Communication Strategies in English as a Lingua Franca Transcultural Communication

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By

Monica Antonello

To my family

Language is an immensely democratising institution.
To have learned a language is immediately to have rights in it.
You may add to it, modify it, play with it, create it, ignore bits of it,
as you will.

—D. Crystal 2003a: 172

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INTRODUCTION

English nowadays has spread globally and it has become extensively used in all kinds of contexts. In addition to its diversification into several World English varieties (e.g. American English, Nigerian English, Indian English, etc.), English is also used as a lingua franca, playing a fundamental role both in intranational and international communication. From the 1990s, research on the use of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) has flourished and several aspects of this phenomenon have since then been investigated (see, for example, Jenkins et al., 2011, for a review; Jenkins, 2018). In this book, ELF is defined as the use of English, together with other multilingual resources, as a common means of communication to negotiate meaning and co-construct mutual understanding between speakers who do not share the same linguistic and cultural background.

Accordingly, ELF can be said to be intercultural by definition (Baker, 2015b), since ELF users usually come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and hence they do not share a specific set of linguistic and cultural practices. This aspect suggests that communicative practices in ELF contexts cannot be taken for granted, but need instead to be jointly negotiated by interactants into a shared frame of reference (e.g. Baker, 2015b; Cogo & Dewey, 2012; Kaur, 2009; Seidlhofer, 2011). ELF comprises not only a complex and hybrid linguistic dimension, but also an equally complex cultural one, and both linguistic and cultural communicative practices should be examined in order to understand how speakers interact in ELF contexts.

It is in light of these considerations, and following more recent developments in the field, I use the conceptualisation of 'ELF Transcultural Communication', to highlight the necessary link between ELF research and Intercultural Communication studies. By adopting such a combined standpoint it is possible to better understand the processes underlying the use of ELF, both from a linguistic and a cultural perspective. In this view, I also approach language and culture as complex systems, that emerge and are negotiated in situ during the communicative act and thus continuously change in the interaction (Baird et al., 2014; Larsen-Freeman, 2016). Moreover, a translingual and transcultural approach will be adopted,

according to which linguistic and cultural practices are not pre-established, following some exonormative authority (being it Standard English or cultural nationalism, to name just two examples), but instead emerge in communication (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019).

By taking this stance, traditional conceptualisations of Communicative Competence (CC) and Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) can no longer be considered as suitable models for speakers in ELF transcultural contexts; a new framework will then be suggested, namely, ELF Transcultural Competence. This model proposes a set of skills that are necessary to effectively and appropriately negotiate common ground among ELF speakers, aiming at taking into account both the linguistic and the cultural dimensions of ELF Transcultural Communication. ELF Transcultural Competence links together two existing models, Kohn's (2016b) ELF competence and Baker's (2015b) Intercultural Awareness, and it makes an attempt to include a translingual and transcultural approach.

Adopting this model, negotiation is acknowledged as paramount in reaching the speakers' communicative goal(s), and it being one of the most important processes underlying ELF Transcultural Communication; to be able to strategically manage interaction and to make use of all the resources available to reach common understanding is indeed a fundamental ability in communication, particularly in ELF contexts. Following this perspective, communication strategies acquire great importance as tools to actively shape and negotiate meaning (e.g. Cogo & Dewey, 2012; Kaur, 2009). In this book, communication strategies are defined as those strategic moves, both linguistic and non-linguistic, that are used to negotiate meaning, co-construct mutual understanding and a shared frame of reference. From this definition, it follows that communication strategies are no longer seen as compensation tools that are needed to cope with communication problems, or serve only to pre-empt or solve miscommunication, but they are especially poignant in the meaning-making process as means to create meaning and negotiate common ground among speakers.

Since meaning negotiation processes and the co-construction of mutual understanding have a fundamental role in ELF Transcultural Communication, this book investigates and gathers further insights into the role of communication strategies in these contexts and in relation to cultural concepts.

In Chapter 1, ELF Transcultural Communication will be presented, linking together ELF research and Intercultural Communication studies. First, ELF

research and its core elements will be discussed; secondly, Intercultural Communication studies will be outlined, with a focus on the issues related to the concept of culture. Finally, ELF Transcultural Communication will be described, illustrating its main characterisations.

