories (Chatman 1980; Culler 1975; Genette 1976) to this literary work because of its innovative nature. A Deconstructionist reading appears to be more appropriate.

More specifically, taking as a starting point the Structuralist theories developed by Chatman (1980) and Genette (1976), the selected play will be first explored as a literary text that conveys its meaning through the use of language.

Although the theatrical text differs from the narrative text because of the absence of the narrator (Chatman 1980), an exception is the theatre of Pirandello, which does not exclude a diegetic interference in the mimesis.

According to Genette (1976), there are varying degrees of diegesis, with the narrator either more involved or less involved in the narrative. However, Genette claims that there is no case in which the narrator is completely absent. In *Six characters*, the author loses his authority and becomes a character, so his point of view is only one of the numerous points of view that create the mimesis. Indeed, the story is narrated through the various interpretations that each of the characters provides of the facts. This leads to a psychological conflict among the characters so the real drama is given by the difference of opinions, not the sequence of events (Szondi 1962).

The revolutionary metatextual system of *Six characters* allows the world of fiction to interfere with the surrounding reality and to involve the spectator. The prefix “meta” (Genette 1976) connotes the passage to a secondary level. Therefore, “metadiegesis” is the universe of the second story (just as diegesis designates the universe of the first story). The “metadiegesis” of the *Six characters* belongs to the first of three types proposed by Genette (1976) – namely, the direct causality between the events of the “metadiegesis”, which gives the story an explanatory function. In the drama, the levels of communication overlap, creating a system of transversal communication that relates scene and extrascene, breaking the convention of the so-called “fourth wall”, the separation between the stage and the audience. The impatience of Pirandello against the conventional mechanisms of the nineteenth-century bourgeois theatre results in a new theatre with desecrating and aggressive characters and shattered plots. The traditional dramatic organism is perceived as misleading and its artifices and spectacular effects are rejected in the name of a representation of authentic life. Furthermore, this theatre does not bother at all to hide what happens behind the scenes. Pirandello’s theatre is not afraid to reveal its secrets and to confess to being fiction, that does not claim to be reality. The theatre reveals itself in front of its spectators and its readers making them part of the drama, disintegrating the traditional scene and letting the staging invade even the theatre. This upsetting of the bourgeois theatre structures represents a deconstruction process seen in terms of a tendency to dismantle the structures of the text and of a “general displacement of the system” (Culler 1982, p. 85).

For these reasons, *Six Characters* is particularly appropriate for a Derridean/deconstructive reading.

According to Paul de Man (1979), the main gesture of the deconstructive process is the act of reading: deconstruction starts with the problematic situation present within each reading and with the consequent need to interpret the text. Readers can determine the interpretation of a literary text, that is a stimulus to create new perspectives related, also, to their individual experience.

In Derrida's (1978) view, Deconstruction is not understood as a dismantling of the text from the outside, but as its undermining from within, which would produce alternative readings. The text in itself does not exist: it is necessary first to 'construct' it, and then to 'deconstruct' its meanings. The text is a plural reality that provides the possibility of alternative readings and reinterpretations, to be deconstructed and reconstructed according to what are the needs and experiences of each reader. Deconstruction is the result of the encounter between the written text and the memory, sensations and cultural background of each reader who, while reading, approaches the text, interacting with it to fully himself/herself identify with literary experience.

The result of this mode of reading is called "différance": the reader comes to realize that his/her own differentiation from the language of the literary text, far from taking him/her to the ultimate meaning (meant as the confirmation on his/her own schematic expectations and beliefs), activates as an endless deferment of meaning (Guido 1999).

In De Man's (1979) critique, a text already contains within itself its own means of deconstruction, and thereby the rhetorical markers that characterize it as literary language. This lightening of the weight of textual meaning, advanced by Derrida and De Man, would indeed guarantee a greater expressive freedom.

So, since the author is dead – according to Barthes (Barthes 1977) – the reader must separate a text from its author and free the work from interpretive tyranny. In this research the opportunity for a deconstruction of the text and its rewriting in ELF, is given by the possibility of allowing its accessibility to migrant communities and facilitating its reading in intercultural contexts.

Once established the theoretical context, is it possible to demonstrate how reading the text and interacting with it is an opportunity of "recreating, re-experiencing, through representation, the emotional journey of a poem, which could, or could not, coincide with the actual Author's own journey" (Guido 1999, p. 157).

2. Research objectives

As detailed above, this contribution is included in an ongoing research, so the following objectives are those expected.

The approach of the migrants to the text is expected to develop an innovative theoretical and methodological model for a critical analysis (Cook 1994) of the formal and pragmatic structures of the selected text and a creative translation into their own ELF variation – namely, "the creation of new (i.e. non-codified) linguistic forms and expressions in ongoing interaction/discourse or the use of existing forms and expressions in a non-

conventional way” (Pitzl 2012, p. 37). Through the principle of creativity, the original text will be revitalized and will lead to a new, autonomous parallel text.

Following the translation into ELF the play is meant to be staged by groups of migrants as research subjects with the help of theatre and acting experts. This study will specifically focus on the subjects' processes of embodied interpretation (Guido 2013) of Pirandello's play.

This process achieves a physical and emotional identification of the subjects with the dramatic language: the subjects as acting interpreters are expected to react to the texts according to their own schemata – which are the cognitive-experiential, cultural and physical patterns stored in the interpreters' minds (Rumelhart 1977, 1980) interacting with the linguistic structure of the plays. The objective is to explore the interpreters' processes of authentication of the plays (Widdowson 1992). The analysis, therefore, will be carried out on the interpreters' embodiment (Johnson 1987) of the plays, of their 'conversational moves' (Burton 1980), and of the rhythm of the characters' language that influences the rhythm of the acting interpreters' breathing, thus activating their experiential and emotional memory with reference to the sense of displacement.

3. Method

The comprehension of events occurs in different ways across cultures, because every culture conceptualises and then verbalises events according to its own cultural schemata. When the verbalisation is needed in a foreign language, in this case in ELF, an individual involved in intercultural communication often conceptualizes events according to modalities typical of his/her L1 and verbalises those concepts in the L2 (ELF), often transferring elements of the conceptualisation in L1 to the verbalisation in L2/ELF (Giampaolo 2014). This represents for the L2/ELF speaker another step in his/her oral production and requires more attention in the linguistic stages because of the lack of automation in the oral production processes by the NNS (Levelt 1989). Furthermore, the aspects of reality conceptualised in the speaker's L1 and verbalised in his/her L2/ELF variation promote the transfer of elements to the L2 not only at the conceptual level, but also at the syntactic and lexical levels. It is important to underline that the data collection (and the subsequent analysis) of this research was suddenly interrupted because of the lockdown measures following the Covid-19 pandemic emergency. Migrants are expected to be directly involved in this ethnographic study focused on the interpretation of a Pirandello's play. The emotional elements which arise while reading some extracts of the literary work are expected to recall to their minds their experience of uprooting from their land. Emotion will be an

essential element in the achievement of linguistic and interpretative production. Strong feelings that well up in the readers' mind could prompt in them the use of ELF forms to be analysed in the course of qualitative case studies, as such feelings are expected to lower the control on the formal correctness of utterances, encouraging the formation of creative neologisms in the use of ELF variations.

To enquire into the 'top-down' processes activated in the migrants' minds while 'deconstructing' (Culler 1982) the original text and re-textualising it into a parallel text, the Think-Aloud Technique in verbal report will be adopted (Ericsson, Simon 1984; Giampaolo 2014; van Someren *et al.* 1994) in order to encourage them to verbalize their thoughts and emotions through ELF in relation to the text under exploration. During the activities of pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading to be proposed to migrants, the Think Aloud Technique is planned to be used for data collection – meant as verbal reports in which linguistic and content forms of ELF can be identified. This method, indeed, would allow an exploration of the thought-processes involved while migrants read, deconstruct and, in doing so, appropriate and authenticate the Italian text to their own experiential schemata (Guido 1999). The main reason for using verbal-report protocols is that it has been demonstrated how verbal reports, well prompted and then interpreted, are an effective source of information for the analysis of cognitive processes (Ericsson, Simon 1984; Pressley, Afflerbach 1995). Furthermore, it will be possible to identify the features of the ELF variety used by each migrant and analyse the language structures and the cultural constructs that influence the development of their ELF variations. Indeed, such variations develop from a process of "language authentication" (Widdowson 1979), which consists in transferring the cultural and experiential schemata as well as the syntactic and pragmatic structures of the speakers' native languages to the 'lingua franca' that they use (Guido, Seidlhofer 2014). The Think-Aloud Technique is planned in this study to record the migrants' responses to the reading of Pirandello's play and, thus, to have access to their cognitive processes of emotional interpretation and authentication of the text. For this reason, they will be given all the time they need to complete their textual deconstruction and subsequent experiential and emotional authentication.

4. Data collection

Data collection will be divided into three stages: The first is a pre-reading stage, involving a brain-storming task useful to focus on the migrants' feelings of displacement. The second is a while-reading stage, involving the recording of the migrants' accounts of their own displacing experiences, expressed in their own ELF variations, compared to those undergone by the

characters of the play. The third stage regards a post-reading deconstructive task aimed at creating parallel texts to be performed by the migrants themselves on an actual stage.

The method of the Think-Aloud Technique (Cohen, Hosenfeld 1981; Ericsson, Simon 1984; Pressley, Afflerbach 1995; van Someren *et al.* 1994) adopted to collect the research data allows for a recognition of the migrants' cognitive and emotional processes activated while reading some selected extracts of Pirandello's play, in particular those parts in which they may feel more involved in the characters' parallel feelings. Then, migrants will be asked to report on real situations in which they may have experienced similar displacing feelings. The recording and videotaping of their accounts will then allow an identification of the linguistic and nonlinguistic strategies in ELF used to convey their own feeling of estrangement and sorrow when analysing the characters' feelings. The research subjects will be selected among non-native speakers of English using ELF variations in situations of intercultural communication to be identified among migrants assisted at local centres for legal and health counseling, as well as among migrants who work as actors at a local theatre. Similarly to other qualitative methods of data collection, the Think Aloud Technique seeks rich data from a small sample of subjects. To collect the research data, each migrant will be scheduled for an individual session of recording in a quiet setting to facilitate his/her 'thinking aloud'. The subjects involved will be instructed to give voice to their thoughts and feelings as they approach for the first time the selected texts – with interactions with the researcher kept to a minimum to avoid interferences with their interpretation. With the permission of the migrants, the Think Aloud sessions will be videotaped and later transcribed to produce verbal protocols. The coded transcriptions can be used to evaluate a wide range of language and content features expressed through ELF, as well as they can be used as parallel texts to be actually performed on the stage, letting migrants express their inner feelings to an audience in the host country who will be made aware of the migrants' sad experiences of uprootedness, so close to those parallel ones expressed by the characters of a play written by a well-known Italian author.

