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Students' Views and Attitudes towards English and ELF in an Italian University

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This is dedicated to the memory of my father, Paolo Bagni.

ABSTRACT

The rise of English as a 'global' lingua franca has brought applied linguistics scholars to question the tenets of English language teaching (ELT). In the expanding circle, the traditionally accepted English-as-a-foreign language (EFL) pedagogical model appears today outdated and possibly even obsolete. Before any changes in English language education can be confidently suggested it is important to understand the perceptions and the opinions of the ELT stakeholders. The importance of attitude studies related to the context of ELT has long been recognized and over the last two decades several such studies have investigated, with various foci, the teachers' and learners' attitudes towards English in educational contexts, revealing the high vitality of the native English norm. To date, most studies that examined the attitudes towards English of university students were conducted in specific ELT contexts and there is a need for further research that also involves students who do not specialize in English. This research consists of a study that investigates the attitudes towards English, English as a lingua franca (ELF) and English teaching of a population of students of three Departments of the Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia. The research has the objective of contributing to the task of assessing the established EFL models of English language pedagogy, and of pointing to possible future directions for both research in applied linguistics and ELT practitioners. In accordance with this objective, the following research questions were generated:

1. What are the students' attitudes towards English?
2. What are their attitudes towards ELF?
3. What are the students' opinions on the teaching of English?
4. Is an ELF-informed approach in tune with the students' own perceived needs?

The research method adopted for this study draws on folk linguistics and the direct approaches to the study of language attitudes. A mixed-methods approach was used for the collection of the data that integrated a structured questionnaire and semi-structured individual interviews. A total number of 254 questionnaires were collected and 28 valid interviews were conducted, between December 2019 and May 2020. The analysis of the data combined a qualitative and a quantitative approach, although with an emphasis on qualitative interpretation. The findings revealed favorable attitudes to English, which the participants regarded as an important tool for social inclusion, and ambivalent attitudes to ELF, with the suggestion that ELF tends to be accepted in the abstract but resisted in practice. While by majority the participants recognized that English functions as a lingua franca, they tended to gravitate towards NE norms, held negative attitudes towards NNE, and did not seem to conceive the idea that English can be a culturally neutral language. The participants' views on ELT revealed a significant influence of native-speakerism and standard language ideology. However, this study also suggested that negative attitudes towards NNE can be changed through awareness-raising of linguistic variation and its principles. The participants were found to be critical of the traditional EFL pedagogy that focuses on the grammar-translation (GT) method, and they suggested that teachers should combine the notion of language as an abstract grammar system with the notion of a communicative tool for the real world. The students were found to conceive ELT in utilitarian and instrumentalist terms, and it was suggested that an ELF-aware approach to English teaching would be in tune with the students' own perceived need to become competent users of English in real-life contexts. However, it was also suggested that the transition from an EFL to an ELF model may not be a smooth one.

L'ascesa dell'inglese come lingua franca globale ha portato la linguistica applicata a mettere in discussione i fondamenti dell'insegnamento dell'inglese (ELT). Nello "expanding circle", i modelli 'inglese lingua straniera' (EFL) tradizionalmente accettati appaiono oggi superati. Prima ancora che possano essere suggeriti con sicurezza cambiamenti nell'insegnamento dell'inglese, è importante comprendere le percezioni e le opinioni di chi è coinvolto in prima persona. L'importanza degli studi sull'atteggiamento linguistico in contesti di ELT è da

tempo riconosciuta, e negli ultimi due decenni diversi studi di questo tipo hanno indagato vari aspetti dell'atteggiamento di insegnanti e apprendenti nei confronti dell'inglese in contesti educativi, rivelando la grande vitalità delle norme native dell'inglese. Ad oggi, la maggior parte degli studi che hanno preso in esame l'atteggiamento verso l'inglese di studenti universitari sono stati condotti in specifici contesti di ELT e sono necessari ulteriori studi che coinvolgano anche studenti che non si specializzano in inglese. Questa ricerca consiste in uno studio che indaga l'atteggiamento verso l'inglese, l'inglese come lingua franca (ELF) e l'insegnamento dell'inglese di una popolazione di studenti di tre dipartimenti dell'Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia. La ricerca ha l'obiettivo di contribuire a valutare i modelli accettati EFL di insegnamento dell'inglese e di suggerire possibili indirizzi futuri sia a ricercatori in linguistica applicata sia a professionisti di ELT. Coerentemente con questo obiettivo, sono state generate le seguenti domande di ricerca:

1. *Qual è l'atteggiamento degli studenti verso l'inglese?*
2. *Qual è l'atteggiamento degli studenti verso ELF?*
3. *Quali opinioni hanno gli studenti dell'insegnamento dell'inglese?*
4. *Un metodo aggiornato a ELF va incontro ai bisogni percepito dagli studenti?*

Il metodo adottato per questa ricerca attinge alla folk linguistics e ai metodi diretti di indagine sull'atteggiamento linguistico. Un metodo misto di raccolta dei dati ha integrato un questionario semi-strutturato e delle interviste non strutturate. Sono stati raccolti un totale di 254 questionari sono state condotte e 28 interviste valide, tra dicembre 2019 e maggio 2020. L'analisi dei dati ha combinato tecnica qualitativa e quantitativa, benché con un'enfasi sull'interpretazione qualitativa. I risultati hanno evidenziato atteggiamenti favorevoli nei confronti dell'inglese, considerato dai partecipanti importante strumento di inclusione sociale, e atteggiamenti ambivalenti nei confronti di ELF, con l'indicazione che ELF tende ad essere accettato in teoria ma non in concreto. Mentre in maggioranza i partecipanti hanno mostrato di riconoscere che l'inglese funziona come lingua franca, essi hanno altresì rivelato una tendenza a essere attratti dalle norme del NE, avere un atteggiamento negativo il NNE, e a non concepire l'idea che l'inglese possa essere una lingua culturalmente neutra. Le opinioni dei partecipanti su ELT hanno mostrato una significativa influenza di 'native-speakerism' e ideologia della lingua standard. Tuttavia, questo studio ha anche suggerito che la consapevolezza dei principi della variazione linguistica può cambiare gli atteggiamenti negativi verso il NNE. Le critiche alla pedagogia EFL e il metodo grammaticale-traduttivo (GT) hanno suggerito che gli insegnanti debbano coniugare il concetto di lingua come sistema grammaticale astratto con quello di strumento per la comunicazione nel mondo reale. La concezione utilitarista e strumentale di ELT ha mostrato che una pedagogia dell'inglese ispirata a ELF è in sintonia con la necessità di diventare utenti competenti dell'inglese nel mondo reale. Tuttavia, lo studio ha anche suggerito che la transizione da EFL a ELF non è senza ostacoli.

Students' Views and Attitudes Towards English and ELF in an Italian University.

Contents

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Abbreviations

BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
CPH	Critical Period Hypothesis
DCE	Dipartimento di Comunicazione ed Economia (Department of Communication and Economics)
DESU	Dipartimento di Educazione e Scienze Umane (Department of Education and Humanities)
DSLC	Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Culturali (Department of Studies in Language and Culture
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EIL	English as an International language
ELF	English as a Lingua Franca
ELFA	English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings
ELT	English Language Teaching
EMI	English Medium Instruction
ENL	English as a National Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
GE	Global Englishes
GELT	Global Englishes Language Teaching
GT	Grammar-translation (method)
HE	Higher Education
IaH	Internationalization at Home
Ing Mec	Ingegneria Meccanica (Mechanical Engineering)
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
LACOM	Lingue per la comunicazione nell'impresa e nelle organizzazioni internazionali (Languages for Communication in International Enterprises and Organizations)
LCE	Lingue e Culture Europee (European Languages and Cultures)
LFC	Lingua Franca Core
LHR	Linguistic Human Rights
LI	Linguistic Imperialism
MCI	Management e Comunicazione di Impresa (Management and Business Communication)
MGT	Matched Guise Technique

MOI	Marketing e Organizzazione di Impresa (Marketing and Business Organization)
NE	Native English NNE Non-native English
NES	Native English Speaker
NNES	Non-native English Speaker
NEST	Native English Speaker Teacher
NNEST	Non-native English Speaker Teacher
PICI	Pubblicità, Comunicazione Digitale e Creatività d'Impresa (Advertising, Digital Communication and Creative Business Processes)
RQ	Research Question
SCO	Scienze della Comunicazione (Communication Sciences)
SEDU	Scienze dell'Educazione per il Nido e per le professioni socio-pedagogiche (Education for Early Childhood Services and Socio-Pedagogical Context)
SPED	Scienze Pedagogiche (Pedagogy)
STPS	Scienze e Tecniche Psicologiche (Psychological Sciences and Techniques)
UNIMORE	Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia
VGT	Verbal Guise Technique
VOICE	Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English
WE	World Englishes

1. Introduction

This introductory chapter begins by outlining the objectives of the research. The background of the research study is then summarized in two distinct sections. Section 1.2 situates the research in the wider theoretical framework of reference. It provides a brief outline of the latest developments that have characterized the field of applied linguistics against the background of the changing sociolinguistic realities of English. Section 1.3 introduces the methodological framework of this research study by arguing for the importance of language attitude studies in the perspective of assessing and revising the ELT practices. Following this, the present research study is introduced, and its rationale is explained against the backdrop of the context and purpose of the research (section 1.4). Subsequently, the research questions are stated (section 1.5) and finally the thesis structure is summarized (section 1.6).

1.1 Objectives

This research consists of a study that investigates the views and attitudes towards English and its teaching of a population of students of three Departments of the Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia (UNIMORE), located in Italy. The term view is used here in its general meaning of opinion, perspective, idea. As a distinct concept from views, attitudes are more latent and implicit than the overt opinons (Garrett 2010), hence they are only inferred from the data collected through the research instruments (refer to chapter 3). The students' views and attitudes are examined through the lenses of the contemporary 'global' dimension of English, the unprecedented expansion of its functions and roles in key societal domains of the 'expanding circle' and particularly its role of 'lingua franca' for international and intercultural communication. The objectives of this research study are: 1) to contribute to assessing the prevailing pedagogical models of English as a foreign language (EFL) that inform English language teaching (ELT) in the expanding circle; 2) to point to possible future directions for both research in applied linguistics and ELT practitioners regarding a paradigm shift towards a pedagogical approach that embraces the concept of English as a lingua franca (ELF). Ideological positions are embedded in attitudes to language, and while the ideology of the standard language and "native speakerism" (Holliday 2006) have informed ELT theory and practice for a long time, this research aims to explore the possibility that the perceptions of the students involved in this study may also reveal an awareness of and a favorable orientation towards English as both a polycentric language and a de-territorialized and de-nativized lingua franca.

1.2 New perspectives on English and ELT

The post-national era of globalization has witnessed a turn in the field of applied linguistic research, from the monolingual assumptions inherited from nation-state thinking, towards an interest for the multilingual usages and a focus on the inherent heterogeneity of the speech communities of the West.

Post-structuralist developments in the study of language in society in the era of globalization have emphasized the ideologically constructed character of the notion of language as a self-bounded system linked with a supposedly homogeneous geo-localized community that had underpinned the linguistics and the applied linguistics of the twentieth century (Blommaert & Rampton 2011, Makoni & Pennycook 2005). Accordingly, monolingualism as the norm and the assumed natural character of a supposedly monolingual native speaker have come to be questioned. The complexities of the sociolinguistic urban spaces of the post-colonial and post-cold war West, in particular, have drawn increased attention to the new kinds of multilingualism characteristic of diasporic life, often appreciated in works in linguistic landscaping (Blommaert & Rampton 2011). Rampton conceptualization of "language crossing" (1995), describing the act of code-switching into varieties that are not considered part of a speaker's linguistic repertoire, as a way of moving across social or ethnic boundaries, was in

this respect very influential. Following Rampton's work on the dialectic between group belonging and ethnic otherness, an interest for the sociolinguistics of migration has grown, with a renewed focus on identity and its symbolic expression in the linguistic behavior.

Applied linguistic research, in particular, has considered the implications for education of the relationship between language and identity in contexts where communication is mobile and complex (Creese & Blackledge 2015, 2010). In the field of second language acquisition, Swain's conceptualization of "languaging" (2006), which described the learner's use of the target language in the L2 class, was very influential too. Foregrounding the key role of languaging as a way of "making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language" (98) in the learning process, Swain highlighted the processual nature of linguistic performance in the target language and implicitly legitimized the non-native speaker's performance that falls short of the native speaker-target. The same concept of the dynamic process of meaning-making through language has been recently repositioned within a post-modernist multilingual-integrative perspective that blurs the boundaries between the learner's L1 and the target language and sees these as non-discrete codes in the act of performance. In order to disentangle the notion of multilingualism from the traditional view that understands it as a sum of more discrete codes, alternative conceptualizations have been proposed, such as "polylanguaging" (Jørgensen, Karrebæk, Madsen, Møller 2011), "metrolingualism" (Otsuji & Pennycook 2010), "urbilingualism" and "lingua franca multilingualism" (Makoni & Pennycook 2012), "translanguaging" (García & Wei 2014), "translingual practice" (Canagarajah 2013).

It is an established fact that the processes of globalization have further entrenched the primacy of English in the world, accelerating its 'spread' in the expanding circle, where the English language has come to play many roles for the non-native speakers of English (NNESs henceforth). More than that, today's students of EFL can easily receive target language input through the new media and can be potentially exposed to diverse Englishes other than the Standard variety of the English classroom.

In this fast-changing context, applied linguistics scholars have been led to borrow the post-structuralist conceptual toolkit that challenged the fundamental assumptions about languages and their group of speakers, and have reconceptualized English in a way that includes both its diatopic variation on the global scale, and its uncertain relationship with the traditionally accepted concepts of nation and culture. Recent research in applied linguistics thus emphasizes the polycentricity of English(es) and its status of lingua franca for intercultural communication. Within this framework, the study of the English language has developed into the distinct though interrelated strands of research in World Englishes (WE henceforth), English as an International language (EIL), and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF henceforth) (see 2.3).

Furthermore, the status of English in today's world has also precipitated a paradigm shift in the specific context of ELT: in view of the tremendous changes that the sociolinguistics realities of the English language have undergone in the last three decades, there is general agreement as to the need to re-assess the approaches adopted in English language education worldwide (see 2.4). The 'global' dimension of English and its increased use as a lingua franca carry several implications for language policy and planning in general, and for ELT in the specific, in the countries where English is traditionally learned as a foreign language. The traditionally accepted EFL pedagogical models appear today outdated and possibly even obsolete. Consensus has grown among applied linguists over the need to adjust the theory and practice of ELT in the EFL countries to the changing nature of the English language outside the classroom. As it is illustrated further on, ELF scholarship has taken on the task of revising and rethinking the general goals of foreign language education, the specific target of English language learning, the curriculum design, the materials and methods, as well as the language assessment criteria and teacher recruitment practices. Research work that contributes to the task of exploring the possibility of adopting an ELF-aware approach that supersedes the traditional EFL pedagogical model is timely. In this regard, the key issues of ownership of English, legitimacy of the non-native English (NNE) usages and the cultural frames of reference associated to the English language demand investigation.

1.3 The importance of language attitude studies

A re-orientation of the ELT models and strategies would arguably serve the double purpose of making the teaching of English more motivating to today's learners, and also more effective, in view of the demands that are placed upon future users of the language in a societal context that puts increased emphasis on English language communication skills. However, before any changes in English language education can be confidently suggested it is arguably important to understand the perceptions and the opinions of the ELT stakeholders; in this sense, the study of language attitudes bears particular relevance in the perspective of facilitating a paradigm shift. The importance of attitude studies related to the context of ELT has long been recognized and studies of attitudes of ELT practitioners and learners of English in the expanding circle have multiplicated in the last two decades. As it is illustrated in chapter 3.4, several attitude studies, with various foci, have investigated the teachers' and learners' attitudes towards English in educational contexts, in the core English-speaking countries, and in the expanding circle countries where for many users and future users of English a shift is arguably occurring from EFL to ELF. Existing studies include attitudes towards different accents and varieties of the language as learning target models, attitudes towards native and non-native English-speaking teachers, attitudes towards the teaching methods, the learning contents and materials, attitudes towards ELF, and also attitudes to English-medium instruction (EMI). Over the last decade, the need for a paradigm shift in ELT has gathered momentum, and more studies of attitudes towards ELF in the expanding circle have started to appear, some of which were explicitly carried out with a view to sensitizing in-service and prospective instructors towards an ELF-informed pedagogy, and to integrating ELF and WE into the English language curriculum.

As it is shown in chapter 3.4, most studies of attitudes towards English and ELF were conducted in specific ELT contexts of the expanding circle; that is, they investigated either the attitudes of non-native-English-speaking teachers (NNESTs henceforth) or the attitudes of NNES students who were studying English at the time of the investigation, as a major academic subject or in a free-standing language course. The preference for a native English (NE) model that was found to prevail among teachers and students was thus an arguably predictable outcome, as the context in which the studies were carried out positioned them in those very specific roles, overriding other potential roles as users of the language outside the classroom. However, the population of users of English in lingua franca communication is larger and more varied than that of the students who specialize in English studies or foreign languages. To date, not many research studies have examined the attitudes of users of ELF from the expanding circle who are not directly involved in ELT as practitioners or learners, including university students who are majoring in other fields of studies than English.

It must be also observed that English is today learned more widely in the education systems of Europe, and in the European countries of the Mediterranean region, where the last two decades have seen the most dramatic changes in the local societies' relationship with the English language, English is now a mandatory subject from an early age. Therefore, there is a growing number of people who have received and receive English language learning during their formal education, regardless of their willingness and motivation to learn English. In other words, every European youth, although to an extent that may vary considerably, can be said to have a stake in ELT, and can be regarded as a potential user of ELF. All this considered, there is arguably need for more research in attitudes towards English and ELF that is carried out in the expanding circle, where the need to bridge the gap between the traditional EFL models and ELF is more urgent, and that involves a more heterogeneous population than the studies conducted so far have done.

1.4 This study

This study was carried out in three different Departments of the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia (UNIMORE): the Department of Communication and Economics (DCE henceforth) and the Department of Education and Humanities (DESU henceforth), where the students who were reached for the investigation were

attending traditional Italian-medium courses, and the Department of Studies on Language and Culture (DSLC henceforth), where the majority of the students who participated in the study were receiving English-medium instruction.

With the aim of offering the stakeholders' viewpoint on issues where their voice would otherwise go unheard, it is the rationale of this research that an investigation into the opinions, beliefs, and the underlying attitudes towards English, ELF, and English language pedagogy of a varied population of students in an Italian university can contribute to the task of assessing the established EFL models of English language pedagogy, and point to possible ways of fine-tuning ELT to the needs and goals of future users of English who are located in the new frontiers of the expanding circle.

Research in NNES students' attitudes to English conducted in Italy is rather scarce, and the population of non-native speaker students who participated in this research study is also more heterogeneous than that of most studies of students' attitudes to English and ELF conducted so far, in terms of their relationship with English. The choice of the three Departments in which the study was conducted allowed for comparisons to be explored and establish possible parallels and divergences.

