

*Fostering awareness of the pedagogical implications
of World Englishes and ELF in teacher
education in Italy*

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Abstract

Teacher education represents an essential step to raise awareness of the sociolinguistic changes brought about by the current pluralization of English and by its lingua franca role. Within the pre-service teacher education programs run at the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Verona, Italy, part of the English language course focused on issues related to World Englishes (WE) and English as a lingua franca (ELF), aiming at fostering awareness of and active reflection upon their pedagogical implications. After taking into consideration recent developments in WE- and ELF-aware teacher education, we will report on findings from a research study involving trainee teachers attending the aforementioned courses for English in academic years 2012-13 to 2014-15. The main aim of the study has been to investigate whether, how and to what extent trainee teachers' pedagogical knowledge and reasoning about a WE and ELF-informed perspective in teaching practices may undergo a change after attending these courses. Drawing upon different sets of data (questionnaires, reflections in e-learning discussion forums, interviews and final reports), the trainees' increased awareness of and readiness to include a WE- and ELF-informed didactic approach after attending the

course will be discussed, together with implications for foreign language teacher education.

Keywords: World Englishes; English as a lingua franca; teacher education; ELT materials and practices

1. Introduction

The plurality into which English has developed has been extensively documented by studies in World Englishes (WE) and, more recently, English as a lingua franca (ELF). ELF research has shown how English is used as the world's lingua franca, with bilingual speakers of English largely outnumbering speakers for whom English is a native language. Research related to the implications this can have in English language teaching has been carried out both with reference to classroom practices and teacher education: Teachers' awareness and beliefs concerning the pluralistic perspective of WE and the variability of ELF are of primary relevance for any potential shifts in ELT practices to take place. Fostering awareness among experienced and, above all, trainee teachers of the modified contexts where English is employed today should include reflection on its increased plurality (WE) and variability (ELF), on how pedagogic practices can cater for L2 users' communicative needs in "real" contexts of language use, as well as on the "relationship between language models (which are necessarily abstractions) and the variable nature of language in interaction" (Jenkins, Cogo, & Dewey, 2011, p. 17). Indeed, the deep modifications in the use of language(s) in our globalized world, together with the spread and diversification of English, have contributed to the problematization of several topical issues, including the primacy of (idealised) standard models and norms, and the conceptualization of the "native speaker" (NS). As Graddol (2006, p. 114) remarks, from a perspective where English is employed as an international language of communication "native speakers may increasingly be identified as part of the problem rather than the source of a solution" on several grounds. Besides the "cultural baggage" they bring with them, "native speaker accents may seem too remote from the people that learners expect to communicate with; and as teachers, native speakers may not possess some of the skills required by bilingual speakers, such as those of translation and interpreting." Furthermore, "as the English-speaking world becomes less formal, and more democratic, the myth of a standard language becomes more difficult to maintain" (Graddol, p. 115).

Traditional ELT perspectives, based on standard English as a native language (ENL) varieties—generally British or American English—are becoming

socio-linguistically unrealistic: In our “superdiverse” world, basing the teaching of English solely upon standard native varieties is “incomplete and may result in a limited and skewed understanding of who speaks English and for what purposes” (Matsuda, 2012, p. 171). Furthermore, such a monocentric approach can contribute to reinforcing a utopian notion of an “omniscient” NS’s competence (Alptekin, 2002, p. 60; Rajagopalan, 2004, p. 114), conveying a narrow and unfaithful portrait of the multifaceted reality of English, as well as of its uses and users, both for WE and ELF. Even more importantly, it “may lead to confusion or resistance when students are confronted with different types of English users (e.g., from the Outer Circle). Students may be shocked by varieties and uses of English that differ from Inner-Circle English, view them as deficient rather than different, or be disrespectful of such varieties and uses” (Matsuda, 2012, p. 171; cf. also Bockhorst-Heng, 2012, p. 218; McKay & Bockhorst-Heng, 2008).

In order for a shift in perspective to take place, making English language teachers aware of these issues appears, thus, essential, first of all because it can familiarize them with the current sociolinguistic reality of the language they are teaching, and secondly since it can foster critical reflection on implications for pedagogical approaches (e.g., Dewey, 2012, 2014, 2015a; Inal & Özdemir, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2011; Widdowson, 2015). Furthermore, it can provide opportunities to critically engage in the evaluation of existing materials, and to devise activities and tasks that are WE- and ELF-aware, adapting and suiting them to each specific learning and teaching context.

