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Exploring Multilingualism: English as a Lingua Franca in the European Framework

Relatrice

Prof.ssa Fiona Clare Dalziel

Laureanda

Laura Sacchetto

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*“Language is the armory of the human mind,
and at once contains the trophies of its past and the
weapons of its future conquests.”*

-Samuel Taylor Coleridge

ABSTRACT

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate the role that English has gained in Europe, and, in particular, in intercultural communication. Therefore, this dissertation will analyse English as a lingua franca, its importance in intercultural interactions and its implications in a multilingual Europe. In order to explore this topic six semi-structured interviews have been conducted among students, professors and administrative employers of the University of Padua. The results showed that the power English has in Europe is strong and it has brought several consequences to today's societies. Therefore, actions should be taken in order to restrict this supremacy or to use it properly to promote multiculturalism and multilingualism.

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INTRODUCTION

English is undeniably important in today's society, from educational fields to academic, economic and political levels. Recently scholars and researchers have been investigating a particular use of the English language, namely English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), which is becoming an important and debatable field in applied linguistics.

The following dissertation will explore the role English has in our society and, particularly, in Europe. The focus of this dissertation will be on English as a Lingua Franca, namely a specific use of the language in international and multicultural contexts. The aim of this dissertation is to understand how English as a Lingua Franca is perceived, which role it plays in our lives and societies and what positive and negative implications it may bring with it, especially internationally, in the European Union and in relation to other European languages.

In order to develop my research I will collect the experiences and opinions of six people, who are studying or working at the University of Padua through semi-structured interviews. Then, I will analyse and compare their answers to the literature I have read, to my personal experience and point of view. The results will help me develop a framework of people's perception of English as a Lingua Franca, along with some predictions and remarks, which may be useful for future research studies.

The first chapter will present English as a Lingua Franca by giving its definition and description. I will summarise the most relevant research studies conducted on this topic and the opinions of important scholars in this field. A short history of the development of this research field will be presented in order to understand how English has been rethought and what changes in attitudes have occurred. This new consideration of English will contribute to shaping the role English has in our lives.

The second chapter will investigate the position English has in Europe, both in European societies and in the European Union. A particular focus will be on European language policy with regards to multilingualism, in order to understand which role ELF plays in multiculturalism. Moreover, here I will discuss the criticisms which have been raised by some scholars on ELF and on the promotion of multilingualism in Europe.

The final chapter will present my research, by describing the methodology and the data I have collected. It aims at presenting the results of the interviews and comparing them with the present literature and my personal point of view. Therefore, I will analyse the data collected through different software and a specific method. The information collected will shape my final remarks and will help in developing my personal opinion on the topic. Finally, I will support my thesis with my personal experience on the matter and I will give my personal reflections, which may be interesting for future discussions and research.

CHAPTER 1: ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA

Since this dissertation will investigate the implications of the importance that English has gained in our multicultural world, the aim of this chapter is to present and summarise the most important research studies conducted on English as a Lingua Franca. Firstly, I will introduce the role of English in today's world and how it has become so important in our societies. Moreover, I will introduce the definition and description of English as a lingua franca by collecting the points of views of some important scholars in this field.

1.1 World Englishes and their speakers

Recently English has gained a significant role in our societies, in particular in the way we communicate with each other. A large and growing body of literature has investigated and classified diverse types of English (see for example Jenkins 2003, McArthur 1998, Melchers and Shaw 2003), which is why many people may refer to them as Englishes, with the plural form. The term refers to the numerous varieties of the language, but also to the contexts in which the language is used and its purpose. "Lingua franca" refers to a context where English is used as a medium, or as a common language between people, who are not English native speakers (Seidlhofer 2005). In this case English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) is used as an important means of communication in an international context, places where people do not usually share the same native language or a common culture. There are also other terms to refer to the unique and specific role that English has acquired such as "World Englishes¹", "English as a global language²", or "English as a World language³", although they seem to cover a more general and broader idea. However, English as a lingua franca still remains the preferred term to describe the function it has on breaking linguacultural boundaries (Seidlhofer 2005).

In the past, especially in colonial trading, a dominant language was essential to facilitate communication between people of different nationalities. Some studies conducted by a German linguistic Hugo Schuchardt have proved the existence in these trade contexts of

¹ "World Englishes is a term referring to localized or indigenized varieties of English spoken throughout the world by people of diverse cultural backgrounds in a wide range of sociolinguistic contexts" (Oxford English Dictionary).

² The term English as a global language is used by Crystal and he defines a "global status" as the special role a language develops, which is recognized in every country (Crystal 2003).

³ See Mair, C. 2003. *The politics of English as a World Language*. Rodopi.

“mixed languages,” which contains forms originated from a mixture of various languages. (Berns 2009). Surely nowadays things have changed, and the role of a lingua franca has a different meaning and implications, but the idea of non-native speakers generating changes and new elements in a language is not that far from what many ELF researchers have been demonstrating. In the last centuries, the role of English has surely changed as our world has changed thanks to globalization and innovative technologies. Even the use of languages has extended to numerous social and working networks and at distinct levels such as local, regional, and international (Berns 2009).

Over the years the idea of English being shaped by its native speakers as well as by its non-native speakers has been the object of considerable debate. In this way we must operate a distinction between English as a native language (ENL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) (Seidlhofer 2005). What some researchers have tried to do around the end of 1990s is estimating the “speakers of English” by considering Kachru’s (1992) model of ‘concentric circles. He used this image of concentric circles to divide English speakers in three areas, where the Inner Circle represents the people who have English as their first language such as USA and UK, the Outer Circle for those countries where it is an additional language, for instance Nigeria or India, and the Expanding Circle, which corresponds to the places where English is a foreign language. Thanks to this representation and the data collected it was already clear that the non-native speakers outnumbered the native speakers (Seidlhofer 2011). Nowadays that is still the case because as a report⁴ published in 2013 by the British Council reveals still a quarter of the world’s population speaks English.

Surprisingly, Crystal in 2003 made the same estimates and therefore we can say that as the world’s population has been increasing so has the percentage of people with a command of English. So, the English spread is constant and is expanding continuously around the globe but also in numerous contexts, functions, and social classes (Seidlhofer 2011). Seidlhofer (2011) argues that the role that English has been acquiring in recent years is even more important and different from the one that other lingua francas such as Latin or French had in the past, which is surely due to its particular colonial influence but,

⁴ The report is called “The English Effect” and it was made by the British Council <https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-insight/english-effect>.

more importantly, thanks to the arrival of the Internet and new technologies, which have promoted world communication, as well as the economic power of the USA, as discussed below.

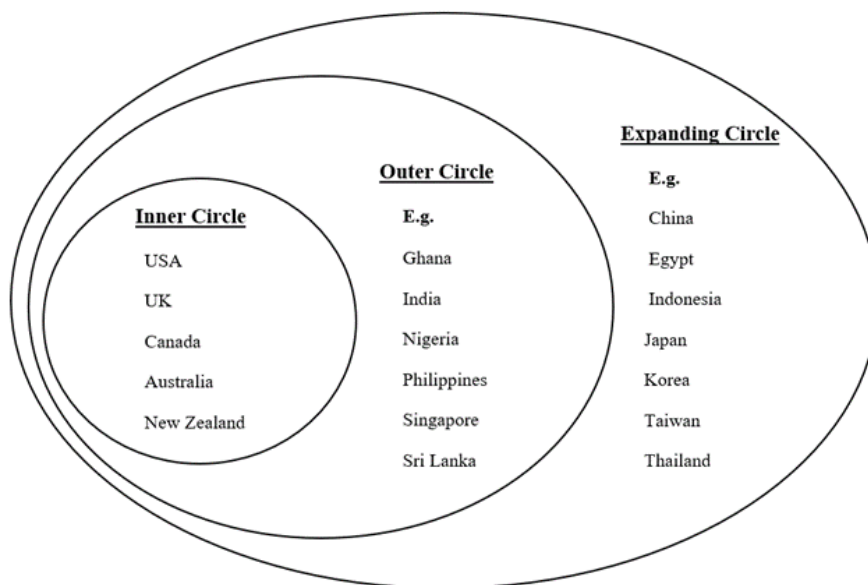


Figure 1. Kachru's Model of Concentric Circles (Kachru 1992)

However, Kachru's representation is partial and was later criticised because it was considered divisive because some groups of speakers were not included in none of the three circles. After the paradigm was created, in fact, many people from the outer and expanding circle may have the same English knowledge of native speakers but they cannot belong to the inner circle. Kachru responded to the criticism by replacing the circles with ovals placed vertically. Later models to represent English speakers were then created by other linguistics without focusing on the language knowledge but on the ability to use it internationally, in order to cancel the native speakers' ownership of English. These models proposed a clear distinction between English as an International Language and English as a Foreign Language (Poppi 2012).

1.2 Origins of the spread of English

The roots of the success of English are not strictly related to its linguistic features but are surely the result of social and political changes that have seen English as the protagonist. Historically since the sixteenth century Britain extended its Empire and conquered areas around the world. They created one of the strongest colonial Empires of all the times. The

reasons behind this colonisation were surely economic and commercial, but the secret of their success is related to their moral justifications: they claimed they were bringing civilisation in the uncivilised world (Poppi 2012). Therefore, the colonial powers took Britishness to other countries, as they brought with them not only their language, but also their traditions and habits. Several examples of this can be found in the literature of that time in authors as Rudyard Kipling or in later authors such as Joseph Conrad.