However, the greatest majority of the participants also shared a partially common background as native speakers of Italian who had received formal education in Italy, where English is taught according to the traditional EFL model, throughout the entire cycle, from elementary to high school. Following a trend of English being learned more widely in continental Europe at large, in the Italian school system the age at which kids start learning English was lowered in 2003 to the first grade of elementary, while also more and more private as well as state and municipal preschools now offer English language classes. The last decade has also witnessed the rapid growth of content-and-language-integrated learning (CLIL) courses in secondary education and the multiplication of EMI programs in higher education. More generally, in the last two decades, Italy has seen English making inroads in domains of language use that were previously reserved to the national language and, as a consequence, the demand for English language skills has grown substantially. The increased emphasis that the processes of 'globalization' have placed on working competence in English, as a particularly valuable asset and an ever more necessary skill in higher education and certain professional positions, was therefore a factor of influence on all the participants' perceptions, influencing their beliefs and opinions on what English is and does.

Also, exposure to English through both the traditional and the new media has nowadays reached a point where English in Italy can no longer be regarded as a completely 'foreign' language. This research started from the consideration that all university students, regardless of their major and their disciplinary training, had encountered and possibly used, in their out-of-classroom experience, different Englishes that may not necessarily correspond to the Standard variety of the English classroom nor to any other NE variety. Therefore, all the participants, whatever their personal experience and relationship with English, were thought to be in a position to express opinions on the models for ELT of their home country's education system, and on what to learn in the English classroom and how best to be taught it.

This study investigated the participants' general perceptions of the contemporary sociolinguistic profile of English from a number of interrelated foci, and so different topics were brought up: the status, roles and functions of English, and ELF in particular, together with the related issues of ownership of English and the legitimacy of the NNE usages; the participant's awareness of variation in English(es), as well as the participants' personal opinions on their learning experience, and their beliefs about how to make the learning of English more motivating and effective.

The views of the participants in this research study were directly elicited by the researcher and their attitudes were inferred from the consciously formulated opinions and beliefs about the topics that were considered, in accordance with the method typical of folk linguistics research (Niedzielski and Preston 2003) and the direct approaches to the study of language attitudes (Garrett 2010) (see chapter 3). To this end, the study integrated a qualitative and a

quantitative approach in the analysis of the collected data. Not only was the integration of methods believed to increase the reliability and validity of the collected data, but it also allowed to explore the possible reasons for the attitudes and put forward working hypothesis for further investigation. A limitation of most existing studies in students' attitudes to English is that they did not provide possible explanations for the attitudes, nor did many of them consider the influence of the respondents' previous experience and other background factors. This study took account of the participants' personal experience as an important variable that helped contextualize and explain the student's beliefs and their attitudes.

Also, this study interrogated ELT-related matters that are a concern of applied linguistics research by integrating them within the wider framework of a sociolinguistics of the English language in the 'globalized' world. This integration of perspectives allowed to suggest hypothesis on the ideological and structural factors that influenced the students' attitudes, which may also become the focus of further research aimed at assessing and updating the ELT strategies. The qualitative analysis, in particular, allowed to gain insights into the deeper ideological underpinning of the attitudes, as they were articulated in arguments and counterarguments by the participants.

The attitudes here examined reproduce ideologies related to language and its pedagogy that are socialized at both the micro-level of the English classroom and the macro-level of society at large. As chapter 3 shows, it is proved by the existing studies that the learners' attitudes to English and ELF tend to be strongly influenced by the dominance of NE norms in ELT and the ideology of the standard language. The native-speaker episteme dominates ELT worldwide, and research is needed that investigates the feasibility of a paradigm shift towards an ELF-informed approach to ELT, highlighting its possible benefits as well as its limitations, and any possible barriers to change. Particularly in the expanding circle, where it is becoming increasingly important for the new generations to learn English as well as learning academic content *through* English, it is necessary to understand how an ELF perspective can be effectively integrated into the ELT practices as well as the EMI practices.

By providing a window to the participants' views and the ideologies underlying their perceptions of English and its pedagogy, this study also aimed to explore the possibility that today's learners are favorably disposed towards a different understanding of English and its learning that embraces its pluricentricity, on the one hand, and its de-nativized and de-territorialized status of lingua franca, on the other hand.

1.5 The Research Questions

In accordance with the objectives of the research and on the basis of the considerations previously exposed, the following research questions (RQ) were generated:

1. What are the students' attitudes towards English?
2. What are their attitudes towards ELF?
3. What are the students' opinions on the teaching of English?
4. Is an ELF-informed approach in tune with the students' own perceived needs?

The first and the second research questions focused on how the participants viewed the English language in the context of today's world and involved the status, the functions, the roles, and the perceived future use of English from the viewpoint of a NNES student. The second question, in particular, addressed the 'global' lingua franca role of English and related also to the ownership of the English language, implicitly asking whether the students perceived English as belonging to a particular group of (NE) speakers or not. The third question was centered around how the participants evaluated their experience of learners of English as a foreign language in formal instruction and aimed to expose the critical issues of the EFL approach. Given the presence of students of an English-taught master's degree program in the participants sample, RQ3 also addressed the learners' opinions on and attitudes to the integration of content and language in EMI. The fourth question specifically focused on the

viability of an ELF-informed approach to the teaching of English. It was initially considered as a sub-question of RQ3, but it was eventually separated for the sake of clarity, since it specifically related the interconnected topics of linguistic variation in English, the learning target and the cultural content of the English language classroom to the students' own perceived learning needs.

1.6 Thesis structure

The second and the third chapter provide the theoretical framework for the current study and present the review of the existing literature. The second chapter begins by establishing the wider sociolinguistic context in which the object of the research is positioned. After a critical discussion of a set of terms that have become standard in the field of English studies and that are used throughout this research, the chapter moves on to consider the advantages and disadvantages that have been associated, in scholarly research, to the 'global' dimension of the English language. Subsequently, an overview of the developments in applied linguistics research aimed at capturing the realities of English in the era of globalization is provided, with a particular focus on the ELF paradigm and the implications that this has had for ELT. Finally, the existing body of research work where arguments have been advanced for an epistemic break in ELT are reviewed. The third chapter introduces the study of language attitudes and underscores its relevance in relation to the purpose of the study. The methods of language attitude research are presented and the review of previous studies in attitudes towards English that are deemed significant in relation to the objectives of this research is provided. Chapter four outlines the methodology of the research study. This chapter includes a description of the setting where the research was carried out, a critical discussion of the method adopted for this research, a detailed description of the data collection procedure and a discussion of the development of the research instruments. Chapter five and six present the analysis of the data collected through, respectively, the questionnaire and the interviews. Chapter seven discusses the results in relation to the research objectives and questions. Chapter eight draws the conclusions by summarizing the findings and pointing out the implications of the research study. In the same chapter, the credibility of the results is discussed in terms of reliability, validity and limitations of the procedures of data collection and analysis, and suggestions are made for further research.

2. The English language and its teaching in today's world

This chapter introduces the wider sociolinguistic context in which the object of this research is positioned and establishes the theoretical and conceptual framework for the research study. Section 2.1 introduces the sociolinguistic background, with a focus on the roles and functions that English has come to acquire for many NNESs in the era globalization, and throws light onto the key concepts of 'new periphery', 'global spread' and 'global lingua franca', that are used throughout the study. Section 2.2 focuses on how the existing literature has characterized the expansion of English throughout the globe, in terms of either its benefits or drawbacks. In chapter section 2.3, the review of the literature turns to the research paradigms that applied linguistics scholarship has developed over the last three decades, with the aim of capturing the evolving realties of English in the globalized world. In this section, the rise of ELF scholarship, from its beginnings till its most recent developments, is discussed at length. In chapter section 2.4, arguments for a paradigm shift in ELT are presented and discussed, and the existing studies that advocate for a change in the pedagogy of English and that are deemed relevant for this research are reviewed.

2.1 The global dimension of English

It has become an established notion in the field of applied linguistics that English functions nowadays as a 'global lingua franca'. Already in the late 1990s, a number of scholars working in in the field emphasized a 'global' dimension in their descriptions of the contemporary sociolinguistic realities of English (e.g.: Graddol 1996, Crystal 1997). Over the last three decades, the processes of globalization have further entrenched the primacy of the English language in the world, accelerating a process of expansion of its functions in key societal domains in many EFL countries, where the English language has no official status at institutional level and is primarily learned through formal instruction.

Globalization is the standard term used to refer to the contemporary phase of corporate-driven capitalism; it captures a whole set of interrelated political and economic processes and socio-cultural phenomena that have reshaped the world in the post-Cold War era: "[G]lobalization has economic, technological, cultural and linguistic strands to it", as Phillipson noted, and "[t]he globalization of English in diverse contexts, (…) is one such interconnected strand" (Phillipson 2000: 90). English is the language of a 'global' pop culture of entertainment and is embedded in the spread of a youth consumerist culture whose fountainheads are located in the USA, the heart of the global corporate capitalist system. English is also firmly stablished as the international language of modern technology, and it is the working language of a transnational class of diplomats and businessmen. Competence in English has become a specially valued skill in the labor market of the globalized national economies, in an ideological framework of neoliberal thinking that emphasizes language skills as a form of human capital and a factor for individual talent. The latter, in turn, is considered key to securing employment and advance prospects of upward social mobility (Holborow 2015, 2018).

On the basis of the principles of the human capital theory (Fitzsimons 2017), the processes of globalization have also recast the purposes of education, and the new millennium has witnessed a global policy convergence in approaches to educational reforms. The theory of human capital "suggests that in a global economy, performance is linked to people's knowledge stock, individual skill levels, learning capabilities and cultural adaptability" (Rizvi 2017). In accordance with these principles, a view of education has been imposed worldwide that "learning for learning sake is no longer sufficient, and that education does not have any intrinsic ends as such but must always be linked to the instrumental purposes of human capital development and economic self-maximization" (ibid.: 7). In Europe, the EU Education and Training strategy was explicitly devised to align education to the changing nature of economic activity on the globalized world stage, and to this end, it was made explicit that the European States' education systems need to produce globally minded, mobile and inter-culturally aware subjects capable to deal with the demands of job market in a globalized world (ET 2020).

Within this framework, English, already the most widely taught language on a global scale with an estimated 1.5 billion learners worldwide, has now become a priority in more and more countries' education systems. The last two decades have also witnessed the internationalization of universities worldwide, and by virtue of the established role of English as the 'lingua franca' of academic research and knowledge dissemination, together with English language education, also education *through* English has greatly increased in importance. The recent exponential growth of English-medium instruction (EMI) in the internationalized universities is an integral part of the aforementioned drive to redefine the role of education in the globalized context. As observed by Galloway, Kriukow and Numajiri (2017), "EMI policies are related to government objectives to develop national human capital that can speak English. (…) and many nations see English skills as being an indispensable competency and key to their modernisation and global competitiveness" (5).

Following this trend of increased vitality of English, language contact between different varieties of English and other languages has increased dramatically on a global scale. Communication in English as a lingua franca, indeed, is a quintessential language contact situation (see 2.3.4); yet language contact with English massively also occurs nowadays in indirect and mediated forms, facilitated by the developments in information and communication technology. English is in fact the most used and the most visible (as well as the foundational) language of the World Wide Web. The Internet revolution has influenced the global flows of information and knowledge in unprecedented volumes and rates, and a clearly asymmetrical pattern has developed in which content in English on the web outweighs content in any other language. The greater visibility of English, in turn, has facilitated processes of language convergence, by which several English terms and expressions have now acquired international currency and become integrated in the linguistic usages of many native speakers of other languages. In any corner of the world where an internet connection is available, exposure to English has now increased dramatically, up to a point where even in many countries where it has no official status, a growing number of people in industrializes countries would hardly regard the English language as utterly 'foreign'.

In brief, the asymmetrical flows of globalization have created new peripheries of the English language, and just as in many other regions of the world where English enjoys no official status in the national institutions, so in continental Europe – and Italy in the specific – the traditional EFL label seems to have been overtaken by the events. Indeed, the most radical changes of the sociolinguistics realities of English can be appreciated in these new peripheries, where an increasing number of NNESs who operate in a variety of domains, such as e.g., scientific research, higher education, international business, tourism, marketing, now use English for purposes of international and intercultural communication in settings that very often do not involve any NESs. For the NNESs who operate in such contexts, the status of English is thus undergoing a shift from that of foreign language towards that of a second language that is used in lingua franca communication. This changing status, in turn, and the increased importance that English learning has acquired in today's world, as it was observed in the introduction, have led applied linguistics scholars to question the traditional EFL models and suggest new paths for the pedagogy of English.

ELF, as a young and thriving field of research that emerged from the need to provide solution to practical problems and evolved in concomitance with the transforming realities of English, is driving the change; it is therefore important to unpack its theoretical assumptions against the background of the contemporary sociolinguistics realities of English. However, before turning to a discussion of the development of ELF field of research, the conceptual and theoretical framework for the study of the students' attitudes that is here reported must be clearly defined. The next section begins by taking a close look at some key terms that are used throughout this dissertation.

2.1.1 Conceptual clarification 1.0: the new peripheries of English

A considerable number of studies have appeared, in the last three decades, that take as their subject matter variation in English. The origins, the forces behind, as well as the sociolinguistic implications of the expansion of the roles and functions of English throughout the world have been approached from different perspectives and with different foci.

Kachru's model of the concentric circles of Englishes (1985, 1992), soon after its appearance, became the standard framework for studies in variation in English, and it has since been widely popularized in the field of applied linguistics. The well-known model classifies variation in three different concentric circles: inner, outer and expanding, corresponding, respectively, to the ENL countries, ESL countries, EFL countries. Kachru's model implicitly legitimized the multilingual speakers of English as a second language in the former colonies as speakers of a variety in its own right and was instrumental in drawing attention to the existence of legitimate users of English beyond the inner circle, thus paving the way for the shift in focus from learners to users that the ELF turn in applied linguistic scholarship would later mark (see 2.3.4). However, with its clear-cut tripartite classification that distinguished norm-providing (British and American) Englishes in the inner circle from the norm-developing (postcolonial) outer circle Englishes and the norm-dependent English as a foreign language learned in the outer circle, the model established a hierarchy of Englishes and, most importantly, of the English speakers.

In order to overcome Kachru's circles limitations, alternative models have been proposed. Some of these foreground proficiency and disregard the native or non-native status of the speakers (e.g.: Yano 2009; Modiano 1999a, 1999b; Graddol 2006), whereas more recent ones have approached variation with a focus on the context of communication (see Jenkins 2015a: 19-21). None of these, however, has been met with the same success as Kachru's, perhaps because the latter is extremely practical. Despite the popularity of Kachru's model, though, it is evident that the sociolinguistic realities of English are much more complex than a model that conflates under the norm-providing standard English all the inner circle's NESs and completely disregards variation within all the three circles pictures (Canagarajah 1999). The clear-cut demarcation is thus actually much more blurred than Kachru suggested, as many scholars have observed (e.g.: Galloway & Rose 2015; Jenkins 2003, 2015a; Mauranen 2018; Pennycook 2005; Schneider 2011), but notwithstanding this, it is still customary to refer to the three circles of Englishes.

In spite of Kachru's model's limitations and oversimplification of the sociolinguistics realities of English, the terms inner, outer and expanding circle are used in this study, because of their practicality, and their convenience as the common standard in applied linguistics. Alternatively, the terms ENL, ESL and EFL are also used, although this distinction as well is a problematic one, since it is based on a simplistic understanding of the roles and functions of English in supposedly homogeneous and geographically bounded communities of speech. The terms 'core English-speaking country' and 'periphery', as in the 'new peripheries of English', are at times used in substitution for, respectively, ENL/inner circle and EFL/expanding circle. This taxonomy for the different English-using societies highlights the historical dimension of the global expansion of English, through asymmetrical power relations, in the terms of a metaphor for the centrifugal irradiation of the language: from the core English-speaking countries, where the dominant groups are native speakers of an official variety of English, to those regions of the world where the greatest majority of NNESs learn English as an additional language and use it in lingua franca communication. In particular, as commented in the previous section, the concept of 'new periphery' captures the dynamic reality of English in those expanding circle countries, such as Italy, for instance, where the changes in the roles and functions of English are more manifest. This term is here used precisely with the purpose of emphasizing this aspect.

2.1.2 Conceptual clarification 2.0: the 'global spread' of English

It has become common to refer to the evolution of the sociolinguistics realities of the English language in the terms of the 'global spread' of English. The term 'spread' was widely made popular by Widdowson (1997) who discussed it in contrast to the apparently synonymous concept of "distribution". In his discussion of English as an international language (EIL) he pointed out that English is not distributed around the world "as a set of established encoded forms, unchanged into different domains of use, but it is spread as a virtual language" (139) and actualized in local forms through processes that imply nonconformity and adaptations. In other words, the 'spread' metaphor, as understood by Widdowson, describes the typical processes of appropriation and adaptation that occur in situations of sustained language contact. Whereas the concept of distribution describes the dissemination of the

native-speaker norm of English and implies its stability and self-reproduction, the idea of spread implies instability and transformation. Spread has thus some sort of natural character to it; after all, as it happens in any language contact situation, speakers drive linguistic change and language shift and, in this sense, the process is entirely natural. Wherever in the world the English language has had a pervasive and continuous presence, some of its forms and structures have been adopted and become integrated in the linguistic usages of speakers of other languages. These processes have occurred, in particular, in colonial contexts where English was granted an official status and, as a consequence, communities of NNESs were led to adopt the English language and ultimately caused local nativized varieties to emerge.

The term 'spread', however, demands further clarification. Although linguistic change is driven by the choices made by speakers, these often find themselves constrained by external factors, that is, aspects of the sociolinguistic context that they cannot manipulate. As much as it is a useful shorthand for the complex series of interrelated historical factors that have brought about the current position of the English language in the world, as observed by Phillipson (2000), the notion of 'spread' tends to encourage a view that obscures agency. Agency, in turn, is a key dimension when considering the changes that the sociolinguistic realities of English have undergone in time, how and why the roles and functions of English have expanded way beyond the boundaries of the core-English speaking countries. It is always people and particular interests that account for the expansion and contraction of languages in society, and in the historical 'spread' of English a whole set of interrelated economic, political, military and social factors have intervened. However, this does not mean that the global 'spread' of English was in some way masterminded, as a typical argument attributed to Linguistic Imperialism (Phillipson 1992) in misleading interpretations of the same theory goes. Arguing against the view that English has been used as an instrument for imposition of power, Widdowson claimed that the idea of spread would also disprove the "conspiracy theory that the language itself has powers of suppression, that it is the English language which colonizes, using the English people simply as medium, as a means of transmission" (1997: 139). Along similar lines, Spolsky spoke of linguistic imperialism in the terms of a "conspiracy theory", that allegedly assumes that the spread of English "was not natural, not the result of a multitude of factors (…) but the direct and simple result of planned intervention by identifiable human agents, that they were the outcome, in other words, of language management" (2004: 79). Objecting to this view, Spolsky (2004) argued that the spread of English reflects local and individual language acquisition decisions, which are made in response to changes in the complex ecology of the language system of the world. Misinterpretations of linguistic imperialism that fail to acknowledge the key factor of the structural constraints to free individual choice, when considering the dynamics of language contact and shift, tend to establish a dichotomy between choice and coercion, incidental and intentional factors. There seems to be no doubt that the spread of English was more incidental to dynamics of structural power and therefore intertwined with a myriad of other aspects than it was a deliberate initiative of language planning and policy. However, it also seems reasonable to state that the sociolinguistic changes that have occurred in the world also result, to a not entirely negligible extent, from policy decisions and structural factors, and that the latter, in many instances, may have inevitably steered the NNESs' speakers' choices towards the increased use of English.