As Sifakis (2009, pp. 234-235) remarks, EFL teachers are “language and teaching specialists” who attend university courses to enter the profession; they should thus be informed about the most relevant key aspects both regarding the language and the methodological approaches to teaching English today. This would entail taking into consideration current studies in sociolinguistics (Bayyurt, 2013) of WE and ELF discourse (Sifakis, 2007, 2014), both at a theoretical level and, even more importantly, through reflective practices (Seidlhofer, 2011, Chapter 8), allowing teachers to “become more aware of the variety/ies of English they actually master and teach” (Pedrazzini & Nava, 2010, p. 280), and to actively reflect on what a WE- and ELF-informed pedagogy would mean in practice. According to Matsuda (2009), if trainee teachers

are equipped with the analytical and reflective skills to interpret their encounter with these new concepts, they will not only gain a knowledge base but also be able to use the exposure to these concepts to (re)shape their perception of English and English speakers. (p. 186)

This would enable teachers to “decide whether/to what extent ELF is relevant to their learners in their context” (Jenkins, 2012, p. 492), also taking into account

“real” opportunities for contact with—and use of—English outside class (Giorgis, 2013; Ranta, 2010; Vettorel, 2014) from a socio-constructivist perspective (Kohn, 2015). It could also possibly encourage more flexible attitudes, not least towards a critical appraisal of prevalently norm-focused methodological approaches; this could in turn lead towards pedagogic choices that can be locally tailored and attuned to the students’ (present and future) needs and contexts of use for English, valuing and sustaining a view oriented at what can be “done” with language (Seidlhofer, 2011; Widdowson, 2003, 2012, 2015) from a communicative “outside-the-class” oriented perspective, rather than seeing it “only” as a school subject, both in language and in (inter)cultural terms.

1.1. Issues in ELF and teacher education

Seidlhofer (2011, p. 205) has suggested that a teacher education curriculum should foster “understanding in teachers of how the language they are studying and will be teaching figures in a more general framework of communication.” Besides raising awareness of the modified reality of English and of its plurality, one of the related objectives would be to promote reflection upon the challenges for “established ways of thinking” in ELT (Widdowson, 2012, 2015). This would entail problematizing broader (pedagogical) issues, allowing “teachers to become more aware of the ‘cultural’ nature of existing principles and re-examine these in a critical light” through active reflection on how, and where, theory and practice meet, and “develop their individual pedagogies in response to what they encounter through exposure to theory and research” (Dewey, 2015a, p. 132). Such opportunities for reflection could work towards the realization that norms “are continually shifting and changing” (Seidlhofer, 2008, p. 4), particularly for ELF, challenging and “counteract[ing] the ‘code-fixation’ of much current language pedagogy that tends to be focused on developing proficiency in language forms rather than an awareness of the nature of the language itself and its creative potential” (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 205).

However, a plurilithic approach to WE, and even more to ELF and its pedagogic implications, has been met with resistance on several fronts (e.g., Kuo, 2006; Maley, 2010; Sewell, 2013; Swan, 2012; see also Seidlhofer, 2011), mainly on the ground that a standard (single) variety of English is needed in teaching and learning terms. Such resistance is well summarised in the PESTS acronym, standing for “‘Practicality’ (not practical to teach different types of English), ‘Efficiency’ (just a waste of time), ‘Standards’ (need to learn standard native English), and ‘Simplicity’ (don’t like to be confused, keep things simple)” (Marlina, 2014, p. 9).

Sceptical views towards a plurilithic approach come also from teachers; as Sifakis (2009, p. 235) highlights, one of the dimensions in the ELT profession is

that teachers are “perceived by themselves, and their learners, peers and broader community” as “language [and culture] custodians/guardians.” This aspect, alongside and in line with the traditionally held norm-oriented view of language(s) and language teaching/learning, is likely to account for the dichotomous stances emerging from literature investigating teachers’ views and beliefs towards Englishes and ELF, with standard varieties and normativity on the one hand, and an acknowledgement of the current plurality in English and of ELF-oriented perspectives on the other (e.g., Blair, 2015; Dewey, 2012, 2014, 2015b; Vettorel, 2015). As Dewey (2012, p. 163) points out, grammatical and norm-abiding accuracy are fundamental tenets in ELT, and standard varieties are thus “seen as the only valid models for the classroom.” This viewpoint is also evident in other recent studies, where teachers’ perceptions of their role as “custodians of English for their learners” (Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2015b, p. 125) and their “duty to correct” (Vettorel, 2015) is related both to the place standard English retains, and should continue to retain, in pedagogic practices, and to the extent to which a “flexible” approach can be realized as far as error correction is concerned (Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2015b, p. 129).

It has also been pointed out that even teachers who have the opportunity to discuss WE, ELF and the inclusion of ELF-aware practices in ELT as part of their training path seem to show resistance in actually taking on a more inclusive approach to Englishes and ELF in their pedagogic practices.

Research into teacher awareness of ELF concepts has thus far tended to show that there is a growing awareness among some teachers of terms such as ‘World Englishes’, but there is generally limited meaningful integration of these terms and the concepts they represent in existing practices. (Dewey, 2015b, p. 180)

Similarly, Bayyurt and Sifakis (2015b, p. 119) summarize how a “contrasting picture” emerges from studies related to teachers’ perceptions and beliefs: On the one hand, there is a willingness to find out more about ELF and non-native speakers’ successful interaction strategies; on the other hand, there is confusion about what needs to be done to integrate the teaching of such strategies into established, EFL-bound practices” (cf. Blair, 2015; also Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2015).