Another historical event that contributed to the English spread is the first industrial revolution, which saw Great Britain as the pioneer. The development of modern technologies and new means of transportation contributed to the economic growth of England. Not only goods and technologies were exported around the globe, but also the language as the technological knowledge came from there. Since then, English was the language of economy (Poppi 2012). Later, England lost its supremacy, and another country replaced its role: the United States of America. It is considered the protagonist of the second industrial revolution: another country but where English was the first language. New technologies were developed, and new ways of communicating were spreading. In the 20th Century the United States were the model of economic growth, success, and wellness. Music, art and information were brought from America to the other continents and the language with them. Finally in 1960s another big development saw USA as protagonist: the advent of Internet and electronics. They intensified the communications channels and helped to get the world connected. Furthermore, they changed our lives completely, not only our personal's but also our business, education and international relations and English became the language of Internet and, consequently, of the World (Poppi 2012).

This was a short historical overview on how English became the international language, but how has it gained the role of lingua franca? How has it become the medium of international relations? The first context in which English was used as a lingua franca was the League of Nations, since it was one of the two official languages. It was created in 1920 after the First World War and there were participating forty-two members from Europe and outside. Therefore, as it involved people from different countries and the matter, they were discussing was important, a common language was essential (Crystal 2003). After the Second World War instead of the League of Nations they created the

United Nations. It had the same aim of league: promote peace, rebuild Europe, and avoid the mistakes there had already been made. Although the function was the same, the composition of the UN was more complex with fifty distinct organs, agencies, commissions, and organisations. Many other international organizations in all parts of the world have English as their official language such as the Commonwealth, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or the European Union (Crystal 2003). As Poppi (2012) claims “starting from this period, whenever an international organisation has been created in the western world, English has always been a natural choice as official language”.

1.3 Research into ELF

ELF is a recent field of research, which started to be explored in the 1990s. In order to understand and analyse the main topics of discussions which have been brought up by ELF researchers, it is relevant to report here a corpus analysis conducted by Prodromou (2008). He has created a corpus of ELF-writers to investigate the main topics involved in ELF research studies. The analysis shows that the words most used in ELF papers are ‘English,’ ‘ELF’, ‘speakers’ and ‘native’. Hence, we can deduce that the main themes involved in ELF literature are surely the opposition between English as a lingua franca and English as a native language, the question of native speakers’ ownership of the language, and the consideration of ELF as a variety of World Englishes. Moreover, the corpus analysis goes on to investigate ELF collocations and colligations, and the results confirm the focus on spoken interaction and the non-native relevance in describing ELF. From the collocation and colligation data Prodromou (2008) then determines the key phrases of ELF literature, which still confirm the ideas stated before. In fact, the most frequent phrases in the corpus are world Englishes and ELF; speakers of ELF; ELF research, ELF researchers; ELF interactions; ELF use, ELF users; Europe and ELF features of ELF (Prodromou 2008).

Subsequently these themes emerging from the above analyses, which are the most relevant to the ELF literature, will be developed and discussed here. As the study above suggests, one of the core themes in ELF research studies seems to be its differentiation from English as a Native Language. Thus, as I stated before, English as a lingua franca should be considered as a foreign language since its users are generally non-native speakers. On the contrary, some researchers such as Seidlhofer and Jenkins in this field

have demonstrated and defined English as a lingua franca as something different from English as a foreign language in order to underline the importance and effort this new field of research needs. The first case is that of a foreign language as French or German. They all have a sturdy base, some fixed grammar rules and cultural bonds. They were created by their native speakers and the focus is on them. In a certain way, we can say that they possess the language as they are their keeper. When someone is learning a new language, they aim at speaking it the way a native speaker does to join their community and maybe someday become just like them. For this reason, native speakers are the one affirming and stating rules, because they know not only what is grammatically correct or not but also what is idiomatic for a specific situation. Criticism or judgment is normally part of this relationship between a language learner and a native speaker (Seidlhofer 2011).

Thus, the distinction between learners and users needs to be taken into consideration. As Seidlhofer (2011) clearly points out learners are those people involved in the process of learning English as a foreign language and who aim at acquiring a proficiency of the language similar to native speakers. Therefore, they tend to emulate English as natively spoken, have a strong interest in English speaking cultures and hope to join the English community one day. As a result, their focus is often on mastering grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation of the language. While users are those who use English as a mean of communication and their focus is on producing an effective communication and mutual understanding rather than imitating the way native speakers use their language. They adapt and adjust the language to their communicative needs. Consequently, this distinction is crucial as it highlights the difference between the concrete use of English as a global means of communication and English as a foreign language (Seidlhofer 2011).

Moreover, in an ELF context English is used in intercultural communication, where one of the most important features is multilingual, since it generally involves people who do not share the first language. Usually, multilingualism may be overt or covert, where the former involves the formal presence of two or more languages in the discourse, while the latter involves interaction which appear to be in one language, but its use is influenced by the mother tongue of the speakers. Research on ELF have revealed that covert multilingualism is typical of ELF (Baker 2022), as ELF interactions take place among

both native and non-native speakers, who may have different level of command in English. Despite their differences and disparity, they are able to communicate with each other efficiently, because they tacitly settle some arrangements by setting ad hoc norms. The most important thing in this situation is to make themselves understood by others. For this reason, ELF speakers do not always make use of idiomatic expressions but try to adapt them to their knowledge and context. This distinction appears because of the double nature of English internationality: on one hand it has been localised through colonialism, which has spread the language, particularly in the colonies.

On the other hand, we have the ‘newborn English’, which is the one learnt by people as a second language and used in order to communicate all over the world (Poppi 2012). Later studies on ELF have defined English as a component of a multilingual fluid repertoire, close to cultures, practices and identities that are not part of a single language or culture (Baker 2022). This led Jenkins (2018) to propose English as a multilingual franca (EMF), which stands for English “used predominantly in transcultural communication among multilingual English speakers, who will make use of their full linguistic repertoires as appropriate in the context of any specific interaction”. Hence, English as a lingua franca is involved not only in intercultural communication, but also on a transcultural and translanguaging perspective, which challenges the boundaries between languages, modes and cultures, and promotes an approach in understanding communication and meaning-making that does not artificially separate interconnected elements (Baker 2022).

The point I am trying to make is that these two sides of English are both equally important and should be both taken into consideration, while the general tendency is focusing only on the proper English spoken by native speakers. As I mentioned before only in nineties researchers have started thinking English with a broader and opened prospective and more studies are being conducted to investigate and discover English as a lingua franca. I will examine in depth later these contrasting views on native speakers predominancy and English ownership, as this idea may lead to consider the English spread as a predominancy over other languages.

However, the term native-speakerism have been strongly criticised by some researchers such as Hollyday (2006) since this ideology seems to be widely present and widespread

in the English language teaching field. As Hollyday (2006) claims, the native speakerist perspective negatively highlights what non-native speakers and their culture are and they are depicted as dependent, easily dominated. This interpretation is surely prejudicial and contributes to the representation of a “problematic generalized Other” opposed to the “unproblematic Self of the native speaker” (Hollyday 2006). As regards ELF perspective, non-native speakers are those involved in interactions, but they are not considered as ‘failed native speakers’ but as “highly skilled communicators who make use of their multilingual resources in ways not available to monolingual NSEs, and who are found to prioritize successful communication over narrow notions of ‘correctness’ in ways that NSEs, with their stronger attachment to their native English, may find more challenging” (Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey 2011).

Nonetheless, the controversy behind the term native speaker is relevant not only in the ELF field but also in English language teaching. In fact, when comparing the Common European Framework of References for languages, whose first edition was published in 2001, with its Companion volume from 2020, we can see that different changes and adaptation have been made. In the specific, with reference about native speakers, it is notable that in the global scale of the Common reference levels from 2001 the Independent User (B2) is described as follows: “ Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party” (Council of Europe 2001). While in the 2020 Companion volume it can be seen that among the numerous changes, which have been applied to the framework, an adjustment in the descriptors is summarized as follows: “Changes are also proposed to certain descriptors that refer to linguistic accommodation (or not) by “native speakers”, because this term has become controversial since the CEFR was first published” (Council of Europe 2020).

As I have already mentioned, ELF is a recent and evolving field of study. Jenkins (2017) sets 1996 as the first time when the term English as a lingua franca was used and in 2000, she started investigating its features with an empirical study on ELF pronunciation. In this study Jenkins (2000) identified formal and functional characteristics and claimed that native English pronunciation is not the best option in ELF interactions (Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey 2011). Firstly, early ELF research studies were inspired by World Englishes and

considered ELF as comprising distinct varieties with both unique traits and common shared features. Later, as more empirical corpus data were collected, the results showed that ELF's usage was too fluid and diverse to fit within the varieties framework. This led researchers to focus towards understanding its fluidity and its various functions. More recently, they put the attention on the ELF's multilingual nature, rather than just seeing it as an aspect of ELF use (Jenkins 2017). After Jenkins' (2000) pronunciation empirical study many collections of ELF corpora were established: beginning with VOICE (Vienna Oxford International Corpus of English), ELFA Corpus (Corpus of English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings), ACE (Asian Corpus of English) and WrELFA (Corpus of Written ELF in Academic Settings) (Jenkins 2017).

Moreover, the ELF research has interested researchers from a wide range of locations around the world: the earliest work was conducted in Germany by Hüllen and Knapp and House, in Austria by James and Seidlhofer, in the UK by Jenkins, in Finland by Mauranen, later on in Greece, Serbia and Turkey and recently also in East Asia. Nevertheless, even if research have been conducted in particular geographical regions, this does not mean that it is significant only of that place, but it is clearly the opposite as the ELF nature is multilingual (Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey 2011). As ELF research have been geographically expanding, so have its domain of interest. In particular, major implications of ELF can be seen in business and academic setting (Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey 2011). This is not surprising as these two domains involve large numbers of speakers who belongs to different language backgrounds (Jenkins 2017).

