

PLURILINGUAL COMMUNICATION IN ELF TALK From Exploration to Application of ELF-Oriented Perspectives

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Abstract – Speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds have increasingly come into contact on a global scale and have adopted English as a contact language, a lingua franca, in contexts where the language is used for various communicative purposes. It is observed that multilingual speakers, belonging to different “linguacultural backgrounds” (Cogo, Dewey 2012), draw on a variety of linguistic repertoires which are dynamically and creatively exploited and modified during the interaction. As a consequence, innovative forms emerge, therefore offering unique insights to researchers and scholars interested in the study of ELF communication. In the present paper, one aspect of ELF communication will be emphasized; the “accommodation” strategies employed by ELF speakers when they negotiate meaning. In particular, attention will be given to “repair strategies” (Kaur 2011) and “cognates” (Hülmbauer 2011) in ELF interactional practices. The aim is to show the “mutually supportive nature” (Seidlhofer 2001) of such strategies but also how the negotiation processes at work are responsible for new lingua franca features. More in depth investigation into the underlying linguistic and cognitive processes which contribute to the meaning-making process in ELF communication will be suggested. It is believed that an enhanced knowledge of ELF theoretical concepts and empirical findings will provide new insights into ELT practices where the role of English as a lingua franca is largely underestimated (Dewey 2011). Results of the initial phase of a pilot study will be presented with the purpose to highlight that teachers’ awareness of ELF features may contribute to reduce the gap between how teachers perceive language and communication and how real communication in the global English world currently takes place. The need to re-examine traditional methodological practices and encourage teachers to engage with an ELF-oriented perspective will be therefore highlighted.

Keywords, ELF talk; plurilingualism; intercultural communication; negotiation strategies; challenging pedagogies.

1. Perspectives in Lingua Franca Communicative Contexts

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) has become an independent field of inquiry and research and has grown considerably in terms of conceptual approaches and empirical findings, especially in the last twenty years (see Jenkins *et al.* 2011; Seidlhofer 2004; Seidlhofer *et al.* 2006). It is interesting that recent empirical investigation within the field is not based on elicited talk, rather on “naturally-occurring” interaction (Archibald *et al.* 2011), which takes place between non-native speakers of English. It has been observed that multilingual speakers, belonging to different linguacultural backgrounds (Cogo, Dewey 2012) draw on a variety of linguistic repertoires which are dynamically and creatively exploited and modified during the interaction. As a consequence, innovative uses and forms emerge, offering unique insights to researchers and scholars interested in the study of ELF communication. The traditional belief according to which communication between speakers of different languages hinders intelligibility is definitely challenged by ELF findings. As a matter of fact, studies (Kaur 2009; Mauranen 2006; Pitzl 2005) have shown that ELF communication is less problematic than expected as speakers

cooperate and use a series of negotiation strategies to facilitate the interactional process and achieve a common goal: mutual comprehension (Cogo 2009, 2010). There is wide agreement among scholars that ELF interactions are “consensus-oriented, cooperative and mutually supportive” (Seidlhofer 2001, p. 143).

In the present paper the “accommodation” (Dewey 2011) strategies employed by ELF interlocutors will be reviewed. In particular, attention will be given to “repair strategies” (Kaur 2011) and “cognates” (Hülmbauer 2011) in multilingual interactional practices. The aim is to point out the mutually supportive nature of such strategies as well as reflect on the extent to which lingua franca innovations may be acknowledged as novel forms rather than deviations from the standard code.

This suggests that an enhanced knowledge of ELF interactional moves may provide new insights into ELT practices where the role of English as a lingua franca is largely underestimated (Dewey 2011). Results of the initial phase of a pilot study will be presented with the purpose to highlight how awareness of ELF theoretical concepts and empirical findings may contribute to expand traditional language teaching horizons as well as reduce the gap between how teachers perceive language and communication and how real communication in the global English world actually takes place. Many issues remain unanswered at present. More in depth investigation into the underlying linguistic and cognitive processes which contribute to ELF communication is therefore suggested.

