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Lexical Variation and Translanguagism in an ELF Aware
Perspective: Attitudes and Concerns

Abstract

EU educational policy underlines the need to rethink language teaching (EU, 2017, 2019) in multilingual classrooms and to help learners meet the demands of the increasingly globalized world. This implies raising language teachers' awareness of the emerging instantiations of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) – a multilingual means for English-medium communication – of its lexical variations and of innovative language teaching practices, such as translanguaging. Pragmatics and lexicogrammar in ELF are interconnected, but teachers are rarely encouraged to reflect upon this connection and to integrate it in their teaching. Inset courses for EL (English Language) teachers, mostly non-native speakers, are therefore suitable contexts for enhancing awareness of authentic language use. This is the goal of the ENRICH Course, aimed at empowering EL teachers to learn about ELF and devise ways of integrating it in their English classrooms. The paper reports on activities, forums and lesson plannings within the course that encouraged teachers to identify and discuss lexical variations in ELF, as well as the use of translanguagism in multilingual English classrooms, so as to revisit their own teaching habits.

1. *Revisiting English in a Time of Change*

English "is no longer English as we have known it and have taught it in the past as a foreign language", but "a new phenomenon" now recognized as English as a Lingua Franca (Graddol 2006, 11), English has become a 'shared' language, it has turned into an inherently multilingual means for English-medium communication among people from different linguacultural backgrounds (Jenkins 2015; Mauranen 2018; Seidlhofer 2018) as well as a sine qua non for professional success and social inclusion. Globalized communication is exemplified

by its most prominent linguistic representative ELF, [that] shifts our perspective from language as a territorial concept of local embeddedness (in the form of national languages and regional dialects) to a concept that enables us to both interconnectedness and mobility (in the form of intercultural modes). (Hülmbauer 2011, 45)

Barbara Seidlhofer (2011, 81) further clarifies that

ELF cannot be primarily identified with any of the Kachruvian Circles but is a function of the transcultural exploitation of the communicative resources of all three. ELF thus needs to be added as an option to be made use of when appropriate, and as a conceptual innovation reflecting the realities of globalized communication.

The widespread use of English as a lingua franca, or "the fact that ELF has been appropriated as a global means of communication, suggests that it is not just a foreign language like any other. It is, in effect, a language that has been deforeignized to become common property" (Widdowson 2013, 192-93).

The debate about the role and function of English and of its new identity, does not concern ELF only, rather it responds to an urgent need to understand what English has become for each of us, teachers and learners, and how we can address the current changes it is undergoing, using the tools adopted so far by EL teachers. As described by De Swaan (2010, 72-73):

In the course of the twentieth century, English has become the hypercentral language of the world language system. Even if there are languages with more speakers, such as (probably) Mandarin and Hindi, English remains the most central one, on account of the many multilinguals who have it in their repertoire. This has nothing to do with the intrinsic characteristics of the English language; on the contrary, its orthography and pronunciation make it quite unsuitable as a world language. It is a consequence of the particular history of the English-speaking nations and of reciprocal expectations and predictions about the language choices that prospective learners across the world will make. Even if the hegemonic position of the US were to decline, English would continue to be the hub of the world language system for quite some time, if only because so many millions of people have invested so much effort in learning it and for that very reason expect so many millions of other speakers to continue to use it.

This small-scale research study was aimed at investigating how a group of international English teachers – mostly non-native speakers – participating in a course on English variation, specifically on English as a Lingua Franca through

an ELF-aware approach, use English within the course activities and the course forum exchanges, and position themselves in terms of the pedagogical implications of changes global English is currently undergoing.

2. *ELF: A Stimulating Field of Investigation on Lexical Variation*

The status of English as a Lingua Franca makes ELF a challenging field of investigation mostly due to the status of English as a global language and its continuous process of adaptation in plurilingual contexts and in multimodal communication. Research methodology in ELF studies has been based upon qualitative and quantitative approaches as well as upon aspects of corpus linguistic applications (Cogo and Dewey 2006; Pitzl 2012; Seidlhofer 2011; Gilner 2016). While most of the initial empirical studies on ELF mainly focused on phonology (Jenkins 2000) and on pragmatics (House 1999, 2001), very few have investigated features of lexico-grammar, an area that has become more central in ELF studies since the creation of specific ELF corpora (such as VOICE and ELFA) – which have enabled researchers to identify the following set of general tendencies (Seidlhofer 2004, 240):