Finally, Jenkins (2015) proposed a distinction of three phases of the ELF conceptualisation. The first one (ELF phase one) began in the late 1980s and focused on two main areas of interest: pronunciation and lexicogrammar. In the 2000s researchers also believed that it would be possible to identify varieties of ELF. As the first phase highlighted that accommodation and variability were central in ELF pronunciation, the second phase emphasized the need for research on ELF communication as a whole and it was necessary to analyse the variability of the forms used by ELF speakers. It is in this phase that a reconceptualization of ELF occurred, as it could not be defined as a World Englishes' variety because of its fluidity and the multilingual backgrounds of its interlocutors that transcend linguistic boundaries. Lastly, Jenkins (2015) underlines the

need for further reconceptualization, which will lead to the ELF third phase. As a matter of fact, she claims that ELF research lacks in respect of multilingualism and therefore she suggests introducing a new term and perspective: English as a Multilingua Franca (Jenkins 2015).

1.4 Characteristics of ELF

As I have argued before, to understand ELF we have to reconsider English and image it with a different and broader prospective. Hence, we must think the language not only as the native speakers' possession but also as a tool for non-native speakers. Any language is inevitably subject to variation and change and the more it is used the more it will change. Since the uncontrolled spread of English worldwide has been demonstrated, it seems hard to believe that the language development is originated only by its native speakers (Seidlhofer 2011). Moreover, since we are considering ELF as different from ENL, even though they are surely related to one another, we cannot say that English remains intact when used in one context or another and that ELF is, consequently, as Seidlhofer (2001) claims, "a globally distributed, franchised copy of ENL".

In order to understand what ELF consists of and what are its differences from the standard varieties of English, I will clarify how it actually works. In order to detect the linguistic features and norms that make up ELF, it is important to understand that those are part of the form of a language, which are not fixed, and they mirror the functions the language is serving. Therefore, if we consider ELF as a natural language process, which goes beyond the merely identification of linguistic features, they are investigated as indicators of the various functions ELF performs in facilitating interactions (Seidlhofer 2011). From the analysis of the interactive work carried out by ELF speakers, it has been noted that they involve a pragmatic and creative process, which leads to clarity and intelligibility, and to innovations in various ways, which I will examine later. Moreover, speakers make use of their knowledge of the language to fulfil their communicative needs. This develops in them, in a certain way, a sense of possession on the language using what Pennycook (2007) describes as their performativity, which she defines as "a way of thinking about relationship between language and identity that emphasize the productive force of language in constituting identity rather than identity being a pre-given construct". Some studies conducted on ELF interactions in various settings and backgrounds have shown

how ELF users seem to be ‘languagers’ who exploit the potential of the language. This term, firstly used by Phipps (2006), refers to the way they make use of the language focusing on the aim of the conversation and on their interlocutors instead on the linguistic norms as he defines them as “people who engage with the world-in-action, who move in the world in a way that allows the risk of stepping out of one’s habitual ways of speaking and attempt to develop different, more relational ways of interacting with the people and phenomena that one encounters in everyday life”. Thus, in a communication through ELF speakers are inevitably trying, consciously or not, to guarantee intelligibility and an effective communication. Therefore, in these situations clarity is inevitably fundamental, and it can be achieved by adding redundancy to the important elements, so through repetitions and by making them explicit, through paraphrasing (Seidlhofer 2011).

The first pronunciation research conducted by Jenkins (2000, 2002) investigated when miscommunication between NNSs of English was caused by pronunciation and the phonological characteristics which were involved in the accommodation process. The results showed that certain English pronunciation features were crucial for intelligibility in ELF interactions, while others were not and sometimes impaired communication. These features were combined, and they constituted the Lingua Franca Core, which enhance mutual intelligibility together with some accommodational skills. (Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey 2011). Her analysis revealed that these core features of ELF interactions are: “consonant sounds except for ‘th’ and ‘l’, vowel lengths contrasts and nuclear tonic stress” (Prodromou 2008). As a matter of fact, pronunciation plays an important role in communication in any languages, more importantly in an ELF context, where speakers should be ready for the numerous accents they will come across in English as a lingua franca environment. Therefore, they will have to adjust to the accent of their interlocutors consciously or not (Prodromou 2008).

Another noteworthy feature of ELF speakers is surely creativity since it is fundamental to adjust English to their communicative purpose (Seidlhofer 2011). Therefore, the language produced is unique since it does not fully conform to the ENL grammar norms and usage. This creative process generated in an ELF conversation can be seen on multiple linguistic levels: lexis, phonological, morphological and syntax. Probably the lexical innovations can be considered the most salient. Although the creation of new

words is something that belongs to any language, the purpose and the way this is done in ELF seems different. In fact, in this case the process of word creation seems the same in both ENL and ELF, but in the latter the language flexibility is exploited to fulfil a communicative need and, consequently, a lexical gap. Some examples of innovative words, which are originated from a 'regularisation' of some ENL words can be found in VOICE, in words such as 'bigness', 'clearness', 'mutualness', 'unitedness', 'non-compactness' (Seidlhofer 2011). Not only new words can be created in an ELF context, but also the meaning of some terms may be adjusted to the communicative purpose of that situation and move away from its literal meaning. Moreover, the ELF vocabulary can be extended with loan translations and multilingual borrowings, but also with lexis from different varieties. This results in a fascinating mixture of lexical simplification and richness (MacKenzie 2014).

Although research study on the lexicogrammar level of ELF have slowly been accomplished, they have proved that "formal and functional properties of ELF lexicogrammar involve longstanding process of language evolution, with many features occurring as the result of a regularization of the system" as Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey (2011) state. This process is typical of all language varieties, but the case of ELF is different as it involves freeing from the standard set of norms of standard English in an accelerated way. Recently, most of the ELF lexicogrammar research has focused on its functional properties, which have shown that "speakers adapt English morphosyntactically in order to best achieve their communicative needs" (Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey 2011).

Another field of ELF which has been investigated in various places of the world, but mostly in Europe, is pragmatics. Much of the research has seen miscommunication and negotiation and resolution of non-understanding as its main focus, highlighting a mutual cooperation in ELF communication. Recent empirical studies on ELF pragmatics revealed that non-understanding or misunderstanding occurs less frequently in ELF communication than in conversations among English native speakers, and that ELF users possess a higher level of interactional and pragmatic competence, effectively signalling non-understanding in ways that keep the flow of conversation. Analyses on ELF pragmatics have been concentrating also on the strategies ELF speakers use to solve

miscommunication problems. Most of the strategies are pre-empting, as they are used to prevent misunderstanding and some of the most used in ELF interaction are repetition, paraphrasing, use of repetition, exploitation of plurilingual resources and use of idiomatic expressions (Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey 2011).

Specifically, Lichtkoppler (2007) conducted a study on the use of repetitions in ELF interactions and it revealed that they play an important role since they help making the production, comprehension and the information transition of a language easier. Therefore, she claims “This characteristic is what makes repetition so powerful. And strategies like repetition are what help make ELF so powerful” (Lichtkoppler 2007:61). Moreover, she identifies various functions of repetitions such as what she calls the ‘time gaining repetitions’, those created to avoid silence and make the speech more fluent. What seems more interesting to me are the what she calls ‘utterance-developing repetition’, ‘ensuring accuracy repetitions’ and ‘showing listenership’ which confirms one of the ELF features which I mentioned before: the focus of ELF on the interlocutors and on overcoming linguistic and cultural differences (Lichtklopper 2007).

Furthermore, what Sinclair (1991) defines as the ‘principle of idiom’ is another expression of the creativity of an ELF user, since the process of idiomatizing definitely helps conveying the communication effective. The idiom principle states that “a language user has available to him or her a large number of semi-preconstructed phrases that constitute single choices even though they might appear to be analysable into segments” (Sinclair 1991). Therefore, this theory can be considered an example of how language users communicate with one another by meeting shared conventions of established phraseology (Seidlhofer 2011). Prodromou (2008) in his corpus-based analysis on ELF has deeply investigated these idiomatic phenomena in ELF interactions. He has distinguished two types of idiomaticity: unilateral idiomaticity and creative idiomaticity. The former consists of “the use of idiomatic language by a speaker which is not understood by the other participants in the interactions” (Prodromou 2008: 215), while the latter is based on a shared common ground of the interlocutors, which helps making the idiom effectively understood.

Surprisingly the results of Prodromou’s corpus analysis showed no evidence of unilateral idiomaticity. He suggested that this result revealed that “any difficulties they [the ELF

speakers] had encountered with idioms were not serious, and asking for clarification was one simple way of dealing with the problem, on the rare occasions when it arose” (Prodromou 2008). Moreover, this unilateral idiomaticity in an ELF interaction seems to involve a sense of lack of concern for the other interlocutor and may result in an unfriendly act, which does not embrace the spirit of an effective intercultural communication, as it seems uncooperative. Although some exceptions are surely possible and unilateral idiomaticity may not always have this effect, it may surely interfere with the communicational process and making it less effective (Seidlhofer 2011). This perspective supports the results showed in Prodromou’s research, as they do not really respect the basis of ELF.

On the contrary, the creative idiomaticity is surely what occurs more often in ELF conversations, since in this case ELF speakers can use an existing idiom principle in their own way to fulfil the function of their discourse. In an example taken from VOICE it can be seen the process of idiomatizing at work, where the term *endangered* has broadened its collocational range to include the nouns *factor, field(s), program* and *study*, and it has been idiomatically customized (Seidlhofer 2011).

