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English as a Lingua Franca

and the implications of ELF
for English teachers in Italy

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Matteo Pontello

Contents

Abstract

The recent phenomena of globalization and digitalization have enabled the English language to spread globally and to proliferate across every social sector of the world and across many countries of the planet. The English language, after having spread globally, started to be assimilated and appropriated by many countries and many linguistic systems on earth and this rapid and pervasive linguistic proliferation has led to a new linguistic phenomenon: the appearance of different "World Englishes." English later started to be adopted by speakers of different languages as the lingua franca of the world and this has entailed many challenges inside the English language teaching environment, both in Italy and across all the world, where only Standard English seems to be the reference point of the didactics of English teachers. For this reason, a questionnaire survey was addressed to first-grade and second-grade secondary school English teachers of the Veneto region. The survey aimed at understanding whether teachers are aware of the new challenges that English language education in Italy has to face today as regards the appearance of new world Englishes and English being used as the lingua franca of the world. The survey also contributed to getting a picture of the situation regarding ELF teaching inside Italian classrooms to discover what teachers think about ELF teaching and what strategies they would adopt in these environments to enable students to tackle ELF in their future.

I recenti fenomeni della globalizzazione e digitalizzazione hanno fatto proliferare la lingua inglese in ogni settore sociale del mondo e in molti paesi del pianeta. La lingua inglese, dopo essere proliferata nel mondo, è stata assimilata e appropriata da molti paesi e da molti sistemi linguistici sulla terra e questa rapida e pervasiva proliferazione linguistica ha portato alla nascita di un nuovo fenomeno linguistico: la comparsa di diversi 'Inglesi del mondo'. In seguito, i parlati di diversi inglesi del mondo hanno iniziato ad usare l'inglese come una lingua franca e questo ha provocato molte sfide all'interno dell'insegnamento della lingua inglese, sia in Italia che nel resto del mondo, dove solo l'inglese standard sembra essere il punto di riferimento della didattica degli insegnanti. Per questo motivo un questionario di ricerca è stato indirizzato agli insegnanti di inglese delle scuole di primo e di secondo grado della Regione Veneto. La ricerca ha voluto scoprire se gli insegnanti siano consapevoli delle nuove sfide che l'insegnamento della lingua inglese deve affrontare oggi per quanto riguarda la comparsa di nuovi inglesi del mondo e di un inglese usato come lingua franca. La ricerca ha contribuito a creare una panoramica della situazione dell'insegnamento dell'ELF nelle classi italiane e a scoprire cosa gli insegnanti pensino dell'insegnamento dell'ELF e quali strategie adotterebbero in questi ambienti per permettere agli studenti di affrontare l'ELF nel loro futuro.

Introduction

In recent years, the expression "English as a Lingua Franca" (ELF henceforth) has emerged to describe the use of English among non-native speakers of English. Since in this globalized and digitalized world English is adopted mostly by non-native speakers of English and non-native speakers greatly outnumber native speakers of English, scholars are starting to consider that English may no longer be exclusively owned by native-speakers and that speakers of new varieties of English (World Englishes, WEs henceforth) have the right to question the ideology of a standard variety. From these challenges rises the need to investigate ELF more closely and, consequently, to discover ways to include a WE and ELF-aware perspective in the current ELT (English language teaching) programmes.

One of the motivations that led me to write this dissertation derives in fact from my four-month internship experience at a first-grade secondary school. In the classrooms, during my English lessons, I started to realise that the students who were sitting in front of me were more interested and motivated in learning different aspects of different Englishes and ELF than in learning regular daily topics. Students perceived that English nowadays cannot be considered as a single 'entity' pertaining just to one country and that different world Englishes and ELF represent the reality of today's English language. That experience was for me the starting point of my idea for this dissertation. After looking at the most relevant and recent studies on English as a Lingua Franca, World Englishes and WE and ELF-oriented pedagogies I decided to take on board the idea to research for myself the implications of these emergent aspects among teachers of English in the Italian context.

A survey was carried out among teachers of English working in first-grade and second-grade secondary schools across the Veneto region. The questions investigated the perception that teachers have with regard to different world Englishes and English as a lingua franca, the extent to which they have a WE and ELF-aware perspective in their teaching practices and the strategies that they could adopt in an ELF-oriented teaching

programme. The study also aimed at understanding whether teachers working in second-grade secondary schools are more receptive to different WEs and ELF than teachers working in first-grade secondary schools and whether more experienced teachers are more reluctant to include a WE and ELF-aware perspective in their teaching practices in favour of a more standard-based approach to teaching English.

The dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction to English as a global language and it describes the consequences of its global proliferation in many social sectors. The chapter also aims at outlining the transition from English as a global language to English as a lingua franca. The second chapter deals with the concept of English as a lingua franca more in detail. It gives an historical background of the proliferation of English until the appearance of different world Englishes and consequently, it aims at finding a key to understanding the debated concepts of 'Standard English', 'Neutral/Nuclear English' and the 'ownership' of English. Furthermore, the chapter aims at giving a description of ELF that can accommodate the concepts of 'fluidity' and 'solidity' of English in contexts of ELF.

The third chapter concentrates on the survey methodology and it describes the objectives of the survey, the profile of the respondents and the assumptions that have been made before carrying out the survey. In the fourth chapter the discussion of the results concentrates on all the aspects that have been described in the previous chapters. First, the discussion aims at giving a broad overview of teachers' perspective on different WEs, ELF and teaching ELF and next, at discussing examples and opinions about teachers' real or hypothetical ELF-oriented practices. Finally, the chapter discusses the importance teachers attach to standard-oriented teaching practices. In the fifth chapter the final results will be commented on, and the most salient aspects emerging from the survey and the dissertation will be discussed, so as to find further solutions for the implementation of WE and ELF-oriented teaching programmes in the future.

"The English language is nobody's special property.
It is the property of the imagination: it is the property of the language itself"
Derek Walcott, Nobel Prize for Literature, 1930-2017

1. English as a Global Language

Presentation

Millions of people travel around the world every year. This is a reality that simply was unimaginable in the first decades of the 20th century. "The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) estimates that internationally there were just 25 million tourist arrivals in 1950. 68 years later this number has increased to 1.4 billion international arrivals per year, […] a 56-fold increase" (Roser, 2017). Never before has it happened that so many people would reach so many territories, meet such different and varied cultures, and talk to completely different peoples. While these numbers may impress us, one thing can be taken for granted: if it were not for the English language, all these tourists could not do anything. Tourists' conversations happen only by means of English in every corner of the planet. It is almost as though this language unconsciously set up in non-native speakers' minds: if a non-native English speaker finds themselves in a foreign country and they have to talk to another person who speaks a different language from theirs, then the first language they would adopt to make themselves understood would be English. This language is not just *a* language in the world or *a* language of a country. It has become *the* global language of the world.

The proliferation of English in Italy can be noticed in its cities, which teem with international tourists. In Italy it is claimed that one does not have to travel abroad so much, especially to some English-speaking countries, to hear English being spoken. This language can be heard in the streets of Milan or Rome, for instance. In those areas English has become so pervasive that it is impossible not to hear it somewhere. The same process happens in every big and crowded city of the world: whether in Tokyo or Berlin, conversations among speakers of different nationalities and languages happen mostly by

means of English. Sometimes it can even happen that speakers of the same language start to speak in English if the linguistic circumstances are not clear.

This is exactly what happened to me. Three months ago I was walking towards Venice station after finishing my morning courses and a group of middle-school students suddenly approached me. They started to interview me in English, and they wanted me to tell them something about Venice. At first, I thought they were foreign students from an unknown country who were carrying out a study among Italian residents in Venice. After a while, I realised that they were actually Italian students who were practising their English by interviewing random people in Venice and therefore they must have thought that I was a foreign tourist.

That event was for me a pivotal moment. I realised that in that circumstance we were all Italians and we were all talking in another foreign language, which was different from our own mother tongue. And we were talking and reaching our communicative goals by means of that language. I realised, after a while, that all around us hundreds of people of unknown nationalities and languages were immersed in the same linguistic process. That language was nobody's mother tongue but was adopted by everyone as a contact language. I realised that English, whether it is here in Venice or halfway across the world, is not only the language of one English-speaking country. It simply cannot be brought back to any country in particular anymore. That language has transformed itself into a common means of communication which is now normally defined as 'lingua franca'.

1.1 The spread of English in Italy and within the Italian language

1.1.1 Language Spread

In recent years, English has proliferated into many sectors of our society very rapidly. 400 years ago the English language was only a language spoken far away and that pertained to a certain country (Britain) and to a certain culture (British culture) (Crystal, 2003) and therefore there were no reasons to study it. Now, after many years, we came to

a situation where it is even strange not to spot some elements of the English language in our daily lives. In the past, non-native English speakers would recognize this process, especially in the first decades of the globalization, when the proliferation of this language into the society was welcomed as something "new" and "enthralling". Nowadays the level of proliferation of English is so profound that non-native speakers do not have the same reactions of surprise anymore: they simply do not even notice that English is around them. Over the past few years the world has faced its biggest change as regards international communications: the arrival of Internet and social networks. These have contributed even more to the global proliferation of English.

It is even claimed that English is starting to be used excessively, especially among younger people, at a point where one starts to wonder if this process is right. "We let the English language conquer increasing spaces of our language. And the most curious thing is that almost always those who use English terms in their speeches can't speak English" (Gambi, 2019). The proliferation of English can be confirmed by the fact that the Italian dictionary contains an incredible quantity of English loans, words, phrases, and sayings, which have entered our language through new communication channels and through the media. This is currently causing a never-before-seen process of grammatical remodelling and lexical enrichment of our national language.

It seems that Italy has left its linguistic borders open as regards this proliferation. English can now be heard in many conversations among Italian native-speakers. "One of the most easily observable results of intercultural contact and communication is the set of loanwords that is imported into the vocabulary of each language involved" (Hoffer 2005, p. 53). Other countries, unlike Italy, do not seem to have accepted this linguistic contact so freely. In these countries barriers have been put up and the linguistic contact between English and the language of the specific country has been defined as a "linguistic invasion". The French dictionary, for instance, does not include English words such as *computer*, *mouse*, *software*, *email* (...) but it has translated these into French.

French speakers use their corresponding French words "*ordinateur*", "*souris*", "*logiciel*" and "*courrier électronique*". French has translated many English words that were trying to enter the national language. For instance, as regards informal interjections, whereas English uses "lol" – *laughing out loud* – in the written informal language so as to underline a reaction of astonishment and imitate the visual expression of a laughter, French uses its corresponding French interjection "mdr" (*mort de rire*). The same process of linguistic re-adjustment has happened in languages such as Spanish, Russian, some Asian languages and some African minor languages.

This, on the contrary, has not happened in Italy. The country has welcomed English loans in its national language and in part it has not followed a process of re-adjustment or translation of these. And this has been going on for quite some time. "English and Italian have been in contact since the 13th century, however, the cultural and linguistic exchange was not as fruitful as with other languages for both nations until the 18th century (Pulcini 2002) and especially after the Second World War" (Megec 2015, p. 4).

From the 18th century contacts between English and Italian started to increase and many loanwords started to be assimilated in the Italian language, although these "were not introduced into Italian with English as the direct lender, but came into Italian through French (Görlach, 2001)" (Megec 2015, p. 4), which was "the most important foreign language in Italy until 1945, when it was dethroned by English" (Megec 2015, p. 4). After 1945, because of the globalisation, contacts between English and Italian started to increase and English loanwords into Italian started to skyrocket. "In the past eight years [the use of English words] has leapt 773%, according to Federlingue, an umbrella group for language services, translators, interpreters, and language schools" (ANSA, 2020).

Today Italians use plenty of English loans in their daily conversations, most of the time without even realising that they are adopting them, or without acknowledging the fact these words come from the English dictionary. These borrowings refer not just to economic or political fields, as they did in the past, but they can be applied to many other

social sectors of our society. For instance, the most adopted English borrowings by Italians are *manager*, *marketing*, *leader*, *business*, *welfare*, *spread*, *default*, *smog*, *fashion*, *stress*, *relax* (...) (ISTAT 2017). These are only some of the possible English words that can occur in Italian conversations.

English words are not only used verbally, in everyday conversations and in the media, but they are also displayed in advertisements, on signs, in posters, and even in the graffiti around every city. Many products in shops and supermarkets maintain the original English words and phrases in their labels. But, surprisingly, there is also the possibility to find Italian products displaying English words and expressions instead of Italian ones. One example could be the latest Ferrero's product called Nutella "B-Ready" (Ferrero is an Italian selling company). The interesting aspect about this advertisement relies in its English wordplay, which works as a genius marketing strategy: "B-Ready" is the abbreviation of the English expression "*be ready*" and it was written like this to highlight the hidden word "bread" within the expression. In other words, the sellers of this new product wanted Italian consumers to '*be ready*' for the new '*bread*', because it had never happened before that Ferrero sold bread and Nutella together. This is to underline the extent to which English has proliferated inside our advertising industry, without us even noticing. Sellers do not only use English words and expressions to the most varied purposes. They are also starting to do whatever they like with them. In other words, they have taken possession of this language.

Many names of English products have been directly absorbed inside Italian. An example could be the expression "Roast Beef". Any supermarket in Italy displays it written like this on the signs, but this is often pronounced as "*ròsbif*" or "*ròsbi*" by Italian people. When Italians order a "bistecca" (steak) in a restaurant they do not realise that they are spelling an English word which was phonologically adapted to the Italian spelling system. "Bistecca" is the juxtaposition of the English words "beef" and "steak", which resulted in the word "beefsteak". This was later adapted to Italian, resulting in the word "bistecca".

This bizarre word "has undergone such a profound assimilation that most people do not recognize the original word from which it derives"[1] (Taglialatela 2011, p. 70).

The frequency of the use of English loans depends in Italy on people's jobs. For instance, business owners or people working in the business world (such as in the field of finance) use more English words and expressions in their daily conversations than Italian workers working in other sectors (ISTAT, 2018). The quantity of English words and expressions also vary from the age of the people. Young people generally use more English words than adults when they talk. This is because young people have more contacts with the English language than older people since young people are more likely to use the Internet, the media, and social networks (ISTAT, 2018).

Even longer English phrases and expressions are being adopted by Italians when they speak in their daily conversations. These expressions can also be noticed on signs and in advertisements. Some of these are, for instance, "*sold out*", "*must-have*" "*Black Friday*", "*breaking news*", "*free style*", "*take away*", "*coffee break*", "*all you can eat*", "*self-service*" (…). Even in this case Italians may not realise that they say these English expressions when they talk to one another because these have been assimilated within their dictionary.

Younger people are likely to adopt even longer English expressions and sayings in their conversations with their peers in order to emphasize what is being said. Most of the time these expressions and sayings cannot be fully understood by everyone, especially by older people, since they may have never heard of them. Some of these expressions are: "*oh my God/oh my Goodness*", "*don't worry!*", "*keep calm!*", "*are you kidding me?*", "*are you serious?*", "*last but not least*" (...). Perhaps this could derive from the fact that these are popular expressions that are often adopted by native speakers in their daily conversations. Italians may have heard them through the media and assimilated them in their mental

[1] Original text: "ha subito un'assimilazione tanto profonda da nascondere ai più la forma originaria inglese da cui deriva" (Taglialatela 2011, p. 70).

dictionary by keeping the same functions that those English expressions and sayings carry with them.

One question springs immediately to mind: how can Italians (and in the same way Germans, Russians, Spaniards…) adopt English words, expressions and sayings in their conversations and not even realise that they are doing this? These are just borrowings, one could argue, and borrowings just work like this. They *enter* a specific language, through language contact, and, consequently, they become fully part of a certain linguistic system and they are treated as though they were words and expressions of that native language. English has spread globally and many non-native English speakers, Italians included, have assimilated this language in their vocabularies. And this obviously has a consequence: once a language is 'assimilated' into another language, the former is inevitably subjected to a process of linguistic transformation by the latter.

1.1.2 Language Adaptation

There is a difference between language 'adoption' and language 'adaptation'. "The distribution of the […] language implies *adoption* (…). The spread of the virtual language implies *adaptation* […]" (Widdowson, 2003 as cited in Seidlhofer 2011, p. 67). This process happens over time: once that English has spread within a certain group of speakers, in this case, Italian speakers, it is inevitably subjected to a process of *language appropriation* by that specific community of speakers. The result is that a specific group of speakers will end up speaking a 'foreign' language that differs in many ways from the language that had originally proliferated in that community. Perhaps this 'foreign' language that speakers speak after this process may also be defined as a 'variety' of that original language. In other words, first English proliferated in Italy and Italians had a first contact with this language. Then, after some time, Italians borrowed this language and transformed it in accordance with their needs. The inevitable passage, then, is from English being 'adopted' to English being 'adapted'.

There are cases in which English words have been directly incorporated in Italian from English and then they have been transformed into "*loan blends*". These loans are special types of loans "in which one element is a loanword and the other is a native element" (Hoffer 2005, p. 54). This has happened, for instance, with certain English verbs. Some of them were assimilated as they were and *transformed into* Italian verbs by adding the suffixes '-are/-ere/-ire' at the end of the English verbs. In Italian the infinitive form of any verb is created by adding one of those suffixes to the base forms. As a result, there are long lists of English verbs which have been later Italianised, for instance, 'drink*are*' (*to drink*) and 'skip*pare*' (*to skip*). Many English expressions coming from the digital and technological world have been adapted to Italian verbs, following the same linguistic rule (suffixation). Today Italians say verbs such as 'chat*tare*' (*to chat*), 'googl*are*' (*to search in Google*), 'instagram*mare*' (*to instagram*), 'skyp*are*' (*to skype*) and 'post*are* su Facebook' (*to post on Facebook*).

There are many cases in which English phrases and expressions have been instead translated into Italian. These expressions are defined as "*loan-translation or calque*" (Hoffer 2005, p. 53). Some examples are the words "grattacielo" (literally, "scrape-sky", "*skyscraper*"), "guerra fredda" (literally, "war cold", which stands for the English expression "*cold war*", because in Italian, contrary to English, the adjective goes before the noun) and "fuorilegge" (literally, "*outlaw*"). Italian can also count many "*loan-shifts*". These are native words which have been adapted to new meanings (Hoffer 2005, p. 53) in the recipient language.

Italians, and many other speakers of English as a foreign language, have incorporated many borrowings, expressions and loans from English and have *adjusted* many of these to their linguistic systems. This reflects the concept that a language cannot be considered as a static and frozen-in-time system of communication. Every language is subjected to continuous and limitless changes, both internal (caused by internal transformations) and external (caused by language contact). The changes are limitless because, after all, "predicting the outcome of a language contact situation remains an immensely

challenging task" (Siemund & Kintana 2008, p. 1). In this sense, Italians, and many other speakers of English as a foreign language, did not just adapt single English words or expressions to their linguistic systems. They also started to adapt English to the phonology, syntax and grammar of their native languages.

"Italian English" (the variety of English spoken by Italians) differs in many ways from the varieties of English that are spoken in English-speaking countries. Italians use words and expressions that do not exist in Standard English, such as '*drinkare*', and they speak 'English' as they were speaking in their mother tongue. They have in their minds the Italian grammatical and syntactical structures but they translate their thoughts in English. In other words, they are not actually speaking 'English'. They are speaking 'Italian' and adopting English as a 'lingua franca' to make themselves understood.

For instance, Italians may pronounce sentences like: "**I don't see the hour*" instead of "*I can't wait*" (because in Italian the literal translation of the expression is '*non vedo l'ora*') and "**you can help me?*" instead of the more suitable English interrogative sentence "*can you help me?*" (because in Italian the subject-verb inversion in interrogative sentences does not occur, contrary to English). It can be claimed that these and other sentences that Italians may say when they speak English may characterize the 'variety of English' that Italians speak. These sentences, after all, do not exist in Standard English. But when Italians adopt them when they speak to other non-native speakers of English (in lingua franca contexts), they can make themselves understood even if those sentences are not 'correct' in English.

It is true that the native English speaker could find the expression "*I don't see the hour*" quite strange but perhaps they will be able to grasp its meaning in the end. If a Spanish speaker heard that expression they would immediately understand it, although this is not 'correct' in Standard English. They might link that sentence to the same Spanish expression '*no veo la hora*', which is very similar to the Italian expression '*non vedo l'ora*'. As a consequence, the Spanish listener may be able understand what the Italian

speaker is saying as opposed to the English listener. The paradox is that the Italian speaker is speaking 'English'! Intelligibility between the Spanish and the Italian speakers can be reached because the Italian speaker is not actually speaking Standard English, but their own version of English in an 'English as a lingua Franca' context.

The English language that Italians speak could be defined as one of the varieties of 'world Englishes' that Global English has generated over time. In this perspective, it can be claimed that most speakers of English as a foreign language might have developed their versions of the original Standard English because the linguistic process is the same for every language. These new 'varieties' of English are precisely the varieties that Italian students will hear when they travel abroad, unless they travel to English-speaking countries, where *Standard English* is spoken.

Summary

English is everywhere in Italy, both physically in the external world and even inside the national language. People in Italy are not even realising that they are starting to make something with this language and that they are transforming it in accordance with their linguistic needs. The transition from 'language adoption' to 'language adaptation' may have already happened, but perhaps Italians do not seem to have noticed it yet. The proliferation of English in Italy and in many countries where English is now spoken as a foreign language has happened so quickly and such in a profound way that very few people seem to have noticed the process.

"In Italy [English] is practically the second language of the country. From the schools to the business office, in both scientific and social world, Italians are becoming anglophones." (Mignone 2008, p. 120). This is the reason why the knowledge of this language must be considered of paramount importance in our national context, almost at the level of the national language. In 2020 people who do not know anything about English can be defined as the "new illiterate" of our century: they may not be very successful in their career, since English is required in many working sectors, and they

may not be able to travel abroad or to connect with the rest of the world, since English is currently the lingua franca of the world. Our EFL learning system could improve the overall proficiency in English of Italian speakers if it starts promoting an efficient foreign language learning policy within the country that could enable the students of the future to face this linguistic proliferation.

1.2 English foreign language education in Italy

"Currently in Italy English is taught compulsorily from 6 to 16, but we should also add the last three years of secondary school to this age range and, in some cases, some years of the infancy school"[2] (Santipolo 2016, p. 180). "In 2006, 99.9% of the student population in primary school learned one or two foreign languages (98.1% one language; 1.9% two languages)" (Faez 2011, p. 36). Therefore, Italian students learn English for 10 years compulsorily, or for 13 years if they manage to finish secondary school (who in Italy represent the vast majority of students). At the end of their course of study Italian students should reach respectively level B1 or level B2 of the CEFR[3].

This policy has not been in existence for many years. English started to be taught as a foreign language in Italian schools not so long ago. "Only in 1963 does English officially enter the school programmes of elementary school in Italy (Balboni, 2012)"[4] (Santipolo 2016, p. 182) and only 20 years later English is officially included in the school programmes of the middle school (although this was already present in some institutions). This was only 35 years ago. Consequently, the society shows different levels of English knowledge and proficiency depending both on the age of the speakers and the course of study that they have chosen when they were students.

[2] Original text: "Attualmente in Italia l'inglese viene insegnato obbligatoriamente dai 6 ai 16 anni, cui vanno aggiunti gli ultimi tre anni di scuola superiore e, in alcuni casi, anche qualche anno della scuola dell'infanzia"
[3] "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages"
[4] Original text: "solo nel 1985 l'inglese entra ufficialmente nei programmi scolastici per la scuola elementare (Balboni 2012)" (Santipolo 2016, p. 182)

This was confirmed by a recent study carried out in 2015 by ISTAT (Italian National Institute of Statistics) which was published in 2017. The report has estimated, among other things, the percentages of people that have any knowledge of English depending on different age groups. It has to be highlighted that these data refer to 5 years ago, and therefore they may not perfectly reflect the current situation.

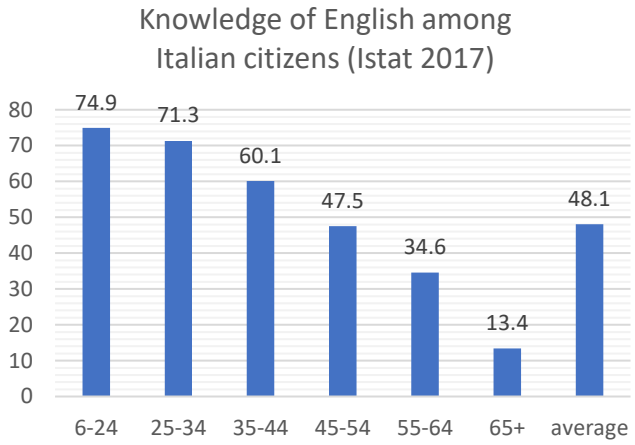

Fig 1.2.1 Knowledge of English among Italian citizens.

Data retrieved from ISTAT (2017).

The intergenerational gap appears to be undeniable even from the data collected by the national Institute. The age group 6-24 exceeds the group of people who are 65 or more than 65 years old by 61,5% as for the knowledge of English. The report also confirms that the knowledge of English decreases as age increases. It would be appropriate to highlight, at any rate, that all the data have improved with respect to the same study that was carried out in 2006 (ISTAT, 2006). Except for the age group 6-24, that presented just a little increase (74,3; +0.6%), there has been indeed an increase that is around 8% in every age group with respect to the preceding data. The major increase, (+11,1%) can be found within the group of people from 55 to 64 years old (ISTAT, 2006).

The data of this study can also be confirmed in real life. A little survey was carried out in the streets of Venice to confirm this intergenerational gap. The author pretended to be an English tourist who had just arrived at the main train station. The same question was

asked to nine random Italian people living in Venice who belonged to three different age groups (1: 25-34, 2: 45-54, 3: 65+). The information of their age was collected just after the interviews. The question was simple: "*excuse me, can I ask you some information? How can I reach Saint Mark's Basilica?*", where "information" is equivalent to the Italian word "informazioni" and "basilica" is an Italian word (cathedral). All the replies were recorded using a simple smartphone and the respondents, anyway, did not know that they were being recorded. If they had known about this, they would have prepared in advance and therefore the whole study would not have represented the real knowledge/proficiency of the respondents. Fig. 1.2.2 (below) reports all the reactions to the question.

"Excuse me, can I ask you some information? How can I reach Sant Mark's Basilica?"			
Age group 65+	Resp. 1 (66 years old) Repeats some words, such as "basilica" and "information" but the whole answer is given in Italian.	Resp. 2 (70 years old) No words in English, the whole answer is given in Italian. Hand gestures accompany the conversation.	Resp. 3 (73 years old) No words in English, the whole answer is given in Italian. Hand gestures accompany the conversation.
Age group 45-54	Resp. 4 (42 years old) They can make themselves understood with some effort. Sometimes Italian words appear in the sentences such as "vaporetto" (waterbus) or "via" (route)	Resp. 5 (49 years old) They can make themselves understood with some effort. Sometimes Italian words appear in the sentence such as "stazione" (station). Some Italian words have been also anglicised: "bigliett" instead of "biglietto" (ticket) and "pont" instead of "ponte" (bridge)	Resp. 6 (52 years old) They can make themselves understood with some effort. The answer is given half in Italian and half in English. Hand gestures accompany the conversation.
Age group 25-34	Resp. 7 (25 years old) Fluency and high proficiency can be detected immediately. The answer is rich in content and examples. They can	Resp. 8 (29 years old) Good proficiency. They can make themselves understood. The answer is rich in content and examples.	Resp. 9 (33 years old) Good proficiency. They can make themselves understood. The answer is rich in content and examples.

	also keep the conversation going.		