Furthermore, as the theorist of linguistic imperialism has made clear in response to criticism (Phillipson 2007a), the claim that the expansion of English in the world has not been left to chance does not mean that the spread was simplistically masterminded. In Phillipson's view, there has been a convergence of interests behind the spread of English, which have more or less directly propelled it forward, and the evidence for that abounds (ibid.). It is an attested fact that the promotion of the use of English has served colonial and neo-colonial interests in various parts of the world that we now label ESL countries. In the post-national world of globalization, though, to quote Pennycook, English cannot be understood in "modernist state-centric models of imperialism" (2007a: 5). Phillipson's updated version of his theory that redefines linguistic imperialism in the geopolitical context of globalization holds that the promotion and the use of English today "meshes with the globalizing of commerce, finance, politics, military affairs, scholarship, education and many grassroots networks" (ibid.: 91-2). In this sense, a clearly defined center from which English is spread may not be located, and so the agents of the spread cannot

be simplistically identified with the national governments, as in the past colonial era. Multiple factors are thus behind the globalizing of English, yet this does not mean that the spread of English has been left to chance. After all, the processes of globalization have promoted global convergences in local policymaking, to the benefit of transnational economic dynamics in which the key actors are multinational corporations rather than national governments. In this context of global governance and free market, when speaking of the agents of the spread of English it is therefore important to consider not only the NNESs who have adopted English for their various communicative purposes and needs, but also the bodies of transnational governance, as well as the local the policy makers, who have created the structural conditions that have favored the expansion of English.

It has been observed that the individualistic and rational choice presumptions that inform treatments of the politics of the 'global' spread of English de-politicize English, "making it seem as if changes in language usage are 'natural' and not connected to systemic issues of economic and political power or cultural prestige and identity" (Ives 2006: 130). Such an approach to the 'global' expansion of English de-emphasizes the importance of language policies, and language-in-education policies in particular. It thus downplays the role of states, trans-national institutions and market forces, all of which have contributed to establishing the structures of the linguistic market, at both the global and the local level, in which English has greatly increased its value in recent times. The special value acquired by English, in turn, is the reason why competence in English is sought for. The same presumptions of rational choice are commonly found in much of applied linguistic discourse, which addresses the topic of the spread of English from within an individualistic framework. Galloway and Rose, for instance, in their discussion of the controversy over the factors for the spread of English, distinguished "bottom-up and top-down perspectives" (2015: 62); that is to say, the global expansion of English has been viewed as either caused by policies deliberately implemented by English-speaking powers, or as driven by free-willing speakers who turn to English for their own purpose and gains.

This dichotomy though, it is argued here, is a false one because it misconstrues the psycho-social dynamics that govern the process of expansion of a language. As a matter of fact, people perceive a personal advantage in learning and/or adopting a prestigious language when this is structurally favored over less prestigious ones and, most importantly, when it functions as gatekeeper of material opportunities, in education, business and the labor market. The overt prestige of the language, indeed, often depends on the dominant position it occupies in a linguistic hierarchy that is created by means of language policy and planning. In this regard, the choice of turning to English may be not always and not in all societal contexts as free as it seems, because, as hinted above, when individuals are under structural constraints their choices cannot be said to be entirely free. Neither does any sort of coercion need to be deliberately exerted on the NNESs, as it used to happen in certain colonial contexts, where the exclusive use of English in school was enforced via corporal punishment and pecuniary fines (see, e.g., Ngũgĩ 1986). No doubt the success of English in the new millennium has been driven by the NNESs from the expanding circle who perceive the personal advantage that they can derive from acquiring competence in the world's leading language. Language and education policies in the expanding circle, in turn, are actively promoting English learning in response to an increased demand for English, and not as part of some deliberate conspiratorial scheme. The demand for English, however, has been itself created in more or less direct ways by means of policy decisions that have strengthened English and ultimately favored its use as a lingua franca. As a matter of fact, with globalization, English is starting to serve gatekeeping functions also in the traditional EFL countries, where a certain level of proficiency is required, e.g., for the attainment of a number of bachelor's and master's degrees, to fill certain professional position and/or progress up the career ladder in various business environments. This gatekeeping function, in turn, is structurally determined, as it ultimately results from decisions taken at the institutional level. In the end, it is actually a combination of push and pull factors that have caused the English language to 'spread', and bottom-up and top-down reasons, often represented as two mutually exclusive options, actually seem to be two sides of the same coin.

An extensive discussion of the socio-historical dynamics that underlie the 'spread' of English throughout the globe is beyond the scope of the present study. Ideological and structural factors that have enabled the globalization of

English have nevertheless a crucial influence on the perceptions of and the attitudes towards English; it is argued further on (2.2) that competence in English is viewed today as a necessary skill, and the need to learn English has become a commonplace notion which has, in this sense, an ideological underpinning that is independent of the actual individuals' needs and desires. As the analysis of the data collected for this study shows (chapters 5 and 6), this ideology of necessary skill is also reflected in the views of the students who participated in this study. At this point, it is important to bear in mind the problematic nature of the term 'spread', as its use may give the flawed impression that the present position of English at the top of a world's linguistic hierarchy is merely the result of a supposedly natural – and perhaps completely inevitable – process. The term has nevertheless become standard usage in applied linguistics, and, however imprecise and arguably misleading, if anything for mere purposes of brevity, it is also used in this study.

2.1.3 Conceptual clarification 3.0: the 'global lingua franca'

Before turning to considering how the impact of English has been represented in existing works that have emphasized either the benefits or the disadvantages of the spread of English, another conceptual clarification is due. It has been so far assumed that English functions as a 'global lingua franca'. Leaving aside for the moment a discussion of the theories and concepts that have been developed within the ELF field of research (2.3.4), it is worth reminding here that the term 'lingua franca' is used, in relation to the role of English as a language of wider communication in today's globalized society, with a different meaning than the original term.

It is an assumed notion that, whereas the first lingua franca in history emerged as a new code between speakers of mutually unintelligible languages, the case of English in the contemporary world is that of an existing language that has been adopted for similar purposes (Pennycook 2012). Whereas the term lingua franca was thus used, in the past, to describe a very specific link language with no native speakers nor any official status, English, on the contrary, gradually acquired its role of lingua franca by virtue of the power and influence exerted by the political-economic communities of NESs. Inconsistency in the use of the term throughout history and across different contexts is however of marginal importance, for this study. It is assumed here that 'lingua franca' has now become the standard shorthand to describe the role that English has come to play in the communicative habits and needs of heterogeneous, fluid, often mobile and also virtual groups of speakers from the most diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The increased use of English as a language of wider communication between speakers of different L1s from various parts of the world, in a wide range of domains and situations, is indeed an established and incontrovertible fact.

The term 'global' that is commonly associated to 'lingua franca' and used to refer to the status of English in today's world, though, demands a critical evaluation. The widespread diffusion and the multifarious uses of English in the globalized era may not represent sufficient grounds to regard it as literally 'global'. The use of the term instead is certainly indicative of how the status of English tends to be seen in terms of the economic and political power wielded by the communities of NESs that have cause the language to spread throughout the world. In terms of power and prestige, English is firmly established at the top of the world linguistic hierarchy, yet it is also a fact that English is not universally spoken, and many are the corners of the globe where one would hardly get by without any knowledge of a local language. In this sense, the term 'global' may also be said to betray a Eurocentric viewpoint that tends to portray the West as the center of the world. As a matter of fact, even in most of the countries to which the ESL label is attached, the use of English is confined to an extremely thin layer of society. In the so-called Anglophone Africa, for instance, it is estimated that a percentage of only between 5 per cent and 20 per cent of the total population can communicate in English (Kamwangamalu 2013). In most sub-Saharan countries, proficiency in English and, most importantly, access to the means that enable one to acquire it, are reserved to a political and economic elite minority. In brief, without any considerations of social class, the term 'global' seems to represent a rather imprecise view of the sociolinguistic realities of English, as well as a partial view of the world. In this sense, the 'global' dimension of English needs to be put in perspective, since both the geographical and the social distribution of communicative competence in English do not seem to justify

the use of the term. However, although the term 'global', if taken literally, misrepresents the sociolinguistic reality, it has become standard in the field of applied linguistics to associate it to English and its usage as a lingua franca. For this reason, and also for mere purposes of brevity, the term is used throughout this study, although between single quotation marks so as to acknowledge its problematic nature.

The next chapter section, presents and discusses how the impact of the spread of English has been described in the existing literature.

2.2 The global impact of English: threat or boon?

The global impact of English has been variously represented in scholarly research; the many characterizations run the gamut from that of English being a 'killer' language that threatens the world's linguistic and cultural diversity, to that of it being an incontrovertible boon that enables the citizens of the whole world to freely communicate with one another. The next four sections discuss the ways in which the impact of English on the world's linguistic diversity has been represented in terms of benefits and threats. Particular attention is given to the rhetoric that portrays English as a trigger for societal development and social mobility, and to the controversial issues that surround the advance of English as a lingua franca, within the framework of the internationalization of the academia and the growth of EMI in the expanding circle.

2.2.1 The spread of English and the world's linguistic diversity

Already in the mid-1990s, Swales (1997) expressed his concerns that the advancement of English in Europe might lead to the extinction of the languages of scholarship with the well-known metaphor of the T-rex, which represents the English language as "a powerful carnivore gobbling up the other denizens of the academic linguistic grazing grounds" (374). A decade later, Phillipson (2008a) defined the one-sided promotion of English in a way that does not ensure "equality and symmetry in intercultural communication" (263) as more of a project of a "lingua frankensteinia" than that of a lingua franca. He maintained that, throughout history, linguistic policies favoring English in multilingual communities had led to linguicide, ultimately reducing linguistic diversity, and he expressed his concern that the promotion of English in the new peripheries may produce similar effects.

The claims for the preservation and promotion of linguistic diversity against the global spread of English usually respond to a conservationist concern that sees languages as part of the ecology and human cultural heritage. The defense of linguistic diversity becomes, in this perspective, part of a wider conservationist concern that regards the survival of languages and cultures as an integral aspect of the preservation of the world's precious environmental resources (Nettle and Romaine 2000). Concerns for language death and loss are often voiced in terms of a cultural loss, on the premise that with each language that disappears, there also goes a unique way of understanding and representing the world. According to this view, languages have a value of their own as each one is the expression of a specific worldview.

The cultural specificity of each language is a commonsensical notion that often lends itself to distortions which produce stereotypes through which a language is hypostatized in a definite set of absolute qualities (Calaresu 2011). For instance, Strevens (1980) attributed intrinsic qualities to the English language that supposedly accounted for its widespread diffusion (see also Crystal 1997). Defined by Kachru as the "'intrinsic-power' hypothesis", the claim that "English intrinsically has certain linguistic – and other – characteristics which make it a preferred language for international roles" is a position that "seems similar to claims of racial superiority" (1986: 123). In fact, as noted by Phillipson, similar beliefs on the supposedly innate qualities of the English language have often found expression in a rhetoric that, resonating orientalist arguments about the intrinsic superiority of western civilization (1992), has attempted to sanitize the dynamics of power that have driven the spread of English beyond the core English-speaking countries.

Alongside the ecological-conservationist arguments, concerns for the preservation of the 'purity' of languages against English have often been raised by commentators from several countries of the expanding circle. The purists' impulse to defend the supposed integrity of a language corresponds to a sort of linguistic-cultural determinism whose strong claim that one cannot think beyond their own language is based on a mechanistic and linguistically preposterous interpretation of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic relativism (refer to Carroll 1956). Languages are in fact "flexible enough to go beyond the categories of the cultures in which they are used" and "[t]heir users are not 'caught' in one view of the world" (Fill 2007: 177). Arguments that view with suspicion any form of language contact, as Crystal observed, "are carried on with great emotional force" (1997: 23). That is because they are premised on the idea that the use of a specific language determines the categories of thought in a distinct way, and therefore, the 'corruption' of the supposed 'purity' of a language represents a threat to a specific cultural ethos.

Furthermore, arguments of this kind rest on the idea that languages have a value of their own and, in this sense, they tend to leave the speakers in the background, as if the languages also had a life of their own. Truth be told, a language is a function of its speakers, and not the other way round. Therefore, from the viewpoint of the speakers, the possible threat posed to the linguistic diversity of the world by the spread of English may appear as a natural and inevitable process. After all, as it was observed above, language shift and assimilation of a community of speakers into a dominant linguistic group are natural processes that have always occurred in history, and it may be argued, in this regard, that the new generations have no interest in maintaining the languages of their parents, if they do not perceive any concrete advantage in doing so.

However, from the perspective of the NNESs, the global impact of English has been also understood as a form of "linguistic capital dispossession" (Phillipson 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2015, 2017), with its host of ethical related issues. Dispossession is said to occur when other languages are marginalized to the advantage of English in key societal domains such as the school, scholarship, business, and therefore it corresponds to the denial of a basic linguistic human right to receive education and be able to participate in the socio-economic processes of one's community through one's mother tongue. According to this perspective, the question of the preservation of linguistic diversity against the advancement of English throughout the globe becomes a matter of resisting the dispossession of the linguistic means of expression of the speakers of minority and/or dominated languages. This concept of linguistic human rights thus redefines the value of linguistic diversity in the terms of equal opportunities in education and, more generally, in society at large. A research niche of Linguistic Human Rights (LHR) has consolidated itself that draws on the strand of sociolinguistic research on multilingualism in postcolonial and linguistic minority contexts. LHR is associated mainly to the works of Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas 1995, Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson 2008, Skutnabb Kangas et al. 1994) who, in their analysis of the impact of English on the world's linguistic ecology, repeatedly refer to "linguistic genocide", "language murder" and "killer language" (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). They prefer to use this set of terms to the more commonly used 'language death' and 'spread', precisely because, in their view, the latter conceal the agency that is behind the expansion of English.

LHR interlinks with the theory of linguistic imperialism (LI), which focuses on the socio-economic and cultural aspects of globalization in which the spread of English is embedded rather than the linguistic strand of globalization itself (Phillipson 1992). Within the framework of LI, the advance and success of English has been linked to the global penetration of American cultural models of consumerism, and the incorporation of the diverse local realities into a single global system of neoliberal economy and governance (Phillipson 2018, 2017, 2008b). The theory of LI thus represents a political-sociological perspective that ties the micro-level of language contact phenomena to the macro-level of the structures in which a global hegemony of the English language is realized. More than that, LI emphasizes the cultural load of the English language, which far from merely being a neutral tool that facilitates intercultural communication, is represented as a vehicle of cultural homogenization.

2.2.2 The benefits of English: myth and reality

Whether the ethical concerns that are at the heart of the perspectives of LHR and LI are taken as an object of research or not, in consideration of the fact that languages are a function of their speakers, any discussion of the impact of the spread of English would, in any case, arguably better assume the speakers' perspective and foreground their choices of learning and adopting English, or even resisting its dominance, and the motivations for their choices. As it was pointed out earlier on, it is widely recognized that the decisive driving force behind the spread of English in today's world is represented by the NNESs of the expanding circle, who perceive English as a linguistic capital that can be turned to profit. Nettle and Romaine made similar observations already two decades ago, pointing to a widespread view of English as a linguistic capital capable of increasing one's chances of success in the globalized economy:

> The higher the profit to be achieved through knowledge of a particular language, the more it will be viewed as worthy of acquisition. The language of the global village (or McWorld, as some have called it) is English: not to use it is to risk ostracization from the benefits of the global economy. (Nettle & Romaine 2000: 30–31)

A link between English skills and competitiveness was made explicit also by Graddol (2006), when he considered the challenges faced by the English teaching profession in the framework of the educational revolution of globalization referred to before (2.1). Graddol expressed a fear that as English becomes more and more indispensable, up to a point when it will be a key basic skill for every citizen of the globe, knowledge of English may no longer provide a competitive advantage: "[English] has become a new baseline: without English you are not even in the race" (ibid.: 122). In the wake of globalization, Phillipson observed that English, in professional English circles and much political discourse, tended to be regarded as "an incontrovertible boon" (1992: 8) and was often equated with modernity, development, progress and prosperity (see, e.g.: British Council 2013). More recently, Kubota observed that "[i]t is believed that acquiring English language proficiency is essential for individual and national economic success" and that this "economic benefit myth (Watts, 2011), has become a strong justification for promoting English language teaching and learning" (2016: 356). Mohanty also made a similar point, when he pointed out that English is projected as "a language needed for maintaining a competitive edge in a globalised world", and that "the growing craze for English all over the world is associated with the rhetoric of English and development permeating into popular perception of its significance, often without any critical scrutiny." (2017: 263).

Arguments that represent English language skills as key to individual and societal development have supported language policies, in the multilingual societies of the outer circle, that have promoted English to the detriment of the local indigenous languages. Three decades ago, when the impact of globalization perhaps could not as yet be fully measured, Crystal expressed the belief that English, in post-colonial contexts, was no longer associated with the political authority it used to hold and had acquired instead the new functional role of "enabling people to achieve particular goals" in situations of diglossia:

> Local languages continue to perform an important set of functions (chiefly, the expression of local identity) and English is seen as the primary means of achieving a global presence. The approach recognizes the legacy of colonialism, as a matter of historical fact, but the emphasis is now on discontinuities, away from power and towards functional specialization. It is a model which sees English playing a central role in empowering the subjugated and marginalized, and eroding the division between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. (1997: 24–25)

While it is certainly true that, in multilingual contexts, speakers use their various languages for different purposes and in different domains of life, Crystal's somewhat optimistic view of English as an empowering tool at the disposal of the marginalized seems to be far removed from the reality of many outer circle countries. In the so called 'anglophone' Africa, for instance, where English has been constantly promoted as a supra-ethnic language of national integration, the ideological view that credits English with a window-function to the globalized world has provided yet one more apparently rational justification for the continued use of the monolingual language policies inherited from the colonial era. Furthermore, the international prestige of English and its high vitality on

a global scale have greatly contributed to entrenching negative attitudes among the population towards the indigenous African languages. These attitudes, in turn, have complicated the efforts aimed at managing multilingualism and multilingual education (Bamgboşe 2000, Kamwangamalu 2013, Kamwangamalu and Tovares 2016, Khumalo 2016). English-medium education, in particular, and the attendant marginalization of the indigenous languages in school, have been found to favor subtractive bilingualism (Lambert 1987, Cummins 2000) which, in turn, is a determining factor to poor students' achievement and school dropout. The promotion of English in the framework of a dysfunctional model of education has thus exacerbated a linguistic divide that, together with other decisive economic factors, restricts access to the higher levels of education and ultimately contributes to the perpetuation of a pattern of exclusion of the majority of the population from the socio-economic processes of their countries (Bambgboşe 2000, Brock Utne 2017, Brock-Utne & Skattum 2009, Trudell 2016). In this sense, English has done little or nothing in the way of empowering the marginalized and bridging the socio-economic gaps; as Williams observed, "[f]ar from being a source of unity, the use of English in education in Africa has become a factor in national division, while the distribution of English proficiency in society is an indicator of the extent of this division" (2011: 44). That is to say that English in Africa performs a social-stratificational function and, rather than a gateway to emancipation, progress and prosperity, is the language of elite formation.

Similar considerations on the detrimental effects of English-medium policies in education have been voiced from other regions of the outer circle. In India, for instance, where English sits at the top of a hierarchical structure of languages together with major regional languages, English-medium education has been found to advantage some but disadvantage the most:

> Neglect of [indigenous, tribal, minority] ITM children's home language in education is one of the major discouragements triggering educational failure and illiteracy, contributing to loss of freedom, capability deprivation and poverty. (…) Language as a cultural capital is a critical link to education and access to social resources. (Mohanty 2017: 262)

In sum, the neglect of the local indigenous languages, in the education systems of the multilingual communities of the outer circle, has triggered a vicious cycle of disadvantage, perpetuating deprivation and inequality. It is precisely for this reason that the structural favoring of English has been viewed by many as a violation of human linguistic rights.

