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Identifying ELF programs in Italian University websites: what gaps need to be filled

Abstract: The present paper stems from an awareness that English has become the most widely used means of intercultural communication on a global scale. Therefore, intercultural communication is more likely to occur through English used as a lingua franca than in any other language used as a lingua franca. English has transcended boundaries and has allowed people from distant cultures to come closer and find common grounds. If, on the one hand, the rise of English has been criticized as a threat to minority languages and cultures, on the other, English has been the means by which people are connected across national and international borders. European Universities and University Language Centres are known to be multicultural environments that provide students with opportunities to familiarise with diverse cultural backgrounds and experience non-native English speech. If therefore, university staff and professionals engage regularly with a multilingual population, they have to be prepared to deal with and respond to their different needs. Within this framework, University degree programs need to be able to cope with a changing cultural and linguistic environment where multilingual speakers increasingly interact in English with other non-native English speakers. In the light of these considerations, this small case study intends to raise awareness of the need to integrate academic degree programs with courses which specifically address Intercultural Communication and English as a Lingua Franca. A sample of Italian university websites has been analysed with a view to identifying the extent to which the aforementioned issues are incorporated within the course programs observed. Preliminary results will be described and considerations suggested.

Keywords: English as a lingua franca; global English; intercultural communication; multilingual academic contexts

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1 Introduction

"One of the most remarkable sociocultural changes of the modern period, culminating in the late twentieth century, has been the global spread of the English language" (Schneider 2007: 1) which has become the most widely taught, read, and spoken language that the world has ever known (Crystal 2003; Graddol 1997; Kachru and Nelson 2001; McKay 2002, 2003). In the past few decades the spread of English across the globe has been enormous and increasing numbers of people use English everyday to communicate across national borders in business, commerce, international trade, the media as well as education at different levels (Crystal 2003). English has become the lingua franca for intercultural communication (IC) globally (Baker 2015; Cogo and Dewey 2012; Gimenez 2006; Gimenez et al. 2015; Jenkins 2012, 2014; Jenkins et al. 2011; Mauranen 2014; Seidlhofer 2011) and has allowed people from diverse cultures to find common grounds in communicative exchanges. Though a number of scholars have criticized the globalization of English which, they argue, has expanded at the expense of minority languages that have been marginalized and often lost (Kachru and Nelson 2011: 305; Pennycook 1994; Phillipson 1992: 17), the present paper will highlight the fact that as a lingua franca for IC, English has transcended boundaries, and has brought distant cultures closer to each other. This is not to say that it has a special status compared to other forms of IC (Firth 2009; House 2009). However, given the unprecedented role English has acquired, IC is more likely to occur through English used as a lingua franca than in any other language used as lingua franca (Baker 2015: 33). English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) has become the most widely used means of communication across diverse settings, "the most common communicative scenario in which English occurs" (Baker 2015: 101). In other words, the global spread of English has, on the one hand, enhanced encounters between diverse cultural identities, therefore enriching and expanding linguistic and cultural repertoires, on the other, it has encouraged the development of communication strategies "accommodation, code-switching, repetition, pre-empting strategies" (Jenkins et al. 2011; Seidlhofer and Widdowson 2009) which are exploited during interaction in order to achieve mutual understanding (Jenkins 2000, 2009, 2012; Matsuda 2012; McKay 2012).

In the light of these considerations, it is believed that Higher Education Institutions, in collaboration with University Language Centres, may have a crucial role in raising learners' awareness of what IC (Byram 2012a, 2012b) means in the global English world. English is not the language owned by its native speakers any longer, rather it is a flexible, dynamic and diverse means of communication that can bridge the gap between people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Cogo and

Dewey 2012; Mauranen 2012; Mauranen and Ranta 2009; Seidlhofer 2011). Therefore, it is suggested that academic institutions may have to further reflect on their organizational and didactic policy and integrate their course offers with study modules which take these aspects into serious consideration. The paper will analyse a sample of Italian university websites with the aim of identifying the extent to which ELF and IC-oriented issues are incorporated within undergraduate and/or postgraduate degree programs, in particular, in those departments that specifically address modern languages, cultures and linguistic mediation.