Fig 1.2.2 Results of the survey in Venice

Proficiency in English seems to vary depending on the age of the respondents. The first three respondents belong to the group of people who are more than 65 and this is the category of people who were not educated or were partially educated to foreign languages. Their knowledge and proficiency is clearly low or non-existent and this is confirmed by the fact that they talk directly in Italian and use hand gestures to make themselves understood. The second group of respondents belong to the age group 45-54. These respondents were educated to foreign languages in Italy but not so much to reach a high level of proficiency. Perhaps many years have gone by and they do not remember what they have studied at school anymore. This can be confirmed by their difficulties in the conversation and also, interestingly, by their ability to make themselves understood even though they use an Italian version of some English words, which should sound more natural to the English listener. This is a strategy that many speakers adopt when they do not remember the translation of a word into a foreign language (communicative strategy).

The best answer to the question was given by "respondent 7" in terms of clarity, fluency and absence of mistakes. The respondent belongs to the age group of younger people who have received, during their school years, the most updated foreign language education. All of this confirms the fact that only younger generations in Italy are starting to speak English in a proper manner.

Italy does not only have an intergenerational gap inside its society but also an interregional one. The EF/EPI annual report of 2019 (English Proficiency Index) has given an image of a country split in three main parts. In the study Northern Italy has reached the highest proficiency level of the country (Emilia Romagna is the first Northern region with a total of 57.45 points)[5]. The Centre of Italy has performed lower than the

[5] The maximum score is 100.00 (EF/EPI 2019).

Northern regions but higher than the Southern ones. South of Italy has reached the lowest points of the country (Basilicata is the last Southern region on the chart with a total of 49.09 points, that is to say, with a gap of 8.36 points with respect to Emilia Romagna). The average score that Italy has reached in this report, then, is only 55.31 points, which is not a satisfying result at all compared to the results of the other European countries analysed in the study.

According to the same study the knowledge of English among Italians is amongst the lowest ones in Europe (Italy was ranked 26th among all the European countries). The country can be found on the immediate threshold between the "medium level of competence" and the "low level of competence". Considering that the continent (Europe) has the highest ranking in the world with respect to the other continents, it appears disappointing that Italy was relegated to the bottom of the list. Neither within the world ranking did Italy achieve fulfilling results: the country was relegated only to 36th place. Given the importance that Italy has for Europe and the world (in terms of tourism, trade, economy, finance and politics) these results appear to be rather unpromising. Over these past months Italy has witnessed a heated debate concerning these unsuccessful data and many scholars have started to investigate the causes of this situation.

At any rate, Italy is trying to improve the situation from within its education system, first of all by adding pre-elementary English courses from nursery school. In 2013 "the then Minister of Education Maria Chiara Carrozza suggested the promotion of plurilingualism through the learning of some first elements of the English language immediately from kindergarten"[6] (Santipolo 2016, p. 181). Even in many other types of school it was recently decided to boost the learning of English (MIUR, 2017). More and more secondary schools, for instance, are including English projects which should work across all the subjects of the curriculum (MIUR, 2017). One of the last innovations was the implementation of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). CLIL was made

[6] Original text: "l'allora Ministra dell'Istruzione Maria Chiara Carrozza suggeriva la promozione del plurilinguismo attraverso l'acquisizione dei primi elementi della lingua inglese fin dalla scuola dell'infanzia" (Santipolo 2016, p. 181)

compulsory in high schools and technical institutes of the country in the last school years. Although the law states that "any foreign language can be chosen as a vehicular language for this methodology", most institutes have decided to put the spotlight on English.

Relevant changes are also occurring in the various academic offers of many Italian universities. According to a recent study carried out by ANVUR (National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes), 11% of 4644 university courses of the academic year 2017/2018 were conducted entirely (7.34%) or partially (3.47%) in English. "There has been a progressive increase in the quantity of university courses provided in English (from 1.4% of the academic year 2015/16 to 3.5% of the academic year 2017/18)"[7] (ANVUR 2018, p. 11). This means that the number of English courses in Italian universities has increased by 60% in a period of just two years.

A recent study carried out by ABA English, a smartphone app for learning English, which took place in 2017, has shown that Italians spend more time with the study of English nowadays than any other country analysed. The study has revealed that "26% of Italians has been studying English for more than ten years."[8] (Della Corte, 2017). "This number is far superior to the other analysed countries and to the global average (which stands at 21%)"[9] (Della Corte, 2017). Another important fact that has emerged from this study is the perception that Italians have in regard to the importance of studying English. They are starting to recognize that low proficiency of this language equals fewer work opportunities in the future. "4 out of 10 Italians declare that they have lost a job opportunity because of their low proficiency in English."[10] (Della Corte, 2017). This is almost half of the interviewees of the study.

[7] Original text: "si registra un progressivo aumento dei corsi erogati in lingua inglese parzialmente (dall'1,4% dell'a. A. 2015/16 al 3,5% del 2017/18)" (ANVUR 2018, p. 11)
[8] Original text: "Il 26% degli italiani studia inglese da più di dieci anni" (Della Corte, 2017)
[9] Original text: "una cifra superiore a quella degli altri paesi analizzati e della media globale (21%)" (Della Corte, 2017)
[10] Original text: "4 italiani su 10 dichiarano di aver perso un'opportunità lavorativa a causa della scarsa conoscenza dell'inglese." (Della Corte, 2017)

1.3 Proliferation of English around the world

One of the ways to measure the proliferation of a language is to look at where it is taught. Every country has got its own foreign language policies, and this means that one would not find, for instance, Spanish being taught in mainstream Japanese schools or German being taught in mainstream Brazilian schools. It would not make any sense because, for instance, Japanese students may not have many contacts with Spanish speakers when they finish school. But there is one language that is taught from Costa Rica to Greenland, from the Faroe Islands to Madagascar. A language that knows no barriers and borders across the planet. That language is English.

"English is now the language most often taught as a foreign language" (Crystal 2003, p. 5). According to a recent study carried out by the University of Winnipeg (2020) "there are 142 countries in the world where English is a mandatory element of the national education policy concerning public education and 41, in which English language is a possible elective subject […]" (University of Winnipeg, 2020). English second and foreign language education, consequently, is promoted in 183 countries. If one added to this number, then, all the English-speaking nations, one could conclude that English language education is currently present in 190 countries.

It is interesting to notice that English is also the most studied language in non-formal contexts. One of the latest smartphone applications for learning foreign languages appeared on the market, "Duolingo", which counts "120 million users around the world" (Pajak, 2016) has shown this in one of its recent studies (2016). According to the data collected by the application in 2016, English "[is] one of the top two languages in two thirds of all countries. This is true even for English-speaking nations, such as the United States" (Pajak, 2016). "Out of 194 countries analysed, English is the first choice of study in 116 countries." (Pajak, 2016).

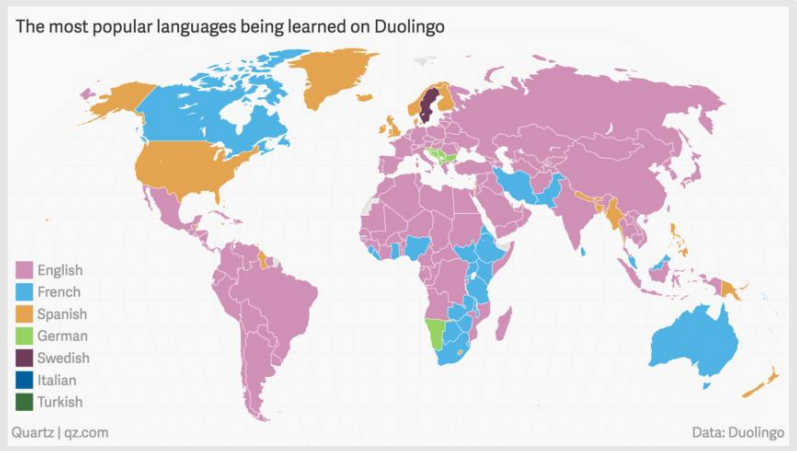

Fig 1.3.1 The most popular languages being learned on Duolingo

Retrieved from Sonnad, N. (2017) "These are the languages the world is trying to learn". *Quartz.*

Many other similar online applications (e.g. Babbel, Memrise, Hello Talk…) have recorded similar results (2017; 2017; 2018). English is chosen by most users in these applications as the first language of study. If this is happening, then, there must be a reason why.

English is not only present in our cities as a vehicular language for tourism purposes. This language has rapidly proliferated everywhere, and non-native English speakers have found themselves unprepared to manage all these changes all at once. English has proliferated in particular in those working sectors that until a few years ago were not used to operate with any kind of foreign language. It has proliferated, then, in many other sectors of our society and it has reached, after some time, even people's daily lives.

English has proliferated in particular in the following sectors:

a) Business and Economy (1.3.1);

b) Commerce and Advertisements (1.3.2);

c) International Institutions (1.3.3);

d) Science, Technology & Research (1.3.4);

e) Internet and Social Networks (1.3.5);

f) Entertainment (Movies and Music) (1.3.6);
g) News and Press (1.3.7).

1.3.1 Business and Economy

"Research from all over the world shows that cross-border business communication is most often conducted in English" (Rajathurai 2018 p. 873). Processes are becoming faster and at the same time, thanks to new technologies, distances are becoming shorter and this is inevitably leading to many linguistic consequences. For instance, if a Canadian business organized an online conference with China, all the participants today would use English in real time to understand each other. This was just unimaginable 50 years ago.

Human resources are hired in most businesses only if they show proficiency in English. "Companies who want to function at an international level only consider their staff well educated if they are good English speakers […]" (Rajathurai 2018, p. 873). Most of the time proof of English proficiency comes from linguistic certifications such as TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication), BEC (Business English Certificate), IELTS and TOEFL.

In some world businesses non-native English workers are selected and hired thanks to their high proficiency in English and in recent years this has led to a linguistic paradox: "qualified multilingual foreigners are already proving to have a competitive advantage over their monoglot British counterparts in global companies" (Kinnock, 2006:4 as cited in Paradowski 2008, p. 98). Consequently, many English-speaking countries are trying to conquer their linguistic supremacy again by presenting themselves on the market, not with English, as would happen in the past, but with other foreign languages.

Globalization brought industries and companies outside many English-speaking countries and in these circumstances workers from all over the world, who already speak different national languages, now adopt English (as a lingua franca) to understand each other. Widespread businesses like "Airbus, Daimler Fast Retailing, Nokia, Renault, Samsung,

SAP, Technicolor, and Microsoft in Beijing" (Rajathurai 2018 p. 873) would not work without English. Daimler-Chrysler, for instance, "uses English in their joint ventures as their working language" (Paradowski 2008, p. 98). Even in many non-native corporations spread around the world English is adopted among workers who do not share the same nationality or language. "At […] Toyota Peugeot Citroen Automobile assembly plant […] in the Czech Republic, English is the working language of Japanese, French, and Czech staff" (Paradowski 2008, p. 98). English is adopted by companies both outside to compete with each other, and inside, among the workers. In other words, English is used as a "global language" outside and inside it is used as "a Lingua Franca".

1.3.2 Commerce and Advertisements

Today English advertisements can be heard everywhere, on TV, on the radio and in our phones. Social networks display every day English advertisements in the homepages of people from all over the world. The same thing occurs in most websites on the internet. A great amount of tv commercials, then, are English or use English as the language of advertising. This is only due to the fact that most products that we all use today come directly from English-speaking countries. English "[is] present on every step of our daily life through fashion and designer shoes, comestibles, beverages […] popular music, computers and high tech" (Paradowski 2008, p. 109).

Particularly effective are those jingles that can be heard in the backgrounds of some advertisements. Coca Cola's chosen song for its campaign "*taste the feeling*", could be an example of these. Furthermore, McDonald's famous slogan "*i'm lovin' it*", is on everyone's lips. This is a clear example of linguistic creativity and transformation of the English language generated by native speakers themselves. The expression includes in fact some grammatical mistakes: the "i" is not capitalised, the "g" in "loving" is cut out and the whole expression "I'm loving" sounds pretty odd in English. Notwithstanding this, the expression is globally recognized.

> "We all know that advertisements, song lyrics, […] [are not] the places to turn for examples of good grammar, but we also know that […] speakers of English can get creative with traditional grammar, and that sometimes grammatically iffy phrases catch on*"* (Mills, 2010).

Notwithstanding the fact that the sentence is not grammatically correct, customers have likewise understood the message that McDonald's wanted to share. It can even be assumed that if the company had chosen the more grammatically correct slogan, *it would not have had the same effect* on the public.

One of the consequences of the proliferation of English is that the English language does not only belong to English advertising companies anymore. Sometimes even national products and goods produced in non-English speaking countries are being advertised in English. For instance, "[i]n Poland […] billboard and newspaper adverts as well as radio and TV commercials are only relying on English-medium slogans, which is slowly becoming a standard in copywriters' workshop" (Paradowski, 2008). English does not only come from the *outside*, but it is adopted, manipulated, and transformed from the *inside*. In other words, English is transforming itself from being a "global" language to a set of different "local" varieties. This fundamental transition - from 'global language' to 'lingua franca' - will be dealt with more in detail in the following chapters.

1.3.3 International Institutions

Today most world institutions use English as their working language and that is why this language can be considered as the only language of international diplomacy. The United Nations claims that "there are six official foreign languages […] Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish" (United Nations, 2020) within the Institution and that the aim is to promote plurilingualism "[i]n order to eliminate the disparity between the use of English and the use of the other […] official languages" (United Nations, 2020). But it is well known that in reality diplomats who work at the UN adopt English as the

only language of communication. After all, English and French are the only two official working languages of the UN system (United Nations, 2020).

The same situation could be applied to the European Union. “Since one of EU’s founding principles is multilingualism” (European Union, 2020) “[one] [has] the right to use any of the 24 official languages” (European Union, 2020) in meetings and councils. Furthermore, “EU laws and other legislative texts are published in all official languages” (European Union). This can be seen officially in the legislation but the reality is different. “For two decades, English has been the ‘lingua franca’ of the European Union institutions” (Keating, 2020). Furthermore, “almost all conferences in Brussels are conducted in English and rarely offer interpretation” (Keating, 2020).

1.3.4 Science, Technology & Research

English is the language of science, technology, and research. This lingua franca enables scientists, researchers and scholars from all over the world to share their findings and results with one another. “95% of scholarly publications appear in English” (Paradowski 2008, p. 106). “Thus, English is often selected by writer[s] in order to maximise the potential leadership, even if the great majority of the target audience may be sharing the same native tongue” (Paradowski 2008, p. 106). Medical research would not simply work if a common lingua franca did not exist. For instance, scientists and researchers from all over the world are now sharing their studies and findings in order to create a vaccine for the new Coronavirus, which has rapidly spread in the first months of 2020. All these processes are coordinated by WHO (World Health Organization), whose networks operate almost exclusively in English.

Most scientific papers are published by universities located in English-speaking countries and these are currently the leading universities of the world. “The latest annual ranking provided by the Shanghai Jiao Tong University Institute […] lists 17 US and 2 UK universities in the lead, with institutions in English-speaking countries altogether occupying roughly two-thirds of the world’s top 100” (Paradowski 2008, pp. 104-105).

At the highest rankings there are universities such as Harvard, Stansford, Barkeley, Cambridge, MIT (Massacchussets Institute of Technology), Columbia, Princeton, Oxford (…) (Paradowski 2008, p. 105). These universities attract students from all over the world each year. Given their notoriety, a student who manages to be admitted to one of these universities will have their future secured.

As for technology, "English now allows the rapid cross-pollination of ideas and innovation around the world" (British Council 2013, p. 4) and that is why English should also be considered as the language of technological research and modernity. The most revolutionary inventions of the last decades - computers, tablets, smartphones - and most technological devices that are used today come to a great extent from English-speaking countries. Many operating systems (Windows, iOS, Android…) only work in English, unless one decides to change the language in the settings. Recently, English was adopted as the working language of Chinese and English researchers to create the first human-like robot of history. "Sophia", this is the name of the humanoid, speaks English and replies to your questions in this language.

English-speaking countries have also contributed to the improvement of the aerospace and technological research. The first man who landed on the moon was American and worked for an American governative agency (NASA). The first words that he pronounced on this unknown planet were precisely English words. "*One giant leap for mankind*", said Neil Armstrong. In the end, the American astronauts left that planet after their lunar mission, but not without leaving anything behind: *the American flag is, after all, still standing on that soil.*

1.3.5 Internet and Social Networks

The advent of internet represents the final stage of the expansion and proliferation of the English language across the globe. "The arrival of the internet and social media, […] has meant that those languages with the greatest momentum and the most attractive characteristics and attributes, […] have become the most successful channels of online

communication and exchange" (British Council 2013, p. 6). Google, the most widely used search engine in the world, let us not forget, is an American invention. English is nowadays the language adopted for most online international communications. According to a recent report of Education First (2020) "565 million people use the internet every day and about 52% of the world's most visited websites are displayed in English. Therefore, learning this language gives access to over half the content of the internet" (ETS Global, 2020).

An eye-opening study on the proliferation of English on the Internet was carried out in 2014 by researchers of the University of California (Berkeley). The aim of the study was to discover a new way to measure the global influence of a language without relying on its geographical proliferation. The research team decided to "identify the global languages associated with particular elites by mapping their networks of multilingual coexpressions. Examples of multilingual coexpressions include […] edits to multiple language editions of Wikipedia and posting short messages on Twitter" (Ronen et al 2014 pp. E5616–E5622). "These [two] networks allow[ed] [them] to map the paths of direct and indirect communication between speakers from different languages" (Ronen et al. 2014, pp. E5616–E5622) on the internet.

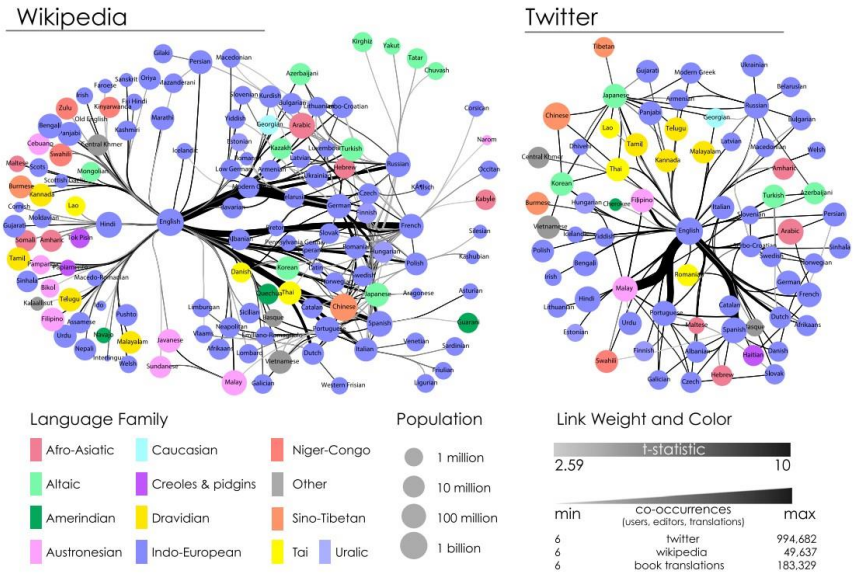

Fig 1.3.2 Coarse map of the links of the three global forums. Retrieved from Ronen et al. 2014, p. E5617

The results were quite remarkable. "[The] world's languages exhibit a hierarchical structure dominated by a central hub, English, and a halo of intermediate hubs, which include other global languages […]" (Ronen et al. 2014, p. E5622). This can be seen in fig 1.3.2: there are two English central hubs at the heart of the two platforms, from which all other linguistic hubs branch out. The study confirmed that the English language acts as a sort of lingua franca for most linguistic connections that are constantly generated on the Internet.

Those linguistic branches and ramifications are quite familiar. They could be applied to any existing social network and all their myriads of linguistic connections that they create daily across the globe. Social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter…) and instant messaging applications (WhatsApp, Telegram…) have reduced, as we all know, space and time. Nowadays non-native English speakers can talk to native English speakers by simply connecting to the Internet. This could have the potential to change the entire ELT environment. In the past, students used to send letters to English "pen-friends" spread across the world and they had to wait ages to receive a reply from them. Today, new generations have more possibilities for the learning of English. YouTube could be just an example of the many websites that students could use to learn English. On YouTube students can see videos, watch movies and hear songs coming from English-speaking countries, but they can also take part in live videos and live chats and engage both with native and non-native speakers of English.

Furthermore, today thousands of online gamers from all over the world meet in live-streams competitions where the use of the voice is necessary. The language that they adopt in these circumstances to understand each other is English. For instance, in a game session of the game "Fortnite" one could find participants from the US, Germany, Italy and Japan playing at the same moment and adopting English as a lingua franca. The same process occurs in online blogs or forums, where writers from all countries meet to share whatever they like. And even in this case English is adopted as a lingua franca.

1.3.6 Entertainment (Movies and Music)

English has proliferated everywhere, in every aspect of our social life, including the entertainment Industry. English is currently the leading language of the filming industry. "The biggest television and music industries in the world are based [in Hollywood]" (Rajathurai 2018 p. 873). The most famous movies ever produced are American movies and most actors come either from the US or from other English-speaking countries. Nash Information Services (2020) has shown that the ten most profitable movie production companies are based in English-speaking countries with a total number of 1788 movies produced and more than 230 billion dollars of worldwide box office (Nash Information Services, LLC 2020).

American movies have also contributed, in some countries, to the learning of English: whereas in Italy most movies offered to the public in cinemas and theatres are dubbed or translated by Italian actors (and Italians take this for granted), in other countries this process does not usually take place. For instance, "[s]ince most Swedes speak more-or-less perfect English, it is relatively easy for them to understand films in English. As a result, almost no films are dubbed in Swedish. Instead, Swedes prefer subtitles (…)" (Maconi, 2017). It is difficult that this situation occurs in Italy simply because most Italians generally do not have the level of proficiency in English necessary to follow the subtitles while watching the movie.

As for the Music industry, it is well known that most artists and record companies nowadays are located in Britain, in the US, or in other English-speaking countries. If one analyses the world playlists, one can find English songs at the top of the world hitlists anytime of the year. According to a recent study carried out by Billboard, 95% of the most influential top 100 world songs of 2019 displayed English content or lyrics (Billboard, 2019). Furthermore, singers and groups around the world normally produce English songs even if they are not English native speakers because they have to survive in a competitive music market which is mostly ruled by English native singers.

It can be concluded, then, that "[t]he power of American movies, television and music likely has more to do with the proliferation of English across Europe than education, particularly when it comes to people under 40" (Keating, 2020). Young people are already in contact with English outside the formal context of the classroom, therefore teachers could ask them to bring in the classroom what they already know. Songs' lyrics, for instance, could represent a useful way to learn English. Students can now find millions of lyric videos of English songs on YouTube. Teachers could get their students to choose a song they like; they could hear it all together in the classroom and then they could work on its lyrics. These types of educational activities also aim at raising students' interest and motivation to learn English. Today possibilities, thanks to the Internet, are limitless.

1.3.7 News and Press

"In the news media, English still remains—and becomes used more and more widely as—the preferred [language] for global reach, with several stations which had so far operated in other languages establishing channels in this *lingua franca*" (Graddol, 2006: 46f. as cited in Paradowski 2008 p. 108). The most famous news channels, spreading news all across the world 24 hours a day, are currently based either in the US, in Britain or in other English-speaking countries. These channels are, for instance, BBC World News, CNN (Cable News Network), Fox News, Sky News, MSNCB (Microsoft-National Broadcasting Corporation), ABC news (Australian Broadcasting Corporation). Notwithstanding the fact that CNN is a US-based corporation, many times news anchors open their shows by saying, "welcome to our viewers in the United States *and around the world*" (CNN, Early Start). They take for granted that the world is watching them.

The most influential news channels for business, economy and finance, then, are entirely broadcasted in English (Bloomberg and CNBC). These news channels have the function to control all world news. Not surprisingly, when a major event happens in the world, no matter the country in which this happens, other national and international channels tune in to these channels (e.g. CNN), often requiring English translators so that viewers can understand what they are hearing.

The English language is the lingua franca adopted by most news agencies. Papuzzi (2010) was able to identify the ones at the top, "with a worldwide network capable of dominating the entire system and without which there would not be any information at all: Associated Press, United Press, Reuters (…)"[11] (Papuzzi 2010, p. 10). Therefore, when one reads any international news, no matter the source, one is actually reading news that have been previously processed by English journalists working in one of these world agencies.

One of the most interesting aspects about news is that, for a while now, even minor non-native national and international news channels have started to create English versions of their channels in order to remain competitive internationally. France24 English, Russia Today English, Al Jazeera English, NHK World Japan are all non-native news channel that broadcast news in English. This means that a French journalist, for instance, may be talking live to a Russian journalist in English to make themselves understood. Therefore, it can be said that English does not only belong to English-speaking news agencies anymore. English, apart from being global language, has also become a worldwide lingua franca.

1.4 The journey from English as a Global Language to ELF

Today English cannot only be considered as a language that appears written outside on the streets on signs and in advertisements. It is not a language only confined in itself, something that is just received "on the outside", something "foreign" and something that does not belong to us. In other words, the English language nowadays cannot be defined as a 'global language' because English started to be *appropriated* by many non-native English-speaking countries.

The 'global language' has become a set of different 'local languages'. People have started to use this language in their own way, following their own rules. These "local languages" after a while have transformed themselves into varieties of the original standard in all

[11] Original text: "con una rete mondiale in grado di dominare il sistema dell'informazione e senza le quali non esisterebbe informazione: Associated Press, United Press, Reuters (…)" (Papuzzi 2010, p. 10)

respects. This was also confirmed by many studies on interactions in ELF, where it clearly emerged that non-native speakers of English would speak their variety of English rather than a formal standard (Seidlhofer, 2011). The English-speaking world now counts many varieties of English: those that are adopted for specific purposes (e.g. business) and those that are spoken depending on the geographical origin of the speakers.

This "English language appropriation" theory can also be confirmed in the Italian context in two ways: first of all, Italians have started to use English for specific purposes in many sectors of the society and second, Italians have also brought about changes to English itself, creating words and expressions that do not exist in English. Furthermore, when Italians speak English, they speak 'their variety' of English, without their even noticing. This variety of English consists of a series of phonological, grammatical, syntactical and lexical features that differ in many ways from the original globalized English.

It must be assumed, then, that the same process has happened in those countries where English is not spoken as a first language. Consequently, it can be claimed that after the global spread of English, many *World Englishes* started to appear. "*Italian English*" is different from "*German English*" and "*Japanese English*", in terms of different phonological, grammatical, syntactical, and cultural features. National languages (and different cultural background) act as a sort of "filter" when English is spoken.