In Chapter 2, this joint perspective will be further analysed discussing ELF Transcultural Competence and the importance of meaning negotiation in ELF transcultural contexts. Traditional models of Communicative Competence and Intercultural Communicative Competence will be called into question, suggesting some alternative models, e.g. Widdowson' communicative capability, Kohn's ELF competence, and Baker's Intercultural Awareness. ELF Transcultural Competence will be discussed as a new model adopted as the backdrop of this volume. Finally, ELF studies on the use of communication strategies will be outlined.

In Chapter 3, the methodology used will be described. First, the data set and the corpora used, the VOICE-Leisure sub-corpus and the ViMELF corpus, will be presented. Then, the analytical approach, which is based on a mixed method approach that adopts Conversation Analysis for the qualitative analysis and descriptive statistics for the quantitative analysis, will be illustrated.

In Chapter 4, the data analysis will be presented, first reporting the qualitative results, then focusing on the quantitative analysis. The use of communication strategies in ELF transcultural contexts will be described focusing on their different functions, remarking their important role to negotiate meaning and co-construct mutual understanding in interaction. Finally, the mixed approach applied to a selection of conversations will be outlined, showing how a combined perspective of qualitative and quantitative analysis can add significant insights on the role of communication strategies in ELF Transcultural Communication.

Finally, in Chapter 5, the discussion of findings will be presented, highlighting how meaning negotiation and the co-construction of mutual understanding are achieved in ELF transcultural contexts through the use of the communication strategies analysed. The findings will be linked to their pedagogical implications, outlining how they could be relevant for an ELF-aware pedagogy, and providing some examples of actual activities that could be used in classroom practice.

CHAPTER 1

ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA
AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

The conceptualisation of ELF Transcultural Communication is based upon two theoretical fields, English as a Lingua Franca research and Intercultural Communication studies, that will be presented in this chapter. First, it will be outlined how English has become a global language that is used intranationally and internationally, illustrating the main research paradigms that have focused on this phenomenon. Successively, ELF will be described in more detail and it will be discussed how this area of research has developed over the last two decades. It will be pointed out how ELF research has challenged some traditionally established notions (e.g. Standard English, the 'native speaker' or speech community) and how in ELF language is conceived of as a complex and fluid system that emerges in interaction and cannot be defined a priori. Since ELF research has shown that ELF communication is intercultural by definition (Baker, 2015b: 43), in addition to the linguistic dimension that conceives language as a complex system, the cultural dimension related to the speakers' diverse cultural backgrounds that underlie ELF use has to be taken into consideration, too, in order to understand how Intercultural Communication studies can enrich and deepen the understanding of ELF communication. Consequently, the development of Intercultural Communication research will be outlined, focusing on the notion of 'culture' and how it has been conceived in different approaches to the study of intercultural communication. It will be emphasised how culture is a complex system that cannot be conceived of as a stable and static entity, but should rather be seen as fluid and emergent. Finally, a combined perspective of ELF research and Intercultural Communication studies will be discussed, suggesting the concept of 'ELF Transcultural Communication'. This conceptualisation can provide a comprehensive framework that accounts for the transcultural and translingual dimensions of ELF communication, where language and culture are conceived as complex and emergent systems. Such a joint perspective can help in shedding light on how language and culture intertwine in ELF and it can provide further insights on the processes underlying ELF use.

1.1 English as a Global Language

English has become a global language, that is, it has taken on "a special role" worldwide (Crystal, 2003a: 3). This special role is achieved when countries other than the ones where a variety of English is an official language decide to take up English as a language that responds to particular aims in that community (2003a: 4). Before discussing the development of ELF research and its main theoretical cornerstones, it is important to outline how English has reached the status of a global language and the factors that have brought to this international dimension in order to better understand its current global use as a lingua franca.