2 Critique to global English

The rise of English as a global language has been a subject of debate and controversy. On the one hand, English embodies the power and prestige that come from "ownership" of a global language, on the other, it entails exclusion from a privileged status for those who do not own it (Canagarajah 2013; Svartvik and Leech 2006). As a global language, English has raised concerns among a number of scholars who have underlined the risk of "linguistic imperialism" and "hegemonic dominance" of the language of the colonisers at the expense of minority languages and cultures. One of the most prominent figures in this area is Phillipson (1992: 17) who, in his critique on the role of English, has made a distinction between "core-English speaking countries", such as Britain and the United States and "periphery English countries", which include former British colonies where English is used as a second or official language, such as Nigeria, India, South Asia, as well as "expanding circle" countries (Kachru 1985), such as Scandinavia, Japan, and other nonwestern ones. The latter are the countries where English has no official status; nonetheless, it is used as a language of wider communication and for international relations.

In Phillipson's view (1992: 17), the relation between the two groups of countries, the "core" and the "periphery", is characterised by a dichotomy between "dominant" and "dominated" languages. English was imposed on the colonised countries and continues to be the language of power and prestige that the periphery countries need to adopt and use in order to have access to better opportunities. He believes that as a consequence of the dominant role of English, indigenous languages and cultures have been inevitably marginalised and in some cases lost and replaced by the colonial language and culture (Bisong 1995). Another strong critique of "English imperialism" comes, among others, from Pennycook (1994) who sees the widespread power of English as a threat to minority languages and as an agent of economic and social inequalities. English has become a "crucial gatekeeper to social and economic progress. It is bound up with aspects of global relations, such as the spread of

capitalism, development aid and the dominance particularly of North American media" (in Svartvik and Leech 2006: 243).

3 Global English and plurilingual communication

Paradoxically, the undisputed power of English has grown alongside a drive towards multilingualism and multiculturalism, which has brought forward the rights of minority languages in language policies and planning. If on the one hand, the rise of English was seen as a threat to cultural diversity, on the other, as a language of wider communication, it represents the means by which diverse peoples are connected across national and international borders, and in such a way that they enrich their linguistic repertoires, which are shaped, adapted and negotiated during interaction (Canagarajah 2013; Pennycook 2007; Risager 2006, 2007). This fluid and evolving form of communication has the power to facilitate the development of "multiple" rather than "unitary" identities which are likely to emerge when ELF communication takes place (Edwards 2004: 219).

ELF communication (Jenkins 2015) is a recognised fact in today's society, where non-native English speakers communicate with other non-native speakers in multilingual academic contexts. European Universities are known to be multicultural environments, and for many students, classes at university are their first major exposure to people from other countries (Jenkins 2015). University Language Centres, in particular, provide students with fresh opportunities to familiarise with diverse cultural backgrounds and experience non-native English speech (McCrocklin et al. 2018: 141). Consequently, the role Higher Education Institutions and Language Centres may have in this multi-faceted ELF environment, is fundamental in enhancing and promoting plurilingual knowledge and competence, respect for diversity, acceptance and recognition of the legitimacy and value of ELF communication (Cogo and Dewey 2012). However, these institutions are not often equipped to address the linguistic and cultural demands of a multilingual population, which is already experiencing ELF communication in everyday exchanges. If university staff and professionals engage regularly with a multilingual population, they have to be prepared to deal with and respond to their different needs. Within this framework, University courses need to be able to cope with a changing cultural and linguistic environment where multilingual speakers increasingly interact in English with other non-native English speakers in non-native forms of English. Therefore, in the current academic scenario, a "pluralistic" view of the English language which "acknowledges the existence of multiple standards that are

defined and implemented differently in different contexts" (Matsuda 2010: 186) becomes of fundamental importance.

4 The study

4.1 Research design

In the light of the previous considerations, this small case-study intends to raise an awareness of the need to integrate academic degree programs with course offers which incorporate modules entitled *Intercultural communication in English*, *World Englishes*, *English as a global language*, *English as a lingua franca*, *International English communication*, *English for International/Intercultural understanding* and so on. Courses and study programs which specifically focus on these issues may better suit the purposes and needs of a multilingual university population who interacts via English and will reflect the demands for more realistic and inclusive English communication. Because of their participation in exchange and mobility programs, students are often involved in international communities where non-native speakers of English from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds meet, and therefore exploit and expand their multilingual repertoires. Scholars highlight the hybridity and creativity of ELF (in Baker 2015: 28) when they refer to "the repertoires in flux" (Baker 2015; Jenkins 2015), in other words, a variety of codes and resources that are employed, adapted and re-created during interaction to acquire new meanings. If students are encouraged to familiarize with these new perspectives, they will not only enrich their knowledge but will be able to reconsider their perceptions of the English language and enlarge their vision of its speakers. The present paper aims to draw attention to the crucial contribution universities may play in enhancing IC via English by offering study programs that focus on the diversity of the English-speaking world, and highlight the fact that the majority of the world's interactions through English occur between non-native speakers (Timmis 2002), who employ legitimate and valid non-standard varieties and accents.