An extensive body of scholarly research has interrogated the relationship between language and development, in post-colonial developing countries (see e.g.: Coleman 2017, 2011; Wolff 2016). Discussions of the role that English can actually play in the process of development in post-colonial multilingual societies have taken center stage, and there is widespread agreement that English does have a key role to play when it is founded on strong mother tongue development. In spite of the structural (mainly economic) constraints to change and the attitudinal (ideological) factors related to the fear of being left out of the processes of globalization (Ngũgĩ 2018), efforts aimed at promoting English additive learning within a multilingual framework have not waned (see e.g., Matsinhe 2013).

An argument commonly deployed against critics of monolingual-oriented policies and English-medium education emphasize that English, in the multilingual outer circle countries, has been and can be actually used to articulate counter-hegemonic discourses (see e.g., Crystal 1997, cited above). As a matter of fact, English was the language in which the discourses of liberation against colonialism and the racist regimes of southern Africa were articulated; it is also, paradoxically, the language that has been used to disseminate knowledge and raise awareness on the need to preserve and develop minority languages. Countless other examples can be made in which English has been used worldwide as the lingua franca of street protests and local resistance against the homogenizing and often destructive forces of globalization. Furthermore, the mere fact that English may gradually replace other less prestigious languages in a multilingual speech community does not represent a problem in itself, unless one assumes a language-ecology perspective that understands any instance of language shift as cultural loss.

Arguments that establish an indissoluble link between language and culture, and the related linguistic determinism (refer back to 2.2.1), may be indeed easily dismissed, on the grounds that any language can be appropriated to express one's identity.

Various works that looked at the global impact of English on the micro-level of linguistic performance, rather than the macro-level of the politics of its spread, have shown that local identities can find their representation through forms and expressions of the English language (e.g, Pennycook 2007a). The appropriation of the English language throughout the globe is a topic that will be taken up further on, in relation to the reconceptualization of English (chapter 2.3.3). What is important to remark here is that one thing is what one can do with a language, whereas a completely different matter are the opportunities one has to access that particular language. In this sense, the advance of English may be actually seen as a threat when it entails the devaluation and marginalization of the NNESs' native linguistic capital and when the right to receive education in one's mother tongue is not respected. In such cases, since basic literacy in one's mother tongue is the necessary condition for the additive learning of any second language, equal opportunities to develop competence in English as an additional language are also denied.

2.2.3 The advance of English and EMI in the internationalized academia

In the face of all the negative characterizations of the global expansion of English, the benefits for the globalized world of having English functioning in the role of a lingua franca for intercultural communication have nevertheless been widely recognized (see, e.g., Baker 2017, in response to Phillipson's characterization of English as a lingua frankensteinia; Crystal 1997; Galloway and Rose 2015: 52-57). In this capacity, English is said to have allowed to break down barriers between nations and cultures, streamlining communication in all those societal contexts that have been radically transformed by the processes of globalization. In scientific and academic research, business and diplomacy, communication in English is said to be time- and cost-efficient, as it allows to bypass the need for costly translation services, while also in informal contexts, such as tourist encounters, English is said to foster relationships between speakers of different languages. Perhaps in no domain other than that of Internet-mediated communication are the advantages of using one single language more evident, since the lion's share of all online material is written in English.

The perceived advantages of using English as a lingua franca have thus fostered favorable attitudes towards the spread of English in the new peripheries of the expanding circle. The discriminating factor that sets the new peripheries apart from the developing countries of the outer circle is that in the former English is learned additively in contexts of relatively high literacy rates, and its position in the overall education systems does not seem to be likely to undermine the position of the national languages. It may be argued, though, that access to proficiency in English is not equally distributed even in the developed socio-economic context of Europe, for instance. Yet the same could be said also in regard to any other national language within each member state, and, for sure, inequalities and linguistic disadvantage did not arise with the spread of English.

However, even in the new peripheries, despite its growing vitality, the advance of English has also been met with resistance and has bred harsh criticism. It is perhaps not surprising that in Europe, where modern nationalism was born, a tension has emerged between the multilingualism and linguistic diversity of the Union and the preservation of each member state's national language tradition, on the one hand, and the vitality of English in its role of inter- and supra-national lingua franca, on the other.

The preservation of linguistic diversity has emerged as a particularly sensitive issue in the academia, where the increased prominence of English in the framework of the internationalization of European higher education (HE) has been surrounded by controversies. English has become the lingua franca of academic communication and knowledge-making and sharing within the European-integrated space of the internationalized HE. Furthermore, although most European universities continue to operate at a purely national level using their local language(s), English-medium instruction (EMI) has grown exponentially, especially in the last decade (Jenkins & Mauranen

2019). In an in-depth ethnographic case study that examined the language policies and practices of universities in nine countries around the world, including Italy, Jenkins and Mauranen observed that "Global HE […] is essentially international", although "'[i]nternational' has become something of a buzzword and can also be used as a euphemism for EMI" (2019: 7). The authors pointed to the paradox that the increasing demand for EMI coincides with the greater linguistic diversity that several universities in Europe and other parts of the world have ever experienced. They argued that "there seems to be an underlying assumption among many university managements that the diversity they see and hear around them should not translate into linguistic diversity, but that the only language to be promoted especially in class should be English" (ibid.: 8).

In that regard, concerns have been raised, in particular, about the risk of English stifling the vitality of the national languages and leading to the erosion of the national traditions of scientific and academic discourse (Phillipson 2006, 2008a, 2015). A host of arguments against internationalization as *Englishization* have been put forward by several Italian academicians and scholars (see e.g., Cabiddu 2017). The typical arguments that establish an inextricable link between language and culture hold that languages, far from being merely tools for communication, are first and foremost tools for the expression of thought. Based on this assumption, the defense of the scholarly tradition in the national language against English is not so much a matter of conservation *per se*, as it is a question of equality in communication. From the perspective of the speaker, the notion of language as an instrument of thought emphasizes that intellectual creativity finds its best expression in one's mother tongue; consequently, as it has been argued, English cannot be considered a universal language (see e.g., Marazzini 2017).

Critics of EMI have focused in particular on the implications that English as medium of education has in terms of the communicative competence in English of the non-native speaker teacher (NNEST). A dumbing-down argument against EMI expresses a fear that the requirement to teach academic content in English might lead the NNESTs to literally dumb down the academic content and lower the standards of teaching. In other words, according to this view, there is a risk that teaching English may entail giving up the peculiar emotive and expressive potential that is inherent in one's mother tongue, and that is required in classroom interactions. According to this view, it would seem that only a native or native-like competence might enable the NNEST to effectively communicate academic content and deal with the unpredictability that characterizes classroom interaction (Serianni 2017).

Another argument against EMI denounced the practice of investing in English as the medium of instruction in the Italian universities, without much of an international student presence, as a cosmetic operation whose main purpose would be that of climbing the international university rankings (Cabiddu 2017). The pressure put on universities to compete internationally in an ever more integrated global system of knowledge economy is a recognized fact, and the presence of international staff and students arguably serves to increase a university's reputation both globally and domestically, and their success in global rankings such as *QS World University Rankings*[1] (Jenkins & Mauranen 2019).

As noted earlier on, the term international has become a euphemism for EMI, regardless of the presence of international staff and students on campus. However, it is also a documented fact that internationalization in Italy is more outward- than inward-oriented, as it is aimed at offering national students an English-medium experience at home in preparation for future prospects of mobility (Jenkins & Mauranen 2019). After all, the underlying principle of the Bologna process that created the European Higher Education Area with the aim of harmonizing the HE systems of the Member States of the European Union (Bologna declaration 1999) was that internationalization has to reach all students and not simply the mobile few. In this sense, internationalization is thus not merely about mobility, and besides internationalization abroad there is another strand of

[1] The QS World University Rankings is an annual publication of university rankings and popular source of comparative data about university performance. It is published by Quacquarelli Symonds, a UK company specialising in the analysis of higher education institutions.

internationalization *at home* "that is also crucial in domestic learning environments, emphasizing the need to reach all students" (Beelen & Jones 2015: 68). As defined by Beelen and Jones, "Internationalization at Home (IaH) is the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments." (2015: 69). However, as noted earlier on, English-only policies and practices on campus arguably limit the scope of the international and intercultural dimension that is integrated into the curricula.

It must be also observed that against the increased use of English as lingua franca of international scholarship, it has been also pointed out that intellectual exchanges across linguistic and cultural borders have always taken place in history without the need to develop a diglossia, with a dominant international language and the subordinated national language (Serianni 2017). In this perspective, passive skills in the other's language are deemed sufficient to ensure mutual comprehension between speakers of different languages, with the implication that English as a lingua franca is unnecessary to internationalization.

In brief, the expansion of English as the lingua franca of the academia in the new peripheries of Europe has led to the perception of possible risks of domain loss and a related issue of inequality in communication (Ferguson 2009). Such a view apparently stems from the fact that English is not a lingua franca in its original meaning of a language without native speakers (refer back to 2.1.3). Against the commonly held view that the use of a 'global' lingua franca makes communication more efficient, arguments have been put forward that point out that the use of English in that role does not put everyone on equal footing. It has been argued that while the NESs get a head start, the NNESs have to incur in the material and intellectual costs of developing the competence in English that is necessary for the production of linguistically adequate texts (Ammon 2001, Phillipson 2008a, O'Regan 2014). As a matter of fact, the proficiency that is needed to communicate academic content cannot be naturally assumed on the part of the NNESs. In addition, the difficulties extend beyond the individual scholar to the publishing companies located in the countries where English is not a widely used official language, whereas, according to Ammon (2001), the NES scholars' academic publications written in English also enjoy greater visibility and prestige for mere language reasons.

In light of these considerations, the *Englishization* of the academy appears more complex than it is often represented; Galloway and Rose, for instance, arguably oversimplify the matters at stake when they state that "[t]he emergence of a global lingua franca as the language of science and scientific scholarship has meant wider access to knowledge and scientific discoveries, which are often printed for the first time in English" (2015: 55). Not only did they not seem to consider the issue of the required proficiency to communicate academic content in English, but they also failed to acknowledge the existing pressures to conform to a publishing market that largely favors English over the other languages. This reality has led Phillipson to argue that English functions as the lingua franca of the academia in an asymmetrical pattern of knowledge-sharing that favors a unidirectional flow of cultural norms and values (2007b). As a consequence of this, it may happen that ENL scientists and scholars, and their countries' academic community, are credited with innovations and breakthroughs which have been actually made elsewhere but have not had the same opportunities to become known for.

In brief, the social and cultural issues entailed by the expansion of English in the academy and the growth of EMI in HE have attracted increased attention, and concerns have been voiced that the trend of *Englishization* has been gathering momentum without sufficient attention to measuring its impact, together with its effectiveness (see e.g., Galloway et al. 2017).

2.2.4 Inequality in communication and ELF

While considering the controversies that have animated the debate on the *Englishization* of the academy, it must be observed that the domains of use in which English in its role of international link language has gained a solid foothold, in the new peripheries, are very much varied, and that the related advantages and disadvantages should be weighed up distinctly for each of those contexts. One first distinction, in this regard, may be drawn between

those communicative situations that involve only NNESs and those where NNESs interact with NESs. In the latter, the NESs may indeed put the NNESs at disadvantage, especially if the former expect native-like competence of latter. It is often assumed that the use of English creates a level playing field for the NNESs who interact among themselves, since all are equally positioned, with respect to the English language; yet this may not always be the case. Another important distinction, strictly related to the afore mentioned one, has indeed to do with the level of competence required to communicate successfully, which depends on the specific domain of use, and which may not be evenly distributed even among the NNESs. Successful communication and the required competence in the language are in fact relative and not absolute concepts. In this regard, it is important to observe that one thing is communication that is aimed at "getting the job done", as, for instance, in the business communities of practice (Kankaanranta & Planken 2010); quite another thing is the kind of communication that occurs in highly regulated contexts, such as the academic community, where adherence to established linguistic norms does indeed matter. No doubt the use of a single working language within a corporate company and among different businesses that operate internationally streamlines communication; as a matter of fact, businesses located in the new peripheries that operate on an international level have adopted English also for internal communication. For many people who operate in business domains, the English language serves merely the instrumental purpose of getting the core content across to the interlocutor, and in this regard the principles of simplicity and clarity in communication are key (ibid.). In some domains, limited vocabulary, a fixed phraseology, and simple syntactical structures may be sufficient to be perfectly functional and communicate successfully. Whereas in other contexts, such as that of academic and scientific research, users of English must be capable of articulating often cognitively complex contents. In the academic fields of the humanities, in particular, where the job that needs to get done is arguably all about language, proficiency in English does matter, and diverging levels of competence clearly favor some and disadvantages others.

Concerns for this problem of inequality in communication between NESs and NNESs have sparked the rise of the ELF field of research that is considered further on. At this point, it is important to observe that much of the criticism against the use of using English in the role of lingua franca tends to be premised on a misconception of ELF, whose tacit assumption seems to be that English in lingua franca exchanges has to correspond to the native-speaker norm of the codified standard varieties of English. On the contrary, as it is illustrated further on, ELF research has been inspired, since its very beginnings, by the democratic and egalitarian ideals of decoupling English from the inner circle native-speaker norm and legitimizing the NNESs as users and owners of English in their own right.

However, as a matter of fact, although competence in English is increasingly regarded as a 'necessary skill' in the education systems of the non-English speaking countries, as well as in today's labor market, and in spite of the realities of ELF in the new peripheries, proficiency in English is still measured against the yardstick of the NE norms. As already observed in the introduction, the need to contribute to criteria for more equality in communication has become an issue of concern in applied linguistics, and ELF research, in this regard, has always been at the forefront of change. As the next section of this chapter goes on to illustrate, in the last decade, ELF research has repositioned English in its capacity of lingua franca in a more inclusive multilingual framework, precisely with the purpose of resolving the inequalities in communication here referred to.

In the next section of the chapter, the discussion turns to the conceptualizations of English that have been formulated within applied linguistics scholarship over the last three decades, with a particular attention to the development of the concept of ELF and the related theoretical field of research.

2.3 Conceptualizing English and ELF

This dissertation has so far referred to the 'global' dimension of English and emphasized its use as a lingua franca in the new peripheries. The perceived disadvantages inherent in the adoption of English in the role of a lingua

franca were related to the often-implicit assumption that when the NNESs use English they must necessarily defer to the NE norms. However, more and more NNESs of different L1s are adopting the English language for a variety of communicative and expressive purposes, in a wide range of domains, where adherence to the norms of NE may be completely unnecessary and perhaps even ineffectual.

At this point, a more fundamental question needs to be answered: what is English today? Most importantly, what are we talking about when we refer to ELF? In order to answer these two interrelated questions, this chapter starts with a consideration on the ownership of English in today's world and the role that is attributed to the NNESs as the key factor for the current vitality of English, as well as its future evolution (section 2.3.1). The discussion then turns to how English has been reconceptualized, over the last three decades, in order to capture its changing realities. The World English (WE) and the English as an international language (EIL henceforth) paradigms of research are introduced, and the related conceptual frameworks summarized, with a focus on both their relevance and limitations, in relation to the changes that English has undergone in the more recent decades (section 2.3.2). Post-structuralist approaches to the study of the English language in the globalized world are then introduced, and their key role in marking a radical epistemic change of perspective is emphasized (section 2.3.3). The chapter then moves on to consider the evolution of the concept of ELF within the homonymous field of research, from the first empirical works on the linguistic forms to the more recent reconceptualization that repositioned it within a multilingual and multicultural framework (section 2.3.4).

2.3.1 The native and non-native speakers of English

In view of the current use of English as a lingua franca on an unprecedented global scale, it has become an established view in the field of applied linguistics that the NNESs worldwide outnumber the NESs. On this premise, it has been repeatedly argued that while the latter can no longer claim the exclusive ownership of English, the former, as legitimate owners, are nowadays leading the natural processes of innovation and change in the English language (Widdowson 1994, Jenkins 2007, Seidlhofer 2011). The view that there are more NNESs than NESs is however not uncontested. Three decades ago, Phillipson commented that the many the "guesstimates" on the numbers of speakers of English worldwide were "inevitably based on a loose definition of proficiency" (1992: 24) and pointed out that that statistics on the number of speakers are "not particularly revealing unless we look at the functions that English serves in society and the relationship between English and other languages" (ibid.: 25). This observation was however premised on the idea that only native-like competence could count as legitimate, with the implication that the NNESs are necessarily positioned as (perhaps perpetual) learners. More recently, Trudgill argued that the NNESs use English in limited contexts and for a limited amount of time and so, in spite of the 'spread' of English beyond the ENL countries, there was probably still much more NE use around than NNE use (Trudgill 2005, as cited in Jenkins 2007: 8). This may well be still the case, since English is certainly used more frequently, and perhaps in many cases exclusively, by those who have done so since birth than it is by those who have learned it and use as an additional language.

However, even though it is arguably impossible to pin down the exact number of speakers of English as a second (or third, fourth, nth) language, and as arbitrary as statistics on the number of speakers of English might be, it must be stressed once again that the fact that for more and more people located in the new peripheries English has become more of a second than a foreign language is by itself remarkable. In other words, the use of English in lingua franca communication among NNESs has come to represent perhaps the most significant aspect of today's sociolinguistic realities of the English language, and whatever their number, the NNESs may indeed be legitimized to stake their claim of ownership of the English language.

A completely different matter is whether the NNESs will be leading future changes in the English language, which, for the time being, arguably counts as nothing but an act of faith. A more fundamental problem with this idea, though, has also been highlighted. From an evolutionary perspective, Mufwene (2012) claimed that it is impossible that future changes may come from the expanding circle, unless English comes to displace all the other languages and becomes indigenized. He observed that, even though it is assumed that the NNESs outnumber the

NESs, language standards within a community of speech are never set up "by majority rule" and that, for the time being, the NNESs are motivated by a need to be as fluent as possible and so will try to "reduce the divergence" (ibid.: 369) from the target models of learning. As a matter of fact, ELT in in the expanding circle measures competence in English against the yardstick of the recognized standards of British and General American English, and any learner will try to meet the target model, in an educational context where competence is object of evaluation. The premise of this claim, however, is once again that the NNES users of English are confined to the position of learners who strive to reach native-like competence. As it is argued further on, the users of English in the new peripheries represent a heterogeneous population, whose objectives and needs vary considerably and most importantly, their linguistic behavior in actual communication may not be necessarily constrained by the demands of the ELT classroom.

