A Preliminary Exploration of Teachers' Attitudes towards Intercultural Communication through ELF

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Abstract   The present paper draws attention to the intercultural nature of English used as a lingua franca in flexible, dynamic and evolving communicative settings and consequently, to the need for language teachers to become aware of the multifaceted English world, where goals and purposes for using English are constantly challenged and re-created. Drawing on the connection between Intercultural communication research and ELF findings, the paper aims to provide empirically-grounded suggestions for language teachers in the hope to stimulate reflections on the role of intercultural aspects in classroom approaches and therefore, encourage to incorporate ELF-oriented pedagogies in well-established teaching practices. In light of a theoretical background, an exploration of language teachers' attitudes towards ELF and intercultural issues will be conducted and the initial results of a preliminary study presented. Finally, implications for language teaching will be offered.

Keywords   Intercultural communication. Intercultural competence. Intercultural speaker. English as a lingua franca. Teaching and learning.

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1   English as a Lingua Franca for Intercultural Communication: The Outline

The present paper centres around the concept that learning a language is fundamentally an intercultural process that takes the learners beyond their familiar settings and communicative practices and therefore entails a series of challenges to well-established beliefs and attitudes towards language teaching and learning. This is especially true for English, if we consider the highly diverse, variable, dynamic nature of interactions through English functioning as a lingua franca (ELF). Given that English as a lingua franca is not a variety of English but the most "common communicative scenario in which English occurs" (Baker 2015, 101), we need to acknowledge that English, however we define it, is the primary medium of intercultural communication globally. As a consequence, ELT needs to recognise the pluralism, negotiation and emergent nature of communicative practices which take place when English is used as a lingua franca in intercultural communicative contexts and therefore equip language learners with the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes for successful intercultural communication through ELF (Baker 2015, 173-5).

The present paper highlights the need for language teachers to become aware firstly, that English is a global lingua franca for intercultural communication, and secondly, to integrate and incorporate, in their own specific contexts and for their own purposes, the findings deriving form ELF (Jenkins, Cogo, Dewey 2011; Seidlhofer 2011; Jenkins 2012) and Intercultural communication empirical research. Learners need to be taught, along with linguistic forms, how to adapt and negotiate their communicative exchanges for intercultural communication.

Firstly, a theoretical perspective to Intercultural communication will be provided along with an overview of intercultural communicative competence in the light of prominent studies in the field. The need to develop intercultural awareness and intercultural skills among second language learners will be drawn attention to. Therefore, implications for language teaching will be highlighted and the initial results of a preliminary empirical study, which explores teachers' attitudes towards intercultural communication and ELF, will be presented.

2   Defining Intercultural Communication Through ELF: Theoretical Background

ELF communication is clearly a form of intercultural communication, as a number of ELF scholars have emphasized. Jenkins (2014, 26) claims that "ELF is about intercultural communication in the

broadest sense, and this means mainly NNES-NNES interactions... intercultural communication skills and strategies are paramount". Similarly Cogo, Dewey (2012, 26) assert that "the type of research we undertake is intercultural in nature, in that it concerns communication that takes place among speakers from various linguacultural backgrounds". Mauranen (2012, 243) points out that "as ELF gains ground in international communication, the intercultural perspective comes increasingly to the fore" and Baker (2015, 101) sees ELF as "the most common scenario for intercultural communication". This is not to claim that intercultural communication through ELF is unique compared to other forms of intercultural communication, (House 2009; Firth 2009) or that it occurs more frequently than all other forms of intercultural communication. However, as Baker (2015, 33) asserts, given the unprecedented extent of the global spread of English, intercultural communication is more likely to occur through English being used as a lingua franca than in any other language used as a lingua franca.

In the field of applied linguistics, two influential perspectives in the development of intercultural communication are intercultural pragmatics and discourse analysis. Research in intercultural pragmatics has examined differences in pragmatic strategies and speech acts between groups from different cultures and how these differences are negotiated in intercultural communication (Blum-Kulka, Olshtain 1984; Spenser-Oatey 2008). Accommodation theory has been a central area within pragmatics which has investigated how participants in interaction adjust their speech to produce better comprehension in their interlocutors (Giles 2009). Discourse studies, on the other hand, have used a series of approaches to the study of intercultural communication. Gumperz (1982; 1992; 2001) has focused on interactional sociolinguistics and has examined diverse interpretations of the contextual factors referred to in interaction along with misunderstandings between different cultural groups. Scollon, Scollon (2001, 2012) examine communication between different discourse communities and their related discourse systems (see also Kramsch 1998). They mark a crucial point in the approach to intercultural communication. While previous approaches had focused on what can be defined as cross-cultural communication studies, in which distinct cultures are compared with each other, Scollon and Scollon use the term intercultural communication "to signal the study of cultural or other groups in interaction with each other" (2001, 539). Looking at more recent approaches into intercultural communication studies, we notice a move away from describing and comparing cultures as "bounded, fixed entities" (see Baker 2015, 20) to a more critical and dynamic approach which questions the relevance of "a priori categorization and cultural boundaries" (Baker 2015, 22) and shifts the attention to the study of cultural groups in interaction with each other.