4.1. Pre-reading

As a first pre-reading task, migrants can be made acquainted with the plot of the play, followed by a number of 'brainstorming questions' aimed at enabling them to make top-down connections between the characters' displacing experiences and their own parallel ones. At this stage, the experiential background of the subjects plays a central role (Guido 2004): being emotionally involved in reporting their sad migration experiences, the

subjects are expected not to care about the ‘correctness’ of the English they use as an L2, but rather they would predictably use their own ELF variations – namely, the English language appropriated to the formal, pragmatic, metaphorical, and even formulaic features that they unconsciously transfer from their own L1s. Lyons (1968) defined formulaic sentences as expressions that speakers learn as not analysable wholes, which are used in particular occasions, whereas Ellis (1985) asserts that creative speaking appeals to the rules of the speaker’s L2, producing new utterances. Hence, the emotional element is expected to have a strong impact on the migrants’ oral production (Giampaolo 2013), because the feelings evoked in their minds can increase their ELF creativity.

4.2. While-reading

The migrants and refugees to be selected as the sample of research subjects are expected to be a heterogeneous group of people, coming from different places and with different personal backgrounds and social status in their own countries. They will be asked to read some extracts from Pirandello’s play where the sense of displacement, uprooting and sorrow prevails. The migrants as interpreters are initially expected to become acquainted with the language and the content of the play by making their own schemata prevail over the text (Guido 2018). In the previous brainstorming stage, the migrants would be given the possibility of recalling their own feelings of estrangement and sorrow related to the experience of fleeing their own countries and now, at this while-reading stage, they are encouraged to employ a top-down deconstructive approach (Rumelhart 1977) as a means to cope with the sense of estrangement that the language and the situations of the play initially trigger in them as they start reading it. As Guido (2018, p. 225) states, “the interpreters’ top-down cognitive processes make the new information achieved from the poetic text interact with their own schemata which ‘normalize’ the poetic-verse structures that, by their very nature, ‘diverge’ from everyday linguistic structures.”

Pirandello’s text was slightly adapted and simplified in its translation into English to be more accessible to migrants. What follows is a couple of selected extracts from *Six characters in search of an author* with their English translations:

Extract 1: [...] Soltanto per sapere, signore, se veramente lei com’è adesso, si vede...come vede per esempio, a distanza di tempo quel che lei era una volta, con tutte le illusioni che allora si faceva; con tutte le cose, dentro e intorno a lei, come allora le parevano – ed erano, erano realmente per lei! – Ebbene, signore, ripensando a quelle illusioni che adesso lei non si fa più, a tutte quelle cose che ora non le «sembrano» un tempo; non si sente mancare, non dico

queste tavole di palcoscenico, ma il terreno, il terreno, il terreno sotto i piedi, argomentando che ugualmente «questo» come lei ora si sente, tutta la sua realtà d'oggi così com'è, è destinata a parerle illusione domani?

Translation 1: [...] But only in order to know if you, as you really are now, see yourself as you once were with all the illusions that were yours then, with all the things both inside and outside of you as they seemed to you – as they were then indeed for you. Well, sir, if you think all of those illusions that mean nothing to you now, of all those things which don't even exist anymore, don't you feel that – I won't say these boards – but the very earth under your feet is sinking away from you when you reflect that in the same way this you as you feel it today – all this present reality of yours – is destined to seem a mere illusion to you tomorrow?

Extract 2: [...] quando in qualcuno dei nostri atti, per un caso sciaguratissimo, restiamo all'improvviso come agganciati e sospesi: ci accorgiamo, voglio dire, di non esser tutti in quell'atto (situazione reale), e che dunque un'atroce ingiustizia sarebbe giudicarci da quelli solo, tenerci agganciati e sospesi, alla gogna (derisi, disprezzati), per un'intera esistenza, come se questa fosse assommata tutta in quell'atto.

Translation 2: We perceive this when, tragically perhaps, in something we do, we are as it were, suspended, caught up in the air on a kind of hook. Then we perceive that all of us are not in that act (real situation), and that it would be an atrocious injustice to judge us by that action alone [...], as if all our existence were summed up in that deed.

4.3. Post reading

After reading these and other selected extracts from Pirandello's play, migrants will be prompted to activate bottom-up processes of recollection of events belonging to their own experience and to compare them with the parallel experiences undergone by the characters in the play. This is expected to trigger in migrants the creation of parallel texts to be performed on an actual stage. To prompt such processes, the investigators conducting the field research may ask, for instance:

- How would you stage your personal experience of displacement?
- Would you please try to embody and improvise on this character?
- Do you think that the upsetting situations in which these characters are involved are similar to situations that you have experienced?
- Would you write a short play on your personal experience and then perform it on stage?

Furthermore, reading the text aloud would allow the discovery of linguistic patterns that would trigger in the readers an emotional involvement in the interpretation of the characters' words. This would entail that the resulting

interpretations are the outcome of as many deconstructive processes as there are readers to interpret the text.

5. Conclusion

The deconstructive reading of *Six characters in search of an author* allows the adaptation of the selected text to the migratory contexts and an experiential involvement of the subjects in the interpretation of Pirandello's play. In deconstructing and authenticating the text while interpreting it, the reader is assumed to become the protagonist of the act of reading and, therefore, the migrants who read Pirandello have the opportunity to relate the events narrated in the play to their own personal experiences, eventually expressing them through ELF during the 'think-aloud' phase. Indeed, the ethnographic fieldwork – expected to take place immediately after the end of the lockdown imposed by the pandemic emergency, and based on data collected by means of the Think Aloud Technique – will also allow researchers to enquire into the migrants' ELF variations affected by their own cultural and personal backgrounds. Data, therefore, may be used to explore many linguistic aspects at the semantic, syntactic, pragmatic and metaphorical levels. It cannot be denied that the emotional aspects will be here at the basis of many ELF forms, because the recalling of the migrants' experience of feeling uprooted from their own countries to escape war and poverty will play a major role in their interpretations of the play. The investigation into the influence of the migrants' experiential backgrounds on the use of their ELF variations will also be useful in identifying the cognitive and emotional processes that they activate while 'authenticating' (Widdowson 1979) the play by interpreting it through their own experiential schemata and cultural constructs (Iaia 2015).

Moreover, the focus on oral production in ELF that investigates the creative language used by migrants in order to express their feelings could be useful also in classrooms that include migrant students. An awareness of ELF creativity could in fact allow teachers to better understand these students while they express their feelings, as well as to help students from the host country to understand how migrants perceive their experience of being uprooted. Research on oral performances in L2 in "task-based contexts" (Skehan 2003; Skehan, Foster 1997, 2001) have explored creativity in non-native speakers' use of communicative skills (Giampaolo 2014). In this sense, the interpretation of a play may prompt migrants to express their impressions and relevant feelings, allowing the researcher to explore their creative use of ELF.

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A STUDY OF COGNITIVE-EXPERIENTIAL PRACTICES FOR PROMOTING ELF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN ITALIAN ELT CLASSROOMS

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Abstract – The increasing use of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) calls for substantial changes in the English Language Teaching (ELT) pedagogy both in Italy and elsewhere. This chapter illustrates an ongoing research project aimed to explore the dynamics of ELF discourse in the educational domain, and ultimately, to devise guidelines for developing cognitive-experiential practices that enhance ELF communicative competence in ELT classrooms. The study investigates ELF communicative strategies through naturally occurring discussions in which school-age learners – ELF users – talk about a challenging topic under unconstrained conditions, namely without the supervision of their English teacher and without English as a Native Language (ENL) requirements. This experimental activity was performed by observing and audio recording natural spoken ELF interactions among Italian students and students of ten different nationalities participating in intercultural exchange programmes in three upper-secondary schools. The qualitative data analysis is conducted within a conversation analytic framework by means of a protocol based on conversational moves. It focuses on the cooperative practices that school-age ELF users enact to achieve effective communication. The analysis reveals that participants (i) generally orient to their interlocutors, employing pragmatic strategies that are commonly used in ELF communication, and (ii) implement *linguaging* and interactional skills that show their authentic involvement in the spoken activity as it was designed. These findings demonstrate that school-age ELF users put into play their language resources, but also themselves as individuals with their own identity, cultural background and experiences. The results of this study may be translated into teaching practices that enhance ELF-mediated communication, promoting language and intercultural awareness.

Keywords: ELF; ELF communicative competence; ELT classrooms; school-age ELF users; upper-secondary school.

1. Introduction

What will the English syllabus in Italian schools be like in the 21st century? The school landscape, with its multicultural and multilingual classrooms, has changed drastically over the past few decades, but very little has changed in the English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms in Italy. As English has become crucial for intercultural communication in our globalized world, the emerging use of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) – i.e. the English used by

speakers of different first languages (L1) and cultures in diverse sociocultural communicative contexts – should redesign the ELT scenario, normally played out by English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The average Italian student is bound to use the English learnt at school in manifold communicative situations, not only with native speakers of English, but more frequently with an ever-increasing number of non-native speakers. Hence, the acquisition of ELF communicative competence, defined in cognitive-experiential terms as the ability to accommodate and negotiate culture-bound meanings between different ELF variations in contact, has become urgent in Italian schools.

While the structure of our society has become ‘liquid’ (Bauman 2000, 2005), and even though life skills such as learning how to learn and communication (in L1 and L2) have become pivotal to cope with the challenges of our time, the teaching of the English language – at least in Italian schools – is still ossified, and keeps resting on the well-established ‘scripts’ that are validated by EFL institutional bodies. In this language teaching landscape school-age learners are taught and trained to take examinations that gauge their competence against native speaker (NS) regulative norms of usage and use, while their real (current and future) needs for effective communication in an intercultural environment is largely overlooked. The majority of our multilingual learners, the so-called ‘digital natives’, have been exposed to English outside the classroom since they were children, mostly via the Internet; as a result, their perception of English is that of a language with a global function (Sifakis 2018). Thereby it is crucial for learners to be confronted with the plurality of English and to be guided to become effective language users.

The multidimensional communicative competence that EFL teachers try hard to enhance in their classrooms, at least in Italy, does not yet acknowledge the natural phenomenon of English as a lingua franca. Acknowledging ELF in the ELT classroom means to become aware of how intercultural communication works, and hence to delve into the pragmatic, adaptive strategies that enable speakers to get their message across in an intelligible and efficient way. An ELF-informed pedagogy requires teachers to be less norm-oriented, more flexible, and more proactive towards tasks and practices that turn learners into actual users of the language and satisfied protagonists of their learning (Kohn 2018).

This study is an exploration into the use of ELF in the educational domain; it is based on naturally occurring discussions in which small groups of school-age learners from a diverse range of first language backgrounds talk about a challenging topic and work out a mutual agreement in a ‘teacher-free zone’. Its main purpose is to investigate the cognitive and communicative processes activated by students in accommodating and negotiating meanings through ELF variations that reflect their own different

native linguacultural schemata. To this end, I designed a task that enables students to interact under unconstrained conditions, that is to say, (i) without the supervision of their English teacher, and (ii) without having to follow a standard classroom protocol of turn-taking and lexicogrammatical correctness, generally enforced in teacher-learner activities.

I grounded my ethnographic study in a Conversation Analysis (CA) framework, enquiring into the dynamics of the discourse without preconceived categories, and focusing upon the moves and the strategies speakers use to make meaning converging with (or diverging from) their interlocutors. I explored (i) the conversational moves that frame interactions among multilingual and multicultural speakers, and (ii) the meaning-making and accommodation strategies that ELF speakers employ to achieve effective communication.