The hypothesis is that not many courses will offer intercultural/ELF-oriented modules at a national level. This study will attempt to identify possible gaps in university programs, which on the contrary, are meant to prepare students for the wider world where IC happens in English. As previous studies have highlighted (see Argondizzo et al. 2020), the examination of university websites is an efficient way to identify and analyze how information and services are portrayed and presented to international and academic communities. Websites reflect "the way higher academic institutions interact with the public, and, in addition, transfer concepts and ideas to

their potential users (e.g. students, instructors, academics, immigrants, citizens)" (2020: 345). In this light, European University Language Centres may play a key role. Encouraged by the Bologna accords and the internationalization process, they contribute to promote linguistic, cultural and social growth of academic communities, specifically in terms of enhancing IC, multilingualism, multiculturalism, communicative strategies, social inclusion, creativity, knowledge-sharing and autonomous language learning (Argondizzo et al. 2020: 341). Therefore, the analysis of university websites is especially useful in order to understand the extent to which the content and language displayed, reflect socio-educational aims and the intercultural principles outlined by the Council of Europe.

4.2 Method

The method selected is a content analysis of a sample of Italian university websites with the purpose of identifying to what extent (if any) Higher Education Institutions include for the year 2021–2022, academic programs that offer teaching modules as related to the above-mentioned issues. Fifteen Italian University websites were analysed. The reason for choosing these specific institutions depended firstly on the prestige, tradition and popularity of the institutions selected, and secondly, they were representative of different regional areas, spread across the north, the centre and the south of Italy. The analysis looked exclusively into humanities, foreign languages and cultures departments which usually include languages-related programs and therefore are more likely to offer cultural and linguistic topics as related to the language studied. When a degree course which seemed to meet the required objectives was identified, the course program, learning outcomes and contents were examined. Among the websites investigated, 10 were included in the analysis section as these offered degree programs that seemed to fit the research purposes. The others were not included as the degree programs and especially the teaching modules on offer were not relevant to the research objectives. However, only a few websites, as will be illustrated in the analysis section, met the necessary requirements in terms of providing teaching modules that specifically focus on ELF and IC courses. As Argondizzo et al. (2020: 345) have pointed out, the analysis of websites can be effective in shedding further light on the IC content conveyed through the didactic materials offered. Therefore, it allows us to identify both strengths and weaknesses in terms of creating multilingual and multicultural environments and raising awareness of IC through specific activities and programs.

Finally, before moving onto the analysis, the limitations of the study must be highlighted. The study is not comprehensive, having examined only a limited portion of university websites from a partial perspective. Moreover, the results so

far do not mean to draw any definite conclusions and cannot be considered representative of all Higher Educational Institutions across Italy. Therefore, more data need to be collected, hopefully from a variety of institutions across different countries in order to gain a more comprehensive knowledge and better insights into the role IC and ELF play at university level. A follow-up of the study will compare data collected across national and international institutions with the purpose of exploring whether IC and ELF topics are effectively covered in the course contents of humanities degree programs.

4.3 Data analysis

The tables below show the relevant degree programs as related to the research objectives. For each institution examined, department, degree courses (both undergraduate and postgraduate courses), and teaching modules were included if they met the research needs. When relevant teaching modules were identified, learning outcomes and course contents were further investigated. The names of the Universities will not be mentioned. Furthermore, the order in which they are presented in the tables does not reflect in any way their prestige or prominence.

As far as Table 1 is concerned the above information was likely to reveal interesting results. For this reason, the module *Geography of Languages* was further investigated and learning outcomes and course contents were examined. In terms of learning outcomes, the website section highlights:

> The student acquires a full comprehension of the languages as cultural features linking the human communities to their territories, history and geopolitical evolution, with a particular analysis of the changes occurred in the spatial dimension of languages, in connection to acculturation processes and to linguistic policies. In this respect, the course will deal with the regional division of the European languages and with the EU language policy both in respect to minority languages and to the process of linguistic education of its citizens. The

Table 1: Text Analysis of *Geography of Languages* module.