It is this particular approach which shares similarities with ELF studies which focus on English that emerges from interactions and therefore its dynamic, negotiable and changeable nature which is central in both intercultural communication and ELF. A comprehensive survey of intercultural communication research is beyond the scope of this paper, however, some conceptual frames are necessary in order to contextualize the emergence of ELF studies within the field of Intercultural communication.

One approach to Intercultural communication which is particularly relevant to ELF theories and principles is the one of "hybridity", "liminality" and "transcultural flows" (in Baker 2015, 28). Intercultural communication scholars (Kramsch 1993; Rampton 1995; Brumfit 2006) suggest that L2 learning and use is necessarily "a liminal process that brings L2 users into new areas, in which languages and their cultural codes are unique to each individual and communicative encounter" (Baker 2015, 29). Moreover, in intercultural communication is not often easy to identify which culture or language we are between or clear-cut distinctions between languages and cultures. More than between cultures, we probably need to understand interactions that cut across cultures. "One does not have to be in-between. People have the power be completely several things at once" (Holliday 2011, 165). This is particularly true of intercultural communication through ELF where the idea of "transnational" and "transcultural flows" expresses the extent of hybridity, fluidity and adaptation which ELF communication entails. According to this theory, cultural and linguistic practices are in a constant "flow", moving from one context to another, cutting across and through nationally-defined cultures and drawing on multiple linguistic and cultural resources which are constantly adapted and changed in the process (Risager 2006, 2007; Pennycook 2007). Canagarajah (2005, 2007, 2013) theorizes a vision of languages and cultures as hybrid and de-territorialised with constant movement between different local and global communities. He highlights the relevance of "translocal" spaces and "translingual" practices (2013, 19) which characterize plurilingual communicative practices. In these contexts, norms of communication are not well-defined and established, rather they are open to change, negotiation and mediation (Mori 2003; Higgins 2007; Young, Sercombe 2010; Zhu 2010, 2011, 2014). "The skill that is most valued in these spaces is the ability to shuttle across norms. The informants accommodate the different norms of English that people bring from different places to the translocal space" (Canagarajah 2013, 163). Thus, the concept of 'translingual' and 'transcultural flows' as explored in intercultural communication studies is strictly linked to the concept of fluidity, adaptation and change that is present in ELF communication (see Dewey 2007; Baker 2009; Jenkins, Cogo, Dewey 2011; Baird, Baker, Kitazawa 2014). ELF research has focused on in-

tercultural interactions and in common with intercultural communication studies, has been interested in identifying the elements that lead to successful intercultural communication. Negotiation is considered as the key element to reach mutual understanding, it is "the very mechanism that enables participants in intercultural and lingua franca communication to employ, mobilise or manipulate diverse resources to achieve their goals of interaction" (Zhu 2015, 2).

3 Intercultural Competence and Intercultural Speakers

Therefore, we need to understand how participants manage fluidity and complexity in intercultural interactions which occur when English is used as a lingua franca. If we consider, as suggested by ELF scholars, that most intercultural interactions are successful, what skills, knowledge and competences are employed or need to be developed to achieve communicative goals? In order to address this issue, we now turn to the concept of Intercultural communicative competence. The purpose is to reflect on the possibility of enhancing intercultural communicative skills in teachers and learners. In particular, the extent to which ESL teachers and learners are aware of what happens in the wider world, the attitudes and knowledge needed in intercultural communicative contexts and their willingness to explore such awareness further. This latter point will be better explored through the study presented in the next section.

The argument raised is that successful intercultural communication is not only about mastering linguistic forms, rather it involves many other aspects of communication that need to be addressed. Intercultural communicative competence has been described as a development of communicative competence which recognises the intercultural nature of second language use and the less central role of the monolingual native speaker in interaction. Cook's (2002, 2005, 2012) notion of multi-competence and focus on multilingual language users is particularly relevant. She describes "multi-competence" as "knowledge of more than one language in the same mind" (2002, 10), consequently, the monolingual, native speaker competence becomes irrelevant while the successful L2 user gains attention. Similarly, Leung (2005) and Hall (2013), among others, are critical of monolingual native norms and competences and argue a re-definition of the principles of successful competence.

