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Language education in plurilingual contexts: Challenges and perspectives within an ELF-aware approach

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The rise of ELF in an increasingly multilingual society presents a great array of challenges as regards teachers' stereotypical perspectives, generating the need to revisit teacher education both for English language teaching (ELT) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). Multilingual classrooms require that teachers update their understanding of language in use, of the new status of English, of material development, of authenticity, and of the use of ICT and of mediation strategies. Adopting these aspects in teacher education can indeed bring about significant change in the language classroom, where the contributions of non-native teachers, as well as of their learners, may offer novel pedagogical insights. The study described in this article is partly based upon the ENRICH CPD course and two methodological courses for CLIL subject teachers using English in their classrooms, which aimed primarily at developing teachers' awareness of the role of English in communication and their multilingual classrooms. The study investigated their responses to the approach adopted and to ELF through questionnaires, lesson plans and comments in discussions among the course participants.

Key words: ELF awareness, language education, plurilingualism, reflection, mediation

1. Introduction

The growing social fragmentation as a result of global mobility, migration processes and the constant spread of new technologies and social digital networks has led to the emergence of unique sociolinguistic contexts, in which the distinctive traditional borders and functions of languages get increasingly transformed and blurred. Languages such as Spanish, Mandarin and Arabic are gradually developing as world languages, while, above all, the sociolinguistic landscape of English has become particularly intricate and contentious compared to other languages. This complexity largely stems from the widespread global use of the language that has rendered it as the most popular means of international communication and on the web, as well as on the ongoing nativization process of non-native English varieties across different regions of the world. English is so widely used now, that it has been compared to a chameleon, as it adopts "the linguistic and sociocultural colour of its environment" (Knapp, 2015, p. 176).

Demographic projections indicate that the global population is expected to reach 10 billion by the close of this century and the majority of this growth is concentrated in developing areas characterized by younger populations, where there is a trend of introducing English education at progressively earlier stages in schools. English has extended its influence across all these areas alongside local languages, without posing a threat to their existence. Instead, it has the “advantage of being ethnically neutral” (Knapp, 2015, p. 174). As Graddol (2006) emphasized while discussing the status of English, globalisation and the internationalisation of English emerged together in a nuanced and mutually reinforcing process, as “economic globalisation encouraged the spread of English but the spread of English also encouraged globalisation” (Graddol, 2006, p. 9).

On this basis, the worldwide spread of English has profoundly influenced the societal dynamics as well as the educational practices of various countries where English is neither the primary nor a secondary language. This has significantly altered modes of communication in English and reshaped cultural conventions, as English itself was undergoing significant modifications due to its contact with local lingua-cultures. Over the last few decades, English has played a pivotal role in the dissemination of cultural elements and knowledge, being appropriated by its diverse groups of users in multifaceted but equally impactful ways. It has evolved into a language used to articulate local practices within an ongoing interplay of globalisation and localisation. As Pennycook (2007) underlines:

English is a translocal language, a language of fluidity and fixity that moves across, while becoming embedded in, the materiality of localities and social relations. English is bound up with transcultural flows, a language of imagined communities and refashioning identities. (p. 6)

In Europe, a growing flow of populations migrating from Africa, Southeast Asia, and Eastern European countries has generated emerging linguistic needs and created new scenarios in terms of language varieties. Countries and cities, once monolingual, are rapidly turning into multilingual and multicultural communities whose new inhabitants are often proficient speakers of English and they may often come from Outer Circle countries. The expansion of a diverse global and plurilingual society has raised inquiries about the role of English, both within Europe and in regions beyond Europe.

2. English as a lingua franca: Challenges for language education

What the discussion above implies is that English has experienced an intricate transformation process, where speakers increasingly encounter non-native usages marked by linguistic traits derived from their first languages (L1). It is within such evolving and versatile linguistic environments that research has delved into the function of English as a lingua franca (ELF), a “contact language between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common national culture, and for whom English is the chosen language of communication” (Firth, 1996). That said, while ELF communication may also include users who speak English as a first language, as is often the case, for example, at international conferences or business meetings around the world (Seidlhofer, 2004), the future of English will be shaped by the role that language plays in both inter- and intra-national encounters among those who use it as a second or a foreign language (Graddol, 2006). This is because, during their interactions, ELF multilingual users intersubjectively co-create the norms governing their communication (Cogo and Dewey, 2012), which, by extension, also takes place in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) or English Medium Instruction (EMI) classrooms by both teachers and learners (Lopriore, 2021).