Another deeper problem, though, runs with the dichotomy native/non-native, since, for one thing, the notion of 'nativeness' is itself dubious, and "there is no exact definition of a native speaker to which everyone subscribes" (Galloway & Rose 2015: 201). First of all, a clear-cut distinction between NESs and NNESs is impossible to draw because it is premised on a notion of monolingual speaker that does not apply to all (if any of) those who speak English in the world. Actually, the greatest majority of individuals in the post-colonial ESL countries, as well as a good number of speakers located within the core English speaking countries are bi- or multi-lingual subjects, and when subjects are multilinguals, it is difficult to distinguish between their first and their other languages. Furthermore, the concept of nativeness is based on criteria of linguistic homogeneity that are not even found within the core English-speaking countries. The notion of native speaker is an idealization that emerged in modernist linguistics, within the framework of XIX century nation-state thinking (see Mauranen 2018), which established an equivalence between nation, people and language. It thus reflects a particular ideology, and, in this sense, it is a socio-cultural construction that is unrepresentative of the sociolinguistic reality. Inasmuch as it served the purpose of labelling a particular linguistic identity that postulates the correspondence between national citizenship and the monolingual abstraction of a single norm of English (see 3.2), the concept of NES has also served to draw boundaries between some speaker groups and others. Since native speakership is commonly defined by birthright, it identifies the speakers from the inner circle countries, where standard English is thought to be spoken, as the exclusive legitimate owners of the English language. In this sense, the NES/NNES distinction is inherently judgmental, as it establishes a hierarchy of speakers that de-legitimizes the latter, while ascribing power to the former. In creating the false impression that those who are identified as NESs hold a superior competence, it still condemns the NNESs to be perpetual learners of the language. It has been observed that the distinction between NESs and NNESs has a lot more to do with prejudice than it has with strictly sociolinguistic criteria, in that the representation of the NES is also often a stereotypical one, associated with notions of 'race' and 'ethnicity' (Kirkpatrick 2007a, Schneider 2011). The ethnocentric prejudice at the heart of the distinction has operated as a discriminatory principle with respect to the different varieties of English, with the "legitimate offspring" on the one hand and the "illegitimate offspring" on the other (Mufwene 2001).

As the next section of this chapter illustrates, the need to legitimize the latter and eradicate stereotypical conceptions of English ownership has taken the center stage of much research in applied linguistics, over the last three decades. For now, it is sufficient to point out that any attempt at categorizing the speakers of English according to the criterion of nativeness seems to be doomed to failure; yet the same, after all, may be said of any kind of categorization, as categorizing, by definition, involves a certain degree of generalization. A loose definition that does not consider neither the type nor the scope of competence in English may still be reached, once it is accepted that the NES is anyone who has acquired competence in English from birth in a naturalistic setting, whereas anyone who has learned English as an additional language later in life than their own native language(s) and mainly if not solely through explicit instruction counts as a NNES. This criterion shall be kept in mind in the pages that follow, because it seems to provide the best operational definition of NES and NNESs. In this study, constant reference is made to the two terms, for the reason, if any, that it is common terminology in linguistics and applied linguistics research.

2.3.2 Beyond monolithic English: WE and EIL

As early as in the 1980s, a number of scholars took up the task of challenging the prejudicial view of the NNESs and emancipate them from the deficit perspective (Jenkins 2015b). Initially associated to the name of Braj Kachru and his tripartite model of the spread of English (see 2.1), the field of research in World Englishes (WE) emerged, in those years, out of a concern for the identification of the varieties of English that had developed organically within the multilingual speech communities of the postcolonial outer circle and argued for their acceptance. Since the 1990s, more and more works accumulated that led to the acknowledgement of a number of geo-localized Englishes (e.g.: Brutt-Griffler 2002; Higgins 2003; Kachru 2005; Kachru & Nelson 1996; Schneider 2007, 2011, 2014). WE research thus promoted a pluricentric view of the English language that represented a first step towards liberating it from narrow conceptions of ownership. The view according to which the NESs are neither the global owners of English nor the arbiters of its use and development, in turn, called into question the accepted models for its teaching and assessment. Applied linguists working within the WE paradigm emphasized the irrelevance of the exonormative NE models in the expanding circle and argued for the legitimization of the local nativized varieties, stressing the advantages that endonormative target model would afford the local educational practices (e.g.: Bamgboşe 1998, Parakrama 1995).

As English evolved into different nativized varieties, it also became the international language par excellence of globalization, and the need to adjust the ELT practices to the multifaceted realities of English also brought the attention of applied linguist to the use of English in global communication (Widdowson 1997). In parallel with WE, the research paradigm of English as an international language (EIL) developed with the aim of capturing this international dimension (Sharifian 2009). Within the same WE paradigm, and in accordance with its pluricentric view, global English communication tended to be envisaged as an international phenomenon, of language contact between different world Englishes and different dialectal varieties. EIL was originally conceived within the "sociolinguistic tradition of variety description with a primary concern for the relationship between language and community" (Widdowson 2015: 363) and was therefore premised on the idea that, when English is chosen as a language of wider communication, speakers bring different bounded and geo-localized varieties of English to the interaction. For this reason, the very pertinence of the concept of EIL was also questioned (Pennycook 2007b). Different interpretations of EIL have been put forth throughout the years and arguments for its reconceptualization have appeared in scholarly research that uncoupled it from WE and brought it closer to ELF (e.g.: Seidlhofer 2011). EIL was indeed an important antecedent of ELF and the two concepts have often been used alternatively in the most recent times to represent the same reality.

2.3.3 Beyond English: a post-structuralist turn

Although it is credited with the merit of redeeming NNE and the NNESs from the deficit perspective, the WE/EIL paradigm, in its original approach aimed at identifying a plurality of geo-localized varieties of English, soon proved not to be able to provide applied linguistic scholars with an adequate research heuristic that could paint a full picture of the sociolinguistic realities of English in the globalized world. In the specific, the pluralizing strategy of WE attracted criticism for being uncapable of taking account of the uncertain relationship that English as language of 'global' usage has with any geo-localized speech community. From within a post-structuralist perspective, Pennycook claimed that WE "reproduced precisely the epistemology it needs to escape" (2008: 30.1), with its abstraction of one homogeneous norm as the shared code of a bounded speech community. He highlighted that, as a paradigm that places nationalism at its core, WE leaves variation out of its classifications and consequently excludes those forms of English that are hybrid and unsystematic (2007b, 2008).

As an approach that fragmented the monolithic image of the English language, WE was in fact conceived within the wider framework of multilingualism and multiculturalism. In the wake of globalization, multiculturalism and its linguistic correlate multilingualism emerged as a paradigm that pluralized the seemingly homogeneous community representing the modern nation, and just as multilingualism pluralized monolingualism, so WEs pluralized monolithic English. After all, second language speakers of English in the outer circle scarcely use

English for intra-national communication and hardly ever use it exclusively, making any identification of a nativized variety of English with a speech community arguably untenable. As, with the turn of the century, a particular interest developed for the multifarious language contact phenomena that characterize the 'global spread' of English, together with the cultural forms that find their expression through hybrid English forms, a new research heuristic was needed. It was observed in the introduction that, over the last two decades, linguistics and communication studies have shown a tendency to supersede the traditional structuralist conceptualizations of languages as self-bounded, discrete codes, and is has become nowadays common to refer to *languaging*, *translanguaging*, *polylanguaging*, hybridity and fluidity, in an attempt to capture the processual quality of language at the level of performance, irrespective of any reference to a specific codified norm. Approaches of this kind that refute the idea that linguistic competence and speech community can be assumed as pre-existing facts have represented a key turn for the development of applied linguistics research (Mauranen 2018), which has led more and more scholars working in the field to move beyond the pluralization strategy of WE.

Against the traditionally accepted notion of language as a self-bounded variety that is identified with a particular group of people inhabiting a determinate nation or region of the world, and the underlying ideology of nationism that establishes a correspondence between language and cultural identity, arguments have been put forth that go so far as to deny the very existence of discrete languages outside the discursive domain of linguistics. Makoni and Pennycook (2005), for instance, highlighting the fundamentally ideological character of the monolingual assumptions of twentieth century linguistics, and arguing for the need to "dis-invent" the very notion of language, claimed that the fuzziness that characterizes the boundaries between languages cannot be described in ways that are still imprisoned in an epistemological order that encodes what they regard as "western linguistic and cultural suppositions" (147).

From within this perspective of a radical epistemological overturn, Pennycook asked a fundamental question about the English language:

> Why should we believe that two utterances, mutually incomprehensible, spoken in different ways, with different meanings, by people on opposite sides of the world, with no connection or knowledge of each other, should be considered to be part of the same thing, system, language, English, simply because this label is loosely applied to these moments of language use?" (2007b: 94)

By postulating that there are no such things as discrete, autonomous, and enumerable languages, but only performative acts in which speakers make use of a variety of (multi-)linguistic resources, Pennycook denied English any ontological status. In his view, the English language, aside from the codified standard norm that is taught and learned all over the globe, only exists in a sort of fluid form that travels across the world and is appropriated by native speakers of other languages in ways that are locally meaningful. In Pennycook's own words, "[s]omething called English is mobilized by English-language industries with particular language effects. But something called English is also part of complex language chains, mobilized as part of multiple acts of identity" (2007a: 74). In Pennycook's view, the global dimension of English highlights that "English is a translocal language, a language of fluidity and fixity that moves across, while becoming embedded in, the materiality of localities and social relations" (ibid.: 6). More than that, in Pennycock's view, far from being a homogenizing factor of globalization, English defines diverse local identities. By locating English within a view of globalization that he represented as a complex series of "transcultural flows", Pennycook approached the study of the global dimension of English by moving away from characterizations of local vs global, in which English indexes only global and not local, while at the same time he avoided reproducing the nationist ideology and the "segregationist approach to language as an autonomous system" (2007a: 75) of WE. His idea that language only exists in context, as part of a performance (ibid.), resonates with arguments that emphasize translingual practices as instances of an integrated proficiency rather than a sum of discrete linguistic competences (Canagarajah 2013).

As observed by Mauranen (2018), this post-structuralist turn offers a fresh perspective on 'hybridity' in English at a time when "English manifests enormous variation, blurred boundaries, continual mixing with other languages,

and unsteady relationships with nations" (107). By freeing the notion of linguistic diversity from a modernist paradigm, the post-structuralist turn has forced applied linguists to substantially rethink many of the traditionally accepted assumptions and beliefs about the English language and, most importantly, its learning (see 2.4).

2.3.4 The rise and evolution of ELF

It has been repeatedly pointed out that the main feature of the sociolinguistics realities of English in the era of globalization has been the consolidation of its role of lingua franca in the new peripheries. Since the last decade of the past century, as English language teachers and corpus linguists started to be confronted with this reality, a view emerged among applied linguistics scholars that the users of ELF in the expanding circle should be accepted as legitimate speakers of English and, as such, they may not necessarily be expected to defer to the NE norms. Inspired by democratic and egalitarian ideals, and paralleling the efforts of WE scholars to legitimize the NNESs of the outer circle, ELF scholarship thus developed out of a need to challenge the orthodoxy of the NE norm that positioned the NNESs of the expanding circle as perpetual learners of the language.

It took almost two decades for ELF to firmly establish itself in the wider framework of applied linguistics. As Jenkins observed, in the beginnings of ELF, "[m]any Native English ELT practitioners, with their instinctive sense of 'ownership' of the English language, meanwhile, tended at least initially to regard the notion of ELF as outrageous." (2015b: 50), and, as it is shown further on (3.4), negative attitudes towards ELF and its implementation in ELT have been found to prevail also in more recent times. Empirical studies of the use of English as a lingua franca started to appear in the second half of the 1990s; ever since, ELF research has revised and honed its theoretical and conceptual toolkit to adjust it to the findings that emerged, as more and more scholars joined in the debate that ELF's break with the tacit assumptions of much applied linguistic work had sparked. In its beginnings, studies in ELF research consisted mainly of empirical analysis of the linguistic forms that characterized the performance of NNESs in interaction and included an interest for the strategies of accommodation through which the NNESs resolved problems of mutual intelligibility and ensured effective communication (Jenkins 2000). Jenkins' 'Lingua Franca Core' (LFC) project (ibid.) represented the major effort of its time, in ELF research on pronunciation features; the 'core' indeed was meant to identify a small repertoire of pronunciation and prosodic features that should be available for use in order to prevent potential intelligibility problems between NNESs. Following Jenkins' LFC, ELF lexicogrammar was then collected and described also in the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE) (Seidlhofer 2001a, 2010) and the Corpus of English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings (ELFA) (Mauranen 2003). Although it was often misunderstood, Jenkins' LFC proposal was not meant to be a fixed and monolithic model to adhere to; analogously, all the other descriptive work that appeared in the beginnings of ELF was not meant to be prescriptive. Much of it, however, in the attempt to legitimize ELF users, remained anchored to the principles of WE and replicated its pluralizing approach, by which the non-native features that were being observed were trying to be hypostatized into distinct L1-inflected ELF varieties. In Europe, it was believed that an emerging Euro-English could be identified (Jenkins et al. 2001, Seidlhofer 2001b), and a debate sparked on whether to attribute the variety status to the recurring features that were being identified in the use of ELF in the old continent. The dispute revealed that the crux of the matter at stake was not so much related to linguistics as it was fundamentally ideological: the Euro-English hypothesis was rejected, e.g., by Mollin (2006), on the basis of a deficit perspective that denied the European NNESs the right to claim ownership to English and implicitly demanded that they deferred to the standard norms of British English. However, the idea that a European variety of English is emerging from its usage as a lingua franca in continental Europe was proposed again more recently by Modiano (2017a). Modiano views English as a "second language [that is] used freely among the citizens of the EU, within the EU, in settings where interlocutors do not share a common L1" but from within the Kachruvian logic of WE and in open opposition to an ELF perspective, he also claimed that "it is probably no longer appropriate to describe English in the EU in terms of an Expanding Circle variety/or varieties, but rather something different – as a 'second language' or in terms of continental Europe as a developing Outer Circle context" (2017a: 314). He also stated his belief that the departure of the British from the European Union "will coincide with greater acceptance of a European second-

language variety of English" (2017b: 366). Dismissing Mollin's (2006) claims on the basis of the fact that her informants had received their formal education in the 1970s, way before the advent of the new technologies, internet and satellite television broadcasting and when "the notion that there could possibly be alternatives to Inner Circle varieties in continental European ELT did not exist" (2017b: 364), Modiano claimed that "the English language is adapting to new linguistic realities in continental Europe" and that is is "now taking a leading role in the emergence of a European sense of citizenship" (ibid.: 365).

Whereas Modiano apparently believes that the "very essence of liberation linguistics" lies in the "[r]ecognition, legitimization and codification" (2017a: 325) of a European variety of English, just like any other Outer Circle variety, the ELF research paradigm has proposed a more radical ideological shift in the conceptualization of English. First of all, in order to free the NNESs from the position of perpetual learners and legitimize them as users and owners of English, together with the deficit perspective, the ELF ideological overturn disposed of the traditional terminology that had been in use in second language acquisition, pointing out the derogatory character inherent in the concepts of interlanguage, interference and the notion of deterioration of standards. The idea was that ELF usages could not be positioned along the interlanguage continuum simply because the NE norm was no longer a target. Throughout the years, as more and more empirical data were gathered, it became clear that the communication between speakers with varied multilingual repertoires showcased a high degree of diversity, fluidity and variability, and, therefore, the multifarious instances of English usage in lingua franca communication could not brought together under one or even more bounded varieties. Marking a breakaway from the approach of WE and upholding a view of English as a de-territorialized and de-nativized language, attempts to delineate distinct ELF varieties were abandoned and the focus of ELF research was then switched from the linguistic forms to the functions fulfilled by the forms, and the ways speakers from different language backgrounds reach mutual understanding (Seidlhofer 2009a, 2009b). Within this new framework, the concept of speech community was also abandoned, in favor of that of "community of practice" (Wenger 1998). ELF was thus reconceptualized as a social practice, in which a fairly stable grouping of users of English are united by shared interests and objectives (Seidlhofer 2007, Kalocsai 2014).

The argument that ELF descriptive work was aimed at reifying some sort of hypostatized universal code in which anything goes, however, has persisted in critiques of ELF until more recent times (see, e.g.: O'Regan 2014, and Baker & Jenkins 2015 in response to such critiques), when yet another fundamental reconceptualization of ELF had already taken place. Once the focus of ELF research turned to the implications of ELF users' crossing of language boundaries, it became evident that ELF communication was inherently multilingual, and ELF itself came to be redefined as "any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice and often the only option" (Seidlhofer 2011: 7). Subsequently, yet another reconceptualization of ELF was put forward, which marked a final breakaway from the varieties approach of WE. After all, the concept of variety identifies a linguistic usage that develops organically and reproduces autonomously within a certain bounded and fixed, localizable, speech community. In the specific, the processes of adaptation and convergence that lead to the emergence of an identifiable new variety of English may only take place in contexts of prolonged contact and coexistence among speakers of different linguistic backgrounds. Only in such contexts English is used in repeated routines and sustained interactions, and, most importantly, the newly emerged forms and structures are passed on from one generation to another. The use of English as a lingua franca, on the contrary, does not automatically develop into usages that reproduce themselves organically within a stable community of speakers. By redefining ELF as a "second-order language contact", that is, a contact between "similects", Mauranen (2012: 29) highlighted the hybridity, complexity and instability of the linguistic forms that characterize the use of English in lingua franca communication, on the one hand, and the often short-lived, transient, impermanent character of the latter, on the other. At the same time, she remarked that the NNESs' L1s do exert an influence on ELF, as indeed do the NE norms, since also "native speakers of one or more native variety English, including world Englishes, obviously also participate in the mix, adding to the flavour" (2018: 109).

If ELF had always been understood as a multilingual phenomenon, right from the beginning, it was only after Mauranen's reconceptualization that the multilingual nature of ELF communication was explored as a key characteristic and a multilingual and multicultural – or better defined *transcultural* – turn took place in ELF research. While Seidlhofer had emphasized the fact that English was often the only choice (see above) between speakers of different L1s, Jenkins redefined ELF as a "Multilingua Franca", that is, "multilingual communication in which English is available as a contact language of choice, but is not necessarily chosen" (2015b: 73). In this new framework, multilingualism is thus not just a backdrop to ELF communication; on the contrary, it is "the one single factor without which there would be no ELF". Starting from the consideration that the focus of ELF discussion had been "on the 'E' of ELF communication rather than on developing the relationship between English and other languages in respect of the multilingualism of most ELF users" (ibid.: 59), Jenkins pointed out that English is only one among other languages, which may be either present or latent, in any ELF interaction, and ELF interactants may choose to speak in another of their mutual languages, and simply "slip into English from time to time" (ibid.: 66). By replacing the dichotomy NNES / NES users with one that distinguished "Multilingual ELF users" from "Monolingual ELF users" (ibid.: 74), Jenkins did not exclude the monolingual NES from ELF, so long as these were able to adapt to a multilingual environment and exploit previously unfamiliar linguistic resources. In order to capture this characteristic of ELF communication, Jenkins discarded the concepts of "shared repertoires" and "multilingual repertoires", which imply the existence of an all-purpose, fixed repertoire in favor of a notion of "repertoires in flux" (ibid.: 76). Better fitting with Mauranen's notion of second order contact, which depends on the identities of those present in a specific communicative situation, the idea of their being "in flux" emphasizes that the repertoires of monolingual ELF users, in the specific, "may not initially include particular items from other languages, but may be influenced during the course of an interaction by the language of their multilingual interlocutors, whether in a temporary or longer-term sense" (ibid.: 75). In this sense, Jenkins' notion of "English as a Multilingua Franca" (2015b) is more in tune with the above-mentioned post-structuralist concept of translanguaging, in that its very multilingual nature emerges across individuals, time and space and does not have assume the existence of an underlying set of rules for the use of each distinct language. As such, it also resonates with Pennycook's understanding of lingua franca communication as "emergent and multilingual: we speak both our own and each others' languages. It is built from the bottom up: it as an emergent collection of local language practices" (2012: 152).

Along with this repositioning of the 'E' of ELF, there also came the realization that the framework of the communities of practice was too limited and unable to capture much of ELF communication. In fact, the users of ELF do not necessarily form communities, neither do they engage in shared practices; on the contrary, they are more often involved in fleeting encounters and may not share from the start a common repertoire for successful communication. In order to describe the transient and often ad hoc encounters that distinguish much of ELF communication, recent work on ELF has proposed alternatives concepts to that of the community of practice. The notion of Transient International Groups (TIGs) (Pitzl 2018), for instance, identifies social configurations that are emergent and temporally bounded, in which members negotiate their linguistic and pragmatic norms as they interact.