This chapter reports preliminary results on the dynamics of spoken ELF interactions amongst Italian students and students of different linguacultures participating in ongoing intercultural exchange programmes.

2. Theoretical framework

ELF is a global phenomenon that is still brushed aside in the English Language Teaching landscape, in Italy as much as elsewhere. I agree with Seidlhofer (2011, p. 190) when she argues that “[it] seems to be not so much a deliberate act, but rather a general lack of awareness”. Most ELT teachers are simply not aware of the emerging reality of ELF as a worldwide medium of intercultural communication; and even if they are, they believe it should stay away from their classrooms – so as not to interfere with their well-established teaching routine and not to threaten their professional comfort zone.

The English taught at school, EFL, is the English that conforms to the rules of use and usage of the native speaker, either British or American. In the traditional ELT classroom learners are required to make appropriate choices according to the English as a native language (ENL) paradigm; any alternative linguistic realizations are considered incorrect, “formally ‘defective’” (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 197), no matter how communicatively successful they are. Defective from an EFL perspective, perhaps, but certainly not from an ELF perspective, as long as the linguistic forms motivated by pragmatic function make communication flow in an intelligible and effective way. An ELF-oriented pedagogy requires a reconceptualization of English as a subject. The ELT classroom is imbued with ideologies of native-speakerism (Jenkins 2012; Seidlhofer 2011), correctness and appropriateness that ignore the multilingual repertoires of the learners, who speak one or more languages in addition to English. As Guido (2008, p. 21)

maintains, “[t]aken for granted [...] is the idea that the grammar code of Standard English – and, implicitly, also native-English pragmatic behaviours – are shared norms in intercultural transactions across the world”. Whatever piece of language is taught, it is bound to conform to the rules of usage and use and to the idioms of the native speaker. Learners are expected to adhere to such norms: not only do they have to learn the rules, but they also have to apply them in a correct and appropriate way, following the native speaker’s practice (Widdowson 2012, 2015a).

As ELF discourse develops in emergent contexts characterised by “a high degree of linguacultural diversity, routinely resulting in highly variable, and creative use of linguistic resources” (Dewey 2012, p. 163), norm-driven parameters can no longer gauge the effectiveness of ELF communication. Dewey (2012) suggests the adoption of an ELF perspective that encompasses a post-normative orientation to language teaching and learning. Such an approach entails a shift in focus: no longer on the correct linguistic realizations in Standard English, but rather on the communicative effectiveness, to be achieved through a “dynamic and adaptive use of language resources” (Dewey 2012, p. 142).

Most often learners fail to fulfil native speaker norms because their linguistic output is grounded on the experience of their own language. Learners use the language creatively, stretching their linguistic repertoire so as to achieve intelligible and effective communication. But it is exactly this behaviour that is blamed by most teachers, who evaluate students against NS norms under the aegis of the publishing industry and English language assessment boards, acting on the organization of English as a subject. EFL teachers are focused on what they teach; hence they evaluate “*teachees*” (Widdowson 2015b, p. 371, emphasis in original), not learners. In an ELF-oriented pedagogy, instead, teachers focus on who they are teaching to and on the learning process. Teachers’ attention should shift from the amount of correct language that learners display to the process of *linguaging*, that is to how learners use the language (Seidlhofer 2011). *Linguaging*, according to Swain (2006, p. 98), refers to “the process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language.” In other words, it is “having a go, trying to make sense and getting somewhere against all the odds” (Phipps 2007, p. 1). The dynamic process of *linguaging* naturally turns learners into users who exploit what Widdowson (2003, p. 173) calls ‘virtual language’, namely “the potential inherent in the language for innovation”. The learners-users activate their capability for using their linguistic resources – regardless of whether their linguistic realizations do or do not conform to the native speaker encodings. Thus, to investigate ELF means to delve into the dynamics of language learning and into the strategies of communication.

The emerging use of ELF also requires a reconceptualization of

communicative competence which casts light on the intercultural dimension of communication, namely on the relationship between language and ever-changing sociocultural contexts. The view that both language and culture are fluid and dynamic resources in intercultural communicative events suggests that “there is no clear ‘target culture’ to which English can be assigned” (Baker 2011, p. 200); hence, it implies that ELF users negotiate meaning in invariably diverse and emergent sociocultural contexts. The kind of communicative competence that needs to be enhanced in ELF-oriented classrooms combines the pragmatic exploitation of all linguistic resources available to ELF users (Seidlhofer, Widdowson 2017; Widdowson 2015b) with a broad awareness of the cultural diversity inherent in intercultural communication.

3. Research context and analytical methods

3.1. Participants and data collection

To explore the actual use of ELF in the educational domain, I devised an original experimental investigation. The activity consisted in observing and audio recording actual spoken ELF interactions among Italian students and students participating in intercultural exchange programmes (e.g. Erasmus+, AFS/Intercultura, YFU) in three upper-secondary schools located in the Greater Rome area. Small groups of students from different linguacultural backgrounds participated in prompt-driven discussions. After having been assigned a challenging topic – *Select a song that gives an insight into contemporary society*, the participants were invited to discuss their choices within the group and to reach an agreement on a single, most representative song. The students performed the activity in a ‘teacher-free zone’, that is to say, in the absence of their own English teacher, so that they could carry out the task without feeling constrained by the standard conditions of the ELT classroom.

The experiment involved 45 students of eleven nationalities, all aged between 15 and 17, speaking nine different L1s; their level of English ranged between the A2 and B2 CEFR standard levels.

The activity involved two subsequent phases. In the first phase I introduced myself and my research on ELF, asking the students what the expression ‘English as a Lingua Franca’ might mean. Then I presented the task through a series of statements (e.g. “Some songs give us an insight into what life is like in a certain period of time, thus turning into *social documents*”), followed by a brainstorming session about crucial issues that affect our society. After that, the students were asked to think of any contemporary song that might fit in the category of *social documents*. They

were encouraged to answer the following question: “In the year 2500, when people listen to songs that were composed in the 20th and 21st centuries, what will they learn about us?” In the second phase, once they had completed the individual task, the students were divided into groups of four to six participants and started their discussions.

I audio recorded ten speech events having an average duration of 12 minutes, for a total of approximately two hours. The data were collected under totally unconstrained conditions: their English teacher was not present during the interactions, and the students were free to use all the resources at their disposal to converge on a shared decision. Most of the groups used their smartphones to either read (out) the lyrics or play the songs. In this phase my role was merely that of a non-participant observer. In fact, in the pre-activity phase I introduced myself to the participants as an ELF researcher, and explained the purpose of my study, assuring them that my presence during their interactions would be as unobtrusive as possible, and that I would not act as a teacher, that is to say, I would neither make any corrections, nor judge their performance. During the discussions I stayed at quite a distance from the students and sat in what Duranti (1997, p. 101) calls a “blind spot”, namely the least intrusive place in the scene. The data were complemented by some informal feedback interviews, during which the participants, one by one, disclosed their thoughts and feelings about the activity.

=	other-continuation
(more)	uncertain transcription
.	falling intonation
?	rising intonation
<1> </1>	overlapping speech
a:nd	lengthened sound
</L1it> </L1it>	utterance in a speaker’s first language
<ipa> </ipa>	phonetic transcription
(.)	brief pause
(1)	pause timed in seconds
<ono> </ono>	onomatopoeic noises
@	laughter
<@> </@>	laughing voice
<to S5> </to S5>	addressing a speaker in particular, not the whole group
CAPITALS	emphasis of a syllable or a word
<fast> </fast>	fast speech
<soft> </soft>	soft voice
<pvc> </pvc>	variations from NS encodings in terms of phonology, morphology and lexis, including ‘invented’ words

Table 1
Relevant VOICE transcription conventions.



The audio recordings, collected over a three-month period, were then transcribed following the transcription conventions of Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE),¹ as shown in Table 1.

3.2. Analytical approach

Since the focus of this investigation is on the cognitive and communicative processes activated by school-age learners in negotiating meaning in ELF-mediated communication, it is most crucial to explore in detail how speakers interact to accomplish understanding. A Conversation Analysis approach serves this purpose well; it allows the researcher to adopt “an emic (i.e. participant’s) perspective on analytical relevancies” and to give “analytical primacy to uncovering interactional achievement and accomplishment rather than failure and deficit” (Firth 2012, p. 1044). Kaur (2016, p. 162) contends that ELF talk is unlikely to be organized much differently from NS talk, but it may differ in the resourceful application of interactional strategies (e.g. turn-taking structure, repair mechanisms); hence, a CA-based analysis unveils “how ELF speakers use the language in and on their own terms” (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 23).

Following both the structural models of conversation analysis (Coulthard, Brazil 1992; Coulthard, Montgomery 1981; Sinclair, Coulthard 1975; Stubbs 1983) and the ethnomethodological models (Firth 1957; Gumperz, Hymes 1964; Sacks *et al.* 1974), I tagged all moves that the interactants performed to make their communication meaningful. The move-tagged exchanges allowed me to observe more closely the detailed composition of the students’ interactions, formulating hypotheses on their communicative behaviour in an ELF setting.

The structural moves² are useful to understand to what extent the speakers’ different linguistic and schematic background impacts on the structure of the talk (Guido 2004); conversely, the ethnomethodological moves³ prove especially helpful for the comprehension of intercultural communication, as they represent the pragmalinguistic and socio-pragmatic rules (Thomas 1983) the speakers appropriate cognitively and affectively in an interaction.

After having tagged the conversational moves the participants perform in their exchanges, I delved into a sequential analysis of the communicative

¹ VOICE Transcription Conventions [2.1],
https://www.univie.ac.at/voice/page/transcription_general_information.

² The taxonomy of structural moves is taken from Guido’s (2004) adaptation of the Conversation Frame developed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975).

³ The ethnomethodological moves are taken from Guido (2004, 2008).

strategies they employ to co-construct meaning and to achieve interactional goals through ELF.

4. Data analysis

In this section a few selected extracts illustrate some of the practices enacted by the participants in the naturally occurring discussions.

4.1. “stop produce carbon footprint”

The following stretch of talk is taken from a long sequence in which four participants discuss pollution. The participants’ degree of involvement in the discussion is shown in the dynamics of the turn-taking machinery, to which they contribute with overlapping and latched speech, thus revealing both their willingness to take part in the talk and their ability to handle a shared floor. As in a dance (of words), each participant steps in, and provides a contribution to jointly constructing meaning.

Extract 1 (S1: Italian; S2: German; S3: Italian; S4: Polish)

- 1062 S1: = i think people will wake up (more) = / [Upgrade-M]
 1063 S3: = yes = / [Acknowledge-M]
 1064 S4: = and stop produce carbon footprint. / [Upgrade-M]
 1065 S3: <2> now or later </2> / [Upgrade-M]
 1066 S1: <2> [a] a:nd yes [b] so </2> / [a. Acknowledge-M + b. possible Reopen-M]
 1067 S2: end carbon footprint / [Support-M]

In line 1062 S1 seizes the floor, and hedges her Upgrade move, whereby she imagines a more positive future scenario. The following turns (lines 1063-1066), uttered at a fast tempo, follow one another, either in latched or overlapping speech, indicating a truly collaborative floor. As Coates (1997, p. 70) holds, “the collaborative floor is a shared space, and therefore what is said is construed as being the voice of the group rather than of the individual.” In line 1063 S3 latches to S1 with an acknowledgement token, expressing clear-cut agreement. Without a gap, S4 provides a further Upgrade move, whereby he introduces a much-felt issue: *carbon footprint*.