– Dropping 3rd person present simple *-s.*
– Confusing the relative pronouns *who* and *which.*
– Omitting definite and indefinite articles where they are obligatory in ENL (English as a Native Language), and inserting them where they do not occur in ENL.
– Failing to use correct forms in tag questions.
– Inserting redundant prepositions, as in *We have to study about.*
– Overusing words of high semantic generality, such as *do, have, make, take.*
– Replacing infinitive constructions with *that*-clauses, as in *I want that.*
– Overdoing explicitness, as in *black color* rather than just *black.*

Whereas Seidlhofer (2004) further argues that these would all likely be regarded as typical learner errors, and therefore, unfortunately, be addressed as an issue to be solved, Cogo and Dewey (2006, 74) point out that they might be of particular interest in that they "provide a description of innovations in the lexis and grammar of lingua franca communication." Recent studies on translan-

guagism (García and Lin 2014; Creese and Blackledge 2015), though, challenge the relevance of an inventory of lexico-grammatical features.

Research on ELF, carried out in different parts of the world, has been geared at diverse linguistic levels, such as lexicogrammar as well as pragmatics, with a particular focus on their intersections (Cogo and Dewey 2006, 87). One of the first fields of investigation on ELF was Jennifer Jenkins's (2000) study on ELF pronunciation, and the use of English in intercultural situations, while (Guido 2008, 2012) investigated its use in contexts such as migration encounters where speakers with different linguacultural backgrounds share English as a dynamic and co-constructed linguistic resource.

Studies on ELF, particularly those carried out by Pitzl (2005, 2009, 2012, 2016, 2018), have also included aspects such as attitudes and identity, as well as the emergence of lexical variation in plurilingual intercultural and social exchanges. Pitzl investigated English as a Lingua Franca, specifically the creative use of idioms, by proposing a

two-fold distinction between norm-following and norm-developing creativity that relates to the synchronic-diachronic dimension of language variation and change [...] on the assumption that ELF is generally effective in communication, in spite of the considerable variability in linguistic forms it exhibits. (Pitzl 2012, 27)

Pitzl (2022) has further added a new perspective in terms of lexical variation within multilingual contexts, based upon an extensive corpus study on the variation of idioms in spoken ELF, warranting a shift from inter- to transcultural pragmatics. This shift entails a change in methodologies used for analysing interactive data.

3. *ELF in Multilingual Educational Contexts: Implications*

Most recently, ELF research has been characterized by a multilingual turn, moving away from the notion of 'native speaker competence' to focus on language as social practice in favour of the idea of 'multicompetent users' (Cook 2002), thus recognizing bi- and multilingualism as a resource rather than a problem (Jenkins 2015, 59).

The pedagogical implications of ELF in areas such as language teaching, language policies, language awareness, multilingualism, and mediation in

plurilingual and migration contexts, have been the object of several studies. Examples of translanguagism (García 2011, García and Lin 2014; Creese and Blackledge 2015; Cenoz 2017), where both interactants' mother tongue and second language "are used in a dynamic and functionally integrated manner to organize and mediate mental processes in understanding, speaking, literacy and learning" (Lewis, Jones and Baker 2012), frequently emerge from studies on interactions in educational contexts, where the English classroom is de facto an inherently multilingual 'contact zone' (Jenkins 2015). However, in these classrooms, English is still taught as a predominantly 'foreign' language, and ELF is not integrated into courseware, curricula, and teacher education.

Research has shown that there is an urgent need to fundamentally rethink English language teaching in multilingual classrooms to help learners meet the demands of the current increasingly globalized world (European Comission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, European Commission 2017). This would primarily involve helping English language teachers, first, by raising their awareness of the current role of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) as the most frequently employed and inherently multilingual means of international and intercultural communication (Mauranen, 2018), and then by integrating ELF language awareness in their teaching practices according to the particular demands of their own local context. World Englishes (WE) and ELF-related issues, however, are, by and large, not sufficiently covered in most teacher education courses across Europe (Sifakis and Bayyurt 2018).

4. *Researching ELF Lexical Variation and Translanguagism*

The *ENRICH ERASMUS+ Project – English as a Lingua Franca Practices for Inclusive Multilingual Classrooms* was carried out between 2018 and 2021 (40 months) in five partner countries (Greece, Italy, Norway, Portugal and Turkey) (Cavalheiro et al. 2021). This paper reports on applied research carried out by the Italian Unit based at Roma Tre University. The purpose of the research was to to identify aspects of ELF lexical variation in recent ELF studies and to explore possible pedagogical implications for English language education.

The preliminary stages of the research involved the Literature Review on English language teacher education (see above) and Needs Analysis. This enabled us to identify:

– the professional development needs of in-service English Language Teachers (ELTs) with respect to multilingualism, ELF and teaching young and adolescent learners in multilingual classrooms, including migrants;
- the needs and wants of these learners, as regards learning and using English.