2. Repair Strategies in ELF

The concept of “accommodation” has been a key aspect in the study of languages and social interaction ever since Giles (1973) first used the term and it has become a central concept in the study of ELF communication. “Accommodation theory analyzes the means by which individuals converge or diverge during an interaction with respect to the language forms and speech styles they enact” (Dewey 2011, p. 205). According to Dewey (2011), “accommodation theory” has provided a framework to analyze the way speakers modify and adapt their speech when engaged in interaction, how they draw on a range of linguistic and extra-linguistic resources by “accentuating, modifying, downplaying” (p. 206) linguistic features. The need for adaptation strategies has been a recurrent theme throughout the development of ELF research (see Mauranen 2003, 2009; Seidlhofer 2004). More recent empirical studies (Cogo 2009; Dewey 2007; Dewey, Jenkins 2010) have shown the significance of accommodation processes in ELF contexts, where a wide number of linguacultural backgrounds are involved (Cogo, Dewey 2012). A considerable number of ELF scholars (see Cogo, Dewey 2012; Kaur 2010; Mauranen 2006; Pitzl 2005) agree on the collaborative nature of ELF negotiation strategies to achieve mutual understanding. By making use of repetition, paraphrase, simultaneous speech, backchannels, utterance completion and various clarification and confirmation checks, participants in interaction actively negotiate to prevent and solve communicative problems. It is also observed that as a result of this, communication blocks are reduced to the minimum. Cogo (2009) provides an overview of the growing body of accommodation-oriented research which has focused on what she calls “cooperative, convergent strategies” (in Dewey 2011, p. 208). These features are often used to indicate to the speaker that their interlocutor is listening and interested in what has been said as well as elicit more conversation or elucidation on some topics (Cogo, Dewey 2012, p.139).

2.1. Replacing Lexical Choice

The following short extracts provide some relevant examples.¹ As we can see below, communication problems seem to be resolved by “repair” strategies which attempt to provide language support when necessary. The “repair strategies” can take the form of “modeling standard pronunciation”, “addressing grammatical anomalies”, “replacing lexical choice”, “completing a sentence” (see Kaur 2011, p. 68). Extracts 7 and 9² are examples of “replacing lexical choice”.

Extract 7

D is telling A, a member of staff, why he likes studying at the institute.

D: we can study until:.... night and you support this study for : er: like eh... er *instrument* like computer:

A: uhhuh... *facilities* yeah?=
 D: = yeah *facilities* (Kaur 2011, p. 64).

Extract 9

S asserts that students need to be taught to cite their sources to prevent plagiarism

S: er: and also we have to teach students that we have to *thank* to the person who created the first knowledge... so we have-

K: we have to *acknowledge*

S: so we have to er: er teach students

K:huh

S: those two things (Kaur 2011, p. 65).

The extracts provided show that rather than correcting for the sake of accuracy, the repair move is carried out with the only purpose to assist the interlocutor when he/she manifests difficulties and is done as unobtrusively as possible, therefore reinforcing the collaborative and supportive nature of ELF interaction.

2.2. Modeling Standard Pronunciation

Furthermore, as shown in extract 1 below, the failure to adopt the correct form on the part of the interlocutor who needs assistance, in subsequent turns, and the fact that the speaker allows further inaccuracies to pass unnoticed, provide further support to the ELF collaborative argument (Kaur 2011).

Extract 1

S is telling D about a border dispute between Cambodia and Vietnam

S: We have the the line: border in the in the map you know

the old map that the: ... *fren*... *fren* [co- co-

D: [french colony]

mm=

S: yes *fren* colony (Kaur 2011, p. 58).

¹ They are taken from a study (see Kaur 2011) in which the participants come from 13 different linguistic-cultural backgrounds studying for a Master’s degree in an international academic institute in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia). Participants were provided with recording devices in order to record themselves in naturally occurring interactional contexts even when the researcher was not present, therefore covering a wide range of speech events, from casual conversations to goal-oriented discussions.

² The numbering in the extracts is that of the original source (see Kaur 2011).

As extract 1 illustrates, although S retains the non-standard pronunciation of the word “french” in the next turn, D doesn’t attempt to correct S further. Shared cooperation between them is once more confirmed.

2.3. Addressing Grammatical Anomalies

In ELF talk, the form considered as the most appropriate is provided as a “confirmation request” or “receipt response” (Kaur 2011, p. 63) and is suggested to the speaker for possible adoption. The fact that the correction is often followed by a response like “yeah” or “yes”, as in extract 6 below, provides evidence that the interlocutor accepts or agrees with the suggested form.

Extract 6

D reminds K of the word limit imposed on an essay they have to write.

D: when- just remember it’s only two thousand and five *hundreds*

K: two thousand five *hundred*

D: yes... words er maybe it’s only:... eight to: nine:

pages: (Kaur 2011, p. 63).