Byram's work (1997, 2008, 2012a, 2012b), among other scholars (Roberts et al. 2001; Byram, Grundy 2003; Alred, Byram, Fleming 2006; Feng, Byram, Fleming 2009), provides a very comprehensive account of intercultural communicative competence as related to second language learning. Byram (2012a) delineates the concept of "in-

tercultural speaker" as the model for successful intercultural communication and foreign language education. Byram's ICC model (see Byram 1997, 73) highlights the need to understand the "multi-voiced nature of culture" in intercultural interaction and the importance of interpretation, negotiation and mediation in communicative exchanges. Similarly, Canagarajah (2013, 173) focuses on "performative competence", a competence which is not related to specific languages, rather it integrates a number of repertoires of language resources that are employed appropriately. In his view, "translinguals have the ability to align diverse semiotic resources to create meaning and achieve communicative success when words in isolation are inadequate and homogeneous norms are not available in contact zones" (2013, 174).

The notion of intercultural communicative competence outlined above leads to a reflection on what knowledge and skills "intercultural speakers" need to possess. In this light, the prevalence of communicative strategies observed in ELF empirical studies suggest that the adoption of communicative techniques among "intercultural speakers" may be effective to achieve communicative goals. One of the features of ELF communication, which has been present in the early studies up until recent ones, is the low degree of non-understanding which emerges in most of the empirical data (Seidlhofer, Widdowson 2009; Jenkins, Cogo, Dewey 2011). This has been considered as a result of mutual cooperation among participants which actively work together to ensure comprehension through the use of a range of interactional strategies. These strategies include modifying and adjusting pronunciation and language to each other (Cogo, Dewey 2006, 2012; Cogo 2009; Hulmbauer 2009; Kaur 2009; Seidlhofer, Widdowson 2009). When non-understanding is signalled in interaction, strategies such as clarification, self-repair, repetition, reformulation are typically employed (Jenkins, Cogo, Dewey 2011; Seidlhofer 2011; Cogo, Dewey 2012), moreover, pre-emptive strategies (Kaur 2009) where participants anticipate non-understanding and therefore reduce the risk of communicative problems, are also common in the data. Other strategies used to establish shared understanding include supportive turn-taking, simultaneous speech and utterance completions (Pullin Stark 2009; Kaur 2011; Wolfartsberger 2011). Finally, code-switching and creative use of shared resources, such as idioms, have also been part of successful communicative strategies (Hulmbauer 2009; Seidlhofer, Widdowson 2009; Seidlhofer 2011; Pitzl 2012). Encouraging understanding of such strategies in the classroom may be a first step in the process of becoming intercultural speakers and developing that intercultural competence necessary to function effectively in highly diverse contexts. This point will be addressed in the following section.

4　Intercultural Communication and Language Teaching: A Case-Study

4.1　Research Design

As it was already emphasized, learning a second language needs to be viewed as an "intercultural experience" (Zhu 2014, 4), the "addition of a new language to a person's linguistic repertoire positions that person differently in relation to the world in which they live" (Liddicoat, Scarino 2013, 6). This perspective to language learning is particularly relevant for learners of English if we consider that the majority of intercultural interactions occur in flexible and changing contexts where English is used as a lingua franca. Preparing learners for this fluidity and complexity in language learning is absolutely necessary, but this can be done only if language teachers are likely to engage with new approaches and different perspectives to language learning. It is to an investigation of teachers' attitudes and beliefs, in relation to an ELF and Intercultural-aware perspective, that we now turn to. The long-term aim is to stimulate teachers to integrate insights from intercultural communication and ELF research (Baker 2012a, 2012b, 2012c) into their daily pedagogical activities with the hope to expand learners' competences and knowledge beyond well-established learning beliefs and practices. In order to do this, it was decided to design the following questionnaire firstly to investigate teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards these issues.

Nonetheless, it should be clarified that the suggestions offered are not presented as an ELF pedagogy, neither the aim is to give teachers prescriptions on how to teach and what to teach. Rather, it is an attempt to offer a wider and more realistic perspective into language teaching and learning drawing on empirical research and theoretical studies, which have increasingly emphasized the implications of intercultural aspects for language teaching. These suggestions may be adopted and adapted differently according to how relevant they might be in specific teaching contexts and for different purposes.

4.2　Research Methodology

4.2.1　Research Approach and Instruments

An online questionnaire was composed and used as a research instrument to collect quantitative data from the participants. Questionnaires are an efficient means of collecting factual information as well as attitudinal and behavioural information (Dornyei 2007). The questionnaire was based on a study by Inal and Ozdemir (2015,

142) and adapted from their research on teachers' beliefs about ELF issues in Turkey. Moreover, questions 3, 4 and 9 are adapted from Sougari and Faltzi (2015, 161) on Greek pre-service teachers' beliefs about ELF-related issues.