Indeed, in the last decades, research in ELF has been highly dynamic, opening up new avenues for investigation and covering various aspects of the field. Most research studies around ELF, particularly those related to the linguistic levels of pragmatics, pronunciation, lexis and lexicogrammatical features, have focused on exploring naturally unfolding discourse within multilingual settings (Cogo and Dewey, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2003, 2004; Seidlhofer, Breiteneder and Pitzl, 2006). Contrary to initial expectations, interactions in ELF, namely among speakers from different linguacultural backgrounds, which are often deemed particularly challenging, have proven to be less problematic than anticipated (Lopriore, 2024). According to research, this is attributed to the collaborative efforts of the interactants, who employ various communicative and mediation strategies to make sure that their communication will be successful.

More specifically, research on ELF interactions in fields as varied as business meetings, Erasmus programs or EMI settings (Ehrenreich, 2010; Kalocsai, 2009; Pietikäinen, 2020) have brought attention to a wide range of significant aspects of communication, emphasizing their implications for language education, where such aspects have been largely overlooked. Among these areas emerging in ELF communication, there are those accommodation processes whereby interlocutors align to each other's patterns of speech to communicate content, without being concerned so much about adhering to native-speaker norms. Such accommodation processes in ELF involve the deployment of pragmatic strategies, including negotiation, repetition, rephrasing, and paraphrasing, which reflect the interlocutors' need to acknowledge differences in their discourse, adapt to each other's linguacultural practices, and address or avoid potential miscommunication (see, e.g., Cogo and House, 2018). Culture and identity are, in this regard, highly important in ELF, as English extends beyond local settings to national and global ones, including digital settings, as in chatting or blogging (Lopriore, 2024).

The above-mentioned findings suggest the need to embrace an ELF-aware perspective in language education, by fostering teachers' and learners' deeper understanding of the social dimensions and the inherent diversity of English. For ELT teacher education programs, this necessarily entails moving beyond stereotypical conceptualisations referring to native/non-native distinctions, which, although being admittedly slow, is a process that is indeed moving forward, as increasingly more EMI and CLIL teachers familiarize themselves with current bottom-up theorising of language and communication (Lopriore, 2017, 2021, 2024). However, as McKay (2002, p. 1) clarifies, "the teaching and learning of an international language must be based on an entirely different set of assumptions than the teaching and learning of any other second or foreign language". And English is a global language not only because it is the language almost everybody uses in business at an international level, but it is also the first mostly studied language in the world commonly used by over 500 million people to access and to exchange information, as well as the official language of most academic contexts.

Indeed, English in Europe has become the most frequently used language in European institutions, even if its profile and role may vary from one country to another. For example, it has already emerged as a second language in most northern European countries, while, in southern Europe, the students' proficiency is still shifting between an intermediate and an advanced level. There have recently been research studies describing the development of a range of nativized Englishes in Europe, that is, varieties used by non-native Europeans, each one with its specific features, and of an emerging Euro-English where British English might have the status of a 'sub-variety' among French, Dutch or Flemish English (Cenoz and Jessner, 2000). Not surprisingly, this raises the question of whether European countries, with a focus

on fostering learners' plurilingual competence, have incorporated this shift into their school curricula (Lopriore, 2024). According to Jenkins (2007):

[P]lanned innovations are only likely to be implemented effectively if the need for change is acknowledged by teachers themselves [...]. This is more likely to be the case if teachers have themselves been involved in some way in the research that leads to the curriculum development [...] because learning about English is so important for teachers, a particularly good way to explore their beliefs and assumptions is through language awareness activities. (pp. 248-249)

Almost all over the world, English has become the first foreign language offered in national school curricula at all school levels and at university. This specific status is a distinctive feature that raises issues related to its function and its array of varieties, but it also determines the choice of an appropriate teaching methodology and of that of the second or third foreign language to be offered in the education system. Language teacher educators, particularly those working with English language teachers, are thus facing the challenge of reconceptualizing its aims, its main components as well as its approach. (Bayyurt and Akcan, 2015; Lopriore, 2016; Matsuda, 2002; Sifakis, 2004, 2007, 2019, 2023).

