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ELF- or NES-oriented pedagogy: enhancing learners' intercultural communicative competence using a dual teaching model

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Abstract: This study underpins the integration of an English as a lingua franca (ELF)-oriented approach into traditional English language teaching (ELT) to develop learners' *full* intercultural awareness and intercultural communicative competence (ICC). The aim is to inform prospective and senior teachers as well as practitioners about the need for adequate preparation for learners to face any speech situations involving native and non-native English speakers. Using informal classroom observations from different Italian education cycles, this study adopts a multidimensional approach to traditional ELT, combining some main ICC and ELF pedagogy tenets. Our discussion indicates that a dual teaching model, including the native English speaker (NES) model for the structural section of language teaching and learning and the ELF intercultural competent communicator model for the intercultural section, can be attained by shifting conveniently from model to model. Therefore, this study offers a fresh perspective on an extensively addressed topic by clarifying and explicitly combining the underlying connections between the main ICC and ELF tenets. This study intends to encourage teachers and practitioners to change their attitudes, perceptions, and concerns towards integrating ELF-oriented approaches into traditional ELT to tackle today's intercultural communicative challenges outside the classroom.

Keywords: dual teaching model; ELF pedagogy; English class; intercultural communicative competence; NES-oriented pedagogy

1 Introduction

Cultural studies on English language teaching (ELT) have progressively modified the intercultural communicative competence (ICC) (López-Rocha and Arévalo-

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Guerrero 2014) within the established World Englishes (WE) paradigm, promoting the integration of an English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)-oriented approach into traditional English pedagogy. Notably, the ELF-oriented approach can be a valuable pedagogical tool for enhancing learners' ICCs because of its inherent intercultural nature (Jenkins 2015; Kohn 2014, 2015, 2019; Seidlhofer et al. 2006; Taglialatela and Tardi 2020); it is realistic in today's multicultural scenario where, in Byram's (1997) words, "engagement with otherness in the contemporary world is simultaneous – through the media on a daily basis, through occasional visiting and receiving visitors, or working and learning together with people of another culture" (p. 65). As such, ELF is often considered the intercultural communication language because it is appropriated as a "second-order language contact" (Mauranen 2012: 29) by speakers from different social and linguacultural backgrounds. In Jenkins's (2006) functional definition, "ELF refers to English when used as a contact language across *linguacultures*" (p. 159);¹ it identifies the intimate language-culture relationship emphasised by the term *linguaculture* and acknowledges ELF communication's cultural aspects.

Byram introduced the ICC construct in 1997, combining *communicative competence* (CC) and *intercultural competence* (IC) (Torres-Gordillo et al. 2020). CC develops from individuals' awareness of sociolinguistic rules and sociocultural contexts where an interaction occurs (Bachman 1990; Balboni 2015; Bryan 1986; Hymes 1972; Martínez and Calderón-Gutiérrez 2013; Savignon 2017), whereas IC refers to people's "ability to interact in their own language with the people from another country and culture" (Byram 1997: 71). Combining CC with IC results in ICC, which describes the speaker's ability to navigate linguistic and intercultural differences for successful communication. This plays a crucial role in foreign language teaching (FLT) to develop learners into competent intercultural speakers.

ICC allows interaction participants to adequately accommodate cultural and language differences to convey a message; it is therefore pivotal in today's multicultural society, with English being used as the chosen communication lingua franca. Certain important implications are foregrounded in traditional ELT, and learning paradigms with native speakers (NSs) are always considered the custodians of linguistic correctness.²

¹ The term "linguaculture", coined by the American linguistic anthropologist Paul Friedrich in 1986, encompasses the relationship between language and culture, as experienced by individuals in their languages and language varieties (cf. Friedrich 1986 for more details).

² Holliday (2005) first termed "native speakerism" (p. 10) as the belief that native-speaker varieties are superior to all other English varieties and should therefore provide the linguistic norms for all situations. However, research has demonstrated that this assumption is erroneous and requires a

In this regard, this study intends to advocate for a theoretical and practical paradigm shift in English language pedagogy from the traditional approach, which mainly focuses on learners' language skills development based on NS standards, towards the more flexible ELF-oriented approach, which focuses on the adaptation of learners' communication abilities to the current globalisation process. However, this study will consider the shift from one approach to the other conveniently, not separately. This study advocates the adoption of a dual teaching model, which uses an NS variety of English for the structural part of the language and raises learners' awareness of English variations worldwide through an ELF approach aimed at ICC to help learners better adapt to speech situations involving native English speakers (NESs).

This study uses the author's ten year teaching experience and informal classroom observations from different Italian education cycles – that is, from middle school to university – to adopt a multidimensional approach to traditional ELT, which combines the principal standpoints of the ICC and ELF pedagogy domains. These include co-constructions of social relationships in communication (Jackson 2014), overcoming culture-bound interactional bias (Bouchard 2017), education of competent intercultural communicators alongside the NS model (Byram 2008; Canagarajah 2013), and adoption of an ELF pedagogical approach as a suitable intercultural mediation tool for the whole curriculum (Baker 2015; Vettorel 2010) to negotiate meaning and prevent and/or repair intercultural misunderstandings (Mauranen 2006; Seidlhofer 2009). By combining these points, this study provides a fresh, multifaceted perspective on a previously extensively addressed topic. The dual model seeks to encourage prospective and senior teachers and practitioners to review their attitudes, perceptions, and concerns about which pedagogical paradigm (ELF- or NES-oriented) should be adopted in their English class. This paradigm is a more comprehensive approach and aims at developing learners' *full* ICC, which involves acquainting them with native and non-native English standards in as many intercultural speech situations as possible.