While British colonisation has made English a means of communication for settlers, colonisers, and colonised, globalisation has made it the language of technology and international communication (Bhatt, 2001; Crystal, 2003a; Rose & Galloway, 2019). The spread of English started in the 16th century, when pioneering travellers moved from the British Isles to the Americas, the South Pacific, Asia and Africa[1]. Between the 16th and the 18th century, migrants arrived in North America, Australia, and New Zealand as settlers and established their new homes in those territories. British English and the several regional and social dialects that the migrants spoke intermingled with local languages and new varieties developed. American English, Canadian English, Australian English, New Zealand English are categorised, together with British English, as 'English as a Native Language' (ENL) varieties and the people speaking these varieties from birth are still regarded as 'native speakers' of the English language and are used as a model of reference for language use (Widdowson, 1994: 379). From the 17th century, the British Empire colonised African and Asian territories, imposing British English as the official language to communicate between the colonisers and the colonised; in these contexts, English became a second official language, it existed alongside different local languages and it was taught through education. Especially after these countries gained independence in the 20th century, English became part of the identity of the once colonised peoples; the varieties of English that developed in these territories were the result of language contact and have been classified as 'English as a Second Language' (ESL) varieties, but no prestige and acceptance were originally

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[1] For a detailed account of the origins and spread of English and for further insights on the varieties developed see Crystal (2003a), Kachru et al. (2006), Nelson et al. (2020), Schneider (2011).

given to them since they diverted from the Standard English[2] 'norm'–i.e. the norm of ENL varieties (Bhatt, 2001: 529; Crystal, 2003a). These ESL varieties are known as World Englishes and they are used for intranational purposes, alongside other local official languages, in these territories. Research on World Englishes has hence strongly contributed to the acknowledgement of the pluralistic nature of English and its role in representing "diverse sociolinguistic histories, multicultural identities, multiple norms of use and acquisition, and distinct contexts of function" (Bhatt, 2001: 528).

British colonisation first, and then the American economic power and globalisation have thus contributed to create a linguistic scenario where English can no longer be described as homogeneously connected to a single language variety, since it has become a complex and fluid system. This emphasis on the plural linguistic realisations and on the diverse cultural influences that have contributed to shape the English language is fundamental in understanding and recognising that English can no longer be represented and conceived of as a monolithic entity, that reflects a set number of fixed varieties, but rather as a language that has spread all around the world and has transformed into several different linguistic and cultural realities. After World War I, the United States of America began to take Britain's place as the world leading power and, after World War II, they established their economic supremacy (Crystal, 2003a: 59). As a matter of fact, during the 20th century, the USA developed their economic influence on the world market and speaking English meant to be able to trade with them, one of the strongest economic powers in the world (Crystal, 2003a: Chapter 5). With globalisation, English strengthened its function as an international common means of communication and its position as a tool to have access to business, education, and entertainment: social media, the press, international research projects, international safety, universities, international organisations use English as the main language of communication (Melitz, 2018). Differently from ENL and ESL varieties, English used in international business, educational, and entertainment contexts represents a lingua franca to communicate between speakers who do not share the same linguistic and cultural background and who recognise English as a communicative resource to express their identities and cultures (Seidlhofer, 2011: 7, 81).

Reaching a global status has greatly changed how English is used and new paradigms of research have developed to focus on the consequences and

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[2] Standard English as a problematic notion in ELF research will be addressed in §1.2.2.1.1.

manifestations of the spread of this language. On the one hand research in World Englishes (WE) has analysed the varieties of English that have developed through British, or American, settlements and through a process of independence in which the colonised peoples appropriated what had initially been an imposed language to make it their own (Bhatt, 2001; Bolton, 2006: 240-243; Crystal, 2003a); on the other hand, studies in English as an International Language (EIL) and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) have examined the use of English as a common means of communication between people who do not share the same linguistic and cultural background, the former developing mainly in the American context, the latter in Europe (Rose & Galloway, 2019: 7-8; Seidlhofer, 2011: 7-10). Furthermore, more recent studies on Global Englishes have attempted to go beyond such categorisations in order to include the diverse and fluid uses of English in a globalised world (Rose & Galloway, 2019: 4). As I will discuss, what these paradigms have in common is questioning the authority of the 'native speaker' model and the static conceptualisation of English as a single, stable, and homogeneous variety.