The questionnaires is anonymous and consists of two sections. The first part is a preliminary/general information section aimed at identifying teachers' language background and experiences. Participants were required to respond to Yes/No questions. In the specific, whether they are native or non-native English speaking teachers; secondly, they were asked to answer to the following: Have you ever visited an English speaking country?; Do you have friends or relatives who live abroad?; Do you contact them often?; Do you use English in your exchanges with them? Moreover, they were required to state how many years they have taught English for.

The second section of the questionnaire includes 13 items aimed at identifying teachers' attitudes towards intercultural communication through English, their awareness of English as a global lingua franca and their perceptions towards Intercultural issues and ELT materials and approaches. Respondents were required to record their responses on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree, as shown below.

Now for each of the following 13 statements circle one number on a scale from 1 to 5 to express your beliefs.
1=strongly disagree 2=disagree 3=neither agree nor disagree 4=agree 5=strongly agree

1. Students need to learn English to communicate with Native Speakers of English.
   1   2   3   4   5
2. Students need to learn English to communicate with Non-native Speakers of English.
3. Any linguistic use that does not conform to Standard English is defective and incorrect.
4. Any linguistic use that does not conform to Standard English but makes sense is acceptable.
5. In teaching English, developing students' proficiency on Standard British/American grammar forms is of crucial importance.
6. In teaching English, the focus on intelligibility (e.g. being able to understand each other) is of crucial importance.
7. When teaching English, learners' awareness of different varieties of English (e.g. Indian English, Singapore English, African English and so on) should be raised.
8. Teachers of English should have a Standard native-speaker accent.
9. It is important for the learners of English to develop a native-like accent.
10. The use of accommodation strategies (confirmation checks, clarification requests, paraphrasing, repetitions, code-mixing and so on) in class, is likely to enhance students' comprehension.
11. ELT Education programs should emphasize British/American Standard English.
12. ELT Education programs should familiarize English language teachers with different varieties of English.
13. Classroom materials/textbooks should include cultural aspects/topics other than Standard British or American.

4.2.2 Participants and Setting

The study took place over about 3 months, from September 2018 to December 2018. An online link to the survey was sent via email to school principals in different secondary school institutions along with an attached letter explaining the goals and purposes of the study. The principals were required to forward the link to the English language teachers working in that particular institution. Schools were all located in the Calabria area, moreover the link was sent to University English teachers working at the Language Centre of the University of Calabria. The objective was to reach a variety of language teachers working in different contexts and with different backgrounds and educational experiences. The survey meant to ensure anonymity so that teachers did not feel any pressure when reporting their answers. Overall, 71 teachers had completed the online questionnaire when it was decided to analyse participants' responses in the period of December 2018/January 2019. Among them, 35 stated to be Native English speaking teachers and 36 Non-native. Almost everyone, 70 out of 71 respondents, stated to have visited an English speaking country, 50 of them have taught English for over 16 years, 10 of them stated to have a teaching experience between 4 and 9 years and 11 teachers stated to have between 10 and 15 years of experience. Moreover, 67 out of 71 respondents declared to have friends or relatives who live abroad, 51 teachers stated to contact them often and 57 use English when communicating with them. This general information section was designed to identify a possible correlation between teachers' intercultural experiences as reported in the first section of the questionnaire and their beliefs/attitudes as shown in the second section. The purpose was to understand whether or not teachers' intercultural experiences may lead to positive perceptions as regards to an intercultural/ELF-aware pedagogy. A statistical measure, one-way ANOVA, was employed for this particular purpose, as shown in the analysis section.

4.2.3 Survey Design

As regards the survey design, it has to be highlighted that the first two items as well as items 8 and 9 were constructed to elicit teachers' beliefs related to the native/nonnative, standard/non-standard dichotomy as far as the role of the native speaker in language teaching and learning is concerned. As shown in previous research (see Jenkins 2007, 2015; Baker 2008, 2009) the native speaker is considered to be the ideal model to imitate and aim for. One of the aims, in the present study, was to investigate whether or not this belief was perceived by the teachers who participated in the study and whether a difference between native and non-native English speaking teach-

ers resulted in different beliefs, as it was assumed to be. Questions 3 and 5 especially were designed to investigate these points. A further but important issue regards learners' exposure to classroom materials and how teachers perceive and evaluate the input that inform classroom teaching in relation to an Intercultural and ELF-aware perception, as question 13 aims to address. The role of ELT in establishing priorities and giving prominence to some language varieties or cultural topics at the expense of others is an important point to consider as well as the extent to which learners' awareness of different varieties of English is accounted for in the classroom. Questions 7, 11 and 12, in particular, address these issues. Teachers' awareness of communication and meaning-negotiation strategies as well as the changeable nature of English in interaction are also investigated with the purpose to explore whether or not these strategies may be incorporated in regular teaching approaches and to what extent they may be applied inside and outside the language class, as questions 10 and 4 draw attention to. Finally, the role of intelligibility, which is a key feature in ELF research, is highlighted in question 6.