But there is another important fact that has happened in recent times. Non-native speakers of English have started to adopt their own variety of 'English' in international contexts because of the processes of globalisation and digitalisation. This situation led to the appearance of an English being used as lingua franca. This expression is used to describe a situation in which speakers of different WEs adopt a common language which is different from their mother tongues in order to make themselves understood by the other members of the interaction. This cannot obviously be defined as a language per se or a language that can be taught and learned, because it changes every time according to the different linguistic circumstances.

Let us pretend for instance, that a businesswoman from Shanghai and a stockbroker from Buenos Aires met in Brussels to discuss some important international affairs. It is unlikely that they start speaking in Chinese or Spanish (unless they both know one of these languages) or in Dutch, which is a language of the geographical context. Using gestures, then, would certainly lead to misunderstandings. The last resource they could adopt to make themselves understood would be another different (but common) means of communication. I say "different" because "*Chinese English*" is in some way different from "*Spanish English*", and I say "common" because these two varieties of WE have similar *neutral* or *nuclear* traits that can lead to mutual intelligibility.

All these processes have been summarized in fig. 1.4.1 (below). The pyramid aims at clarifying the transition from "English as a global language" to "English as a lingua franca". The pyramid is presented upside-down to underline the concepts of geographical spaciousness and historical chronology of the three different phenomena:

- "*English as a global language*" is a process that started centuries ago and that has affected the whole world. This layer is presented at the top of the pyramid with the maximum level of space;
- "*English as a local language*" is the result of the recent process of globalization which led non-native speakers of English to create their own varieties of English (and this has led to the appearance of different WEs). The process has been more 'local' (more geographically localized) than 'global' and that is why the definition is shown in the middle layer of the pyramid;
- "*English as a lingua franca*" concerns new linguistic processes that now occur in international contexts. The new process of digitalization has made it possible for non-native English speakers, who speak different WEs, to exchange information in new linguistic contexts. Because of the complexity of this process it is not easy to localize where these interactions take place.

The vertical flowchart beside the pyramid aims at clarifying which linguistic process goes with which layer of the pyramid. First, English *proliferated* as a global language; next, it was *appropriated* by different non-native speakers of English. Finally, speakers of different WEs have started to *use* their version of 'English' in international contexts (in lingua franca contexts).

Fig 1.4.1 Transition from "English as a Global Language" to "English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)"

On the whole, what appears remarkable about English being used as a lingua franca is the potential that it brings with itself. This language is, in fact, nobody's mother tongue, but it can be adopted by all speakers as a means to understand each other. This is something that could possibly solve many linguistic hindrances of this heavily interconnected and globalized world. Consequently, the linguistic barriers of the Babel Tower that prevented individuals from communicating with one another could, in this way, disappear.

2. English as a Lingua Franca

2.1 What is this thing called Lingua Franca?

The term "Lingua Franca" in reference to English appeared in a 1967 article of L.A. Hill. In this article he argued that for the first time ever "it may be necessary to divorce the language from its cultural roots and, instead, develop a neutral form of English which can be used by speakers of English around the globe" (Kiczkowiak & J. Lowe 2018, p. 8) and that "English language teachers should 'lend a sympathetic ear to the desires and aspirations of many […] who see in English the answer to their need for an international lingua franca […]'" (Hill 1967, p. 95 as cited in Kiczkowiak & J. Lowe 2018, p. 8).

Phillippson in his 1992 book *Linguistic Imperialism* seemed to take another perspective in the matter. He argued that "the pendulum has […] swung the other way, and the tendency is to promote English as the only lingua franca, which can serve modern purposes" (Phillippson 1992, p. 42). For him, English is established as the only lingua franca of the globalized world. However, when referring to Phillippson and his work, one must acknowledge the fact that his discourse follows an imperialistic perspective. He envisaged in fact a "Lingua Franca" as a "dominant international language of a certain moment in history" (Phillippson 1992, p. 41).

The confirmation of the fact that English is the *de facto* established lingua franca of our times comes from subsequent definitions of Lingua Franca, for instance, from the one given by Firth in 1996. For him this is "a contact language between persons who share neither a common native tongue, nor a (common) national culture and for whom English is the chosen *foreign* language of communication" (Firth 1996, p. 240). Firth takes for granted that the chosen language of communication among different languages must be English and that other languages cannot be adopted as a common means of communication in these interactions. Different "first languages" and "national cultures" can be united only by one "contact language".

It's quite interesting to notice that with the turn of the new millennium and the advancements of the research into English as a Lingua Franca there has been the recognition that different forms of English meet in contexts of ELF because speakers vary in their first languages and cultures. Native languages normally act as 'linguistic filters' and the result of this is that the "new languages", emerging from the contact between the native languages and the foreign languages, always have different features.

In 1999, for instance, House claimed that "[l]ingua Franca interactions are defined as interactions between members of two or more different linguacultures in English, for none of whom English is the mother tongue" (House 1999, p. 74). A similar definition was given by Jenkins a few years later, in 2006, when she declared that English used as a lingua franca is "a contact language across linguacultures" (Jenkins 2006, p. 159). There is the recognition, after her work, that contexts of ELF are not homogeneous, as was thought before, but heterogeneous. Even though English remains the chosen language in these interactions, there is now a new aspect to take into consideration: speakers in these interactions share not only their 'languages' but also their 'cultures'. The aspect of culture is strictly linked in many ways to the aspect of language, and this could make the entire discourse on ELF even more complicated.

The heterogeneity of these processes is recalled in the definition given by Barbara Seidlhofer in 2011. She claimed that a Lingua Franca is "*any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option*" (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 7 emphasis in original). Seidlhofer expands the concept of heterogeneity even further: for her English is used as the primary means of communication in contexts of English as a lingua franca because there are *different first languages* involved. Interestingly, she claims that English is likely to occur as the language of the lingua franca in these contexts, but English is not the only communicative medium possible. Even another language could be chosen.

2.2 Lingua Francas throughout history

The first Lingua Francas started to be used, historically speaking, as means of communication among different merchants. Lingua Francas, therefore, started to proliferate because they were useful for people to communicate with speakers of *different* languages. The term "Lingua Franca" started to appear in the Middle Ages in the Mediterranean area. This language was "formed by a mixture of Venetian, Genoese, Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, Turkish and some elements of minor languages and [...] was useful for merchants of the Levant […] to manage the commerce, in an area where the most varied languages converged"[12] (Barbina 1993, p. 27). The first lingua franca was, therefore, a mixture of different *languages* (*and cultures*) that had nothing to do with each other. It was not a 'stable' language because it was subjected to continuous changes brought about by different speakers and because it was adopted by many countries in the Mediterranean.

The term 'Lingua Franca' was adopted to describe not only this pragmatic language, which was useful for different populations to trade, but also to refer to a vast geographical area (Europe). The term was later incorporated into Latin and transformed into the Italian expression "lingua franca", where "*lingua*" in Italian stands for "*language*" in English and "*franca*" (Frank) "comes from Old French 'franc', meaning 'free', and lives on in Italian 'franco'" (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 81). The whole expression was then incorporated into the English vocabulary without further linguistic modifications.

Europe was not the home of only one lingua franca. The continent has been the cradle of other lingua francas that have followed over time. One of these, probably the most known one, is Latin. Latin was both the language of the Roman Empire and the language of the Christian Religion. It is precisely thanks to this latter aspect that Latin has kept its power for more than 2000 years. A liturgical language "can be easily accepted without much trouble even by the ones who adhere to that religion, even though they speak different

[12] "formata da un miscuglio di veneziano, genovese, greco, arabo, ebreo, turco e con elementi di altre lingue minori e […] serviva ai mercanti del Levante […] per gestire il commercio, in un'area dove confluivano lingue diversissime" (Barbina 1993, p. 27)

languages"[13] (Barbina 1993, p. 30). Latin is considered even today the 'lingua franca' of the Catholic Church because the Church maintained it as a unifying element for all believers in the world. To some extent English and Latin have currently the same functions: *they unite many world languages and populations around their own languages*.

As far as religions are concerned, it should not be forgotten the similar case of Islamism and the power it had (and still has) to unite *different populations and languages* across the world. "Islamism has contributed to the proliferation of Arabic across a very vast area, and in this way it gave a linguistic identity to many different populations"[14] (Barbina 1993, p. 32). Today Arabic is considered as the "lingua franca" of all Muslims and also of the Arab world, geographically speaking. For instance, this language unifies many populations who speak different languages across the Middle East. "There are 25 countries that claim Arabic as an official or co-official language" (Doochin, 2019) "and then there are 6 sovereign states in which Arabic is a national language or recognized minority" (Doochin, 2019).

The first lingua franca of the world was useful for commerce and trade. But after many years, 'commerce' and 'trade' were replaced with the concepts of colonization and imperialism. Countries such as Spain and France started to spread across the world in order to conquer as many territories as possible and to show their political superiority to the other European powers. An interesting aspect about all this is that while these superpowers were conquering the world, they were also starting to spread their native languages over vast territories, whose speakers already spoke different languages.

From the 16th to the 17th centuries the world was taken over by the Spanish Empire. Consequently, the language of Spain (Spanish Castilian) spread across the colonies of the New World and started to be adopted by non-native Spanish speakers as a lingua franca.

[13] Original text: "può essere accettata senza troppi problemi da tutti coloro che a quella religione aderiscono anche se parlano lingue diverse" (Barbina 1993, p. 30)
[14] Original text: "l'espansione dell'islamismo contribuì alla diffusione della lingua araba su uno spazio molto vasto, dando così a un gran numero di popolazioni diverse una identità linguistica" (Barbina 1993, p. 32)

Even today Spanish is considered to be a sort of 'lingua franca' that unifies many Latin American countries. These countries developed their own version of Spanish, which later drifted away from the original 'Standard' version of the language. The same process could be said to have happened later with French.

In the 18th century France was the most populous, richest, and most powerful European nation (Crystal, 2003). French was adopted as a lingua franca by many speakers and it was also the lingua franca of the European aristocracy and nobility. French in the 19th Century was also the language of international treaties (Crystal 2003), and it generally had the same status that English has nowadays in the world. With the expansion of the French Empire, then, the language proliferated even in more countries across the world, especially in countries located in the African continent. Today the speakers of those countries still speak French as a second or foreign language (African French) but whatever their status is, none of them actually speaks 'Standard French'. Each country developed its variety of French after that the original colonizers abandoned their territories.

All lingua francas of the past may share, in this sense, a common characteristic. These languages (the Levant's language, Latin, Arabic, Spanish and French) spread across immense territories, in which some people were already speaking other native languages. What has been observed is that, in post-colonial times, the original languages of the colonizers started to take on different features depending on the different countries. This process happened because a 'lingua franca' is a language spoken by speakers who already speak *another native language*. The contact between these 'native languages' and the languages of the colonizers creates, most of the time, another adapted version of the language. Whenever a language expands, it will inevitably produce different 'versions' of the original language, which can be defined as 'varieties' of the original language.

2.3 Why we can talk about different "World Englishes"

Once that an empire has been established in certain countries it also imposes its language within its borders. The French and the Spanish empires administered territories with many different populations within them. Therefore, "French" and "Spanish" were spoken as Lingua Francas. The same thing happened, historically speaking, with English. Thanks to the expansion of the British Empire, the English language was imposed in many areas of the world. Those territories are precisely the countries where English is now spoken as a second language.

Towards the end of the 16th Century (after 500 years of English establishment in the British Isles) "the number of mother tongue English speakers […] is thought to have been 5 and 7 million" (Crystal 2003, p. 30). Today the language spoken in this territory is defined as *British English* or *British Standard English*. The British Isles were the core from where the proliferation of English started. From that century onwards, the process of proliferation of English began to speed up. "Between the end of the reign of Elizabeth I (1603) and the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth II (1952), this figure increased almost fiftyfold to some 250 million" (Crystal 2003, p. 30). In this 400-year period the world has acknowledged the proliferation of many *varieties* of English, which seem to be different, in many ways, from the original '*British English*'.

One of the factors that contributed to the expansion of English was obviously the British colonial expansion. The expansion of the language started with Cristoforus Colombus in 1492, although this was a Spanish expedition. "The first expedition from England to the New World was commissioned […] in 1584" (Crystal 2003, p. 31) and "the first […] English settlement dates from 1607" (Crystal 2003, p. 31). Throughout the seventeenth century immigrants started to settle down not only in the New World but also in Canada and in the Caribbean. After decades of establishment, the original language followed a process of transformation depending on the different territories. As a consequence, different varieties of English started to proliferate. Nowadays the languages spoken in

those territories are defined as "*American English*", "*Canadian English*", "*Caribbean English*" and "*Jamaican English*".

The expansion of English continued over time. The language expanded as the Empire invaded as many territories as possible. "From the early seventeenth century ships from Europe travelled to the West African coast" (Crystal 2003 p. 39). "The result was the growth of several pidgin forms of communication, and in particular a pidgin between the slaves and the sailors" (Crystal 2003, p. 39). These mixed languages, then, were brought to the southern territories of the United States because of the Atlantic triangular slave trade. Slaves were bought in African territories and then brought to the new American lands in order to be enslaved. The only thing that these slaves could bring with them were their native languages, which later mixed with English. "This creole English […] rapidly came to be used throughout the southern plantations, and in many of the coastal towns and islands" (Crystal 2003, p. 40). Nowadays this variety of English is defined as "*African American Vernacular English*", which is not only a variety of English spoken in the United States, but it also constitutes a sort of "lingua franca" for all the African-American speakers spread around the world.

During the seventeenth century "English expanded also in India following the establishment of the British East India Company" (Crystal 2003, p. 47). Let us remember that India reached its independence from Britain only in 1947. This means that the country has been in contact with the language of the colonizers for more than 300 years. The English language in India was not only "a second language" but "[it] was adopted as administrative language, replacing even Sanskrit and Persian"[15] (Barbina 1993, p. 52). In other words, "English became the primary medium of instruction thereby guaranteeing its status and steady growth during the next century" (Crystal 2003, p. 48). That is why *Indian English* is one of the most spoken varieties of English as a second language even

[15] Original text: "essa venne adottata come lingua amministrativa, rimpiazzando il sanscrito e il persiano" (Barbina 1993, p. 52)

today. “The rest of the subcontinent speaks hundreds of regional vernaculars. Amid this Babel, English remains the […] only lingua franca” (Masani, 2012).

In the eighteenth century the British Empire started to spread its language even in the southern hemisphere. The newly discovered continent – Australia– was employed by the British administration as a territory that should serve as a penal colony. “Soon afterwards European traders (especially British traders) began to settle in New Zealand too” (Crystal 2003 p. 41). This has originated, over time, other two varieties of English: *Australian English*, which differs in many ways from British English, and *New Zealand English*. Subsequently, it was the turn of South Africa. “British involvement in the region dates only from 1795, […] and British control was established in 1806.” (Crystal 2003, p. 43). Even in those territories the original variety of English followed a process of transformation that enabled that language to drift away from the original language spoken by the colonizers. Today another variety of English can be heard in those areas: *South African English*.

The British Empire contributed to the spread of the language across all the African continent. “By the beginning of the nineteenth century the increase in commerce […] brought English to the whole West African coast” (Crystal 2003, p. 49). The result of this was “the rise of several English-based pidgins and creoles” (Crystal 2003, p. 49). Britain started to spread its colonies in countries such as “Sierra Leone, Ghana, Gambia, Nigeria, Cameroon and Liberia” (Crystal 2003 pp. 50 - 51). Consequently, different varieties of English started to proliferate. Towards the end of the nineteenth century the British Empire started to expand in the eastern part of Africa and, as a consequence, the British East Africa Company was founded. English proliferated then “in Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe” (Crystal 2003 pp. 52 – 54). Nowadays “[t]here are about two dozen African countries where English is spoken as an official language” (Kiprop, 2018). In total “[t]here are about 6.5 million native English speakers and 700 million non-native English speakers” (Kiprop, 2018). This is the reason why many varieties of *African English* are still spoken in the Continent

today. The expression '*African English*' cannot be brought back to any English variety in particular in the continent but it is adopted as an umbrella term that includes all the English varieties of the continent.

"By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Britain had become the world's leading industrial and trading nation" (Crystal 2003, p. 80). Consequently, English became "the language on which the sun never set […]" (Quirk, 1985 p. 1). But while Britain was celebrating the spread of its language across all these nations, the country was not considering the fact that something else was happening with their own language outside its borders. English could not be considered as 'a single entity' even back then. There were many varieties of the original British standard and many world Englishes were starting to take a different form. And the whole process was not even concluded after the fall of the British Empire because between the 19th and the 20th century new World Englishes started to appear thanks to the expansion of the US sphere of influence.

"By the end of the [19th] century the population of the USA was larger than that of any of the countries of Western Europe, and its economy was the most productive and the fastest growing in the world" (Crystal 2003, p. 10). Their sphere of influence started to spread across the world and in the meanwhile the US also spread their language across these territories. "[T]he USA received the island of Guam and sovereignty over the Philippines [and] Hawaii was annexed at that time also" (Crystal 2003, p. 55). *Philippine English* and *Hawaiian English* are the varieties of English spoken there today. Shortly afterwards, the American expansion also reached countries located in South East Asia such as Singapore, (where today *Singapore English* is spoken), Malaysia (where now *Malaysian English* is spoken) and Hong Kong (*Hong Kong English*). Since the US and UK presence was very deep-seated in the whole Asian continent, it is customary today to group together different varieties of Asian English around the expressions "*South Asian English*" and "*Est Asian English*". The expression "*Asian English*" is, however, the general expression which is adopted to include all the varieties of English that have proliferated in these territories.

When one refers to the expression "World Englishes", one has to envisage a wide network of different varieties of English, which have proliferated in post-colonial times and which are now spoken in many areas of the world. These World Englishes are currently the varieties of English that are spoken in countries (post-colonial countries) where English is now officially a second language. If one wanted to be fully aware of the complexity of this "wide network" of varieties, one could take Tom McArthur's Wheel Model (1987) as an example.

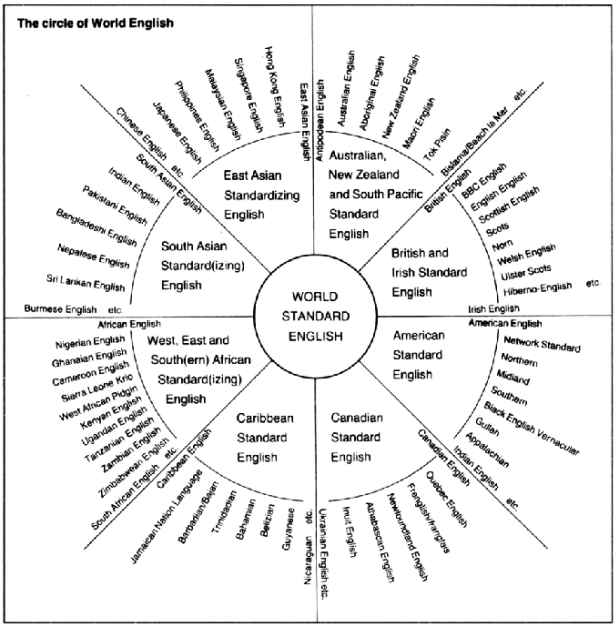

Fig. 2.3.1 "McArthur's Wheel Model (1987)" retrieved from Haswell (2013) p. 126

The model contains many of the English varieties that have been presented so far, including many other sub-varieties. There are eight general macro-varieties of World Englishes in total and also many minor sub-varieties for every macro-variety. The variety at the centre of the wheel is described as the "world Standard English" but the author does not give any explanation for this choice. Since this variety was put right in the centre, one could conclude that all varieties and sub-varieties are originated right from that 'standard' point and that they must be subjected to the authority of a 'standard' variety of English. Perhaps McArthur wanted to underline the fact that this 'standard' could be any variety of World English or a sort of 'lingua franca' that could be adopted across all macro- and sub-varieties. This 'lingua franca', however, is not British English because 'British

English' is included in one of the eight macro-varieties at the second level of the wheel. What seems clear, at this point, is that "the model intimated a need for a standard without suggesting where it should come from. The model made no suggestion of which was valued over others, only that one may *supersede* another in terms of intelligibility." (Haswell 2013, p. 126).

Today the situation concerning World Englishes may appear different because many countries have reached their independence from the US and UK after the Second World War. But this does not mean that English has disappeared completely from these territories. Even if the British Empire fell at a certain moment in history, its language is still present in these countries. Britain continues to exercise its linguistic hegemony in some of the ex-colonies even today. The English language, is, after all, the bonding agent of the Commonwealth of Nation, which currently exercises its power in 54 countries, in Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe and the Pacific (House of Commons, 2012). Anyway, even in countries where English is a foreign language, national languages continue to act as linguistic "filters". Even the English speakers of these countries can be recognized for their variety of English. "The recognition is taking hold that English as an international language belongs to all who use it, and that people who learn it as an additional language have an active role in the way the language […] changes" (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 49).

2.4 New World Englishes Hypothesis

McArthur's Wheel Model was designed in the 1980s and this was the period preceding the explosion of globalization and digitalization. These two processes have contributed to the proliferation of English in many other countries, even in those countries which had not been directly exposed to the English colonial expansion. Even in these countries, English was adapted to the respective native languages (remember the case of Italy and all the transformations that Italian brought to English and that it continues to bring to this language). This process made it possible for these countries to produce their own varieties of English. These new varieties of English as a foreign language can be defined as "New Englishes" in contrast to the "Old Englishes" of the past. Seidlhofer (2011) claims in fact

that “post-colonial versions of the language have already been accorded legitimacy in sociolinguistic inquiry and indeed identified as World Englishes (WE) in their own right” (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 60). But now “empirical evidence indicates that comparable processes of language […] variation are at work” (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 60) so much so that now linguists are starting to include even new varieties of English as a foreign language in the broader definition of WEs.

The expression “New Englishes” refers to those new varieties of English that may have developed through language contact in recent years. Some of these may be, for instance, ‘Italian English’, ‘Spanish English’, ‘French English’ and ‘German English’ if the European context is taken into consideration. But one could also look at non-European countries where English is now a foreign language, for instance, Brazil or Russia. In these cases, their varieties of English could be defined as ‘Brazilian English’ and ‘Russian English’. The process may be similar for every variety of English: one just needs to add the adjective “-English” after every native language.

This hypothesis has in reality some tangible examples. This can easily be experienced, for instance, when one hears Spanish, French or German speakers speaking English: one may recognise that they are Spanish, French, or German by their accents and pronunciations and also because they may transform English according to their linguistic systems. Furthermore, they may use different verbs and a different syntax, which would not perfectly work in English. They may also use some native words or combine native words and English words together when they speak. They may also translate expressions and sayings of their languages that do not mean anything to the native English speaker.

These cases have been confirmed by researchers since they started to transcribe interactions among speakers of English as a foreign language and as a second language (Seidlhofer, 2011). After years of research they arrived at a simple conclusion: this may happen because every native language normally acts as a sort of “linguistic filter” when English is produced. The first language filter “creates a problem for foreign language

learning in that it predisposes us to hear other languages in terms of our own" (Byram 2004, p. 488). Consequently, "[a]s long as our first language filter is 'on', […] [w]e can only participate in what is new with reference to what is familiar" (Dalton & Seidlhofer 1994, p. 18). And here arises the question of the 'standard': why is 'Standard English' considered as the 'ideal English' if the English that non-native English speakers speak is already modified by their native languages?

2.5 So how many Englishes have we got?

Perhaps these "New Englishes" could be included in what Braj Kachru in 1985 defined as "the Expanding circle" in his "Three Circles of Englishes" model. These "New Englishes" have been described as those varieties of English that are spoken in countries where English is officially a "foreign language". Fig. 2.5.1 shows one of Kachru's revisited models (2009) and all the three original distinctions made by Kachru (1985).

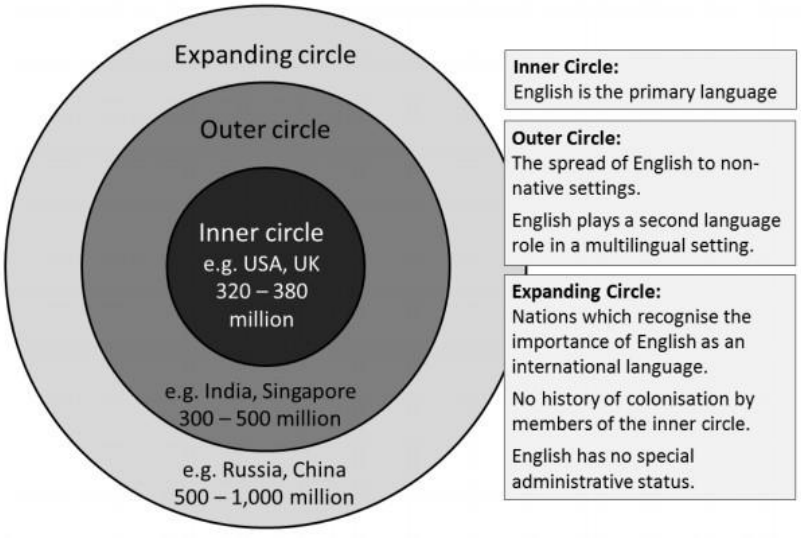

Fig. 2.5.1 "Kachru's Three Circles Model (2009)"

Retrieved from Whitehead & Coates (2014)

The Inner Circle refers to "countries where English has a traditional historical base and in which it is still spoken as a primary language" (Kiczkowiak & J. Lowe 2018, p. 11). For instance, the US, the UK, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. The Outer Circle refers to "countries where English is used as an official first or second language (such as

Kenya, Nigeria, India and Singapore)" (Kiczkowiak & J. Lowe 2018, p. 11). In this Circle post-colonial countries can be found. Lastly, the Expanding Circle, refers to countries "where English has no official status (such as Japan, Poland, China, and Russia)" (Kiczkowiak & J. Lowe 2018, p. 11). These are non-post-colonial countries, where English is normally taught as a foreign language.

The hindrance is that the numbers of the speakers of each Circle, which already seem extensive, are in reality never stable. "The numbers […] are going to peak even more as a now surprising number of governments […] declare an intention to introduce English as a second official language." (Paradowski 2008, p. 115). Many countries are introducing English 'as a foreign language' even though they do not have any contact with English. It can be concluded, therefore, that the Three Circles "have very fuzzy edges" (Paradowski 2008, p. 115) and there are many reasons for this.

> "Many native users have low options of the English of other native users, at home or abroad; many second-language users are manifestly more fluent in some aspects of the language than many natives […] and many foreign users know and use the language better than many native- and second language users" (Viereck, 1996; Hoffman, 2000; McArthur, 2003: 57 as cited in Paradowski 2008, p. 115).

Therefore, another problem with the Model is that this considers 'native speakers' only those speakers who live exclusively in English-speaking countries. Even though numbers change all the time, it can be concluded that "80% of all communication involving the use of English […] does not involve any 'native speakers' of English" (Beneke 1991:54 as cited in Seidlhofer 2011, p. 2). After every revision of the Model it can be concluded that most interactions in English now happen across non-English-speaking countries and non-native speakers of English.