In the following sections, it will be addressed how English should be reconceptualised, and the paradigms of research that have been established to study and analyse, from different perspectives, this global phenomenon.

1.1.1 Reconceptualising English

English has reached a global status and it thus embraces dynamic, variable, and diverse uses, for English speakers can have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and their linguistic and cultural models of reference cannot be defined and set a priori. Since English has developed into several different varieties and it has reached a fundamental role in international communication, this language can no longer be conceptualised as a homogeneous system: it responds to both intranational and international needs and its manifestations are numerous and greatly diversified. Consequently, 'English' can be seen as an umbrella term that comprises the linguistic resources used by speakers drawing from English as a global language: "*English* is not a homogeneous or clearly bounded linguistic entity or object", but it has become a complex and variable language that is realised through manifold and flexible forms (Pitzl, 2018: 8, italics in the original). Accordingly, English is a heterogeneous system that comprises both different varieties used intranationally and linguistic practices that are used in international communication. As Seidlhofer (2011: 16) highlights, "ENL is full of conventions and markers of in-group membership such as characteristic pronunciations, specialized vocabulary, idiomatic phraseology,

and references and allusions to shared experience and the cultural background of particular native-speaker communities" that cannot be generalised to all the speakers in all the contexts in which English is used nowadays. Therefore, the term 'English' can no longer be used to define a specific group of prestigious varieties (i.e. ENL), but it has to be conceived of as a reality that comprises both diverse practices negotiated in international contexts–English as a Lingua Franca–and the diversified varieties that have originated from language contact and have now been appropriated by specific and diverse speech communities[3]–World Englishes.

As pointed out above, this diversified and multifaceted development of the English language has brought to the establishment of new fields of research focusing on this phenomenon. In the following section, an overview of the main paradigms that have focused on English as a global language will be outlined, before focusing on English as a Lingua Franca.

1.1.2 Models of categorisation of English as a global language

As discussed above, English has spread in a very peculiar manner, since no language has ever had the same diffusion and influence it has today (Dewey, 2007: 333-334; Grazzi, 2013; Kaur, 2009; Widdowson, 2018). Four complementary research paradigms have focused on the global spread of English and on the consequences and phenomena related to it: World Englishes (WE), English as an International Language (EIL), English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), and Global Englishes (GE). These fields of research examine how English is related to colonisation and globalisation, and how its spread has affected and influenced the use of this language in the world; they all aim at analysing English independently from Anglophone settings, norms and references, as a language that has reached a global role and that has developed into plural, diverse and dynamic forms (Baker, 2015b: 11).

Research on World Englishes analyses new linguistic realities that have developed through the spread of English in the world, challenging the view of ENL varieties as the only 'proper' varieties of English and the 'native speaker' as a benchmark for all communicative and sociolinguistic contexts. As Widdowson (2018: 105) explains, World Englishes studies are "principally concerned with the description of varieties, linguistically distinct versions of intranational English that [have] their own communal identity and integrity". This paradigm refers to a plural form of 'Englishes' and stresses

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[3] A discussion on the notion of speech community in relation to ELF will be presented in §1.2.2.2.2.

that "English no longer has one single base of authority, prestige and normativity" (Mesthrie & Bhatt, 2008: 3), since several varieties have developed and have been acknowledged as national/regional languages. Accordingly, in WE research, scholars focus on the pluralisation of English by identifying and categorising varieties through sets of common features at a national (or regional) level (Canagarajah, 2013: 58-61). Even if this perspective comprises a direct link between a variety of English and a geographically situated community, research on WE has had an important role in establishing and legitimising the use of English independently from ENL varieties, thus suggesting that New Englishes are no longer to be compared to ENL uses and norms, for they have developed their own norms and practices to respond to the local needs of the community in which they are used (Baker, 2015b: 10).