The changes that have been occurring in teacher professional development programmes in contexts when learners require to achieve full proficiency in at least two foreign languages were thoroughly highlighted by Barbara Seidlhofer (1999). Teacher educators are themselves, according to Seidlhofer, inevitably required to revisit their beliefs and traditional habits in terms of the type of training needed to prepare second or foreign language teachers. Several research studies were developed by experts of the European Commission as well as by those working on devising language policies in the Council of Europe. As Seidlhofer (1999) argued:

“In short, there is a sense of breaking the professional mould, with a broader conception of what it means to teach languages going hand in hand with a more comprehensive view of the languages to be taught. Thus monoculturalism seems to have been replaced by multiculturalism, monolingualism with multilingualism, and targets seem to be criterion-referenced rather than (native- speaker) norm-referenced”. (p. 234)

The spread of English is so rapid and vast that labels traditionally used in English language programs, for example, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or Second Language (ESL), are gradually giving way to definitions such as English as an Additional Language (EAL) as it is mostly the case in the UK, or as English as an International Language (EIL), more often used in the USA (Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006; Matsuda, 2012; McKay, 2002).

In most countries that are increasingly characterized by the emergence of a multilingual population where English is de facto a lingua franca, the most used language to communicate, scholars and educators had to revisit language curricula and teaching approaches. Specifically, both foreign language and subject teacher education had to be reconceptualized through a new construct. This could only be done by eliciting teachers to discuss their attitudes and beliefs about the current and future status of English and by exploring suitable approaches to elicit teachers' reflection and awareness of the changes occurring in most language exchanges. The emergence of ELF and of the function of non-native English teachers (NNESTs), require specific attention devoted to the shift in perspective in English language teaching as suggested by Jennifer Jenkins (2015) in her invitation to “reposition English and

multilingualism". The questions elicited by Jennifer Jenkins's invitation mainly concern a reflection upon the position of English within the language curriculum as well as of foreign language teaching approaches. But what would the necessary changes to elicit teachers' awareness of the new status and function of English be? Current literature from research, particularly on ELF (Cavalheiro et al., 2021; Sifakis, 2019; Sifakis et al. 2022) as well as recent English language teacher education courses, highlight the importance of involving teachers in exploring some language education components within a diverse perspective. For example, by revisiting the notion of authenticity as well as those processes underlying speaking and listening development in a second language, or the relevance of native standard models. In order to sustain teachers' repositioning about the language they teach, i.e. English, it is worth focusing teachers' attention upon spoken exchanges and eliciting teachers' noticing of the use of code-switching, of translanguaging or code-meshing. This may add a new perspective in language teacher education.

Research studies on English language coursebooks have proved that in all countries mostly focus on representations of standard English language as if only those standard forms represent current English language, failing "to acknowledge the increased use of English among non-native speakers of English" (Matsuda, 2012, p. 171). This type of choice derives from the idea that the guiding principle in ELT should be based upon a monolithic view of English. But would this approach adequately prepare learners for the dynamic variety and plurality they will meet as English users in the future?

There are thus significant implications for English language teachers as well as for content teachers who use English in their CLIL or EMI lessons. What is needed now is an appropriate design of the main components of English language curricula, coursebooks and classroom materials, as well as in devising appropriate language tasks. Both English teachers and CLIL teachers should be guided and encouraged to observe features of currently used English, and to notice language instantiations that deviate from the norm and the traditional features of English. This could be started using local authentic materials available in their own context, employing innovative teaching approaches and creating reflective tasks locally tailored and meaningful both for them and their students (Lopriore and Tsantila, 2022). Teacher education, whether for English language teachers or for CLIL or EMI teachers, is the context where current and new generations of teachers could be sensitized to English variations, as in the case of ELF, and to the current needs of emerging multilingual classrooms and to plurilingualism.