1.2. WE, ELF and teacher education programmes

In recent years several teacher education projects have been implemented with the specific objective to familiarize prospective and/or experienced teachers with the above issues and to foster reflection upon their implications for teaching practices, frequently including moments for experimentation with materials,

too (e.g., Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2015a, 2015b; Hall, Wikaksono, Qian, & Xu, 2013; Matsuda, 2009 for Japan; Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2015; Wicaksono & Schender Black, 2012). As importantly, concepts related to WE, Global Englishes and English as a lingua franca have to some extent been taken on board since 2008 in teacher training programmes like the Cambridge ESOL DELTA¹ (Dewey, 2012, 2014, 2015b; Dewey & Leung, 2010). It is also worth of notice that the Italian Ministry of Education recent teacher entry papers (2013, 2014; MIUR, DM 95 – Allegato A – Prove e Programmi d'esame, retrievable at http://www.istruzione.it/concorso_docenti/documenti.shtml (last accessed 10 August 2016)) for secondary school teacher qualifications refer to these areas, and that WE- and ELF-related topics are increasingly included in pre-service teacher education courses in the Italian context, too (Bozzo, 2015; Lopriore, 2010; Mansfield & Poppi, 2012; Pedrazzini, 2015; Vettorel & Lopriore, in press).

Generally, the overall aim of these programmes is to provide a theoretical framework for reflection on issues related to the spread of English and its implications for teaching of English as a foreign language. Azuaga and Cavalheiro (2015, p. 118), for example, identify the following aims for a module on ELF as part of English studies courses: “to become aware of the implications of ELF in communication and pedagogy, as well as to confront and change their opinions by providing them with hands-on information” in order to critically reflect upon their suppositions and explore new possible paths of action. In addition, the course aimed at developing “a critical awareness towards issues like intercultural competence, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, World Englishes, among other topics” (p. 118) from which different options in the language classroom could be explored. Gimenez, Calvo, and El Kadri (2015, pp. 227-228) highlight similar objectives for a teacher education course in Brazil, where contents included key issues such as “the spread of English in the world, *Englishes* and their implications for teaching and learning, grammar issues arising from interactions among non-native speakers and the ownership of English” to be dealt with in a reflective way within an ELF-oriented pedagogic perspective, also through devising ELF-aware teaching activities as part of the course. The programme successfully managed to provide trainees with perspectives on ELF and English varieties, and on how to include them in teaching, as well as on intelligibility as “more important than achieving a standard native-speaker variety” (p. 234).

Objectives similar to the ones outlined above were part of the TFA and PAS pre-service teacher education courses run at the University of Verona, as will be illustrated in the following sections.

¹ Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults.

2. The study: Fostering awareness of WE and ELF in TFA and PAS teacher education courses

In Italy, since 2012 would-be teachers are requested to attend university-run courses, namely Tirocinio Formativo Attivo (TFA) and Percorso Abilitante Speciale (PAS), which include both a general part on didactics and a more specific one in close connection with the trainees' disciplinary area. Unless participants have at least 3 years' teaching experience to attend PAS courses, a consistent practicum (19 ECTS) is to be carried out as an integral part of the TFA programme.

2.1. Context and participants

Since the academic year 2012-2013 the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at the University of Verona has been involved in both TFA and PAS teacher education: TFA programmes for prospective language teachers of English, Spanish, German and French were offered in 2012-13 (lower secondary school) and 2014-15 (lower and upper secondary school). PAS courses were activated in 2013-14 and 2014-15 and have been offered in 2015-16 for English and Spanish.

One of the two modules in the English language course (6 ECTS/36 hours for PAS and 3 ECTS/18 hours for TFA) focused on WE, ELF and their pedagogical implications. The module was placed at the beginning of the course so that it would represent a reference framework also for the following lessons dealing respectively with lesson planning, material evaluation and the development of language skills. The following aspects were dealt with in the module:

- the historical and socio-cultural factors responsible for the spread of English and its current pluralization (WE), including exemplifications of language variation;
- ELF: characteristics, speakers and contexts of use;
- reflection on the pedagogical implications of WE and ELF, including a critical evaluation of ELT coursebooks, and the creation of WE- and ELF-aware lesson plans and classroom activities.

After a theoretical introductory phase, pair and group reflective activities were carried out and then shared in class and in the course e-learning forums. Since 2012, a total of 58 teachers have attended the TFA English courses and 81 the PAS ones. As Table 1 shows, the majority of participants were women for both PAS and TFA courses, and generally TFA trainee teachers were younger than those attending PAS courses.

Table 1 TFA/PAS participants' gender and teaching experience

Academic year and course ²	2012/13	2014/15	2013/14	2014/15
	TFA 1	TFA 2	PAS 1	PAS 2
Male	14%	14%	9%	3%
Female	86%	86%	91%	97%
Teaching experience				
Less than 5 years	79%	76%	61%	69%
5-10 years	0%	14%	35%	26%
10-15 years	14%	3%	4%	0%
More than 15 years	7%	7%	0%	5%

Although having at least 3 years' teaching experience was mandatory to attend PAS courses, as can be seen in Table 1, all participants had at least some years of experience as foreign language teachers, gained after they completed their degree in foreign languages. Most trainees attending PAS1 had worked at school for less than 5 years, and many of them between 5 and 10 years. The great majority had less than five years' teaching experience at different school levels, more frequently in primary and lower secondary schools.

2.2. Research design

The main aim of the present case study has been to investigate whether, how and to what extent trainee teachers' beliefs and "pedagogic knowledge" (Borg, 2006, p. 49) about the inclusion of a WE- and ELF-informed perspective in their teaching practices would undergo a change after attending the aforementioned Module 1 on WE and ELF, part of the teacher education course they attended.