The first round of the dance ends with two overlaps, signalling the speakers’ involvement in the issue, and a Support move. In line 1065 S3 ‘upgrades’ the micro-sequence adding a time reference – *now or later* – that he moulds on the English idiom ‘sooner or later’. Simultaneously, in overlapping speech (line 1066), S1 recognizes S4’s contribution to her statement [a], and with a minimal token (*so*) she possibly performs a Reopen move [b]. The meaning-making negotiation, which started in line 1062, ends

in line 1067, when S2 corroborates S4's contribution to the discussion by making a partial repetition: *end carbon footprint*.

In the co-constructed micro-sequence (lines 1062-1065) the temporal expression used by S3 in line 1065 comes timely. S3 produces a creative time expression – *now or later* – having in mind the English idiom ‘sooner or later’. S3's *now and later* is an example of creative idiom – “an adapted realization of an existing conventional expression” (Pitzl 2018, p. 120) – that exploits the virtual meaning potential of the language. S3's new verbal realization removes the alliteration of the original expression, but the substitution of ‘sooner’ with a shorter word – *now* – makes the time reference sound even more effective. If we consider ‘now’ as a hyponym of ‘sooner’, hence a more specific word than the lexical item in the original idiom, we may interpret S3's word substitution as a pragmatic choice influenced by context (Pitzl 2018). I would venture that S3's lexical choice, which cannot be construed as an L1 transfer (in Italian there is no equivalent idiom containing the lexical item ‘now’), gives voice to his strong urge to reduce the human impact on the environment as soon as possible, that is to say, starting immediately. Thus, the choice of *now* does not express any ‘intentional’ creativity, but rather conveys a communicative purpose.

S2's Support move in line 1067 rounds off this jointly built sequence. S2 employs a partial repetition – *end carbon footprint* – to corroborate S4's Upgrade move in line 1064 – *stop produce carbon footprint*. S2 repeats only the last two words of the original utterance, and changes the two verbs used by S4 into one direct monosyllabic verb, *end*, reinforcing the utterance. S2's repetition here serves an array of functions: (i) it recognizes the urgency of the issue, (ii) it upholds S4's statement by signalling alignment with the speaker of the original utterance (Mauranen 2012), and, most importantly, (iii) it is interaction-oriented because it is used to develop rapport and to show involvement in the talk (Lichtkoppler 2007). S2 orients to the co-participant through repetition and establishes affiliation by expressing common ground.

4.2. “the truck tu:f tu:f tu:f”

The following extract is rich in linguistic resources and pragmatic strategies. It contains instances of onomatopoeic additions, interactive repair, and code switching.

Extract 2 (S1: Italian; S3: Italian; S6: Spanish)

- 283 S3: that's the <L1it> camion {truck} <ipa> kæmiən </ipa></L1it>
who: (.) / [Inform-M]
284 S6: truck / [Repair-M]

- 285 S3: who <pvc> trucked {knocked down} </pvc> some people (.) /
[Inform-M]
- 286 S6: no the truck / [Repair-M]
- 287 S3: [a] <@> no the truck </@> who kills some people (.) [b] cos he
was on the (.) / [a. Inform-M + b. Explain-M]
- 288 S6: on a tourist erm / [Explain-M]
- 289 S3: yeah / [Acknowledge-M]
- 290 S6: on a tourist = / [Explain-M]
- 291 S3: = that was a party e:r (1) that was a city party and (.) the truck (.)
<soft><ono> tu:f tu:f tu:f </ono></soft> the truck @@@ <7> hit
some people.</7> / [Explain-M]
- 292 S6: <7> it drove over people.</7> / [Repair-M]
- 293 S1: yeah / [Acknowledge-M]
- 294 S3: <ono> ta ta ta tu: tu: tu: </ono> @@ / [Explain-M]

The group has selected *Non mi avete fatto niente*, an Italian song dealing with terrorism. At this stage of the discussion, S3 describes the terrorist attack that took place in Nice, France, on 14 July 2016. Instead of using the word ‘lorry’ or ‘truck’, he utters the corresponding Italian word, *camion*, a loanword from French in both Italian and Spanish (the participants’ first languages), seemingly unaware of performing a code switch. S6, who has shown sensitivity to grammar and vocabulary issues and an attitude to repair in previous exchanges, takes the floor providing the English word *truck*, which S3 immediately appropriates and authenticates, as if it were a verb, to complete his Inform move. S3 is so involved in the delivery of the information he holds about the terrorist attack that he instantly recognizes the word ‘truck’ as a verb, and uses it in the past tense: *trucked* (line 285). In the next turn, S6 performs another Repair move, repeating the word *truck* preceded by the definite article, and introduced by a negative token, to indicate that *truck* is a noun, not a verb. Only at this point (line 287) does S3 realize his quite original use of the word *truck* made in line 285; hence he resumes his Inform move [a] with an exact repetition comprising a negative token, whereby he recognizes his misinterpretation. He utters it in a laughing voice, which serves as a face-saving strategy.

The next three lines of the extract (lines 288-290) show cooperative behaviour in a word search moment. The hesitation pause at the end of line 287 allows S6 to provide a hint (*on a tourist erm*), immediately acknowledged by S3. She then repeats it (line 290), supposedly to supply more information, but S3 seizes the floor and explains what in fact happened in Nice. In line 291 S3 latches to S6’s second attempt of giving her contribution to the word search, and incorporates the idea of *tourist* (lines 289 and 290) in the expression *city party*. In the same turn, he recapitulates what he has just said, softly adding onomatopoeic sounds that copy the noise of a running truck. S3 is aware of his unusual fashion of expressing information, and, in fact, the second time he utters the word *truck* he

produces a burst of laughter; only after that does he conclude his turn reformulating the information given in a previous turn (line 287).

The addition of onomatopoeic sounds to make the conversation livelier, despite the most serious topic being dealt with, is interpreted by S6 as a further request for lexical help. That is why she overlaps in line 292, providing a complete sentence that contains the supposedly missing verb. In this case S6 misinterprets S3's use of onomatopoeic sounds as S3 does not flag a problem, conversely, he peppers his contribution and successfully completes his turn verbalizing his *tu:f tu:f tu:f*. The Acknowledge move uttered by S1, the participant who has chosen the song about terrorism, confirms that the information provided by S3 and S6 with a collaborative overlap has effectively been delivered (line 293). The sequence ends with another instance of onomatopoeic sounds that reproduce the shots fired during the terrorist attack. This time, S3's turn is totally non-verbal: his onomatopoeic contribution to the discussion, accompanied by laughter, is not followed by a verbal explanation.

The lexical choice – *camion* – made by S3 at the start of the selected extract, and pronounced as if it were an English word, is not perceived by the speaker as a code switch since he appropriates and creatively authenticates the word *truck*, suggested by S6 in line 284, using it as a verb to complete his move. I interpreted it as an instance of 'oblivious' code switch, prompted by the foreign origin of the word in the speaker's first language, Italian, and induced by strong emotional charge, whereby he informs the participants in the discussion about the Nice terrorist attack. The series of repairs in lines 284-287 unfold instances of other-correction (*truck* and *the truck*), other-initiated correction (*the truck*), and an instance of a quite creative use of the language (*trucked*). S6 does not overlook S3's code switch despite the proximity of the word in the two L1s spoken by the participants in the discussion; complying with the constrained rules of the ELT classroom, she serves up the correct English word.

In the second part of the extract S3 implements his Explain moves employing a highly effective communicative strategy. He uses onomatopoeic sounds to strengthen the message he intends to deliver (lines 291 and 294). His laughter tokens in both turns may reveal S3's awareness of his unusual (at least in the traditional ELT classroom) – yet playful – fashion to handle the discussion. S3 uses sound effects as a pragmatic strategy, which he employs with great ability. Such skill, according to Coates (1997, p. 83), "is widely recognized as a feature of boys' talk". In my data, though, instances of sound effects are also found in girls' talk.

The extract exemplifies the process of meaning negotiation and the variety of strategies employed by the students to ensure effective communication and mutual intelligibility. Constructing meaning is

synonymous with collaboration; in fact, as Mauranen (2015, p. 45) notes, there is a “pronounced propensity of ELF speakers to engage in cooperative behaviour”. Among speakers who do not share the same common ground and mediate knowledge with their own cultural schemata, constructing meaning may also imply to try out different – sometimes original – paths for accomplishing satisfactory communication. S3 and S6 are eager to give their contribution to the discussion, and to do so they adopt multiple strategies. S6 is a quiet girl who has met the co-participants only once before the spoken activity. She first deploys a repair practice (*camion/truck*), then she engages in a word search (*on a tourist...*) triggered by a minimal hesitation pause on the part of S3; and finally, misinterpreting S3’s self-laughter as a request for help, she completes S3’s utterance in overlapping speech (*it drove over people*). Conversely, S3 is a playful boy who resorts to unusual pragmatic strategies for effective communicative purposes. He first handles his unintentional code switch (*camion*) – which I previously defined as ‘oblivious’ – with remarkable skill by uttering the term as if it were English. Then he falls back on his playfulness to make a death scenario more vivid with vocal additions in the form of onomatopoeic sounds. Both students succeed in making meaning and in getting their message across – the content of the Italian song. In fact, S1, the student who originally suggested the song, acknowledges their jointly constructed utterances in line 293.

4.3. “who cares? we have to think about the fu:t- the future”

In the selected extract a mispronunciation initiates a brief humorous sequence of turn-taking that comprises teasing-like utterances and a witty quip. The sequence is at a fast tempo, resulting from the participants’ competing for the floor.