4.3 Data Analysis and Discussion

Data analysis of the questionnaire involved descriptive statistics including tabulations of responses, percentages and mean scores. SPSS version 25 was used for all statistical processing. Before summarizing the findings from the study and considering some of the implications, the limitations of the study need to be mentioned. Firstly, no attempts at generalizations can be made. The purpose of the study was not to provide a teaching methodology for replication but rather to demonstrate that the theories and research discussed in the paper could be adapted and applied to ELT classrooms, on the basis of specific purposes and in different settings. Secondly, the limitations of the data collected, which has relied on quantitative analysis only, should be recognized. For this reason, it was decided, for the follow-up of the study, to adopt a mixed-methods approach, making also use of qualitative data through participants' interviews and triangulation of different data sources (Dornyei 2007). This would allow to get a more in depth data set from interviews with a smaller number of participants who could comment and expand on areas/questions that were of interest to them and maybe enable themes and issues, that had not been previously considered, to emerge from the responses. Furthermore, a range of perspectives on the participants' attitudes and experiences could be gained. However, since the qualitative data are still in the initial phase, only the first stage of the study will be presented and discussed.

The results of the survey seem to show overall positive attitudes towards intercultural awareness, which may entail willingness to en-

gage with it in the classroom. Question 13, in particular, *Classroom materials/textbooks should include cultural aspects/topics other than Standard British or American*; question 12, *ELT Education programs should familiarize English language teachers with different varieties of English*; question 7, *When teaching English, learners' awareness of different varieties of English (e.g. Indian English, Singapore English, African English and so on) should be raised*, suggest, as far as results, that the teachers surveyed are likely to acknowledge and embrace intercultural aspects in classroom discourse as tables 1 and 2 below show. For question 13, 53.5% strongly agree and 31% agree; question 12 shows 49.3% who agree and 38% who strongly agree; question 7, though slightly lower, emphasizes a positive result from an intercultural-aware perspective, with 47.9% of respondents who agree and 28.2% who strongly agree.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics calculated for the 13 statements in the questionnaire

	N.	Means	Std. Deviation	Variance	Range	Minimum	Maximum
Q.1	71	4.08	0.996	0.993	4	1	5
Q.2	71	4.03	0.985	0.971	4	1	5
Q.3	71	2.25	0.906	0.821	4	1	5
Q.4	71	3.68	0.770	0.594	4	1	5
Q.5	71	3.72	0.913	0.834	4	1	5
Q.6	71	4.49	0.715	0.511	3	2	5
Q.7	71	3.99	0.837	0.700	3	2	5
Q.8	71	2.99	1.225	1.500	4	1	5
Q.9	71	3.06	1.132	1.282	4	1	5
Q.10	71	4.24	0.765	0.585	4	1	5
Q.11	71	3.44	0.937	0.878	4	1	5
Q.12	71	4.23	0.741	0.548	3	2	5
Q.13	71	4.35	0.812	0.660	3	2	5

Table 2 Percentages of teachers' attitudes

|	Q.1	Q.2	Q.3	Q.4	Q.5	Q.6	Q.7	Q.8	Q.9	Q.10	Q.11	Q.12	Q.13
1 = strongly disagree	1.4	2.8	22.5	1.4	1.4			12.7	8.5	1.4	2.8		
2 = disagree	5.6	2.8	36.6	2.8	8.5	2.8	5.6	25.4	25.4	1.4	8.5	2.8	2.8
3 = neither agree nor disagree	19.7	21.1	35.2	33.8	25.4	4.2	18.3	23.9	28.2	7.0	45.1	9.9	12.7
4 = agree	29.6	35.2	4.2	50.7	46.5	33.8	47.9	26.8	28.2	52.1	29.6	49.3	31.0
5 = strongly agree	43.7	38.0	1.4	11.3	18.3	59.2	28.2	11.3	9.9	38.0	14.1	38.0	53.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
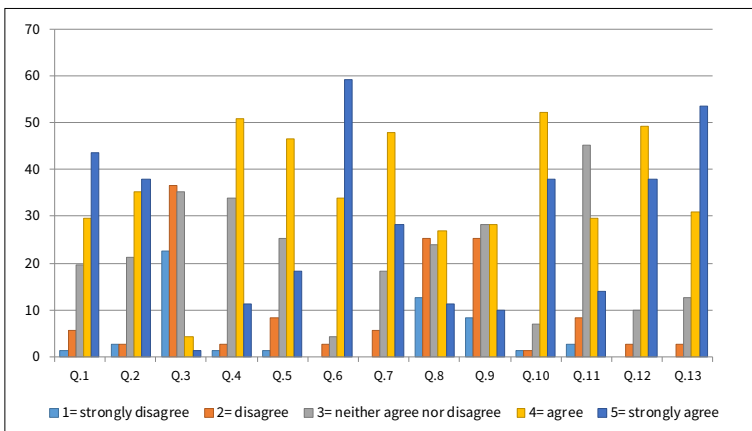
Figure 1 Distribution of the overall scores