The data were collected by means of both primary and secondary sources. Primary factual, behavioural and attitudinal data (Dörnyei, 2010) were gathered through a questionnaire. In the initial phase of the study, that is, for TFA1 and PAS1 courses, one single questionnaire was administered, to be compiled partly at the beginning and partly at the end of Module 1. The questionnaire was divided into five main sections: (a) personal background, (b) personal and professional relations with the English language, (c) students and English outside school, (d) English, Englishes and ELT, and (e) ELF. The 24 questions included closed-ended items (Likert scale and multiple-choice) as well as open, clarification and short-answer questions.

² Questionnaire responses have been coded specifying the courses for each academic year, assigning them a progressive number; the initials of participants and the contexts of data are also indicated: forum discussions (F), final reports (FR), interviews (INT). Data in the tables refer to the questionnaires that were returned.

In the second phase of the study (TFA2, PAS2), in order to further expand the investigation related to how teachers would take into consideration a WE- and ELF-informed approach in their classroom practices after attending Module 1, the questionnaire was subdivided into two parts, handed out at the beginning and at the end of Module 1 respectively; the initial questionnaire was a slightly modified version of the previous one, and a part investigating the respondents' educational background was added, for a total of 26 questions. Both the single and the initial/final questionnaires were piloted before the courses. It was made clear that participation in the questionnaire survey was voluntary and anonymous; the questionnaires were completed individually, partly during the lessons. Consent for all data included in the study was granted by participants. Table 2 shows the ratio between the number of attendees for each course and the number of questionnaires that were returned.

Table 2 Total number of questionnaires/trainees

Academic year and course	No. of questionnaires/trainees	No. of initial questionnaires/trainees	No. of final questionnaires/trainees
2012/13 TFA1	7/7		
2013/14 PAS1	22/42		
2014/15 TFA2		43/51	27/51
2014/15 PAS2		29/39	24/39

Quantitative analysis was conducted for answers to close-ended and open questions. Since the final questionnaire was specifically aimed at investigating more in depth a possible change in the trainee teachers' "pedagogical knowledge" (Borg, 2006, p. 49) after attending Module 1, seven out of the eight total questions were open; participants were also asked to provide actual examples of how they would include a WE- and ELF-aware approach in their teaching practices. Our qualitative dataset comprises answers to the closed and open questionnaire questions, the participants' comments in the e-learning dedicated forums, the lesson plans and activities devised by the trainee teachers, as well as follow-up semi-structured interviews.

A 3-stage qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2014) was undertaken for the open-ended questionnaire responses. The first stage consisted in organizing the participants' open answers in order to get a first general sense of the data; in a second step the main topics and ideas emerging from the data were organized in key-words and key-concepts; the last step involved the classification of data through a coding framework.

3. Research aims and results: Impact of Module 1 on trainee teachers' awareness of WE and ELF

The case study illustrated here is part of a larger research project aimed at investigating trainee teachers' opinions towards the introduction of a WE- and ELF-aware approach in their teaching practices after attending TFA and PAS courses. The main research questions in the larger study aimed to explore whether the course would bring about a change in:

- familiarity with the concepts and characteristics of WE and ELF,
- awareness of the current plurality of English in terms of language variation and contexts of use,
- awareness of the implications this pluralization can have in ELT, and
- openness to adapt/modify their teaching practices and/or materials within a WE- and ELF-informed approach.

Within the scope of these broader aims, in this paper findings emerging from the areas related to the following questions, which were part of the questionnaire, will be taken into account:

1. What key aspects has the module helped to clarify?
2. What aspects related to WE and ELF do you think are important in teacher training? Why are these aspects important?
3. In which way has the module influenced your approach to teaching English?

The aim of these questions was to investigate whether, how and to what extent Module 1 contributed to partially modifying, or even transforming, the trainees' knowledge about (a) the current plurality of English and its lingua franca role, (b) aspects related to WE and ELF that should be included in teacher education following the participants' experience in the course, and (c) the impact the module could have on their (prospective) teaching practices. Findings deriving from the questionnaire data will be interrelated and triangulated with the aforementioned data sources, that is, comments additional to the open-ended questions and in the e-learning forums, interviews³ and final reports; exemplary quotes from data will also be provided in order to illustrate the trainees' reflections on the issues under consideration.⁴

We will first give an overview of the responses in the questionnaire section investigating the trainees' familiarity with WE and ELF before attending the course. We will then take into consideration their answers regarding the aspects

³ Follow-up interviews have so far been carried out with TFA1 and PAS1 participants.

⁴ See Note 2.

Module 1 had helped clarify and those that were deemed relevant in teacher education. Thirdly, we will focus on the aspects the participants indicated as influential for their teaching practices.

3.1. Impact of Module 1 on trainee teachers' perception of WE, ELF and their pedagogic implications

An open question investigating the participants' familiarity with WE, ELF and their implications in ELT prior to attending the course was included in the questionnaire to gain background information. As summarized in Table 3, findings show a general unfamiliarity with these issues; even the respondents who provided a positive answer specified that their knowledge was generic or came from academic courses they had attended dealing with these topics. The great majority of PAS1 trainee teachers (72.7%, 38.7% for PAS2) said that they were unfamiliar with WE, while TFA participants stated they were more familiar with WE (28.6% TFA1; 18.2% TFA2). Similarly, 81.8% PAS1 and 54.6% PAS2 participants answered they were not familiar with ELF, against 28.6% TFA1 and 34.6% TFA2 attendees.