Department	Degree course	Teaching module
Language and Literature, Interpreting and Translation	– Language, Society and Communication (postgraduate) – Modern Post-colonial and Comparative Literature (postgraduate)	Geography and Languages

relationship between linguistic diversity and biological diversity will also be explored with a geographical focus on the issue of language death.[1]

A further step into the analysis attempted to examine specific course contents, which claim:

> The course aims at examining the relationship between space/place and language from different perspectives. At the beginning of the course, the students will familiarize with the field of cultural geography and its main themes, concepts, and keywords. After having explored the differences between linguistic geography and geographies of languages, we focus on the second and using both theories and empirical cases, we look at the interconnections between culture, cultural geography and language geography; language as cultural phenomenon; toponyms and culture; and semiotics of space.[2]

On the surface, the above-mentioned descriptions look promising in terms of our research objectives, since the connection between language and culture seems to be given special attention, along with linguistic diversity and minority language issues. However, from a closer examination, it emerges that the exploration is carried out mainly from a geographical perspective and does not involve cultural and linguistic diversity as connected to the globalization of English. Specifically, the contents do not relate to the diversity of English and the issues surrounding the role and purposes for using the language in flexible, dynamic and changing sociocultural domains where IC occurs primarily through English.

From Table 2 below, it can be argued that many different languages with their related cultures are provided in this institution as well as *Intercultural competence* courses relating to a variety of languages. However, none of them specifically address IC in English. The learning objectives of the general course, *Fundamentals of Intercultural competence*, emphasize that the course aims at:

Table 2: Analysis of *Fundamentals of Intercultural Competence* module.

Department	Degree course	Teaching module
European, American and Intercultural Studies	– English and AngloAmerican Studies (post graduate); – Linguistic and Cultural Mediation (undergraduate degree)	Fundamentals of Intercultural Competence

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1 Retrieved from https://www.unibo.it/en/teaching/course-unit-catalogue/course-unit/2021/402061. October 2021.
2 Retrieved from https://www.unibo.it/en/teaching/course-unit-catalogue/course-unit/2021/402061.

acquiring basic theoretical competences about the main aspects of intercultural and lin-
guistic mediation, in an interdisciplinary perspective. General introduction to the history and
the analysis of the English-speaking cultures.[3]

What seems to emerge from the examination of the course content and the course
catalogue overall is that native English-speaking cultures play the major role in the
teaching program, meaning by English-speaking cultures, native British and
American cultures.

Table 3 does not provide relevant information in relation to the teaching
modules offered.

Continuing with the investigation, we may observe that the course overviews
in Table 4 below emphasize that the teaching module will focus on languages and
cultures for a global world, and will approach an international multicultural
context. However interesting and innovative the course titles may appear, an in-
depth examination of the actual course contents reveals that none of the teaching
modules specifically address the issues under investigation. Though the focus on
IC is prominent, nonetheless there is no specific reference to the meaning and
function of ELF or the diversity of linguistic and cultural forms through which
English operates (Baker 2015; Jenkins 2012, 2014, 2015).

Table 3: Degree course in *Applied Interlinguistic Communication*.

Department	Degree course	Teaching module
Interpreting and Translation	Applied Interlinguistic Communication	No teaching module relevant to research purposes

Table 4: *Mediation and Intercultural Communication* modules.

Department	Degree course		Teaching Module	
Mediation and Intercultural Communication	–	Culture for International Communication and Cooperation (postgraduate)	–	Not relevant to research purposes
	–	Language and Cultural Mediation (undergraduate)		

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3 Retrieved from https://corsidilaurea.uniroma1.it/it/corso/2021/29950/cds.

When we look at Table 5, in particular, the *Didactics of Literature and Intercultural Communication* course, the learning outcomes seem to meet our demands in terms of research objectives:

> The definition of a model of intercultural communicative competence. The influence of culture on communication and the meaning of being interculturally competent. Acquiring the theoretical bases and the main notion concerning intercultural communication. Analysis of the main critical points in intercultural communication according to the following parameters: cultural values, verbal and non-verbal communication, communicative events. The course is an introduction to intercultural communication. The core is the analysis of cultural differences in international setting; the main topics are: communication and culture, multiculture and interculture, stereotypes, nonverbal communication.[4]

As far as Table 6 is concerned, the analysis of this particular institution suggests that the *Intercultural Pragmatics* course may be relevant in terms of our research purposes. Examining the course content in detail we find that the objectives and content indeed match the research purposes.

Table 5: Analysis of *Didactics of Literature and Intercultural Communication* module.