Once ELF communication was conceptualized as inherently "heterogeneous in terms of linguistic and cultural backgrounds" (Mauranen 2012: 46), it also followed that, just as linguistic and pragmatic norms cannot be assumed as a pre-existing and stable set, so are the cultural frames of reference that the ELF users bring together in interaction. In other words, if languages in actual performance are more fluid and hybrid than self-bounded and numerable, then the same can be said of the cultural frames of reference that are associated to the speakers. Following the poststructuralist turn in applied linguistics that left behind the assumptions of nationist thinking, with its language-culture equation, ELF research took on board a concept of intercultural – or better defined *trans*cultural – awareness that became key to the understanding of ELF multilingual practices. Thanks, in particular, to Will Baker's ethnographic work (2009, 2011, 2015, 2016, 2018), the ELF research field converged with that of inter-/trans-cultural communication. Based on the assumption that linguistic and cultural differences

"should be approached critically and not assumed a priori" (Baker 2018: 27), Baker showed how ELF interactions construct links through and across – rather than between – different cultures, as complex links with culture emerge "in situ as a result of adaptation and negotiation on the part of the participants" (Baker 2015: 99). In this perspective, cultural borders in ELF interaction are constantly transgressed, and while cultural differences may be initially recognized among the ELF users, Baker (ibid.) found that these do not have much influence on the communicative practices, since the cultural references are not perceived as being so relevant and significant by any ELF users in the course of interaction. According to this view, national cultures, in particular, are only among many possible orientations and no assumptions can be made as to the interactants' cultural references, since culture through ELF is constructed in discourse and emerges in interaction. In order to tease out the complex relationship between ELF and culture, recent works on ELF (Larsen-Freeman 2016) have taken up Complexity Theory (CT) as a metaphor through which the use of English as a transcultural multi-lingua franca is seen as invoking a varying degree and different levels of complex social systems simultaneously in each communicative instance. These systems, in turn, are said to influence, respond and adapt to each other, making the boundaries between themselves blurred and never categorical. In brief, the transcultural turn in ELF has reconceptualized the very notion of culture in relation to language by highlighting its fluid and emergent character. ELF, in this framework, is dis-embedded from the cultural models of the core English-speaking countries and appears as a neutral tool for communication between and across cultures. Its underlying ideology of de-territorialized and de-nativized language is therefore restated with renewed emphasis.

The next section of the chapter discusses the implications that have arisen for ELT, and the EFL model in particular, from the developments in applied linguistics research that have been so far outlined.

2.4 From EFL to ELF: a paradigm shift in the pedagogy of English.

As pointed out in the introduction, the status of English in the globalized world has brought applied linguistic scholars to question the basic tenets of ELT. In the new peripheries, in particular, where learners are likely to use English in the future in contexts of lingua franca communication, and for purposes other than the familiarization with a specific ENL culture, the still prevalent EFL model for the pedagogy of English has revealed its limitations and obsolescence. After briefly introducing the traditional tenets of ELT, this chapter section reviews the relevant research works that argue for the need to rethink the pedagogy of the English language in light of the current realities of English, in the perspective of a paradigm shift away from EFL towards more inclusive, post-normative, ELF-informed approaches.

2.4.1 The traditional tenets of ELT

It was pointed out that the 'spread' of English has involved processes of adaptations and change. Recent research works were referred to that proposed post-structuralist reconceptualizations of English, showcasing in particular the complexity, transience and hybridity of the forms of English as a lingua franca in actual performance. However, the English language is also a product that is marketed worldwide, in its codified NE monolithic norm, by a thriving ELT industry, whose headquarters are firmly established in the core English-speaking countries. The tacit assumption that the rules of proper use of English are defined by the NESs remains pervasive and strong in ELT, and it is a widely acknowledged fact that allegiance to the codified NE norms still characterizes foreign-language education policies, the development of curricula and teaching materials, the assessment practices, the pedagogical models and, as it is illustrated further on (chapter 3), also the prevalent attitudes of the ELT stakeholders towards English and its teaching. The continued dominance of this "native-speakerism" (Holliday 2006) has had the effect of securing the monopoly of ELT expertise in the hands of the NESs from the core English-speaking countries (Phillipson 2000). Although local norms of English have developed organically within some multilingual speech communities of the expanding circle, the native-speakerism in the local ELT practices has perpetuated a pattern of dependency on inner-circle pedagogical models and know-how. It has been observed

that the NE norms represent an exonormative and perhaps unrealistic target for the learners of the multilingual societies of the outer circle, and in light of this reality, it has been argued that English has operated as a neo-colonial language in the local education systems (Kumaradivelu 2006).

Perhaps because no nativized variety can be said to have developed organically in the new peripheries of English, the native-speakerism is generally taken as an obvious and unquestionable principle in the local pedagogical practices of English, which is in fact learned as a foreign language. The EFL pedagogical model still prevails in the schools of the new peripheries, in spite of the dramatic changes that English has undergone in the last three decades. The basic tenets that underpin the EFL model relate to the legitimacy of the norm, the status of the native-English-speaking teachers (NESTs henceforth) and NNESTs, and the cultural models associated to the language. A deeply ingrained belief about the legitimate (and illegitimate) varieties of English, uncritically assumes that the codified NE standard variety is the only acceptable learning target model. This is a conventional idea that persists due to the constraints imposed by the fixed conventions for formal writing, the influence of the media and, perhaps most importantly, the official language certification exams, which have a washback effect on the whole curriculum and the learning objectives. As regards the NESTs and NNESTs, it is often assumed that the former represents ideal teachers, because they are considered the best embodiment of the target language and culture for EFL learners. Highlighting the scientific unsoundness of such beliefs on the supposedly innate NESTs' expertise, since often the NESTs are monolingual speakers without neither any knowledge of the L1 and home culture of the learners, nor any personal experience as learners of a foreign language themselves, Phillipson (1992) referred to this tenet of ELT as the "native speaker fallacy". Strictly related to this is the "monolingual fallacy", which Phillipson identified as one major tenet of the Anglo-American English language pedagogy exported to the postcolonial contexts (ibid.). The idea of the presumed advantages of a monolingual approach to the teaching of English is however also found in EFL contexts (Kubota 2016), where the ultimate goal of the learning process is the ability to speak like a monolingual NES, and so the exclusive use of English in the classroom is believed to create a more naturalistic setting where exposure to the target language is maximal. However, in certain education systems such as the Italian one, the monolingual principle is not adhered to scrupulously and the important pedagogical functions of the learners' L1 are also recognized. Nevertheless, as it is shown in this study, the idea that the English classroom should best be an English-only environment appears to be a strongly held one among Italian learners of English.

Furthermore, the prevailing native speakerism has always been reflected in the choice of learning materials for the EFL classroom (Jenkins 2012, Seidlhofer 2011). Hands-on experience in foreign-language teaching tells that the materials in use in the EFL classroom of the Italian secondary schools, in the specific, tend to focus exclusively on ENL societal contexts and often reproduce stereotypical images of the ENL target culture. Research studies on ELT textbooks conducted in the Italian context have confirmed that classroom materials contribute to promoting a monolithic view of the English language and fail to prepare learners for the dynamic variety and plurality they are likely to encounter as users of the language. The EFL textbooks that are adopted in the Italian schools tend in fact to focus almost exclusively on the British codified standard norm of English and only secondarily on General American. They thus present the two internationally recognized codified norms as the only legitimate varieties, in complete disregard for the non-native and non-standard usages of English, and in spite of the increased visibility the latter have come to acquire in today's globalized world (Lo Priore and Vettorel 2015, Vettorel 2010, Vettorel and Lopriore 2013). In a recent study, Vettorel (2018a, 2018b) examined a number of EFL course-books published by international and Italian publishers from the 1990s till the 2015 that were addressed at Italian upper secondary school students. She found that, except for a few cases, the current lingua franca role that English increasingly retains were not even represented; furthermore, no tasks and activities related to communication strategies and aimed at developing the learners' communicative capabilities were included in the textbooks. After all, the EFL model assumes that the purpose of learning is that of preparing students to interact with NESs and familiarize them with the target culture of the NESs. Most importantly, the understanding of culture on which the EFL model is premised appears to be imprisoned in the epistemological presuppositions of nationist thinking and is therefore

at odds with the poststructuralist conceptualizations of culture that have been taken on board in the most recent work of applied linguistic scholars (see 2.3.4).

In sum, the underlying principle of EFL pedagogy is that the English language belongs to the NESs of the core English-speaking countries, and on the basis of this assumption, the only legitimate target of learning is the NE codified standard variety, while all the learning materials are normally embedded in the ENL target culture.

Another key tenet of the EFL pedagogy as identified by Kubota (2016) is related to the idea that the earlier the age at which English learning starts, the better the outcome. This belief is actually not exclusive to the EFL contexts; it is in fact a widely held notion that was also acknowledged by Niedzielski and Preston (2003, see also 3.2) as common thinking among non-experts in matters of linguistics and second language acquisition, and it was defined by Phillipson (1992) as the "early start fallacy". The idea that younger learners have a head start regardless of any other contextual conditions represents some sort of popular version of critical period hypothesis (CPH) (Lenneberg 1967), which postulates that after the age of puberty people lose the natural ability to acquire language like native speakers. As such, the early start fallacy implicitly assumes that the target of learning a foreign language is the attainment of native-like proficiency. Although it is an attested fact that younger learners have the advantage of being able to adopt an implicit approach to learning and so harness their more natural abilities to acquire a language, in the instructional contexts of the expanding circle, where exposure to the target language is relatively limited as opposed to a naturalistic learning context where the target language is the common language of the out-of-classroom, age is not the only and not even the most crucial variable that determines the learners' success. As proved by research in EFL instruction environments, where the amount of time dedicated to the learning of the target language is limited and the target language itself is not normally spoken in the wider social setting, older learners actually have an edge over younger ones. The advantages of older learners are related to their cognitive maturity, which allows them to make the most of the limited classroom time by harnessing their metalinguistic awareness and analytic ability (Muñoz 2006, 2008, 2011, 2014). However, even though "both experience and research show that starting early is no guarantee of success and that older learners can attain high levels of proficiency in their second language" (Lightbown and Spada 2013: 96), as it was observed in the introduction, there is a tendency, nowadays, to lower the age at which English is learned in the schools of the new peripheries. An increasing demand for an early start should not come as a surprise, if one considers that the EFL pedagogical model sanctions learners for falling short of the NE pronunciation established benchmark, and that the advantages of an early start have been related in particular to pronunciation (ibid.). The changing realities of English in the new peripheries are nevertheless arguably likely to make the scenario more complicated, in regard to the advantages and disadvantages related to the starting age. One the one hand, the amount of time dedicated to learning English in the formal education systems may still be very limited and therefore give older learners the upper hand; on the other, as previously pointed out, exposure to English has increased dramatically in the last decades, and for a minority of young learners, so have the opportunities of international mobility, all of which creates the conditions that may facilitate a more natural acquisition process. In addition to this, and to make things even more complicated, the role of lingua franca that English is likely to play for many learners of the new peripheries has brought to question the pertinence of the NES speaker target, and, therefore, an early start may be rather irrelevant to the learners' future goals, after all.

2.4.2 Towards a more inclusive ELF-oriented approach to ELT

The need for an innovative pedagogy of the English language has been repeatedly voiced in the academic literature of the last two decades and various proposals have been put forward as to what should be taught and how to be taught. Scholars working within the WE framework spearheaded the process of revision and innovation in ELT worldwide, in relation to the 'global' spread of English. As discussed earlier (2.3.2), WE research represented a first key turn in applied linguistics research, in that it highlighted the irrelevance and inappropriateness of the exonormative model in the outer circle, and came thus to represent one major breakaway from the prevalent native speakerism in ELT. The WE research paradigm suggested that the teaching and learning of English is necessarily

a culturally situated practice that varies according to context, and made it clear, in particular, that being a monolingual NES from one of the core-English-speaking countries does not automatically make one an effective English language teacher (Mahboob 2010).

While research in WE emphasized a need to develop endonormative models for the pedagogy of English in postcolonial contexts and reposition ELT within a more equitable multilingual framework (see e.g.: Kirkpatrick 2007b, 2012), parallel developments in EIL research greatly contributed to raising awareness of the pluricentricity and the diversity in use of English, pointing to the need to overturn native-speakerism and innovate accordingly the classroom practices worldwide. Several proposals for the teaching of English as an international language are included in the works of Rubdy and Saraceni (2006), Matsuda (2012), Alsagoff et al. (2012), Canagarajah et al. (2012), Zacharias and Manara (2013) and Marlina and Giri (2014). Canagarajah, Kafle and Matsumoto and Yiakoumetti (2012), for instance, privileging negotiation of meaning against mastery and pragmatics against grammar, called for a "plurilingual model that transcends the teaching of single varieties or monolithic grammars", in order to "develop language awareness among students and make them capable of negotiating the diverse varieties they will encounter in their everyday life in transnational settings" (93-94). Along similar lines, Kafle (2013) argued for a reconceptualization of EIL pedagogy that, legitimizing translingual practices in the classroom, foregrounds the successful negotiation of meaning against the traditionally accepted notion of mastery of the norms of NE. Starting from the assumption that the monolingual NESs have more than likely become a minority, Marlina (2014) argued for a revision of ELT worldwide in such a way that inspires students to "give equal and legitimate recognition of all varieties of English" and "develop the ability to negotiate and communicate respectfully across cultures and Englishes in today's communicative settings that are international, intercultural, and multilingual in nature" (7). He reiterated the same points in a more recent monograph (Marlina 2017) that aimed to investigate how realistic it might be to implement an EIL-oriented approach in an ENL academic setting (Urban University, Australia). The pedagogical issues and the practical implications of a WE/EIL-oriented approach to ELT, in regard in particular to the need for a contextual grounding of ELT based on the students' status of legitimate users of a language of 'global' dimension, are also discussed in the recent works of McKay and Brown (2016), Mckay (2018), Matsuda (2017) and Rose et al. (2020b).

In light of the 'global' lingua franca role that English has come to play for a growing number of NNESs, in particular, many scholars in the field of ELF have called into question the native-speakerism of the established EFL model and have argued in favor of an epistemic break with the traditionally accepted model for the pedagogy of English of the new peripheries. Chapter section 2.3.4 has shown that that the related questions of ownership of English and appropriateness of the standard native-speaker NE norm have been the common thread of ELF research. Based on the assumptions that, nowadays, there are more NNESs than NESs and that learners located in the new peripheries are most likely to use English, in the future, in lingua franca communication with other NNESs, ELF scholars have underscored the need to decenter the native-speaker norm as the target of English learning. In the perspective of an ELF-aware and ELF-oriented approach to ELT, native-like proficiency is deemed an irrelevant (and often unattainable) target, and so the NE norms may at best be a starting point of reference, but not (necessarily) the ultimate end of the learning process. Within an ELF pedagogical framework, the need to foster the learners' communicative competence regardless of adherence to the NE norm takes center stage, and, in the last decade, an increasing number of scholars have made a case for redirecting ELT in this sense. Since Jenkins (2006) advanced her proposal for a more inclusive approach to ELT that considers WE and ELF, a plethora of publications, including papers in applied linguistic journals and edited volumes, have discussed the pedagogical implications of ELF, with a view of enhancing the professionalism of English teachers and making the teaching of English more in tune with today's learners' needs. Arguments for a post-normative approach to ELT that is inclusive of the diverse usages of English and prepares learners for the dynamic variety they will encounter as users of ELF were put forward at the beginning of the last decade by Seidlhofer (2011) and Dewey (2012).

In the last ten years, other studies followed. One first important contribution to the task of redefining proficiency assessment criteria was provided by Mahboob and Dutcher (2014). Drawing on studies in WE and ELF, and Systemic Functional Linguistics, they developed the "Dynamic Approach to Language Proficiency (DALP)" "a model of proficiency that is not based upon native speaker status but rather on one's ability to adapt to and negotiate different contexts" (117). Saraceni's (2015), in his critical analysis of WE research, included a discussion of the pedagogical implications of the ELF approach, such as the choice of appropriate target models, and the related considerations on the possibility of teaching English as a fully de-anglicized language. A number of contributions collected by Bowles and Cogo (2015) provided both theoretical and empirical perspectives on ELF research, and discussed the implications in educational terms of the shift away from deficit perspective towards a resource-oriented approach for which the authors advocated. The various authors in Bayyurt and Akcan 2015, Pitzl and Osimk-Teasdale 2016, and Tsantila, Mandalios and Ilkos (2016) discussed the entire range of the pedagogical implications of ELF, in relation to the teaching and learning, teacher education, language testing and assessment, the learning materials. More recently, Sifakis and Tsantila (2018), in a discussion of the issues and challenges that ELF has raised for the EFL classroom, demonstrated how an ELF theoretical perspective can inform the education of future EFL teachers and assist in the task of developing language learning materials, testing and assessment that are more appropriate to the future ELF users' goals. In another journal article, Sifakis' (2019) proposed a comprehensive pedagogical framework for the integration of ELF in ELT that includes language-in-education policy design and planning, teacher education, the development of materials, language evaluation, assessment and testing. The idea put forward in this article is that an ELF-aware pedagogy, which Sifakis understands as an approach that integrates the widely accepted English for specific purposes (ESP) model, needs to be adjusted in each local context to the stakeholders' needs and wants. With the specific aim of rethinking English language certification so that it reflects the needs of future ELF users, Newbold, in a recent study (2017), thoroughly analyzed the scope and limitations of the existing English language proficiency tests. In the same work he also illustrated an experiment in co-certification in which a British-based international examining board and an Italian higher education institution joined their forces to produce a version of an international exam within an ELF framework. The test represented the first experiment of an independent listening task which introduced characteristic features of ELF communication, such as non-native phonology and intonation patterns. Interestingly, the experiment suggested that test takers found the listening comprehension of ELF features uncontroversial and unproblematic. Cenoz (2019) examined the newest trends of research that bring together the study of translanguaging in education and the ELF-oriented pedagogical proposals, with the aim of exploring possibilities for assessing ELF as a multilingual competence.

Vettorel (2017) focused on the context of the Italian education system, with the aim of advancing an inclusive WE- and ELF-aware approach to the classroom practices that prepares learners to communicate in lingua franca communication. She argued for a renewed approach to teacher education that familiarizes the prospective teachers of English in the Italian school system with the complex realities of English and fosters their critical reflection of the implications that the latter have on ELT. In her studies on the Italian EFL school textbooks (Vettorel 2018a, 2018b) that were previously referred to, discussing the implications of her findings for further research, she also argued for the development of teaching materials for the EFL classroom that include activities that aim to raise the learners' awareness of the plurality of English usages and promote the practice of communication strategies.

