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Variation in the English Lexicon in Educational Contexts: Investigating Conversational Dimensions in Computer-Mediated ELF Interactions

Abstract

In the last two decades, a considerable interest in the processes of variation of the English lexicon by ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) users has grown in different scientific fields, from language teaching and learning to intercultural communication and migration contexts (e.g. Cogo 2009; Guido 2008, 2018; Pitzl 2012, 2016; Seidlhofer 2011; Sperti 2017, 2023; Widdowson 1979, 2003). ELF speakers naturally tend to appropriate the English language according to specific pragma-linguistic goals and structural features conforming not only to native speaker norms, but also to those of their own L1. The study aims to investigate how participants in the Professional Development Course "ENRICH" interact online in a plurilingual and pluricultural context, activating ELF accommodation processes and mediation strategies to achieve mutual understanding or acting as intermediaries. The research focus is on the process of lexical variation applied by ELF speakers with special attention to conversational exchanges and communicative processes, stimulated by shared activities and peer exchanges where ELF instantiations emerged. Data from computer-mediated interactions will be presented and analysed, focusing in particular on how lexical variation and change occur among ELF users when concepts and communication are negotiated to fulfil specific linguistic and communicative needs.

1. *Introduction*

The spread of English as a global Lingua Franca (ELF) and the impact of the related socio-linguistic phenomena are nowadays unquestionable, especially when the use of English as a shared common language is frequent in migration contexts or in multilingual professional settings, such as institutions, diploma-

cy, trade or tourism, where speakers from different socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds exchange messages for communicative purposes.

Computer-mediated transcultural interactions between non-native speakers of English, namely ELF users, are the main object of the fieldwork at the basis of this paper whose leading aim is to provide a contribution to the research studies on the exploration of processes of variation of the English lexicon by ELF users. Data from the spontaneous practice of mediation in online Forum discussions – i.e. asynchronous interactions in Computer-Mediated Communication, CMC – that are part of the Continuous Professional Development ENRICH Course (see Sections 3-4) of English L2 language teachers will be presented and analysed.

Our purpose is to investigate lexical variation in textual processes, stimulated by shared reflective activities presented in the course, with special attention to the interactional dimensions of peer exchanges where ELF instantiations emerged.

In line with research in ELF communication (Jenkins et al. 2011), we expect ELF teachers to present a high degree of pragmatic competence in making their messages more intelligible and adopting suitable communicative strategies rather than selecting and preferring native speaker norms and standards. Mutual cooperation is considered as a pillar of ELF communication (Jenkins et al. 2011) and the implicit willingness of ELF users to achieve successful communicative outcomes overcomes possible linguistic constraints: as confirmed by most research, ELF interactions are usually effective and successful.

2. *Theoretical Background*

2.1 *From Lexical Creativity to ELF Variability*

Various theoretical perspectives and assumptions sustain and justify the rationale of the research objectives, aimed at enquiring into processes of variation of the English language by ELF speakers from different L1 backgrounds in transcultural contexts, accounting for (i) the influence of existing L1 transfers into ELF instantiations; (ii) the co-construction of meaning and understanding in cross-cultural interactions through communicative and mediation strategies applied to the negotiation of speakers' attitudes, emotions, and socio-cultural

schemata; (iii) miscommunication and communication breakdown resulting from deviating interpretative processes of pragmalinguistic dimensions, given that ELF communication is often characterized by challenging accommodation strategies and, sometimes, by cross-cultural miscommunication (Guido 2008; Sperti 2017, 2023).

The scientific debate around lexical creativity and word-formation in ELF uses and multilingual contexts is considerably growing (cf. e.g. Kaur 2020; Widdowson 2017, 2019, 2021; Pang 2024; Mota Pereira 2016; Pitzl 2012, 2016). More precisely, Pitzl (2012) focuses her attention on the distinction between norm-following and norm-developing – or rather norm-transcending – creativity, reporting a series of examples containing words spontaneously coined by ELF speakers during spoken interactions, underlining the fact that the general perception of L1 creative uses and particular lexical forms coined by L1 speakers seems much less controversial than the idea that ELF users may produce and adopt successful creative forms of the language. Pitzl (2012) also underlines how the analysis of these emerging data confirms that each of these new formations can be norm-transcending as well as norm-following (and even norm-reinforcing) at the same time.

In other words, from a lexical perspective, these words are new instantiations that are norm-transcending. It means that the new word was not available before being coined by an ELF speaker. From a morphological perspective, the same words are creative in a norm-following way since they all make use of native English suffixes or patterns respecting a standard word-formation process. ELF speakers coin new expressions according to existing and codified L1 morphological processes and syntactical rules.

Other common strategies used by ELF speakers, as confirmed by the dataset here analysed, include the use of communication strategies at the lexical level of the language, e.g. paraphrasing, code-switching, translanguaging, asking for clarification and avoiding the use of local idioms. In addition, ELF speakers are able to demonstrate a certain degree of sensitivity and flexibility in dealing with cultural differences and changes, by frequently using backchannels, conversational hedging and echoing.

Besides, starting from the perspective of "language contact theory", Pitzl (2016) explores the different idiomatic creativities in ELF and World Englishes (WE) with two parameters: time, and language users, arguing that language contact is "an essential property of ELF" (Ibid.: 295). Her analysis of non-Eng-

lish idioms in ELF interactions demonstrates the multilingual creativity of ELF speakers and its speech communities which is not found in WE speakers.