However, when the correct form is not adopted or the original one continues to be used, the interactional exchange does not appear to be disrupted. The focus on communicative effectiveness seems to be a priority. If speakers, in increasingly intercultural contexts, manage to successfully communicate because of the effort they make to co-construct meaning and get the message across, therefore communicative ability should be prioritized over accuracy also in the ELT field. The above examples show, in my opinion, that ELF empirical findings should become part of language teachers’ knowledge and background, especially during higher Education programmes and consequently incorporated into pedagogical practices and transmitted to students in class. Becoming aware that communication via English has changed, also in Expanding Circle (Kachru 1986, 1992) contexts, may encourage teachers and students to re-think established beliefs and purposes and therefore shift from EFL to ELF-oriented approaches. Revising teaching and learning priorities may contribute to develop a fresher perspective on lesson syllabi, course materials and assessment criteria as well as enable teachers and students to become critical thinkers and definitely more creative English users. In other words, teaching and consequently assessment purposes should start reflecting the reality of these new sociolinguistic contexts as well as the new and creative uses of English in such contexts.

3. Plurilingualism and ELF: The Role of Cognates

In order to make sense of each other linguistically, ELF speakers are able to draw on a “pool of shared resources” (Dewey 2011, p. 209) of different plurilingual elements which they manipulate with the purpose to facilitate comprehension. It is believed that speakers exploit all linguistic resources available to them and develop connections and similarities between languages which assist them in the meaning-making process (Hülmbauer 2011). This way “linguistic diversity in communication is seen as a facilitating factor which multiplies the possibilities of understanding” (Araujo e Sa, Melo 2007, p. 18). Therefore, being non-native speakers is not a limitation, rather a valuable resource as it provides speakers with the ability to use their multilingual awareness and consequently enhance successful meaning construction. One of such resources, which I believe needs to be

further explored to better understand how plurilingual communication unfolds, is the use of “cognates” in ELF talk.

“Cognates” are defined as words from related languages “which are similar in both form and meaning and which go back to a common source” (Schendl 2001, p. 17). However, the meaning of cognates needs to be expanded when we talk about lingua franca contexts. The study of cognates in ELF can be particularly useful to gain further insights into the underlying processes which allow plurilingual communication to develop, the objective but also the perceived connections between forms and meanings and the innovative uses which emerge in interactional practices.

When we talk about lingua franca talk, we talk about at least three interrelated factors, two or more different native languages and one intercultural component. ELF users have different plurilingual resources available to them that they exploit in the joint effort of conveying meaning (Cogo, Dewey 2012; Hülmbauer 2011). Cognates which stem from plurilingual interactional encounters are believed to activate lexical inferencing, in other words, guesses related to the meaning of words, by drawing on their “pool of shared resources”. In ELF contexts, elements from different languages are co-activated at the same time, producing analogies between meanings with the aim to support and ultimately facilitate successful comprehension (De Bot 2004; Mac Whinney 2005; Hammarberg 2009).

When analyzing lingua franca communication, speakers’ subjective perceptions are to be taken into consideration, particularly associations established on the basis of plurilingual cues. This is why the observation of so-called “false” cognates can broaden the knowledge of the cognitive processes at work in ELF talk and the consequent results that they produce. A cognate is considered “false” when there is a discrepancy between similarity in the form of the items considered and difference as far their meanings are concerned. When a “false” cognate is used in ELF, assumptions overlap and new relationships are established, thus leading participants to infer meanings.

The following example is taken from Hülmbauer (2011) and illustrates the above concept. It is an extract from an EU press conference on the Union’s energy policy. Here journalists from different linguistic backgrounds interact with each other.

S1: one of the major erer points there under discussion is er (.) e:r the r- the the problem of er carbon leakage (.) e:r and a solution for that to that e:r the two alternatives that have been studied *grossly* are (.) to give er to to grant a FREE e:r er carbon credits to ere r big industry [...] (p. 148).

S1, a representative of an Italian newspaper, provides a comment and uses the term “grossly”, which in standard English code would mean “extremely”, defining unpleasant qualities. On the contrary, in this case, what the speaker has in mind is a concept like “by and large”, “on the whole”, as he builds an analogy relationship with elements from his L1, e.g. the Italian expression *grossomodo* (Hülmbauer 2011, p. 147). The “resource pool” mentioned above is believed to contain at least the French item *engros* as well as the German *und Ganzen*. In the plurilingual lexicon, “words from more than one language compete for activation both in production and perception” (De Bot 2004, p. 23). Plurilinguals are able to establish relations between meanings and words drawing on perceived similarities which are shared by all participants as in the case of the word “grossly”. As a result, successful communication is achieved.