In the tradition of English language teaching, one of the main concerns has been predominantly represented by the need to replicate 'real-life' communication generally represented by the Inner Circle models. For several decades this approach has prevented teachers and coursebook authors from investigating and taking inspiration from how English is being used in reality. The main consequence of this type of approach was that only a partial and limiting exposure to the authenticity of a fully contextualized language in use was provided to teachers and their learners. It would thus be necessary to start revisiting traditional approaches and contents in language teacher education and sustain the introduction of language variations in the national language curricula as part of language planning. This way, the elicitation of teachers' as well as of learners' awareness of the relevance of noticing authentic uses of English in today's globalized world, would unveil the effectiveness of new forms of communication. Providing, for example, opportunities, to notice tasks of spoken interactions would ensure teachers' awareness of the use of English in multilingual and in migration contexts. Revisiting the use of English spoken language in real life contexts during teacher education courses, would thus enhance teachers' awareness of

the emerging pragmatic features of communication, of the new functions and of the new forms of meaning mediation and negotiation strategies being used by multilingual speakers of English.

Current classrooms - mostly composed by multilingual speakers - need to be offered programs based upon a renewed awareness of language, of language in use and of material development, associated with the use of authentic materials, of learners' multilingual repertoires exploitation, particularly through the use of ICT and of mediation strategies. It is within these scenarios, that the recently published *Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) Companion Volume* (Council of Europe, 2020) highlighted the relevance of plurilingual and of pluricultural competence, as well as the overcoming of the native speaker model. Plurilingual competence, for the CEFR, involves the ability to "flexibly call upon an inter-related, uneven, plurilinguistic repertoire to:

- "switch from one language or dialect (or variety) to another;
- express oneself in one language (or dialect, or variety) and understand a person speaking another;
- call upon the knowledge of a number of languages (or dialects, or varieties) to make sense of a text;
- recognise words from a common international store in a new guise;
- mediate between individuals with no common language (or dialect, or variety), even with only a slight knowledge oneself;
- bring the whole of one's linguistic equipment into play, experimenting with alternative forms of expression." (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 28)

The Companion volume further highlighted the relevance of spoken interaction and of mediation, this last one a notion central in communication in multilingual contexts and quite close to what happens in ELF exchanges. What does mediation involve and what are the implications of learning to use mediation strategies, as presented in the Companion volume descriptors?

The user/learner's ability to mediate does not only involve being linguistically competent in the relevant language or languages, it also entails using mediation strategies that are appropriate in relation to the conventions, conditions and constraints of the communicative context. Mediation strategies are the techniques employed to clarify meaning and facilitate understanding. As a mediator, the user/learner may need to shuttle between people, between texts, between types of discourse and between languages, depending on the mediation context (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 125).

The notions of mediation and of mediation strategies are thus central in the Communicative Language Competences descriptors of the Companion volume, where competences are reported under three main headings: Linguistic competence, Pragmatic competence and Sociolinguistic competence. These parameters of description are always intertwined in any language use; they are not separate 'components' and cannot be isolated from each other (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 130), thus they are particularly useful in multilingual contexts, and in ELF interactions. These descriptors may provide a useful reference for teachers and in teacher education courses to raise awareness of aspects of pragmatics in spoken language communication too often overlooked in teacher preparation and in their daily practice. One of the consequences of introducing reflective awareness of the current plurality of English in

teacher education courses, is that this innovative approach could be used by teachers – whether language teachers or content teachers – afterwards in their classroom with their students. This entails a significant change within the language classroom where original views and perspectives may be offered by non-native teachers as well as their learners’ responses. The following sections provide some samples of the introduction of ELF awareness as the major component of English language teacher education courses, as in the ENRICH Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Course (Sifakis and Kordia, 2021), and as an embedded component of methodological courses for CLIL subject teachers using English, as well as how teachers responded to this innovation. In both cases, participants will develop a personal understanding of the function of language in and for learning and of the role of English as a Lingua Franca in multilingual classrooms. The courses were the object of a number of research studies (Lopriore, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021; Lopriore et al., 2022) that investigated, through interviews, questionnaires, documentary analyses of teachers’ projects and lesson plans, the effectiveness of the approach adopted. The role of English during the sessions and in teachers’ lesson plans, the emerging uses and acceptance of translanguaging, and how teaching knowledge was investigated and revisited by teachers in on-line discussions and in the practicum.