Moreover, the scientific research confirms that idiomaticity plays an important role in ELF interactions. Seidlhofer (2009) argues that the divergence from native norms is a strategy used by ELF users to overcome the challenges posed by the so-called "unilateral idiomaticity" – a strategy which "may even be harmful to the success of communication, if the participants do not share a similar linguistic repertoire" (Gnutzmann 2000, 358). In ELF interactions where both native and non-native speakers of English are involved, the idiomatic dimension of the language employed by native speakers often represents an obstacle in intercultural communication. The phenomenon of "unilateral idiomaticity" has been explored by means of the Vienna-Oxford Corpus of International English (VOICE) in Seidlhofer and Widdowson (2009) where the two scholars demonstrate that ELF users co-construct idioms in interaction. In these cases, speakers use idioms as markers of a common ground where they interact and mutually share meaning and experiences, spontaneously establishing an exclusive place of reciprocal understanding and belonging between interlocutors. In Seidlhofer and Widdowson (2009)'s words,

it may turn out that what is distinctive about ELF lies in the communicative strategies that its speakers use rather than in their conformity to any changed set of language norms. (Ibid., 37-38)

In addition, data suggest that ELF users try to avoid unilateral idiomaticity respecting native cultural and pragmatic norms, since ELF is more concerned with communication. Seidlhofer's (2011) assumption is that language development in ELF uses is "self-regulating and that the formal adaptations that are made can naturally enhance functional effectiveness" (Seidlhofer 2011, 148).

Cogo and Dewey (2012), studying other crucial aspects of lexis and grammar including prepositions, articles and collocations, aim to identify the relationship between pragmatics and lexicogrammar and the underlying causes and processes that contribute to the emergence of new forms in ELF, which they describe with respect to "redundancy, regularization, prominence, explicitness and semantics" (Ibid., 112).

To conclude, since ELF uses increasingly emerge in multilingual contexts and ELF itself can be considered a multilingual mode affecting intercultural communication, even in the virtuality, plurilingual resources from the speak-

ers' first or other language backgrounds come into play (Hülmbauer 2013; Widdowson 2016). While the investigation of virtual resources has so far mainly been focused on morphological flexibility, Christiansen (2016) highlights their interconnection with the semantic variability characterizing the plurilingual nature of ELF instantiations and argues that:

it is interesting to note that despite the relative "decline" in the dominance of English as other languages, historically and currently important in the real world outside the virtual world of the internet, naturally make their presence felt on the web, the position of English at the top of the hierarchy of world lingua francas seems secure for the moment. (Ibid.: 88).

2.2 *Mediation Strategies and ELF Computer-Mediated Interactions*

In the present study, the process of lexical variation is explored within the practice of mediating communicative strategies.

Mediation has become in the last decades a manifold concept differently explored and received in learning theories and used in international multilingual contexts. Mediation is an underlying notion in many different fields such as sociocultural theory (Lantolf and Thorne 2006a, 2006b), language teaching (Lopriore 2015; Sperti 2021; Stathopoulou 2015); language learning and language socialization (North and Picardo 2017; CEFR – Common European Framework 2020;), intercultural communication (Byram 2008; Baker 2015), translation (House 2014), interlingual and intercultural communication in the field of migration (Guido 2018, Sperti 2017, 2019) and of communication in plurilingual contexts such as hotspots, schools, health, detention and security centres (Coste and Cavalli 2015).

Mediation, however, is a complex process that can be perceived as an active or a passive action, it may be cultural or linguistic, and it may emerge in inter- or intra-personal exchanges, it may involve more participants, their beliefs, and their cultural and linguistic resources, while differently modifying them.

Mediation and mediation strategies are central in communication contexts where non-native speakers interact increasingly using of English as a Lingua Franca. Mediation emerges as a process activated in ELF communication, as it facilitates socialization and cooperation among participants who "otherwise may not be able to participate" (Hynninen 2011, 965). Moreover, medi-

ation in EMI (English Medium Instruction) university contexts is, according to Hynninen and Solin (2018), a language-regulatory practice, a cooperative strategy that increases explicitness and fosters interaction and is thus a valuable strategy in ELF settings.

In this perspective, mediation strategies are related to processes of mutual intelligibility activated among ELF speakers, in any communicative context. Moreover, the spread of online and computer-mediated communication and its effects on human behaviour and communication provide elements to investigate how interactions and mediation processes are affected by these new tools and to what extent they differ from traditional modes, and how they affect relations and the exchange of meanings and concepts.

Since the very beginning of online and virtual learning, research studies have focused on the most relevant consequences of the extended use of technology in everyday communication as well as in the educational contexts. Among the limits noted, the occurrence of information overload, the reduction in non-verbal communication cues, increased misunderstandings, the lower sense of community, the difficulty in communicating emotions, and the lack of higher-order thinking are reported (Hiltz 1986; Eastmond 1994; Stevens-Rayburn and Bouton 1998; Paulo 1999; Nentwich 2003; Moore and Kearsley 2005; Rovai and Jordan 2004).

Data presented in this paper have been collected from an asynchronous training environment. In this sense, it is relevant to consider that recent studies show that asynchronous communication in discussion forums and emails is likely to require more cognitive effort, contain more ambiguity, and stimulate less psychological involvement. Research suggests some solutions to overcome the constraints of this kind of interactional contexts, such as the use of synchronous applications (Hrastinski 2008; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al. 2010) to promote the sense of community and to decrease feelings of distance and isolation developed by asynchronous e-learning environments. As data will show, the same seems to have occurred in the educational setting under examination here thanks to the use of ICTs to involve participant teachers all along the course.