Extract 3 (S1: Italian; S2: German; S3: Italian; S4: Polish)

- 1015 S1: = [a] who cares? [b] we won’t even be here (.) and = / [a.
Challenge-M + b. Upgrade-M]
- 1016 S3: = [a] yeah who cares? [b] we have to think about the <ipa> fu:t-
</ipa> the future so = / [a. Acknowledge-M + b. Focus-M]
- 1017 S2: = <@> the food </@> @@@ = / [Challenge-M]
- 1018 S4: = food also @ / [Acknowledge-M]
- 1019 S3: <6><@> the future so: </@></6> / [Explain-M]
- 1020 SS: <6> @@@ </6> / [Acknowledge-M]
- 1021 S2: <@> a:h we get the (micky) out of the poor guy </@> @@@ = /
[Oh-Receipt-M]
- 1022 S4: = [a] okay [b] my song (.) there are part of the words like (.) man
don’t worry and going to when this game called life (.) [c] so (.) / [a.
Finalizer-M + b. Inform-M + c. possible Evaluate-M]

A student has selected a song about pollution and S1 and S3 are commenting on a future environmental scenario. In line 1016 S3 latches to S1 to acknowledge S1's Challenge move [a], using a response token (*yeah*) and an exact repetition (*who cares?*), and to express his own idea through a Focus move [b], containing a self-repair (*the fu:t- the future*). S3's mispronunciation of the word 'future' is perceived as a slip of the tongue – 'food' – by S2, who immediately takes the floor: she laughingly utters the word *food* and roars with laughter (line 1017). In the next latched turn, S4 makes a humorous remark (*food also*) in a serious tone, and he follows it with a self-laughter token. S4 manipulates his voice skilfully, which contributes to the humorous effect of his comment. In the following lines (1019-1020) an overlap occurs. While S3 gains the floor, repeating the repair (*the future*) in a laughing voice and recognizing the fun triggered by his own mispronunciation, the other participants acknowledge S4's witty quip with several tokens of laughter. The sequence continues in line 1021: with an Oh-Receipt move S2 laughingly admits that they are teasing S3, yet she carries on laughing. Latching to S2's comment, S4, the student who had contributed to the humorous moment with a witty remark, seriously closes the sequence with a Finalizer move [a]. To this end, he uses an *okay* token as a face-saving device in favour of the entire group, and starts reporting the lyrics of his song [b] (line 1022).

The sequential analysis highlights the twofold purpose of S4's humorous remark (*food also*) in line 1018. First it serves S4 to align with the prior turn, and secondly it allows S4 to play down S3's mispronunciation by acknowledging that we must think about food too. The serious tone of his voice orients to S3's previous utterance and gives prominence to the quip. Along the sequence S4 manages to balance the humorous interactions (lines 1020-1021) with the need to resume the regular unfolding of the discussion (line 1022). His latching to S2 in line 1022 and his Finalizer move denote solidarity with the participant who is being teased and his intention to maintain good relations with him.

4.4. "i have to listen spanish trap"

This stretch of talk sounds as a 'mating dance' that aims to negotiate comity and affiliation.

Extract 4 (S1: Italian; S2: German; S3: Italian; S4: Polish; S5: Spanish)

- 1093 S3: <to S5> what about you? which is your favourite?</to S5> (.) /
[Elicit-M]
1094 S5: trap / [Answer-M]
1095 S3: no (.) <to S5> your favourite type of music?</to S5> (.) yes /
[Elicit-M]
1096 S5: trap / [Answer-M]

- 1097 S1: a:h <7> trap </7> / [Oh-Receipt-M]
 1098 S3: <7> a:h trap too </7> (1) / [Oh-Receipt-M]
 1099 S3: spanish (.) <8> spanish trap </8> / [Upgrade-M]
 1100 S4: <8> aFRICA trap </8> @ / [Challenge-M]
 1101 SS: @@@ / [Acknowledge-M]
 1102 S3: <@> i have to listen spanish trap </@> / [Inform-M]
 1103 S1: <@> not polish?</@> / [Challenge-M]
 1104 S4: @@@@ / [Acknowledge-M]
 1105 S3: <@> i have to listen polish trap too </@> / [Inform-M]
 1106 S5: <@> or french trap?</@> / [Challenge-M]

In the first line of the extract S3 resumes the role of ‘master of ceremonies’ he has played all along the discussion, and turns to S5 to keep up the conversation. Apparently, S3 believes that S5’s answer to his question in line 1094 (*trap*) refers to S4’s favourite music, and this answer does not reflect her own preference, that is why he initiates his turn in line 1095 with an abrupt *no*. In the same line S3 repeats his Elicit move, expanding it to make his request more explicit (*your favourite type of music?*), and adding *yes*, as if to reinforce it. At this stage, the word ‘trap’ triggers a sort of “choric” performance (Firth 1964, p. 112) in all but one participants in the discussion, emphasizing the ‘harmonious dance’ nature of what they are saying rather than the actual content of their exchanges. After a couple of overlapped Oh-Receipt moves (lines 1097-1098), which also serve to acknowledge S5’s response, S3 upgrades the word *trap* with a nationality adjective (line 1098). The use of the nationality adjective – *spanish* – preceding the word *trap* may appear predictable in this turn, as S5 is Spanish. On the contrary, S4’s move, uttered in an overlap and followed by a laughter token in line 1100, may indicate a Challenge move that aims at building rapport and lightening the discussion. Also the stress that falls on the second syllable of the word ‘Africa’ – *aFRICA*, which here serves as an adjective, may disclose a pragmatic choice. All students laugh and start a series of humorous exchanges – a sort of little show – with the word *trap* preceded by a nationality adjective. Jokingly, S1 challenges S3, asking him why he does not also listen to Polish trap, in consideration that S4 is Polish (line 1103). S4 immediately acknowledges S1’s Challenge move with a loud burst of laughter. Laughingly, S3 takes up the suggestion made by S1 (line 1105); in so doing he may express the intention to broaden his cultural horizons. In the following turn, S5 concludes the humorous sequence with a further Challenge move, whereby she suggests listening to French trap, possibly hinting at the song she had previously presented.

The sequence reveals that the participants can manage intersubjectivity in a playful fashion, using Challenge moves, rhythmic repetitions, and humour. They seem to negotiate comity (Leech 1983), namely the building and maintaining rapport, and to create a friendly and communal atmosphere.

Interestingly, their favourite kind of music serves as a catalyst for “a convergence of participants’ worlds in affective terms” (Aston 1993, p. 226). The sequence shows the interactional aspect of their communication and the strategies they employ to “end up feeling comfortable with each other and friendly” (Brown, Yule 1983, p. 12); even their Challenge moves, uttered jokingly or accompanied by a laughter token, act as a trigger to start (line 1100) or to nourish (lines 1103 and 1106) humorous exchanges. Furthermore, their exchanges sound like a dance (of words) performed by perfectly timed dancers (speakers) who act out cooperatively and consonantly.

The little show revolving around the word ‘trap’, accompanied by nationality adjectives, also discloses the intercultural dimension of the participants’ interactions. The speakers ‘play’ with each other’s nationalities, and in doing so they appear to strengthen the intercultural bond within their international Erasmus+ group, in addition to building comity.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The exploration of the ELF discourse naturally unfolded by school-age ELF users under unconstrained ELT classroom conditions reveals that the speakers employ a wide range of strategies aiming to (i) achieve effective communication, and (ii) create a friendly – often playful – atmosphere, negotiating rapport. They tend to use the language in a natural way, pragmatically shaping it for their communicative and social goals.

All speech events show that students generally orient to their interlocutors enacting a variety of practices. They use repetitions and implement Check moves to ensure that a word, or the whole utterance, has been understood (e.g. *do you know what does it mean tough?*); they make the discourse explicit and clearer by negotiating topic (e.g. *eh it’s a good idea the champions*); they draw on synonyms – usually uttered immediately after the original word – to pre-empt non-understanding (e.g. *the melody (.) the tune; the text (.) the lyrics*); they finally perform Try-Marker moves⁴ (e.g. *right?, ha ha?, you know?*) to test whether (i) the listener has well-interpreted the prior utterance (e.g. *and poverty also exists everywhere (.) right?*), or (ii) the interlocutors are familiar with the new referent introduced in the talk (e.g. *refugees on the program that erm closing borders (.) ha ha?*).

The extracts above demonstrate that school-age ELF users may be skilful *languagers*. They make a creative use of the language to give voice to their urges, adding pragmatic strength to the interactional speech (e.g. *now or later*, line 1065 in Extract 1). They sometimes coin new lexical items (e.g.

⁴ Try-Marker move with raising intonation for the speaker to test his/her addressee whether s/he has recognized a referent (Guido 2004, p. 350).

<pvc> *jemmy* {*twin*} </pvc> *towers*) – possibly with a transfer from their L1 – making the discourse flow without interruptions and, at the same time, peppering it. They call on any resources at their disposal that render the talk livelier and sometimes more pleasant. For example, onomatopoeic additions, such as the ones in Extract 2 (<soft><ono> *tu:f tu:f tu:f* </ono></soft>, line 291; <ono> *ta ta ta tu: tu: tu:* </ono>, line 294), contribute to making the unfolding speech more vivid, ultimately impacting more on the listener.

The school-age ELF users involved in the study display a highly cooperative behaviour, not only in word search moments or in interactive repairs, but also in constructing humorous sequences. They appear to be eager to give their contribution to the discussion, either to ensure that communication flows smoothly, or to enhance in-group belonging. For example, in Extract 4 the students cooperatively support their affiliation to the Erasmus+ group they belong to, and create a jocular atmosphere through the jokingly performed Challenge moves focusing on the word ‘trap’. Extract 1, too, shows the students’ cooperativeness within a ‘collaborative floor’ frame. In fact, all participants contribute (i) to making meaning, exploiting the turn-taking mechanism to the full, through latched and overlapping speech, and (ii) to giving support to one another while imagining a future environmental scenario with no carbon dioxide emissions.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that school-age ELF users frequently perform interactional skills to negotiate comity, to establish affiliation with their interlocutors, and to build up a pleasant atmosphere. The participants of all groups appear to use any linguistic resources available in their repertoire to create and/or maintain interpersonal relationships. Laughter is a much-employed device that serves the twofold functions of capturing the interlocutors’ support, and of invoking solidarity within the group in a humorous fashion. The little show set up in Extract 4, for example, displays the “in-tuneness” (Pullin Stark 2009) of the participants who, either laughingly or by means of simultaneous laughter, perform highly coordinated exchanges aiming to lighten up the atmosphere and to foster solidary bonds.

The results of the analysis indicate that school-age ELF users orient to their interlocutors, and generally do not signal any ‘deviations’ from Standard English lexicogrammatical forms as troublemaking for understanding. In fact, the students appear to activate a variety of communicative strategies orienting to content-delivery exchanges, usually glossing over the formal correctness of their message. In one speech event, however, a participant, possibly sensitive to NS encoded forms or latently constrained by the ELT classroom rules, expresses the urge to take the floor and to provide corrections for non-standard linguistic realizations. Extract 2 exemplifies her need to dispense the English equivalent of *camion*, a word shared by the two L1s spoken by the co-participants in the discussion, interrupting the communicative flow, and

leading to a series of Repair moves.

Most importantly, findings show that when school-age English learners turn into ELF users, they put into play their language skills but also themselves as individuals with their own identity, cultural background and experiences. Their robust cooperativeness, both in word search moments and in interactive repairs, disclose the participants' attentive listenership and effective engagement in the communicative event. Findings also suggest that the participants convey their highly interactional orientation through either coordinated dances of words, often accompanied by laughter, or a skilful use of their multilingual repertoire, namely through practices that bring about "affective convergence" (Aston 1993, p. 228). These findings are also supported by several informal retrospective interviews I conducted at the end of each speech event. During the feedback interviews the students expressed feelings of self-satisfaction and a sense of agency, having been the protagonists of a "new" (*verbatim*) language experience in their learning context.