Department	Degree course	Teaching module
Language and Comparative Cultural Studies	– Language, Civilisation and Science of Language (undergraduate)	– Didactics of Literature and Intercultural Communication
	– European, American and Postcolonial Language and Literature	– Not relevant to research purposes

Table 6: Analysis of *Intercultural Pragmatics/Cross-cultural Communication* modules.

Department	Degree course	Teaching module
Foreign Languages, Literatures and Cultures	– Intercultural Studies in Languages and Literatures (postgraduate)	– Not relevant to research purposes
	– Modern Languages for International Communication and Cooperation (postgraduate)	– Intercultural Pragmatics
	– Planning and Management of Tourism Systems	– Cross-cultural Communication

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4 Retrieved from https://www.unive.it/data/course/330876/programma.

Students will gain awareness and understanding of the cultural diversity expressed through socio pragmatic norms (specific 'local' conditions on language use; for instance, the norms which allow speakers to judge speech acts as either polite or impolite) and through language-specific resources. Students will learn to understand and identify the uniqueness of those speech events where speakers of different languages and cultures interact.

The notion of culture and the relationship between culture and language will be dealt with.[5]

Similarly, an examination of the *Cross-cultural Communication course* (see Table 6) reveals that the learning outcomes aim at exploring:

> Cross-cultural communication in a few specialist fields, giving special attention to texts used for tourism purposes, examined from an intercultural perspective. The importance of the use of English as a lingua franca is also taken into consideration as well as its influence on the linguistic and textual realisations at an international level. At the end of the course students will be able to recognize the intercultural models and apply them to the analysis of promotional digital texts.[6]

Though the other university websites analysed (see Tables 7, 8, 9, and 10) present cultural and intercultural-oriented degree programs, from a closer examination

Table 7: Degree courses related to *Intercultural Studies*.

Department	Degree course	Teaching module
Humanities	– Cultural and Religious Intermediation (postgraduate)	– Not relevant to research purposes
	– European and American Languages and Literatures (postgraduate)	– Not relevant to research purposes
	– Languages, Literatures and Intercultural Studies (undergraduate)	– Not relevant to research purposes

Table 8: Degree courses related to *Intercultural Studies*.

Department	Degree course	Teaching module
Humanities	– Cultural and Religious Intermediation (postgraduate)	– Not relevant to research purposes
	– European and American Languages and Literatures (postgraduate)	
	– Languages, Literatures and Intercultural Studies (undergraduate)	– Not relevant to research purposes

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5 Retrieved from https://www.unibg.it/ugov/degreecourse/45767.

6 Retrieved from https://www.unibg.it/ugov/degreecourse/45767.

Table 9: Degree courses related to *Mediation, Tourism and Culture*.

Department	Degree course	Teaching module
Humanities	– Linguistic Mediation, Tourism and Cultures	– Not relevant to research purposes
	– Global and Local Studies	– Not relevant to research purposes

Table 10: Degree courses related to *International Cooperation and Communication*.

Department	Degree course	Teaching module
Humanities	– Asian and African Languages for Communication and International Cooperation	– Not relevant to research purposes
	– International Communication for Tourism	– Not relevant to research purposes
	– Foreign Languages for International Communication	– Not relevant to research purposes

it is shown that they do not offer teaching modules relevant to our research purposes.

5 Discussion

On the basis of the websites analysed it can be concluded that only a limited number of universities offer programs which take into consideration the roles, functions and implications of English as a language of wider communication across diverse contexts. As already pointed out, English has become a lingua franca for IC globally, there are about 300 million non-native English speakers who use English to communicate more with each other than with native English speakers (Jenkins 2000). ELF is a recognized area of academic research which draws on empirical investigation related to aspects of language such as lexical, grammar, pragmatic, phonetic features (Cogo and Dewey 2012; Jenkins 2002, 2005, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2014). As Tsantilia et al. (2016: 1) claim: "ELF is a dynamic, multifaceted, fast-evolving field, describing processes of language change, divergence and convergence in many of its core-domains, thus, offering its users new language options to cover their communicative needs, and influencing current thinking on English language use".

These aspects have wider implications on areas such as speakers' attitudes and identities with respect to native/non-native varieties of English, the relation between language and culture, the impact of culture on communication as well as its pedagogical considerations.