Another interesting phenomenon regarding creativity in ELF is metaphORIZING, which occurs when an expression, which reminds an existing ENL idiom, creates a new metaphor in order to fulfil a specific function in the conversation. An example of this process, taken from Pitzl’s work is a conversation from a professional meeting where two speakers are discussing a draft document and one of them uses the expression *head and tails* not with its original ENL meaning but adapting it to that situation. In fact, in this particular context *head and tails* is not used with its idiom significance, but as a metaphor to mean that the document does not need to be fully adapted, and so where the idea of ‘as a whole’ is given by the new metaphor (Pitzl 2009).

Finally, also these natural processes confirm the nature of ELF and how it works. Thus, as it can be seen ELF is inevitably related to ENL, since it draws the ENL grammar and usage. However, in ELF context the linguistic norms are those of speakers from different first language background who seem less interested in matching native speakers’ standards and more in maintaining the communication effective. “In these situations, ELF is both form and function” as Cogo (2008) points out, and “by performing certain

functions it is appropriated by its speakers and changed in form”. So, the result is an interrelationship between form and function, which generates process of change and variation in the form. However, as I have tried to underline, and Cogo argues “ELF is a new and stimulating field of investigation and a lot of work remains to be done” (Cogo 2008). Also, because time flies and the world changes, societies, cultures and languages evolve, and so does the position and role of English.

CHAPTER 2: MULTILINGUALISM AND ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA IN EUROPE

This chapter will introduce the role of English and of multilingualism in the European Union (EU). As a matter of fact, recent research studies on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) have taken into consideration its multilingual and transcultural perspective and have forged the term English as a multilingua franca. Here I will examine how this perspective can be collocated in Europe and the criticism that this definition of ELF has raised.

2.1 EU Language policy

“United in diversity” is the motto of the European Union and clearly underlines the attention the European Union has for respecting its cultural and linguistic diversity. This is also stated in article 3 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU): “it [the European Union] shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced” (Article 3 (4) TEU). Moreover, the Union cherishes the educational field and, therefore: “Union action shall be aimed at developing the European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States, while fully respecting cultural and linguistic diversity” as article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union claims (Article 165 (2) TFEU). In 1958 the languages of the member states became also the EU's official languages, which are now 24: Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish and Swedish. These are all established in the Regulation No. 1 of the European Economic Community. Here are also defined the three working languages, which are French, English and German (Sasse, Milt 2024).

The language policy presented in these articles and regulations forms the basis and the perspective of the European Union. In order to put them into practice, some objectives have been set. The EU takes care of its linguistic diversity and promotes various programmes for teaching and learning foreign languages, in particular member states' languages, as one of the objectives of the language policy is that every citizen should be

an expert of two other languages than their mother tongue. Furthermore, the EU is also involved in projects and acts to protect member states' minorities. Not only does the EU aim at promoting multilingualism and protecting diversity, but it has also identified language learning as an important priority. Therefore a vast number of policies and projects have been conducted to support research on languages by creating useful tools such as: the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which helps evaluating people's language competence; the European School Education Platform, which promotes innovative teaching methods; the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe; and the European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning, which aims at encouraging innovation and excellence in language teaching and at helping people learning languages proficiently. Numerous activities, programmes and projects have been promoted such as the Erasmus+ Programme, which facilitates learning and training mobility, the European Day of Languages, and the European Language Label, a reward for creating new language teaching and learning projects (Sasse, Milt 2024).

A relevant role in adopting this language policy is played by the European Parliament. In fact, multilingualism is the basis of its communication strategy. In the Parliament every language of the EU has the same importance, and therefore a translation of most of the documents into all the official languages is usually available and during the parliamentary session every member can speak in any of the EU languages. Resolutions have been recently adopted to increase language learning, in particular a resolution of 2018 highlighted the need for teaching at least two subjects through a non-native language at secondary school level, the so-called Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). Moreover, other resolutions have underlined the risks and challenges of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in protecting linguistic diversity, but on the contrary has also noted some benefits and ways in which AI may facilitate and encourage multilingualism. In a resolution of 2021, the Parliament stressed the need for member states to promote the development of foreign language competency at all levels, specifically in primary and secondary education in order to take steps towards reaching the goal of plurilingualism in Europe (Sasse, Milt 2024).

In addition, the European parliament is strongly committed to the protection of and non-discrimination against linguistic minorities, which every member state has to ensure. Lastly, another noteworthy point was made at a conference held in 2022, where the report stated that the EU should: “Promote multilingualism as a bridge to other cultures from an early age. Minority and regional languages require additional protection, taking note of the Council of Europe Convention on Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The EU should consider setting up an institution promoting language diversity at the European level. From elementary school onwards, it should be mandatory that children reach competence in an active EU language other than their own to the highest possible level. In order to facilitate the ability of European citizens to communicate with wider groups of their fellow Europeans and as a factor of European cohesion, learning of the language of the immediate neighbouring EU Member States in cross border areas and reaching a certifiable standard in English should be encouraged by Member States” (Conference on the Future of Europe- Report on the final outcome 2022) (Sasse, Milt 2024).

To summarise, Europe is strongly committed to the promotion of diversity and multilingualism in all its member states, but also has a major interest in language teaching and in preserving minority languages. This plurilingual and multicultural perspective seems to be in line with the use of English as a lingua franca in intercultural communication. Therefore, English can be seen as a sort of ‘bridge’ between people from different language and cultural backgrounds. In Chapter 1 we have seen how and why English has played a major role worldwide and in various ambits, but what is the role of English in the European Union?

2.2 The use of English in Europe

The European Union (formerly the European Economic Community- EEC) is an international organisation set up after the end of the second world war, constituted of independent nation states, which confer powers on and resources to this institution. Therefore, the EU possesses a series of supranatural powers, some of which concern the linguistic area. Before 1958 European treaties did not mention any rules in linguistic matters. Afterwards they stated that every time a new county joins the European Community its language becomes an official and working language. As it can be seen in

the previous section, where recent language policy is presented, every official document is translated to every official language, and this has been the case since 1958. However, in-house communication, which follows some rules of procedures, are held in the three preferred working languages: English, French or (the less used) German (Trichet 2002).

English was introduced as a vehicular language only in 1973 when the United Kingdom and Ireland joined the Union. At first, it was only used in specific fields such as the economy, technology and science. Gradually English spread to many other sectors, and after 1980s it boomed. As research conducted by Truchot (2001) shows, the use of English was boosted between 1986 and 1999 resulting in a decline of French. As a matter of fact, Truchot (2001) examined the percentages of primary texts produced by the European Commission in the three main working languages. The results revealed that English texts have risen from 26% in 1986, reaching 52% in 1999, while the use of French has fallen from 58% in 1986 to 35 % in 1999 (Truchot 2002). Nowadays another increment can be noted in the use of English as a drafting language since in 2008 it was 72.5%, while in 2020 it reached 85.5% (Leal 2021). However, French still maintains an important role in the European institution, as Wright (2000) states, resulting in a sort of bilingualism, surely because of its history, as it was the language of some founder states and because the locations, where the European Parliament and the European Commission are based, are in French speaking countries (Truchot 2002).

Another study (Labrie 1993) found that officials used French to communicate with one another more than English, while to speak with experts and member states English was the preferred language both for written and oral communication. As the administrative and managerial responsibilities of the Commission increased, so did the use of English in working meetings, reports and programmes. Moreover, in some cases the time needed for translation may be too long and the primary texts may go around in the language they were drafted, English or French (Truchot 2002). Surprisingly in 2016 95% of the European Commission staff used English as the main language for their duties (Leal 2021).

As Truchot (2002) argues, in the EU there is “the tendency to make English a mandatory supranatural language”, although European language policy demands a strong effort to encourage plurilingualism. English seems to be the automatic language of many

institutional co-operation bodies, such as the Eurocorps, a multinational corps headquarters. Moreover, English is also the language used to manage and improve aid and assistance programmes in central and eastern European countries (Truchot 2002).

As mentioned above, Europe is made up of different states and languages, but not only those which are official. In fact, across Europe fifty languages can be identified, with over forty additional so-called small languages, spoken by a limited number of people. Thus, not only is the European Union as a whole a heterogeneous language environment, but also in each of the member states different languages and minorities can be found. Moreover, the facilitation of people's mobility among the member states thanks to open borders, the encouragement of mobility for study or working purposes, and improvements in the political and economic growth of different European countries has rapidly changed the language landscape of each member state, which have been getting more complex, due to the increasing number of minorities and immigrants languages expanding in every state. In this European context, characterised by strong complexity and high linguistic diversity English plays a major role, as it is a compulsory first foreign language in school, and therefore serves as a second language after the official one, and a third language for European speakers of minority languages (Berns, et al. 2007).

English use in Europe is today widely spread among a variety of fields, domains, such as science and technology, diplomacy, international relations, sports, commerce, design, tourism, and it serves for numerous functions and purposes. Now I will explore the fields in which English is mostly used in Europe. Generally, the use of English in the workplace has increased highly as in many European countries it has become a strong requirement. In particular, this has occurred in the field of science and technology as it is the main language of publication and it is widely used at conferences, because of the internationalized features that these fields have gained. Another international working environment is surely business and advertisement, where relations and communications with other countries is important. Additionally, numerous studies, (see for example Gerritsen, van Meurs, & Gujsbers, 1999) have shown that about a third of the television commercials in the Netherlands are partially or entirely in English. Moreover, this does not only concern the Netherlands, because other studies (Martin 2002) have revealed that French television commercials also make considerable use of English. Even in Germany

the use of English in advertising is frequent to reach a larger and international audience, especially young people. However, empirical studies on audiences (Gawlitta 2001) showed that older people generally do not like slogans and commercials in English, and surprisingly it was also found that the use of anglicisms in advertising is not so loved among young people (Berns, et al. 2007).