Table 3 Familiarity with WE and ELF before attending Module 1

	Yes, I was familiar with WE	No, I was not familiar with WE	Yes, I was familiar with ELF	No, I was not familiar with ELF
TFA1	55.1%	28.6%	57.1%	28.6%
TFA2	22.7%	72.7%	13.6%	81.8%
PAS1	45.5%	18.2%	34.6%	34.6%
PAS2	38.7%	38.7%	19.4%	54.6%

As to the aspects examined in Module 1, a significant number of participants highlighted the fact that the lessons contributed to familiarizing them with several concepts and with the historical developments and linguistic variation in WE (14.3% TFA1, 20% PAS1, 24,5% TFA1, 64.3% PAS2), and with the function and characteristics of ELF. Other elements that were mentioned are the role of intelligibility and the "legitimacy" of language variation (14.1% TFA1, 9.4% TFA2). Participants also said that Module 1 contributed to clarifying the concept of varieties of English, the first and the second diasporas and Kachru's model, as well as *"the World English situation, the historical aspects, the 'dignity' of WE and ELF [contributing to creating] a deeper knowledge of how they are important"* (PAS2-14), and *"the differences among all the varieties of Englishes existing, their origin, their status, their evolution"* (PAS1-3). Comments from several data sources confirm the importance of dealing with WE and ELF in the course: *"The first lesson was really enlightening for me because I have never been extensively educated about World Englishes"* (EO-TFA2-F); Module 1 *"gave me strong basis*

and more confidence in using WE in my classes and make my students have an up-to-date view of English today" (BT-PAS1-INT).

Dealing with WE and ELF fostered reflection on the trainees' habitual teaching practices, too: It was pointed out that teachers should focus on "*the different Englishes spoken in countries in which English has an official status*" (TFA1-2) and reflect on "*the validity of variation*" that leads to a gradual detachment from teaching "*English only [as] spoken in the Inner Circle*" (TFA2-8).

As to ELF, lessons were defined as useful to "*deepen the concept of English as a Lingua Franca and to focus on the fact that it is a 'contact language' that does not depend on English or American lexical and grammar rules*" (PAS2-1), and to foster the realization that "*many English speakers use it as a lingua franca for cross-cultural communication*" (PAS1-20); during the post-course interview a teacher commented that "*it was interesting to see what ELF is . . . and to understand how we use it, and why, and how to explain this to students as well*" (LVZ-TFA1-INT).

Familiarization with conceptualizations of ELF was also seen as relevant to raise awareness of the importance of taking into account intelligibility and communicative effectiveness, as indicated by 14% PAS1, 9.6% PAS2, and 7.1% TFA2 participants respectively. Reflective comments included the following: "*I have to focus my attention more on the communicative aspects rather than correcting only grammar mistakes*" (PAS2-5); "*communication ability is more important than formal correctness*" (PAS2-21); teachers should encourage students to "*communicate avoiding the fear of making mistakes also thanks to communicative strategies*" (TFA2-43), aiming at "*intelligibility and effective communication*" (TFA2-13). A reference to the "*ownership of the language*" was also made, since it can deeply influence the "*interpretation of errors*" (TFA2-12).

Reflection on the implications of WE and ELF for ELT, which was indicated as significant by 57.1% TFA1, 15.1% PAS2, and 9.5% TFA2 respondents, helped foreground several key points, such as the importance of setting "*goals that are compatible with the status of English nowadays,*" where "*it is important to focus on the message to get across rather than to aim at a language 'standard'*" (TFA1-1) and to open "*our students' minds to new perspectives about the varieties of English used in interactions all over the world*" (PAS2-1). In several comments it was also mentioned that Module 1 helped trainees realize that both WE and ELF can be frequently experienced, and that taking them into account in ELT can represent "*a honest proposal for our students*" (IC-PAS1-F): "*WE and ELF are not so far away from our everyday life and are [therefore] key aspects of language teaching*" (PAS2-26); "*English is a language which, by now, must be accepted in all its varieties. These aspects cannot be ignored any longer because in our globalized world it permits a real communication and a real contact*" (PAS2-2); "*the use of*

English is more and more spread outside classroom so we [teachers] have to take into account that our students have many stimulus from outside" (PAS2-29).

These reflections showcase that Module 1 helped trainees raise their awareness about conceptual issues for both WE and ELF, developing sensitivity to the lingua-cultural diversity of English through reflection on the importance of including a WE- and ELF-informed approach in didactic practices.

3.2. WE and ELF in teacher education

Key issues related to the second research question, that is, aspects connected to WE and ELF that ought to be included in teacher education, are summarized in Table 4. According to many TFA1 participants, raising awareness of WE is one of the most relevant aspects to be taken into consideration in teacher education: Several respondents highlighted the importance of focusing on different varieties of English, indicating historical and linguistic development of WE as a major element to be included. Moreover, many participants commented that being familiar with ELF and its characteristics is significant because of the implications in teaching practices; once informed, teachers can help students understand the role that English has as a contact language and the international settings in which it is used. Including WE and ELF in teacher education can thus allow teachers to prepare students for facing international and intercultural communicative contexts in which they will use English in its lingua franca function as active participants.