3. *Research Context and Objectives*

3.1 *The ENRICH Project*

Research has shown that there is an urgent need to raise language teachers', teacher educators', educational policy-makers' and researchers' awareness of the current role of English as the most frequently employed means of international and intercultural communication, i.e. a global lingua franca (ELF), in educational and professional contexts (e.g. Galloway 2018; Lopriore and Vettorel 2015; Dewey and Patsko 2018; Sifakis and Bayyurt 2018). In such contexts, English is the language of choice among people who come from different languages and cultural backgrounds and need to communicate.

In light of the above, the Erasmus+ *English as a Lingua Franca Practices for Inclusive Multilingual Classrooms* (ENRICH) Project[1] (Cavalheiro et al. 2021) aimed at developing and implementing an innovative and free-of-charge online Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Course ENRICH,[2] which empowers teachers to adapt their teaching practices in view of the role of ELF in today's multilingual and multicultural contexts, thanks to a network of researchers and teacher trainers from Greece, Italy, Norway, Portugal and Turkey. Data analysed in the present research study have been collected within the framework of an intensive needs analysis (NA) study, carried out to sustain the design and the implement the Course.

The in-depth NA study investigated the habits and perceived needs of over 600 EL teachers and over 500 learners, as well as teaching and learning practices, routines, attitudes and beliefs in the diverse English Language Teaching (ELT) educational contexts of the five countries above – which are all differently affected by recent migration flows and, consequently, by new scenarios in terms of multilingualism and multiculturalism, and representing different foreign language curricula and teaching traditions.

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1 http://enrichproject.eu/ (accessed: 01/06/2024).

2 The Erasmus+ "English as a Lingua Franca Practices for Inclusive Multilingual Classrooms" (ENRICH) Course is currently available through the website of the ENRICH Project at http://enrichproject.eu/the-cpd-course (accessed: 01/06/2024).

3.2 *The ENRICH Continuous Professional Development Course*

The online ENRICH Continuous Professional Development Course has been directly addressed to pre- or in-service teachers and was implemented in 2020 using a specially designed Moodle platform. Even if in an asynchronous mode, modules and activities of the course were designed in the platform to promote successful interaction among participants. A series of activities engaged the participants in thinking about a particular topic each time and then in sharing their thoughts in a specially designed Forum.

The CPD Course used a blended learning methodology in that it incorporates online and offline experience: participant teachers could view the video lectures of each Section online at their own pace, they carried out the Activities in each Section and were prompted to share their thoughts with other colleagues (mainly offline). Along the course, as part of a teacher education programme, the teacher educator(s) or mentor(s) supported the participants, offered advice and stimulated the interaction on the forum.

The course infrastructure was specifically meant to produce an impact on teachers primarily in terms of their professional empowerment and the ability to exploit the benefits of the role of English as an international lingua franca, so as to adopt an ELF-aware inclusive pedagogical approach in their multilingual classrooms.

3.3 *Data Collection and Research Methods*

Data presented in this chapter have been collected during the 5-month course in 2020. The ENRICH PDC was completed by 249 teachers from various multilingual teaching contexts: 96 participants completed the entire course, while 173 participants engaged actively in parts of the course activities. Teacher participants were selected according to: (a) a high level of CPD needs, (b) their experience in teaching migrant learners, such as refugees, and (c) the representation of diverse teaching contexts (e.g., state or private, primary or secondary). Most of those initially enrolled were geographically close to the partner institutions (25% in Turkey, 21% in Italy, 20% in Greece, 14% in Norway, and 12% in Portugal) while some were based in the rest of the world (e.g., 8 teachers from Pakistan and 11 from other regions, including Argentina, Brazil, Indonesia, and Qatar). More than 85% of all participants were women and nearly 60% were 26-

45 years old. Most of the teachers had more than 10 years of teaching experience and were, at the time of the PDC, mainly integrated in primary and secondary educational settings (Cavalheiro et al. 2021; Lopriore et al. 2022; Sifakis et al. 2022). The CPD syllabus included 30 sections in total and was designed in such a way so as to make linear and/or non-linear completion of its sections feasible, meaning that each participant could choose in what order they could move forward, depending on their own educational needs and priorities.

The main input source in each course module was a video lecture which was produced by the partner(s) responsible for authoring it specifically for the aims of the PDC. Various supplementary materials accompany these videos, including transcripts of the lectures, PowerPoint slide presentations, a glossary and other useful resources. Furthermore, each section included the range of compulsory and optional activities based on the video lectures, fostering participants' reflection and critical dialogue on relevant issues – which are at the basis of this analysis. At the end of the PDC teachers were invited to submit a final assignment where they were asked to design, teach and evaluate original lesson plans in their classrooms using the input gathered from the Course and taking into account their local context's needs.

The analysis of the responses given to a series of reflective questions was mainly a qualitative one. Specific aspects related to several key-inputs of the PDC, such as teachers' awareness of ELT, their experiences, their attitude towards the new role of English and about their teaching practices and objectives, emerged from the CMC interactions and provided relevant inputs and hints for reflection. The asynchronous online discussion in the forum allowed teachers' responses to be quite varied and provided insights into teachers' perceptions of their experience as users as well as teachers of English. For example, when asked to interact about the role of English as a global language or to discuss the need of a global language nowadays, the exchanges on the forum were all extremely interesting and sometimes surprising.