We can observe that most of the courses analysed include Intercultural-oriented degree programs. However, though partial and tentative, the analysis has revealed that this aspect is not brought any further than at a surface level. Only in two cases do the course contents and learning outcomes reflect a full coverage of the issues explored. The results so far cannot be generalised; however, they seem to suggest that, on the one hand, there may be a gap that needs to be filled within academic institutions, on the other, that an ELF-oriented approach (Sifakis 2014) is gradually starting to emerge and shift perspectives from a theoretical only exploration to practical application at university level. What the investigation highlights is that when it comes to English speaking cultures, Anglo-American English and Anglo-American cultures are predominant within academic programs. There is no mention, at least in the websites analysed, of other varieties of English with their related cultures and speakers, while empirical studies have largely highlighted that successful communication is likely to occur only if we recognize the intercultural nature of English (Canagarajah 2013; Pennycook 2007; Risager 2006, 2007), and if we acknowledge that English "can be spoken by different voices, yet understood by different ears" (Anchimbe 2010: 284).

University Language Centres may provide a crucial contribution to the development of an ELF-aware perspective by creating appropriate activities and materials specifically suitable for the growing number of multilingual classrooms (Lopriore and Vettorel 2016). This means revising and integrating ELT syllabi with a more "plurilithic" approach (Lopriore and Vettorel 2016) aimed at developing learners' intercultural skills. Possible suggestions include tasks and activities which engage learners in observing how non-native speakers use English. Learners may be presented with authentic communicative exchanges through media and corpora, where non-native speakers interact by using different varieties and accents of English. Furthermore, they may be encouraged to focus on similarities and differences between the target language and their L1s in terms of idioms and pragmatic aspects along with negotiation strategies (clarification requests, repetitions, comprehension checks, self-repair, code-switching, and so on), which characterize authentic ELF interaction (Cogo and Dewey 2012; Seidlhofer 2011). These awareness-raising tasks will stimulate learners' reflections on which variety of English they prefer and why, which one they consider more intelligible, which one, in their opinion, should be learned and why. Moreover, learners will be encouraged to reflect on the role of mutual intelligibility among non-native speakers, which a number of scholars have considered the key to

successful IC (Jenkins 2006; Reed 2012; Seidlhofer 2004) compared to correctness. Finally, awareness of cultural diversity will be raised as well as how different cultures impact on successful IC. With the support of Language Centres, Higher Education Institutions will be better equipped to meet the needs raised by the rise of English as a language for IC, which is increasingly being used by multilingual speakers in academic contexts, and therefore, encourage its full recognition and implementation within university teaching programs. It may be a challenging process but it will be worth it in the long run.

6 Concluding remarks

The new emerging scenarios, characterised by the widespread use of ELF by non-native speakers, pose challenges and demand for the definition of new policies and planning within degree courses as far as contents and programs are concerned. This will entail revisiting and integrating curricula and syllabi from an ELF-aware perspective (Sifakis 2014, 2017) that would aim at reinforcing learners' intercultural communicative skills, enhancing their multilingual repertoires, and developing their capacity for "languaging" and "translanguaging" (Canagarajah 2013; Kramsch 2009; Mauranen 2012; Seidlhofer 2011). If awareness of the current plurality of English is raised, policy-makers within academic contexts may start taking this perspective into account (Lopriore and Vettorel 2016). In the long run, it will contribute to shifting teaching modules and course contents from an "Anglophone-centred" approach to a more inclusive and realistic one (Lopriore and Vettorel 2016: 14) that will ultimately encourage students to:

– engage in interactive communicative encounters with mono and plurilingual English speakers;
– identify, reflect upon and successfully use communication strategies;
– observe, discuss and reflect upon their own and their mates' forms of code-switching;
– identify, understand and use pragmatic strategies in English-using contexts;
– explore and resort to the English resources present in their environment, e.g. their linguistic landscape and opportunities for encounters with English in the media (2016: 10).

ELF is still a relatively young research field and is considered possibly too challenging to be included in curricula and course programs at different levels. Further research is therefore necessary to shed better light and gain further insights that might be explored and implemented at university level in the near future. For this reason, this small case-study should be expanded with a larger set of data to be

collected from national and international institutions in order to analyze and compare the extent to which IC and ELF-related contents are incorporated within degree programs and modules. What can be concluded is that, though limited and partial, the present study has identified an IC gap within teaching modules that are supposed to acknowledge the relevance of ELF-related contents, especially if we consider that the majority of multicultural and multilingual academic communities increasingly interact via English. Higher Education Institutions with their Language Centres may become "the most powerful agents of change in our society" (Matsuda 2010: 18) as change is easily passed along from academic contexts to the larger society through students and graduates' attitudes, enhanced awareness and knowledge.

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