Table 4 WE and ELF aspects that should be included in teacher education

Important aspects to be taken into consideration in teacher education to foster:	TFA1	PAS1	TFA2	PAS2
Teachers' awareness of WE historical development and linguistic traits	37.5%	22.7%	48.6%	38.7%
Acknowledgement of the role that English plays around the world, focusing on ELF and its features	37.5%	13.6%	6.6%	6.5%
Acknowledgement of the role intelligibility plays in cross-cultural communication, focusing on communication strategies	12.5%	13.6%	33.3%	64.2%
Sensitivity to different cultural backgrounds			2.7%	12.9%

Intelligibility and processes related to pragmatics and communication strategies were indicated as key points, too, particularly since they are very rarely present in ELT materials. Besides, international school projects were often identified as useful opportunities to experience the language in "real" communicative ELF contexts. In one of the interviews, a teacher who had attended TFA1 referred to her students' international exchange with a German group of peers as such an example, commenting that the experience was eye-opening for students

because they realized that English is not only spoken to interact with mother tongue speakers (LVZ-TFA1-INT).

The different cultural backgrounds of speakers, and the importance of fostering intercultural awareness by reflecting on the students' and on other lingua-cultures⁵ were also mentioned: Learning about WE was seen as fundamental to *"talk[ing] about World Englishes even in classroom,"* giving students *"a different perspective"* on language and culture (PAS2-9), and having *"a broader view and learn[ing] to be respectful of differences"* (PAS2-21).

Regarding ELF, it was pointed out that since it *"responds to the need of communication of our global society"* (MDA-PAS2-F), it *"can no longer be ignored in educational contexts and . . . it is not right to identify one variety as superior"* since *"it is the use that 'makes' the language"* (TFA1-4); *"[teachers] shouldn't consider ELF as a deviation from standard English nor a language full of errors"* (AA-PAS2-F). Hence, ELF should be dealt with *"because students often think that English is useful just to speak with native English speakers"* (TFA2-14).

Intelligibility and communication strategies were identified as key aspects in this case, too: *"communicative skills and abilities are [as] important as grammar"* (PAS2-17), and dealing with intelligibility can allow students to understand *"different variations/pronunciation and to make them aware of these different aspects of Englishes in the world"* (PAS1-11). Communication strategies ought to be dealt with to make students aware of *"how to solve problems with the language through interaction strategies"* (TFA2-28) and *"to put into practice any strategy in order to achieve effective communication . . . to avoid misunderstanding"* (TFA2-9), both in linguistic and cultural terms. Communicative effectiveness and using *"the language to communicate"* (PAS1-20) were also seen as a major point: *"Communication and the ability to communicate are more important than accuracy and grammar"* (TFA2-20); *"fluency and understandability are key aims to be achieved"* (TFA2-21).

One further element that was stressed in a reflective critical way is the lack of ELT materials aimed at developing pragmatic competence, an important aspect in ELF interactions. Both during classroom discussions and in the e-learning forums, comments related to the textbooks that were analysed during the module highlighted that: *"No effort has been made to make the students perceive what English has become in our globalized society: a language rich in varieties and used/accepted by non-native speakers,"* stressing that *"no contexts have been created and no tips/prompts have been given to permit ELF communication to be experienced by learners"* (PT-PAS2-F). At the same time, several participants also mentioned that

⁵ Some TFA2 participants also mentioned that having knowledge of linguistic variation and being open to different cultural backgrounds can help teachers deal with students of non-Italian origin, also in encouraging them to share their lingua-cultural *"heritage"* with the rest of the class.

even if in our English textbooks there are no examples of ELF . . . some lessons explaining the most important features of ELF would be very interesting for students, in order to understand . . . the reality that they will have to face when engaging a conversation with people from various backgrounds. (PT-PAS2-F)

The challenge of considering a new perspective was also referred to; as one teacher comments,

the most challenging aspects of our course were exactly that of finding ways to take ELF into our classes . . . making our students understand how this language has developed recently. All the simplified grammar and vocabulary and the fact that there is not only one standard English are not always easy to be understood and accepted even by the students. (AR-TFA1-INT)

To sum up, understanding the plurality of English today, both in terms of variation in WE and in its lingua franca role, were seen as key-elements for teacher education by all participants. TFA1 and PAS1 trainees highlighted the importance of dealing with the plurality of Englishes, of the relevance of intelligibility and communication strategies, and of authentic communicative contexts. TFA2 and PAS2 participants stressed the importance of being informed about the multifaceted reality of English both in terms of linguistic variation and cultural sensitivity.

3.3. WE- and ELF-aware didactic perspectives: A new pedagogical reasoning?

As we have seen, besides an increased “knowledge about the language,” Module 1 contributed to challenging the trainees’ “pedagogical knowledge” and “pedagogical reasoning” (Borg, 2006, p. 48) by fostering critical reflection on a WE- and ELF-informed approach in classroom practices. In this section we will focus on the third research question,⁶ aimed at investigating what kind of pedagogical practices were envisaged by the participants for actual inclusion in a WE- and ELF-aware classroom approach.