2 Literature review

ICC-related literature is broad and permeated with many concepts and development models (Schmidmeier et al. 2020); however, one must initiate a review of its evolution by focusing on its three development stages – the CC, IC, and ICC.

re-conceptualisation, particularly in ELT (Fang 2018; Phillipson 1992; Seidlhofer 2020); this is also the scope of our dual teaching model proposal.

CC, which has attracted many researchers since the 1960s, has been approached from various perspectives. Chomsky (1965) first proposed its cognitive aspect by distinguishing between the competence of “an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly” and the “errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance” (p. 3). This viewpoint was followed by Hymes’s (1972) social approximation, which highlights that CC includes speakers’ knowledge of sociolinguistic rules and their ability to apply these rules to interactions, followed by Wiemann’s (1977) approximation of relational competence, which entails that CC is the ability “to choose among available communicative behaviours” to accomplish one’s own “interpersonal goals during an encounter while maintaining the face and line” of “fellow interactants within the constraints of the situation” (p. 198; cf. also Bryan 1986). More recently, Balboni (2015) affirmed that the mental dimension of CC can be achieved through reification of the world surrounding the speaker. Mental skills can constitute the foundation of learners’ language-related knowledge and allow them to master their language skills, which become reified linguistic acts in specific communicative events that are codified by specific social, pragmatic, and cultural norms.³

IC refers to people’s “ability to interact in their own language with people from another country and culture” (Byram 1997: 71), thus suggesting that individuals’ interactional capabilities can overlook their own foreign language competences. It is concerned with cultural and extralinguistic aspects, including facial expressions or gestures (proxemics), and grounded in a profound cultural awareness and a positive attitude involving accommodation of cultural differences (Bennett and Bennett 2004; Garrote and Agüero 2016; Jackson 2014). However, Baker (2011) emphasises an important point regarding the distinction between cultural awareness (CA) and intercultural awareness (ICA) in current language educational settings. He argues that ICA is more relevant than CA considering “the more fluid communicative practices of English used as a global *Lingua Franca*” and therefore requires a rethink; thus, ICA is “a more relevant concept for these dynamic contexts of English use” (p. 62). This position is pertinent to our discussion because ICA, a

³ “Norm” is a particularly loaded term in the cultural studies context. For example, Tomasello (2010) conceptualises “culture” as a complex social system emerging from individuals’ participation in the world; this results in sets of shared and non-shared values, beliefs, practices, and attitudes. In particular, he argues that the (non-)sharedness of these beliefs, practices, attitudes, and values arises from their social sedimentation, which means that they appear as *norms* and *patterns* when they are repeatedly used. As language reflects the beliefs, practices, attitudes, and values of one society, this view could suit our discussion when the term “norm/s” occurs in connection with both culture and language.

fundamental component of overall intercultural competence, can help speaker-learners act appropriately in intercultural situations and contexts.

The influence of ICC, which is often used synonymously with IC (Fantini 2009; Jandt 2004) but is nonetheless a concept in its own right, has increased since Byram's (1997) ICC model proposal. This clarifies that while IC and CC differ substantially, they should be combined if ICC must occur with success. ICC focuses on "the ability to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language" (p. 71); such interactions influence group relations and individuals' behaviour, attitude, and identity. It does not parallel language proficiency and must be "taught" and practised by learners like any other skill (cf. Jackson 2014; Stadler 2011). Therefore, to practise and develop their ICC skills, learners require constant exposure to real-life situations through adequate materials and classroom activities permeated with intercultural stimuli. When speakers of different languages and cultures use a common "interaction" language (for example, ELF), CC and IC combine to produce ICC (Torres-Gordillo et al. 2020). Within the foreign language teaching and learning domain, ICC takes the *intercultural speaker* as a reference model and describes this speaker as a competent communicator who can negotiate meaning between their own and other cultures.

According to Balboni (2015), the main difference between CC in each language and ICC lies in the connection between *mental skills* and *concrete actions*. Mental skills allow speakers to understand strengths and weaknesses in other speakers' viewpoints and points of contact and separation; they demand considerable efforts from all interaction actors to overcome any bias; this is useful for participating in a mutual communicative exchange dimension – a sort of *third space* (Bouchard 2017; Kramsch 1993) where communication is reified, as the meaning is negotiated to co-construct a shared speech situation. Within this process, learners must create their own "mental space" (Caon 2016: 106), which allows adjustment to unexpected circumstances without focusing on the interpretation of a reality modelled on its own cultural categories.⁴ Therefore, the ICC becomes a container that learners can fill with their acquired skills and competences and develop over time through their intercultural encounters; this ongoing process can never be considered complete (Byram et al. 2002; Humphrey 2007). ICC involves the development of knowledge and skills in a given language (a native, second, third, or foreign language); this encourages independent, responsible, appropriate foreign language use in tune with surrounding communicative environments. It

⁴ "Cultural categories", such as time, space, person, nature, gender, and social status, have been defined as "the conceptual grid of a culturally constituted world", providing the basic coordinates to identify and differentiate all that happens around us (McCracken 1986: 71; cf. also Hofstede 1980; Singh 2002).

encourages the speaker's ability to navigate intercultural differences for successful communication, implying the mastery of a set of *knowledge, skills, and attitudes* essential for effective intercultural communication (Byram 1997).