Common to all the proposals for a post-normative, ELF-informed approaches to ELT is an underlying view of English as a neutral tool for inter-cultural communication, which dis-embeds language from its cultural ties to a specific national community of native speakers. As a matter of fact, the ELF paradigm foregrounds the instrumental function of language, separating it from its expressive/symbolic function of groupness (Ives 2006), and upholds a notion of cultural identity that is more in tune with the post-structuralist understanding of culture as fluid, contingent, constructed and negotiated in interaction. This understanding of culture is clearly at odds with the concept of national cultural tradition on which the traditional EFL pedagogical model is premised. By conceptualizing English as a de-territorialized and de-nativized language, not only has ELF research highlighted

the irrelevance of the native-like proficiency target, but it has also implicitly delegitimized the ENL cultural models traditionally associated to the language in the EFL curriculum and learning materials. The previously (2.3.4) mentioned works of Baker (2012, 2015, 2016) on ELF as trans-cultural communication highlighted the limitations of an exclusive focus on ENL cultural models and pointed to the need to move away from essentialist conflations of cultural identity with national languages and cultures, on the grounds that culture is constructed in interaction. In agreement with this understanding of culture, the pedagogical concerns for effectiveness in lingua franca communication have also suggested the importance of fostering learners' intercultural awareness and sensitivity. As defined by Baker (2012) intercultural awareness (ICA) is presented as an alternative anti-essentialist view of language and culture that allows to account for the postulated unstable, fluid and dynamic relationship between them. The pedagogical implications of Baker's notion of transcultural ELF are that learners of English require the skills to mediate and negotiate cultural references beyond a fixed view of an English-speaking culture. The instrumental view of English that decouples it from ENL culture has been gathering momentum and is now surfacing in much of ELT discourse. Tsantila, Mandalios and Ilkos (2016), for instance, also included a section of studies where the significance of intercultural competence for an ELF-oriented approach to ELT is discussed. A number of recent contributions on the topic of culture in relation to ELF and ELT, from an Italian perspective, are collected in Grazzi and Lopriore 2016.

If, within ELF framework, the English language is not to be associated (exclusively) with ENL cultural models it follows that the whole notion of integrative motivation (Gardner 1985) implicit in the EFL model has to be revisited too. Integrative motivation assumes in fact that the objective of language learning corresponds to a desire on the part of learners to know more about, integrate and adapt to the culture of the target language group. The need to revisit the notion of integrative motivation vis-à-vis the unprecedented 'global' spread of English was already suggested more than one decade ago, e.g. in the works of Dörnyei et al. (2006), and Ushioda & Dörnyei (2009), who, focusing on the Hungarian context, pointed out that no specific target reference group of speakers could be identified for the English language and that English, in the post-cold war era, had come to be associated by learners with some sort of global citizenry. Jenkins (2007) too made the same point when she stated that English had lost its national cultural base and was becoming increasingly associated with a global culture.

However, as attitude studies demonstrate (see 3.4) there seems to be a contradiction between this idea of global ownership of English and the still prevailing idea of learning English in a culturally appropriate way, between de-anglicized English and the NES episteme of EFL pedagogy. The structural barriers to change in ELT are widely acknowledged, and it has been previously observed that assessment and testing, in particular, represent a major one, in that they have a decisive influence on how students perceive English and greatly contribute the ways they are taught. The urgency of a change of perspective from EFL to ELF is nevertheless recognized among applied linguistic scholars, since the mismatch between how English is used and how it is taught is a factual reality.

With the aim of bringing together the pedagogical proposals that had been developed within the independent fields of research of WE, EIL and ELF in response to the call for a paradigm shift, Galloway and Rose (Galloway, 2017; Galloway & Rose, 2015; Rose & Galloway, 2019) introduced the 'Global Englishes Language Teaching' (GELT) framework that has now developed into a thriving research paradigm (see also: Rose, McKinley and Galloway 2020a; Rose et al. 2020b). As a comprehensive approach to the ELT in the globalized world, GELT emphasizes the need to develop learners' language awareness towards the multiplicity of Englishes available and, at the same time, it upholds the notion of global ownership of the English language and the related post-normative pedagogy developed by EIL and ELF research. The GELT approach thus takes on board both the pluricentric perspective of WE with its focus on multiple varieties, and the deterritorialized and de-nativized character of ELF with its post-structuralist understanding of culture as constructed in interactions. Rose, McKinley and Galloway summarized GELT in six proposals:

1. Increasing World Englishes and ELF exposure in language curricula
2. Emphasising respect for multilingualism in ELT

3. Raising awareness of Global Englishes in ELT
4. Raising awareness of ELF strategies in language curricula
5. Emphasising respect for diverse culture and identity in ELT
6. Changing English teacher-hiring practices in the ELT industry

(2020a: 4)

Together with these proposals, the authors also identified several barriers to change, among which strong adherence to standard language ideology in ELT is particularly relevant in relation to this research study. As an ELF-informed pedagogical model, the GELT approach upholds the basic ELF principles that in global interactions in English "lingua-cultural norms are ad hoc and negotiated, as opposed to being fixed" (Galloway 2017: xiii) and that mutual intelligibility and understanding are more important than achieving native-like proficiency and adherence to the norms of standard English, regardless of the communicative situation in which the interaction takes place.

Although an interest for the pedagogical implications of the current realities of English as a lingua franca has been steadily growing among applied linguistic scholars, calls for a shift of perspective in the teaching of the English language seem to have made little headway into the ELT profession. A major point of criticism concerns a research-practice gap, whereby the arguments for change advanced by scholars have not been sufficiently tested in practice. In recent years, empirical research studies aimed at bridging this gap have multiplicated, a comprehensive review of which (including 58 papers published between 2010 and 2019) was presented by Rose, McKinley and Galloway (2020a). However, while the advantages of innovative ELT practices have been established from a conceptual standpoint, most studies conducted in classroom contexts only represent "initial explorations" (ibid.: 34) of what innovations might look like in the practice. Arguing for the importance of carrying out more robustly planned studies that explore how to articulate the advantages of curricula proposals also from an empirical standpoint, Rose McKinley and Galloway indicated the need for quasi experimental research designs conducted with groups of students engaging in new curriculum changes.

As pointed out in section 1.4, it is the rationale of this research that the views and attitudes of the ELT stakeholders must be carefully considered before making firm pedagogic recommendations. Although this research study does not report on an empirical study carried out in a specific ELF classroom, it also includes in the participants sample several students who received explicit ELF instruction (refer to 4.2.1) and so directly engaged with an innovative curriculum design.

2.4.3 ELF and EMI

The proposals for change outlined in the previous section seem to be particularly well-timed if set against the background of the increased mobility of many European students and the internationalization of their educational experience (refer to 2.2.3). Most importantly, the multilingual turn in ELF research that was briefly discussed in section 2.3.4, which aimed to reposition the concept of ELF within an equitable multilingual framework, has come to acquire a special significance in relation to the rapid growth of English-medium instruction (EMI) in the integrated European Higher Education Area.

Jenkins and Mauranen's study (2019) of the language policies and practices of several internationalized universities around the world was referred to earlier on (see 2.2.3). It was mentioned that the authors found that despite the great linguistic diversity that international students bring on campus, internationalized universities tend focus for academic purposes exclusively on English. Most importantly, Jenkins and Mauranen (2019) point out that English in EMI "is understood as only native English, by which is meant certain kinds of 'standard' British and/or American English" (8-9). Observing that this "native English ideology [...] suffuses much of international HE where EMI is present" (9), they argue for a change of paradigm that replaces the E of EMI with

ELF. Along the same lines, in another study that considers the spread and use of ELF in the domain of HE, Jenkins (2019) notes that although HE has been defined as a "a prototypical ELF scenario" (Smit, 2018: 387), "the spread of the phenomenon of ELF, is often (mis)interpreted to mean the spread of native English" (2019: 92). Jenkins (ibid.) argues for the promotion of ELF rather than native-English (NE) in the internationalized universities in the belief that such a shift towards ELF would settle the controversies that have surrounded the increased *Englishization* of the internationalized spaces of HE and scholarly communication. She suggests that the problems of inequality in communication and the risks of domain erosion that were discussed earlier on (refer back to 2.2.3) arise precisely from the failure to acknowledge the existence of ELF and uphold it as an alternative model to the NE norms. In Jenkins' view, by reconceptualizing English as ELF and positioning this within a multilingual and multicultural framework, risks of marginalization incurred by the non-anglophone national traditions of academic research would be reduced, and the inequalities in communication between NESs and NNESs "would be speedily resolved" (2019: 94).

However, while the reconceptualization of the 'E' of EMI as ELF rather than NE in theory appears a handy solution to problems of inequality in communication, as it was commented earlier on (refer to 2.2.4), in highly regulated contexts such as those of academic research and HE there arguably seems to be no way of avoiding deferring to the NE norms, least of all in written communication. Indeed, it seems that the emergent and unpredictable character of the linguistic norms inherent in the concept of ELF is hardly compatible with the fixed conventions of academic discourse, particularly in the written registers. A contrasting opinion was expressed by Pennycook, who observed that "Standard written English is not static, nor is it centred on the traditional norm-providing centres in the UK and USA. Rather it is a product of the totality of regulated writing across many regions of the world. In this sense it is an emergent yet regulated entity" (2012: 149). The claim that written academic discourse is not centered on the NE norms is however arguably questionable. As a matter of fact, NNES authors are encouraged to seek the advice of NESs before submitting their manuscripts, and there are professional organizations and individuals who do it for money. There are also resources such as the "Academic phrasebank" (Morley 2014) and online software tools[2] that function as a sort of library of academic phrases that one can readily use, allowing one to import texts from previous papers, search for statements from other authors and inherit their vocabulary and language. All of which confirms the dominance of NE norms in academic discourse.

It is also true that ELF advocates have stressed the need for the NESs to learn to accommodate to the NNESs and so level the playing field in which communication takes place. It has been observed that monolingual NESs are less effective than NNESs in international communication, pecisely because they are less good at making use of accommodation strategies and less flexible in their use of English than the NNESs, who are more sensitive to the need to adjust their language for other interlocutors from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Jenkins 2011; Phillipson 2003). In this sense, Jenkins argues that "it is many (if not all) NESs who are most in need of help in global HE: help to develop their intercultural communication and accommodation skills, help to escape their monolingualism, and help to understand that they do not own English, whether in HE or any other international domain" (2019: 104). Whether the principle of accomodating to the NNE usages is ever accepted by the anglophone academic community canot be foreseen, although it is evident that a shift towards de-nativized English requires structural changes in the institution of HE and demands a redefinition of the established norms of scholarly communication.

In addition to that, although the notion of ELF as a "Multilingua Franca" (Jenkins 2015b; refer to 2.3.4) is compatible with the principle of respecting linguistic diversity and pluralism in culture, there remains to be investigated how in practice the internationalization of HE and EMI can be reframed in a more equitable multilingual and multicultural framework that respects the principles of diversity and pluralism while, at the same time, preserving the role of English as a language of wider communication. Being such matters beyond the scope

[2] See e.g., https://www.ref-n-write.com/trial/academic-phrasebank/ .

of this research, it is only observed here that the integration of a multilingual franca perspective into EMI and HE seems to have a vast potential for creating synergies between two burgeoning field of academic research that merit scrutiny in the future. It seems that by acknowledging the realities of ELF and the central role of the NNESs in ELF communication it is possible to create new pedagogical opportunities particularly for EMI. For one thing, an ELF-oriented approach to the teaching of content *through* English would arguably represent a major step away from the monolingual assumptions of native-speakerism, towards a legitimization of translingual approaches in the English-medium classroom. Recognizing the linguistic repertoires that the students bring to the EMI classroom as an asset would also empower them as NNESs who are not necessarily expected to defer to the norms of NE.

As a final consideration, it is remarked that although it is important to consider the arguments levelled against the provision of EMI in the Italian Universities that were summarized in section 2.2.3, it must be also acknowledged that, as a matter of fact, English is now firmly established in its role of lingua franca in the increasingly internationalized space of HE and academic research, and if only for pragmatic, utilitarian reasons, there seems to be no point in resisting EMI on principle. Therefore, the matter at stake is not so much one of debating how Italian universities should curb the advance of English, but rather one of conceiving ways of making the impact of English in HE and academic research compatible with the need to preserve the vitality of the national scholarly tradition, on the one hand, and with the respect for the multilingual and multicultural diversity of today's world, on the other. In that regard, a multilingua franca approach to EMI appears as the most effective way of managing the linguistic diversity of the internationalized HE classrooms and, as the next chapter shows, it is one which does not seem to meet with the opposition of the main stakeholders of EMI, namely, the students.

It was claimed earlier on that change in curriculum and classroom practice needs to rely on research and should arguably be preceded by dialogue with its stakeholders (refer to section 1.4). In this sense, the students' views of and attitudes to EMI, which are explored in section 6.3.3, acquire a special relevance, considering that EMI is a relatively new reality in Italian HE and the attitudes of its stakeholders are still a largely unexplored area. More generally, it is argued here that research is needed before making firm pedagogic recommendations as to innovations in ELT in general and it is in this perspective that this dissertation looks at and discusses the views and attitudes of the ELT stakeholders.

2.5 Chapter summary

In the first section of this chapter, a discussion of the 'global' dimension of English in today's world situated the research study reported on in this dissertation in the wider sociolinguistic context and identified the research niche, at the crossroads of sociolinguistics and applied linguistics. Section 2.1 also included a critical discussion of three key concepts that have become standard in applied linguistics and that are used throughout this dissertation. In this first section of the chapter, the increased use of English in lingua franca communication among the NNESs located in the new peripheries of English was highlighted. Section 2.2 discussed how the impact of the spread of English beyond the core English speaking countries has been represented in scholarly research, in terms of the perceived advantages and disadvantages. A conclusion was drawn that English has been linked with the exacerbation of two main kinds of inequality: socio-economic inequalities within postcolonial ESL societies, where language in education policies that favor English have a social stratificational function; inequalities of communication in English between NESs and NNESs, which have animated a debate in the academic communities of the new peripheries of English. In regard to the latter type of inequalities, it was pointed out that at the root of much criticism against English there is a misconception of ELF, which is often misunderstood to mean native-speaker English. At the beginning of the following section a question was asked as to the nature of English in today's world. In order to answer it, section 2.3 provided an outline of the conceptualizations of the English language that applied linguistic research formulated in order to account for the fast-changing realities of English in the era of globalization. Attention was given, first, to the pluralizing strategy of WE research, which fragmented the image of monolithic English, and then to a post-structuralist turn that marked a major break away

from the NE monolingual orthodoxy of much previous work. Finally, the developments of ELF research were retraced, from the early descriptive work that identified non-native features of language use to its latest repositioning within a trans-lingual and trans-cultural framework. It was shown how the ELF research paradigm has evolved throughout the years in response to the need to legitimize its underlying ideology of English as a de-territorialized and de-nativized language. Most importantly, it was pointed out that ELF has inaugurated a completely new chapter in the study of English, with crucial and far-reaching implications for the pedagogy of English. In section 2.4, the implications that such development have had for ELT were discussed, by reviewing the existing works that present arguments for a paradigm shift in ELT towards more inclusive and ELF-oriented approaches to the pedagogy of English. It was remarked that the rise of the ELF paradigm has opened up new horizons for the teaching of English in the new peripheries, although it was also observed that ELT has remained largely unchanged and that structural barriers thwart efforts to bring about change. The importance of investigating the ELT stakeholders' views was pointed out in the closing remarks. The next chapter extends the discussion on the value of language attitudes and provides an overview of the relevant studies of attitudes to English and ELF.

3. Attitude Studies

The previous chapter traced the latest developments in applied linguistic research, from WE to trans-cultural ELF, and finally reviewed a number of works that argued for a transformative approach to the pedagogy of English in the new peripheries. There is widespread consensus among scholars that before confronting and changing a whole range of long held and deeply rooted tenets, the stakeholders' views on ELT must be taken in consideration and the feasibility of a shift in the pedagogical practices must be carefully examined. The study of language attitudes has provided applied linguistics researchers with a method that has assisted them in the task of assessing the existing models for the pedagogy of English and exploring new methods and strategies, which can be designed and implemented in order to reorient ELT, in light of the changing needs of the users of English in today's world. This chapter moves on to consider the theory and method of language attitudes research and provides the literature review that is relevant to the present research study. First, the concept of attitude is introduced (section 3.1); second the key concepts and methods of language attitude research are presented and discussed (sections 3.2 and 3.3); finally, relevant studies in attitudes towards English and its teaching are reviewed (section 3.4).

3.1 The concept of attitude

Attitudes represent a core concept in social psychology and have also been the focus of a great deal of research throughout the social sciences, where they provide useful indicators of social trends (Mckenzie 2010, Baker 1992). There is not, however, one single, universally accepted definition of attitude in scientific literature, where it has been variously conceptualized, according to the weighting given to each different feature that characterize them (Garrett 2010). Furthermore, the concept of attitude is also in common usage among the non-specialists, and it is often used as synonym for other related, though distinct, concepts (see below). Sarnoff provided a loose definition of the concept, describing it in general terms as "a disposition to react favorably or unfavorably to a class of objects" (1970: 279 cited in Garrett 2010: 20). This and all the other definitions that have appeared in the literature (see Garrett, op. cit.) emphasize that attitudes are object-oriented – that is, they involve an assessment of an object – and that they are a hypothetical construct, as an attitude can only be inferred from responses but not observed directly (McKenzie 2010). On top of this, Garrett (op. cit.) observed that attitudes, as a disposition to react in a certain manner, must also have some degree of stability that allows them to be identified.

It is widely agreed that attitudes comprise a cognitive, an affective and a conative component. Cognition refers to the fact that attitudes contain beliefs about all objects of social significance and their relationship; a case in point, repeatedly referred to in this research, is that of the English language, which tends to be associated with success in professional experience. Attitudes also involve an emotional response – feelings – to the attitudinal object, which can be approved or disapproved of, to an extent that may vary. Affective responses, in turn, can be verbal or non-verbal in nature. Examples of verbal affective responses include expressions of liking or disliking, joy or anger, etc., whereas nonverbal responses involve bodily reactions, such as facial expressions. It has been observed that a strong affective component is a constant characteristic of attitudes, sometimes even when no cognitive component appears to be there, which points to prejudice as a factor of influence in attitudes. Prejudice has been found to be a particularly relevant aspect in relation to the attitudes towards native and non-native accents of English (see 3.4). Finally, the conative component of an attitude refers to the individual's predisposition to act in a certain way, in manners that may be more or less consistent with the cognitive and affective judgements: for instance, a student may decide to enroll in an English language course or an EMI program, because or in spite of her/his liking for the language and/or the perception of its usefulness.

While the existence of a close link between cognition and affect is generally agreed upon, controversy lies in the third component. Although it has traditionally been assumed in social psychology research that attitudes have major consequences, including motivating action, the precise role and utility of attitudes in predicting and explaining behavior is a debated issue. Attitudes and behavior are in fact not always aligned, and observable

behavior may in fact disguise or conceal a deeper attitude (McKenzie: ibid.). The link between attitude and behavior is thus a weak one, and some studies (e.g.: Breckler 1984, cited in Garrett 2010: 24) have argued that, for this reason, the three components are better investigated separately. The Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980, cited in Garrett 2010), instead, considers that behavior may not always be in our control and postulates the existence of a number of factors of control that intervene between the intended and the actual behavior. According to this view, there are a series of intermediate steps between attitudes and behavior, situational variables that explain why attitudes do not always nor necessarily lead to the predictable action (see Garrett 2010: 26-27). A student, for instance, may have a positive attitude towards EMI, but he/she may lack the time, opportunity, or the prerequisites to follow through with his/her intentions to enroll in an English-taught program. However, the value of studying language attitudes does not only and not necessarily lie in their ability to predict behavior, while also the variables that stand between behavioral intentions and behavior itself may be of much interest themselves. All this considered, since this study on language attitudes is not part of an explicit action-oriented agenda, this problematic relationship between attitudes and behavior is however considered to be beyond the scope of this research. it is sufficient to bear in mind, for the purpose of this research study, that attitudes can function as both input into and output from social action. For instance, just as a positive attitude towards English can foster investment in its learning, the increased vitality of English in the new peripheries can foster more positive attitudes towards English.