3. Integrating ELF in English language teacher education: A shift in perspective

Language teacher education “serves to link what is known in the field with what is done in the classroom, and it does so through the individuals whom we educate as teachers” (Freeman 2016, p. 9). In traditional English language teaching, teachers’ view of the language is firmly linked to teachers’ personal experiences of learning and experiencing that language, thus teachers’ shift in perspective cannot but start with the observation of language itself. A language such as English, which is the language most teachers learnt since they were very young and has “grown” into something different, requires diverse ways of looking at it (Lopriore, 2017). The integration of ELF in language teacher education demands for changes in professional development programs, particularly it needs a thorough reconceptualization of language education main components; this should be mainly carried out by those teacher educators working in multilingual contexts. In those contexts, learners need to be carefully guided in more than one language besides their own, while studying and at the same time appreciating the cultures of other languages.

In the last decade, several research studies (Bayyurt and Sifakis, 2015; Cavalheiro et al., 2021; Cogo and Dewey, 2012; Kohn, 2018; Llurda, 2004, 2018; Lopriore, 2016, 2020, 2021; Lopriore et al, 2022; Sifakis, 2019, 2023) have investigated the most appropriate way to enhance a change of perspective in teacher education, as well as the forms of training needed to introduce future English language teachers to ELF. Teacher education has emerged as the most appropriate field to promote a shift in perspective in English language teaching (ELT), the only field where the complex reality into which English has developed by adopting a reflective approach could be taken into account. Enhancing reflective practices can, as a matter of fact, challenge teachers’ deeply held notions and beliefs about language, learning and teaching (Richards and Lockhart 1994; Schön, 1983).

Since the course-book remains the main tool and reference point both for teachers and learners, teacher education should include moments devoted to a critical reflection upon and analysis of materials, whether those present in course-books or authentic materials. With the adoption of an ELF-aware perspective in language teacher education both pre-and in-service teachers can be sensitized about the current plurality of English and of its extended role as a

lingua franca. This may have significant repercussions in English language teaching and in learning practices.

Teacher educators have traditionally followed historical models adopted in English as a foreign language teacher education, while in the last few years, because of world migration and the consequent change of the world language landscapes, there has been a growing need to look for alternative ways to educate teachers of English from a more realistic perspective. It is on this basis that, while presenting the ELF awareness framework, Sifakis and Bayyurt (2018) discuss a typical ELF-aware teacher education model, since a particular standard variety of English is not regarded as the ideal model for teaching English as a foreign or second language. In the model Sifakis and Bayyurt (2018) developed, ELF-aware teacher education includes all stages of teacher preparation, from a theoretical phase (exposure to WE- and/or ELF-related literature) to the implementation of a practicum for pre-service teachers. Teachers are expected to produce in the practicum WE/ELF-aware English language teaching materials or modify existing authentic materials to adjust them to an ELF-aware perspective.

ELF-awareness was originally defined by Sifakis and Bayyurt (2018) 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 of the ELF construct. (p. 459)

In 2019, Sifakis (2019) further explored the notion of ELF-awareness and devised its tripartite subdivision. He distinguished among:

- *“Awareness of language and language use*, referring to those aspects that teachers need to explore in detail through noticing (Schmidt, 2010) tasks, as the ‘knowledge of the syntactic, morphological, lexical, phonological, pragmatic, and sociocultural features of English produced in interactions involving non-native users both inside and outside the ELT classroom’, as produced in interactions among native and non-native speakers.
- *Awareness of instructional practices*, as in reflective practices on degrees of acceptability enhanced during teachers’ discussion on their personal beliefs.
- *Awareness of learning*, as in the use of tasks meant to elicit learners’ responses to non-standard forms of communication”. (Sifakis, 2019, p. 291)

ELF awareness was chosen as one of the leading principles guiding innovative teacher education courses in a transformative perspective (Dewey, 2018; Llurda, 2004; Lopriore, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021; Seidlhofer, 2011; Sifakis, 2019, 2023; Sifakis et al., 2022). ELF-awareness thus represented the opportunity for teachers to learn about current English features, to explore its new instantiations, to discuss the main implications for teaching, and to identify ways to take the current state of English into account in the school curriculum.