As to WE, trainees agreed on the importance of encouraging a pluricentric approach in their didactic practices, fostering a broader view both linguistically and culturally; PAS2 participants in particular acknowledged the need to focus not only on British and American English, and several TFA2 trainees mentioned that using authentic materials, such as written texts, audioclips or videoclips, charts and also literary texts could encourage a more dynamic approach to presenting differences in accents and lexical items.

⁶ The question was specifically included in the questionnaire for TFA2 and PAS2 courses and in the interviews.

Besides reflecting on the issues examined during Module 1, trainee teachers shared in the e-learning forums the WE- and ELF-related teaching ideas they had prepared during the course, for which some examples will be provided. One lesson plan that well exemplifies the rationale with which trainees worked in devising WE-aware activities is “Multicultural London: is Bombay really two hours away? Workshop @ the Web Lab.” The series of activities in the teaching unit⁷ that were tried out in class aimed at familiarizing students with the multiethnic environment of London, where different varieties of English and different cultures coexist, focusing then on Indian English. As the trainee teacher explains in the e-learning forum:

students were posed some questions meant to reflect on possible links between India and Britain. Then a picture of Southall Market from London's Little India was shown. Everybody guessed that it was a street market in India. When they were shown the second photo (Borough Market) they could hardly believe that both pictures were taken in London. (GC-PAS2-F)

Similarly, referring to an activity related to WE that was realized in class after attending the course, during the interview a teacher commented that there

were first of all cultural and social aims: introduce them [students] to socio-linguistic and socio-pragmatic competence; underline the plurilinguistic and intercultural aspects in order to enhance cultural sensitivity and the ability to identify and use strategies to be part of a multicultural community; make students understand what World Englishes are and expose them to another variation [variety], and to language borrowings too. (BT-PAS1-INT)

As to the inclusion of an ELF-informed approach in teaching practices, trainees focused primarily on the importance of making students aware of the role that English plays as the international language of communication. Intelligibility and communication strategies were once again seen as key elements: “Clarity of the communicative exchange” (PAS2-20) and all those aspects that “are necessary to mutual understanding” (PAS2-21) should be overtly included in teaching practices. Several comments pointed out that the English class should be more communicatively oriented, with a focus “on the message rather than on the form” (PAS2-17) also in testing (the need to re-think assessment parameters in terms of language use and language fluency was mentioned, too), as the following comment in the forum exemplifies:

⁷ The unit includes six sections: (a) brainstorming, (b) picture analysis, (c) picture unfolding, (d) web activity and ITC tools, (e) video and discussion, and (f) language reflection.

freedom [in communicating with people] can be easily used in class and [teachers can] turn it into a powerful tool to make our students express them[selves] during speaking activities in a foreign language rather than in their mother tongue – thus knocking down the linguistic fear to say something which is never correct – of course, as we have widely discussed in our past classes, there are rules and so on, but I truly feel that ELF can be an effective instrument to let our students speak freely. (GC-PAS2-F)

It was also highlighted that classroom practices should prepare students for authentic international/intercultural communication, helping them become aware of ELF and realize that British English can no longer be the only reference model in “real” communication. As explained in a number of questionnaires answers, students could be guided to compare aspects related to intercultural pragmatics, such as “*different way[s] of greetings, for example Italian greetings are different from Chinese and Indian greetings*” (PAS2-20); exemplifications of English as “*spoken around the world*” could make “*students aware of the different accents, pronunciations and vocabularies*” (PAS2-6), for example through “*examples of listening passages from Italian politicians speeches in international contexts*” (TFA2-4).

TFA2 and PAS2 participants stressed the importance of interaction among non-native speakers, and indicated participation in international school projects (for example via eTwinning: <https://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/index.htm>) as a good opportunity to experience language use in ELF contexts, pointing out that teachers should encourage students to take part in “*experiences of student-exchange in other countries where English is not [the] L1*” (TFA2-9); interaction with students of non-Italian origin present in the school was also mentioned (PAS2-6).

Among the lesson ideas that were devised in this area, an interesting example is the activity in which students are first introduced to issues connected to accent variation in ELF through a video (British Council, 2014) and are then guided to work on describing some ELF phonological and morphological characteristics through different types of exercises. As suggested in the comment,

even if students at this [elementary] level cannot afford comparison between ‘standard’ English and the samples of ELF we would be analyzing, I’m sure . . . their ears can detect that they are listening another English, and this would be suitable for my purpose; watching a video showing the shift of accent among “English” and ELF users would be useful. (SZ-PAS2-F)

Several PAS final reports included activities, or whole lesson plans, that were devised within an ELF-aware approach, aimed at fostering students’ awareness of language variation and language use in ELF contexts. For example, one of the PAS1 trainee’s final works consisted in eight lessons aimed at introducing students to the plurality of English and to the role it plays in students’ every-day life (TM-PAS1-FR). First, students were asked to work on a textbook

passage ("The role of English"; Banzato & Dalziel, 2009) presenting the concept of ELF, and then guided to discover its role in international communication. In other cases, reading passages from coursebooks, or authentic materials from the web, were used with this objective in mind, and some final reports included both virtual and face-to-face meetings with students of different L1s as a way to experience communication in ELF contexts.