Research in the field of English as an International Language (EIL) has focused on the international use of English, adopting a perspective still based on the notion of variety (Baker, 2015b: 10). EIL studies analyse the intranational and international use of different varieties of English in a contact situation; in other words, they examine how speakers of different varieties of English negotiate English on equal terms (Canagarajah, 2013: 61-62). As a matter of fact, speakers of English as an additional language (that is, as a language they can speak in addition to their first and sole language) far outnumber native speakers of ENL varieties; hence, the 'English' to be used should no longer be subjected to ENL norms and practices, but can be contextually negotiated by the participants to the communicative act. Early studies in EIL explored the possibility of the emergence of a 'neutral' international variety of English that could be used as a shared means of communication worldwide; however, recent research has rejected "such a supranational variety" and has acknowledged the diverse and fluid nature of the practices emerging in EIL contexts (Baker, 2015b: 10; Canagarajah, 2013: 61-62).

Early research on English as a Lingua Franca was included in the EIL paradigm, and many researchers used the term EIL to refer to the lingua franca function of English–just to mention one example, one of the first (and seminal) 'ELF' studies by Jenkins (2000) was entitled *The Phonology of English as an International Language* (Baker, 2015b: 10). Even if some scholars suggest that EIL research is the "North American counterpart to English as a lingua franca" (Rose & Galloway, 2019: 8), it is important to mention some fundamental differences between these two paradigms. As Baker (2015b: 10-11) points out, even if early studies on ELF viewed it as a kind of variety, adopting a perspective similar to that undertaken in EIL,

recent research has aimed at going beyond categorisations based upon language varieties, focusing on the variable, fluid and dynamic use of ELF in communication. In this view, ELF does not relate to the speakers' different varieties, but comprises fluidly negotiated linguistic forms and practices (Baker, 2015b; Cogo, 2018). ELF studies have also shown that ELF users co-construct and negotiate meaning in interaction, making use of creative and multilingual resources (Baker, 2015b: 5-10; Canagarajah, 2013: 62-68); indeed, differently from WE research, ELF "is concerned with more fluid and dynamic uses of English in which there may be no fixed physical communities with which language can be associated (Baker, 2015b: 10). As will be discussed in §1.2, ELF is to be seen as the "variable use of English in intercultural communication" (Baker, 2015b: 7).

Global Englishes is a more recent paradigm that includes World Englishes, ELF, and English as an International Language research. Rose and Galloway (2019: 3-8) explain that Global Englishes is "an inclusive paradigm looking at the linguistic, sociolinguistic and sociocultural diversity and fluidity of English use and English users in a globalised world". The purpose of this area of research is to analyse the impact of the spread of English and the changes and challenges this global phenomenon has brought to the use and practice of this language; it hence comprises interests related to World Englishes and post-colonial English varieties, to the use of English as a lingua franca and of English as an International Language. By embracing these research fields, it aims at establishing a more comprehensive and complex paradigm that is able to account for the diversified and variable uses and users of English worldwide (Rose & Galloway, 2019: 6).

In the following section, ELF and ELF research will be presented in more detail, outlining the core elements that distinguish this field of research and the challenges it has raised towards 'established concepts', such as the notion of speech community, the perspective of language as a stable and discrete entity, and the authority of the 'native speaker' model.

1.2 English as a Lingua Franca

In this section, firstly ELF will be defined, describing its primary features, successively the development of ELF research and its core issues will be outlined in its three main phases (Jenkins, 2015).

1.2.1 What is ELF?

English as a Lingua Franca can be defined as the use of English as a common means of communication between people who do not share the same linguistic and cultural background, and thus negotiate meaning in order to co-construct mutual understanding. The reference to 'English' in the definition, however, does not rule out the influence and use of other languages since, as will be illustrated, multilingual resources are a fundamental element in ELF communication.

Given the diversified and broad nature of this phenomenon, several conceptualisations have been suggested in the attempt to find a comprehensive definition of the essence of ELF. One of the first characterisations was provided by Firth in the mid-1990s, who described ELF as "a contact language between people who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen *foreign language* of communication" (1996: 240, italics in the original). This early perspective clearly points out that a lingua franca corresponds to a contact and a foreign language: it is thus not spoken as a first language by anyone in the communicative act, hence excluding native speakers of ENL and ESL varieties. Jenkins (2007: 1) follows a similar perspective, which sees ENL speakers excluded from ELF communicative contexts, and ELF defined as "a contact language used among people who do not share a first language, and is commonly understood to mean a second (or subsequent) language to its speakers".