The qualitative investigation of the sample of teachers' responses in reflective activities in the ENRICH CPD Course[3] (Sifakis 2009; Cavalheiro et al. 2021) was carried out considering the features of the mediation processes in a

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3 The following data have been collected, classified, and transcribed in order to preserve participants' privacy, though keeping their natural production as spontaneous and non-induced conversational exchanges. In defence of each speaker's privacy, proper names have been erased.

conversational perspective as well as multilingual speakers' turn-taking, speech acts and moves, aimed at achieving pragmalinguistic goals and producing perlocutionary outcome on the interactants. The main actions undertaken during the study were the following:

1. To first identify most relevant reflective activities along the course modules in terms of interactional value;
2. To build a corpus of teachers' exchanges and cues within the selected activities;
3. To look for ELF lexical variation and mediation processes among the participants involved.

More precisely, for the purpose of investigating these processes, a small corpus of approximately 60 exchanges created from the sample of over 2,000 course participants' responses to the overall forum activities, was built and investigated.

The overall corpus-based analysis was meant to monitor and analyse teachers' responses to the course following the computer-mediated conversational dimension where participant teachers moved to share views and beliefs. Activities and corresponding discussion were selected from the main course components – "Using English" and "Teaching English", as shown in Table 1.

ENRICH Course Module	ACTIVITY
1. Using English	***Activity 1: Differences in language use*** **Think** about your own **experience** as a user of English. Taking into account the global spread of the language: • Have you ever had to produce different language depending on where and why you were using it? In what ways was that language different? • Besides where and why, what other aspects or parameters may render the language that we produce different? Reply to this post and **share your views** with the rest of the participants of the course.
1.1 ELF	***Activity 1: Use of English*** **Think** about your own **experience** as a user of English, as well as the discussion in the 'Using English' main section of the Course. • In what contexts is English used around the world, for what purposes and among whom? • Why would you say English is a global language nowadays? **In your opinion**, do we actually need a global language? Reply to this post and **share your views** with the rest of the participants of the course.

2.1 ELF-aware teaching	**Activity 4: ELF awareness in our own textbooks** **Think** about the discussion provided in the video of this Section and do the following: • Select a random activity from your textbook • Describe it: To what extent is ELF awareness integrated in it? Why? Provide two or three reasons **supporting your opinion**. • How would you enrich it to make it more ELF-aware? **Provide as many ideas as you can**. Reply to this post and **share your views** with the rest of the participants of the course.
2.2 The content of ELF-aware teaching	**Activity 1: What do we teach and why?** **Think** about your own experience as a teacher of English, focusing on what exactly we usually teach in our classrooms, or else, what exactly we want our learners to acquire or develop through our teaching. • What kinds of knowledge, skills, values and/or attitudes do you generally focus on promoting in your classroom(s)? Make a short list, starting from the items you feel are most important. Reply to this post and **share your views** with the rest of the participants of the course.

Table 1. Activities from the ENRICH PDC, analysed in the present study.

3.4 *Research Questions*

Taking into consideration the assumptions above on the study of ELF users' accommodation processes and the practice of mediation in CMC interactions, a conversational analysis is applied to the following authentic data, with the aim of investigating the role of cross-cultural pragmatics in the transfer of L1 socio-cultural schemata in speech act performance (Searle 1969, 1983).

The assumption behind the present study suggests that different strategies of appropriation of the English language are activated in (synchronous or asynchronous) interactions, according to native linguacultural schemata and pragma-linguistic processes (Guido 2008). ELF speakers naturally tend to appropriate the English language according to specific pragma-linguistic goals and structural features conforming not only to native speaker norms, but also to those of their own L1. More specifically, ELF users adopt linguistic and paralinguistic strategies typical of their mother tongue and cultural meaning which sometimes cannot be translated; they tend to transfer native linguacultural uses into the use of ELF. In these cases, mediation is applied with the aim

of co-constructing meaning and understanding, and negotiating attitudes, emotions, and socio-cultural background knowledge through ELF. In other words, in ELF contexts participants in the interaction become aware of their need to activate interactive processes of mutual understanding, negotiation and accommodation of their ELF variations.

In this perspective, the conversational investigation considers the interactional construction of talk through CMC. In particular, attention was paid to how users of written CMC adopt patterns of sequentiality, when sequentiality is not directly inferable from the actual ordering of contributions (Farina 2018; Liddicoat and Tudini 2012; Tudini 2010). Also, mediation processes affecting face to face conversational dynamics are here considered in a computer-mediated dimension, where communication technologies allow remote interactants to maintain social contact even if by means of completely new forms of interaction (Erickson and Kellogg 2003).

More precisely, data presented are derived from a wider corpus of authentic exchanges within the ENRICH Professional Development Course, i.e. a teacher education course devised and implemented in five different countries in Europe and in the Mediterranean area, within emerging plurilingual landscapes and new scenarios in terms of English language teaching and learning. The online 5-month course was meant to develop participants' own understanding of the role of English as a lingua franca in multilingual classrooms through an innovative ELF-aware pedagogy (Sifakis 2019; Sifakis and Bayyurt 2018).

When focusing on forum discussions where teachers shared personal views and beliefs about language learning and teaching within an ELF-aware approach, the following research questions arise.

1. Would specific pragma-linguistic goals and traces of transformative processes emerge in teachers' responses to the Course activities?
2. Are the conversational dynamics and the communicative processes affected by computer-mediated interactions in the meaning negotiation among participants?
3. Do course participants, through the use of their different English variations, adopt any kinds of mutual accommodation strategies and lexical processes in ELF interactions to convey their culturally-marked knowledge and beliefs?

The following data analysis, hence, is aimed at investigating participants' on-line communicative practices as well as at unveiling their deeply held beliefs in terms of teachers' language awareness, attitudes and classroom practice, by means of lexical choices and variation, and conversational strategies.