ELF speakers are considered to be flexible, dynamic and creative language users as they easily move between codes and meanings. They are said to have “a greater tolerance for ambiguity because they are comfortable with situations in which one basic idea may

have different nuances” (Lubart 1999, p. 344). The study of cognates in ELF talk, as it was suggested in the present paper, may represent a fascinating avenue to be explored to gain more in depth awareness of how ELF communicative processes actually work. In particular, it may shed new light on issues of multilingualism, intercultural communication and “multicompetence” (Cook 2002).

By its very nature, ELF, is a powerful example of intercultural communication between plurilingual speakers who interact in highly flexible, variable, unstable linguistic contexts “in which different languages and cultures merge to fashion a more complete linguistic repertoire, updated through plurilingual speech in interaction” (Araujo e Sa, Melo 2007, p. 8). In order to better reflect the new communicative processes in intercultural settings, terminologies and concepts which describe “what language users do with and know about language” (Hall *et al.* 2006, p. 231) need to be re-defined and broadened. This would entail a revised notion of plurilingualism which goes beyond traditional language boundaries and replaces the “one language at a time” approach with an “all language at all times” one (Hülmbauer 2011, p.154), in which linguistic elements from different sources come together and contribute to enhance communication.

4. Teachers’ Awareness and ELF

The study of ELF communication in plurilingual communicative contexts does have important implications in the field of language teaching and education. Becoming aware of how the English language functions in plurilingual contexts, the purposes for using the language, the needs of its users, is necessary to be able to cope with the flexibility and uncertainty of the English language. Findings (see Dewey 2011, pp. 216-222, Jenkins 2007) show that there is a strong belief among teachers that the use of non-standard varieties of English in class will lead to communication breakdown. Teachers are often concerned that an increase in language diversity will automatically lead to a loss of intelligibility, therefore the recurrent use of standard British English and native language norms and criteria in their pedagogical choices.

4.1. Data Collection

In order to investigate teachers’ awareness of ELF features and the extent to which their linguistic attitudes determine their pedagogical choices, I decided to conduct a small case study which has involved language teachers working in different degree courses at the University of Calabria (South of Italy). They all teach English to Italian University students, majoring mainly in nonlinguistic subjects (Science, Political Science, Administration Science, Education). Students are required to study at least two compulsory English courses in their undergraduate program and one in the postgraduate. Teachers were given a short questionnaire and were asked to evaluate seven ELF items on a set of scales, an example of which is given below along with the instructions provided.

Please evaluate the following utterances in spoken English on the following scales for *a) correctness b) acceptability for international communication* (meaning by “international communication” naturally occurring interactions between non-native speakers of English in intercultural contexts) *c) intelligibility for international communication d) importance for classroom correction*. In each case underline/highlight the appropriate number.

1.	<i>We need to discuss about the problem.</i>		
a)	incorrect	1 2 3 4 5 6	correct
b)	unacceptable	1 2 3 4 5 6	acceptable
c)	unintelligible	1 2 3 4 5 6	intelligible
d)	important to correct	1 2 3 4 5 6	not important to correct

The other items in the questionnaire were: 2. *Last summer I was happy because I finally took my driving license*; 3. *I enjoy listening classical music*; 4. *My sister has same problem as me*; 5. *Pollution is a major issue and a big problem for the nature*; 6. *In my country everybody have to do military service*; 7. *I didn't finish reading the book yet*.

The questionnaire is based on Dewey (2011) in terms of the structure of the questionnaire and the items proposed, which are taken from Dewey's corpus of ELF talk, apart from the last item which is meant to be a sample of Standard American English (see Dewey 2011). The questionnaire also included general information such as personal details, years of teaching experience, level of students' competence, native language, other languages spoken, previous teaching experiences in multilingual contexts (e.g. where learners belong to different first language backgrounds), and a final section for individual comments. The aim of the questionnaire was to explore teachers' knowledge of and reactions to ELF data in this specific teaching context. In particular, I was interested in investigating what kind of connection (if any) existed between perceived intelligibility and acceptability of ELF items on the one hand, and correctness and importance in terms of classroom correction on the other. It must be pointed out that no ELF training programme is offered to language teachers at the University of Calabria and the teachers who responded to the questionnaire had not been previously informed about ELF theoretical backgrounds or its empirical findings. Moreover, because of the limited size of the sample, the findings, especially with regard to the quantitative data, represent only the beginning of a pilot study which needs to be expanded with a larger amount of data and possibly with focus groups which may provide further insight and a deeper understanding of teachers' motivations and linguistic beliefs. Because of the preliminary nature of the study, it was not possible to run any inferential analyses which may be employed with a larger sample. Therefore, the conclusions drawn at the present stage are inevitably tentative. A further investigation may also look at the extent to which teachers who had previously been exposed to multilingual settings and/or native/nonnative English speaking teachers may be more aware or tolerant of non-native or non-standard language features. This aspect has not been dealt with at present.