In the ENRICH CPD course, the first international course on integrating ELF in ELT, which was implemented in 2020 in five countries (Greece, Italy, Norway, Portugal and Turkey) as part of an Erasmus+ collaborative project (Cavalheiro et al., 2021; Sifakis and Kordia, 2021; Sifakis et al., 2022; see <http://enrichproject.eu/>), participant teachers were exposed to a reflective task-based exploratory process whereby their understanding and beliefs about English were elicited through observation tasks of the English presented in multilingual classrooms, in

course-books and as used in films or TV series. Teachers in the course were engaged in noticing tasks on language input (Schmidt, 2010) and in languaging tasks that prompted participants to make meaning and shape experience through ‘talking-it-through’ activities (Swain, 2006). At the end of the ENRICH course, teacher participants were engaged in using and adapting authentic materials while devising lesson plans within a non-standard perspective. Adopting an ELF-aware reflective approach sustained course-participants in developing their own teaching processes, both in the embedded ELF component of the CLIL methodological courses offered at Roma Tre University, between 2016 and 2019 (Lopriore, 2021), and in the ENRICH Course (Cavalheiro et al., 2021; Sifakis et al., 2022, 2023). The ENRICH course ran online in 2020 by the ENRICH Consortium, while the subsequent ENRICH Revisiting Course was run in 2021 by the Roma Tre University team only (Lopriore et al., 2022).

4. The ENRICH CPD and the current study

As illustrated above, the ENRICH course mainly aimed at helping English language teachers to integrate the current role of ELF in their multilingual classrooms. The course was meant to fundamentally help teachers rethink and revisit their teaching as well as its object, that is the current status of English, through the use of tasks, activities and peer exchanges, mostly focused upon spoken interactions among native and non-native speakers. How was teachers’ awareness elicited? This was possible through reflective activities in the ENRICH course forum where participant teachers were offered opportunities to share their personal beliefs about English within an ELF aware approach.

Within this framework, a research study (Lopriore et al., 2022) was set up to understand whether a profoundly innovative change in teachers’ daily practice would have challenged teachers’ initial resistance to change, thus unveiling both their beliefs and their routines. It was expected that the adoption of a reflective approach would have stimulated participant teachers’ language awareness, thus leading to a change in their attitudes, agency and classroom practice. But how could the study reveal changes in teachers’ beliefs and practice? It was thus hypothesized that changes – or their absence – would have been revealed in the participant teachers’ responses in the course forum; similarly, changes in their positioning, agency and ownership would have emerged in their language within the longitudinal perspective of the whole course duration.

4.1 Teachers’ responses to innovations within the ENRICH CPD course

For this study (Lopriore et al., 2022), we first tried to identify the most meaningful activities proposed during the course, in order to create a corpus of (Italian) teachers’ responses within these activities, and to interrogate the corpus to identify language instantiations capable of unveiling teachers’ positioning and agency. We chose to observe participant teachers’ use of modal verbs, verbs of mental perception, attitudes and opinions. The study thus analysed teachers’ discourse, as it emerged within their interventions when responding to the course activities, specifically those investigating their degree of ELF awareness and the implications of introducing a diverse perspective in their English language courses.

The ELF-aware teacher education approach would have helped teachers develop a meaningful cognitive and attitudinal change in view of recent developments in ELF research. The corpus allowed to have a closer view at the language choices made by the participants and to relate them to the changes they underwent during the 5-month course. Participants’ comments and lessons actually unveiled a change in perspective among participating teachers. Teachers’ awareness of changes emerged when they made reference to the integration of ELF in their

daily English lessons, or when they started using terms as *multilingualism*, *authenticity*, *lingua franca*, *social networks*, but also when they appropriately used terms as *translanguaging*, *accommodation strategies* and *ELF awareness*, as confirmed in the following examples from the corpus (key terms are underlined):

(a) *I believe that teachers should use ELF when they teach English, and integration could be the good solution. Living in a multilingual context where English and Arabic are mostly used for interactions, students mainly use English in the classroom when interacting with teachers or while working on a task.*

(b) *I think that the integration of ELF in ELT, through the use of authentic materials in our lessons, also of social networks like Facebook, TikTok, Instagram is very useful.*