4. *Data Analysis and Discussion*

As mentioned before, the analysis took into consideration the most relevant passages in the interactional processes occurring within the ENRICH forum. More precisely, a special attention has been devoted to the questions geared at eliciting teachers' positioning on the current role of English language and on teaching practices, and to traces of changes and of a shift in perspective, e.g. through the participants' use of lexis and of textual strategies, emerging in their discourse. What follows is the analysis of extracts taken from the forum within the selected reflective activities.

To answer the three main research questions of the study the following elements have been highlighted in the extracts, and namely:

– Double-underlined words refer to modality and marked discourse, syntactic and verbal uses, in order to detect specific structural and discursive features emerging in teachers' responses to the course activities.
– Words in bold signal the most relevant conversational and discourse strategies in terms of moves and acts, mediation strategies, and metalinguistic cues used in response to reflective questions and affected by computer-mediated interactions in the meaning negotiation among participants.
– Underlined expressions signal ELF-oriented lexical choices and English language accommodation used to convey participants' culturally-marked knowledge and beliefs towards the CPD inputs and topics.

4.1 *Extract 1 – Using English: Differences in Language Use*

The first section of the course (*Using English*) refers to the importance of looking at the current lingua-cultural innovations and realizing how English is used, by whom, under what circumstances and with what competences.

Emphasis is here placed on the parameters at the basis of language communication, especially in view of the current global character of English. This section also provides an overview of the subsections *English as a Lingua Franca* and *Linguistic diversity*, each of which focuses on specific aspects related to using English nowadays. This module includes two Activities in total. The one selected for the analysis is the first one *Activity 1: Differences in language use.*

The activity, which triggered reactions in terms of personal experiences as users of English, taking into account the global spread of the language, elicited 108 replies. In the following extract from the forum, nine participants from different linguacultural backgrounds exchange views and opinions triggered by the list of reflective questions given by the course mentor.

(1) *S1 (Greek):* **Of course** I have had <u>to use different language</u> depending on the location and reason for my use of English. My English in the classroom, for example, is different from that with friends (whether fellow-teachers or not / <u>personal friends</u>) – in the former case it is <u>more 'technical'</u> ('grammar-specific'), (more or less) formal / informal depending on the content of a lesson or an activity, while in the latter case it is <u>more 'easy-going'</u>, vernacular / colloquial and <u>personal</u>. In both cases the reasons for interacting / communicating are also hugely different – **in the first case** it is mostly for pedagogical reasons (for my learners to essentially / <u>ultimately 'learn'</u> something or to exchange views in response to lesson materials, **while in the second** it is purely for communication reasons (to exchange personal news, feelings, attitudes, reactions etc. regarding matters of common interest or impact). **Moreover**, the language <u>I have used</u> in a university lecture hall as a student differs greatly from that <u>I have employed</u> in a courtroom, where <u>I was</u> the translator / interpreter in a murder case involving foreigners (mainly Nigerians) living in Athens – the topic / content and environment / <u>'seriousness'</u> / solemnity of the situation / context dictated a different 'variety' of English, **so to speak.** Other parameters / aspects rendering the language we produce different are – **to my mind** – our age, gender, education, mood / state of mind, emotional state, time of the day (at the end of a very busy and tiring day, I do not wish to speak to anybody!), social status, the mode of communication (speaking or writing – **my English right now, for example, is different from that which comes out of my mouth in casual conversation**) and generally, the kind of relationship (formal, intimate, distant, friendly, warm, cold, unfriendly, etc.) existing between me and the person I am speaking to / with.

(2) *S2 (Portuguese):* **Hi there**, **you answered this question in such a complete** and **understanding way** that **it is difficult for me to do it better than you did**. Therefore, I am just going to add something… […]

(3) *S3 (Italian):* **I think S1 has summarized** my way of thinking. **I totally agree with his opinions**. **I use a different language if** I'm at school with students or if I talk to friends. [...]

(4) *S4 (Greek):* [...] There has been another Erasmus program I participated <u>in this time</u> with a group of 6 of my students and it involved a one week trip to a high school in Slovakia where students and teachers from four different countries (Greece, Slovakia, Poland and Spain) exchanged ideas about their countries/cultures, similarities/differences of their educational systems etc. In this case I had also the chance to interact with English language teachers who were from Poland and Slovakia and I had the chance to attend a Course of history in English taught by a Slovakian teacher as part of a CLIL program. **Another parameter that affects the language we produce is motivation.**

(5) *S5 (Greek):* Dear all, **you have made so many interesting comments** on variable parametres (sic.) that affect language use and **I would't like** [sic] to repeat the same things! **I would just like to point on how much I agree with S4!** "Another parameter that affects the language we produce is motivation." **MOTIVATION** is such a strong parametre for using language, <u>among other things in life</u>! [...]

(6) *S6 (Brazilian):* In my mother tongue, **I use a different vocabulary, voice range, sentence construction... depending on whom I'm addressing**. <u>When I'm selling</u> my services to potential clients in multinationals, **I assume <u>quite a professional tone</u>** which is different from the one I use with my grandma, for instance. **Funny to mention that**, in English, I'm **much more assertive** than in Portuguese. Maybe because Brazilians are usually friendly and warm; in English, <u>I don't really think about it</u>. **This thread reminded me of an article** I read recently about African Americans' code-switching. https://www.yesmagazine.org/opinion/2019/12/17/culture-code-switching/.

In resume, **I believe** whom you're talking to significantly affects the communication. Other aspects such as your feelings using a certain language, your background, your (social, hierarchical, etc.) position in the situation, your interest in the interaction (if you're trying to convince the interlocutor or <u>if they're winding you up</u>) have an impact as well.