4.2. Data Analysis

The questionnaires were sent through emails to language teachers working at the University of Calabria (South of Italy). Of 22 questionnaires, 18 were returned completed. They were analyzed by combining a quantitative with a qualitative approach as shown below.

The table and the graph show the mean scores measured for each of the 7 items in terms of the four categories evaluated: correctness, acceptability, intelligibility, importance for classroom correction as given by the 18 respondents. As we can see, the results point out a striking discrepancy between intelligibility and acceptability for international communication on the one hand and correctness and importance for classroom correction on the other. All ELF items were evaluated as highly intelligible and

also acceptable for international communication, but not correct as language features and in most cases important to correct in the language classroom.

	Correctness	Acceptability	Intelligibility	Importance (in terms of correction)
Question 1	1.94	4.06	5.22	3.00
Question 2	2.78	4.17	4.83	3.06
Question 3	1.28	3.78	5.00	2.17
Question 4	1.33	3.72	4.67	2.06
Question 5	1.78	4.17	4.89	2.44
Question 6	1.17	3.00	4.67	1.72
Question 7	3.22	4.61	5.11	3.61

Table 1
Mean scores measured for each of the 7 items for the 4 categories evaluated.

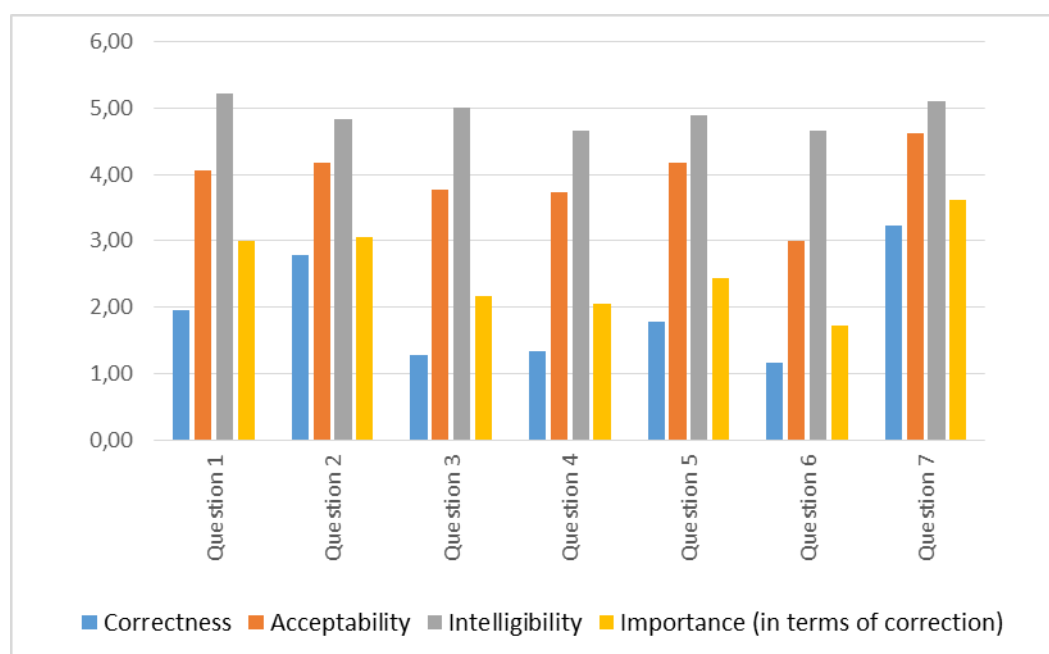


Figure 1
Distribution of the overall scores.

For instance, question 1, *We need to discuss about a problem*, and question 3, *I enjoy listening classical music*, scored the highest in terms of intelligibility, with a mean score of 5.22 and 5.00 respectively. Question 1 was also considered highly acceptable for international communication, with a mean score of 4.06. However, the two items scored poorly in terms of correctness, with mean scores of 1.94 for question 1 and 1.28 for question 3, in this case one of the lowest for this category. The same applies to question 4, *My sister has same problem as me*, and question 5, *Pollution is a major issue and a big problem for the nature*, which also scored very low on the correctness scale (mean scores of 1.33 and 1.78) and much higher on the intelligibility one (mean scores of 4.67 and 4.89). Question 6, *In my country everybody have to do military service*, shows a striking contrast between correctness and intelligibility, the item was considered as the least correct (with a mean score of 1.17), while having a mean score of 4.67 in terms of

intelligibility. This particular result is in clear contrast with current ELF findings which, on the contrary, have shown that the occurrence of present simple verbs in 3rd person singular with zero marker in place of the *-S* morpheme, is a recurrent feature of ELF interaction (Breiteneder 2005; Cogo, Dewey 2012, p. 49).