Intercultural speakers' conceptualisation as people who are mediating and negotiating between their own and other cultures is particularly relevant to ELF speakers, who are potentially bi- or multilingual/cultural. In fact, ELF is inherently inspired by a respect for sociocultural diversity (Jenkins 2015; Kohn 2014, 2015, 2019; Lopriore and Grazzi 2016); therefore, intercultural speakers and ELF speakers show overlapping features (Pözl 2003; cf. Seidlhofer et al. 2006), as their linguistic and cultural competences enable them to adopt a "privileged position" with a new perspective based on their own and other people's cultural assumptions, values, beliefs, and behaviours (Byram 2008: 205). This clearly fulfils one language teaching objective, that is, familiarising learners with various cultural situations they may experience. The ELF class, in this respect, may be the best place to connect a language to the multiple cultures involved in intercultural encounters. Indeed, according to Corbett (2003), fostering open attitudes towards other cultures, namely, intercultural awareness (see the aforementioned ICA), constitutes the first ICC stage; ELF fits the purpose of shared communication well.

ELF has dramatically impacted the IC domain, especially regarding linguistic competence(s) requirements. Ke (2012: 66) states, "linguistic competence is part of cultural knowledge, with the implicit assumption that, if you want to know more about culture X, you must learn language X as part and parcel of culture X". Thus, language and culture are interwoven. While cultural understanding, empathy, and sensitivity are critical, current English use within the global communication process increasingly requires special attention with regard to non-native English speakers' (NNEs) interactions, where linguistic and cultural norms are constantly and biunivocally in flux, negotiated, and accommodated.

Firth (1996) argued that ELF speakers can be successful intercultural communicators while relying on the unconscious "let-it-pass strategy". In short, when a communications disruption occurs between multiple speakers in ELF situations, especially if the message is irrelevant to the core communication purpose, most ELF speakers simply ignore the "undecodable" utterance and continue the conversation, particularly as that utterance may be clarified by contextual information and cues. This is referred to as the co-construction of meaning in the search for a common ground for intercultural communication (Mauranen 2006; Seidlhofer 2009). Cogo (2009) highlighted additional accommodation strategies including repetition and code-switching. In fact, repeating utterances in interactions can help ELF speaker-learners achieve mutual understanding because they require more time to elaborate the utterance received; however, to attain successful communication, ELF speakers often exploit their linguistic repertoires, which can

cover different levels of knowledge regarding their own regional or local languages (Ke 2012), and include other equally valued linguistic resources that they normally possess (this is known as “translanguaging”).⁵ Therefore, ELF speaker-learners adjust their speech act to the related context to establish a mutual understanding between and across languages and cultures, which creates a strong connection between ELF dimensions and intercultural communication.

3 Outline of the arguments

This study draws on the author’s 10 year teaching experience and informal classroom observations across different Italian education cycles from middle school to university.⁶ It adopts a multidimensional approach to traditional ELT, encompassing some major tenets of the ICC and ELF pedagogy domains, which include co-construction of social relationships through communication (Jackson 2014), overcoming of culture-bound interactional bias (Bouchard 2017), education of competent intercultural communicators alongside the NS model (Byram 2008; Canagarajah 2013), and the adoption of an ELF pedagogical approach in the whole curriculum as a suitable intercultural mediation tool (Baker 2015; Vettorel 2010) to negotiate meaning and prevent and/or repair intercultural misunderstandings (Mauranen 2006; Seidlhofer 2009). More specifically, this study addresses the following questions: (1) What does ICC signify in foreign language teaching and learning? (2) How can the integration of ELF practices help learners become more competent intercultural communicators? (3) How can ELF be embedded in the traditional English language curriculum? (4) Could teachers’ attitudes towards ELF affect the teaching process? Throughout Section 3, references are made to the dual teaching model.

This study recognises that no data collection regarding specific grade level, subject area, lesson content, and quality of interactions has been arranged. However, given the consequent dearth of systematisation, the methodological approach grounded in informal classroom observation should be considered reliable because classroom interactions occurred naturally without any performance anxiety from

5 While with “languaging” reference is made to language practices of speakers in which multiple discursive resources are necessary for communicate in general, “translanguaging” concerns the speakers’ natural cognitive and linguistic capacities that strategically draw upon all the available cognitive, semiotic, sensory, and modal resources at their disposal to interact with people of different linguacultural backgrounds (cf. Tagliatela 2021: 108).

6 In detail: 1 year of teaching in middle school, ages 11–13 (total: 6 classrooms); 3 years of teaching in secondary schools, ages 14–15 (total: 18 classrooms); 6 years of teaching in university (i.e. at undergraduate level) (total: 20 modules) and postgraduate level (total: 8 modules).

learners, which tends to arise when learners are aware that they are being observed. Therefore, this study's argumentation can provide valuable suggestions on the topic.