It is difficult to estimate the quantity and quality of Englishes that exist in the world. Numbers of non-native English speakers increase every time researchers try to count them

because linguistic interconnections are now more complex and widespread than they were in the past. The result of all this is that expressions such as "foreign language" (or "additional language") and "second language" in reference to English have become blurred and unclear. What emerges from this linguistic 'unclarity' is that English, which once was the term adopted for 'one variety', 'one country' and 'one population', now it is a term adopted for everything and nothing at the same time.

2.6 Who owns the English language?

Most of the world's English speakers are now non-native English speakers, and most English interactions in the world now happen across non-native English speaking countries. Then, we should really ask ourselves whether it is legitimate to consider the countries of the "Inner Circle" (which have the smallest number of speakers compared to the other Circles) as the owners of the 'standard'. There is a debate among linguists around this term, and no solution seems to have been found yet.

Even though countries pertaining to the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle are not using the language as the 'native speakers do' and they are not following the rules of the 'standard', they are using it for the same reasons of the speakers of the Inner Circle: they speak to communicate. Every language on earth has this purpose because every language can be considered, after all, nothing but a 'system of communication'. Barbara Seidlhofer (2011), for instance, claims that:

> "ELF is not a kind of fossilised interlanguage used by learners failing to conform to the conventions of the Inner Circle norms but a legitimate use of English in its own right, an inevitable development of the globalization of the language" (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 24).

Standard English, which is constantly and assiduously learned in schools of the countries in the Outer and Expanding circles, could be defined as an 'invention' that dates back to the beginning of the 20th century. "With the advance of mass broadcasting in the 1920s managers of the new medium were faced with […] the issue" (Quirk 2014, p. 4) of the

standard. After some time "[i]n the US, an educated 'Midland' was selected […], in the UK the minority voice of the public schools ('RP') was selected and this came to be referred to quite often as 'BBC English'" (Quirk 2014, p. 6). In any case, terms such as 'RP' and 'BBC English' were later abandoned in the research because they did not reflect the reality of things. But after a century, that variety, which was originally spoken by a 'minority', is still officially in some way the 'standard'. Queen's English and other minor varieties of English, which are spoken only by some 'educated people' in England, are still considered the source of all English varieties and, therefore, the varieties of English that should be learned and spoken.

But what does 'Standard English' actually mean? *Standard English*, today, is not even so simple to define. "There seems to be considerable confusion in the English-speaking world, even amongst linguists, about what *Standard English* is" (Trudgill 1999: 117 as cited in Seidlhofer 2011, p. 44). 'Standard English' might refer to the variety of English that is "written and spoken by educated speakers in England and, with certain differences, in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, The republic of Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa" (Trudglill and Hannah 2008: 3 as cited in Seidlhofer 2011, p. 44). Other linguists normally include *American English* and *British English*, some others even *Australian English.* The confusion, today, is even greater than it was in the past. Many linguists are including in the definition of the 'standard' varieties that other linguists instead tend to exclude. Seidlhofer (2011) concluded that "linguists cannot identify the boundaries which demarcate one variety from another." (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 46) because 'English', today, is more complex than it was in the past.

The answer to question of "ownership" of the English language, then, seems to be even more contradictory. Standard English is still officially the variety chosen in the EFL learning environment and for most linguistic certifications. In this sense, English is still owned by native speakers of the Inner Circle. But the reality is another. English might be still "owned" by native speakers officially, but in this globalized and digitalized world, English cannot simply belong only to English native speakers. Seidlhofer, for instance,

claimed that "non-native speakers of English […] have the right to question the dominance of native speakers" (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 66). "If [native speakers] are proud of the fact that what used to be 'their' language has now become the world's language, then they must also grant it the freedom to develop 'in the world' as a global lingua franca." (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 65). Ownership of English, therefore, can be said to be "widespread".

Seidlhofer (2011) mentioned a possible solution to the issue of the 'ownership' of the English language. 'English as a lingua franca' could be seen, paradoxically, as the possible solution.

> "This idea seems to be based on the assumption that languages are complete and functionally comprehensive entities and that they are bound to compete with each other […]. When this assumption is compounded by the belief that different languages necessary belong to different nation states and represent their values and interests, it is not surprising that the *dominance* of English is taken to imply *domination* by its native speakers. But once one denies this right of exclusive ownership and dissociates the language from its native speakers […], in other words, once one thinks of English as ELF, then the language obviously no longer poses the same threat of domination" (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 68).

2.7 So what does it mean to "learn English"?

When one studies a foreign language, one normally starts to study the 'standard form' of the language and this is something that is normally already prescribed somewhere and that constitutes 'the rule'. This happens because it would be impossible to learn all the varieties and aspects of a single language. Even foreign students learning Italian start their courses with 'Standard Italian', namely, that version of Italian that can be heard on TV and which is spoken in national institutions, schools and public offices, but also among Italians themselves, normally in formal contexts. Eventually, if they proceed with their learning, they will be taught how to discern different Italian dialects and accents, since in

Italy they are part of Italians' daily life. Standard Italian is considered, after all, Italy's internal lingua franca.

Once there was only one variety of English – the standard – and, therefore, the term 'English language' referred to that particular 'standard'. Today, instead, there are varieties of the Outer Circle and varieties of the Expanding Circle, apart from native speakers' English. 'English', today, refers therefore to a macro-concept that contains many varieties of different English*es*. The problem is that in schools students may think that 'learning English' is equivalent to the 'learning of the language of Britain' and sometimes to other varieties of the Inner circle. But these varieties are just *some* varieties of English. They may not represent the 'English language' as a whole.

The problem is that it would not even make sense to choose just one variety of English from the many varieties of WE that exist in the world and to consider this as the 'standard' above all the varieties. Let us remember that interactions in English nowadays happen among speakers of *every* circle. One would not solve this issue by concentrating more on varieties of the Outer Circle or the ones of the Expanding Circle. Since interactions in English are transversal and occur across all circles, then, it would make more sense to learn a "transversal English language" which could be useful for all speakers of all circles. In other words, a lingua franca.

But why not choosing one variety as the common standard for all interactions? Why should learners not learn a 'standard' and use that as the 'language of the lingua franca'? The fact is that in transversal English communications today speakers speak a language that changes every time according to the varieties of the speakers involved. This language is "malleable" and might not be standardized. "ELF researchers are now no longer trying to describe ELF as a variety with a set of linguistic features that make it distinct from other varieties of English" (Kiczkowiak & J. Lowe 2018, p. 10). They are starting to include in the definition of ELF all varieties of English (see Kachru & Smith 2008). Researchers have proven this by analysing conversations in contexts of ELF. Every

conversation appears different because every time there are different speakers, each one with a different linguistic background. There was perhaps a misunderstanding in the terminology that is used: today, when we say that we are speaking 'English', we are referring to 'our variety of English', which is different from other varieties. Students should not only learn 'Standard English' but also strategies to cope with 'ELF'.

Fig. 2.7.1 (below) should clarify the level of complexity of the interactions in ELF and why it may not be appropriate to speak of one variety (the 'standard variety') when referring to "English as a Lingua Franca". The figure also clarifies where ELF interactions can take place.

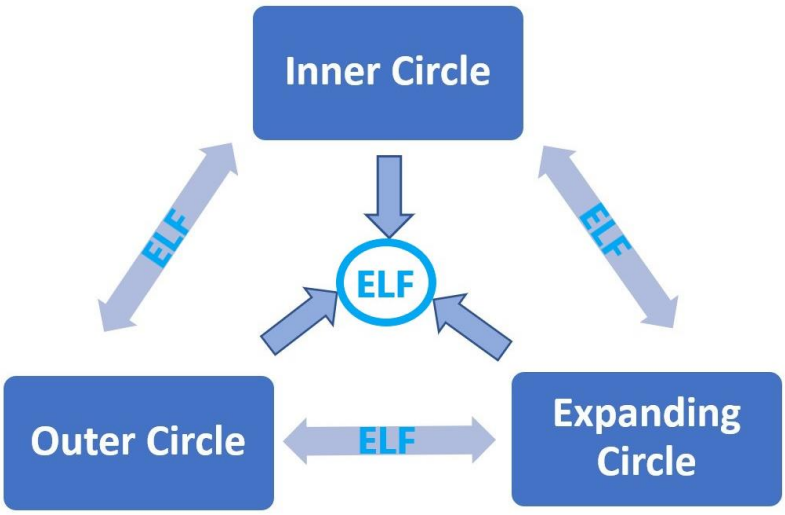

Fig. 2.7.1 "Scheme of ELF interactions"

In fig. 2.7.1 the Three Circles are not represented as they were shown in Kachru's Model. Here, they have been separated and there is a precise reason for this. The 'standard', which is only spoken by speakers of the "Inner Circle", cannot be considered the standard for all interactions because all varieties of English meet in contexts of ELF. All varieties of each Circle, then, can be put on the same footing. That is why the Three Circles have been transformed in single and equal entities, which are not linked by any particular bond and which do not follow any progression from a hypothetical 'centre'. What can be noticed immediately is that interactions in ELF may occur transversally. "ELF […] occurs

[…] *across* all the three circles" (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 74 emphasis in original), therefore "it becomes clear […] why adhering to the limitations of the three-circle model is counter-productive for ELF interaction. […] ELF is a function of the […] exploitation of the *communicative resources of all three*" (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 81 emphasis in original).

Interactions in ELF may occur between Outer circle and Inner circle varieties in both ways, between Outer Circle and Expanding Circle varieties in both ways and between Inner Circle and Expanding Circle varieties, in both ways. They may also occur across all the Circles (just imagine an important international meeting among non-native speakers of English from all over the world). The circle at the centre of the scheme aims at representing this situation. A meeting among speakers from South Africa (Outer Circle) and Britain (Inner Circle) may be completely different from a meeting among speakers from Italy (Expanding Circle) and Canada (Inner Circle), linguistically speaking. In all these situations the 'English' that speakers speak may be 'different' (because of the many varieties of English involved) and 'common' (because in all these cases English is adopted as a lingua franca).

2.8 Towards "Neutral English"

Teachers should now be aware that *British English* and *American English* are not the only varieties of English that speakers will hear in contexts of ELF. Many varieties of English from different countries can be heard in these interactions. One of the ways to be able to tackle this would be to focus more on a "neutral form of English", which does not refer to any variety in particular. This idea is not completely new and can be traced back to an early work of C. K. Ogden (1935) where he refers to a type of English defined as "BASIC" (Ogden, 1935). "BASIC English represents […] the first stirrings of the idea that English could function as an international language and that this language need not obey the rules of its codified varieties" (Ogden 1935, as cited in Kiczkowiak & J. Lowe 2018, p. 8). Although his idea was later found to be quite unrealisable (it is questionable to use only a set of 850 English words in international contexts), that does not take away

from the fact that he was one of the first promoters of the concept of "neutrality" of English and that English could work as a Lingua Franca.

A similar concept can also be found in Radolph Quirk's discourse around '*Nuclear English*' (1981). This type of English would be "an English trimmed to the bone and freed from its historical and cultural baggage, 'easier and faster to learn […] and at the same time 'communicatively adequate'" (Quirk 1981: 155 as cited in Pütz & Aertselaer 2008, p. 16). Quirk was also able to turn his ideas into reality because he managed to indicate "some examples of preferred forms, all of them readily available in the existing standard language, especially in the area of grammar" (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 158). Even in this case, Nuclear English could be effective if it were used in contexts of English as a lingua franca. The problem is that, as Quirk mentions in many of his following works, this useful language cannot work without 'standard prescriptions'. "Quirk's proposals are […] essentially conservative in that they do not involve 'going beyond the rules of ordinary acceptable English" (Quirk 1981, as cited in Seidlhofer 2011, p. 164).

In the journey to find a more suitable form of "Neutral English" we also have to mention Jennifer Jenkins' findings on ELF interactions, which can be summarized around the expression "Lingua Franca Core" (Jenkins, 2000). "What she set out to do was to identify the features of pronunciation which were crucial for intelligibility in international, lingua franca settings" (Kiczkowiak & J. Lowe 2018, p. 9). She found that the 'standard pronunciation', which is often given the reputation to be 'the correct pronunciation', does not actually occur in many conversations in ELF and that this is even a hindrance sometimes for ELF speakers. She discovered that many of the pronunciation features that teachers teach in the classrooms are not very relevant in contexts of ELF and, on the contrary, many of the features that are usually neglected, are instead implemented in these contexts (Jenkins, 2000). She continued with her research until she was able to "identify a list of linguist features of English which are stable across speakers of English from a number of different national and linguistic backgrounds, and which contribute most to

mutually intelligible language production" (Kiczkowiak & J.Lowe 2018, p. 9). Intelligibility is, after all, the common goal of every interaction in ELF.

Barbara Seidlhofer (2011) identified a list of lexicogrammatical features that could be useful in conversations in ELF. She identified "a number of features used by 'non-native speakers' which, even though deviating from the standard 'native speaker' model, seemed to have little negative impact on successful communication in English" (Seidlhofer 2011 as cited in Kiczkowiak & J. Lowe 2018, p. 10). She discovered that there are many 'recurring patterns' that occur during these conversations. "Based on the analysis of large amounts of behavioural data, accounts can [...] be given of recurring patters of language, of typical occurrences of words and phrases that constitute idiomatic native-speaker usage." (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 58). However, Seidlhofer highlighted the fact that these 'typical occurrences' should not be considered as rules of a new language. The English basic structures, in other words, cannot be ignored. "When people perform [ELF] they do so with reference to some framework of knowledge […] but not necessarily that which is sanctioned as the NS standard." (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 110). If interactions in ELF have a common 'framework of knowledge', then, it would be interesting to discover which common features account for the essence 'trimmed to the bone' of Neutral English.

'Neutral English' is an expression that may be adopted to describe the solid common basis of every conversation among non-native English speakers. "It is solid because it contrasts with the hybridity, dynamism, fluidity and flexibility of ELF interactions." (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 110). In this sense, Seidlhofer (2011) arrived at the conclusion that:

> "we need to be able to refer to a construct that can accommodate the dynamic and fluid character of ELF while also accounting for what its realizations […], despite all their diversity, have in common: the underlying encoding possibilities that speakers make use of." (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 111).

She was later able to transform this set of "underlying encoding possibilities" into "an underlying abstract set of rules" (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 112). This 'set of rules' is also commonly known as "*virtual language*" (Seidlhofer, 2011). More specifically, she refers to the concept of "constitutive rules" - 'solid' rules that can be found in every conversation in ELF" - and "regulative rules", which refer to more 'fluid' rules that vary every time according to the situation (see Searle, 1995). At this point, the 'English Language' that speakers adopt in conversations in ELF "is conceived of in two very different ways: an abstract code on the one hand, and as actual usage on the other." (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 112).

Perhaps the distinction between 'constitutive' and 'regulative' rules can be better clarified with the example that she mentions of the game of chess, which was originally described by Searle (1995).

> "…the rules of chess create the very possibility of playing chess. The rules are constitutive of chess in the sense that playing chess is constituted […] by acting in accord with the rules. If you do not follow […] the rules, you are not playing chess" (Searle 1995, as cited in Seidlhofer 2011, p. 113).

This means that if non-native English speakers do not follow some 'basic' rules of Standard English, they are not speaking English at all. In contexts of ELF, however, speakers themselves can create some 'new' rules and this is what distinguishes ELF from Standard English.

> "players of the game […] realise these rules in various ways in actual performance. […] and no matter how frequently they [regulative rules] occur, they do not constitute the game itself but only characterize different ways of playing it. They are […] local usage conventions for acting on the rules of the game" (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 113).

The two types of rules that occur in contexts of English as a lingua franca are complementary: one cannot exist without the other. They are two sides of the same coin. To clarify the distinction between "abstract code" and "actual usage" or, more properly, between "solidity" and "hybridity" an image of an oceanic seabed was chosen, which is displayed in fig. 2.8.1. The image should be intended as a metaphor for the general definition of "English as a Lingua Franca".

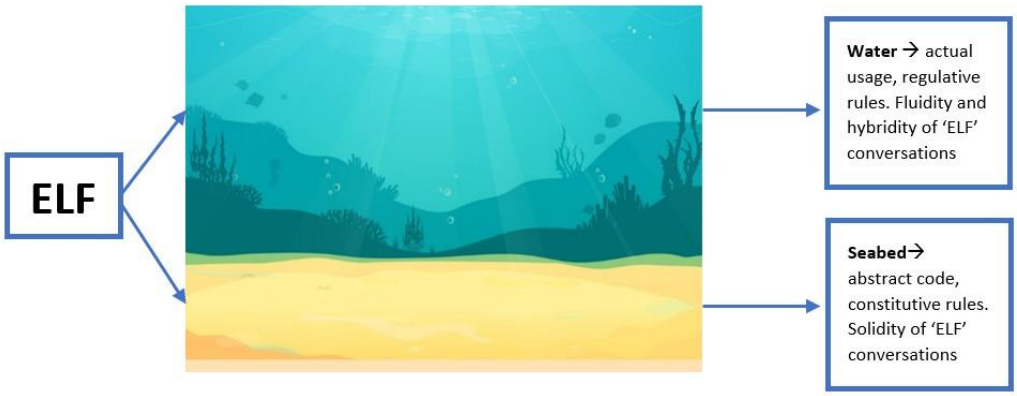

Fig. 2.8.1 "ELF as an oceanic seabed". Image retrieved from VectorStock.com/21363848

English as a Lingua Franca cannot be considered as a "single and indivisible entity" but, instead, as a set of two complementary elements: 'basic and solid' elements of the English language (which are metaphorically represented in the figure by the seabed) and 'fluid' and 'hybrid' characteristics of different World Englishes (which are represented in the figure by the element of water). The seabed should be imagined as a solid element that never changes, whereas water should be intended as an element that is continuously subjected to different flows and that changes all the time. The seabed without water would represent the essence of the English language, and water itself would represent the fluidity of the interactions among different Englishes. English as a lingua franca is a mixture of the two aspects.

This is to say that interactions in ELF must occur within a common solid 'basis', otherwise they would not exist at all. Can you imagine the ocean water without its seabed? Can you imagine a conversation in English without any type of standard structure? Even

Radolph Quirk, for instance, when he proposed his idea of 'Nuclear English', claimed that these interactions must happen only "by keeping […] certain rules of the standard language" and that "[n]uclear English must be 'firmly within the grammar of ordinary English' (ibid.:21) […] Any form not *sanctioned* by this grammar is unacceptable" (Quirk 1981, as cited in Seidlhofer 2011, p. 161).

2.9 What consequences does all this have for English language education?

Traditionally, the assumption among English teachers in non-native countries has been that English must be taught by observing certain 'standard' rules and that there is just one 'variety' of English possible: the one spoken by speakers of the Inner Circle. "Native speakers are seen as the ideal models of the English language that English users should aspire to imitate" (Kiczkowiak & J. Lowe 2018, p. 15). It is true that 'English' originated in Britain and that it spread across the world after the British colonial expansion. It is true that a language belongs to the speakers who know it better, namely, the native speakers' community. This aspect is unquestionable. The problem here refers to the *importance* non-native English teachers still attach to this variety of English. It seems that more importance has been given to the learning of 'perfect' English rather than the learning of 'useful' English. But in this globalized and digitalized world it may be more relevant to learn a variety or form of English which can be useful for international contexts. Students, in other words, should learn English lingua franca. Yet "the insistence that the only authentic English is that which bears the particular idiomatic stamp of native speakers in Britain or the United States […] is still widespread in the ELT industry and in many people's minds, too" (Seidlhofer 2011, pp. 132-133).

'Standard English' is only one variety of the many Englishes that are spoken in the world. Most English conversations nowadays happen among speakers who do not share any first language. And the variety of 'English' that they speak may not even be the 'standard'. This 'standard', however, is exactly the type of English that students in many countries of the world, Italy included, are learning. The result is just paradoxical: when these students finish school and they start using the language in real contexts, they may not find

the variety of ‘English’ that they have learned for so many years. They may discover that outside the school walls there is just another reality where the English language changes depending on the situation. My question is, therefore, are these students aware of the fact that English may not actually be what they think it is? Are they ready to use English in contexts where there are no English native speakers?

The focus should not even be on students but on teachers, since students obviously learn what teachers teach them. Perhaps teachers may be experienced in teaching ‘standard’ rules, but they may not be so experienced in preparing pupils to be ready to speak English in contexts of English lingua franca. But teachers may not even be the problem, paradoxically. After all, they just teach what is ‘right’ to teach, and what is ‘right’ to teach is normally what was previously ‘prescribed’ by national and international institutions. Since ELF cannot even be considered ‘a language’, then a ‘linguistic description’ of this language might never be found. This is why “the language as used by Inner Circle speakers and codified in grammars, dictionaries and textbooks remains, by and large, unquestioned as the only legitimate object of […] learning” (Seidlhofer, 2011 p. 9). In this climate of uncertainty teachers can only raise students’ awareness about different WEs and ELF and try to include a WE and ELF-aware perspective in their teaching practices.

In the next chapters, which represent the focus of my research, I will show the results of a survey which was carried out among English teachers working in first-grade and second-grade secondary schools of the Veneto Region. The aim of the survey was to understand whether concepts such as “World Englishes” and “English as a lingua franca” are known among them, how they would face (or are facing) the issue of different WEs and ELF in their classrooms and which strategies they would adopt to include ELF in their current programmes. “Since ELF cannot be defined as – nor exists as – a language variety, it is difficult to picture how it might be taught” (Kiczkowiak & J. Lowe 2018, p. 13).

3. A survey on ELF and teaching ELF (Methodology)

The only way to explore how 'English Lingua Franca' is perceived in the EFL teaching environment and to see the bigger picture was to conduct a study among those experts who work within the field of English foreign language education. The survey concerned teachers of English working in first-grade and second-grade secondary schools of the Veneto Region. These professionals are responsible for the most updated English foreign language education and they are generally seen as experts who can bring innovations in these learning contexts. Students' proficiency in English in contexts of ELF only depends on the extent to which their English teachers are willing to implement a WE and ELF-aware perspective in their teaching practices.

A questionnaire was chosen as research instrument for this study so as to have a clear panoramic of teachers' perspectives of some of the most debated aspects revolving around 'English as Lingua Franca' in EFL teaching environments - World Englishes, New Englishes, ELF-oriented teaching and strategies for teaching ELF. Questionnaires are useful research instruments that can give clear answers to abstract questions and simplify complex topics. They can be very illuminating if they also provide open-ended questions to which respondents can freely give their answers. If questionnaires are designed in this way they enable the researcher to obtain results both from quantitative data (thanks to the analysis of the answers to the closed questions) and qualitative data (thanks to the analysis of the answers to the open-ended questions). Furthermore, this enables the researcher to explore different sides of the same phenomenon and to draw more complete conclusions of a certain research question.

Questionnaires can be very useful also because they enable the researcher to collect many quantitative (and qualitative) data from many respondents in a relatively short period of time. For instance, in this case, 140 respondents were reached in just three weeks (21 days). The greater the number of people respond to a questionnaire, the more accurate the analysis will be in the end. This can be achieved because respondents respond to the same

questions and in this way bias can totally be reduced. This questionnaire included three open-ended questions which totalled 360 answers. These answers were later analysed and regrouped in order to find similar patterns among them. Since questionnaires were anonymous respondents did not hesitate to write their opinions freely and without any fear of being judged. Anonymity was also helpful, in this case, to obtain rich, thoughtful and honest answers from teachers.

3.1 Summary

The questions investigated the perception that teachers have with regard to different world Englishes and English as a lingua franca, the extent to which they have a WE and ELF-aware perspective in their teaching practices and the strategies that they could adopt if an ELF-oriented teaching programme was implemented in their classrooms. The study also aimed at understanding whether teachers working in second-grade secondary schools are more receptive to different WEs and ELF than teachers working in first-grade secondary schools and whether more experienced teachers (teachers with more than 20 years of teaching experience) are more reluctant to include a WE and ELF-aware perspective in their teaching practices in favour of a more standard-oriented approach.

Nowadays English interactions take place mostly across non-native English speakers and therefore different varieties of English meet in contexts of ELF. This calls into question the issue of the importance of Standard English and its validity inside the English foreign language learning environment. Another objective of the survey was therefore to understand whether teachers concentrate more on standard-oriented teaching or whether they are willing to detach from this type of teaching. Finally, the questionnaire enabled teachers to express their feelings and ideas about how their students would perceive the implementation of a WE and ELF-oriented teaching programme.

Overall, the questionnaire has shown that the majority of teachers refuse the assumption that Standard English should be the only variety of English in the classroom. Teachers have maintained that it would be more useful to raise students' awareness about different

native-speaker varieties of English and varieties of English as a second language. Teachers have claimed that they would feel reluctant to include other varieties of English (varieties of English as a foreign language) in an ELF-oriented teaching programme. A great part of them still claimed that Standard English is the variety of English that students should adopt in contexts of ELF. This is an aspect that contradicted the initial results of the study.

Teachers have claimed that the teaching of ELF should be included in EFL teaching programmes. The survey has shown that most teachers would consider the teaching of ELF as an important aspect to take into consideration in their own teaching practices. Half of them have also claimed that they were already implementing an ELF-oriented teaching programme although they acknowledged the fact that a prescription for teaching ELF still does not exist. The survey has shown that the time factor (that teachers need more time in their teaching hours) is one of the obstacles that prevent most teachers from implementing a WE and ELF-oriented programme. The lack of specific materials and indications have also been recognised as obstructing aspects that prevent most teachers from implementing this type of programme in the classrooms.

Most teachers have claimed that it would be necessary to raise students' awareness about English as a lingua franca, and that one of the ways to do this would be to teach students to use some useful strategies. Teachers have agreed with the fact that it would be important to expose students to different English pronunciations, (but not to teach them how *to speak* with different pronunciations), to raise students' awareness about different grammatical and syntactical features of different Englishes, to raise students' intercultural awareness and to teach them to use general communication strategies in these contexts. The great number of examples that they have given, however, show that there is not just one way in which an ELF-oriented teaching programme could be implemented in the classrooms.

On the whole, the study has shown that teachers today are more receptive to 'ELF' than they were in the past, although a great number of them still show the tendency to promote a standard-oriented type of teaching and a reluctancy to detach completely from standard-oriented teaching methodologies. In any case, a change of perspective was also highlighted in some of their answers to the open-ended questions. Teachers have claimed that they are trying to keep up with these new challenges. They have mentioned interesting and illuminating innovations that could be directly implemented in the classrooms and which would benefit students' overall proficiency in English as a lingua franca in the future.

3.2 Objectives

The study had the following objectives:

- to understand whether concepts such as 'world Englishes', 'English as a Lingua Franca' and 'neutral English' are known among teachers;
- to understand how teachers perceive 'Standard English' and how important this is for them in their teaching practices;
- to see whether teachers consider the teaching (and learning) of other (new) varieties of WE to be important in the EFL learning environment;
- to see whether teachers consider some varieties of WE to be more important than others;
- to see whether teachers consider the teaching of ELF as an important aspect to take into consideration in their teaching programmes and whether this would be useful for their students;
- to understand how ELF is being taught (or it should be taught) in Italian classrooms and to discover which strategies teachers would implement if they had to follow a WE and ELF-oriented teaching programme.
- to discover other aspects around 'ELF' and 'teaching ELF' that were not included in the questionnaire.