(7) *S7 (Greek):* **I totally agree with you** S5 that the who-why-where situation of communication <u>affect</u> the language we use. **Thank you for sharing the article**, **too!!** [...]

(8) *S8 (Italian):* **To be honest, I never bothered** to use the English language in different contexts.

(9) *S9 (Norwegian):* **Very interesting. If I understand you correctly, you are saying**, when you use English in the classroom and when you use English on the street with a stranger asking for directions, **it is the same sort of English you use?**

The activity was carried out at the beginning of the course, when participants, coming from different cultural and linguistic dimensions, were exposed to reflective questions geared at eliciting teachers' positioning, and where it was expected to identify their deep-rooted beliefs and assumptions on English lan-

guage use and teaching which the following CPD modules would very soon challenge. In (1)-(2)-(3), in (4)-(5) and in (6)-(7) a sequence of preferred cues may be identified thus confirming the positioning of teachers as for the main topic emerging from the questions raised by the course mentor, namely differences in language use according to the communicative context and purpose. However, dispreferred cues may be found in (8) and (9), where S9 (9) challenges S8's ambiguous statement (8), even though in vain.

At the lexical level, strategies of language accommodation and of mutual understanding are activated as commonly happens in ELF contexts (e.g. *personal friends; more 'easy-going'; comes out of my mouth; if they're winding you up; things in life*). They are activated to enhance mutual understanding as the online exchange goes ahead.

Shared views and exchanges of opinions are maintained despite the online interactional structure. Discourse markers, metalinguistic expressions and intertextual references confirm the initial setting up of a community of practice among participant teachers who interact on the initial CPD inputs (e.g. in (2) *you answered this question in such a complete and understanding way that it is difficult for me to do it better than you did;* and in (6) *I use a different vocabulary; I assume quite a professional tone*).

4.2 *Extract 2 – ELF: Use of English*

The second Section under investigation belongs to the *Using English* component of the ENRICH course. In this segment, current models of World Englishes and International English are presented, and the role of English as a global language and as an international lingua franca is discussed. This section includes three activities in total. The one selected for the analysis is *Activity 1: Use of English* – a reflective activity, introduced to participant teachers after presenting theoretical key-issues in the course module. It produced 85 replies. What follows is an extract from the forum discussions:

(10) *S1 (Pakistani):* In Pakistan it [English] is the preferred medium of instruction, the language of the elite, and one of the official languages. I grew up speaking both Urdu and English at home and **if I try and think back I think** I did not differentiate between the two for a long time. That distinction came in when I started school and was penalized by the nuns for talking to my friends in Urdu during recess. **I certainly**

think that it is a global language. English is used across the world as a medium of communication. **Of course** it is the language of Academia and Research, but it is also the language of transactions, trade, current affairs, people from different cultures and background to communicate with each other.

(11) *S2 (Qatari):* **I would like to disagree with your statement** "it is the preferred medium of instruction". Yes, it may be used in countable school systems and elite educational centers, **but it is not a preferred medium of instruction in Pakistan. I would like to refer you to** some recent publications that highlight how English is perceived and used in Pakistan's education system.

(12) *S4 (Portuguese):* **Interesting point of view. I <u>would</u> debate a little bit more on** the effects of the diaspora, those, are **to me**, an important part of the effects of a lingua franca. A people's identity is their own language, **what are the consequences of a uniform world, with a uniform language?**

(13) *S5 (Norwegian):* English is used around the world for business, political, social purposes. It is used by people from all of life's **social-economic stratas. Yes** English is a global language and **yes I do consider that** a global language is beneficial, however **I do not believe** it **needs** to be restricted to only 1 language or that English is necessarily best suited for the task. **My concern with** the push for English as a global language and the cultural associations implicitly endorsed/encouraged by this, is that students <u>may</u> come to consider their own language or dialect and ergo culture as less valuable, which **of course** is connected historically to colonisation and the suppression of other peoples' language, culture etc. Historically English hasn't been the only global language, and in certain contexts, for example the Olympics is shared with other languages, ie French.

(14) *S6 (Portuguese):* **Hello, S4, you have raised an important question**. When we investigate how many native speakers of other languages are there in the world, we have Mandarin Chinese, English, Hindustani, Spanish, Arabic and Portuguese, etc. **I am not even going to discuss** the numbers, because it seems that there is no consensus. These too are global languages, but for their nature, its level of difficulty or political/historical contexts it seems that English is in a way **some sort of lingua franca of the occidental world. I think that** a lingua franca does not threaten a dialect or our own language, **even though** our globalized world leads to some sort of uniformization, languages, dialects and traditions seem to be alive too. Languages are not a fixed organism, they are alive and change throughout the years, and **I think that** is where the beauty remains. **If a lingua franca is used to establish peaceful relationships, push forward investigation and science, isn't t it wonderful? Thank you for your insight, we have similar views and it made me reflect upon this.** Cheers, S6.

The set of reflective questions posed in this module is absolutely crucial for the progress of the CPD Course: traces of changes and of a shift in perspec-

tive taking place through the participants' use of eliciting and summoning moves (e.g. *I would like to disagree with your statement; I would debate a little bit more on; you have raised an important question*), along with ELF related terminology, acquired throughout the PDC, emerging in their exchanges (e.g. *medium of instruction, diasporas, standards, NNS*). The lively turn-taking in (10)-(13) is particularly interesting and reveals teachers' serious commitment and disposition to face issues related to their role as users as well as teachers of English. Challenging moves in (14) confirm the involvement and the interest emerged in the previous exchange. Moreover, textual markers and verbs referred to mental processes (e.g. *if I try and think back I think; I do consider that; it made me reflect upon this*) also signal teachers' agency in a process of gradual transition from previous beliefs to shifts in perspective. Thus, to answer the three main research questions, it is useful to observe how participants adopt multiple accommodation strategies and mediation processes to convey their culturally-marked knowledge and beliefs and to share views and attitudes all along the course.