This study's notion of CC was based on the research by Hymes (1972) and Balboni (2015) on the competence types founded on one individual's awareness of sociolinguistic rules and the sociocultural contexts involving interaction. Furthermore, the notion of IC draws upon Jackson's (2014) perspectives, which disassociates advanced language proficiency level from advanced IC level. Finally, the ICC construct is grounded in Byram's (1997) theory.

4 Discussion

Despite the underlying complexity and interrelationship between the above-mentioned questions, this section addresses each question separately in its related sub-section, thus clarifying the major issues that arose during the argumentation. Moreover, such an organisation clarifies the connections supporting this paper's proposal for closer integration of the ELF approach with the NS model to develop learners' *comprehensive* ICC.

4.1 What does ICC signify in foreign language teaching and learning?

Within foreign language pedagogy, in particular, ICC involves determining how an interculturally competent speaker-learner communicates in a foreign language class; this mainly depends on their individual cultural knowledge and CC in that specific language. Therefore, the ICC should be "taught", and learners should practise it like any other skill (cf. Jackson 2014; Stadler 2011).

According to Balboni (2015), in the foreign language class, ICC can be challenged by certain learning issues including word choice or culture-bound grammatical aspects. To tackle similar issues and manage any unexpected linguistic or cultural misinterpretations, learners should be guided and supported through an ICC-oriented teaching approach (Prnjat and Guglielmi 2008; Sercu 2005), such as the ELF approach, which clarifies how different communities, cultures, and languages can be understood in the context of contemporary global intercultural communication. The close relationship between language-related communication and (inter)cultural skills may involve a valuable combination of effective foreign language uses; such a teaching approach may educate learners to become intercultural speakers. Intercultural speakers embody ICC features; this

transforms them into competent communicators capable of critically negotiating meaning between their own and others' cultures (Byram 2009; Jackson 2014). House (2007) contends that intercultural speakers can reach a space across familiar cultures by developing a "third way" (p. 15) in their efforts to manage this space, where communicative meaning is co-constructed and shared (cf. Kramsch 1993).

A similar educational approach makes the process of teaching and learning foreign languages complex. In this process, knowledge and skills acquisition regarding NS language and culture across the curriculum is complemented by the acquisition of intercultural knowledge and skills. This gives rise to a dual speaker-learner model, which teachers can develop within their learners through amalgamation of the NS-oriented model and the intercultural speaker model. However, since the two models are not mutually exclusive, they must be conveniently integrated. Moreover, in the case of English, the NS model of one English variety can be used for the structural part of language teaching and learning, whereas the competent communicator model in ELF situations can be used for the intercultural part. Here, it is worth noting that ELF is commonly regarded as the intercultural communication language (Jenkins 2015; Kohn 2014, 2015, 2019; Lopriore and Grazi 2016). Through the dual model, learners can acquire in-depth knowledge of any taught foreign language and navigate linguistically and culturally between their own world and that of others. This study holds that developing awareness of an NES standard variety is equally important for maintaining cognisance of the number of ELF features necessary for raising learners' *full* intercultural awareness; thus, using English in combination with NS standards or with ELF variations may require one to approach the same language differently. In any intercultural speech situation involving NES and NNES interaction, both have the same right to be intelligible. Moreover, integrating an ELF approach into traditional ELT can raise learners' awareness of global English variations and boost their confidence and satisfaction as they communicate between and across cultures. Thus, opting out of the NS model in English class (as ELF scholars generally recommend) would imply losing one important facet of the language and, consequently, its related cultural dimension; rather, combining the two pedagogical models and shifting from an NES-oriented approach to an ELF-oriented approach conveniently that is based on the lessons' objectives and classroom environment could be beneficial, as our experience has demonstrated over the years. The responsibility of conveying and integrating such dualism into teaching practices rests on the teacher, who becomes a facilitator and decides when and how to shift from one model to the other during the English class.

4.2 How can integrating ELF practices into traditional ELT educate learners to become more competent intercultural communicators?

FLT that seeks to develop learners' ICC generally focuses on countries speaking the language being learned and taught; this limits their use and applicability to English in a multilingual global society (Byram 2012). Although various studies have applied the ICC model to the use and teaching of English (Alred et al. 2006; Byram et al. 2001; Feng et al. 2009; Roberts 2001), the increasingly dominant ELF usage in intercultural communication conflicts with the model's focus on "country". In fact, if used as a Lingua Franca, English does not represent any specific country or culture but is legitimately appropriated by NNEs that find in it a sense of belonging to a global community (Byram 2012; Byram et al. 2001; Feng et al. 2009). However, in the dual model, where NES standards and ELF features are imparted based on learning objectives and classroom environment as two sides of the same coin, English can be the expression of one specific variety, as required by an NES-oriented teaching method. Moreover, it can simultaneously support the view of ELF as a shared communication tool among speakers from diverse linguacultural backgrounds. Therefore, the dual model may overcome any potentially arising conflict.