3.3 Questionnaire structure

Items

The questionnaire contained 21 items in total, 20 of which were mandatory items. Items presented different formats and they were shown to the respondents in a balanced way so as to ease the completion. The questionnaire included mostly quantitative questions and to a minor degree qualitative questions. The qualitative responses of the three open-ended questions were turned into quantitative responses after these were grouped together in similar categories so as to be quantified. Overall, the questionnaire included:

- Nine multiple-choice questions which allowed respondents to choose between one or more options from a list of pre-defined answers;
- Nine rating-scale questions which included a scale of four options (1. '*completely disagree*', 2. '*disagree*', 3. '*agree*', and 4. '*completely agree*'). In this case respondents could only choose one of the four options given;
- Three open-ended questions, one of which was not mandatory. These questions required respondents to write their answers into a comment box which did not have any word limit and did not present specific pre-set answer options.

Sections

The questionnaire was broken down into four main sections. After the questionnaire's introduction and instruction box respondents could find the first section of the questionnaire. This included two items that required respondents to give some information about their teaching background (the type of institution in which they taught and the total period of time they had worked in schools). This was done in order to collect further information about the survey's sample and to understand whether there were differences in the final results depending on the different school types of the teachers and the teachers' teaching experience.

The second section included five items in total and required respondents to answer some questions concerning the concept of ‘world Englishes’. The first question was more general than the other four, which in turn were less general and more specific. In the last four questions respondents had to indicate whether they agreed with different statements that were provided to them. This was carried out in order to understand whether they would include varieties of English as a second language and varieties of English as a foreign language in their EFL teaching programmes and, above all, whether they would consider ‘Standard English’ to be more important than other varieties of WE.

The third section included four items in total and required respondents to answer some questions concerning the concept of ‘English as a lingua franca’. The first question about ‘English foreign language education’ was just a general question and it was created to understand whether teachers would consider Standard English as the only variety of English that should be taught in schools or whether other varieties of English could also be included in an EFL teaching programme. The second and third question concerned the definition of ‘English as a lingua franca’. These questions were created to see whether teachers would understand the hypothetical difference between ‘Standard English’ and ‘Neutral English’. The last question on ‘Neutral English’ was not mandatory and it only had to be answered by those respondents who had selected the third option in the preceding question.

The fourth section included ten items in total and required respondents to express their opinions on a possible implementation of a WE and ELF-oriented teaching programme in schools. Four items were more personal and focused on the teacher’s personal opinions on ELF. Six items were more specific and focused more on the possible methodologies to teach ELF. Here respondents had to indicate if they agreed with different statements on different strategies that could be adopted in a WE and ELF-aware teaching. One of these items was an open-ended question. This enabled teachers to express themselves freely on their ideas and to give some tangible examples of activities around ELF. The

last question, also open-ended, enabled them to express their opinions on students' perception of different WEs and ELF.

In order to avoid random answers in this last section, an explanation of the concept of 'English as a lingua franca' was included in the introduction of this section. This was done because it was not clear whether all teachers knew the concept of ELF. Barbara Seidlhofer's definition of 'English as a Lingua Franca' (2005) was chosen because it was considered clear, complete, and suitable for this last section.

> "In recent years, the term 'English as a lingua franca' (ELF) has emerged as a way of referring to communication in English between speakers with different first languages. Since roughly only one out of every four users of English in the world is a native speaker of the language (Crystal 2003), most ELF interactions probably take place among 'non-native' speakers of English. [...] What is distinctive about ELF is that, in most cases, it is 'a 'contact language' between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication' (Firth 1996: 240)." (Firth 1996, as cited in Seidlhofer 2005, p. 339)

3.4 Survey Methodology

The questionnaire was submitted via e-mail to the attention of a representative sample of Italian first-grade and second-grade secondary schools (60 schools in total, 30 were first-grade schools and 30 were second-grade schools). All the schools were located in the Veneto Region and they were randomly chosen for this study. The questionnaires sent to the school offices were later forwarded by the school principals to the English teachers working in their schools. Respondents could freely forward the link of the questionnaire to other colleagues who were working in first-grade and second-grade secondary schools.

The questionnaire was sent in the period from 24th April 2020 to 1st May 2020 and data started to be collected and then analysed from May 11th. Over the course of two weeks (from 24th April to 8th May) it was possible to reach 140 respondents in total. This number

was not expected at all but was very welcomed by the researcher who had previously set the threshold level at just 50 respondents.

Once respondents received the email or the notice of the questionnaire, they had to click on a link that would bring them directly to the questionnaire site. The questionnaire had a duration of 15-20 minutes to complete. Every section was included on its own page, so there were four pages in total in the questionnaire. Once respondents finished their questionnaire, they had to click on a final button so that the researcher could receive their answers.

Data collection

Data were collected over time as respondents completed their questionnaires. Data were subsequently transformed by the Google Forms site into statistical data, except for the three open-ended questions, whose answers were only shown in various lists. Some of the statistical data and charts created by Google Forms were later readjusted and modified to make the analysis report clearer and more fluid.

The answers to the open-ended questions were instead regrouped into different categories and sub-categories after the analysis of their content. Some of the answers to the open-ended questions were discarded and this was done:

- when the answer was ‘empty’;
- when the answer was clearly out of context or inappropriate (e.g. one dot ‘.’);
- when the answer was not sufficiently clear or lacked some elements (e.g. ‘I think.’ without saying anything else).

Anyway, only a little number of answers were discarded. This process did not influence the final results.

3.5 Survey Sample

After two weeks it was possible to count 140 respondents in total. With the answers of two initial questions it was possible to profile respondents according to the different types of school in which they taught (first-grade or second-grade secondary schools) and the period of time they had been teaching in schools until the date of compilation of the questionnaire.

a) Breakdown of respondents by school types.

68.6% of teachers worked in second-grade secondary schools and 31.4% worked in first-grade secondary schools.

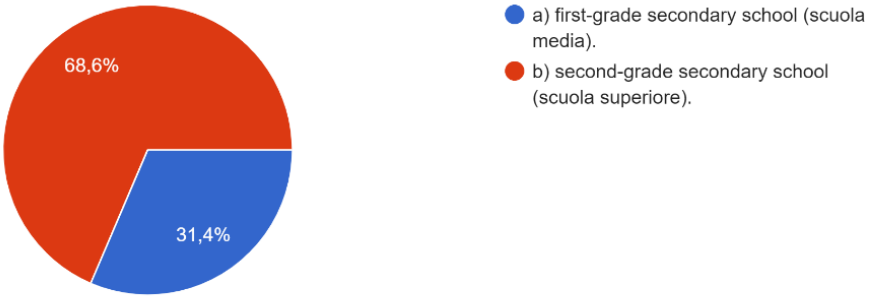

Fig. 3.5.1 Q.1: "I currently teach in a…"

b) Breakdown of respondents by teaching experience.

The results of the five different time frames were quite homogeneous. 22.1% of teachers had "less than 5 years" of experience. 25.7% of teachers had "5 – 10 years" of experience. 15% of teachers had "11 – 15 years" of experience. 5.7% of teachers had "16 – 20 years" of experience and 33.3% (the majority) had "more than twenty years" of experience.

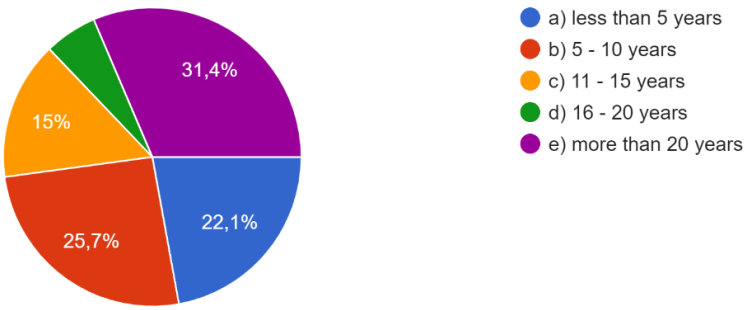

Fig. 3.5.2 Q.2: "I have been teaching English for…"

Why have these two personal questions been asked?

Two different hypotheses were made before carrying out the survey:

a) Teachers' school types: it is expected that teachers working in second-grade secondary schools will have a more WE and ELF-oriented approach, since the aim of these teachers is normally to prepare students to tackle the world outside once they have finished school; it is expected that teachers working in first-grade secondary schools will reject some or all the challenges brought about by different WE and ELF approaches, and concentrate more on standard-oriented teaching.

b) Teachers' teaching experience: it is expected that more experienced teachers who have worked in schools for many years (more than 20 years) will be more reluctant to include a WE and ELF-aware perspective in their teaching practices, and to promote standard-oriented teaching; less experienced teachers are, instead, expected to include a WE and ELF-aware perspective in their teaching practices and to move away from the concept of the standard.

4. A survey on ELF and teaching ELF (Discussion of results)

This chapter discusses the results of the survey. The discussion is divided into four parts which reflect the four sections of the questionnaire.

4.1 Teachers' Perspective on 'World Englishes'

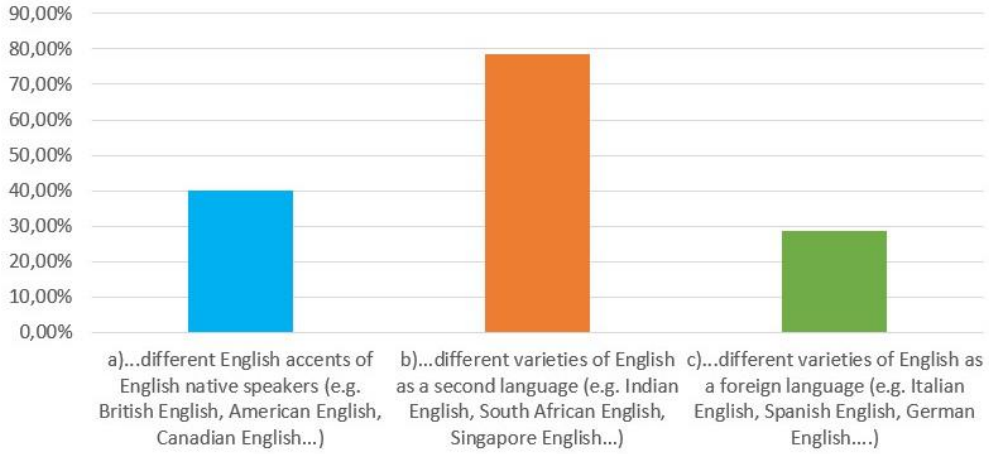

Fig. 4.1.1 Q.3: "when we talk about 'world Englishes' we normally refer to…"

78.6% of teachers chose option 'b' (different varieties of English as a second language) and 28.6% chose option 'c' (different varieties of English as a foreign language), which was not too far from the result of option 'a' (different English accents of English native speakers, 40%). The results showed that teachers chose only one option (10% only option 'a', 42.1% only option 'b', 9.2% only option 'c') or more options (8.5% for the options 'a-b-c' ; 2.1% for the options 'a-c' ; 19.2% for the options 'a-b' ; 8.5% for the options 'b-c').

It seems that the concept of 'World Englishes' may not be so perfectly clear among teachers because different options of 'varieties of English' were chosen. The question here arises is, how can a variety of English be considered as more important than another? and why do some teachers exclude certain varieties from the concept of 'World

Englishes'? English can be considered a language now spoken mostly by non-native English speakers; then, why should any particular variety be excluded from the general definition of 'World Englishes'? Kachru & Smith (2008) claimed that the expression 'World Englishes':

> "includes at least three types of varieties: (1) those that are used as the primary language of the majority population of a country, such as American and British; (2) varieties that are used as an additional language for intranational as well as *inter*national communication […] such as Indian, Nigerian and Singaporean; and (3) varieties that are used almost exclusively for international communications, such as Chinese, and German." (Kachru & Smith 2008, p. 2)

Only 8.5% of teachers selected all the options given in Q.3 and this means that only a small number of them would include *all* varieties of English, as the definition reads. This could have repercussions on ELF teaching and on ELT teaching in general. 90% of teachers gave importance only to one or two varieties and this could possibly mean that they would only focus on that particular variety / those particular varieties in their classrooms and ignore the other(s). But the concept of 'World Englishes" includes *all* varieties of English and neglecting one variety or more varieties in the classrooms may not benefit students' final proficiency in ELF.

> "As Sifakis (2009, pp. 234-235) remarks, EFL teachers are 'language and teaching specialists' who attend university courses to enter the profession; they should thus be informed about the most relevant key aspects both regarding the language and the methodological approaches to teaching English today" (Sifakis 2009, as cited in Vettorel and Corrizzato 2016, p. 489).

Teachers should show to have knowledge of different WEs and ELF, but they should also show to be able have a WE and ELF-oriented approach in their formal ELT teaching. In other words, they should be able transform the 'discourse' around different WEs and ELF

in real practice in the classrooms. Many studies (cf. Vettorel 2017) have found that the dichotomy between 'theory' and 'practice' is a hindrance in every ELF-oriented pedagogy.

In the following questions (Q.4, Q.5, Q.6 and Q.7) it was possible to discover which varieties of English were valued 'more important' and which were considered 'less important' by teachers. Overall, teachers refused the fact that students should only be exposed to *Standard English* during the lessons. However, their assumption was contradicted in the questions concerning 'English as a Lingua Franca', where a great number of them seemed to be more inclined to consider '*Standard English*' as the variety of English that should be used in contexts of ELF.

"Jenkins (2007, p. 36), […] noticed a typical contradictory behaviour apropos of non-native teachers of English, who show openness towards ELF, while in practice they tend to adhere to a 'traditional RP model' (Jenkins 2007, p. 99)." (Jenkins 2007 as cited in Grazzi 2017, p. 207). There are "dichotomous stances emerging from literature investigating teachers' views and beliefs towards Englishes and ELF, with standard varieties and normativity on the one hand, and an acknowledgement of the current plurality in English and of ELF oriented perspectives on the other" (Vettorel and Corrizzato 2016, p. 491).

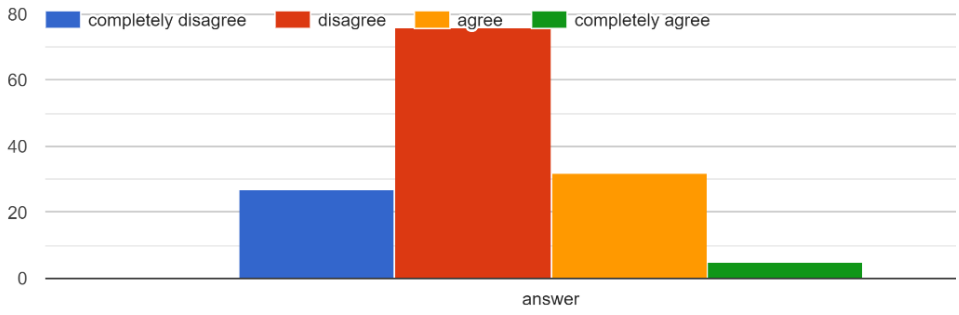

Fig. 4.1.2 Q.4: "Students in Italian schools should only be exposed to 'Standard English'. Indicate to what extent you agree with the statement"

Most teachers (74%) disagreed with the fact that students should only be exposed to *Standard English.* These results may reflect a change of perspectives among teachers. "Changes in the perception of the role of English in the world have significantly influenced thinking about approaches to teaching (if not necessarily the teaching itself)" (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 12). But the reality of things may be different. "English as a native language (ENL) has remained the default referent, implicitly or explicitly" (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 15). Most of the time "when [students] learn and use English as a foreign language, [they] are encouraged to strive to do 'as the natives do'" (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 17).

What really happens in the classrooms is that teachers tend to promote some standard features, and, in particular, those features that pertain to "standard middle-class British English" (Kiczkowiak and J. Lowe 2018, p. 18). Another problem is that learning resources most of the time only show English content in *Standard English* without giving space to other varieties of English (cf. Vettorel & Lopriore, 2013). The standard pronunciation that students hear through many learning devices in Italian classrooms, then, does not prepare them to a world where English pronunciations are almost infinite. Anyway, 26% of teachers of this survey still claimed that students should *only* be exposed to Standard English and for them this situation does not need to change.

The Standard pronunciation has always been considered as the 'most perfect' and 'clearest' English pronunciation by many teachers but recent studies have found that in reality "students […] are rather poor at distinguishing 'native' from non-native speakers' recordings (Pacek, 2005; Scales, Wennerstrom, Richard and Wu, 2006; Smith and Rafiqzad, 1979)" (Kiczkowiak and J. Lowe 2018, p. 18). Teachers generally consider that "effective communication can only be achieved by adopting the patterns of behaviour of […] educated ENL users of the language" (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 50). But in reality "there is no […] direct relationship between communicative effectiveness and correctness in terms of the norms of native speakers […]" (Seidlhofer 2011, p. 53).

Teachers of this survey tended to hide the fact that Standard English should be the most important variety that students need to be exposed to. Sometimes they even contradicted themselves. For some of them students should be exposed to an '*easy standard*'[16] or a '*more general standard*' rather than many varieties of Englishes. But how can a standard be easier or more general? For some of them exposing students to ELF (and therefore detaching from the standard) '*would get students even more confused than they are*'. Some others claimed that they '*[could] try [at least] with the most successful and self-confident students*'.

Teachers showed a certain level of reluctancy to detach themselves completely from the concept of 'superiority' of *Standard English.* Teachers claimed that they could '*try*' *and* '*see*' whether detaching from the rules may be beneficial to their students, but this might not entail a concrete action on their part. This uncertainty was highlighted in many of their answers.

> Understanding different accents is undoubtedly important but I wouldn't encourage [students] to learn use any other accent other than the ones of the native speakers of English speaking countries.[17]

> I'm worried that [students] will learn the mistakes of the other speaker, while speaking to a native English speaker might improve their pronunciation, vocabulary, and syntax.

> Usually textbooks present 'standard English' so I don't know if they would be interested in learning about different varieties.

26% of teachers agreed with the fact that students should *only* be exposed to Standard English. 43% of teachers who claimed this were relatively young teachers (with 5-10 years of teaching experience) and only 25% had 'more than 20 years' of teaching

[16] Teachers' answers to the open-ended questions of this study are always shown in italics.
[17] Teachers' longer answers have been displayed in this way to facilitate the reading.

experience. This means that the assumption that *only* more experienced teachers would focus more on standard-oriented teaching is wrong, considering also that the remaining number of more experienced teachers disagreed with this question.

Since most teachers showed to have preference for different varieties of English, questions 5, 6 and 7 investigated which varieties of English were considered as more relevant and which as less relevant by teachers.

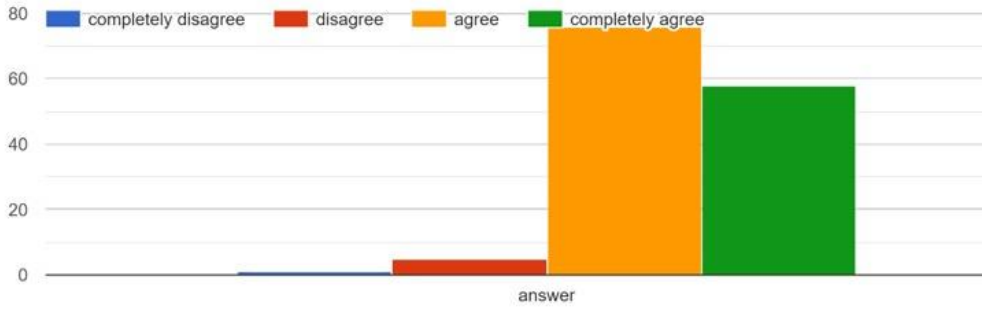

Fig. 4.1.3 Q.5: "Students in Italian schools should be exposed to different native-speakers varieties of English (British English, American English, Canadian English…). Indicate to what extent you agree with the statement."

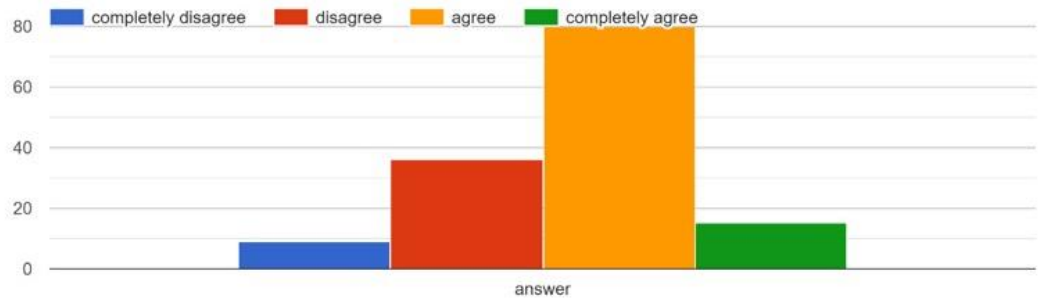

Fig. 4.1.4 Q.6: "Students in Italian schools should be exposed to varieties of English as a second language (Indian English, South African English, Singapore English…). Indicate to what extent you agree with the statement."

Most teachers (95.7%) agreed with the fact that students should be exposed to native-speakers varieties of English in their classrooms. 67.8% agreed with the fact that students should be exposed to varieties of English as a second language. However, in this latter

case, the negative answers were higher than the negative answers of the preceding question (Q.6 32% ; Q.5 3.5%). Let us remember that in the first question of the second section (Q.3) 78.6% of teachers claimed that these varieties (varieties of English as a second language) should be included in the definition of 'world Englishes'.

It can be claimed that students are already being exposed to native-speaker varieties of English in Italian classrooms. Many teachers, both in first and second-grade secondary schools, mentioned the fact that their students are already exposed to *American English*, *Canadian English*, and *Australian English*. Although teachers claimed that it should also be essential to expose students to varieties of English as a second language (e.g. South African English) they did not mention whether this is happening in their classrooms or whether they are thinking of doing this in the future.

Anyway, many teachers claimed that exposing students to too many varieties of English could be redundant because students themselves already '*perceive that there are different varieties of English as regards pronunciation*'. Students are generally already in contact with English and many of its varieties outside the learning environment. This was also shown in previous studies on students' perception on different WEs and ELF.

> "Younger generations in particular come into contact with Englishes in a variety of contexts (e.g. Berns et al.; Seidlhofer 2007; Seidlhofer et al.; Giorgis); all over Europe daily encounters with (linguistic) otherness are experienced starting from increasingly multicultural and multilingual school environments (Byram 1997, 2008)." (Vettorel 2015, p. 229).

Teachers of this research added the following examples.

> Nowadays teenagers are exposed to different Englishes and different cultures thanks to internet. They already question themselves about this and the teacher too.

> Many of the VIPs they follow on social media already speak English with different accents or as a second language.
>
> The students' approach to the English speaking world has already started thanks to sports and movie stars. They are getting used to that. The most popular TV series already present a blend of accents since the themes as well as the social backgrounds described with the plots are now cosmopolitan and no more simply domestic.
>
> Young learners already perceive that there are quite a number of varieties of English from their use of social networks, their gaming online, their listening to different sorts of music etc.
>
> We are working in multi-ethnic cross-cultural classes, the Internet and YT use any variety of English, students are constantly exposed to them. They have the global world in their mobile.
>
> I have never asked students but I'm sure they already have some awareness that there exists more than one English (they spend hours playing online with gamers from all over the world). They are exposed to different varieties of English and ELF (on YouTube, ...) every day anyway and I think they are more interested in being able to understand a vlogger talking about travelling around India than a British professor talking about poetry!

Definitions of 'World Englishes' include *all* varieties of English, even those varieties that are spoken by non-native English speakers. Teachers should also expose students to "those English varieties that would appear insignificant" because the world has never been so linguistically interconnected, and their mission should consist in preparing their pupils for this. "Starting at an early age, learners should get broad receptive training and should be confronted with as many accents as possible […] progressing from the most common to the least frequently used pronunciation varieties" (Bienswanger 2008 p. 33).

Teachers of this survey tended to have divergent opinions on different 'varieties of English as a foreign language'.

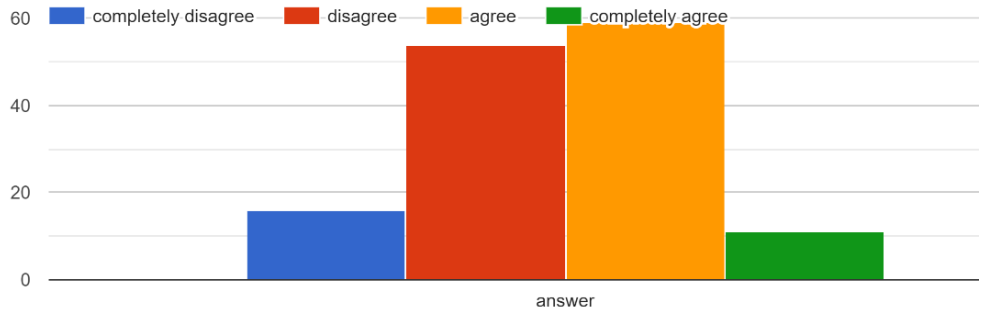

Fig. 4.1.5 Q.7: "Students in Italian schools should be exposed to English spoken by non-native speakers (e.g. Italians, Spaniards, Germans, Russians…) Indicate to what extent you agree with the statement."

In Q.3 only 28.6% of teachers agreed with the fact that these varieties could be considered as varieties of English. Here it seems that another completely different scenario emerged. The results of Q.7 may confirm the fact that if one divides a question (Q.3, in this case) into different sub-questions (Q.4, Q.5, Q.6 and Q.7) one may be able to better understand what teachers really have in their minds. In this case, these sub-questions were useful to understand which varieties of English were perceived as more relevant and which, instead, as less relevant.

Most teachers (50%) agreed with the fact that students should be exposed to English spoken by non-native speakers, such as Italian English, Spanish English, German English, and Russian English. However, if one counted all the negative results, one would obtain exactly the same result (50%). Teachers appeared to be rather undecisive, considering also that the percentage of positive answers (42.1%) exceeded the percentage of the negative ones (38.5%) only by 3.6%. These non-native varieties of English are precisely the ones that students may hear when they travel abroad, especially if the European context is taken into consideration, where most speakers of English are neither non-native

English speakers, except obviously for speakers of Great Britain and Ireland, nor speakers of English as a second language.

Most teachers who disagreed with this question (59%) were teachers of English working in first-grade secondary schools whereas 41% were teachers working in second-grade secondary schools. This confirms the original hypothesis that stated that "teachers working in first-grade secondary schools would reject some or all the challenges brought about by different WEs". 61% of teachers who disagreed with Q.7 were relatively young teachers with less than 15 years of experience and 50% of them were young teachers with less than 11 years of experience. The original assumption that only 'less experienced' teachers would bring the most innovative aspects of ELF into the classrooms was therefore rejected by the results of this question.