The only item which had the highest rating (a mean score of 3.22) was *I didn't finish reading the book yet*. On the importance for classroom correction scale, the item got a mean of 3.61. However, as we know item 7 is an example of Standard American English, I believe it should have got higher scores in terms of correctness. I would like to add that 13 out of 18 respondents are native speakers of either British or Canadian or American English as they stated in the general information section. This result probably shows that for most teachers, Standard language norms correspond to one particular variety, Standard British English, which is considered as the most appropriate model to be transmitted to students in class. In particular, in the comments section, one respondent, a Canadian English speaker, reinforced the idea that this particular item had to be corrected in class because it did not conform to British English, which is what language teachers are expected to adopt. As this person highlighted, "In European schools the tendency is to teach British English, where the use of the Present Perfect is quite different from that used in North America. The textbooks that we use in the classroom are all based on British grammar, therefore it would be very important to correct, based on the rules given in a British grammar book".

As far as the category "Importance for classroom correction" is concerned, the results are in line with the previous discussion. The item which was considered as the most important to correct as well as the least correct, as already shown earlier, was question 6, *In my country everybody have to do military service* (mean score of 1.72). It is also interesting to notice that, on the contrary, the item is evaluated as considerably intelligible. Question 3, *I enjoy listening classical music*, question 4, *My sister has same problem as me*, and question 5, *Pollution is a major issue and a big problem for the nature*, were also considered important to correct, (with mean scores respectively of 2.17, 2.06, 2.44) but at the same time intelligible (mean scores 5.00, 4.67, 4.89 respectively). The difference which comes out between perceived intelligibility of ELF items and importance for classroom correction of the very items, highlights a big gap existing, on the one hand, between teachers' established beliefs about how the language functions, the purposes for using it, the models to adopt in language classrooms and, on the other hand, how the language is actually being used by the majority of people engaging with English nowadays in the most diverse settings globally. Becoming aware of the diversity of English in its sociolinguistic contexts, of the creativity exploited by plurilingual speakers in ELF contexts, may be a starting point, in order to cross traditional language boundaries and offer a more realistic picture of a language which needs to be taught differently, with innovative, challenging approaches.

4.3. Discussion of Results

The findings in the present study, though in the initial phase, draw attention to the need to bring more ELF findings within pedagogical practices, to encourage teachers to change their perspectives (Wang 2015) and accept or at least tolerate elements of variability and uncertainty into classroom practices (Cogo 2015, p. 3), in other words, engage with an ELF-oriented perspective. If ELF features, like the ones presented above, are increasingly employed by plurilingual English users who dynamically and creatively move between codes and meanings, therefore this should be taken into account when designing lessons

and assessing learners in class. Maybe, these ELF features should not be marked as deviant or incorrect by language teachers.

If this is going to happen, ELF training programmes at different levels should be provided as well as opportunities to raise awareness of “plurilingual speech in interaction” (Araujo e Sa, Melo 2007) and its implications for language education. I believe that teachers, practitioners, teacher trainers, curricula developers and administrators should realize that the English which is now spoken in ELF communicative contexts has evolved, expanded, to include elements from a variety of linguistic resources. English in lingua franca contexts is a “hybrid”, “heterogeneous” (Cogo, Dewey 2012) system and cannot be any longer described as a distinct variety with fixed norms and rules or identified with a particular speech community (Jenkins *et al.* 2011; Seidlhofer 2011). The traditional concept of a language which reflects “a homogenous grammatical system, a homogeneous speech community, a homogeneous competence” (Canagarajah 2006, p. 211) needs to be revised. ELF definitely calls for a revision of traditional practices and beliefs which are to be accompanied by appropriate teacher training in order to reflect “a more multilingually-sensitive English language pedagogy” (Cogo 2015, p. 9). It needs to be pointed out that the aim is not to claim anything necessarily unique about ELF communication. In its intercultural and “transcultural” (Baker 2015) nature ELF shares features with other types of communication. Yet, what makes ELF unique and interesting is that “transcultural” communication through ELF is played out on such a large scale. In this light, ELF research has emphasized the multiple, dynamic and emergent nature of the relationships between language, communication, culture and identity (Baker 2015) and therefore, the need to re-conceptualize and re-define traditional boundaries between those.