4.3. *Extract 3 – ELF-Aware Teaching: ELF Awareness in our own Textbooks*

The third case under examination focuses on defining the concept of *ELF Awareness* and, in particular, the concept of *ELF-aware teaching*, as a process whereby insights drawn from research on ELF are integrated in current English as a Foreign Language (EFL) practices (Sifakis 2019). Special emphasis is placed on the three components of the concept of ELF awareness, namely "awareness of language and language use", "awareness of instructional practice" and "awareness of learning", and on what each of them involves in the language classroom. Specific examples of the ways in which textbook inputs and activities can be enriched and implemented from an ELF-aware perspective are provided. This section also provides an overview of the aims of the subsections *ELF-Aware Teaching*, *The Content of ELF-Aware Teaching*, *Methodology in ELF-Aware Teaching*, *Language Assessment* and *Lesson Planning and Evaluation*, each focusing on specific aspects related to teaching English. This complex and articulated module includes four Activities in total. The one selected for the analysis is *Activity 4: ELF Awareness in our own Textbooks*

The activity involved teachers in the selection of appropriate examples from their textbooks to establish to what extent ELF awareness is integrated in them. A total of 106 replies are reported in the Forum. The following is an example of a free computer-mediated exchange of opinions and mediation of communication.

(15) *S1 (Greek):* I have chosen the reading " Picasso's Guernica " which is on page 86 in Think Teen students' book for the second grade of Junior High School. Together with the text the students are given a copy of the painting for observation purposes. The text describes Picasso's famous painting " Guernica " which shows the devastation of the Spanish town and the suffering people and animals have experienced. In this painting, Picasso wants to highlight the horrible aftereffects of every war**. ELF awareness is integrated in this text as the questions to be answered are clearly metacognitive questions** [Image]

(16) *S2 (Portuguese):* **I think you added some good questions, but I do not see how** they fit in an ELF-aware perspective. For example, **how <u>can </u>questions** such as "1. What is the main idea of the text?" or " 4. Why do people make war?" **be considered metalinguistic questions? And I agree that** "5. What do you think about war? " is a metacognitive question **but I don't think it <u>would</u>** be a question asked to explore an ELF perspective (**unless you want to** use it as a starting point to talk about immigrants and/or refugees). [...]

(17) *S3 (Portuguese):* The following example was taken from the 3rd grade course book, *Let's Rock*, adopted at my school. The theme of this section on the unit is Countries and Nationalities. The dialogue shows different cultural habits of various characters. In this page students <u>can </u>learn about people of different nationalities having different cultural habits. **This <u>will</u> certainly** lead to self-awareness of the ELF. **Of course**, the teacher's role is to bring out and develop this awareness in these very young learners. As this is a competition, the class <u>will</u> be challenged to play the role of different nationalities, taking different characteristics that represent <u>de</u> [sic] culture and habits of the countries chosen. To be more interactive and productive this <u>could</u> be made in group work. Students <u>will</u> prepare short dialogues and role play them in a contest.

(18) *S4 (Portuguese)*: Hi, S3. **I'm sorry but I do not agree that ELF-awareness is integrated in this activity. I think that** it is aimed at developing intercultural awareness, **but I also think that** the text fails at it since there are several stereotypes represented in the text. **However, I believe you <u>can</u> use it anyway** (I also use this coursebook with my 3rd graders) and ask them some metalinguistic and metacognitive questions and <u>try to</u> talk to them about preconceptions. **This <u>would</u> be extremely difficult** to do using English, **of course**, because these students are beginners. **But maybe** you <u>could</u> use some Portuguese, too. **I guess** it depends on <u>much mother-tongue</u> **you think we should** use in an EFL classroom.

The analysis of teachers' responses to the course revealed signs of change particularly in their responses in the transition from the first section, where they were stimulated by means of reflective activities based on their role of users of the English language, to the second one, where they were asked to identify the challenges of an ELF aware approach and how they could revisit their lessons using this new perspective.

In the previous extract, participants are presenting their possible practical implementations of an ELF-aware approach in their classroom. The activity inevitably elicited participants' agency, awareness and ownership, that would unveil shifts in their understanding and commitment to the innovation triggered by the course content. In (15)-(18) teachers do not hesitate to signal their disagreement, probably encouraged by the asynchronous online environment (Baron 2000; Crystal 2006). However, mediation strategies are repeatedly applied to negotiate meaning and communication so as to avoid misunderstandings (e.g. *I think you added some good questions, but...; and I agree that...but I don't think it would..., unless you want to...*).

At the lexical level, expressions and patterns used in the exchange refer to the ELF-oriented and ELF-aware terminology which teachers confidently use to discuss and mediate their views (e.g. *ELF awareness, metacognitive questions, metalinguistic questions, ELF perspective, role play, intercultural awareness, EFL classroom*).

At the syntactic level, modal verbs are more frequently used and varied, and the verbal structure reveals the transformative process which was at the basis of the ENRICH CPD as it was inherently embedded within a "reflective, inquiry-oriented teacher education" (Manzano Vázquez 2016, 9) that promotes individual theory-building and effective collaboration among ELTs engaged in diverse English language using, teaching and learning contexts (e.g. *I think you added; but I do not see how; I don't think it would be; this would be extremely difficult; I guess it depends on*).