Furthermore, the study offers suggesting evidence for the crucial 'ELF-user' role played by English learners in their learning context. In fact, school-age ELF users act as skilful *languagers*, drawing on their verbal and non-verbal repertoires, and as 'rapport builders', through the negotiation of relational goals leading to satisfactory communication. In short, the analysis contributes to demonstrate that, regardless of their age and their learner status, ELF speakers use the language effectively and efficiently to accomplish their communicative and social goals, and in so doing they attribute legitimacy to their own English.

To conclude, the creative and social dimensions of ELF discourse that emerge from this analysis carry important pedagogical implications for the ELT classroom. English teachers' attention to the correctness of linguistic forms should rather turn to the effectiveness of communication, as it generally occurs in ELF interactions. The spoken activity described in this paper is a significant cognitive-experiential practice for enhancing communicative competence in ELF that should be replicated in ELT classrooms. The audio recordings, along with the transcripts of the speech events, may be employed in noticing and reflecting activities that promote language awareness and thinking about intercultural communication. Further investigation adopting a multimodal approach might explore the non-verbal interactional resources (e.g. gesture, eye gaze) that school-age ELF users employ to make communication more meaningful to them.

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SUBTITLING INTO ELF

When accessibility becomes a counter information tool

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Abstract – This study investigates the modalities by means of which the visual arts have recently been transformed by migration, and how aesthetic transformations within the context of (sub)titling have contributed to re-shaping identities and minority groups in filmic genres. The growing interest in migratory aesthetics has brought into representation marginalised subjectivities (i.e. the lives of Italians forced to emigrate from Libya after the Gadhafi *coup d'état* as the case in point in this work) in ways that depart from migrant depictions in the conventional media (e.g. the news bulletins). Against the backdrop of translation as a form of re-narration and an instrument of accessibility, and drawing on Systemic Functional Linguistics as a method of survey, this study examines the (sub)titling activity in English *lingua franca* in what may be referred to as “accented cinema”, namely the documentary film *My Home, in Libya* (2018) directed by Italian filmmaker Martina Melilli. Creativity and experimentation are central to this work of art, also thanks to the use of (sub)titling procedures employed as aesthetic and linguistic devices that go beyond translation proper while covering the filmic narrative areas in terms of authorial titling and diegetic interventions. Against the normative background of subtitles in English *lingua franca*, (sub)titling is perceived as a practice that encourages the mediation of migrant and marginalised stories, and as a space of re-narration where screen textualities like pieces of (sub)titles give voice to characters’ inaudible thoughts.

Keywords: (sub)titling; ELF; migration; accessibility; accented cinema.

1. Introduction

This study examines the diverse levels of translation that interact in niche documentaries against the backdrop of English *lingua franca* (ELF henceforth). ELF as the language of translation for communicating purposes is placed within the context of audiovisual translation and functions in processes of interlingual (sub)titling and the rendering of off-screen voices, text messages, comments and thoughts which, in the style of digital communication, are encapsulated within the space of (sub)titles (i.e. intertitles, pop-ups). Attention is directed specifically to Martina Melilli’s documentary film, *My Home, in Libya* (MHiL henceforth), a representative

model of accented cinema, with a focus on (sub)titling as one of the most common modes within audiovisual translation which, in this context, is employed to promote the diffusion of socio-political and historical contents through ELF. The term “(sub)titles”, a key word in this study, contains the prefix “sub”, delimited by round brackets. This occurs since the practice of (sub)titling in the documentary under scrutiny entails the spheres of interlingual subtitling (subtitles occupying the bottom position of the screen) and other forms of titling (subtitles occupying the central part on the screen).

ELF is perceived as the language of accessibility (Rizzo 2019a) which has guaranteed the spread of information as counter discourse and which, therefore, has provided visibility to the topic of Italian emigration from Libya (i.e. this highlights the fact that English is used as the means of communication among people from different first language backgrounds across linguacultural boundaries, acting as the international language). In this sense, ELF (sub)titles play a functional role as narrative devices that contribute to the international diffusion of marginalised stories involving exiled people, migrants or citizens who have lost their roots in their countries of origin and have been forced to flee their homeland (i.e. Libya is the case in point).

The purpose of this study is to identify the types of (sub)titles present in the documentary as both depositaries of Italian narratives transferred in English,¹ and as depositaries of unspoken and unheard voices that speak through diverse categories of (sub)titles. These (sub)titles are not very common outside the sphere of niche cinema. Here, the intimate dimension of (sub)titles provides target readers with new stimuli and permits them to enter obscure contexts: viewers are allowed “into the more private world of the characters, in particular [...] to read personal text and Facebook messages in real time with the characters themselves as part of the *mise en scene*” (Johnston 2014, quoted in Katan 2018, p. 66). Against the background of (sub)titling as an act of activism (Baker 2019; Díaz Cintas 2018), interventionism and resistance (Pérez-González 2014), this investigation approaches (sub)titles as spaces of “re-narration” (Baker 2014) which contest and counter argues hegemonic practices (Díaz Cintas 2018; Rizzo 2019b) by means of communication in ELF. In brief, ELF functions as the concrete political device, or the agent of political mediation in public life, and enables the transnational flow of types of activist textuality.

By drawing on Michael Halliday’s (2004) transitivity framework (transitivity as a system of the clause is an important notion of Systemic

¹ The represented country of origin is Libya, and though the protagonist/filmmaker speaks Italian with her grandparents, she uses ELF with the Libyan character with whom she is in touch via digital devices.

Functional Grammar), the aim is to reveal the different process types as representative of the cognitive areas involved in the lexico-semantic networks of the verbal categories that have been chosen to construct clauses and represent experiences of reality. If we consider language as a system of interrelated sets of options for making meanings, verbs serving as processes are fundamental expedients to discover the nature and area of the experiences that their selection has activated. The verbs contained in the stories conveyed through (sub)titles activate counter discourse by setting in motion cognitive areas that collide with mainstream stories. In fact, if, on the one hand, mainstream stories are dominated by homogenising and assimilating discourses which do not take into account individual identities but treat marginalised people as masses (i.e. “The islands have seen a sharp increase in the number of migrants from West Africa in recent months”; “Two children – aged five and eight – and a man and a woman have died off the coast of France”, *BBC news*), on the other hand, stories situated at the margins and outside the mainstream are given alternative voices in the arts. In aesthetic discourse, people are named and are enabled to take on the roles of powerful agents in challenging cultural homogenisation (i.e. “In Tripoli we lived in *Shara Tanta*”; “I was already working as a young boy, then I worked in a repair shop”, *MHiL*).

2. Data

MHiL, a 2018 medium-length film (66 min.) directed by Martina Melilli and shortlisted in the 2018 Locarno Festival, was produced by Stefilm, in collaboration with ZDF, Arte, Rai Cinema, with the support of Mibact, the Piemonte Doc Film Fund, and Regione Piemonte. As both the filmmaker and photographer, Melilli interconnects texts and visuals, thus allowing her work to be classified as an alternative cinematic form of accented cinema. The experimental dimension in Melilli’s documentary is found in the connection that exists between the characters and the photographic images, an interdependence that is strengthened by (sub)titling as a creative tool embedded in the entire work. As modes of epistolary communication and content information, on the one hand, and as modes of interlingual translation, on the other, the (sub)titles in *MHiL* are all produced in ELF as a key function of political and cultural significance.

The documentary film narrates the experiences of the filmmaker’s family as a generation of exiled people, whose stories intersect with the socio-political issues afflicting the northern African country of Libya. Narratives printed on screen and reported through interlingual translation recount facts and events in the lives of the Melilli family. The story is set in Libya (1936) and begins with the birth of the filmmaker’s grandfather,

Antonio, the son of a couple of Sicilian immigrants (the filmmaker's father was also born in Tripoli), and continues until 1970 when the rise to power of Colonel Gadhafi forced all Italians who inhabited the country to return to their homeland. Antonio Melilli is in fact one of the 20,000 Italians forced to leave Libya in 1969, after the Gadhafi *coup d'état*. He was born and grew up in Tripoli from the 30s to the 60s, when Libya was an Italian colony. Starting from her grandfather's memories, Melilli draws a map of the city and its locations of the past and tries to relocate them in the present with the help of a young Libyan man living in Tripoli. His name is Mahmoud.

Martina and Mahmoud converse across virtual spaces of communication provided by the networked universe, which strengthens the computer-mediated friendship between the characters and reveals the difficulties of living in Tripoli.

The Melilli family returns to Italy, settling near Padua, but their heart remains in Tripoli (i.e. the idealised place of a mythical past: “when I was a child, for example, I wondered why we were the only family in a small town in the Veneto region to eat cous-cous on Christmas day”, *MHiL*, 2018). Feelings of belonging, exile and memory are translated through a powerful use of images and (sub)titles processed and compressed by digital instruments. Historical memory of a colonial time and current events are intertwined in the personal lives through the use of smartphones, digital means, and social networks.

3. Accented cinema and the strength of (sub)titles in ELF

“Accented cinema” provides the public with an aesthetic response to the experience of displacement through exile, migration or diaspora. It includes a variety of cinema genres, which are the result of exilic, diasporic, postcolonial ethnic-identifying filmmakers who live and work in places other than their country of origin (Naficy 2001, p. 11). This cinema is often ideologically overt, narrative, based on visual style, commonly authorial and autobiographical. In other words, products of accented cinema “not only signify and signify upon the conditions of exile and diaspora [...] but also upon cinema itself” (Naficy 2004, p. 134). They shed light upon “exile and diaspora by expressing, allegorising, commenting upon, and critiquing the home and the host countries and cultures” (Naficy 2004). Within this framework, ELF shapes a subversive, translated and interpreted language (the language of Melilli's grandparents, and the languages of Melilli herself and Mahmoud), and encourages the spread of counter information across many different linguistic, geographical and cultural areas, where ELF users are substantially more numerous than native speakers of English (Seidlhofer

2011; Widdowson 1994). This affects in particular the dissemination of aesthetic products that act politically using English as a pivot language across niche cultural spaces. In fact, English has made the language of cinema universally accessible across networked platforms and cultural spaces thanks to its being recognised as the language of communication and, consequently, it is used in the translation of dialogues and monologues, in-vision and display captions.

Within this setting, the practice of (sub)titling in English has come to occupy the centre stage of cultural contexts, where (sub)titling activities have been imbued with social significance, in line with the belief that the incorporation of English (sub)titles within artistic products has to be recognised as a fundamental practice for entering the global world. Table 1 presents all the expressions, phrases, clause constructions, tense uses and other elements present in the synchronous communication between the two main characters, Martina and Mahmoud. This is viewed as a form of (sub)titling mechanism which also proves the existence of different linguacultural conventions and a detachment of ELF from the norms of English as a native language. In fact, ELF is considered as the result of the speakers' processes of transfer of their respective L1 textual, lexical-semantic and pragmatic structures into a particular non-native form of English (Guido 2015). Non-standard forms of English in the communication between the two characters is also ascribable to communication processes occurring via digital channels, where language is commonly transformed into a spoken discourse where abbreviations, reductions and colloquialism are common practices.