It is interesting to observe, in my view, the results for question 10, *The use of accommodation strategies (confirmation checks, clarification requests, paraphrasing, repetitions, code-mixing and so on) in class, is likely to enhance students' comprehension*. This question highlights the use of negotiation as a key element for successful intercultural communication and is meant to investigate teachers' knowledge and appreciation of typical ELF features, such as comprehension checks, clarification requests and so on (see Dewey 2007; Baker 2009; Jenkins, Cogo, Dewey 2011). This question shows 52.1% of agreement and 38% of strong agreement, thus suggesting that the teachers who participated in the study may be willing to experiment with these features on a practical level in class. A similar argument concerns question 6, *In teaching English, the focus on intelligibility (e.g. being able to understand each other) is of crucial importance.* Question 6 got the highest percentage in terms of agreement. As table 2 above shows, 59.2% of the respondents strongly agree with the statement and another 33.8% agree with it, with a mean score of 4.49 as shown in table 1. This question attempts to explore the extent to which teachers are aware of the role of intelligibility in enhancing communicative processes. Raising awareness that learning English entails much more than just a set of well-defined grammar rules and activities may enable learners become critical thinkers, evaluate and challenge the input provided in class, in other words, the reasons for learning English. Focusing on intelligibility as a priority in the language classroom means recognizing that adaptation, negotiation and mediation are essential skills to be encouraged in order to achieve mutual understanding. Learning English has to be acknowledged as an intercultural process that leads learners to the "translocal space"

(Canagarajah 2013, 163) where boundaries are blurred and norms are not well-defined. Nonetheless, it is a process that may empower both teachers and learners become agents of change, challenge traditional learning goals and priorities and become protagonists of their learning process. The possibility of recognizing that English is constantly adapted, negotiated and recreated during interaction (Risager 2007; Pennycook 2007; Canagarajah 2013) is entailed also in question 4, *Any linguistic use that does not conform to Standard English but makes sense is acceptable*. This result seems to highlight a positive attitude, with 50.7% of agreement and 11.3% of strong agreement. It is also significant, in this perspective, that question 3, *Any linguistic use that does not conform to Standard English is defective and incorrect*, showed the lowest percentage; 36.6% of respondents disagreed and 22.5% strongly disagreed, with a mean score of 2.25 as seen in table 1. These results possibly suggest that teachers may be ready to question the relevance of fixed, well-established native speaker forms and accept the intercultural, dynamic, changeable nature of English which is now increasingly used as a lingua franca for intercultural communication.

However, if on the one hand, teachers appear willing to engage with intercultural aspects in language teaching, on the other, the need to develop students' proficiency on native standard forms is still an important goal, as some results indicate. The possibility to incorporate intercultural issues in pedagogical approaches and materials seems, in some questions, to be balanced by positive attitudes towards well-established teaching practices which prioritize native British and American English, as the percentages for question 5 show. In this particular question, *In teaching English, developing students' proficiency on Standard British/American grammar forms is of crucial importance*, 46.5% agree and 18.3% strongly agree, while 25.4% are undecided. Question 11, *ELT Education programs should emphasize British/American Standard English*, presents 45.1% of respondents who are undecided and only 11.3% (ranges 1 and 2) disagree with this. Questions 8, *Teachers of English should have a Standard native-speaker accent* and question 9, *It is important for the learners of English to develop a native-like accent*, do not seem to manifest definite views as the percentages of agreement and disagreement are very similar, with question 9 slightly higher on the agreement scale. It is especially interesting to draw attention to the attitudes these teachers manifest towards the purposes for learning English. Questions 1 and 2 show almost the same percentages, with mean scores respectively of 4.08 and 4.03, which possibly suggest that there is no clear-cut distinction between the two learning goals. Learning English to communicate with Non-Native speakers is definitely a goal to be pursued as well as learning English to communicate with its Native speakers. They are both on the same level. Overall, these last responses do not

seem to show well-defined attitudes in relation to the native/non-native speaker dichotomy and its possible impact in language teaching approaches, as it was originally assumed when designing the survey.