As shown, these early attempts to define ELF were focused on its status as a contact language and on the exclusion of native speakers of ENL and ESL varieties. However, following the developments of further studies and investigations in the field, recent characterisations have opened up to a broader definition. Seidlhofer (2011) indeed includes the dynamic and fluid nature of ELF communication and both native and non-native speakers of English varieties by defining ELF as "*any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option*" (2011:7, italics in the original). This definition delineates ELF communication as a communicative space that is not based on its users' status as 'native' or 'non-native', but that comprises speakers of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds that elect English as their means of communication. Following the new focus of ELF research on the processes underlying ELF use, Seidlhofer highlights the functional use of English as a common means of communication for speakers who do not share any other linguistic resources (Baker, 2015b: 6).

The perspective adopted in ELF is thus different from the one in WE and EIL, since the fluidity and variability that characterise ELF communication are looked at not in contrast or in comparison to other varieties of English, but as intrinsic features of this communicative tool, that goes beyond the concept of variety: "ELF is then best understood as a dynamic, locally realized enactment of a global resource, best conceptualized not as a uniform set of norms or practices, but as highly variable, creative expression of linguistic resources which warrants a distinct analytical framework" (Dewey, 2009: 62). ELF communication is thus "heterogeneous, ad hoc, fluid and flexible", with no definite set of external rules to refer to: ELF speakers negotiate norms and practices in the ongoing interaction as they deem appropriate and effective for their communicative goal and in that particular context (Kalocsai, 2014: 23). This context-based use of the language shapes ELF as a greatly diversified phenomenon, where different linguistic practices co-exist and combine in order to reach successful communication. Hence, ELF is primarily and fundamentally, a process of appropriation that allows its users to convey and construct communication through the linguistic (and non-linguistic) resources they consider appropriate (Dewey, 2009; Hülmbauer et al., 2008; Hülmbauer, 2009; Jenkins, 2015; Jenkins et al., 2011; Kalocsai, 2014; Seidlhofer, 2009, 2011; Widdowson, 1994, 2003, 2012). Consequently, as will be discussed in §1.2.2.1, conventional rules cannot apply to ELF and exonormative norms based on an external authority (i.e. ENL speakers) can no longer be seen as a feasible reference (Seidlhofer, 2009: 41). This entails that the focus of ELF users is on effective communication and mutual understanding, and not on adherence to Standard English norms or narrow notions of 'correctness', which are no longer applicable to ELF contexts (Jenkins et al., 2011: 284; see also Seidlhofer, 2009, 2011; Widdowson, 2012).

Another important aspect to be highlighted, as will be discussed in §1.4, is that ELF is intrinsically intercultural, since it is used as a common linguistic resource in contexts where speakers do not always share the same linguistic and cultural background, and thus build and co-construct mutual understanding through a process of meaning negotiation (Baker, 2015b: 43). As in any intercultural communication setting, ELF interactions involve speakers who come from and belong to different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, thus norms and practices–that is, rules and behaviours–cannot be taken for granted, but need to be negotiated between the participants in order to reach mutual understanding (Baker, 2015b: 8). As will be discussed in §1.3 and §1.4, since meaning in such contexts is negotiated and understanding co-constructed for successful communication, it is important to emphasise that contemporary trends in ELF research, as well as in Intercultural

Communication studies, theorise language and culture as complex and emergent systems: they are fluid and dynamic entities that emerge in interaction through the speaker's linguistic and non-linguistic practices (Baker, 2018a, 2018b; Cogo, 2018). They are continuously negotiated and thus they cannot be described and inscribed into fixed and homogeneous categories, but need to be analysed as evolving systems that are displayed through the speakers' interactions. In other words, as Baker (2018a: 29) remarks, in ELF contexts linguistic and cultural practices emerge and are negotiated in situ by the speakers involved in the communicative act. Accordingly, linguistic and cultural norms are to be jointly negotiated as well; as Cogo (2018: 3) explains,

> in ELF communication the cultural knowledge usually associated with NS communities is neither relevant nor appropriate to represent the intercultural practices, communication strategies, and sometimes super-diverse contexts of ELF. The intercultural practices constructed in different ELF contexts do not result from a static view of culture representing one nation and one language, but from a more fluid, complex, and heterogeneous approach to the "norms" of intercultural communication.