A Professional Development Course (PDC), the ENRICH Course, was developed, piloted and implemented across the five partner countries, as well as the ENRICH follow up course.[1]

The Course consists of 30 online sections grouped into three categories referring, respectively, to: 'Using English', 'Teaching English' and 'Learning English.' The overall goal was to develop ELF-awareness, here understood as:

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 and Bayyurt 2018, 459).

ELF-awareness advocates not an 'either/or' but a 'with/within' perspective. In Sifakis (2019) words, ELF-awareness "does not seek to replace ELT [or more specifically EFL] but to be integrated into it, to a lesser or greater extent, depending on teaching context and stakeholders' attitudes" (Sifakis 2019, 301). In fact, ELF-awareness aims at enriching current practices with insights stemming from ELF, but also World Englishes (WE), and English as an International Language (EIL) (Lopriore and Vettorel, forthcoming), literature and research (Lopriore 2023; Tsantila and Lopriore 2023).

Each course section includes a video lecture and discusses a particular ELF-related topic and a range of activities accompanied by a Forum open to participants' discussions. Over 350 Participants from the 5 partner countries, as well as from nations like Brazil, Pakistan, Ukraine, Qatar, etc., were engaged in designing, teaching and evaluating lesson plans for their classrooms within their 'Final Assignment'.

Research studies on the new status of English, particularly on World Englishes (WE), on English as an International Language (EIL), and on English used in

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1 The ENRICH Course is now available on the official website of the ENRICH Project, at: http://enrichproject.eu/ (accessed: 01/06/2024).

multilingual contexts, as in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), have proved that integrating new views of English in multilingual classrooms requires the development of new competences. These studies have revealed a need to revisit language education and new perspectives not just for English teachers, but for all modern language teachers, as well as for those teachers using English as in CLIL or in EMI (English Medium Intsruction). English language teachers have not yet incorporated in their teaching an awareness of this new function of English, let alone an awareness of the relevance of the multiplicity of Englishes and of the acknowledged roles of EIL and ELF for plurilingualism and social inclusion.

4.1 *Research Questions*

Within the ENRICH ERASMUS+ Project, the Roma Tre Unit research unit carried out investigation based on the three data sources: data collected during the ENRICH ERASMUS+ Professional Development Course, designed and implemented in the EL teaching and learning plurilingual contexts of the five countries (Greece, Italy, Norway, Portugal, and Turkey) participating in the ENRICH ERASMUS+ Project (2018-2021); data from two follow-up courses; data from the VOICE ELF Corpus (VOICE 2009; VOCIE CLARIAH 2022).

Their goal was to identify aspects of ELF lexical variation in recent ELF studies and to explore possible pedagogical implications in English language education. Particularly, the main research aims of the present study were the following:

– To investigate the ENRICH participants' use of English within the course activities and the course forum exchanges;
– To identify features of ELF instantiations in the course virtual exchanges;
– To determine course participants' positioning in an ELF aware perspective for ELT;
– To explore the activation of ELF 'authentication' processes of the language in accordance not with native speaker norms, but with those of their own L1, as well as the use of mediation strategies to achieve mutual understanding;
– To explore lexical variation in word-formation, e.g. compounding, shortening, blending, use of affixes and borrowings in exchanges, and compare them with those present in VOICE CLARIAH (2022).

4.2 *Research Design*

The first step was to identify features of ELF instantiations in the course virtual exchanges and then to determine course participants' positioning in an ELF-aware perspective within an English language course. The design of the study was thus devised according to the following actions:

– Identification of a set of modules within the course that were particularly meaningful because of the innovations presented to the course participants, for ex. when the notion of ELF was introduced or when teachers were asked to devise specific classroom tasks to develop learners' awareness of diverse instantiations of English.
– Selection of specific activities or forum groupwork where participants were involved in discussions with their peers and had the opportunity to discuss and express personal positions.
– Analysis of the language used by participants in their interventions in order to identify specific ELF instantiations related to lexis.
– Identification of the reasons behind specific lexical choices.
– Analysis of changes in teachers' agency and positioning.
– Identification of possible implications for language education.

The study was carried out through the analysis of participants' discourse as it emerged within their interventions when responding to the course activities, specifically those questioning their ELF awareness and the implications of introducing a diverse perspective in their English language courses.

The hypothesis behind this study was that the participant teachers' responses to a course leading to a profoundly innovative change in their practice was likely to trigger teachers' initial resistance to innovations, thus unveiling deeply held beliefs. The reflective approach adopted would, though, gradually lead to a change in their classroom practices.