Adverbial expressions	<i>according to me.</i>
noun-noun (possessive -'s)	<i>granddad place; They don't care about girl feeling.</i>
Clause construction	<i>Video I have to wait ...; U from where in Italy?; But to protect my family must every family have weapon; She's parents need so much money to I can marry her.</i>
Tenses, verbs missing	<i>I never go out from Libya; But if u here in Libya; I didn't used at all [...] how it use; We just cars to travel; It's make ur adrenaline rush; I didn't find the love life yet; Here if I falling in love with girl; I fall in love once, but when she know I am poor; I wish I can hug you now; I never kiss a girl in my life; I don't like girl stay out home after 12; They going to Italy but the boat sink; But u change my life; When I talk with u first time I pray for god; Best friend I have ever; That's mean war.</i>
Wrong use of adjectives, punctuation, definite & indefinite articles, irregular construction	<i>Because I'm Arabia, But Russian or France maybe I have chance; The Internet is problem; There thay, r torture ppl and big prison; I need to see the same Tripoli in past; No power mostly time.</i>
Spelling	<i>The <u>problemas</u> are caused by; Muslim so peace and nothing in <u>goran</u> say do that; I have <u>gon</u>; With mixed ppl Italian, <u>joush</u>, Christian, Muslim; Busses no...Trains no; <u>Thay</u> all diy; <u>Thay</u> on your beach; I will <u>confecc</u> to u about some things; You welcome Martina is an honor.</i>
Subjects/ personal pronouns, third personal singular voice (missing)	<i>Martina, am sorry; Electricity cut off, always cut off; I didn't used at all [...] how it use; In Libya marry not by love but by family and how have much money I fall in love once, but when she know I am poor; Gaddafi make new crazy lows; But u change my life.</i>
Lexis	<i>I will go this fucking country.</i>

Table 1
Digital communication between the filmmaker and Mahmoud from Tripoli.

The (sub)titles in *MHiL* contribute to embedding a set of features within the film, a combination of traits that epitomises filmic productions belonging to the so-called postmodern era: diegesis overtakes mimesis by means of translation, and titling, epistolarity and calligraphic textuality are offered to the spectator and become reasons to classify Melilli's documentary film as what is referred to as accented cinema. Naficy's expression, "accented cinema" (2001), extends far beyond exilic communities, or the accented speech of diegetic characters. In fact, the term "accented" also adds the authoring effect to multilingual dimensions by expressing, commenting and depicting narrative ingredients within film productions through the aesthetics of (sub)titles.

In Melilli's film documentary, the accented speech of diegetic characters is reinforced by epistolarity, which is expressed in different ways: a) through clauses and sentences displayed within textual blocks known as intertitles (e.g. these are (non-voiced) off-screen thoughts or comments, or complementary information to visuals): b) within open black spaces on the screen, where text messaging in ELF occurs between the filmmaker and the invisible but readable Libyan character. Communication via synchronous text messaging substitutes the formal features of traditional letters which facilitated meaning-making exchanges among people who were geographically distant. What we find in *MHiL* is the presence of a piece of writing on screen as a block of verbal text providing the audience with additional or complementary information which reinforces the relationship between readers/viewers and characters.

Seen from this perspective, there is a subtle correlation between the art of subtitling and the level of epistolarity that encapsulates the documentary film in its narrative process of telling stories of migration and exile through (sub)titling processes. In the words of Naficy, "exile and epistolarity are constitutively linked because both are driven by distance, separation, absence, and loss, as well as the desire to bridge these multiple gaps" (2004, p. 134). (Sub)titles and any form of written text on the screen aim to reduce the distance between the author/protagonist and the viewer both in relation to languages in translation and to culture-meaning transmissions. In *MHiL*, (sub)titles bridge the distance between the country of origin (Libya) and the country of arrival (Italy), and take the form of "spoken-written" epistles in the shape of text messages, telephone conversations, comments, headnotes. This contributes to providing a "metonymic and a metaphoric displacement of desire" (Naficy 2004), the desire to be somewhere else, and to re-imagine an unknown territory and other times.

The rich variety of subtitles which cover the filmic space of *MHiL* is thus embedded within epistolary networks which translate different moments

of the characters' experiences by giving access to viewpoints and emotional states that provide intimacy, immediacy, and creativity. In other words, the epistolary form transmitted via (sub)titles reinforces the dialogic dimension of the documentary – inscribing the filmic product itself within a set of dialogic relations between addressers and off-screen interlocutors, and also between addressers and spectators. Epistolarity is thus functional to the expression of displacement and split subjectivity by means of (sub)titles found in various places: they appear as standard subtitles (or forms of interlingual translation), they are superimposed over the images, and the flow of the images is accompanied by the display of (sub)titles that in the form of pop-ups or headnotes become essential, as in silent films, to the narration of the stories. The accuracy of the setting, information, and characters' feelings and thoughts is strengthened through the use of on-screen titling as an instrument of expressivity and narrativity. Thus, blocks of English texts appear in various regions of the film frame in order to visualise speech or thoughts, and facilitate the audience's comprehension.

As remarked by Grillo and Kawin (1981), subtitles and intertitles have the potential to encourage different types of reading modes, which seem to be put into play in Melilli's documentary. On the one hand, (sub)titles stimulate syntactical reading, which consists of experiencing the whole film by listening to dialogues, watching images and reading (sub)titles, and, on the other hand, intertitles inspire paratactical reading, that is, the addition of complimentary elements which are combined consciously and coherently within the film itself.

4. (Sub)titles and narrative levels in *My Home, in Libya*

The documentary under scrutiny makes use of (sub)titling as a site of representational practice (Guillot 2012), and as a site of interventionism (Pérez-González 2014), experimentation and creativity. As already specified, (sub)titles in ELF produce interlingual translation from Italian into English (i.e. standard subtitles placed at the bottom of the screen) and contribute to the communication of thoughts, concepts, memories, and on-screen text messages (i.e. intertitles, pop-ups). In other words, the (sub)titling process in ELF involves the presence of standard subtitling and intertitles or pop-ups aiming to enrich information and to transmit off-screen thoughts. Clearly, the process of (sub)titling epistolarity is an integral part of Melilli's filmic production, given that the intertitles constitute visual and written verbal components that confer an epistolary character to the entire work.

4.1. Mapping (sub)title types

Intertitles are comparable to “pop-up glosses and pop-up notes that explain culturally marked items” (Caffrey 2009, p. x), whereas, in Pérez-González’s terms, pop-ups are sub-types of headnotes which are “placed anywhere in the frame to complement the content of standard or dialogue subtitles located at the bottom of the screen” (2014, p. 154). In *MHiL*, intertitles/pop-ups appear “generally enclosed in small windows on a white background explaining or glossing culturally-marked elements audible or visible in the original” (Perego 2010, p. 53; English trans. by D. Katan 2018), as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1

Visual-verbal pop-ups in the initial scenes in *My Home, in Libya* (2018).

These pop-ups are visual-verbal handwritten blocks of text and can include “traditional (sub)titles, but also any other written inserts, banners, letters” (Katan 2018, p. 65). In Caffrey’s classification (2009, p. 19), pop-ups are not only verbal titles. He classifies them into four groups to mark the differences between verbal/nonverbal, as well as visual/audio pop-ups. Visual-nonverbal pop-ups are to be understood as nonverbal titles such as images and photos (as Figure 2 shows).



Figure 2

Visual-nonverbal pop-ups in the initial scenes in *My Home, in Libya* (2018).

The space of (sub)titling is no longer exclusively *sub* since attention must now be shifted towards new forms of titling intervening elsewhere on the visible screen. In recent research (Katan 2018), titling activities exempted from spatial and visual constraints have received great attention and have been freed from positions of obscurity (Nornes 1999).

Drawing on Nornes's (1999) expression "abusive subtitling", Katan (2018, pp. 65-67) refers to different forms of titling, among which "authorial titling" (Pérez-González 2012) and "diegetic intervention" (Johnston 2014), both of which are narrative strategies central to *MHiL*. In authorial titling, film directors have an authorial hand and also the faculty of choosing how much of the screen can be occupied by "diegetic and extradiegetic additions" (Katan 2018, p. 66). In *MHiL*, the authorial voice of the filmmaker, conversing with Mahmoud living in Tripoli, takes place in ELF and is visually and verbally seen by means of free narrative texts that occupy completely the black screen with the purpose of providing the viewer with the objective perception that digital text messaging is simultaneously reducing the distance between the two characters. In diegetic intervention, (sub)titles have thus acquired a new role (which involves diegesis) and which consists in allowing viewers to read the private universe of characters on screen and in real time. This implies the acceptance of titles as an integral part of the filmic narrative, which, to put it in Katan's words, can be defined as "diegetic nuggets" (Katan 2018, p. 67), since they embrace the advancement of the narration or seek to complement it. In brief, pop-up glosses as the cases in point are allowed to float on screen either as "(translated) dialogue or as diegetic messages and thoughts" (Katan 2018).

4.2. Narrative levels in (sub)titles

The narrative dimension that is constructed through the (sub)titles in *MHiL* includes different (sub)titling genres corresponding to three narrative levels: a) calligraphic textualities/pop-up glosses, b) standard subtitles, c) synchronous texts.

The first category is represented by intertitles/calligraphic textualities/pop-up glosses as superimposed filmed ELF, printed texts edited into the midst of the photographed action at various points and which interact with the flow of visuals, images, photos and faces. This (sub)titling space creates a mental narrative level that comprehends off-screen voices, thoughts, and comments, turned into readable short text types (Table 2 provides the list of pop-ups and, occasionally, their relative images).

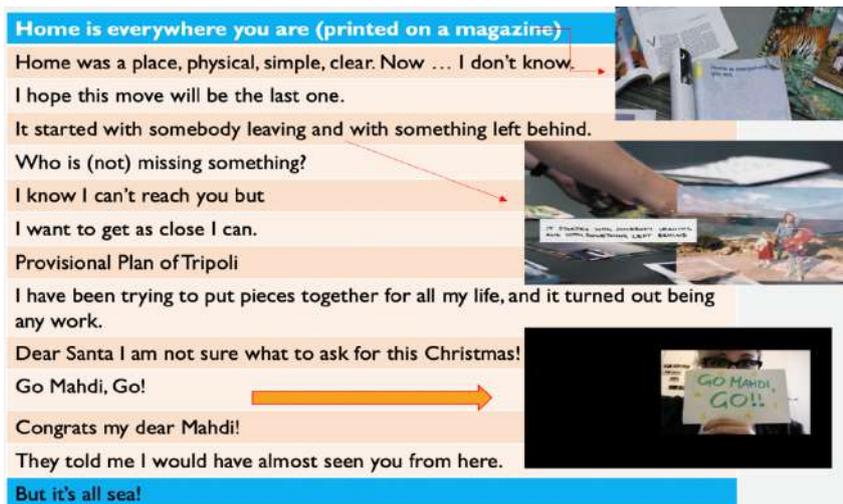


Table 2.

Pop-ups against a white background placed in the central part of the screen.

The second category is represented by subtitles as textual spaces of interlingual translation, where Italian as the source language is rendered into English as the language of mediation. These subtitles, as they are of a standard type, occupy the central bottom position of the screen and cover the experience of the emigration of Melilli’s grandparents from Libya. The narrative level that is highlighted is the ontological one, since attention is given to narratives as stories that people tell themselves and others about their experiences in the world.