Further to the initial analysis, one-way ANOVA was employed to examine the variability of the scores and identify a possible correlation existing between teachers' intercultural experiences as reported in the first section of the questionnaire and their attitudes as shown in the second section. One-way ANOVA was used to find out effects of the independent variables on each dependent variable (items 1-13). The level of significance was set at .05. The four independent variables considered were 1. Have you ever visited any English-speaking country?; 2. Do you have friends/relatives who live abroad?; 3. Do you contact them often?; 4. Do you use English in your exchanges with them? The analysis shows that there is no significant difference between independent variables 3 and 4 and each of the 13 items. However, a significant difference ($p<.05$) is revealed only in the case of associating independent variable 1, Have you ever visited any English-speaking country? with question 13, *Classroom materials/textbooks should include cultural aspects/topics other than Standard British or American* ($p=.003$) and independent variable 2, Do you have friends/relatives who live abroad? with question 2, *I need to learn English to communicate with Non-native speakers of English* ($p=.007$), as shown in tables 3 and 4 below. These results, though tentative, suggest that, in this particular case-study, teachers' experiences and contact with people from other countries may facilitate intercultural awareness and possibly an inclination towards ELF-aware perspectives, in particular, in terms of recognizing the need to integrate classroom materials with intercultural topics and the global character of English as lingua franca for intercultural communication. One way ANOVA was also used to identify scores variability across native and non-native English speaking teachers, in particular, to explore a possible correlation between being a native/non-native teacher and attitudes towards ELF/intercultural perceptions. However, contrary to initial assumptions, no significant differences are revealed by the analysis. This possibly shows that being native or non-native English speaking teachers does not affect their perceptions and attitudes towards intercultural issues, at least for the teachers who participated in the study.

Table 3 Correlation between teachers' intercultural experiences and dependent variables

		SUM OF SQUARES	DF	MEAN SQUARE	F	SIG.
Classroom materials/textbooks should include cultural aspects/ topics other than Standard British or American. * Have you ever visited an English speaking country?	Between groups	5.611	1	5.611	9.540	.003
	Within groups	40.586	69	.588		
	Total	46.197	70			

Table 4 Correlation between teachers' contacts with intercultural speakers and dependent variables

		SUM OF SQUARES	DF	MEAN SQUARE	F	SIG.
Students need to learn English to communicate with Non-native Speakers of English. * Do you have friends/relatives who live abroad?	Between groups	6.925	1	6.925	7.831	.007
	Within groups	61.019	69	.884		
	Total	67.944	70			

In addition to the preceding analysis, it was decided to explore relationships between mean scores in two sample groups, teachers and students, in the attempt to gain further insight into teachers' and learners' attitudes. A previous study had been conducted at the University of Calabria in the academic year 2016-17 with the purpose to investigatelearners' attitudes towards ELF-related issues and intercultural awareness (see De Bartolo 2018). A 10 item questionnaire was administered to 120 undergraduate university students belonging to scientific degree courses at the University of Calabria. See table 5 below for descriptive statistics which includes exclusively the questions in the aforementioned study which were compared to the corresponding items discussed in the present paper.

Table 5 Descriptive statistics calculated for 6 of the 10 items in the questionnaire

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Means	Std. Deviations	Variance
QUESTION 1	119	3	2	5	4.27	.606	.368
QUESTION 2	119	4	1	5	3.87	1.013	1.026
QUESTION 4	120	4	1	5	3.08	.975	.951
QUESTION 5	120	3	2	5	4.03	.804	.646
QUESTION 6	120	3	2	5	4.19	.652	.425
QUESTION 7	120	2	3	5	4.36	.646	.417
Valid N (listwise)	118						

The same questions in both surveys were investigated. Being the sum of the samples considered larger than 100, a two tailed normal distribution Z was applied (H_0: $\mu_{1 = }\mu_2$, versus H_1: $\mu_1 \neq \mu_2$, $\alpha = 0.05$, $Z_{\alpha/2}$ = +/- 1.96) (Bohrnstedt, Knoke 1994) and statistically significant differences observed, as table 6 below shows.

The analysis was conducted only in relation to the following 6 questions: *Students need to learn English to communicate with Native Speakers of English* (Q1 in both sample groups); *Students need to learn English to communicate with Non-native Speakers of English* (Q2 in both sample groups); *In teaching English, developing students' proficiency on Standard British/American grammar forms is of crucial importance* (Q5 teachers/Q6 students); *In teaching English, the focus on intelligibility (e.g. being able to understand each other) is of crucial importance* (Q6 teachers/Q7 students), *When teaching English, learners' awareness of different varieties of English (e.g. Indian English, Singapore English, African English and so on) should be raised* (Q7 teachers/Q4 students); *Classroom materials/textbooks should include cultural aspects/topics other than Standard British or American* (Q13 teachers/Q5 students).