(c) *To communicate, they (the learners) often use body language and translanguaging, especially face to face, and other accommodation strategies, when they use social networks*

(d) *A 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.*

Teachers' comments especially when teachers were stimulated to consider their personal experiences and roles as a user and a teacher of English, as in the following statements where modality was very frequently used:

(a) *"The only disadvantage is that usually we instructors have to complete our courses within a certain limit of time. ELF will surely give an interesting perspective to EFL classrooms but at the same time it will be time consuming and may lead to some administrative issues."*

(b) *"What challenges or obstacles could there be and how could you overcome them? ELF is not included in the National Curriculum so there is no specific methodology for teachers if they want to teach it."*

(c) *"I should include more activities that allow them to bring their extramural experiences with English inside the classroom and share these experiences with the other students."*

(d) *The teaching of English in the Italian school in general, and therefore also in my school context, is still mainly based on the textbook, i.e. on reading, writing and grammar [...]. An ELF awareness perspective would breathe life into the traditional method of teaching English as L2. [...]. In such a perspective listening becomes essential as it is the key to fluent speech. More time should be devoted to Listening activities. At school, you should spend more time just listening to understandable material through the Internet and modern multimedia tools.*

Teachers' words unveiled not only their growing awareness of the changes occurring in the language they teach, but it also enhanced their 'agency' in taking initiatives to change their

practice, as it emerges in the above statements. The initial hypotheses of the study were thus mostly confirmed by the results of the corpus analysis, *de facto* teachers' initial resistance to innovations had been initially challenged, but they were subsequently stimulated within an individual appropriation process.

4.2 ELF component in CLIL courses: Subject teachers' responses

This section presents and discusses some issues related to the decision of introducing an ELF-aware component in two of the 8 CLIL methodology courses run at Roma Tre University, in Italy between 2014 and 2019. These courses had been established at national level in 2012 by the Italian Ministry of Education to prepare subject matter teachers to teach their subjects through the adoption of CLIL and using English as the language of instruction (Lopriore, 2021).

The integration of language and content instruction is a fast-growing approach worldwide and with various implementation models at all educational levels, as it benefits learners by developing meaningful content knowledge and promoting authentic language interaction. While content-based English as a Second Language (ESL) courses teach language through content (Snow and Brinton, 2017), sheltered instruction and content and language integrated learning (CLIL) courses teach content through language (Lopriore, 2018, 2021; Echevarria et al., 2017; Lasagabaster, 2008; Mehisto et al., 2008).

The courses aimed at training subject-matter teachers with a CEFR B2-C1 level of English to teach their subject through English and use a CLIL approach in their lesson planning. In the Italian region of Lazio, over 500 teachers participated to the courses between 2014 and 2019 at Roma Tre University. Teacher educators in these courses were, for the most part, university professors of English and they worked together with university subject specialists, fluent English speakers, who sustained course participants in developing lesson plans and projects.

When interviewed, future CLIL teachers said that engaging with CLIL represented a challenge they had been waiting for in their professional lives. Some teachers had also commented that, 'Using English helps students re-shape their understanding of the subject matter' (Lopriore, 2018). 'In using a language other than Italian, students are challenged to focus on language in talking about content'. In brief, participant teachers were aware that learners had to choose different ways of reporting and explaining, as well as to 'revisit' what they had learned but in a different perspective.

While the course designs slightly differed, the blended course components run at local universities in 15 different Italian regions had usually included the topics summarized in *Table 1*, except for two of the courses activated at Roma Tre University where an extra module – the one on ELF – had been added within the language skills development component.

Table 1: Main components of CLIL teacher education courses

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language skills development • Introduction to Second Language Acquisition • Lesson and syllabus planning • Cooperative approaches • Classroom observation • ICT for learning • Assessment and evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials selection and use • Microteaching • Practicum component in teachers' schools • An action-research approach based on classroom observation • A final project, developed with multimodal and ICT tools to be presented at the final exam
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Notes: ICT = Information and Computing Technology
(Source: Lopriore, 2018, p. 7)

The language component of the courses was mostly based upon traditional samples of standard English meant to scaffold content learning in English, while the ELF module added in two of the courses, introduced language awareness activities on noticing tasks of current instantiations of English as a lingua franca, as in TV series or documentaries to enhance participants' attention to non-standard forms of language use.