4.2 Teachers' Perspective on 'English as a Lingua Franca'

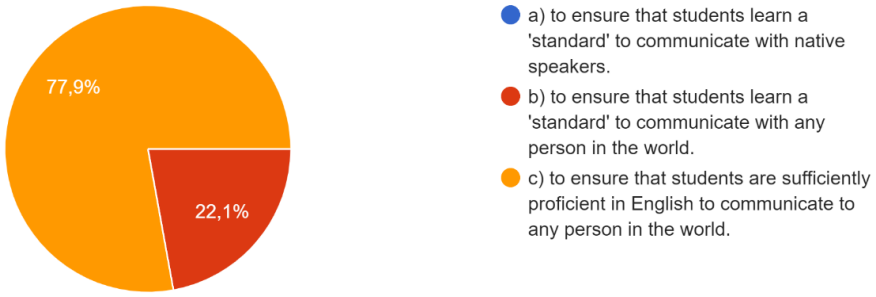

Fig. 4.2.1 Q.8: "What do you think should it be the goal of English language education?"

All teachers agreed with the fact that English is taught not because students need to communicate only with native speakers but because students may use this language even in non-native contexts. However, it has to be underlined that a small part of the respondents (22.1%) still believed that students need to learn *a standard* to communicate in these non-native contexts. And the question that springs to mind is always the same: *what is the purpose of learning a 'standard' if today English is spoken mostly by non-native speakers in contexts of English as a lingua franca*?

> "The […] pluralisation of English, as well as its widespread presence in the environment and the consequent opportunities to encounter and use English 'from below' (Preisler) have important implications for English Language Teaching (ELT), where a monolithic view of English can no longer represent the only reference point" (Vettorel 2015, p. 229).

The scenario may change if one assumes that teachers considered this 'standard' to be 'a common basis that could lead to intelligibility in contexts of English as a lingua franca and that could allow different speakers of different WEs to understand one another despite their linguistic differences (see answers to Q.11). At any rate, the emphasis in the second option (option 'b') of Q.8 was put on the word 'standard', otherwise teachers would have chosen the third option, where the word 'standard' was explicitly mentioned. This was in fact the option that was selected the most (77.9%).

54% of teachers who selected option 'b' were teachers with less than 11 years of experience. This rejects once gain the hypothesis that only less experienced teachers would detach themselves from standard-oriented teaching. 71% of this group (option 'b') were teachers working in first-grade secondary schools. This confirms the hypothesis that teachers working in these contexts would be more inclined to reject some or all the challenges brought about by different WEs and ELF and concentrate more on a standard-oriented teaching programme.

In Q.9 almost all teachers (95%) claimed that they heard the expression 'English as a lingua franca' before. It was expected, then, that they would know what that was about.

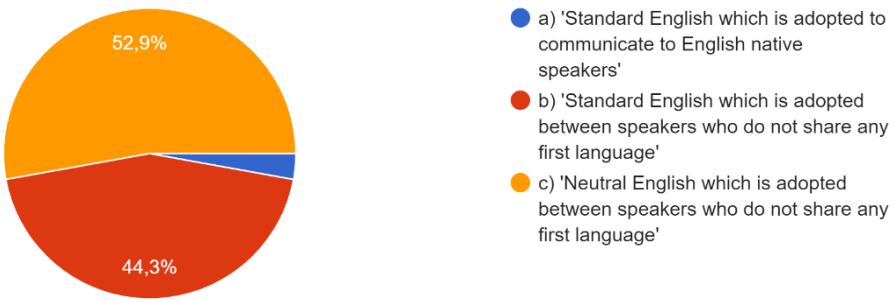

Fig. 4.2.2 Q.10: "What do you think it is the most suitable definition for 'English as a Lingua franca'?"

But, interestingly, the same issue of the Standard occurred again in Q.10, where they were asked to give a clear definition to the expression.

Almost half of the respondents (44.3%) claimed that English as a Lingua Franca would involve the use of '*Standard English*' in the interactions between speakers who do not share any first language, rather than a 'neutral' form of English. This result confirms that many teachers (although not the majority) do not seem to have taken on board the idea that in contexts of ELF the standard variety of course can be heard and adopted in the interactions but this variety does not occur in all situations: every speaker of English will end up speaking their variety of English in these contexts, no matter where they come from or what their native language is.

71% of teachers who selected option 'b' were, surprisingly, teachers of English working in second-grade secondary schools whereas 29% were teachers working in first-grade secondary schools. The opposite results were expected. As for their teaching experience, the results were equally distributed depending on the different time-frames. However, it has to be underlined that 65% of teachers of this group had less than 20 years of teaching experience. This means that the issue of the standard does not only concern more experienced teachers, as it was originally assumed. Indeed, so far most teachers who have been found to focus on standard-oriented teaching are less experienced teachers.

In Q.10 most teachers (52.9%) considered that English as a Lingua Franca would be a more neutral form of English rather than a specific variety of English. Although 95% of teachers claimed that they knew the concept of ELF (Q.9), it can be concluded that in reality only half of these may have understood its real meaning. The concept of 'neutrality' of English was described in chapter two but in the survey it was also clarified by the answers given by this group of teachers in the following question (Q.11), which reads as follows:

Q.11: “If you chose the third option (c) in the preceding question (10), could you give a short definition of "neutral English"?”.

The question received 61 answers in total, although 74 respondents selected the third option (option ‘c’) in the preceding question (Q.10). Notwithstanding the lack of 13 answers, it was still possible to obtain a general idea of teachers’ assumptions on ‘Neutral English’. Their answers were grouped together on the basis of their common features into five main categories:

a) pronunciation features;
b) grammatical features;
c) intercultural features;
d) communication features;
e) English as a Lingua Franca.

a) pronunciation features

‘Neutral English’ was described by many teachers as an English which is not characterized by any particular kind of pronunciation, any regional or specific English variety or any kind of local or accent/intonation. ‘Neutral English’ is characterized instead by a ‘*general accent*’. Sometimes it was also described as a form of English that does not present ‘*any accent at all*’. The only aspect that seems to be important for teachers is that any type of English, no matter its variety or accent, has to provide for ‘*mutual intelligibility*’ in international contexts.

But the question here arises is, *how can a language not present at least a set of phonological characteristics that characterise its sounds*? “Every language has its unique set of phonological features drawn from a universal pool of possible features and feature combinations” (Krämer 2009, p. 110). In contexts of ELF there are many speakers speaking different first languages, so it seems inevitable to be able to depict one or more phonological characteristic(s) of a particular variety of English in the interaction.

Therefore, the term ‘neutral accent’ could be brought back paradoxically to ‘Standard English accent’. Look at the answer of this teacher:

> Well, neutral English is almost a myth, but it is that kind of English which doesn't have a strong regional intonation and pronunciation. I know it's associated with BBC English, although BBC English is not really neutral.

What the teacher meant here is that even though one linked the concept of ‘neutral accent’ to ‘*Standard English*’, one would not have solved the issue of the concept of a ‘neutral pronunciation’. Even Standard English has a clear accent with certain characteristics and features and therefore it is anything but neutral. This may be the reason why the teacher claimed that ‘BBC English’ ‘*is not really neutral*’. ‘Neutral accent’ could be defined, therefore, as a ‘*myth*’, as the teacher claimed, simply because it may not exist at all. In worldwide English interactions many English accents and pronunciations can be heard, and it appears rather unlikely that all speakers use a common ‘Standard English accent’ or a ‘neutral accent’ in these interactions. Another teacher made the following statement.

> I believe "neutral" gives the idea of a kind of English which is not necessarily British or American, or in any way geographically related […], while on the other hand "standard" makes me think of "rules"... therefore whose rules? British ones or American or Australian? What set of words am I supposed to use, for example? The British "standard" or the American "standard”?

‘Neutral pronunciation’ refers therefore to ‘any English pronunciation’ whereas ‘standard pronunciation’ refers to ‘the rules of just one particular variety’. ‘Neutral’ means ‘many accents’ and ‘standard’, instead, refers only to ‘one accent’.

b) grammatical features.

‘Neutral English’ was described by many teachers as a form of English which is ‘grammatically neutral’. As for the adjective ‘neutral’ in reference to ‘grammar’, English

teachers tended to divide: for some of them the concept of 'grammatical neutrality' is equivalent to a type of grammar that is not 'perfectly correct'. Interestingly, in this case, teachers linked the concept of 'correctness' to the grammatical rules of 'Standard English'. And this means that for them it does not matter whether students do not use a 'correct English' (Standard English) in these interactions. They just need to reach intelligibility with a 'neutral grammar'. 'Neutral grammar' means therefore 'not perfect grammar' whereas 'standard grammar' means 'perfection'.

Although many teachers claimed that it does not matter if students make grammatical mistakes when they speak English, they also agreed with the fact that there must be at least a *clear* and *solid grammatical basis* that can allow mutual intelligibility and comprehension to occur among speakers. Some of them claimed that students should be taught language structures which are common in all contexts of ELF. In other words, one cannot expect ELF to happen if there is not a common grammatical basis among the speakers. In general, any language would not work if this did not have an underlying grammatical structure. "Language without grammar would be chaotic: countless words without the indispensable guidelines for how they can be ordered and modified" (Batstone 1994, p. 4).

Teachers claimed that students should not focus too much on a 'perfect grammar' and that they are free to make some grammatical mistakes when they speak. But these 'liberties' should not hinder mutual intelligibility to effectively occur. In this sense, two teachers claimed that 'Neutral English' is for them:

> An English not too focused on issues like colour/color realise/realize divide into/divide in. Provided it is based on a standard grammar, variations should be mostly welcome.

> An English where perfect grammar and phraseology are not to be expected, but where the focus is on communication and basic grammar.

They refer to a type of grammar that is '*standard*' and '*basic*'. Many teachers maintained that the concept of 'grammatical neutrality' could be linked to an '*easy and simplified version of English grammar*' that should be characterised by a '*simple syntax*', or a '*simplified structure*' with '*no marked features*' and with '*no specific idioms*'. 'Neutral grammar' corresponds therefore to 'a sufficient grammar' that is characterized by a set of general grammatical rules that could enable students to be 'sufficiently proficient' in contexts of ELF. Perhaps this could refer to the threshold level (B1) of the CEFR.[18]

c) intercultural features.

Many teachers linked the concept of 'Neutral English' with the hypothesis of a 'neutral culture'. For them 'Neutral English' is in fact an English '*which is not influenced by any national culture*' and 'a *multicultural way to communicate with other speakers*'. Others maintained that this type of English is not just '*multicultural*' but also '*intercultural*' and '*cross-cultural*'. Speakers of ELF cannot expect just one culture in the interaction (for instance, British culture) because there are many English speakers from different nationalities and cultures in contexts of English lingua franca, not just the 'British or American' ones. "In this sense […] there will almost certainly be instances where national cultural identities are […] made relevant by the participants in ELF communication" (Baker 2015, p. 123). Therefore, the expression 'neutral culture' could be equivalent to a 'not specific culture'. English as a lingua franca is therefore a common linguistic context in which speakers speak the same language but have different cultural backgrounds.

Some teachers linked the concept of 'culture' with the concept of 'language'. They claimed that a 'culture' of a certain speaker may influence the way in which that speaker speaks. It was Agar (1994) who considered *language* and *culture* as a single entity. He claimed that we can take "language and culture and make them inseparable. The 'and' disappears and we're left with *languaculture*" (Agar 1994, p. 132, italics in the original). House (1999) later resumed that concept. For her "[l]ingua Franca interactions are defined

[18] This refers to "the ability to express oneself in a limited way in familiar situations and to deal in a general way with nonroutine information." (Badger, 2018)

as interactions between members of two or more different linguacultures in English." (House 1999, p. 74). In this sense, a teacher concluded that:

> Neutral English is English used as a culture-free tool in order to communicate. However, the cultural background of the speakers might influence the way language is used.

d) communication features

Most teachers linked the concept of 'Neutral English' directly with the concept of 'successful communication'. In this sense, the English language that is adopted in contexts of ELF is 'neutral' because it is not subjected to any phonological rule, difficult grammar, or any specific culture. And this 'neutrality' allows ELF to be immediately understood by all speakers of each interaction and communication to be quick and effective.

Teachers claimed that for them 'neutral English' is '*an adapted*' version of English, '*a go-between language*' that enables both native and non-native speakers to understand each other. In this sense, the main goal of 'Neutral English' is '*just making other people understand what you are saying*'. '*No matter if it is BE, AmE or English spoken in India*' the only goal is effective communication. This is what led many of them to link the expression 'Neutral English' directly with the more dynamic concept of 'English in use'.

> Neutral English is characterized by English words and expressions coming from no matter what World English, speakers should only know [how] to convey their messages efficiently. We must remember that the [main] purpose of a language is to communicate a message and not a mere exercise of style.

With 'exercise of style' this teacher probably refers to 'Standard English'. It would not make sense to teach students to express themselves only in *Standard English*, considering the complex nature of ELF. The goal of a foreign language teaching programme at lower

levels is not to teach students to show '*a certain style*' but to enable them to communicate efficiently both with native and non-native English speakers.

e) English as a Lingua Franca.

Many teachers linked 'neutral English' directly with the expression 'English as a lingua franca' so as to underline that the 'neutrality' of this language allows the communication to happen among speakers of 'different languages' and precisely among 'non-native English speakers'.

Summary

The expression 'Neutral English' was interpreted in many ways. Some teachers focused their attention more on specific aspects; some others linked the expression to more general concepts. Some teachers also tried to invent their own definition of 'neutral English'. For instance, a teacher drew the following conclusion.

> I can't exactly understand this expression [Neutral English] but I guess I grasped the idea you wanted to give. In my opinion, "English as a lingua franca" doesn't refer to a "kind" of English but rather as a way the English language is nowadays used to communicate. Therefore, rather than a "neutral English", speakers of English as a lingua franca would speak "their own English", which would share at least some of the basic characteristics of "other people's Englishes", enough to make the two understand each other. I don't think that something like a "neutral English" exists or should exist. Rather, it would be important to preserve some standpoints of the language (some grammar and some phonetics features) in order to let everybody understand each other. I don't know if this may be considered as Standard English or "neutral English" as you defined it.

What the teacher claimed here is that 'Neutral English' should not be linked to a particular *form* of English, but rather to a ***situation*** in which *different Englishes meet*. When one refers to a 'neutral' form of English one refers, at any rate, to a 'form' of English which

should have certain features. But as the teacher said, this cannot happen in contexts of ELF because there are too many varieties and forms of English involved in the interaction.

'Neutral English' includes different characteristics of different Englishes that cannot be brought back to any concept (such as Neutral English) that could include them all. The English language that speakers in contexts of ELF speak cannot be *Standard English* either because Standard English has certain features of one specific variety of English. But in the same way speakers cannot speak a neutral form of English because ELF is itself a set of different Englishes. It can be concluded that the term 'neutral English' refers to a language that is 'not specific' or 'not standardized'. The only exception to this neutrality, however, is 'grammar', which must be instead common for all speakers of every interaction, and therefore standardized.

4.3 Teachers' Perspective on teaching ELF

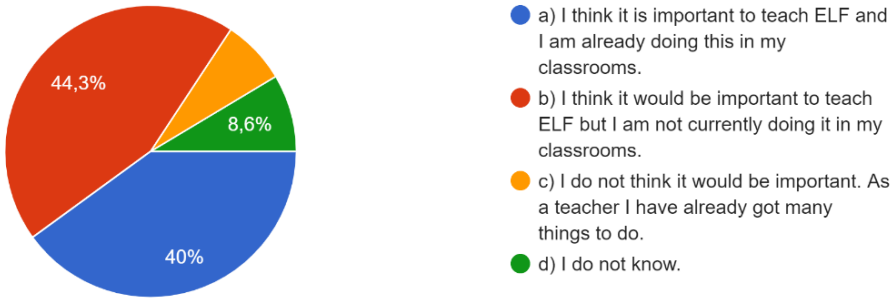

Fig. 4.3.1 Q.12: "How important would it be for you to teach English as a Lingua franca (ELF)?"

84.3% of teachers considered that teaching ELF would be an important aspect to take into consideration in their classrooms (one has to keep in mind that some teachers, however, might not have a clear idea of what ELF actually is, as was seen in the results of the preceding questions). Surprisingly, 40% of them also claimed that they were already implementing an ELF-oriented teaching programme in their classrooms.

69% of teachers who claimed that they were already teaching ELF were teachers working in second-grade secondary schools. The minority (31%) was working in first-grade secondary schools. This confirms the initial hypothesis that teachers working in second-grade secondary schools would be more inclined to have an ELF-aware perspective in their teaching practices than teachers working in first-grade schools, since the aim of the former is to prepare students to live in a society where English is adopted mostly as a lingua franca. However, it should be recalled that 71% of teachers working in second-grade secondary schools considered *Standard English* as the variety of English that should be adopted in contexts of ELF (Q.10). Therefore, teachers working in second-grade secondary schools might as well appear as more updated and informed teachers, but in the end they show to adhere to the same principles of teachers working in first-grade secondary schools.

Teachers working in first-grade secondary schools wrote the following statements.

> Students at scuola media [middle school] are not interested in learning different versions of English as they still have to learn the basics. They think it would be interesting and more useful in a secondary school.

> If I think of my classes this year (scuola media), I don't think they would find it useful. However, I believe it would be an essential part of a more Linguistic curriculum, so I may teach ELF in the future if I happen to teach in such a school.

> I am teaching in a scuola media, […] I think the students are too young to get the importance of a lingua franca. They "feel" English as a subject at the moment and not an opportunity.

> I think that first-grade secondary school students' awareness about language variability is not yet developed to the point that they could be interested in learning ELF.

> ELF teaching is useful maybe when they are older, in the fourth or fifth year of secondary high school, […] but not earlier.

In a study carried out by Vettorel (2016) many first-grade secondary-school pre-service teachers highlighted that "it can be difficult and in away destabilising to teach students a plurality of Englishes inside a curriculum that prefers the model of the native speaker"[19] (Vettorel & Corrizzato 2016, p. 155). The teaching of ELF could be instead relegated to those school years which in Italy start to detach from 'formal English teaching' to concentrate more on other experimental linguistic programmes such as CLIL[20]. "[I]t appears that the tendency to introduce aspects of global Englishes is usually visible in those sections aimed at developing (inter)cultural awareness or CLIL […]" (Lopriore & Vettorel 2015, p. 14). CLIL today is implemented in Italy mostly in second-grade secondary schools.

As for the teachers' teaching experience of teachers who were adopting an ELF-aware perspective in their classrooms, the results were, surprisingly, quite homogeneous and with just slightly differences among them (28.2% <5 years, 17.9% 5-10 years, 20.5% 11-15 years, 14.8% 16-20 years and 25.6% 20>). This means that the teaching experience that teachers have collected in schools is not an important factor to take into consideration as for the teaching of ELF, in contrast to the original assumption that stated that less experienced teachers were more likely to adopt an ELF-aware perspective in their classrooms than more experienced teachers.

44.3% of teachers claimed that they were <u>not</u> implementing an ELF-oriented programme in their classrooms. There are obviously certain motivations behind their choice. Previous studies on ELF awareness have shown that there is not only one factor that hinders teachers from teaching different WEs and ELF. "Introducing a WEs perspective into ELT

[19] Original text: "come possa essere difficoltoso, e in un certo qual senso destabilizzante, introdurre gli studenti alla pluralità degli Englishes all'interno di un paradigma che predilige il modello del parlante nativo" (Vettorel & Corrizzato 2016, p. 155)

[20] CLIL stands for "Content and Language Integrated Learning" and refers to the methodology of teaching subjects through an additional language (foreign or second).

programmes may take time (Brown 1995: 241), also due to potential resistance by teachers (cf. e.g. Maley 2010; Vettorel, Maley 2008)" (Facchinetti 2012, p. 229). Vettorel (2015), after her study, concluded that "[e]mpowering teachers to become confident decision-makers is an ambitious objective, which has to come to terms with time and resource constraints" (Vettorel 2015, p. 122).

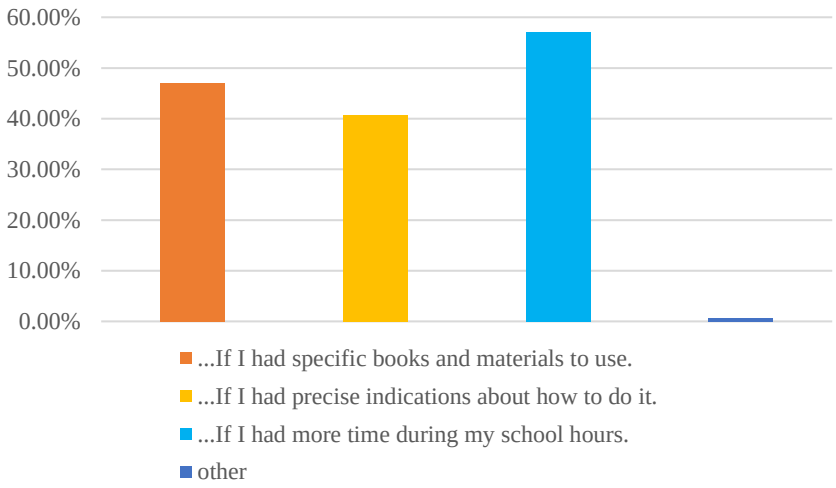

Fig. 4.3.2 Q.13: "I would implement ELF teaching in my classrooms..."

In the survey the time factor (that teachers need more time during their school hours) was the factor that prevented most teachers (57.1%) from implementing an ELF-oriented teaching programme, followed then by the lack of specific books and materials to use (47.1%) and the lack of precise indications (40.1%). The fact that teachers 'need more time' to teach ELF reveals that in this way teachers seem to be more focused to teach a type of 'English' (formal ELT) which is not English Lingua Franca.

In this sense, 'ELF' is seen as something that could be included in the curriculum, but which should not exceed, at any rate, the teaching hours that teachers dedicate to the teaching of formal English in their classrooms. A teacher claimed that '*[they] could teach about it [ELF] inside [their] schedule*.' Therefore, teaching ELF may be considered as something additional or secondary in these learning contexts. Another teacher wrote that '*there simply isn't enough time to teach ELF during normal lessons*' and another one

claimed that '*teaching English at school is very difficult because [teachers] don't have too much time in their programs with only 3 hours a week*'.

The time factor was not considered a hindrance only for teachers, but also for students. A teacher wrote that students '*don't have enough time to do this kind of "study" and probably part of them would consider it a waste of time*'. Another one claimed that '*for some students it could be interesting, especially if they are already keen on languages, traveling etc. but perhaps for others it could be one more thing to study and it would pile up with other things in the "not-so-useful" department*'. *They are usually afraid of having too much to learn*'.

Teachers do not usually include activities around different WEs and ELF in their programmes because they have to observe the indications given by national programmes and this obviously takes up all the time that they have at their disposal. If national indications included a more WEs and ELF-aware perspective, teachers would probably have more 'time' to teach ELF. Therefore, teachers might as well claim that they are interested in teaching ELF (in Q.12 85% agreed with the fact that teaching ELF would be important), but they will always conclude that, as things stand now, they have no choice but to keep teaching students what they have always taught them.

The lack of specific materials and precise indications (which both derive from a lack of formal linguistic description of ELF) were also highlighted as obstructing aspects. Teachers claimed that '*[they] already [teach ELF], using materials available on the Internet*' and they provide '*extra materials*' in the classroom because most of the time '*books are not updated*' or even though they are, they do not focus too much on ELF. In a study carried out by Vettorel and Lopriore (2013) it was shown that:

> "in line with previous studies […] there have not been significant changes in the recently published ELT coursebooks […], particularly as to a shift towards awareness-raising activities related to the plurality of Englishes, not to mention ELF. Characters continue to

> be prevalently NSs, settings and accents overwhelmingly Inner Circle, Anglophone ones." (Vettorel and Lopriore 2013, p. 497).

At any rate, by looking at Vettorel's recent studies (2016; 2017; 2018), it can be seen that "signs towards a change in perspective […] are (but slowly) starting to appear in course-books" (Vettorel 2017, p. 251). However, it should be highlighted that "speakers of English with a diversity of linguacultural backgrounds, both in terms WE varieties and above all, of ELF interactions are still largely underrepresented" (Vettorel 2017, p. 251). Further studies have also highlighted that teachers are starting to create their own materials to compensate for the lack of activities around different WEs and ELF. "Particularly significant [was] considered […] the design of WE- and ELF informed activities and lesson plans, that were often created starting from the adaptation of existing materials (Vettorel 2016; Vettorel, Corrizzato 2016b)" (Vettorel 2017, p. 245). "An ELF-aware pedagogy [should] involve […] a shift in perspective, one that takes account of the current realities of how English is used, with teachers coconstructing appropriate ELF-related methodologies for their learners" (Vettorel 2017, p. 243).

But the question that springs to mind is, *how can teachers teach something that is not institutionally prescribed at all*? Perhaps teachers may elaborate different strategies to teach different WEs and ELF and implement them in the classrooms. In the meanwhile, they could continue to teach what the national programmes have provided for them. This, as studies have shown, is already happening. But, currently, it is clear that they cannot find possible solutions for how to modify their formal didactics in order to tackle these issues. Perhaps teachers could find these solutions by working together with their students.

> ELF "should represent a general *attitude*, a *mindset* of scholars, teachers and students alike, who are *not* happy with blind, a-critical adherence to pre-conceived, never-challenged ideas but are willing to question them and, if necessary, develop them further to replace them with new ones altogether" (Saraceni 2015, p. 185).

It has to be highlighted, however, that "ELF-awareness [should not become] a pre-defined and imposed set of prescriptive 'rules' (Jenkins, Cogo, Dewey 2011; Seidlhofer 2011), nor 'a new 'method' or 'approach' to teaching", (Sifakis 2017, p. 7)" (Vettorel 2017, p. 243).

The 'lack of prescription' of ELF is a worldwide problem and it should not be applied only to the Italian context. The hindrance is that a possible linguistic description of ELF may never be found simply because ELF is an ever-changing phenomenon and not a steady situation. Interactions in English as a lingua franca always show different linguistic features because there are different speakers of English involved in these contexts. How can institutions prescribe something that changes all the time? What can the EFL teaching environment really do to face this?

4.4 How ELF could be taught

> "In general, a common preoccupation emerging from WE/EIL/ELF studies related to pedagogic practices is 'to prepare learners to use English to become part of the globalised world, which is linguistically and culturally diverse,' incorporating this diversity in pedagogic practices in order to 'represent English as a pluralistic and dynamic entity rather than a monolithic and static one' (Matsuda 2012a, 169). As Alptekin words it, 'EIL pedagogy should be one of global appropriacy and local appropriation, in that it 'should prepare learners to be both global and local speakers of English and to feel at home in both international and national cultures' (Alptekin 63)." (Matsuda 2012a, Alptekin 2002 as cited in Vettorel 2017, p. 117)

Incorporating all these aspects in ELT programmes may not be so simple for teachers. One starting point, as previous studies have shown, could be to expose students to different English pronunciations. Teachers, in this sense, already have plenty of materials at their disposal both in the textbooks they use in the classrooms and on the Internet. However, many studies carried out by Vettorel (2016, 2017) showed that most learning

materials have not been updated yet. Most of the activities aiming at raising students' awareness about different WEs and ELF are still organized as 'secondary' or 'extra' activities and most of the time they are shown at the end of the books.