However, if on the one hand, we realize the need to expose teachers to ELF-related issues and how ELF users interact, on the other hand, we need to cope with a difficulty to translate ELF empirical findings into ELF practical pedagogical tasks (Dewey 2015). It is therefore important, as Dewey (2015) suggests, that in ELF research, we do not stop at simply presenting the implications for an ELF pedagogy, leaving the teacher to figure out how and whether to implement it. On the contrary, researchers and teachers should work more closely as teachers need to be constantly trained and guided in the effort to integrate ELF perspectives in the teacher education curriculum (2015, p. 191).

5. Practical Considerations for a Revised Pedagogy

Implementing an ELF-teaching oriented approach, however, does not mean “selecting linguistic features” in syllabi and materials and deciding what should or should not be taught in class (Jenkins *et al.* 2011; Lopriore, Vettorel 2015, p. 17). Rather, it entails a broader shift in perspective aimed at making teachers aware of the plurality of English today and at providing learners with the necessary tools to become competent as well as more effective English users (2015, p. 16).

Teachers and consequently learners, will have to understand how to negotiate different identities and become familiar with different voices. It may be useful to investigate, in teacher training programmes, teachers’ knowledge of the changes that occurred in the English language, knowledge of World Englishes, varieties of English more generally and ELF in particular. Therefore, a newly revised pedagogy should not exclude standard varieties, but integrate the different perspectives within the main curriculum, as an added value, a creative way of looking at the changing scenario of global English usage, from a fresher, genuine, perspective.

A useful starting point would be, during training courses, to expose teachers to a variety of social contexts in which ELF is actually used, either through audio materials, films, documentaries, e.g. news about international meetings where non-native public figures (politicians, artists, etc.) interact in press conferences or use English to communicate with other ELF users, and to stimulate them to observe, identify how people use the language when they communicate (Lopriore, Vettorel 2015, p. 19), “the use of strategies for making sense, negotiate meaning, co-constructing understanding” (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 198). Particularly interesting, in this light, are blogs, Facebook pages and other forms of computer-mediated communication) (see Lopriore, Vettorel 2015 for further details) which offer insightful “opportunities for learners to interact in realistic situations and experiment with the language in ELF intercultural contexts” (2015, p. 27).

Exposing teachers, first, and students, later, to authentic ELF data (e.g. taken from the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English; www.univie.ac.at/voice/ or ELF academic corpus; <http://www.helsinki.fi/englanti/elfa/elfacorporus>) may help them discover the strategies underlying successful communication (Wang 2015, pp. 110-111), “the need to develop the ability to communicate intelligibly with other speakers, despite the inevitable existence of errors” (Bayyurt, Sifakis 2015, p. 129), the need to grow as ELF users. For example, in a language classroom, teachers may have students work in pairs to observe and evaluate the acceptability of given excerpts of ELF interaction and explain the reasons for their evaluations. Teachers will have the role to stimulate students’ reflections and awareness with questions such as:

- What is your purpose for studying and learning English? What kind of English do you think would suit your purpose?
- Are there any features of this ELF data which fit in or conflict with your views of good English?
- What do you think of the speakers’ use of English? Do you like their way of using English? Why?
- Do you think that the speakers have achieved their purposes? If yes, how? If no, what do you think are possible reasons? (Wang 2015, pp. 110-111).

This kind of approach may represent an important shift from a “monolithic” to a “pluralistic” view of the English language which “acknowledges the existence of multiple standards that are defined and implemented differently in different contexts (Matsuda 2010, p. 186). However, a total shift from TEFL to TEIL/ELF is somehow unrealistic, as Sifakis and Fay (2011, p. 291) also emphasize. Becoming aware of an ELF-oriented approach does not necessarily mean acknowledging its legitimacy especially in the ELT context (Dewey 2012, 2015; Jenkins 2007; Seidlhofer 2011). Change takes time to be implemented, it requires a radical change in attitude and beliefs and this does not come easily.