The aim was to enhance subject teachers' professional identity as non-native English speakers (NNES) and to be able to identify and cope with non-standard forms of English; this would have developed their self-confidence and thus identify, choose and use appropriate authentic materials for their lessons. It was hypothesized that, by adopting an ELF-aware approach in the language component of the course, subject teachers would have been able to start noticing features of language exchanges in English used within multilingual contexts, and thus start planning lessons with tasks where their learners would have noticed similarities and differences in L1/L2 and the use of non-standard forms. This was achieved in the courses by:

- engaging participants in group discussions in class or during their individual and group work on their use of English and on the notions of native and non-native;
- investigating aural comprehension and spoken interactions;
- exploring English, WE and ELF through the use of language corpora: using excerpts from the BNC (British National Corpus) to the VOICE (ELF corpus).

Teachers were thus mostly encouraged to notice different instantiations of English in a variety of English-speaking contexts, as well as to identify and use materials from authentic sources and not from ready-made CLIL coursebooks in their lesson plans.

Both the benefits of language education and the potential of English as a lingua franca in CLIL environments were investigated in a small-scale research study (Lopriore, 2021) of approximately 35% of all the CLIL course participants in two of the CLIL methodological courses organized at Roma Tre University. The study investigated teachers' responses through interviews and questionnaires and the analysis of teachers' projects and final lesson plans. Teachers' responses showed that they felt ELF was a field of discovery totally unexpected for them, a field that elicited their attention to the language they and their students were using, while opening up to new perspectives in classroom interactions and materials development, as witnessed in some of their statements below.

ELF adds a different way of "observing" language and it is reassuring in a way. (3.2015)

CLIL activities are based on a very pragmatic methodology which helps students to experience both the language and the subject itself. CLIL is a great moment to focus on students' interests rather than the syllabus. (14.2015)

CLIL subject teachers' responses to the study highlighted how effective these courses are and how language clearly emerged as the means for content learning. Introducing a new perspective in language teachers' notions and ideas about English, its variations and its emerging instantiations sustained their use of English and challenged traditionally held views, values and beliefs about language and learning as well as their view of their subject specific knowledge and of their idea of the role of language in disciplinary literacies. The training process underlined the close relationship in learning between language and content to sustain and define new ways of conceptualizing and delivering content when teaching. The ELF

embedded module in the two CLIL courses highlighted the balancing act that subject teacher participants as well as teacher educators, who are too often struggling with the challenge of coping with the new status of English and its implications for teaching.

5. Conclusion

Introducing a new perspective into language teachers' notions about English, its variations and its emerging instantiations may challenge traditionally held views, values and beliefs about language, language teaching and learning; in turn, it may trigger some sort of resistance to changes of everyday routines among teachers, thus reducing their willingness to explore and observe the current status of English, to modify and adapt course-books, and to look for and use samples of WE or ELF in their lesson plans. Teaching is a highly socializing job that deeply informs teachers' own lives and actions, as we do it through language, whether we teach a subject, the home country's language or a foreign language. Involving teachers in revisiting and reshaping their experiences as English language learners and their teaching, in terms of the language and the way they teach it, may challenge teachers' own identities. This was particularly the case for CLIL teachers who were engaged in a double challenge: revisiting the content and the language they use(d) to teach it. This process may be elicited only through a reflective approach that could be embedded in the whole course.

Course participants had been exposed to a reflective task-based exploratory process whereby their beliefs about English were elicited through reflective tasks as presented and taught in course-books and as used in media, in films or in TV series. Teachers were engaged in noticing and languaging tasks in an ELF aware perspective and were asked to adapt materials and devise lesson plans within a new "non-standard" perspective in the teaching of English. The adoption of a reflective approach through language awareness elicits teachers' awareness of changes occurring in English in multilingual contexts, while enhancing a new perspective on the implications of teaching it within an ever-changing scenario where language teaching traditions are often challenged. This type of approach sustains the participants' appropriation of their own teaching process as well as their agency (Ketelaar et al, 2012).

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