The last category is represented by synchronous textualities, where the presence of ELF is very significant, and where the level of epistolarity (letters, telephony, written exchanges of meanings) is reinforced in the central black region of the screen. Here, pop-ups are the metaphorical translations from Italian/Arabic thoughts (the languages of Martina and Mahmoud respectively) into English clauses (as shown in Figure 3).

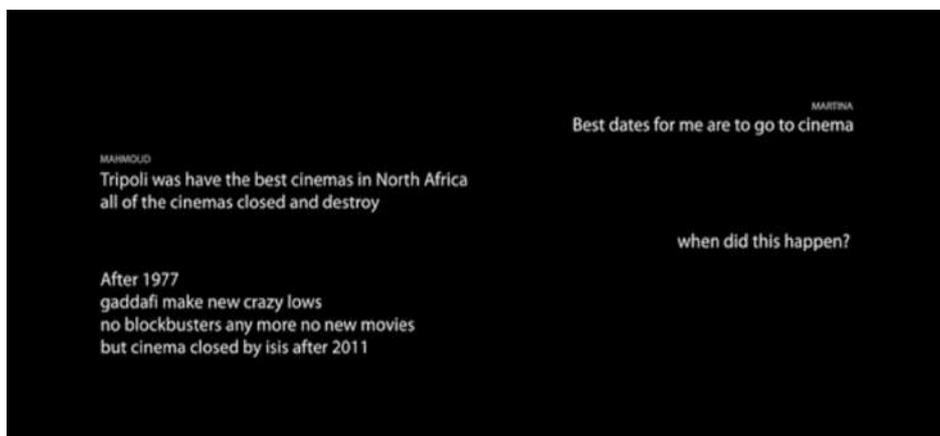


Figure 3

Martina and Mahmoud’s text messaging as forms of (sub)titles.

The narrative level that is highlighted echoes digital communication, and thus enters the sphere of epistolarities as digital narratives, thereby creating a digital narrative level. The three narrative levels are exemplified in Table 3, which is complemented by textual extracts from the documentary film.

NARRATIVE LEVELS	TEXTUALITIES ON SCREEN
1. FIRST NARRATIVE LEVEL (INTERTITLES/CALLIGRAPHIC TEXTUALITIES/POP-UP GLOSSES): MENTAL	HOME IS EVERYWHERE YOU ARE» Who is (not) missing something?
2. SECOND NARRATIVE LEVEL (SUBTITLES): ONTOLOGICAL	-IN TRIPOLI WE LIVED IN SCIARA TANTA [...] (Grandfather) -LET'S START WITH YOUR STORY (Martina)
3. THIRD NARRATIVE LEVEL (SYNCHRONOUS DIGITAL TEXTUALITY):	(MARTINA) -As I can't come to Tripoli myself, I am looking for a person there, who could help me and communicate in English. - (MAHMOUD) -Hi Martina! Ok, I can help you! Why can't you come to Tripoli?

Table 3
The representation of narrativity in *My Home, in Libya's* (sub)titles.

5. Methodology and analysis

In order to determine the cognitive areas or categories that (sub)titling activates through the use of verbs, this study draws on Michael Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The semantic classifications of verbs as conceptual categories on which clauses depend are connected with the identification of processes as components of the experiential metafunction, where the selection of words to express meanings is essential to convey a certain message.

In his functional theory, Halliday (2004) states that “experience and interpersonal relationships are transformed into meanings and the meaning is transformed into wording” (2004, p. 25). Thus, according to Halliday, the clause consists of three distinct yet interrelated metafunctions (the ideational, the interpersonal, and the textual). Each metafunction is concerned with a meaning, and each meaning “forms part of a different functional configuration, making up a separate stand in the overall meaning of the clause” (Halliday, 2004, p. 34).

What is relevant to this analysis is the identification of the ideational metafunction, since it allows language users to present their world experience through the lexico-grammatical choices they make, which are part of the

transitivity system. In particular, transitivity questions what processes are involved in actions, that is, what processes make up people's realities. In other words, Halliday's notion of transitivity has developed a view of language as a meaning-making system with an emphasis on choice, and contributes to construing our experience in terms of patterns of processes, participants and circumstances. In this specific context, SFL is employed to identify the chosen verbal structures in the (sub)titles, considering that the meanings of a sentence and the text that sentences form are arranged and patterned around verbs.

Since verbs (and the selected semantic areas of each verb) are the primary categories which contribute to meaning production and transmission, by employing Halliday's transitivity framework this study tries to bring to light what motivated the filmmaker and the characters in *MHiL* to choose certain lexico-semantic structures rather than others. The survey is supported by the presentation of quantitative data (i.e. all the verbal categories that appear in the documentary's subtitles and intertitles/pop-ups) which put emphasis on the selection of certain processes according to how subjectivities seek to construct their complex cultural and linguistic identities.

Verbs have been grouped according to their frequency in the (sub)titles, and subsequently categorised on the basis of their lexical domain in order to identify the dominant superordinate within the corpus of (sub)titles. The recognition and selection of verbs, as already stated, has taken into account Halliday's systematisation of processes, classified into six process types: material, mental, behavioural, relational, and existential verbs, as illustrated in Table 4.

Material processes	The physical world, of doing: acting, creating, changing, happening (being created)
Relational processes	The world of abstract relations, of being and having, of symbolising
Verbal processes	The world of saying
Mental processes	The world of consciousness, sensing: feeling, thinking, seeing
Existential processes	The world of the existence

Table 4
Processes in SFL and lexical domains in LSA.

As far as the first narrative level is concerned, the number of processes refers to the four most relevant processes – ranging from Material to Verbal processes – and, as shown in Table 5, the highest number of processes corresponds to Material processes (8):

Mental narrative level – Process types
start, leave (2), reach, get, put, go (2) – Material (8)
know (2), hope, miss, want, see – Mental (6)
be, turned out – Relational (6)
ask, tell (2) – Verbal (2)

Table 5
Frequency of processes on the mental narrative level.

With regard to the second and third narrative levels (i.e. interlingual subtitling based on Martina’s conversation with her grandfather, and Martina and Mahmoud’s synchronous digital communication), the highest number of processes relates to Material Processes (226), followed by the Relational (180), Mental (77) and Verbal (35) processes, as shown in Table 6.

TYPES Ontological narrative level	PROCESSES	TYPES Digital narrative level	PROCESSES
MATERIAL 118	Wait (5), live (2), write (2), read, lose (4), ran away, go out, sit, find, ski (2), divide, go up, fire, come from, do (2), go on (2), give (5), stop, enter, bring (3), come (6), take away, turn, buy (2), pass, finish, move (3), check, burn, stay, leave (6), go (8), get married, marry, come back, crowd, tower, build (2) be born (4), continue, start (2), immigrate, grow up, send, arrive, put, hide, work, register, receive, arrest, get (4), watch, work (2), change (2), install, project, meet (3), listen (2), open, bang, walk, rent, take, finish, insist, happen.	MATERIAL 108	Give, work, come (5), look for, get (2), succeed, do (5), study, turn, leave (2), watch (3), send (2), change (3), wait, go out (3), live (7), move, find (4), live out, go (8), work (2), film (2), cut off (2), use, protect, take (4), burn down, put, build (2), marry (3), fall, graduate, make (5), escape, break up, hug, buy, kiss (4), do (4), buy, close (2), destroy, wake up, handle, be born, stay out, sink, die, drown, pray, meet (2), happen, write (2).
RELATIONAL 92	Be (89); have (3).	RELATIONAL 88	Be (76), have (12).
MENTAL 25	Know, hope, want (2), look (4), remember (2), think (2), see (3), believe, forget, help, regret, fall in love (2), miss (3), propose.	MENTAL 52	Help, hope (2), hear (2), know (19), care (2), love (2), think (2), want (2), cause, see (2), freak out, feel (2), fall in love, wish, look, like (2), mean (3), confess (2), miss, worry (3).
VERBAL 16	Ask (2), talk, tell (4), call, say (8).	VERBAL 19	Communicate, tell (5), speak (3), ask (2), say (3), promise, talk (3), call.

Table 6
Frequency of processes on the ontological and digital narrative levels.

6. Discussions and final remarks

The lexical semantic domains activated by the use of verbs that dominate the (sub)titles in *MHiL* involve the cognitive areas of Action, Movement, Change and Happening, that is, the Material Processes (234, total number) which shape the sphere of the physical world of doing according to SFL. This implies that the narratives conveyed through the variety of (sub)titles presented in their heterogeneous forms have been selected in order to transmit action, transition, movement and dynamism. Furthermore, the second most frequent conceptual category activated by the verbal constructions in the documentary entails the sphere of relationality, which comprehends the world of abstract relations of being, having and symbolising, that is, the category of Relational processes (186, total number). In particular, relational processes play a fundamental role in the narratives and shed light upon the user's interest in being either an attribute of something or the identity of something, thus, in attributions or identifications that concern the way in which two or more people or things are connected (i.e. the filmmaker has created a network of lexico-semantic correspondences in terms of absence and recorded visual memories with her country of origin). Results testify to the fact that the physical world and the world of relations in terms of doing, being and having are recognisable as central conceptual categories that describe the cognitive dimension of *MHiL*'s characters.

The narratives encapsulated within the framework of ELF (sub)titles as forms of re-narration have been structured in a logical cohesion in which the characters' use of language implies acting and relationing as acts of doing, attributing and identifying something with the purpose of achieving an aim.

The accented calligraphic epistolary space that is visible in Melilli's documentary film is representative of the modalities through which (sub)titles comment upon or add information to the visuals, and in the way in which both (sub)titles and visuals merge to form one unified text. The use of calligraphic strategies is thus a hallmark of Melilli's cinema, whose final result is to subvert or alter the standard cinematic state of dominant cinema. Melilli, Mahmoud and the filmmaker's grandparents give voice to their future, present and distant experiences of the Libyan universe by selecting semantic categories and placing them within verbal structures that reinforce physical worlds (*doing, acting, moving, going* functions) and the world of abstract relations (attributive and identifying *being* and *having* functions).

ELF subtitles have provided accessibility by actively maximising the dissemination of knowledge and the inclusivity of niche information, and have been transformed into depositaries of authentic narrative sequences of life experiences that contrast with mainstream-oriented products, thus stimulating processes of affectivity. The use of English as a means of

communication has strengthened the sense of foreignness and reinforced the distance between Libya, the country of origin, and Italy, the country of arrival. A type of daily communication deeply rooted in the use of the Internet is able to reach creative and poetical levels, where stories are sewn together through the use of screen textualities that look like pieces of (sub)titles.

(Sub)titling becomes a procedure of transcreation, which goes beyond the confines of standard subtitling and, in this sense, represents a creative activity encapsulated within the filmic dimension in both the initial conceptual and post-production phases: “the most creative and collaborative transposition of meanings and knowledge”, “a form of accommodation, reflux, and change [...], a metaphor for (re)creation” (Spinzi 2018, p. 12). The use of texting as a screen (sub)titling device is a clear signal of the multitasking way we live today, constantly jumping between information streams.

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