Accordingly, English as a Lingua Franca is to be conceived of as "a means of intercultural communication not tied to particular countries and ethnicities, a linguistic resource that is not contained in, or constrained by, traditional (and notoriously tendentious) ideas of what constitutes 'a language'" and 'a culture' (Seidlhofer, 2011: 81). As will be discussed in §1.2.2.1.1 and §1.3.2, in ELF research, and also in Intercultural Communication studies, language and culture are no longer univocally linked to a single nation and community (i.e. English to any particular Anglophone country), but they need to be conceived of as dynamic and negotiated systems that result from the manifested linguistic and cultural practices of its speakers. Following this view, ELF is to be considered as a linguistic resource that includes and embraces diversity and fluidity in linguistic forms and cultural practices.

In the following sections, the development of ELF research and its core issues will be discussed, pointing out how the development of ELF studies has brought to a reconceptualization of traditional notions of 'Standard English', 'speech community', and 'language'.

1.2.2 ELF research

ELF research has a rather young history, since the first pivotal studies were carried out in the 1990s, its development has been divided into three main

phases by Jenkins (2015). 'ELF 1' indicates the earliest studies, which focused mainly on form and on the revolutionary idea that ELF brought along, that is, "getting a truly global perspective on English, and envisioning its development not only within national and regional boundaries, but in communities of unprecedented mobility and interconnectedness in the world" (Mauranen, 2016: 21). Subsequently, 'ELF 2' indicates the shift of interest in ELF research that came to see ELF not as a possible variety, as it was hypothesised during the first phase, but as a function, starting thus to focus on the processes underlying the use of ELF (Jenkins, 2015: 55). Finally, 'ELF 3' stresses the interest in the "increasingly diverse multilingual nature of ELF communication" (Jenkins, 2015: 58). This phase underscores the permeability, fluidity and complexity of languages in general and it focuses on the influence of multilingualism in ELF communication (Canagarajah, 2013; Cogo, 2018; Jenkins, 2015): the use of different linguistic repertoires is seen in a fluid and dynamic continuum, where they combine and co-exist with the use of English, due to the fluidity and diversity intrinsic to ELF (Baker, 2015b; Jenkins, 2015).

In the following sections, these three phases will be outlined, following a perspective in which re-conceptualisations in one phase do not exclude previous theorisations, but build upon them in an evolving process.

1.2.2.1 ELF 1

After the spread of English as a global language, as discussed in §1.1, it appeared obvious that English as a Native Language was no longer the most frequent use of English in the world (Dewey, 2007: 333). On the one hand, as we have seen above, research on World Englishes varieties developed as an autonomous field of research; on the other hand, English was increasingly used as a shared means of communication, often without the presence of native speakers of any ENL (or ESL) variety in the communicative act. Being ELF contexts the most common scenario for the use of English in the world, researchers started to challenge the validity of a 'native speaker' model, questioning whether Standard English and 'native speaker' use were to be considered the pinnacle of correctness and appropriateness in all contexts. As Jenkins (2000:1) highlights, "for the first time in the history of the English language, second language speakers outnumber those for whom it is the mother tongue, and interaction in English increasingly involves no first language speakers whatsoever" (see also Jenkins, 2015: 52-54; Jenkins et al., 2011). Following the perspective in which speakers of ENL varieties were no longer to be seen as the point of reference for language use, participants in ELF conversations were now considered as users of the

language and not as learners, thus legitimising their linguistic choices and the negotiated practices they enacted in communication. While English *learners* would have the need and requirement to aspire to a 'native speaker model' based on ENL varieties, English *users* are entitled to their own linguistic choices and no longer have to imitate ENL models of language use. As Firth explains, studies on ELF contexts were primarily directed "to conceptualize the participant simply as a *language user* whose real-world interactions are deserving of unprejudiced *description*" (1996: 241, italics in the original). Accordingly, ELF users are not to be seen as 'failed native speakers', or as 'eternal deficient English learners', but as skilled communicators who negotiate meaning and co-construct mutual understanding in order to reach successful communication (Jenkins et al., 2011: 284).