Another field where English is particularly relevant in Europe is definitely education, as in 2020 it appeared to be the most commonly studied language at upper secondary educational level, with 96% of students learning it, and vocational education level, with 79% of students in the EU (Eurostat 2020). At first it was taught with the aim of gaining the proficiency that would allow people to interact with English native speakers and to speak almost like them, while thanks to the development of a European multilingual and multicultural perspective, as I have explained in the previous chapter, English has gained the role of lingua franca, facilitating interactions with people with different language and cultural backgrounds. Usually, in most of the EU countries English is the first compulsory language in secondary schools, or if not, the one that is the most frequently chosen. In some countries languages have also started to be taught at primary levels of education. As a matter of fact, a great majority of countries introduced language teaching into primary schools, for example France, Germany, the Netherlands. Another interesting phenomenon which is spreading across Europe is education through the medium of another language, also known as bilingual, multilingual, dual language, immersion and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). In many cases English plays the role of the medium of instruction (EMI), but at the same time it could also be the subject of instruction. Although English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) is a new research field, which is developing and therefore its definition may be problematic, it seemed relevant to at least mention it. Macaro (2018) described it as: “the use of the English language to teach academic subject (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English”. This definition surely leads to greater specifications and deeper studies, which are still being conducted, as this field of interest is becoming more important worldwide.

Moreover, English has clearly reached a significant role in higher education both as a medium of instruction and as the subject of instruction. The numbers of universities

across Europe offering courses in English is boosting rapidly. Due to the strong promotion of mobility programme supported by the Union, such as Erasmus+, every European university aims at expanding its education and at attracting foreign students. Not only are an increasing number of higher education courses held in English, but also much of the academic discourse, of the research productivity publications is in English. Therefore, it has become an academic language in Europe (Berns, et al. 2007).

What is more, in Europe English is also widely used in the entertainment world and in all media forms. As a consequence, a vast number of songs written by European singers are in English and this language has a strong impact in film and television among European countries, since Hollywood has long been dominating the world market for cultural products (Truchot 2002).

2.3 English as a dominant language: a threat to multilingualism

The role that English has rapidly gained in Europe and in the world has also been the object of further reflections and contradictions. One idea that took hold in 1990s sees the spread of English as a sort of dominance over other languages. To be specific, Phillipson (1992) defines English linguistic “imperialism” and how it originated from the contribution and diffusion that English language teaching has had worldwide.

In order to understand what this idea of English linguistic imperialism consists of, I will present its theoretical foundations. According to Phillipson (1992) a working definition for English linguistic imperialism is: “that the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstruction of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages”, where the term structural is used to refer to material properties and cultural immaterial ones. In this case, English linguistic imperialism is considered as one particular type of linguicism, which is defined by Skutnabb-Kangas (1988) as: “ideologies, structures and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, regulate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language”. Therefore, inequalities which are both structural and cultural designate more material resources to English rather than to other languages, resulting in advantages for proficient English speakers.

The key to English linguistic imperialism, according to Phillipson, lies in two phenomena which relate to the language education system. The first one is the so called anglocentricity, the term that stands for the act of judging other cultures comparing it to one's own; by doing so English devalues other languages. The second phenomenon described is professionalism, which consists of considering methods and techniques followed in ELT sufficient for understanding and analysing language learning in general. Phillipson (1992) argues that “anglocentricity and professionalism legitimate English as the dominant language by rationalizing activities and beliefs which contribute to the structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages”.

The roots of English linguistic imperialism can be found, according to Phillipson (2008), in the expansion of the US empire and in US foreign policy over two centuries. Over the years cultural and institutional connections between UK and USA have been intertwined and contributed to the foundation of the so-called World English⁵. Globalisation had a strong impact on the spread of English and on its internalisation, as it enlarged its dominance also across Europe and in various domains, as I have discussed in the previous paragraph. Phillipson (2008), lastly, underlines a shift of linguistic imperialism into linguistic neoimperialism, based on what had happened to the American empire. Thus, global English can be seen “as the capitalist neoimperial language that serves the interests of the corporate world and the governments that it influences, so as to consolidate state and empire worldwide. This dovetails with the language being activated through molecular processes of linguistic capital accumulation in space and time” (Phillipson 2008). To conclude, linguistic neoimperialism generates inequalities between English speakers and speakers of other languages through exploitative dominance, marginalisation and as it penetrates supremacist ideologies in discourse. Finally, Phillipson (2008) supports the creation of language policies which implement linguistic diversity and enable people to see their ethical human rights respected.

2.4 The EU paradox: de jure multilingualism vs de facto monolingualism

Considering European language policy, it can be said that it is not so accurate and specific, and some lacks and contradictions seem to emerge. Primary EU laws are the

⁵ See Philippon 2008 for a deeper and complete analysis of the birth of linguistic imperialism.

objective and basic rules that allow the Union to function and consist of treaties and charters of fundamental rights. However, as Leal (2021) argues “their formulation is often vague” and what seems to be lacking is the specific actions which should be taken to achieve these goals, as these are generally presented in secondary law. In fact, their emphasis is on the respect of the Union’s linguistic diversity and on preserving multilingualism, as several articles in treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental rights suggest. Instead, secondary laws, made up of regulations, directives, decisions, recommendations and opinions, describe the projects and actions, which should be established to give rise to the objectives described in the primary law (Leal 2021).

Leal (2021) proposes three interesting critical points while analysing the EU language policy on multilingualism. Firstly, she claims that although all 24 official languages formally and legally possess an equal status, informally a distinction between official and working languages is made; statistics and various EU sources underline the special role and status that English has in the EU. A second point is made by Leal regarding the actual realisation and the possibilities to promote and protect multilingualism. She argues that since language policy is not an EU competence, but “responsibility of individual Member states” (European Commission 2012) and the principles of conferral, subsidiarity and proportionality lie in the EU’s jurisdiction, any effective language policy can be adopted. However, it is undeniable that the EU funds and promotes numerous projects and initiatives, which contribute to the development of multilingualism in all member states, but she argues that “the level on which they operate and their scope is modest, if not because of the hurdles of jurisdiction, then for budgetary reason”. She, therefore, suggests an enlargement of EU competence. The third issue raised by Leal is that of minority languages which are not yet recognised as official. All of this demonstrates that EU language policy is only a *de jure* multilingualism and a *de facto* monolingualism, as the issues raised above seem to confirm.

Thus, according to EU policy a language can be seen as an important element of one’s identity, culture and view of the world, but on the contrary, if we analyse the use of languages that the Union makes, what emerges is an image of languages as only instrumental to communicate. This is demonstrated by the distinction between official and procedural languages and by the dominance that English has gained in the EU, proved

by the data mentioned above and evidence collected by academics, politicians, Brussels correspondents and members of Parliament. The harmful paradox that seems to emerge and should be addressed by the Union is the EU's *de jure* multilingualism and *de facto* monolingualism, as multilingualism is one the European common grounds along with language equality and it should not be threatened by the 'unofficial' role of English (Leal 2021). How can this paradox be solved? Leal (2021) claims that no remedy will fully solve this problem, but surely language policies may be a useful tool in that direction.

It is interesting to observe that this critical perspective on the language policy of the European Union was presented in 2003 by Phillipson. In fact, in his book (2003) he presents and describes the functioning of the EU language system and the fallacies of its language policy, which he calls *laissez faire* language policy. In the last chapter, he therefore underlines the need for actions on language policies. In particular, he claims that "Europe must therefore address: sociolinguistic realities, including big and small languages; issues of cost in relation to the use and learning of a range of languages; matters of principle, language as human right; issues of practicability and efficiency of multilingualism; issues of political will and power" (Philippson 2003:175-176).

2. 5 English as a Lingua Franca in Europe

As far as the role of English in Europe is concerned, a separate discussion needs to be made in regard of ELF. In fact, it is also located in the multilingual paradigm and as Leal (2021) argues "the EU's efforts to foster multilingualism are tantamount to symbolic politics, and its language policy in its institutions is very much non-existent, so the adoption of English as a lingua franca of sorts is the ad hoc, unofficial "solution" to the "problem" of multilingualism". In this case when considering ELF, a clarification needs to be made regarding the difference between languages for communication and languages for identification. ELF is clearly a language for communication since it is a useful tool to make people understood in international contexts. ELF speakers do not use language for identificatory purposes, as their focus is on facilitating communication among individuals with different native languages and especially "because ELF is not a national language, but a mere tool bereft of collective cultural capital, it is a language usable neither for identity marking, nor for a positive disposition towards an L2 group, nor for a desire to

become similar to valued member of this L2 group- simply because there is no definable group of ELF speakers” (House 2003: 560).

Furthermore, since many researchers (see for example Phillipson 2003) have criticised ELF and have considered it a threat to multilingualism, many ELF scholars have shown the opposite. House (2003) is one of them and, hence, she argues that ELF may generate the opposite effect. She claims that the spread of ELF might encourage minority language speakers to affirm the importance of their local language, encouraging a deeper emotional connection with their culture, history, and traditions. As a result, local languages and cultural practices may often gain strength in response to the proliferation of ELF (House 2003).