In this light, Sifakis (2014) proposes a “transformative perspective” for teacher education that “targets teachers’ convictions and established practices about teaching, learning, and language use through an action research roadmap” (Bayyurt, Sifakis 2015, p. 119) with the objective to form “ELF-aware teachers” who can challenge and move away from an exclusive focus on a native English orientation (Wang 2015). In other words, a modified pedagogy, which expands and enriches existing practices with insights drawn from the EIL-ELF approach (Sifakis, Fay 2011) would entail stimulating teachers to embark onto a reflective journey during which they start thinking critically about “deeply rooted assumptions” (Bayyurt, Sifakis 2015, p. 120) concerning the functions of the English language, the roles of its users, the pedagogical implications of this phenomenon

and finally, reflect a transformed “mind-set” (Bayyurt, Sifakis 2015, p. 119) into ELF-aware lessons. To summarize, a radical change in ELT pedagogy will start from

1. the realization that English is a major language of intercultural communication between people belonging to culturally diverse communities;
2. the acceptance that such communication will increasingly occur between non-native speakers of English;
3. the recognition that the purpose of teaching English would be to facilitate, in the long term, interaction between learners from different lingua-cultural backgrounds;
4. the adoption of an ELF teaching approach which will include varieties of English as well as locally-emerging features;
5. an awareness-raising of the need to engage with multicultural topics and contents beyond Anglophone cultural norms and models;
6. empowering teachers to adapt traditional teaching frameworks to suit new goals and practices;
7. raising learners’ awareness towards varieties of English and linguistic innovations they will inevitably come across with in the most diverse communicative settings;
8. enhancing learners’ intercultural skills and plurilingual resources and competence (Sifakis, Fay 2011, pp. 292-293).

6. Concluding Remarks

ELF research (Cogo, Dewey 2012) has been providing evidence of the existence of “accommodation” strategies in ELF settings, and in particular, of how important they are in terms of enhancing communication. Focusing on accommodation strategies is fundamental not only because it shows that ELF talk is “consensus-oriented, cooperative and mutually supportive (Seidlhofer 2001, p. 143), but also because it highlights the fact that the negotiation processes at work are responsible for new lingua franca usages which emerge in face to face interaction. The result is not the emergence of a stable variety, rather of a “dynamic pool of linguistic resources that is continually being added to and modified in response to the immediate demands of the interaction” (Dewey 2011, p. 222).

However, these innovative language forms, no matter how widespread they may be, are in contrast with established beliefs and norms of correctness that the prevailing ELT system upholds. The current tradition conceives language competence in terms of a fixed and static set of forms, with grammatical accuracy prioritized over communicative effectiveness. As a result, we get only a partial vision of what communicating via English means. In other words, we do not account for the wider range of abilities plurilingual speakers manifest, their ability to manipulate linguistic resources, to transcend language boundaries, to dynamically move between codes, to expand knowledge and competences that go beyond traditional frameworks (Seidlhofer 2011). Becoming aware of what happens in ELF interactional contexts, and in particular, of the role of negotiation and accommodation strategies, will contribute to a better understanding of how communicative effectiveness and intelligibility are successfully achieved through linguistic diversity.

Consequently, this new awareness will entail a re-thinking of current teaching approaches and curriculum design. A newly expanded curriculum will cater for the diversity of the English language in the contemporary sociolinguistic scenario; its many different nuances, its unique voices. Teachers and everybody involved in language pedagogy should consider that “how much language learners acquire is ultimately irrelevant. What matters is the extent to which whatever parts they have learnt can serve to

activate their capability for using, and therefore for further extending, their linguistic resource” (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 198).

More systematic and in depth studies in the processes underlying communication strategies in ELF talk and a growing relationship between ELF researchers and practitioners, as was suggested, will allow professionals engaged in language education to gain a more complete and authentic knowledge of the complexity of the English language nowadays, a language in constant flux, heterogeneous, unstable, nonetheless communicatively very effective.

Fostering reflection on sociolinguistic aspects of language use should become a priority in teacher education, ELT materials and pedagogical practices. If we raise teachers and students’ awareness of the importance of familiarizing with these new perspectives, they will not only expand their knowledge but will be able to reconsider their perceptions of the English language and enlarge their vision of its speakers. I believe these issues are slowly starting to emerge and to impact on educational policies. In order to be fully incorporated into teacher training/preparation programmes and successfully implemented, major efforts will be required on the side of policy makers, teacher trainers, and classroom teachers themselves.

I believe that the big difference between how teachers in ELT perceive the language, as this small case study attempted to show, and the way in which speakers actually interact in ELF contexts, is the crucial issue to address, in order to reduce this big gap. If teachers are motivated and encouraged to carry out their own empirical research inside the classroom (Bowles 2015), through observation and evaluation of ELF interactional practices, a clearer picture of how an ELF teaching approach can be incorporated and practically implemented in classroom practice may be offered.

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