By looking at the data, no significant difference is found when comparing means for questions 1/1, 2/2, 6/7. On the contrary, a significant difference is found for questions 5/6, 7/4, 13/5. It is therefore observed that perceptions about the importance of different varieties of English in the classroom, as in question 7/4, *When teaching English, learners' awareness of different varieties of English (e.g. Indian English, Singapore English, African English and so on) should be raised*, appear to be stronger in the teachers' group compared to the students', as their mean scores are higher. More positive attitudes in the teachers' group are also observed in relation to question 13/5, *Classroom materials/textbooks should include cultural aspects/topics other than Standard British or American*, while in question 5/6, *In teaching English, developing students' proficiency on Standard British/American grammar forms is of crucial importance*, students scored higher than teachers, thus manifesting a stronger attitude as far as

the perceived importance of standard grammar forms is concerned, which possibly highlights that the learners surveyed prioritize the use of standard grammar in classroom learning.

Table 6 A two tailed normal distribution calculated for six corresponding items in two sample groups

Teachers N = 71	Students N = 120	Per α = 0.05, $Z_{α/2}$ = +/- 1.96	
Q.1	Q.1 N = 119	Z = -1.41	Accept H_0
Q.2	Q.2 N = 119	Z = 1.03	Accept H_0
Q.5	Q.6 N = 120	Z = -3.83	Reject H_0
Q.6	Q.7 N = 120	Z = 1.30	Accept H_0
Q.7	Q.4 N = 120	Z = 6.78	Reject H_0
Q.13	Q.5 N = 120	Z = 2.70	Reject H_0

4.4 Implications and Final Remarks

What emerges from the analysis, in my view, is that teachers may be eager to engage with an ELF/intercultural oriented perspective in their pedagogical practices, even more than students, in some cases and for the data set considered. Teachers may be open to change, variety, innovation and flexibility in terms of recognizing the transcultural nature of English. They may have acknowledged that English has increasingly become a language for intercultural communication. However, whether and to what extent they are ready to challenge established views and apply novelty and variety, in practical terms, is still to be investigated and clarified. These results may only suggest that with the appropriate training and with meaningful awareness-raising activities, traditional language activities may be transformed in ELF-oriented pedagogical activities which will better reflect the intercultural nature of English and the purposes for which English is used in the current multifaceted world. What is necessary, in my view, is a radical transformation of educational goals and priorities within the ELT industry itself, starting from a critical evaluation of how pedagogical materials and topics are approached and presented in ELT textbooks in relation to intercultural and ELF issues.

The engagement with the intercultural aspect in language learning appear in ELT at a superficial level. The ELT world remains largely untouched by theoretical developments and empirical studies which have drawn attention to the implications of using English as a global lingua franca on pedagogy (Jenkins 2000; Cogo, Dewey 2012; Mauranen 2012; Seidlhofer 2011; Mauranen, Ranta 2009). There still seems to be resistance to incorporate insights from ELF research into ELT pedagogy (Risager 2007; Sybing 2011; Sowden 2012), and even when the cultural and intercultural role is recognized, it is of-

ten relegated to a "fifth" and last skill, after the other four: listening, reading, writing and speaking, have been covered (Tomalin 2008). Apart from being limited and unsystematic, the treatment of intercultural topics in ELT is often un-critiqued and unchallenged (Baker 2015) with stereotyped images and simplistic representation of 'native' and 'non-native' characters and contexts (Jin, Cortazzi 1999; Vettorel 2010; Gray 2010). I believe that we do need to acknowledge that the majority of interactions through English, as ELF studies have demonstrated, occur among non-native speakers of English who can successfully communicate their message across. It is therefore essential to provide our learners with a realistic and meaningful communicative model and with the necessary competence to function in "plurilithic" and changing cultural contexts which, most of the time, are far removed from the "Anglo-centric" model teaching materials present. Encouraging and stimulating learners to become competent intercultural communicators who are able to use linguistic forms competently but also flexibly and appropriately to different purposes may be a more effective goal to pursue rather than trying to adhere to a fixed linguistic code and to an unattainable native speaker ideal. Together with this flexible use of linguistic forms, there needs to be an awareness of the meaning-making process in intercultural interaction along with communicative strategies. These include, as already mentioned, "accommodation, code-switching, repetition, pre-empting strategies (Jenkins, Cogo, Dewey 2011; Seidlhofer, Widdowson 2009) that may be presented in class as examples of communicative strategies to be employed in the world outside as a starting point for negotiating differences and creating mutual understanding. Online resources which offer a wide range of communicative intercultural contexts, are in this regard, a very useful tool to give practical demonstrations of possible communicative situations and how to approach real-life communication which involves negotiation, dynamism and challenge. This is not to suggest that linguistic forms should not be given importance to in language teaching, rather they should be presented as part of a communicative process to be adapted and modified in combination with other aspects of communication such as communicative strategies. What teachers may be able to do in class is developing learners' awareness of communicative resources they already have, encouraging learners to adapt and expand those resources, in order to communicate effectively (Widdowson 2003; Seidlhofer 2011). In other words, communication is to be viewed as a learning process that needs to be reflected upon, adjusted and possibly enriched with appropriate instruction.

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