Moreover, many sociolinguistic studies have shown an interconnection between ELF and multilingualism. In fact, the ELF phenomenon has been observed in a translanguaging prospective as a flexible, fluid and hybrid sets of languaging practices. In particular, ELF is essentially multilingual, because of the capacity of its speakers to communicate with one another by putting together various resources and knowledge, and is highlights the practice of translanguaging, where languages are used as part of an integrated sociolinguistic repertoire, because it shows how languages are blended and exploited together in communication (Cogo 2016). Finally, Cogo (2016) also confirms House’s thesis on the positive effects of ELF in promoting multilingualism in Europe by presenting a study conducted by Peckham (2012) on a group of Erasmus students in new EU member countries, which showed that ELF facilitated the entrance, establishment and consolidation of their learning community and helped them to join multilingual environments and to learn local languages.

In order to deepen the understanding of the role that English has in Europe and what implications ELF has on it, the next chapter will analyse and discuss the opinions and experiences of six people among students, professors and members of the technical administrative staff of the University of Padua.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE INTERVIEWS

This chapter will discuss the position that English has in our world, and in particular what role English as a Lingua Franca has in our society by presenting and analysing the results of a series of interviews which I conducted with students and staff from the University of Padova. I will then discuss the findings in the light of the literature on the topic.

3.1 Data and methodology

As the previous chapters pointed out, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) is a contentious issue among scholars and its role and position is arguable. Therefore, in order to develop this topic, I decided to explore stakeholders' experiences of ELF and opinions about it. In order to do this, I conducted six interviews with different academic figures: language professors, language students and members of the public administration staff working in the area of International Relations at the University of Padova, who had experience and knowledge on this matter. The interviews took place mainly online, through the online platform Zoom, while one was conducted in person and they were semi-structured interviews (SSI). In the literature, this term tends to be used to refer to interviews conducted in a conversational way, with each respondent interviewed individually. The type of questions generally used in SSI are both closed and open-ended, but they are usually followed by follow-up questions. Therefore, they may last longer than other kinds of interviews, as the conversation may not always follow the pre-set questions and it may wander around unexpected issues (Adams 2015).

I used SSI, because I wanted the interviews to be as spontaneous as possible and to let the respondents fully express their opinions and experiences introducing new ideas and topics. This is one of the advantages of this type of interview, as Karatsareas (2022) also claims. As a result, "owing to their direct nature, researchers can use interviews to build substantial sets of rich and in-depth data relatively quickly while at the same time having the opportunity to establish good rapport with participants", as Karatsareas (2022:101) goes on to argue. Another strength highlighted by Karatsareas (2022) is that SSIs help generating an environment, where the interviewees can express their opinions on language in their own way and with their own words "around their lived experience" (Karatsareas 2022:101).

The open-ended set of questions, which I had previously prepared, were divided into three main areas: the first one was about the respondents' work and studies, the second part was about the role of English in their lives and in Italy, as an European country, and the last part was about ELF and the future of English. The answers were recorded and transcribed, via Microsoft word, in order to be analysed in the following sections. My approach to the analysis will be both quantitative and qualitative and, since I will first present a keyword and corpus analysis.

I have reported in Table 1 the information about the corpus of interviews; the first column displays the date when the interview took place, the second the interviewee's initials, the third their occupation and the last one the number of words of the answers' transcription. As the last column suggests, the length of the interview varies according to the respondent. This suggests an heterogeneity in the answers given and it may be due to a different level of the participant's expertise or a particular character trait.

Table 1. Corpus Information

DATE	INTERVIEWEE	OCCUPATION	NUMBER OF WORDS
24/06/2024	PD	Student	3196
24/06/2024	MM	Student	4169
27/06/2024	MBG	Admin staff	1280
27/06/2024	DD	Admin staff	4160
28/06/2024	KA	Professor	1712
1/07/2024	FH	Professor	1282

The tools I used for my analysis are AntConc 4.2.4, which is a freeware software for corpus analysis used to analyse concordance in texts; and lextutor.ca/key/, a website which generates keywords from texts. I will go on to identify the major themes which arose in the interviews, and secondly I will report what I believe to be the most relevant and thoughtful contributions.

3.2 Keywords and concordance analysis

I will first focus on the keywords which emerged from the six interviews. The term keyword refers to a word or concept, which plays a major role in a text or speech since it appears numerous times. As Corrin et al. (2022:2) suggest: “keywords are also used by researchers conducting systematic reviews of a topic in order to provide an overview and synthesis of a range of research outcomes. Identifying relevant keywords and building this into a search strategy is key to performing a robust systematic review”.

In order to identify them, I copied and pasted all the transcriptions of my interviews in the keyword extractor provided by the website lextutor.ca. The keywords identified by the website are 51, but I have reported the most relevant in Table 2, where the first column represents the number of times more frequent this word is in the interviews than in the website corpus labelled bnc_speech_fams_per10mill.

Table 2. Most relevant keywords

FREQUENCY	KEYWORD
5576.00	pidgin
1859.00	multilingual
929.50	exposition
542.12	nuance
371.70	authentic
320.48	native
177.00	immigrant

169.00	utilitarian
169.00	fluent
163.59	language
118.00	pronunciation
108.45	English
99.13	dialect
85.47	neutral
82.60	mandatory
80.83	imitate
68.83	predominant
54.68	hierarchy
53.06	international
51.16	origin
45.06	expose
42.72	perspective
39.30	accent
36.09	privilege
32.86	translate
32.54	communicate
30.19	study

Some of the keywords suggested are predictable and correspond to the topic I am dealing with, such as “pidgin”, “multilingual”, “native”, “fluent”, “language”, “English”, “predominant”. On the other hand, there are some words which surprisingly recur many times in the interviews, such as “exposition”, “nuance”, “mandatory”, “hierarchy”, “origin”, “expose”, “privilege”. Although these do not strictly refer to the main topic of my research, these words may be linked to the respondent’s experience and their high frequency may suggest that some participants share common experience or opinions. However, it is relevant to specify that not all these themes occur in all the interviews, but are surely important to one or two of them, due to the uniqueness that characterises each of the interviews, and of the different opinions of the interviewees, as mentioned below. Moreover, analysing the transcribed texts with antConc it emerged that some of the most frequent words in the interviews, apart from personal pronouns such as I and you, conjunctions, articles and prepositions, are: English, language, people, lingua franca and international, as can be seen in Table 3. I have chosen to display in Table 3 only the most relevant words, listed in the first column (Headword), which came out of the analysis. In the second column (Rank) they are ranked from the most to the least frequent (from 1 to 100); the frequency is displayed in the third column (Freq), while the last one (Range) shows the number of texts in which each word appears. The words English, language, people, lingua franca and international agree with the main topics of my research, while the high frequency of the verb think confirms that the interviews reported the respondents’ opinions and thoughts.

Table 3. Most frequent words

HEADWORD	RANK	FREQ	RANGE
English	12	291	6
Language	17	171	6
Think	32	95	6
Will	37	83	5

Italian	39	76	6
Say	41	73	6
Languages	45	69	6
People	46	65	6
Feel	52	55	5
Different	60	46	6
Use	62	45	6
Students	64	44	6
Speak	69	41	5
Life	72	37	6
Lingua Franca	79	33	6
International	81	32	6
Right	81	32	6
Mean	85	31	6
Need	85	31	5
Same	85	31	5
Course	94	28	5
Speaking	96	27	6
Time	96	27	5

Important	100	26	6
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In addition, I also explored the collocations of some of the most frequent words, which seemed most relevant to my research. I have reported them in Tables 4, 5 and 6. Not only have I checked the collocation of some frequent words, but also of some keywords suggested by lextutor; in particular, I have analysed the words: English, communication and native, since they had the most interesting collocations.

Table 4. Collocations of English

COLLOCATE	FREQUENCY (LEFT AND RIGHT)
SPEAK	26
LINGUA FRANCA	22
SPEAKERS	15
BUSINESS	8
PIDGIN	9

Table 5. Collocations of Communication

COLLOCATE	FREQUENCY (LEFT AND RIGHT)
FOR	7
INTERCULTURAL	2
FEAR	2
WORKPLACE	2
SKILLS	2

Table 6. Collocations for Native

COLLOCATE	FREQUENCY (LEFT AND RIGHT)
SPEAKERS	6
BELONGS	2

As Table 4, 5 and 6 show, some words have similar collocation such as English and native, which collocates with speak and speakers, suggesting that in most of the interviews a focus is placed on native speakerism and on spoken English. This is also confirmed by the collocation communication skills, even though it occurs only twice. The word English collocating with lingua franca and the word communication with intercultural agree with the main themes of my research.

To conclude, some common themes are surely English, ELF, languages and internationalisation. Also communication seem to play an important role along with speakers, spoken language, accents and pidgin language. Nevertheless, another topic brought up in most of the interviews is nativeness, along with the idea of belonging and possessing a language, the fear of speaking, and the need to imitate the authentic language.

3.3 Thematic Analysis

In this section I will focus on meaning across the transcribed texts in order to identify some common themes, shared thoughts and experiences. To do so I will develop a thematic analysis (TA), which is a method of qualitative data analysis commonly used in psychology. This technique consists of generating codes, small units reporting relevant information to the research questions or to the main topic, which will help creating a framework to report and summarise data (Clark and Braun 2017).

Table 7. Themes list

THEME	CODE
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1	Everyday Use of English
2	English for Communication
3	Belonging and Possessing the Language
4	English Privilege
5	Deep-rooted Issues around Race and Inequality
6	Utilitarian View
7	Language and Power
8	Nativeness and Native-speakerism
9	Need for Change

I will start by reporting the themes which appear in most of the interviews, which are listed above in Table 7. Something that pool the interviews together is what I have called “Everyday Use of English” (Theme 1). In fact, all the six interviewees have claimed that English plays a main or major role in their life, because not only is it their working language, but they all agreed that it is part of themselves. Two interviewees defined themselves English native speakers, while one person considered herself multilingual, and the other three are fluent in English and use it every day both in their working/studying life and their leisure time.