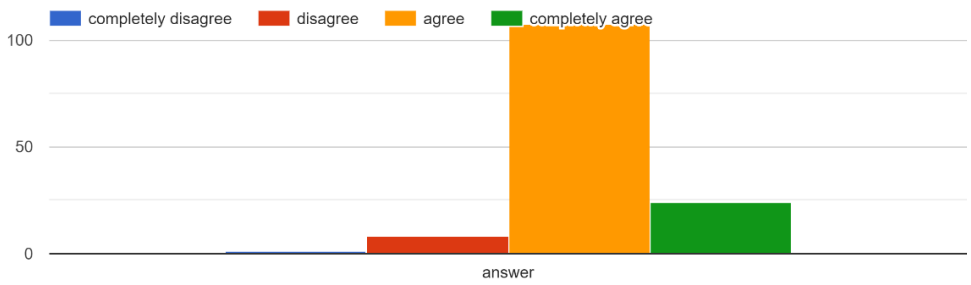

Fig. 4.4.1 Q.14: "Teaching ELF would mean exposing students to different English pronunciations. Indicate to what extent you agree with the statement."

93.5% of teachers agreed with the fact that a possible solution would be to expose students to different English pronunciations. In contexts of ELF students need to be prepared to meet speakers who speak different varieties of English and various English pronunciations. This was mentioned in many other previous studies on ELF pedagogy. "By integrating a variety of different listening […] activities, [teachers could] prepare students for real-life language encounters once outside the classroom" (Sifakis and Tsantila, 2018). Paola Vettorel (2017) gave an important contribution to the development of activities that aim at raising students' awareness about different English pronunciations. She analysed many studies that focussed on materials and activities which could be directly adopted in the classrooms and discovered that many of these were suitable for these environments.

Teachers of this survey gave some tangible examples of how this could be practically carried in the classroom (or of how this was already being carried out). The examples of activities around different pronunciations that they mentioned were very similar to the ones described by many teachers in Vettorel's study (2017).

- dramatization, listening and speaking activities
- implementing listening and speaking skills through students' exposure to everyday life in countries where ELF is spoken
- listening to sentences or speeches told by people from different countries
- focus on different register of the language with authentic listening material
- watching videos on the internet about people from different countries with different […] accents
- listening to different topics dealt by people from all over the world
- listening to songs, listening news, listening to interviews
- listening to dialogues; comparing use of similar words and pronunciation.

Many teachers pointed out that students are actually already exposed to different English pronunciations even outside the formal context of the classroom '*because they [already] listen to different varieties of English in songs*'. Another one wrote that '*teens are exposed to different Englishes (in music, videos...) and obviously they would like to focus on different accents, expressions, pronunciation as they already notice them*'. Students '*already perceive that there are quite a number of pronunciations of English from their use of social networks and their gaming online*'.

Many teachers wrote that starting from what students like and know best may be another solution. They claimed that '*students are interested in videos and documentaries on the web that use English spoken all around the world [...]. They prefer to understand different kinds of English than the language of books or literature in general. So they need a new approach to learn English*'. Perhaps teachers could ask students to bring some materials about different English pronunciations in the classroom and they could organize together some activities around these. This would also enable students to increase their motivation to learn English.

Interestingly, many teachers wrote that students should also be able to *speak* with different varieties of English. This is an aspect that was not expected at all and that could

be debated. If students are free to listen to every variety, they should also feel free to speak with whichever variety they like, provided this does not hinder mutual intelligibility and comprehension in contexts of ELF. What was found in the results of the following statement (Q.15) was something unexpected that once again confirmed the fact that some teachers might have a distorted idea of what ELF actually is.

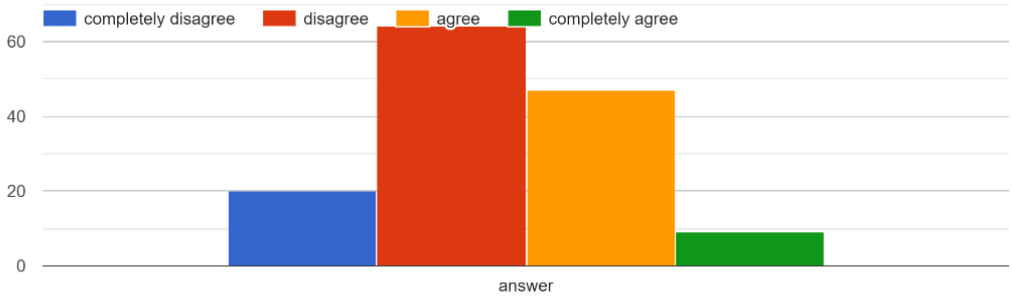

Fig. 4.4.2 Q.15: "Teaching ELF would mean teaching students to speak with different pronunciations in English. Indicate to what extent you agree with the statement."

It is true that most teachers disagreed with the fact that students should be taught to *speak* with different pronunciations in English (60%) but it has to be underlined that 40% of them - a very high percentage - claimed the opposite. 73% of teachers who agreed with this statement were teachers working, surprisingly, in second-grade secondary schools. Even this result was not expected at all. Most of them (72%) had less than 20 years of teaching experience.

In general, it can be claimed that the simple action of 'teaching students *how* to speak' a second language or a variety of that language entails a twofold problem. First of all, *can a teacher really do that*? Forcing one student to speak with a certain variety or a certain accent is impossible, linguistically speaking, and it would also be a waste of time since every English learner will produce a different 'accent' and 'variety' of English when they speak. Many teachers in Selvi and Rudolph's (2017) study mentioned that:

> "an ELF-aware teacher … doesn't push students to be [someone] while speaking. […] Each student is unique so they may speak differently. In addition to speaking and pronunciation, the teacher may focus more on fluency, intelligibility and comprehensibilty […] Since what is important is to be […] understood by others […]" (Selvi & Rudolph 2017, p. 95).

Some teachers of this study claimed that '*when [their] students practice their speaking skills in class they are in fact using English as a lingua franca*'. And this is the second problem. Teaching students how to *speak* with different varieties would not make much sense because in contexts of ELF there are simply too many varieties of English to cope with. Therefore, teachers cannot expect that their students pronounce them all. It would make sense only in the case in which this activity would lead to a general understanding that there are different English pronunciations (e.g. role-play activities, cf. Q.18). Paradoxically, if students practiced their speaking skills in the classroom they would in fact adopt English as a lingua franca because they would be exposed to the other varieties of English of their classmates and they would adopt, at the same time, their variety of English in the interaction.

But rather than teaching students *how* to pronounce a certain variety instead of another, teachers should perhaps focus their attention on how to teach students certain general *communication strategies*, which students could adopt in *every* context of ELF. Instead of making things more difficult than they are, teachers could instead in this way prepare the ground for successful communication in English in these contexts. Speaking activities do not normally lead students to improve their communicative skills "mainly because students are told to *how* say something and encouraged to 'memorize the conversations' […] and somehow mime them" (Lopriore and Grazzi 2016, p. 72).

Many studies have shown that communication strategies and pragmatic strategies are frequently used among speakers of English in ELF contexts because they enable different participants of the conversation to communicate effectively with one another. "In studies

focusing on appeals, comprehension checks and responses in the […] data of the VOICE Corpus […], [it was shown] that these pragmatic strategies are frequently employed […] in order to cooperatively reach mutual understanding, in a face-saving and 'natural' way." (Vettorel 2019, pp. 73-74).

Vettorel (2018) was able to group general CCs (communication strategies) which are normally adopted by speakers of different WEs in contexts of ELF into the following four macro-categories:

> "1. appeal for help (direct/indirect);
> 2. (a) meaning negotiation: requests for repetition, clarification, direct questions/minimal queries);(b) meaning negotiation: confirmation checks, direct/indirect question, repetition in rising intonation, interpretative summary (e.g. you mean…?), content /summary;
> 3. responses: repetition, rephrasing, expansion, reduction/simplification, confirmation, rejection, repair; lexical anticipation / suggestion / correction […] use of fillers and time-gaining devices;
> 4. achievement strategies: circumlocution/paraphrase, approximation/all-purpose words/word-replacement, restructuring, word-coinage, code-switching – or literal translation from L1 (mother tongue)/ Ln (any language part of the interactants' repertoire), foreignizing, code-switching into L1/L3/Ln)"
> (Vettorel 2018, pp. 80-81)

Question 18 reads as follows.

> "Teaching ELF normally means teaching general communication strategies. Could you indicate some strategies which might be useful in ELF contexts?".

All the 140 answers to this question were analysed and regrouped depending on their similar features. Overall, eight macro-categories of different CCs were created. Some of them are similar to the ones mentioned by Vettorel (2018).

1. Paraphrasing: paraphrasing when you do not know a specific word, rewordifying, or explaining the meaning - Paraphrasing concepts when you miss for words or when you do not know or do not remember the exact word you need (e.g. you do not know the word "washing machine" and you say "the machine you use to wash your clothes") - describing the meaning of a word when you don't know how to say it - using different words to express what you want to say.

2. Use of Role-play: dividing the class into small groups that should act through role-plays - interpreting characters from different countries and use different varieties of English after they have been exposed to different kinds of dialogues.

3. Meaning negotiation: trying to understand the global meaning of a sentence, even if some words are not clear – trying to infer the meaning (requesting for repetition or help, content summaries etc..) - using compensatory strategies (rephrasing, approximation...).

4. Nonverbal strategies: body language, mimicking, indicating, gesturing, using facial expressions.

5. Cultural strategies: respecting the other cultures of the interaction - being aware of the context - understanding the different roles and cultural background of the speakers - comparing different cultural and social backgrounds - analysing possible misunderstandings due to cultural differences.

6. Adaptation strategies: stimulating students to adapt to the person they're speaking to by using different accents and/or grammar – using some of the vocabulary that the other speaker is adopting to make communication smooth and comfortable – fine tuning your accent to accommodate the other - shifting from a language to another - mixing different words from different countries hoping that the listener knows another.

7. Other communication strategies: using short and simple sentences - learning how to buy time in conversation - understanding one another as precisely as possible with the fewest number of words – trying to communicate and sending more comprehensible messages - using foreign words - substitution - asking for clarification - being able to overcome communication breakdown.

8. Not being afraid of mistakes: not focussing too much on 'perfection' - focussing on successful communication rather than formal accuracy – not being too anxious to sound perfect.

Teachers also drew their attention to another aspect concerning the implementation of different CCs. They claimed that they cannot teach these strategies without clarifying the reason why they are teaching them. They should also *explain* students why these are being taught. A teacher in Vettorel and Corrizzato's study (2016) for instance claimed that:

> "Communication strategies ought to be dealt with to make students aware of 'how to solve problems with the language through interaction strategies' (TFA2-28) and 'to put into practice any strategy in order to achieve effective communication" (Vettorel and Corrizzato 2016, p. 500).

Some teachers of this survey also gave the following examples.

> The teacher should make students aware that a good range of pragmatic strategies […] are useful to solve misunderstandings in order to be able to communicate effectively (cooperative meaning negotiation - request for repetition, clarification, direct questions, confirmation checks, interpretative summaries, rephrasing, lexical anticipation, fillers and time-gaining devices, word coinage and code-switching). But we should also explain them why these can improve the communication.

> […] Students will face a globalised world when they finish school and therefore, they will hear dozens of different Englishes. I think the only way to help them is to talk to them about this and to teach them how to face difficult situations... maybe accommodation, repetition, listen more carefully what the other speaker is saying... trying not to sound as a "perfect" speaker of English, paradoxically.

It has to be underlined that the answers that brought to the creation of the eight categories represented just the answers of ***a group*** of teachers of the survey (47%). The other group of teachers (53%) only gave vague replies and did not seem to have clearly understood the concept of 'general communication strategies' in regard to ELF. They claimed that '*teachers just need to present students some videos and songs of different types of English*' or that they should focus their attention just on '*listening and oral activities*'. Many others replied that to solve the problem of communication '*students just need to listen to non-native speakers speaking English and to talk to them in class if there is the possibility to do this*'. A teacher, in particular, drew the following conclusion:

> I don't think you need specific strategies - exposing the students to different English's is of course the main strategy, keeping in mind the fact that Italian students themselves speak a variety of non-standard English.

But how can students learn how to *communicate* in contexts of ELF if they are only given something to watch or to listen to? Competence and performance are two different aspects of second language acquisition and teachers should ignore none of either, even in an ELF-oriented programme.

> "Aiming at developing 'strategic competence' and communicative capability would seem fundamental to equip learners/users to be able to use English to communicate in its current complexity – 'Capacity', intended as 'the ability to use a knowledge of the language as a resource for the creation of meaning' (Widdowson 1983, p. 25), and 'capability' as 'a knowledge of how meaning potential encoded in English can be realised as a communicative resource' (Widdowson 2003, p. 177)" (Widdowson 1983, 2003 as cited in Vettorel 2017, p. 253).

Questions 16, 17 and 19 concentrated more on specific aspects about teaching ELF, such as grammatical/syntactical, lexical, and intercultural awareness about different Englishes. In these questions, teachers were expected not to focus only on 'general awareness' about

ELF or on ‘general communication strategies’ but to give more concrete and practical examples of strategies that could be implemented in a WE and ELF-oriented teaching programme.

a) grammatical and syntactical awareness

Many studies on ELF lexicogrammar have been carried out so far and many “corpora have been compiled for many world Englishes as well as instances of ELF, and after analysing them, patterns of non-standard features have been reported […].” (Clement 2011, p. 16). Seidlhofer (2004) compiled a list of lexicogrammatical features after analysing patterns of behaviour of different non-native English speakers in contexts of ELF. These regularities, “although typical errors in native English, were not found to impede success in ELF communication” (Ling Low and Pakir, 2017) in later studies.

> “• Dropping the third person present tense –s
> • Confusing the relative pronouns who and which
> • Omitting definite and indefinite articles where they are obligatory in ENL, and inserting them where they do not occur in ENL
> • Failing to use correct forms in tag questions (isn’t it? or no? instead of shouldn’t they?)
> • Inserting redundant prepositions, as in We have to study about…)
> • Overusing certain verbs of high semantic generality, such as do, have, make, put, take
> • Replacing infinitive-constructions with that-clauses, as in I want that
> • Overdoing explicitness (e.g. black color rather than just black)”
> (Seidlhofer 2004, p. 220)

In an ELF-oriented teaching programme teachers should make students aware that they may hear some ‘incorrect’ grammatical constructions in contexts of English as a lingua franca. They should also make students aware that this grammatical traits “represent systematic variations of English grammar that have been influenced by language contact and/or the local languages of the speakers [and] [t]hey are not necessarily a wrong form of English” (Matsuda, 2017).

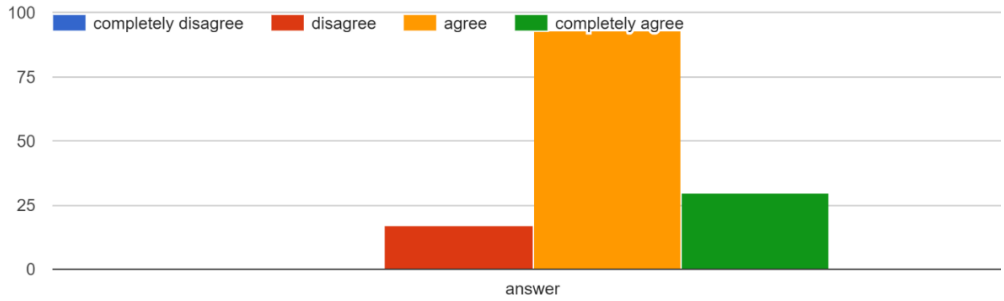

Fig. 4.4.3 Q.16: "Teaching ELF would mean raising students' awareness about different grammatical / syntactical aspects of different Englishes.
Indicate to what extent you agree with the statement."

87.8% of teachers agreed with this question and 12.2% disagreed with it. This means that teachers were well aware of the fact that students might find variations of Standard English grammar in contexts of English as a lingua franca. Teachers claimed that '*perfect grammar and phraseology are not to be expected*' in these contexts and that '*the focus is on communication and basic grammar*' or '*simplified grammar*'. Some others claimed that it would be useful to expose students to different grammars of different Englishes '*but the focus should be on standard grammar, in the end*'. For them '*it would be more important to preserve some standpoints of the language […] in order to let everybody understand each other*.'

Teachers focused their attention on the importance of teaching a 'standard grammar' rather than raising students' awareness about other grammatical aspects of other varieties of English because teaching grammatical irregularities (of different Englishes) may in fact hinder students from communicating clearly in contexts of ELF. In this sense, many teachers claimed that they should teach a 'basic' English grammar that can enable students to communicate effectively with other non-native speakers. Furthermore, students also need to be *aware* that they may hear other grammatical and syntactical features in these contexts. English grammar was perceived by most teachers as something more 'solid' than English pronunciation, which can vary all time because of its fluidity.

"As several ELF studies have shown, the grammatical side of communicative competence is still a primary concern for teachers" (Vettorel 2017, p. 253).

b) lexical awareness

English as a lingua franca is generally perceived as a situation in which different lexical features of different Englishes can be heard in the same interaction.

> "[a]n enormous number of words can be used, exceptionally, occasionally, or regularly, by speakers from many different countries. These include one-off borrowings and more established loans from speakers' L1s, and established false Anglicisms from various L1s, as well as on-the-spot approximations of established English words, and one-off creations" (Mackenzie 2014, p.75).

ELF-aware teachers should make their students' aware about the possibility of coming in contact with lexical forms of different WEs, which have previously been created by language contact and/or come directly from the local languages of the speakers. These lexical forms do not necessarily represent wrong features of English provided they do not hinder mutual intelligibility.

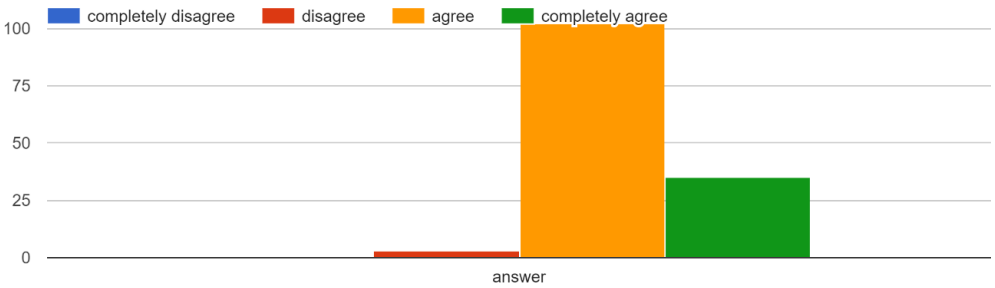

Fig. 4.4.4 Q.17: "Teaching ELF would mean raising awareness about different lexical / vocabulary aspects of different Englishes.
Indicate to what extent you agree with the statement."

97.8% of teachers agreed with question 17. Many of them claimed that students in their classrooms are usually very interested in finding differences among words and

expressions of different Englishes even because students themselves seem to be already aware of them. Teachers of this survey reported the following examples.

> When I talk to my students explaining that there are lexical and vocabulary differences in world Englishes, etc. they seem quite interested. They always ask me the differences between AE and BE words.

> Sometimes they use expressions that are incorrect but then they insist that they have read them somewhere or heard someone saying that word or phrase, then you realize that it was from an Indian speaker and so you take the chance to explain them the difference between standard English and other "Englishes".

It is this situation that led many teachers to consider the idea of teaching an '*English that doesn't necessarily follow […] rules of British English vocabulary*' or '*a language with a reduced vocabulary*' because in contexts of English as a lingua franca students will hear an English language '*characterized by English words and expressions coming from no matter what World English and speakers should know a good number of synonyms to convey their messages efficiently*.' Therefore,

> "besides fostering awareness of the current diversity of English users and usage in the world in linguacultural terms, further activities could focus upon the exploitation of materials pedagogically aimed at [reflecting] […] on how L2 users exploit their plurilingual resources in the creation of 'unusual' lexical items and expressions" (Vettorel 2015, p. 239).

c)intercultural awareness

"It is argued that the complexity of construction and negotiation of identities in intercultural communication – particularly in ELF - ought to be looked at through the concept of interculturality." (Vettorel 2016, p. 218 cfr. Baker 2015).

> "different aspects of identity (national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural as well as gender, generational, racial, regional and local/global groupings) interweave in a complex, fluid, liminal and non-linear way in intercultural encounters. Participants can thus be observed in constructing 'cultural identities which make the multilingual and multicultural nature of ELF communication prominent through references to both a plurality of cultures and in positioning the participants themselves as multilingual communicators" (Baker 2015, p. 132 as cited in Vettorel 2016, p. 218).

Even in this case, EFL (English foreign language) teachers were expected to raise their students' awareness about the aspect of interculturality of ELF and to make them aware that intercultural communication is an important aspect to take into consideration in contexts of ELF. "Teachers have a key role in promoting learners' intercultural competence. For this reason, they need to have knowledge of […] how they can help learners adjust their own thinking and behaviour in interaction with other people" (Haukås et al., 2018).

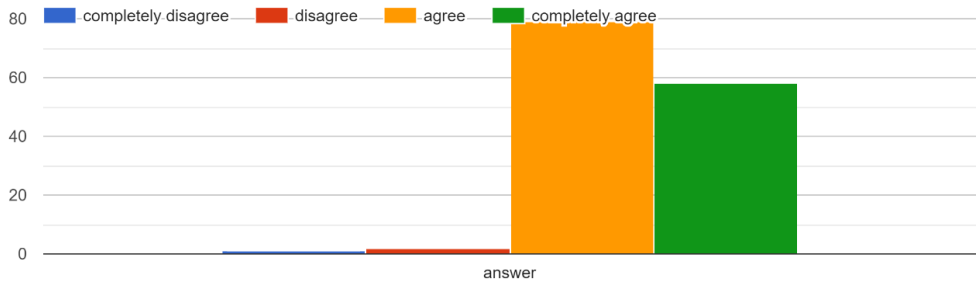

Fig. 4.4.5 Q.19: "Teaching ELF would mean raising students' intercultural awareness. Indicate to what extent you agree with the statement."

97.8% of teachers agreed with this. Furthermore, the aspect of 'intercultural awareness' was one of the most frequently cited aspects in many of their answers. Some of their statements are reported below.

I think it is important to show students the existence of different cultures linked to England / America or the English speaking world (for instance, Jamaican, South-African, Canadian etc..) through songs (Bob Marley's) or books (Nelson Mandela's Autobiography) or public speeches (Justin Trudeau's speeches - you tube videos) in order to let my students be open-minded towards "the other" and let them be exposed to as many English varieties as possible. Students live in a globalized world, so they need to be exposed to different Englishes both in oral and written forms.

I think students might be interested in knowing different aspects of the English language related to different countries. Moreover, students are now exposed to ELF more than in the past, thanks to the intercultural exchange programmes (Erasmus etc).

8th graders enjoy learning about different cultures around the world, using CLIL lesson plans (geography, history...) makes it much easier to teach ELF. Also I teach the history of the English language (7th graders) which incorporates ELF 100%. I am American and firmly believe that there are many types of English and a standard should be taught, however, the English language is flexible and is always borrowing, recycling, and merging words, cultures, and concepts- making it lingua franca.

As a foreign language teacher I think my aim is to share with my students the interest in everything that is different from our cultural identity and my duty is to do it entirely and completely.

We need to foster a deeper understanding of other cultures and to strengthen the ability to overcome challenging situations when travelling abroad.

We need awareness about non spoken cultural elements in communication that may create relevant obstacles even between people fluently using the same language.

If learning a language is also learning about a different culture and frame of mind, learning different varieties of English expands your horizon not only linguistically, but also culturally.

We are all citizens of the world and we daily get in touch with different cultures, traditions and habits and need to know as more as possible different lifestyles in order to create a sense of community.

4.5 Students' perceptions of ELF

The survey directly addressed teachers of English working in Italian schools but the survey, at the same time, shed some light on how Italian students would perceive a WE and ELF-oriented teaching programme in their classrooms. Teachers claimed that students seem to be aware of the existence of different WEs and ELF, sometimes more than the teachers are. That is why the last two questions shifted the focus of the survey from what 'teachers' think about different WEs and ELF to how 'students' would perceive a WE and ELF-oriented pedagogy.

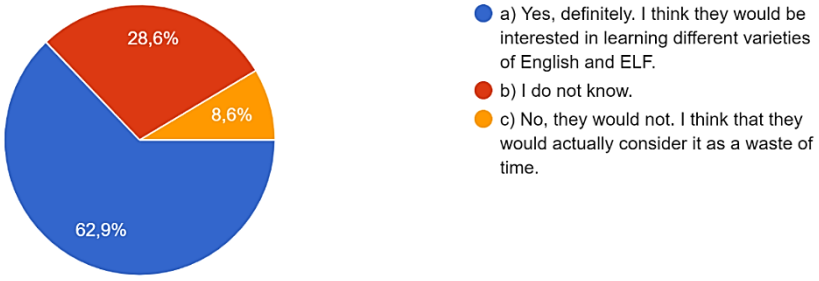

Fig. 4.5.1 Q.20: "Do you think students would be interested in learning (about) ELF?"

62.9% of teachers claimed that their students would be interested in learning different varieties of English and English as a Lingua Franca. As previous studies have shown, there is much evidence now that students have positive attitudes towards WE and ELF-oriented programmes. "(He and Zhang 2010; Tomak 2011; Cogo & Dewey 2012) showed high levels of tolerance for NN (Non-Native) accents of English, in as far as non-native

accents facilitate communication." (De Bartolo 2018, p. 159). In the following question (Q.21) teachers explained the reasons of this choice.

Many teachers claimed that students are normally interested in and curious about '*real life situations*' where a language is normally adopted '*as a means of communication*'. ELF, in this sense, represents a '*real language and not only the language of literature*'. Learning (about) ELF would be '*useful for their future job*' because '*it would enlarge […] opportunities*'.

> Most students are interested in using English to communicate rather than learning the R.P. pronunciation or all the rules of the standard language.

> Students generally want to learn English especially because they will be able to speak to both English speaking people and people from different countries who speak a neutral English and/or English as a foreign language.

> English enlarges opportunities especially if students intend to continue their studies abroad or work abroad, not necessarily in an English-speaking country but one where the first language has not been studied by [them] (e.g. Finland, Japan).

Other teachers maintained that students would benefit from an ELF-oriented teaching programme more because this would have the potential to '*widen their cultural horizons, deepening [their] knowledge, skills, and motivation in relation to their future perspectives*'. '*Young people are generally curious and open-minded*', and especially students of English '*are very curious about people who speak different languages from theirs*'. Therefore students '*might find it interesting to know that there are many different ways to speak English and that each way reflects a different culture*.' '*Comparing differences is always motivating [for them]*', if one considers the fact that '*teenagers are generally proactive and open up to absorb knowledge at its wider range*'. In this case

students would be interested in learning ELF more for motivational and integrative purposes, rather than instrumental ones.