The data collected from this extract reveal how the online interactional dimension fosters cooperative learning and critical thinking in teacher training, also in terms of degree of awareness and reactions to the course inputs, especially in a pluricultural context here represented by different socio-cultural and professional backgrounds.

4.4 *Extract 4 - The Content of ELF-Aware Teaching: What do we Teach and Why?*

The last section under investigation belongs to the *Teaching English* component of the ENRICH Course and discusses the content of ELF-aware teaching, namely the kind of input that could be employed in English Language Teaching (ELT) activities which integrate insights gained from ELF. Special emphasis is placed on the general competences as well as on the communicative language competences which ELT aims at developing and on the ways these could be viewed from an ELF-aware perspective. In this regard, this Section highlights the ways in which the content of typical English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching can be enriched to address more effectively the needs of the learners in today's multilingual and multicultural world. This Section includes three Activities in total. The one under investigation here is *Activity 1: What do we teach and why?*

The activity, carried out in the second part of the Course, contains a list of reflective questions which triggered teachers' contributions to the debate about their role of teachers of English, focusing on what exactly they teach in their classrooms, and what exactly they want their learners to acquire or develop through their teaching. The forum discussion produced 48 replies. In the following exchange participants share opinions and experience from their classrooms.

(19) *S1 (Greek):* **I don't believe** my students <u>should</u> be as close as native speakers of English **because native speakers <u>can</u> be far from 'ideal'! Which** native speaker is the 'best model' to follow in any case, with which accent, from what area of the UK, USA, Australia etc.**?** Using English in an 'ideal' way, **to me,** means to be able to use it successfully according to one's needs at a given situation and time. **In other words**, I **try** to meet my students' present and future needs which may include taking a certification as a future professional qualification, **being able to** communicate effectively and perform group work activities with peers when participating in twinning/Erasmus+ projects, watching videos/films without subtitles, reading literature in English, travelling/studying/working abroad or in multilingual contexts.

(20) *S2 (Turkish):* **I strongly agree with S1**. **As we discussed previously** needs analysis is the key to adapt our teaching strategies.

(21) *S3 (Portuguese):* **To start with, I <u>would</u> say** that sometimes what I teach and what I envisage for my students is not exactly the same. <u>Not once, nor twice</u> have <u>I felt caught in a predicament</u> between **what I believe** is best and more helpful for my students and obsolete educational guidelines foisted upon me by government policies. **Yet, despite**

some **"bumps in the road" what I try to focus on** is speaking (intelligibility); language proficiency (linguistic, strategic and intercultural competences); critical thinking. My teaching practices do not focus on the development of **native-like competence**, at all. In a world where NNS clearly surpass their NS counterparts is it acceptable, even desirable, that the latter impose their linguistic standards upon the former? **I do not think so.** The globalised ELT classroom aims at preparing students for spoken interaction between NNS-NNS and NNS-NS, which do not necessarily conform to, and do not have to, norm-providing models. In the same vein, **I do not agree that** a NS is the **ideal user** of language. **Several studies have shown** that many NS of English have been rated as the least intelligible speakers, thus failing to be **"the" ideal user** of the language.

(22) S4 (*Greek*): **Dear colleague, S1 what you write in the first paragraph reminds me of my own thoughts and feelings** – a situation that **bothers me, too**. Sometimes I even feel angry and helpless, **thinking whether I <u>should</u> give up and do exactly as I am told or keep "fighting" for what I believe is right …**

The list of questions put at the beginning of this section of the Course is particularly complex and demanding. Teachers are asked to carefully explore their self-awareness in terms of what and why they teach, and their responses unveil teachers' commitment to the relevance of being close to their learners and to their real communicative needs. Their deep involvement and agency emerge in the use of: lexical choices (e.g. *angry; helpless; predicament; give up; obsolete; foisted*), discourse markers (e.g. *to me; in other words; to start with*), creative idiomaticity (e.g. *far from 'ideal'; not once, nor twice; I felt caught in a predicament; "bumps in the road"; keep "fighting" for*), deontic modality (e.g. *would; should*), reformulations and rhetorical questions (e.g. *in other words, I try to; is it acceptable, even desirable, that the latter impose their linguistic standards upon the former? I do not think so*), and verbs of mental processes (e.g. *I don't believe; I strongly agree; what I believe; reminds me of my own thoughts and feelings*), which confirms the overall adoption of language accommodation processes as well as the mediation of concept among interactants who appear particularly supportive and cooperative in this section of the course forum.

5. *Conclusions*

Based on the extracts above, it seems safe to argue that the CPD Course reveals the teachers' ownership of the ELF-aware transformative approach, and that their agency clearly emerges in their considerations about differences in the

current use of English as a global lingua franca as well as the adoption of an ELF-aware approach in their teaching practices.

Importantly, speakers interact without the fundamental support of para-linguistics, primarily prosody, and other non-verbal cues, and relied entirely on the co-constructed written conversation to create meaning. As shown, this results very often in the disruption of adjacency pairs such as question-answer pairs which in face-to-face conversation normally follow one another (Schegloff and Sacks 1973). Very often forum posts are ignored, or interesting threads end without a progress. Importantly, however, course participants adopted computer-mediated mutual accommodation strategies in ELF online interactions to convey their culturally-marked knowledge and beliefs, while an emerging ELF dimension of cross-cultural specialized communication could be detected in terms of lexical and textual structures.

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