Another code I have traced, related to an everyday use of English, is what I have called “English for Communication” (Theme 2). In fact, all the interviewees have underlined the important role that English plays in their lives, and in particular in communication, mainly with students and colleagues from other universities. Additionally, something that two people directly mentioned, but I have perceived in all of the interviews, is a strong sense of “Belonging and Possessing the Language” (Theme 3) because of a certain ease in expressing themselves and making themselves understood better than in other

languages. Personally, I was positively struck by one contribution, where one person associated English with an idea of freedom, a safe place which cuts down any hierarchy imposed by her home country's society. I found it very enriching and I think that in some way it may be not that far from my personal representation of English as a Lingua Franca, as for me it brings a similar image with it.

Likewise, one of the major themes is surely what I have coded as "English Privilege" (Theme 4). This idea, which is once again mentioned in all the interviews, consists of seeing English as a sort of privilege, because it allows you to do things that you normally could not do, such as travelling, meeting people from other cultures, but also, and more importantly, it makes it easier to find a job, a better job or it raises you to a higher social class, allowing you to be considered lucky, wealthy and important. In particular, one of the interviewees shared her experience in her home country and she claimed that there English "is not just a subject that is taught in school, it is about access to education, it is about access to knowledge, it is about access to the Internet even". Therefore, in such a society, English enables you to live a better life, but also here in Europe, as another interviewee said, it is widely believed that: "because you know English the doors will automatically open for you and you will immediately get a job."

On the other hand, as a result, this sense of privilege related to English could intensify "Deep-rooted Issues around Race and Inequality" (Theme 5). Disparity and inequality in possibilities and opportunities is also a theme that came up in three out of six interviews. If, on one hand, English allows people to reach their ambitions and better jobs, on the other it implies inequalities and struggles for those who do not have this "privilege". Moreover, one person in an interview underlined an opposite point of view on inequality in the job market, because she explained that while schools and universities put a great deal of effort into promoting English and in welcoming international students, there are still many companies and working contexts which do not take the opportunity of being enriched by international students. All in all, this "English privilege" has also brought up contrasting opinions, but due to the strong importance English has in our society its dominant role is undeniable.

Related to the idea of privilege I have highlighted another pattern of meaning, which I have called "Utilitarian View" (Theme 6), as it has been mentioned in my interviews.

This perspective has been mentioned by three people out of six. According to them, the position English has in our societies reflects this utilitarian view, where people study certain languages not because they like them, but because they are marketable in the job market, they will help them make more money and they help you reach more opportunities. One of the interviewees claimed that: “It is all about the job market and only studying to get a certain job because this is how you lose not only languages but also poetry, literature, arts”. Therefore, the loss of languages is not due to the spread of English, but to this perspective, she believes. Another interviewee stated: “there is also this idea that English, you know, will resolve all the problems”, but she thinks that this is misguided and English is in this way being “overhyped”, probably as a result of this utilitarian perspective.

Furthermore, another pattern of meaning I have identified is “Language and Power” (Theme 7), as it is a recurring theme which characterises four out of six interviews. Hence, when speaking about the role of English in our societies all of the interviewees defined English as a predominant language and its predominance as a result of its power. This supremacy comes from its history, but also from its economic, political power and its worldly open exposition. Considering “language as a tool, that is around us, it is for everybody to use it”, as one person said, is also a tool used internationally to express power, both economic and political, which makes a language predominant and enlarges its prestige, generating negative impacts on less spoken languages.

In the second chapter I mentioned the issue of “Nativeness and Native-speakerism” (Theme 8), which is also a theme present in three out of six interviews. The two English professors I had the opportunity to interview are English native speakers and they explained me that in the past they felt a certain sense of ownership of the language and considered themselves as gatekeepers of their language, but today things have changed, their perspective is different and how they teach English is different, probably also because of the internationalisation of English and the spread of ELF. However, as one student stated, exposure to native speakers is still important, especially when learning a new language, but the learning process should not be based only on imitating natives, because when using, possessing and spreading a language, in some ways, you are going to change it. Therefore no language is neutral, not even English, because when it is spoken

by everyone, they bring their culture in the language. One of the interviewees said: “all languages are alive, they are changed, they are developed by the users and so it is very evident that the English language is changing depending on who the speakers are and how they are using it. And let’s say the traditional gatekeepers of the language, although they think they are still in control, they are not really in control.” In addition, another student I interviewed stated: “it is inevitable that you will spread your original language when you have the hegemonic power, but it will come back to you in ways that maybe are not expected and you have to deal with it. It is the price you pay to be a world power, a planetary power.” This is what is happening with English, and particularly with English as a *Lingua Franca*.

Finally, the last questions of my interviews were about ELF and its future and the interviewees’ opinions seem to be fairly different. However, a recurrent theme which I have identified is the “Need for Change” (Theme 9). Five out of six people, although in different ways either highlighted the need for changes and improvements, or predicted such transformation of the English language itself, of ELF and of world power.

Overall, from the interviews it appears that most of the respondents believe that English will keep its importance for many years, but in a long term perspective its position and prestige may change according to the geopolitical situation. Three out of six interviewees think that new languages may emerge and gain importance in the international overview such as Chinese and Spanish. Only one person also mentioned, beyond new languages becoming a *lingua franca*, new technological developments and improvements particularly in the language resources, such as collaborative translation or translanguaging. Three people highlighted the importance language teaching has, especially Teaching English as a Second or Foreign language (TEFL) and how teaching policies should be adjusted, they should include ELF and should go beyond that, using it to promote multilingualism instead of using it to promote themselves. One of the interviewees described ELF as a weapon, which nowadays has become a “self-promoting tool.” She was very sceptical and critical about that, but what she wanted to underline is the need for research studies, changes and improvements in our societies with special regard to ELF.

With regard to the near future, English will certainly still be the lingua franca, but as one person underlined: “it is possible that different varieties of English will develop, will emerge because of the features that are emerging in English as a lingua franca, so English as we know will change and I think there will be different Englishes that will be different to American English, British English, South African English. I think there will be different types of English as a lingua franca.”

3.4 Final remarks

In this last section of the chapter I would like to share some personal reflections on the topic. As this dissertation aimed to investigate the role ELF has nowadays in Europe and in promoting multilingualism, the interviews I conducted were certainly enriching and thoughtful. They confirmed some of the ideas the literature I had analysed in the first chapters pointed out and how this topic is new and debatable.

The spread of English is undeniable as is its world predominance and its use as a lingua franca. All together this has had many consequences which have repercussions at different levels. Firstly, it has increased disparity and inequalities, particularly in the job market and in underdeveloped societies. Inevitably the empowerment of the English language is damaging some other, less spoken and minority languages, which are not being taught and preserved. However, through ELF many positive changes are also occurring, in the way English is taught, thought and considered. Teachers and scholars are trying to set a distance between native speakers and English users and the latter are the protagonists of many evolutions in the language itself. New perspectives, points of view and awareness on the power of English are growing and developing. ELF, if used properly and correctly, can be a useful tool to promote multilingualism and to raise tolerance and to embrace multiculturalism in our societies. Why could it not also be used to promote minorities, new cultures and new life styles? Right now the lingua franca is English but it might not always be so. Who knows what future will bring? What we should do is to invest in ELF and promote it, through policies and at international levels. It is only a matter of making it concrete and not just a concept or an instrument to self-promote each country or the European Union, and I would argue that the only way to do so, as Phillipson (2003) and Leal (2021) claim, is through language policies and changes in education, in teaching and learning methods.

One of the reasons why I chose to investigate this topic is because I had the possibility to experience the use of ELF personally. In fact, last year I went on an Erasmus exchange for six months in Germany, since I am also studying German. There I was able to practise and improve my German, but however the language I used the most was surely English and not only because I was taking many courses in English, but because it was the easiest way to communicate with other Erasmus students, especially those who could not speak German. Therefore in this context we were using English as the main means of communication, because it was our common language since we were from different parts of the world. In my opinion, I believe English is also the only foreign language which enabled me to have the most sincere and deeper conversations, because otherwise I think I would have never been able to do it in any other foreign language, other than English. Probably this is because of the importance the Italian, but probably the European, educational system sets on English, according to the role it has internationally.

Nevertheless, since the first conversations I had with the other international students, I felt that the English we were using was different, somewhat other than the English I was taught. In those situations I realised I was not paying attention to the formality of the language, but to making myself understood and sometimes this involved using German, Italian or completely new words. Yet, thanks to ELF I was able not only to make myself understood and to understand others, but also to share my own culture, my own language and my own lifestyle with them, and at the same time I was learning and discovering theirs. I met people and built relationships, which I would have not been able to build without English.

To conclude, English surely has an undeniable power, both economically and politically, but if used properly as a lingua franca, it may also have a stronger power to connect people, to build intercultural bridges and to limit differences, disparities and inequalities.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation explored the important position English has in our society, particularly in international communication with ELF. In some countries knowing English seems to lead to privileges and to give easier access to the job market, although in some cases it is not always like this. It may be argued that this role of English has been in some ways overhyped and it may be suggested that policies and regulations should help reducing the gap which has been created between English and the other languages. Moreover, ELF could be another useful tool to promote multilingualism and to reduce the superiority of English. However, in order for it to be helpful, it should be understood and investigated according to its changing nature and to its distance from the language spoken by its native speakers.

As this dissertation has argued, languages are undeniably related to power and they are indispensable tools, which help and encourage communication and understanding. However, societies and, particularly, political power may abuse those tools generating inequalities; this may be the case of English. This is one important result which came out of this study. Therefore, even ELF may be considered as a double-edged sword, which should be protected but at the same time used properly to promote intercultural communication and mutual understanding, and not to set boundaries or differences.