Obviously, in a language class where English is the only foreign language, adopting the NES and the intercultural speaker model cannot be a one-size-fits-all solution. Teachers must not ignore the question of which English variety should be taught and learned; similarly, students must be informed about the plurality of English in the form of regional varieties (Bayyurt et al. 2018), all with equal dignity, validity, and legitimacy. However, this point should be clarified: this study's argumentation on the dual model does not support any normative strictness leading to a sort of copy-paste process of the native standard variety taught/learned, as that would be inappropriate for guiding ELF as well as English communication in general. Recalling Seidlhofer (2011: 198), the centre of focus is what speaker-learners are allowed and enabled to do with that native standard variety in their *own* communication and learning.

The "ownership" aspect is elucidated by Widdowson (1994), who refers to speaker-learners as language users and stresses that their communicative capability for learning and exploiting the language can be considered "not just as a set of fixed conventions to conform to, but as an adaptable resource for making meaning" (p. 42). According to Widdowson (1994), real proficiency is correlated with non-normativity, which means that "you are proficient in a language to the extent that you possess it, make it your own, bend it to your will, assert yourself

through it rather than simply submit to the dictates of its form” (*ibid.*; cf. also Kohn 2022). Hence, learners should partake in specific activities that can encourage them to discuss the experiences acquired through their own ICA, based on what they have read, seen, or heard, and compare these experiences with factual information about the lifestyle patterns of the language and culture taught. Thus, they can contrast what they have learned about the language and culture inside the classroom with what they have learned from their real-life experience. An interesting activity for highlighting the differences in individual perceptions of a specific culture involves, for example, considering foreigners’ perceptions of a country based on how it is represented in tourist guides or TV broadcasts; a few more alternatives could include participating in debates, exhibition attendance, field trips, group discussions, group tasks, poetry recitation, presentations, storytelling, etc.

The challenge and/or obstacle faced by teachers regarding the choice of English variety that students must adhere to in their class, and, consequently, of the related NS model they must aspire to use, is not unusual. Their choice may be subject to distinct factors that are often independent of the teacher’s will or preference and external factors, such as the curriculum directives of the Ministry of Education at the national level. In many non-Anglophone countries, including Italy, the most commonly selected English variety for school-level teaching reference is British English,⁷ which is inevitably bound to the WE paradigm (Kachru 1985, 1992), where the relevance of NSs as language norm providers is emphasised (see Kachru’s Inner Circle). Nonetheless, some attempts to integrate ELF preparation into traditional programmes for pre-service teachers have been made in recent years (for example, in Italy), and teacher training courses and materials have been particularly referenced (Lopriore 2017; Tagliatalata 2021).

Prospective teachers play a fundamental role in bridging the gap between linguistic correctness and sociolinguistic and cultural appropriateness in learners’ education. Recalling Weber’s (2013) words, “why [teachers] teach English, who [they] teach English to and what they teach English for” (p. 12), it must be reiterated that teachers should instruct learners on the existence of other English varieties and variants, underline their validity and legitimacy, and simultaneously acknowledge the importance of developing communication strategies for effective language learning. Thus, learners should be exposed to the English variant they are likely to encounter in real-life interactions. The great challenge here is to familiarise them with unfamiliar phonetic, lexical, morphological, syntactic, or

7 According to single national guidelines for ELT instructional models, one country can select an endonormative nativised model in the outer-circle countries (e.g., India, Malaysia, South Africa) – that is, an English variety of their choice that reflects a specific locality (cf. Kirkpatrick 2007).

pragmatic utterances, even if it is not always possible to predict which English variant learners will encounter in current globalised communication (Kohn 2022). Teachers can benefit their students by becoming pluralistic educators and specialising in teaching a variety of English variants, while becoming capable of adopting an ELF-oriented approach to enhance learners' ICC; for example, they can follow the said dual model. This kind of perspective-level change could also increase students' motivation in the face of an NS model that is often difficult to apply and match.

In this respect, the dual model has two benefits: on the one hand, learners can be instructed about the importance of complying with NES standards – and, consequently, with normativity – in their learning (this is particularly suitable for formal contexts and situations [e.g., job interviews, business and political negotiations, academic communication, etc.]); on the other hand, combining the ELF approach with traditional NS-oriented teaching practices can raise learners' awareness of English variations worldwide and help them realise that, if any deviations from the norm occur in any interaction – despite their preparation for NES standards – they can still communicate effectively, regardless of (non-) conformity with a reference model. This practice can thus increase learners' self-confidence as intercultural communicators, since deviations from the norm are acceptable, and full compliance with the NS standard requirements is perceived as secondary in circumstances where mutual intelligibility takes on grammatical accuracy and correctness.

4.3 How can ELF be embedded in the traditional English language curriculum?

The leading question for arranging or structuring a lesson to create productive teaching and effective learning considering the students' ICC enhancement should be as follows: *What should I, as a teacher-facilitator, aim to achieve to benefit my learners?* If they must acquire or practise certain structural NS norms of the language, teaching activities and materials should be arranged for that purpose, and the final objective should be elicited. For English, complying with NS normativity standards would be the objective, and learners should be guided towards this. However, not all learners may have the same acquisition potential; this has implications for the role of teachers, teaching materials, and assessment practices.