The investigation of the ELF instantiations related to lexis took place within the context of some of the activities that involved course participants in specific tasks related to their experience as English language users and teachers. This was meant to elicit their awareness of the English language teaching contexts and future development, of their own principles and beliefs, and of their students' English language experience. Teachers' interventions in English within a course

aimed at developing their ELF-aware perspective in a multilingual context were analyzed and discussed in this research study. In the following section, a selection of the course activities and the findings are presented and discussed.

5. *Preliminary Findings*

A selection of some of the teachers' responses and of their use of English has been reported below. Specifically, Section 5.1 is related to teachers' opinions of their learners' perception and awareness of English and of spoken and written English as used daily in their out-of-school experiences. Section 5.2 concerns teachers' perceptions of their own use of English within their teaching contexts. Section 5.3 is meant to elicit teachers' awareness of their own use of English and their own variations. Section 5.4 is geared at eliciting teachers' understanding and use of terms such as translanguagism and multilingualism. Section 5.5 is meant to elicit their awareness of notions such as linguistic diversity and language variation.

All the findings are related to activities chosen among three parts of the main course – Learning, Teaching, Using English. Each section provides the instructions, Teachers' answers (T) and Tutors' comments (V), which were shared and discussed with course participants.

5.1 *Activity 1c: Teachers' Perceptions of English Language Learners*

> *Think about your own context and provide answers to the following questions about English language learners, based upon your own experience.*
>
> How do learners in your context use English outside the classroom?
>
> Are there certain learners who use English more or less than others in terms of age, gender, interests, family background, etc.?
>
> Would you say that learners use more oral or written English?
>
> How do you imagine these learners will use English in the future, i.e. 20 years from now?
>
> Will the use be the same? Different? If so, how do you think it will change?

Teacher (T1)

I'd say learners use both the oral and written modality, but more the oral one in a real life context.

Comment [V1]

Morphosyntactic variation – plural form missing and misuse of the definite article:
The kids who use English as a sort of life skill are already aware of the importance of knowing it and will grow increasing it in a natural, authentic and autonomous way because it's useful for their life."

Comment [V2]

Possible semantic/lexical variation, most probably she wanted to use master instead of increase.

5.2 *Activity 1a. Teachers's Perceptions of their Use of English*

Think about your own context and provide answers to the following questions about English teachers.

How would you describe your use of English outside the classroom?

How would you describe your teaching colleagues' use of English outside the classroom?

Given the teachers you know, are there certain teachers who use English more or less than others in terms of age, gender, interests, family background, etc.?

Would you say these teachers use more oral or written English outside of the classroom?

Teacher (T2)

I use the English language outside the class usually for interacting with my colleagues, specifically during formal meetings like coordination meetings. Apart from that, I use it on social media to discuss social issues or chat with my foreign friends. My colleagues mostly use English with their own children because they want them to have exposure of English right from the beginning. If things are related to the profession, then we use written English more than spoken; however, when it's about discussing social issues, talking to friends, then we use spoken English more than written. I have observed young female teachers using English more often as compared to others as they are digital natives that's why they feel comfortable in using technology and interacting with others in English."

Comment [V1]

Morphosyntactic variation –preposition misuse.

5.3 *Translanguaging Activity 1: Key Notions*

> *Think about your own experience as a user of English and answer the following questions.*
>
> What do the terms 'language' and 'multilingual speaker' mean to you?
> Could you provide a brief definition of each term?
> Sometimes people use other languages (e.g. their mother tongue) while using English. Why would you say they might do that?
> Have you ever done that or noticed anyone else do it? If so, what did you think then? Why?

Teacher (T2) (approx. one month after the first activity on learners)

A. Language is a flexible social process that constantly adapts to times and conditions. Multilingual speaker is the one who has the ability to move between known languages, building integrated systems of meaning. It happens when the corresponding term is not known and then integrates with a word of one's native language. Personally, more than replacing with a term of my native language I try to find a synonym always remaining in the language I am speaking.

Comment [V1]

Morphosyntactic variation – missing pronoun *it*.

Comment [V2]

Semantic variation from speaker's L1.

Teacher (T3)

Language is a tool of communication and using more than one language is multilingualism. I sometimes borrow mother language words in English as for that particular word the exact translation is not available. For example, 'roti' can be translated as bread but it's not exactly the bread in real.

Comment (V3)

Morphosyntactic and lexical variation, a noun is missing

Teacher (T4)

Language is a set of words and sounds which combined together allows us to comunicate with other people. I know it is a very simple definition but it is the first thing that came to my mind. A multilingual speaker is a person who knows and can use quite well at least other two or three languages beyond her/his mothertongue.