An important shift in the way English is perceived, especially at an educational level, has emerged from the data I collected. A new way of considering and perceiving English is developing, taking distance from the native speakers' language. However, much effort still needs to be made in order to spread the idea that everyone can possess and make their own use of English according to their interests and needs, and that in this perspective there are no gatekeepers of the language but just users. Since languages are tools they can be adjusted and modified by its speakers to make the communication easier and understandable and this is the purpose of ELF. Therefore research in this field is undeniably important and it is relevant also for Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI).

The limits of this research are clear, as it is based on the opinions of a restricted number of people interested in the field. However, this leaves room for further research, which could be conducted on a larger scale and among European citizens in a number of

countries, in order to investigate their perspectives and suggestions. Furthermore, what my dissertation aimed to investigate was also the relevance ELF has in Europe, so as to highlight the need for future research in this field, to better understand this phenomenon and how it can be used, even at international levels, to promote multilingualism and mutual understanding of different cultures.

Lastly, with this dissertation I also wanted to look at the future and at the possible directions English as a Lingua Franca will take. What emerged from my interviews is that English may still maintain such a role for some years, but in the distant future its place might be replaced by other languages, according to the international and economic changes which will occur. All in all, what I hope the future will bring is a deeper and more thoughtful understanding of the power of English, but also that of any other language which could take its place, may have. I believe that governments and international organisations should set limitations to such a supremacy, through regulations and policies to be taken internationally, in order to use the language as a tool and not as a weapon to enlarge its power or to let other languages die.

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RIASSUNTO IN ITALIANO

La presente tesi ha lo scopo di indagare il ruolo che l'inglese ha assunto in questi ultimi anni all'interno delle nostre società e in particolare all'interno dell'Unione Europea. Nello specifico si concentrerà su un particolare uso della lingua inglese in contesti internazionali, anche noto come "*English as a Lingua Franca*" (ELF)- inglese come lingua franca-, analizzando quali possono essere i limiti e i vantaggi di questo particolare utilizzo dell'inglese. Per fare questo ho condotto sei interviste con diverse personalità dell'ambito accademico, raccogliendo le loro opinioni e le loro esperienze sull'uso e il ruolo dell'inglese in contesti internazionali.

L'argomento principale di questa tesi verrà approfondito in tre capitoli. Il primo capitolo tratterà dell'inglese come lingua franca (ELF), verrà data una definizione di questo termine ripercorrendo gli studi e le ricerche che importanti linguisti hanno svolto su questo tema, partendo dal ruolo che l'inglese ha oggi nelle nostre società e da come ha ottenuto un'importanza del genere. Il secondo capitolo si concentrerà, invece, sul ruolo dell'inglese in Europa, particolare attenzione verrà dedicata alle politiche linguistiche dell'Unione Europea e alla loro prospettiva multilinguistica, da qui riporterò le principali critiche che alcuni studiosi hanno mosso nei confronti dell'inglese come lingua franca. L'ultimo capitolo riporterà, invece, un'analisi dei dati raccolti dalle interviste che ho eseguito. Infine, collegherò questi risultati con le letterature affrontate nei primi capitoli e la mia esperienza personale.

Il termine lingua franca esiste già dall'antichità e veniva usato per descrivere una lingua utilizzata come medium, come lingua comune tra persone che parlano lingue diverse e appartengono a culture diverse. Anche l'inglese ha assunto in maniera sempre maggiore questo ruolo, data l'importanza che ha raggiunto in ambito economico, politico internazionale.

Diverse sono le varietà d'inglese che esistono nel mondo, poiché vari sono i paesi in cui questa lingua è parlata, come Kachru (1999) ha cercato di dimostrare. Agli inizi del Novecento con gli studi del linguista tedesco Hugo Schuchardt fu provata l'esistenza di "lingue miste", nate dal contatto tra più lingue e modificate dai diversi parlanti (Berns 2009). E in seguito a ulteriori sviluppi di queste teorie, molti studiosi hanno, quindi,

provato la differenza tra l'inglese come lingua straniera, l'inglese parlato dai parlanti nativi e l'inglese usato come lingua internazionale (Poppi 2012).

Ma da dove nasce questa diffusione dell'inglese? Le radici dell'importanza di questa lingua sono da ricercare nella storia dell'impero britannico, che fu uno dei più forti e più grandi del mondo. Questo permise loro di estendersi e portare ovunque la loro lingua e cultura. Al termine delle due guerre mondiali la Gran Bretagna, dapprima, e gli Stati Uniti, in seguito, svolsero un ruolo importante, soprattutto nella creazione delle prime organizzazioni internazionali come la Lega delle Nazioni, le Nazioni Unite, la NATO e l'Unione Europea.

Le prime ricerche in campo linguistico sull'inglese come lingua franca (ELF) risalgono ai primi anni Novanta, pertanto tale ambito di ricerca si è sviluppato recentemente. Tra i primi ricercatori ricordiamo Jenkins (2000) che fu tra le prime a dare una definizione di questo uso dell'inglese. I primi studi, condotti sulla comunicazione tramite ELF, analizzarono la pronuncia, il lessico e la grammatica usata da parlanti non nativi inglesi in contesti multiculturali. Da questa analisi emersero i primi tratti caratteristici dell'inglese come lingua franca, che non poteva essere considerata una variante dell'inglese, data la sua fluidità e la facilità con cui i diversi interlocutori superavano qualsiasi barriera linguistica data dal multilinguismo di questi contesti (Jenkins 2015). Due caratteristiche principali dell'inglese come lingua franca sono la variabilità e la capacità di accordarsi tra parlanti per favorire la comunicazione, pertanto la variazione linguistica che si va a creare in queste situazioni sarà vastissima e soggetta a continui cambiamenti. L'inglese come lingua franca nasce, quindi, come qualcosa di completamente diverso dall'inglese usato dai parlanti nativi, data la sua capacità di adattarsi e di cambiare a seconda dei parlanti e della funzione che la lingua svolge in un determinato contesto (Seidlhofer 2005).

L'inglese in Europa svolge innegabilmente un ruolo egemonico rispetto alle altre lingue, dato il suo frequente utilizzo in numerosi ambiti della nostra società, economico, accademico, politico ma anche culturale (Truchot 2002).

Invece le politiche linguistiche dell'Unione Europea sembrano porre grande attenzione allo studio e all'apprendimento di più lingue, come dimostrano molti dei programmi finanziati dall'UE come Erasmus, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). In

questo modo l'UE dovrebbe quindi favorire il multilinguismo, uno dei suoi principi fondanti, promuovendo tutte le 24 lingue ufficiali. Tuttavia sappiamo che all'interno dei singoli stati membri e anche degli organi ufficiali dell'Unione l'inglese è la lingua più usata e quasi privilegiata rispetto alle altre, poiché oltre a essere lingua ufficiale e anche lingua di lavoro (Truchot 2002).

Questa supremazia dell'inglese in Europa ha portato, perciò, lo studioso Phillipson (1992) a criticare il ruolo che l'inglese sta assumendo, parlando del cosiddetto "imperialismo linguistico", che sarebbe una diretta conseguenza dell'anglo centrismo. Pertanto il multilinguismo proclamato e perseguito dall'UE sembrerebbe essere tale solo a livello normativo, *de jura*, ma *de facto* è un monolinguisimo (Leal 2021). Anche l'inglese come lingua franca viene duramente criticato da Phillipson (2003) come una minaccia per il multilinguismo. Tuttavia, gli studiosi dell'ELF come House (2003) e Cogo (2016) hanno dimostrato e stanno continuando a dimostrare il contrario attraverso le loro ricerche, poiché l'inglese come lingua franca potrebbe, invece, favorire e promuovere il multilinguismo.

L'ultimo capitolo, della presente tesi, analizza e confronta i dati che sono emersi dalle sei interviste, che sono state da me eseguite. Le persone intervistate sono: due studentesse, due professoresse e due impiegate dell'ufficio relazioni internazionali, dell'Università di Padova. Le domande riguardano le loro esperienze personali in riferimento all'inglese e in particolare, all'inglese come lingua franca, le loro opinioni sul ruolo che l'inglese svolge nelle nostre società e sul futuro di questa e delle altre lingue straniere.

Il quadro che è emerso è molto eterogeneo, poiché molto diverse sono le singole opinioni degli intervistati. Tutti hanno sottolineato un'inevitabile supremazia dell'inglese che sembra essere diventato quasi un privilegio, che genera quindi disuguaglianze.

Altri temi che sono emersi riguardano, invece, l'affermarsi di una nuova prospettiva nell'apprendimento dell'inglese, che si focalizza, non tanto sull'assomigliare a un parlante nativo, ma sull'esigenza di far arrivare il proprio messaggio all'interlocutore. In questo modo, anche chi sta imparando una nuova lingua può sentire veramente di possederla, poiché la sta usando come strumento per veicolare il suo messaggio facendosi capire, nonostante non sempre rispetti la grammatica o ciò che direbbe un parlante nativo.

Quello che molti intervistati hanno sottolineato è il bisogno di cambiamenti, la necessità di inserire nuove pratiche e nuove politiche linguistiche anche in UE, in modo da limitare e ridurre la supremazia dell'inglese.

Personalmente ritengo che l'inglese come lingua franca, se usato nel modo corretto, potrebbe essere una soluzione per arginare questo problema, in quanto potrebbe favorire la comunicazione interculturale e permettere quindi a persone che parlano lingue diverse e provengono da ambienti culturali differenti di condividere e diffondere la loro cultura.