First, an ordinary teacher-centred pedagogy should be reconsidered in terms of a learner-centred pedagogy, where the learners' own experiences and linguistic repertoire – verbal and non-verbal – must be elicited and valued to achieve successful intercultural communication. In this instance, an ELF perspective's

pedagogical significance is underlined, as it shifts the focus of attention to the learner and the learning process. Here, learners must develop their own “capability for languaging” (Seidlhofer 2011: 198) as principal agents in the process of making the learned language their *own* (Kohn 2019),⁸ with the teacher playing the role of a facilitator.

Second, teaching methods and materials must be employed adequately according to the teacher’s decision regarding what part of the teaching (i.e. NES- or ELF-oriented) will be implemented in the class. As argued by Bayyurt et al. (2018), stated that “the textbook remains one of the main pedagogic tools and provides reference points both for teachers and learners, teacher education should [certainly] include moments devoted to a critical reflection upon and analysis of existing materials within a world of English (WE)- and ELF-aware perspective” (p. 252). ELT practice should be informed with elements of authentic out-of-classroom communication that involves non-native users of English, considering that their number is three times higher than that of NSs (Tagliatalata 2021). Third, assessment practices should be addressed by the pedagogical framework adopted within the dual model. If the assessment concerns learners’ acquisition of NES standards, it should be much more focused on “accuracy” and “correctness”, which are traditionally rooted in more “rigid” evaluation criteria. In turn, if learners must be assessed in terms of ELF intercultural communication skills, the focus should converge on “intelligibility” and “appropriateness” (or “effectiveness”), as advocated by ELF pedagogy (Bayyurt and Dewey 2020; Jenkins 2000; Seidlhofer 2011), with a consequently more flexible evaluation process. Thus, embedding ELF in the traditional English language curriculum implies that learners should receive resources and materials for creating the said *third space* within a communicative event for participants with a different mother tongue who choose English to co-construct meaning through a negotiation process that aims to prevent and repair intercultural misunderstandings (Mauranen 2006; Seidlhofer 2009) while fostering the development and acquisition of English-related ICCs. When using English with an ELF perspective, each teacher should structure their lessons according to the requirements of the type of class they teach and thus cope with the limits of the didactic autonomy regulated by their national curriculum.

ELF is not a variety of English (Cogo 2012) but, rather, a *variant* of English dependent on people’s diverse linguacultural backgrounds. It is used as a flexible and co-constructed communication means, which involves speaking in specific

⁸ Kohn (2019, 2022) introduced the notion of “MY English” to refer to a process where speaker-learners, as principal agents in the process of making a learned language their *own*, create their *own* version of it in their minds, hearts, and behaviour.

local contexts to achieve mutual understanding in intercultural situations (Leung and Street 2012; Lopriore 2017), through specific communication strategies (e.g., accommodation, code-switching, repetition, etc.). (Cogo 2015; Seidlhofer 2011; Vettorel 2014, 2015). This complex scenario has important implications for English use in intercultural speech situations and for implementing the most appropriate pedagogical practices in ELT to make learners competent intercultural communicators.

A key question arises: Why should this persistent shift from “accuracy” and “correctness” towards “appropriateness” and “intelligibility” really exist in ELT? This study’s proposed dual teaching model insists that being aware of the NES standards (i.e. knowledge of accurate and correct linguistic norms) is as important as being aware of the ELF features (i.e. knowledge of the variations of English and its deviation from the norms) if learners’ *full* intercultural awareness is to be achieved. In fact, using English in tune with the NS standards or with the ELF variations involves approaching the same language differently; furthermore, in any intercultural speech situation where NESs and NNEs interact, both have the same right to be intelligible with regard to their language and culture as well as their own complex world of experiences. This study holds that intelligibility can be obtained when all these speech conditions co-occur. The nature of context (i.e. formal or informal) determines the degree of accuracy, appropriateness, or correctness needed for a given situation. Furthermore, any normative strictness conducive to a sort of copy-paste process for the studied native standard variety is not sustained here; however, a flexible and convenient adaptation of the dual model is applied to the classroom requirements.

Therefore, traditional ELT should consider the objectives and the classroom environment of each usage context (Jenkins 2012; Leung 2005, 2013) by helping to develop the ability to understand which English is most suitable for different situations (Ehrenreich 2009), including cases where it is necessary to comply with a specific English variety. Thus, Valdman (1989) introduced “variable pedagogical norm” as a useful framework for supporting teachers in their decisions about which language variety and/or sociolinguistic variants should be imparted to learners. Such a variable norm should neither strictly adhere to NS standards nor represent a sort of idealised iteration of NS use; however, it should constitute a linguistically reflective and variable potential, contingent upon the circumstances and the perception of one speaker’s role in a specific usage context based on one’s unique experience as an NNEs (cf. Tagliatela 2021). Undoubtedly, such a view recalls the adaptability and fluidity of ELF features.