Comment [V4]

Morphosyntactic variation – third person singular.

Comment [V5]

Lexical variation due to speaker's L1.

5.4 *Participants' Voices on Translanguaging*

Part of the course section on translanguagism presents articles and videos. The vimeo "What is Translanguaging?" was part of the teachers' preparation and the following are the questions they had to discuss together in the Forum:

Teacher 2/2
> In Portugal, I have noticed that a lot of emigrants usually do that with Portuguese and French, though. I don't think they do it because they have difficulty with one of the languages. They seem to do it because they are proficient in both languages and they use it without thinking that they are using two different languages.

Teacher 3/2
> Depending on the context, people may use two or more languages, including English, to communicate effectively. I live in a multilingual household, so I switch in and out of languages, mostly English and French, but with friends between English, Hungarian and Russian, too, as a norm. ... It is a natural act, and I do not need to think about it.

5.5 *Participants' Voices on Linguistic Diversity*

In a forum devoted to Linguistic Diversity, a theme addressed towards the end of the course, course participants were asked to voice their own opinions. Their comments are reported below, the most meaningful ones in terms of the participants' understanding and positioning of linguistic diversity, have been underlined. At the end of the course, the teachers' reflections on diversity and language variation unveil the process they have been going through during the course and how their teaching, once back into their classrooms, will be enriched by the experience they have gone through.

Teacher 4/1
> When discussing linguistic diversity, one needs to take into consideration different levels in which it may occur. For instance, having written my MSc thesis on perceptual dialectology, I am compelled to start by saying that, on a first level, linguistic diversity entails all possible varieties and variations within one language (for instance, different accents, different words for the same concept, regional variations, dialects, to name but a few). However, zooming out from a single language analysis, linguistic diversity then encompasses all different languages, be it within one single country or the entire world. That

is, it refers to the variations that enable the existence of thousands of languages times the possible varieties within a single one.

Teacher 5/2

Prejudices against varieties are never founded linguistically but usually stem from social causes. For this reason, people should be most concerned with understanding the nature of variation. Nevertheless, varieties other than the British or American English are likely to have low prestige among learners in Greece as students are mostly exposed to these varieties that dominate music, TV and cinema film industry and which are also applied in textbooks and formal examinations.

Teacher 3/2

As multilingualism becomes an everyday reality, multimodal language use is equally widespread in classrooms. A great advantage when teaching multilingual classes compared to monolingual ones is the fact that English is the only common language between the learners, who are obliged to use it not only for their normal interactions but also as a medium of instruction.

Teacher 3/1

There are no opportunities for the learners to use their mother tongue as there is no common first language, which makes the target language the only medium of communication, thus providing great practice for students. As a result, students' multilingual skills are promoted. In addition, cultural diversity provides opportunities for stimulating discussion to learn and develop an understanding about other cultures through the use of English.

4. *Conclusions*

The preliminary hypothesis that generated this study was that, most probably, the participant teachers in a course leading to a profoundly innovative change in their practice would have challenged their deeply held beliefs regarding their English language teaching, thus probably triggering an initial resistance to innovations. Teachers' responses to the course came out in their comments about the feasibility of such a course meant to sensitize them on the current status of English and of ELF, were quite positive not just in the course final evaluation but in the gradual shift in perspective emerging in the teachers' comments during the activities and the forum discussions.

The methodology adopted was meant to monitor and analyze teachers' responses to the course following the 'path of change' participant teachers had gone through in a longitudinal perspective, according to the order of the main

course components: from "Using English" to "Teaching English" and to the last one, "Learning English".

In each of the three main components, the activities chosen and commented on by the participant teachers were the ones regarded, as the most significant ones for activating changes as the reported teachers' comments prove. By participating in group work to investigate the main features of English variations, such as ELF, and being asked to discuss their responses with colleagues, teachers were offered an opportunity to reflect upon the daily use of lexical variations and how these exchanges would not compromise communication.

Participants' responses, particularly those emerging in the forum interactions and triggered by the questions, revealed teachers' positioning towards ELF, an area they all seemed to be already aware of, while their interest was mostly attracted by the discovery of a field that of English lexical variations, that is very seldom addressed in coursebooks. Teachers seem ready to explore this field as a new way of revisiting their language teaching experience. This position is reinforced by teachers' frequent reference to multilingualism and to the issues emerging in multilingual classes; this highlights the clear concern of the challenges of current school language landscapes where there is an urgent need to reposition English in a new perspective. This can be achieved through special classroom-based research on lexical and idiomatic variation (Seidlhofer and Widdowson 2007), involving language teachers and learners in noticing language variations in authentic spoken interactions in video excerpts.

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