In this first phase, studies focused on linguistic features of ELF spoken communication, following the linguistic descriptive approach adopted in World Englishes research (Jenkins, 2015; Jenkins et al., 2011; Seidlhofer, 2001). As Jenkins et al. (2011: 295) point out, "much of earlier ELF research was undoubtedly concerned primarily with identifying the features that seemed to be characterizing this emerging kind of English use, with the ultimate aim of being able, one distant day, to codify ELF". During the first phase, then, researchers analysed ELF within a 'variety' perspective, trying to define its phonological, lexico-grammatical and pragmatic characteristics (Jenkins, 2015: 54; Jenkins et al., 2011: 284). Some seminal studies characterised this initial phase: Jenkins (2000), who analysed which phonological problems non-native speakers of English varieties could encounter in ELF contexts and what role phonological accommodation played in fostering mutual understanding, delineating the Lingua Franca Core (LFC); Seidlhofer (2004), who identified a list of lexico-grammar elements that were intended as hypothetical ELF features; House (2002) and Meierkord (2002), who pointed out how lingua franca communication is hybrid and variable, how speakers use flexible linguistic resources, and how data from ELF interactions show solidarity and mutual cooperation between speakers, even when cultural differences could potentially mine communicative success.

These early results needed to be corroborated through the collection of new and richer data, in order to carry out larger studies on ELF spoken communication. Consequently, ELF researchers started to compile larger ELF corpora to better comprehend the nature of ELF; this would also contribute to challenge assumptions about it being 'improper English', and to question the viewpoint according to which only 'native speaker' norms were to be considered appropriate (Jenkins, 2015: 50; Jenkins et al., 2011).

From an ELF perspective, it was fundamental to show that variation has legitimacy in a context where the language serves as a common means for international communication (Seidlhofer, 2004). One of the main arguments was that the number of 'non-native speakers' of English was much higher than the number of its 'native speakers', requiring a re-thinking of what was to be considered effective in communication and what perspective should be taken about communicative norms and appropriateness in ELF settings.

In 2001, the projects for the VOICE[4] (Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English) and the ELFA[5] (English as a Lingua Franca in Academic settings) corpora were designed in order to provide data to further research distinctive characteristics of ELF communication (Jenkins, 2015; Jenkins et al, 2011; Mauranen, 2003, 2006; Mauranen et al., 2010; Seidlhofer, 2001, 2004). This investigation of ELF through the use of corpora was aimed at analysing both qualitatively and quantitatively ELF peculiar features, in order to identify and classify aspects that could define ELF as a variety (Mauranen, 2003; Seidlhofer, 2001, 2004). Mauranen et al. (2010: 184) explain that "a large corpus is indeed a rich resource: corpus data are able to reveal linguistic regularities and patterning while also keeping track of variability in the material–and where substantial variability can be expected, as in L2–L2 interactions, discovering regularity is particularly interesting". The VOICE project was started at the University of Vienna by Seidlhofer (2001), while Mauranen was the director of the ELFA project based at the University of Helsinki (Mauranen, 2003). Both corpora aimed at 1 million transcribed words and chose to focus on spoken interactions: since spoken data shows spontaneous and authentic communication, it could also shed light on the dynamics of ELF negotiating processes, online construction of meaning, in addition to ELF peculiar linguistic features and norms (Mauranen, 2003; Seidlhofer, 2001).

ELF 1 was a phase in which ELF research was still in its infancy, and where attention focused first of all on the necessity to establish a field of study in its own right. It is important to highlight the great work that was carried out in this attempt to legitimise an independent field of research focused on the use of English as a lingua franca. As outlined above, even though WE research served as a model in initial studies focused on the description of ELF linguistic features (phonetics, semantics, and lexico-grammar), ELF researchers gradually acknowledged that ELF could neither be categorised

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[4] https://www.univie.ac.at/voice/ (last accessed 26/10/2021).
[5] https://www.helsinki.fi/en/researchgroups/english-as-a-lingua-franca-in-academic-settings/research/elfa-corpus (last accessed 26/10/2021).