More specifically, teaching ELF includes references to a set of research-based pedagogical principles that inform what teachers do in class or what they

incorporate into their materials and lesson plans to facilitate learners' ICA. However, as argued by Jenkins (2012), regardless of what English language teachers are, or are not, recommended to use in class by researchers, "it is for ELT practitioners to decide whether and to what extent ELF is relevant to their learners in their context" (p. 492). Students, as active learners (Vettorel 2015), can acquire peculiar (intercultural) communicative awareness if they are encouraged to think critically about how language is used in a certain context (Seidlhofer 2015). They can resort to their ELF competence – that is, the competence to be used in ELF situations – accounting for *critical cultural awareness* that forms a part of Byram's (1997: 34) "five *savoirs*" (i.e. *attitudes*, *knowledge of self and other*, *skills to interpret and relate*, *skills to discover and interact*, and *critical cultural awareness*), and develop and adopt the right form of English to facilitate an effective communicative event under ELF conditions, which is also referred to as "ELF communication competence" (Kohn 2014: 1). This involves a process of "mobilisation" for personal knowledge, skills, competences, and language resources, thus facilitating students to find suitable solutions for any intercultural communicative event in a personal, independent, and responsible manner. In this respect, the reference model to be associated with the NS model can be identified with the competent intercultural communicator⁹ (cf. Canagarajah 2013; Mansfield and Poppi 2012; Vettorel 2010), which, for English, becomes an *ELF competent intercultural communicator*.

Such a redefinition shows that the *intercultural speaker* and the *ELF speaker* have overlapping features (Pözl 2003; cf. also Seidlhofer et al. 2006), as ELF situations are inherently intercultural (Jenkins 2015; Kohn 2014, 2015, 2019). Therefore, an ELF-oriented approach implemented within a traditional English class can reasonably foster learners' ICC because of its adaptability to any intercultural situation; in turn, teachers can decide what is important for their context and locality and whether to integrate it into their classrooms.

4.4 Could teachers' attitudes towards an ELF-oriented approach affect the teaching process?

Becoming *ELF-oriented* includes awareness of the observations and principles emerging from an understanding of how ELF functions. Calafato (2019) contends that "[l]anguage awareness is explicit knowledge about and conscious perception of language, its structure and vocabulary, its teaching and learning, as well as its

⁹ In this study, "communicator" implies learner and user, as the learning aspect transcends the school pathway.

use in social and cultural contexts” (p. 4; cf. also Sifakis and Bayyurt 2018: 459). Therefore, the cognitive and sociocultural components intertwine. However, the crucial function of culture in ELT can be observed when teachers and learners with the same mother tongue draw upon their knowledge of it and participate in a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural reflection regarding features relevant to the mother tongue as well as the learned language and culture (Svalberg 2016) through a mutual exchange of their linguacultural experiences. Hence, new communication methods must be considered for recognising the plurality of voices in English from various parts of the world (Lopriore 2017).

Although teachers are becoming increasingly aware of the relevance of incorporating an ELF-aware approach in ELT, because of the multilingualism and multiculturalism in classrooms even at the local level (Leung and Street 2012), they still struggle to appropriate this pedagogical approach in their classrooms. They are hesitant to introduce innovations derived from the intercultural and hybrid uses of English, as this is considered counterintuitive and even counterproductive (Margić and Vodopija-Krstanović 2018). They believe that students may miss out on learning Standard British or American English, which can be useful for their career prospects or for studying in native English-speaking countries. While they express concern regarding ELF approaches in education that can suggest the perception that native standards are *a priori* unattainable (Groom 2012), they believe that ELF generates a power imbalance in favour of the NS language; this can lower the learners’ self-esteem and negate their social and cultural identity (Margić and Vodopija-Krstanović 2018). This is because the traditional NS model pivots around achieving NS proficiency and assimilation into the new culture without considering the learners’ experiences, values, and beliefs. In this sense, Jackson (2014) maintained that an advanced language proficiency level is not correlated with an advanced IC level, considering that language and culture are two distinct aspects of communication. Therefore, teachers should aim to develop learners’ potential in opening a new space for using English based on their own linguistic and cultural backgrounds; further, they should encourage learners to learn from their experience through *reflective* practices¹⁰ (cf. Bowles and Cogo 2015) to achieve communal communicative success (Kohn 2019), under the motivation provided by their sense of belonging to the same global community or group of speakers, which ELF can provide.

In the shift from the traditional teaching approach to the ELF-oriented approach, many teachers have renounced the idea of their learners aridly reproducing the communicative features of NSs. As Pölzl (2003: 4) points out, it is

¹⁰ *Reflexivity* is one of the components of the triad model of ELF-oriented pedagogy. The other two are *creativity* and *performativity* (for details, see Tsuchiya 2020, pp. 348–349).

questionable how teachers “could teach and students [could] learn the language benchmarked on the NS and pretend to belong to a particular ‘national’ English speaking culture when they obviously do not”. Teachers should instead, more realistically, help students manage any intercultural communicative situation and reconceptualise the NES model as the norm provider. Their reluctance to use an ELF-oriented approach, which has often impeded educating learners to be competent intercultural speakers (Tagliatalata and Tardi 2020), can be surmounted if they first conduct an attentive evaluation of the learning environment. An ELF-oriented approach can be consequently adjusted to a specific situation, and teachers may decide what may be important for their context and integrate it into their classrooms (cf. Valdman 1989).