To sum up, findings show that a positive attitude towards the inclusion of both a WE- and ELF-informed approach in teaching practices was developed by these trainee teachers. Comments in the questionnaires and in the e-learning discussion forums, as well as reflections during the post-course interviews and in the final reports, show that the topics covered in Module 1 contributed to developing awareness of the current plurality of WE and ELF, positively influencing their "personal pedagogical systems" (Borg, 2006, p. 48). Furthermore, the didactic activities devised during the course, as well as the ones included in the final reports, point towards a WE- and ELF-aware teaching perspective that will hopefully continue to inform these trainee teachers in their future professional lives.

4. Conclusions

The trainee teachers who attended the TFA and PAS courses described in this paper considered the topics covered in Module 1 as a positive opportunity to develop knowledge and awareness of the current plurality of English and of its lingua franca role. The module contributed to familiarizing them with issues related to WE and ELF, clarifying several key notions in both areas. Participants highlighted the importance of discussing aspects and issues connected to the plurality of English in teacher education, saying that the module helped them develop awareness of linguistic variation and cultural differences, as well as recognize the relevance that intelligibility and communication strategies have for effective communication. This awareness also translated into a critical evaluation of ELT materials and led to the development of WE- and ELF-informed approach didactic activities.

The case study discussed in this paper can thus suggest important insights for pre-service teacher education. On the whole, our findings show that including WE, ELF and their pedagogical implications in pre-service teacher education can certainly contribute to modifying trainee teachers' views of the current reality of English, and above all encourage them to move towards a broader perspective in didactic terms. As for the participants in the teacher education project developed by Bayyurt and Sifakis (2015b, p. 131), dealing with WE and ELF issues represented for the participants in our study "an opportunity to receive new information about fascinating issues concerning the English language and a springboard for growing

professionally as reflective teachers." In line with other research studies in different contexts (Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2015a, 2015b; Matsuda, 2009; Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2015; Vettorel, 2015), our findings show that, once informed, teachers do acknowledge the importance of dealing with topics related to the current developments of English and their pedagogic implications. This, as we have seen, can allow them to make informed pedagogical choices, actively reflecting on the need to promote an "ability to adapt, negotiate, and mediate communication in dynamic and context-sensitive ways" (Jenkins, Cogo, & Dewey, 2011, p. 17), and reflect on the need to move away from a predominantly norm-focused instruction towards a more communication-oriented and inclusive approach.

Fostering awareness of the current diversification of English in teacher education can thus set the basis for acknowledging that WE and ELF can no longer be ignored in class: Rather than one single) variety (standard British English) or NS reference model, students should be presented with exemplifications of different accents, lingua-cultural varieties and contexts of use, going beyond static and monolithic representations of the language, as is still largely the case in ELT. Our findings show that providing opportunities for a critical evaluation of existing ELT textbooks and "global or local US/NES-based materials" (Yu, 2015, p. 49) represents a fundamental step towards WE and ELF-awareness "in practice," and towards the exploration of "possible ways to adapt materials from ELF-relevant perspective" (p. 49). In Kramsch's (2014) words,

the purpose is not to abandon all standards pedagogic norms of language use as the goals of instruction. It is, rather, to strive to make our students into multilingual individuals, sensitive to linguistic, cultural and, above all, semiotic diversity, and willing to engage with difference, that is, to grapple with differences in social, cultural, political and religious worldviews. (p. 305)

Rather than abandoning "NES/US-based materials entirely" (Yu, 2015, p. 50), teacher education should foster awareness of how existing materials can be implemented within a less monolithic and more WE- and ELF-informed perspective, broadening opportunities and adding "to teachers' and teachers educators' repertoires of teaching examples" (p. 50). In this respect, the activities and lesson plans that were developed as part of these TFA and PAS courses and exemplified above show that, when the opportunity is provided, teachers can become "agents of change" in using materials as "resources for adaptation" (Seidhofer, 1999, p. 236; cf. also Lopriore & Vettorel, 2015; Vettorel, 2016). They can thus play an active role in promoting awareness of Englishes and ELF, not only selecting the most appropriate materials but also using them in a context-appropriate way (cf. also Seidhofer, 2011, pp. 199, 201; McKay, 2012a, 2012b). And, as we have seen, both during the lessons and in the e-learning discussion

forums, the knowledge and reflection stimuli in Module 1 led TFA and PAS trainee teachers to interrogate themselves in a critical and reflective way about the ways in which a shift in perspective can actually be put into practice, devising possible ways for a WE- and ELF-aware approach, and largely recognizing the importance of including WE and ELF as integral part of teacher education for such a shift to take place. Certainly, further moments of cooperation between researchers, teacher trainers and teachers are of crucial relevance so that the latter can be supported in finding “their own ways” of introducing WE and ELF-informed perspectives in their own teaching and learning contexts. Initial teacher education can thus be seen as a first step in this direction: Awareness of the issues involved, as well as opportunities to reflect on how these challenges can be taken into account in teaching practices can lead to a change in perspective, one that can hopefully have a long-lasting impact on classroom practices.

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