Many teachers who agreed with option 'a' recalled the fact that students would be interested in learning ELF because they '*are well aware of the existence of many varieties of English as well as of the role English has as a means of communication*.' Teachers claimed that '*given the spread of social networks and online games, students are already implementing a form of ELF*' and that ELF '*[i]s part of their daily communication because that is close to what they see and hear around them every day […] through songs, movies, TV programs*'. A teacher concluded that students '*are the new connected generation and […] they already belong to something wider than the here*'. Another teacher concluded, paradoxically, that given this situation '*students might not even be interested in learning its [ELF's] dynamics*'.

28.6% of teachers claimed that they did not know whether their students would be interested in learning different varieties of English and English as a Lingua Franca. In Q.21 they claimed that this would depend on the following factors:

> a) students' curiosity and motivation to learn foreign languages
> b) students' interest in learning English: 'I think in some types of school students are already struggling enough to learn English at a basic level. I believe teaching ELF should not regard learning about different grammatical and syntactic systems as it could generate more confusion'
> c) the type of school and the school's grade: 'according to me most of my students (scuola media) might not be aware of its [ELF] importance. Sometimes they are not that much interested; it depends on […] the age of the students. I've found older students are more eager to learn or discover these aspects of this ever-evolving language.'
> d) classrooms' internal compositions: 'In the same class you have students who would enjoy that a lot and others who would just sit through it. If the school gives the chance for advanced groups classes then ELF would certainly be on the curriculum.' – 'I think that

some students (the most motivated or those who like travelling or like the subject) would be really interested in learning different varieties of English. The problem is for those students who have difficulties in studying a foreign language, those who are not motivated or interested in learning English or have no self-esteem/self-confidence and find it too difficult to learn anything that implies flexibility and an open mind.'

e) teachers' attitude: 'it depends on how much the teacher is able to convey the fact that elf is strictly linked to the world outside, where they're going to work/study in the future and it gives added value to their curriculum […]'

f) how students' parents perceive ELF: '[…] Learning ELF would teach to the students that our world is rich of linguistic varieties as well as cultural varieties. Moreover, students are always interested in new and original topics. On the contrary, parents would probably prefer their children/sons/daughters to study standard English because they might think that it would be more useful for their job. So, as a teacher, I would be concerned about the parents' reactions.'

A teacher also claimed that…

…It would be really nice if students could "be interested" in something. They generally absorb what you give them, without asking themselves if they are interested or not. Maybe when they are older, in the fourth or fifth year of secondary high school, they could get interested, but not earlier. My students generally "like" subjects, and they do so because they like the teacher, but not because they are interested in the matter. Very few and really dedicated students tell you that they like a subject because they are "interested" in it. I was a substitute teacher for many years, and even the most brilliant fifth year Liceo students (those who got a 100 e lode at the final exam) started to love English because they liked my lessons, while they had been hating it till the year before with a different teacher, so can you say that they were interested in what I taught them? Or did they simply like me? Interest, I'm afraid, is something that comes with maturity. So, just to answer your question, I presume that students are too young to understand the advantages of

> learning ELF, they will probably realise them once they start working or using ELF as a tool to get things done.

8.6% of teachers claimed that their students would consider a WE and ELF-oriented teaching programme as a waste of a time. In Q.21 these teachers claimed that '*students are not interested in different varieties of English, at the moment, they do not care about what kind of English they are taught*' because they are not willing to '*have skills to communicate with foreign speakers*'.

Some teachers recognized the importance of including a WE and ELF-oriented perspective in their teaching practices by completing this questionnaire.

> The survey, [was] really eye-opening […], students need to be prepared for a world with hundreds of different Englishes and perhaps us teachers should realise this. English is a global language today. Pupils need to get used to understand a global English, which they're going to face in their future life, I had never thought of that.

> I will close with a personal experience. Looking for material about maths in English I came across some Indian sites and was confronted, in fact, with the reality of a different language than the one I teach. That made me think...and then your questionnaire came. What a coincidence!

> I think it is extremely important to give our students the biggest possible vision of foreign language showing and teaching them everything can be useful to better understand the world around them. If the language is the expression of people to communicate between them, if I really want to establish a feeling with the speaker, I must accept his way to communicate with us. Your survey opened up a whole new world.

5. Final results and conclusion

5.1 Final reflections emerging from the data

Before carrying out the survey two hypotheses were made. The final results are summarized in fig. 5.1.1.

> "a) Teachers' school types: it is expected that teachers working in second-grade secondary schools will have a more WE and ELF-oriented approach, since the aim of these teachers is normally to prepare students to tackle the world outside once they have finished school; it is expected that teachers working in first-grade secondary schools will reject some or all the challenges brought about by different WE and ELF approaches, and concentrate more on standard-oriented teaching.
> b) Teachers' teaching experience: it is expected that more experienced teachers who have worked in schools for many years (more than 20 years) will be more reluctant to include a WE and ELF-aware perspective in their teaching practices, and to promote standard-oriented teaching; less experienced teachers are, instead, expected to include a WE and ELF-aware perspective in their teaching practices and to move away from the concept of the standard." (chapter three p.73)

Q.4	75% of teachers who agreed had less than 20 years of experience	Hypothesis 'b' is wrong
Q.7	59% of teachers who disagreed were 1st-grade secondary school teachers	Hypothesis 'a' is right
	61% of teachers who disagreed were teachers with less than 11 years of experience	Hypothesis 'b' is wrong
Q.8	71% of teachers who selected 'option b'were 1st-grade secondary school teachers	Hypothesis 'a' is right
	54% of teachers who selected 'option b' were less experienced teachers.	Hypothesis 'b' is wrong
Q.10	71% of teachers who selected 'option b' were 2nd-grade secondary school teachers	Hypothesis 'a' is wrong
	65% of teachers who selected 'option b' were teachers with less than 20 years of experience	Hypothesis 'b' is wrong
Q.12	69% of teachers who were teaching ELF were 2nd-grade secondary school teachers	Hypothesis 'a' is right
	numbers of teaching time-frames were equally distributed	Hypothesis 'b' is wrong

Fig. 5.1.1 "Confirmation or rejection of hypotheses A and B"

Hypothesis 'a' was confirmed in 3 out of 4 cases (80%). Teachers working in second-grade secondary schools have a more WE and ELF-oriented approach than teachers working in first-grade secondary schools. Hypothesis 'b' was rejected in 5 cases out of 5

(100%). Teachers' teaching experience is not an important factor to take into consideration. Both less and more experienced teachers would include a WE and ELF-oriented approach in their teaching practices.

This means that a teacher with 5 years of experience who works in a second-grade secondary school is more likely to have a WE and ELF-oriented approach in their teaching practices than if they were working in a first-grade secondary school. The teacher can be the same person in both school types because the teacher's teaching experience is not a relevant aspect to take into consideration, as this study has shown. This would imply that there is something that compels the first-grade teachers to concentrate more on standard-oriented teaching. If first-grade secondary school teachers of this study had worked in second-grade secondary schools, they would probably have given different replies to many answers in this survey. The implementation of an ELF-oriented pedagogy does not depend on the teaching experience of the teacher, nor on their knowledge of and proficiency in English. It is the environment in which teachers teach that makes all the difference. It is the programmes that they have to follow that may change their perceptions of ELF.

The two different school types (first-grade and second-grade secondary schools) have different approaches to the learning of English. First-grade secondary schools aim at giving students only a basis of the English language, without focusing too much on particular aspects of the language. Second-grade secondary schools aim at giving students a more complete proficiency in English and for this reason they may also give space to other linguistic aspects that are usually neglected in first-grade secondary schools. This is why second-grade secondary schools are perceived as the ideal environments to promote ELF-oriented teaching programmes.

Furthermore, this study has shown that teachers perceive that only students in second-grade secondary schools are interested in learning different WEs and ELF. Teachers have pointed out that students in first-grade secondary schools would consider the English

language only ‘as a subject’ and that they do not *show* the same willingness to explore other aspects of the language that students in second-grade secondary school have. But this study has also revealed, at the same time, that teachers perceive that students of *both* first and second-grade secondary schools already know that there are different WEs and that English is spoken as a lingua franca. Therefore why are teachers of first-grade secondary schools not including some elements of different WEs and a general awareness of ELF in their teaching programmes? Why are only second-grade secondary schools perceived as the ideal environments to learn these? Further studies are needed in order to find an answer to these questions.

In Italy the most innovative aspects surrounding English language learning are relegated to the last school years of secondary schools, instead of being included in earlier school years. CLIL, for instance, is now implemented in most schools in Italy in the last school years of second-grade secondary schools. In technical institutes CLIL is implemented only in the last year of study (fifth year). It would make more sense if this programme were implemented from the first school years of secondary school or even from first-grade secondary schools. The earlier a student gets in contact with English being adopted as a vehicular language, the better they will be able to perform in ELF in the future.[21] It is possible that a programme such as ‘ELF awareness’ will be relegated in the same way to the last years of second-grade secondary schools if the Ministry of Education decided to include it in the curriculum. This is because the Ministry will probably not have the financial means to implement it in the first school years of second-grade secondary schools. This is exactly what happened with CLIL.

Even in first-grade secondary schools teachers could start to include some elements of different WEs in their programmes or at least to try to raise their students’ awareness about these. These activities should obviously be tailored to the capacities and needs of first-grade secondary school students, namely, students who will reach level A2 of the

[21] With the CLIL methodology any subject of the curriculum can be taught using a foreign language (e.g. teaching science in English). In this sense, the language that is adopted in these circumstances is a vehicular language and therefore a lingua franca.

CEFR at the end of their course of study. Since first-grade secondary school students are less experienced students, they could be involved in less demanding activities.

For example, a teacher could ask their students to create a poster about different WEs and hang it in the classroom. Students are then supposed to fill it in with words and expressions of different WEs that they may hear or see both in and outside the classroom. In another activity around the awareness of the existence of different world Englishes the teacher could get their students to fill in a blank world map with flags of the countries in which English is spoken as a first language and/or as a second language. Students could then fill in another poster with the names of the different varieties of English that they have discovered while filling in the world map. In a subsequent activity the teacher could get students to listen to different speakers of different varieties of English. After that, they could work in groups to discover which variety of English goes with which flag (and hence which country) of the world map that they have previously filled in.

Further studies are needed to discover whether ELT programmes of first-grade secondary schools change the perception that teachers have in regard to English as a lingua franca. Further studies are also needed to understand whether programmes in first-grade secondary schools focus too much on giving students a basis of English rather than giving them real opportunities to explore different WEs and ELF in real classroom activities. Instead of relying only on national ELT programmes, sometimes it would also be helpful to have a conversation with the students in order to discover if and what they would change about the programmes that are offered to them. First-grade secondary school students may be more 'receptive' towards these aspects than we believe. Teachers should probably start to listen to them more.

5.2 Conclusions and future perspectives

The globalisation of the English language and the subsequent appearance of different WEs have had an impact on ELT programmes. The questions that have been put forward are: *what kind of English are students learning*?, *what kind of English are students instructed to hear and speak in their future*? The status of English has rapidly changed, but this has not been acknowledged in many programmes, which still promote standard-oriented teaching. Only now, thanks to recent studies on WEs and ELF, is it starting to be acknowledged by national programmes.

One of the main hindrances about the English foreign language learning system in Italy, like many countries in Europe, is that most ELT programmes are not updated to new findings on ELT methodologies. English language learning in Italy is implemented because its aim is to enable students to reach high proficiency in this language. The tendency, however, is to promote foreign language learning programmes that perceive students only as 'passive' receivers of the language rather than 'active' speakers. As seen in chapter one, in Italy the average level of proficiency in English is amongst the lowest in Europe. The promotion of standard-oriented teaching in Italy is still widespread. If teachers claim that this is not true, most of the time they can be proven wrong simply by asking them some questions about ELF.

Teachers should detach from standard-oriented teaching methodologies and concentrate more on ELF-oriented teaching, since this latter form of English reflects the reality in which English is adopted today. Teachers seem to have acknowledged this situation and they even perceive that students are more interested in learning a 'real type of English', which can be useful for communication purposes, and other varieties of English that they hear every day outside the formal environment of school.

The hindrance is that even if teachers tried to take the first steps to improve the situation, they would realise that this will not be a simple task. Currently there are few prescriptions and indications about ELF for teachers and few learning materials for students. ELF is

still a complex phenomenon that reflects or is a consequence of the complexity of our interconnected and globalised world. What teachers claim in the end is that, in this state of uncertainty, it is only possible to promote a programme that revolves around the concept of 'awareness' of ELF in the classrooms. But does 'being aware' of ELF mean 'being prepared' to tackle ELF?

Further studies are needed to understand whether the simple 'awareness' of different world Englishes and English lingua franca leads to the ability to discern different WEs and to speak English in contexts of ELF. Further studies are also needed to understand whether practicing ELF in the classroom actually leads to real linguistic improvements in contexts of English as a lingua franca. The distinction between 'awareness' and 'real practice' is fundamental in ESL (English second language) learning and so must be the case for ELF learning. A simple 'awareness' about ELF risks becoming a collection of 'secondary' and 'extra activities' that are relegated to the end of the school year. Most of the time these 'secondary activities' are actually the ones that appear to be more useful and relevant for students in contexts of ELF.

One day perhaps English will be taught in a different way. Detaching from certain 'rules' (e.g. as regards pronunciations) could be a starting point. Teachers could detach from a standard pronunciation and start to speak a 'neutral' kind of English. In this way, students would not link English with any particular variety anymore and they would start to consider English as a language that does not have a specific pronunciation. Further studies are also needed to discover whether teachers of English are willing and able to produce this type of pronunciation. This study has revealed that many teachers would like to detach from standard pronunciation, but they do not know 1) how they could change their accent; 2) if students would be more confused because of this; and 3) if this would really help to improve the situation. And they may be right because even if they tried to detach from standard pronunciation, students will continue to hear it from the learning devices that they have in their classrooms. Even if they tried to detach from certain aspects of British culture, students will find these everywhere in their books.

Teachers' attitudes could perhaps be improved starting from university courses. EFL teachers of the future need to be aware that there are different WEs and ELF, and they should also be aware that indications for WE and ELF-oriented teaching programmes still do not exist. Therefore, in the meanwhile teachers are required to be creative, dynamic and proactive to compensate for this lack. Teachers who already work in schools should be given the opportunity to participate in lifelong learning programmes that concentrate on the latest developments in the research into different WEs and ELF. The institutions should then be able to match this lifelong learning with a partial or complete revision of some of the Anglocentric learning materials adopted in the ELT teaching environment. Teachers' attitudes to different WEs and ELF can be improved, but there are certainly other aspects surrounding the whole ELT environment that need to be revised if an ELF-oriented pedagogy was to be implemented in Italian classrooms.

In addition to focusing on teachers it would also be appropriate to focus on students. Students, whom teachers see every day in front of their desk, will in fact, one day, be part of a society where English will be spoken as a lingua franca. It would be relevant to ask them how they perceive the current ELT teaching and if (and how) they would improve the situation. *Do students think that the English language that they hear in the classroom is similar to the one that they hear outside the classroom*? *Would they like to focus on other varieties of English? Do they think that the learning of English is useful if it is taught in this way or should it be modified somehow*? As claimed before, nowadays the English language is more present outside the classrooms than it is inside, so it appears legitimate to ask students their opinions on these aspects. Teachers may not have a clear perception of their students' interests and needs unless they are asked about this.

Teachers of this study have claimed that their students seem to be already aware that different WEs exist and that ELF is spoken in international contexts. The study has shown that, despite this, many teachers keep on teaching what they have always taught because they *think* that their students might not consider the learning of ELF as relevant and useful for their future. But why not simply ask students? Teachers have not yet developed the

ability to read their students' minds. If teachers asked them, perhaps they could find that students are instead very interested. Further studies are needed to investigate students' feelings and opinions about the learning of ELF in order to understand whether they would consider this type of learning as relevant or whether they feel that the current ELT environment offers them what they already need. Teachers cannot change certain aspects of the didactics only from above. They also need to listen to those to whom these programmes are addressed.

Teachers should also focus their attention on the methodology that is adopted to raise students' awareness about different WEs and ELF. Starting from what students know, instead of teaching these aspects 'from above', could help to increase students' motivation and interest in learning ELF. In other words, it would be useful, in the case of ELF-oriented teaching programmes, to implement a learner-centred curriculum in the classrooms that enables students to be the protagonists of the learning experience. When students are put in the centre of the learning experience they can give the best of themselves.

One example could be to ask them to bring materials about different WEs and ELF from home and organise a lesson around these (e.g. English songs of different WEs). Teachers could implement, for instance, some flipped classroom learning activities. These types of activities provide that the teacher divides the classroom into various groups. Each group is supposed to focalise on a particular variety of world English. After having collected data at home on a particular variety, each group of students will have to present it to the classroom and describe its phonological, grammatical and lexical features to their peers, replacing in this way the role of the teacher.

Teachers could also adopt some jigsaw techniques in their teaching practices when students work in groups. Thanks to this method students become dependent on each other to succeed because every group of students is formed by 'experts' in a certain matter. Once that all the groups are established, each member of each group specialises in one

different variety of WE. Each student is then supposed to meet the other 'experts' of the other groups who have specialised in their same variety and form in this way a new group of 'experts' in that variety of WE. After consulting with one another on that specific variety of WE each student would then return to their respective 'home' groups and share their knowledge of that specific variety of WE with the other members of their group. In this way, in one group of students there will be multiple 'experts' of different varieties of English. All students of each 'home' group can therefore learn some aspects of other WEs by simply asking the other members of their group. Cooperation also aims at enhancing students' interest and motivation to learn.

Another solution could be the implementation of role play activities. Roleplay simulations are learning activities in which some role-players (learners) improvise a part in a simulated scenario. These activities should be implemented after that the students have been taught how to discern different WEs and how ELF works. A student (or a group of students) could pretend to be a speaker from whichever variety of English and introduce themselves to the classroom as though they were a real speaker of that variety. Students can either stick to a script or totally improvise their part.

Students (or groups of students) of different varieties could then meet in a simulated 'dinner party' in the classroom and perform their variety of English with or without a script. When students perform roleplay simulations with different WEs in the classroom, they are unintentionally re-creating in these environments the exact same conditions that speakers of different WEs experience in contexts of English lingua franca. Students, in this way, are not just passive 'receivers' of an ELF-oriented teaching programme, but they themselves can actively practice what it means to speak English in ELF contexts. Furthermore, in this way students can also comprehend that communication strategies are essential in these contexts to make themselves understood.

There are different kinds of activities that could be implemented to make the learning of different WEs fun and entertaining. What needs to be done, then, is to study possible ways

to implement ELF-oriented activities in the learning environments and, above all, to see whether these activities are really effective or whether they do not improve students' final competence in ELF. These activities should be implemented both in first-grade and second-grade secondary schools. In this way, it will be possible to discover which activities work best in lower education and which work best in higher education.

The most relevant aspect that has to be confirmed, however, is whether these WE and ELF-oriented activities are really useful for students or whether they are not beneficial for them in the long run. To understand this, for instance, ELF researchers could compare an experimental group of students who have received a WE and ELF-oriented education with a control group of students who have received classical ELT teaching, and determine if there are differences between the two when they are immersed in contexts of English lingua franca. If there is no difference between the two groups, that would possibly mean that it may not be important to raise students' awareness of different WEs and ELF. If the experimental group performs better than the control group in these contexts, that would mean that it would be useful to raise students' awareness about these aspects.

On the whole, further studies are needed to give an answer to the following questions:

- could a WE and ELF-oriented teaching programme be implemented in first-grade secondary schools?
- what are students' real perceptions of different WEs and ELF?
- would students really benefit from a WE and ELF-oriented teaching programme?
- does the simple awareness of different WEs and ELF lead students to be proficient in contexts of English as a lingua franca?
- which activities could be really implemented in the classrooms? How should they be implemented?

ELF represents one of the most intriguing aspects that the English language learning environment has ever faced. Many studies on different WEs and ELF have been carried

out so far and many solutions for a possible implementation of these aspects in the English language learning environment have been found. However, national ELT programs still do not present a complete WE and ELF-oriented approach. In this state of uncertainty, ELF-aware teachers are expected at least to detach from 'theory' about world Englishes and English as a lingua franca and to try to improve things starting from their teaching practices in a more concrete way. ELF-aware teachers should therefore be considered as the new pioneers in this unknown field.

But ELF can become a great opportunity also for students. For the first time ever we are dealing with a situation that is well known among them. Consequently, students themselves could become part of future learning programmes on WEs and ELF as 'active learners' and as protagonists of the whole learning experience. In order to do this, however, teachers should also be able to promote an efficient teaching programme that revolves around the concepts of 'motivation', 'competence', and 'progress'. After all, "education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." (William Butler Yeats)

If we do not take all those who work within the English language learning environment into consideration - teachers, students and researchers alike - we will never be able to fully implement a WE and ELF-oriented teaching programme in the classrooms. The complexity of English lingua franca can be simplified only if a network of different people, resources and innovations are simultaneously present in these educational settings. Only thanks to this rich network of elements will the students of English be able to succeed with their overall proficiency in English in future contexts of ELF. Let us remember that the future can be an 'idea', a 'wish' or a 'state of mind' and it can even become reality if one finds the courage to get started.

"The most reliable way to predict the future is to create it."

–Abraham Lincoln

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Appendix

Survey Questionnaire

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

Welcome to the online site of the questionnaire “English as Lingua Franca (ELF)”.
My name is Matteo Pontello and I am a Laurea Magistrale student in Language Sciences at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. I am conducting a research questionnaire in 'English as a Lingua Franca' for my final Thesis.
The questionnaire is addressed to English teachers currently working in first-grade and second-grade Italian secondary schools. Through the questionnaire I would like to understand whether concepts such as “World Englishes” and “English as a Lingua Franca” are known among teachers and to get a bigger picture about the didactics of ELF in Italian classrooms. This will help me discover facts and aspects about the reality of ELF teaching in our school context.
The survey is divided into four sections with 21 items in total and it should only take about 15-20 minutes to complete. Your responses will be treated anonymously and used for research purposes only. After finishing the questionnaire, please remember to click on the "invia/send" button!
Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey!
I really appreciate your help.
*Campo obbligatorio

1. Teaching background

1) I currently teach in a... *
Contrassegna solo un ovale.
- ○ a) first-grade secondary school (scuola media).
- ○ b) second-grade secondary school (scuola superiore).

2) I have been teaching English for... *
Contrassegna solo un ovale.
- ○ a) less than 5 years.
- ○ b) 5 - 10 years.
- ○ c) 11 - 15 years.
- ○ d) 16 - 20 years.
- ○ e) more than 20 years.

2. World Englishes

3) When we talk about “World Englishes” we normally refer to...
(you can choose more than one answer) *
Seleziona tutte le voci applicabili.
- ○ a)...different English accents of English native speakers (e.g. British English, American English, Canadian English...).
- ○ b)...different varieties of English as a second language (e.g. Indian English, South African English, Singapore English...).
- ○ c)...different varieties of English as a foreign language (e.g. Italian English, Spanish English, German English...).

4) “Students in Italian schools should only be exposed to 'Standard English'”. Indicate to what extent you agree with the statement. *

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	completely disagree	disagree	agree	completely agree
answer	○	○	○	○

5) “Students in Italian schools should be exposed to different native-speaker varieties of English (British English, American English, Canadian English...)”. Indicate to what extent you agree with the statement. *

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	completely disagree	disagree	agree	completely agree
answer	○	○	○	○

6) “Students in Italian schools should be exposed to varieties of English as a second language (Indian English, South African English, Singapore English...)”. Indicate to what extent you agree with the statement. *

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	completely disagree	disagree	agree	completely agree
answer	○	○	○	○

7) “Students in Italian schools should be exposed to English spoken by non-native speakers (e.g. Italians, Spaniards, Germans, Russians...)”. Indicate to what extent you agree with the statement. *

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	completely disagree	disagree	agree	completely agree
answer	○	○	○	○

3. English as a Lingua Franca

8) What do you think should be the goal of English language education? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- ○ a) to ensure that students learn a 'standard' to communicate with native speakers.
- ○ b) to ensure that students learn a 'standard' to communicate with any person in the world.
- ○ c) to ensure that students are sufficiently proficient in English to communicate to any person in the world.

9) Have you ever heard the expression “English as a Lingua Franca”? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- ○ a) Yes, I have.
- ○ b) No, I have not.

10) What do you think it is the most suitable definition for 'English as a lingua franca'? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- ○ a) “Standard English which is adopted to communicate to English native speakers”.
- ○ b) “Standard English which is adopted between speakers who do not share any first language”.
- ○ c) “Neutral English which is adopted between speakers who do not share any first language”.

11) If you chose the third option (c) in the preceding question (10), could you give a short definition of “neutral English”?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4. Teaching ELF in schools

“In recent years, the term ‘English as a lingua franca’ (ELF) has emerged as a way of referring to communication in English between speakers with different first languages. Since roughly only one out of every four users of English in the world is a native speaker of the language (Crystal 2003), most ELF interactions probably take place among ‘non-native’ speakers of English. [...] What is distinctive about ELF is that, in most cases, it is ‘a ‘contact language’ between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication’ (Firth 1996: 240)” (Seidlhofer, 2005).
It would be interesting now to know what your position on ELF teaching is and how ELF teaching could be implemented in schools.

12) How important would it be for you to teach English as a Lingua franca (ELF)? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- ○ a) I think it is important to teach ELF and I am already doing this in my classrooms.
- ○ b) I think it would be important to teach ELF but I am not currently doing it in my classrooms.
- ○ c) I do not think it would be important. As a teacher I have already got many things to do.
- ○ d) I do not know.

13) I would implement ELF teaching in my classrooms...
(you can choose more than one answer) *

Seleziona tutte le voci applicabili.

- ○ a)...If I had more time during my school hours.
- ○ b)...If I had precise indications about how to do it.
- ○ c)...If I had specific books and materials to use.
- ○ Altro: _____

14) “Teaching ELF would mean exposing students to different English pronunciations”.
Indicate to what extent you agree with the statement. *
Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	completely disagree	disagree	agree	completely agree
answer	○	○	○	○

15) “Teaching ELF would mean teaching students to speak with different pronunciations in English”.
Indicate to what extent you agree with the statement. *
Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	completely disagree	disagree	agree	completely agree
answer	○	○	○	○

16) “Teaching ELF would mean raising students' awareness about different grammatical / syntactical aspects of different Englishes”.
Indicate to what extent you agree with the statement. *
Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	completely disagree	disagree	agree	completely agree
answer	○	○	○	○

17) “Teaching ELF would mean raising students' awareness about different lexical / vocabulary aspects of different Englishes”.
Indicate to what extent you agree with the statement. *
Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	completely disagree	disagree	agree	completely agree
answer	○	○	○	○

18) Teaching ELF normally means teaching general communication strategies. Could you indicate some strategies which might be useful in ELF contexts? *

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

19) “Teaching ELF would mean raising students' intercultural awareness”.
Indicate to what extent you agree with the statement. *
Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	completely disagree	disagree	agree	completely agree
answer	○	○	○	○

20) Do you think students would be interested in learning (about) ELF? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- ○ a) Yes, definitely. I think they would be interested in learning different varieties of English and ELF.
- ○ b) I do not know.
- ○ c) No, they would not. I think that they would actually consider it as a waste of time.

21) Whatever you answer was in the preceding question (20), could you explain a little bit more in detail the reason of your choice? *

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____