As argued, through the dual model, a fair balance between an NES-oriented pedagogy and an ELF-oriented pedagogy can be achieved. The intercultural speaker model can be an ideal model for language learners’ achievement (cf. Bouchard 2017; Byram 1997, 2009; Moeller and Nugent 2014), especially with reference to English, as they must become competent intercultural users of English in an increasingly complex global reality. However, the NS model is more suitable for contexts where compliance with normativity is considered a distinguishing feature. Right from pre-service training, teachers must understand that using an ELF-oriented approach does not imply disregarding the NS standards but, rather, enlightening learners about the different varieties of English that can increase their success in intercultural communication. ELF cannot really be taught, as it involves a non-standardised variety. However, learners can be sensitised to it through activities for developing their own ELF awareness. Therefore, integrating an ELF approach into the classroom along with an NES-oriented approach is an enriching challenge.

5 Conclusions and research prospects

Overall, this discussion sought to provide prospective and senior English teachers and practitioners with useful insights into the importance of ICC in ELT. In particular, this study argued how ELF-oriented teaching can enhance the development of intercultural components among learners. A shift, conveniently operated by teachers, from the traditional English teaching framework, where NS standards are emphasised, into a more pragmatic ELF-oriented teaching and paying particular attention to intercultural intelligibility, is crucial in today’s multicultural scenario to raise learners’ *full* intercultural awareness of how English can function as a bridge between and across linguacultures.

This study has postulated that a dual teaching model should be integrated into the English class. This model comprises a combination of the NES model of one national variety for the structural part of language teaching and learning, which is aimed at formal settings, and the ELF competent intercultural communicator model for the intercultural part, which is intended for developing co-constructed communication and mutual understanding. In the dual model, the two components (NS-oriented teaching and ELF-oriented teaching) do not exclude each other, as both are necessary for developing learners' *full* awareness of the multiple facets of English; thus, they effectively enhance learners' communication between and across cultures in various speech situations. This model can be useful for any foreign language class. Further, it can facilitate learners' in-depth reflection on and acquisition of the studied foreign language, consequently allowing them to mediate linguaculturally between their own linguaculture and that of others.

This study presents a discussion on how ELF can assist learners to become competent intercultural communicators, clarifying that teachers should become pluralistic teachers who specialise in teaching one English variety and demonstrate that they are capable of adopting an ELF-oriented approach for enhancing learners' *comprehensive* ICC. The variety and NS standards that English teachers should flexibly adhere to depend on the regulations of state guidelines issued by the ministry of education and on their objectives and classroom environments. Teachers should strive to bolster their ability to understand which English variant is most suitable for different intercultural situations and then encourage their students to think critically about how the language is used in the given contexts; students should be encouraged to exploit their *own* English language repertoire to tackle today's intercultural communicative challenges outside the classroom.

Learners must develop a clear understanding of the course objectives, whereas teachers should exercise caution to avoid unrealistic expectations and jeopardise the entire learning process. Repositioning the role of English across the curriculum also reveals that the intercultural speaker and the ELF speaker have overlapping characteristics, as ELF situations are inherently intercultural. However, the management of these situations may show some bias because of teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards the ELF-oriented approach. Transforming traditional language pedagogical practices is not always easy because teachers tend to resist novelties; for them, this may mean giving up on established (and probably easier-to-use) teaching frameworks. However, this study's findings have clarified that the NS-oriented model should not be rejected; rather, teachers should be aware of the different varieties of English. Teachers who are aware of the numerous recurring English varieties and are capable of inculcating them in their practices can help their learners become successful intercultural communicators.

Thus, this study offers a fresh and comprehensive perspective on a topic that has been widely investigated, despite some limitations. First, this study's discussion was conducted using a theoretical approach, whereas the ICC domain in conjunction with ELF pedagogy is prevalently practical. Second, there was a general focus on teachers' attitudes and beliefs, even though their linguacultural background could negatively impact their practices or relationships with learners in their localities. For example, it may be insightful to conduct research on the teachers' attitudes in multicultural classrooms, which may be biased by their personal linguacultural backgrounds. This understanding may help them face challenges in linguistically and ethnoculturally diverse classrooms. Third, this study did not specifically refer to ad hoc materials due to word count restrictions. Fourth, this study's methodological approach was grounded in informal classroom observation. While this approach could be reliable and provide valuable suggestions regarding the topic, classroom interactions often happen naturally and are not biased by learners' performance anxiety, which arises when they know they are being observed. Fifth, this study did not collect data for specific grade levels, subject areas, lesson content, and quality of the interactions. It is therefore recommended that discussions should be broadened with different methodological strategies, possibly including qualitative and longitudinal sociocultural studies illuminating more complex relationships among teachers, students, other stakeholders, and the materials they design.

This study's findings draw attention to the need for initiatives to change teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and concerns towards integrating ELF-oriented approaches into traditional English teaching – particularly among teachers new to the profession and the ELF domain who are still coping with inadequate pre-service preparation and materials. Such a change should never be considered a radical shift from the established English pedagogy to its updated pedagogical version (including the ELF approach); instead, it should be viewed as a path to an enriched teaching practice, where through the dual model, all dimensions of English can coexist with equal dignity and legitimacy and can serve to effectively raise learners' *comprehensive ICC*.

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