A distinguishing characteristic of attitudes is that they are often ambivalent, and conflicting attitudes towards the same object can be found to coexist. A major advantage of the above sketched tripartite model, indeed, is that it recognizes the complexity of the concept and attempts to explain why individuals may hold ambivalent attitudes towards the same object; according to McKenzie, "[a]mbivalence occurs when there is uncertainty, inconsistency or conflict between attitude components" (ibid.: 24). This aspect of attitudes has emerged as an especially relevant one in studies of attitudes towards ELF, as it is commented in section 3.4. Another fundamental characteristic of attitudes is that they are learned. The sources of attitudes are personal experience and, more generally, the socio-cultural environment, including, e.g. the family, the school and the media. Also, because language attitudes are learned, they are also inherently prone to change. It was pointed out above that attitudes are considered to be sufficiently stable to allow for their identification and measurement. However, the degree of stability may vary considerably, and while those attitudes that have are acquired early in lifespan tend to be more durable, others are more transitory. Some evaluations are actually made on the spot, as when responding to a previously unknown object for the first time; social evaluations vary across different social situations, although variation is however bounded in some way, and it does not have to be seen in contradiction with the notion of durability. On the other hand, if some attitudes are more context-dependent, others are instead more context-independent (Garrett 2010). The intensity of an attitude, that is, how strongly the positive or negative attitude is held by the individual, is another important aspect; it affects the strength with which a certain belief is held, with consequences on the possibility or not to change the attitude in question and, consequently, on guiding behavior (Baker 1992). Measuring the intensity of an attitude, however, is not an easy task, and as it is shown below, quantitative measures of attitudes have their own limitations.

One problem with the concept of attitude, in its common usage, is that it tends to overlap with other strictly related concepts, such as opinion, belief, social stereotype, ideology. Although they are often used as synonymous, in everyday speech outside the field of social psychology and social sciences research, it is important to distinguish between attitude and these related terms, in order to avoid ambiguity. Attitudes, which are latent and implicit, are explicitly verbalized as opinions and beliefs. According to Baker "opinion can be defined as an overt belief without an affective reaction" (1992: 14). Opinions are indeed assumed to be cognitive in their nature, although they also trigger or are triggered by affective reactions. Most importantly, opinions, which are discursive, may not always reflect the underlying, more latent, attitude. For this reason, as it is shown further on, indirect measures have represented the privileged method in sociolinguistic research of investigating the more latent attitudinal reactions to speech. Beliefs are usually referred to as the cognitive component of attitudes, although they may also

trigger and be triggered by affective reactions (Garrett: op. cit.). Beliefs are conscious and they can be normally inferred from opinions. A further distinction can be made between descriptive beliefs, which involve perceptions or hypotheses about the world, and prescriptive beliefs, which are expressed in terms of what ought to be, has to be or needs to be done in regard to the object of discussion, of what is right and wrong. As it is illustrated further on, folk (non-expert) beliefs about language and language-related matters show a marked tendency to be of the latter kind. Defined by Garret as "cognitive shortcuts" (2010: 4), stereotypes mainly represent a cognitive process, although the category that is made object of stereotyping also normally evoke an affective response. Social stereotypes tend to be durable, as they are passed on as social knowledge from one generation to the next; even though direct experience may be in conflict with a received stereotypical representation, stereotypes are very difficult to change, because what is perceived to be inconsistent tends to be categorized as the exception that proves the rule (and this can be indeed observed very frequently). Social stereotypes represent a filter through which social life is interpreted and carried on, they serve the function of generating and maintaining group ideologies and are a repository of common-sense beliefs (ibid.). The concept of ideology refers to "a patterned but naturalised set of assumptions about the world works, a set which is associated with a particular social or cultural group" (ibid.: 34). Ideology is thus about the codification of group norms and values, and, unlike attitude, it is not object specific. The concept of ideology is a central and crucial one in the field of sociology, where it is often viewed as a sort of broad perspectives in society, a global attitude towards social and political matters (Baker 1992). In the fields of sociolinguistics and applied linguistics research, the language-related ideologies represent important explanatory variables. Language ideologies – or ideologies of language – provide an important backdrop to the study of language change and variation, the dynamics of multilingualism, the sociology of languages, as well as the politics of language in educational contexts. Language ideologies underpin language (and language-in-education) policies and, as it is argued further on, they are also an important if not the most important factor of influence on attitudes to language.

Other arguably less important concepts with which attitudes are often confused are values, habits, moods, motives and personality traits. Values can be defined as the "superordinate ideals that we aspire to" and, though strictly related to attitudes, which they contribute to shaping, they are "more global and more general than attitudes" (Garrett 2010: 31), since they transcend the specific situations. Habits can be considered as behavioral routines, of which individuals are usually not fully aware of, whereas attitudes can only be determinants of behavior. Like attitudes, though, habits are learned and tend to be stable. Attitude is, in this sense, also specifically distinguished from the concept of mood, which is not enduring (Pantos & Perkins 2013). Motives are also similar to attitudes in that they "refer to latent dispositions that affect the directionality of behavior" (Baker 1992: 14). The most important distinction between the two concepts is that motives are goal specific, while attitudes are object specific. Like attitude, another concept that is commonly used in the tradition of social psychology to explain behavior is represented by the personality traits, which, unlike attitude, however, are not object-oriented and do not involve an evaluative process. One's attitudes are also considered to be less stable and more prone to change than one's traits of personality.

To sum up, attitudes are object-oriented and include an evaluative disposition, that is, a judgement; they function both as input and output, they involve beliefs about their object, emotional responses and are determinants of behavior; they are learned through experience and a variety of other socio-cultural factors.

3.2 Language attitudes

The discussion has so far focused on the concept of attitudes and a number of strictly related concepts. All the concepts have been illustrated with examples related to the context of language. We now take a closer look at the attitudes towards language and the related notion of language ideology, already mentioned above.

Although there is not one single universally accepted definition of 'language attitude', this is commonly referred to in the terms of an evaluative disposition towards language and/or features of language usage. People hold attitudes to language at all its levels: words, names, accents and other speech features, styles, etc. The term language attitude is in fact an umbrella term, and language attitude studies is a heterogeneous field of research that encompasses a broad range of foci. As identified by Baker, the major areas of investigation are:

- attitude towards language variation, dialect and speech style
- attitude towards learning a new language
- attitude towards a specific minority language
- attitude towards language groups, communities and minorities
- attitude towards language lessons
- attitude of parents towards language lessons
- attitude towards the uses of a specific language
- attitude towards language preference

(1992: 29)

Attitudes to variation in English, are usually investigated at the level of accent. As it is argued further on, people make inferences on the basis of how people speak, and accent tell a lot about the social identity of the speaker. Language functions as a marker of group identity (Edwards 2009) and accent is arguably the most important trait of language that signals belonging to a certain social group. Also, people hold attitudes towards "whole languages" (Garrett 2010: 10) and their roles in society, not only to aspects of usage within a language, or to what are perceived as dialectal or sociolectal varieties of the same language. Such attitudes are often implicit in commonsensical beliefs about some languages being useless or not suitable for certain functions, and/or being inferior, less developed than others or even primitive. Other languages, on the contrary, may be deemed indispensable, in certain speech communities, for certain roles and functions. It has been observed here that the latter case applies to English, which is nowadays widely held in high regard as a key skill for personal success in the globalized world.

Language attitudes have been an object of study for many reasons. First, they have represented a key component of sociolinguistic theory building, and ever since Labov's seminal studies (1963, 1966) inaugurated the field of research on linguistic variation, language attitude studies have accumulated and diversified, according to their specific object, objectives, theoretical perspective and methodology. From a sociolinguistic-variationist perspective, language attitudes "provide a backdrop for explaining linguistic variation and change" (Garret 2010: 15). Attitudes towards language and notions of prestige, in particular, can influence language change. Just as covert prestige guarantees the survival of threatened languages in some multilingual contexts, the stigma associated to a dominated language can lead to the erosion of its domains of use or even its disappearance, as an entire community of speech undergoes a process of language shift. From an interactionist perspective, language attitudes are recognized as an important communicative phenomenon. Attitudes to language play a role in both reception and production of language: speakers anticipate what other people's attitudes (and reactions) to our language will be and, in this sense, attitudes influence our language choice. Obviously, the idea that attitudes influence our reactions to other people's language postulates a direct link between attitudes and language behavior, and, in this perspective, the two should not even be separated conceptually, as argued by Giles and Coupland (1991). However, as pointed out above, it is a generally agreed upon view that the relationship between attitude and behavior is a problematic and not straightforward one.

The relevance of attitudes to specific languages, in particular, is also recognized from the perspective of the sociology of language, in relation to language policy and planning, as attitudes also have an impact, at a political

level, in terms of what languages receive institutional support. In turn, the institutional status of a language contributes to shape the attitudes to language that prevail in society. In this sense, attitudes are related to the structural power of languages: a language with high vitality is likely to be positively evaluated, especially if it performs gatekeeping functions, as it is the case of the codified standard norm of English and received pronunciation (RP henceforth) in ELT contexts.

Furthermore, language attitudes have been frequently investigated in educational contexts, for the implications that they have for a host of pedagogical and curricular matters. For one thing, the attitudes towards language varieties can affect their use in education and can have an impact on students' self-esteem, motivation and learning achievement (e.g.: Tegegne 2016). The importance of investigating language attitudes has indeed been recognized also in the field of research in second language acquisition, where the learner's attitudes are considered as a determinant of motivation and success in the acquisition of the L2, from both a cognitive and a socio-psychological perspective (McKenzie 2010).

Applied linguists have adopted the methods and tools of language attitudes research to explore the stakeholders' views on the ELT models and practices. On the background of the growing interest in the need for change in ELT in light of the global dimension of English, calls for more empirical, classroom-based research at the practical level to support the possible paradigm shift have been made, and, as it is illustrated in section 3.4.3, publications that discuss attitudes in relation to perspectives for a renewed pedagogy of English have multiplicated in the last decade.

It was pointed out in the introduction that the rationale for this research study lies in the importance of considering the attitudes of the NNES students towards English and its learning for the purpose of assessing the prevailing EFL model adopted in the Italian education system and exploring the feasibility of an ELF-informed pedagogy. This research study examines the attitudes towards English both as a school and academic subject and as a language with which the students come in contact in the out-of-school. Therefore, for the purpose of this research study, 'language as a whole' and language learning appear as the most relevant objects of attitudes to be investigated. In addition to that, since this study also looks at the students' attitudes towards the concept of ELF, accent emerged as another key aspect of the students' attitudes to be analyzed. Indeed, the attitudes of learners of English towards NE and NNE acquire particular relevance in the perspective of a paradigm shift in ELT away from the orthodoxy of native-speakerism towards a more inclusive, ELF-aware pedagogical model. Moreover, attitudes towards English accents are all the more relevant in consideration of the pluricentric and fluid nature of English in today's world. In fact, the English language manifests a high degree of variation throughout the world and particularly American English accents enjoy great vitality in the mediascape. At the same time, in the instructional setting of the EFL class, RP enjoys great prestige and is conventionally set as the learning target model. However, NNE usages are also becoming more and more common in the out-of-classroom context of the new peripheries of English, where English is adopted as the default link language in lingua franca communication.

Language attitudes are commonly investigated in terms of two evaluative dimensions: status (e.g., clever, educated) and solidarity (e.g., pleasant, friendly) (Ryan et al. 1982). As demonstrated by empirical studies in language attitudes, status attributions are primarily based on perceptions of the socio-economic status of the group associated with the language or language forms, whereas solidarity attributions, instead, tend to be based on in-group loyalty (Dragojevic 2017). At this point, it must be observed that the basis of attitudes towards language and language features is not some inherent value of the linguistic forms, but, rather, the social connotations that such features carry. Languages and language variation carry social meanings, and all classes of attributes are associated to languages and language features, as these often trigger "beliefs about a speaker and their social group membership, often influenced by language ideologies (see 3.2.1), leading to stereotypical assumptions about the characteristics of those group members" (Garrett 2010: 33).

The association of language and linguistic features to stereotyped social identities is a crucial characteristic of language attitudes. It is in fact difficult to distinguish between attitudes to language and attitudes to the social

groups associated with the language. Judgements of language are, in this sense, judgements of the people who speak or are believed to speak the language or the language features that are being judged. For this reason, once evoked, language attitudes can have behavioral consequences with further social effects. For instance, they play a role in maintaining inequality, advantaging some and disadvantaging others, and negative attitudes towards a language and its associated speaker group, in particular, are known to promote prejudice, discrimination, and problematic social interactions. Accent-related attitudes often reveal ethnic or racial prejudice and are known to have an effect on people's life opportunities; a stigmatized accent is often a social or career barrier, as demonstrated by numerous studies (see Garrett 2010: 12-14; Lindemann and Campbell 2018). Thomson (2013), for instance, reported that a Google search for accent reduction had resulted in well over 100,000 hits, linked to Web sites offering courses that promised to rid NNESs of their non-native like pronunciation. These programs reveal the power of accent attitudes in society and their consequences.

The social stereotypes that are associated to language and language features also contribute to creating expectations, and knowledge of expectations is an important step towards addressing linguicism and discrimination. Expectations based on stereotypes and prejudicial views acquire a particular significance in relation to the ELT contexts, where hiring biases against NNESTs exist and are often overt (Mahboob 2010). The dominance of native-speakerism in ELT often produces stereotypical images of the NESs, and these, in turn, can create negative expectations regarding the NNEST's competence in English. However, since the native speaker is itself a socio-cultural construct, as previously argued (2.3.1), a student may expect her/his NEST to correspond to a stereotypical image, but the instructor may nevertheless fall short of the student's expectations, because of her/his accent, or even because of her/his looks. It must also be pointed out that the association of a language to a social identity does not always and necessarily include an evaluative judgement. In this sense, language attitudes are often understood in the same terms as "language regard", a concept which, as defined by Preston (2011), does not necessarily entail positive or negative evaluation, unlike attitudes that always include an evaluative disposition. However, the crucial point here is that it is difficult to distinguish between attitudes to language and attitudes to the social groups that are associated with the language.

In brief, language attitudes are evaluative reactions to language and language features that reflect a cognitive process of stereotyping and social categorization. They function as filters through which the sociolinguistic reality is made sense of and may represent store of common-sense opinions and beliefs.

3.2.1 Standard language ideology and attitudes to English

It has been observed above that attitudes are learned, and various social and cultural norms intervene in their formation. The importance of the language ideologies as a factor of influence on language attitudes and on the process of creation of stereotypes and beliefs about language and its speakers has been also mentioned. Variously defined (see Woolard 1992), language ideology refers to the shared body of notions about the nature of language, that is, the ways people normally think about language. Language ideologies often promote the creation of common-sense notions, distortions and myths, which are usually the basis for the explanations given by people for their own attitudes to language and language features.

Some fundamental language attitudes, such as distinguishing between a standard and non-standard variety, have been found to become established as we enter the school system (Garrett 2010) and, if like all attitudes, language attitudes may also change – for instance, in response to shifts in intergroup relations and/or as a result of language policy – it is also true that those that are socialized very early in life tend to be more resistant to change. The language ideologies that are acquired since the first days of school, in particular, are at the root of commonly held attitudes and beliefs that tend to resist analysis and come to be internalized as self-evident unquestionable truths. Commonsensical beliefs, indeed, tend to reflect the dominant ideology. In all the "economically developed nations where processes of standardization have operated over a considerable time to produce an abstract set of norms (…) popularly described as constituting a standard language" (Milroy 1999), the supposed existence of this standard form of language represents a powerful and widely held ideological position, which is imposed and

maintained by dominant institutions (see also: Lippi Green 2012, Milroy 2007), among which the school certainly is a very influential one. Historically speaking, the process of language standardization has been a major and perhaps the key factor of influence on folk beliefs about and attitudes towards language (Milroy 2007, Niedzielski & Preston 2003), breeding negative attitudes towards the varieties of language that deviate from the one and only supposedly 'right' standard norm. Standardization is about the reduction of variation and diversity through the imposition of uniformity; since it is an ideological construct, it is difficult to identify the standard language within the natural variation of actual usage of the language. For instance, it is very difficult to tell what the 'standard' variety of English corresponds to and it is actually easier to define what it is not (Milroy 1999). Furthermore, standardization is strongly connected to the notion of prescriptivism. The basic principle of standard language ideology is in fact correctness, which, as shown by Niedzielski and Preston, is a category that permeates the ways in which people usually talk about language: "Nonlinguists use prescription (at nearly every linguistic level) in description" (2003: 18), and deviation from the standard is usually defined in terms of a deficit, as incorrect and language. Correctness is in turn reinforced by the overlapping principles of authority, prestige and legitimacy. Authority, in language, is represented by the education system, the grammars and vocabularies, the academies of language, that is to say, the trusted authorities on the correct usage of language, which have historically guaranteed the preservation of the standard usage. Indeed, as an idealization, the standard language also requires in fact active maintenance, in the face of the natural variation and dynamics of change. Prestige is related to the notion of social status. Prestige and its converse, stigma, are in fact not inherent properties of languages; rather, they are a property of the speakers, or groups of speakers, that languages are associated to (Milroy 2007). The standard language is in fact a normalized product that is derived ex-post facto from a prestigious usage, and is legitimized on the basis of the social prestige and the authority of its speakers. The concept of legitimacy also points to the fact that competence in the prestigious standard norm is not regarded merely as a technical competence, but also as a statutory competence; in other words, proficiency in the standard norm is authoritative competence (Bourdieu 1991). Furthermore, legitimacy is conferred to the standard norm through the writing of histories of language, which historicize the abstraction of the standard by providing – and ennobling – it with a "continuous unbroken history, a respectable and legitimate ancestry and a long pedigree" (Milroy 2007: 138). As Milroy observes, "Histories of English are largely codifications of the history of the standard language, and these codifications are themselves part of the process of the legitimization of the standard language in its function as the language of the nation state and its colonies and ex-colonies" (ibid.).

The history of the standard language interlocks with the history of the nation, and one can see, at this point, how closely native-speakerism is connected to the standard language ideology, as the legitimate speakers and owners of English are normally identified with the native-born speakers of the core English-speaking countries where this unbroken historical line is thought to exist. So powerful is the influence of the standard language ideology that, although the standard language is nothing but an idealization, an abstract set of rules and norms, the folk (non-experts) tend to believe in the reality of the abstraction; that is to say that they believe that there exists a good, proper language that lurks behind its actual use, which often deviates from it. While linguists recognize that the sources of prescription are the conventions of use, the power, status, and prestige that is associated to the standard norm, the non-experts tend to believe that they reside in the underlying nature of language itself, and in their view, the proper and correct language is not so because it is used by those who are legitimized as the good speakers, but because it is "logical, clear, continuous (in an etymological sense), and so on" (Niedzielski and Preston 2003: 18). Furthermore, the folk tend to believe that any deviations from the standard norm are failures to observe the rules of the greater abstraction of "The Language", to which, supposedly, all speakers innately have access to (ibid.). Along similar lines, Milroy pointed out that, under the influence of the standard language ideology, people are led to think that "it is your own fault if you cannot spell or if you speak incorrectly. It is believed to be open to everyone to learn what the correct forms are" (2007: 135). Therefore, users of non-standard forms are often regarded by the folk not only as people whose social trajectory has failed to provide them with the opportunities and the means to develop the prestigious and proper linguistic competence, but as people who reject the deeper

internal knowledge about the correct way to speak that they supposedly possess. Deviating from the standard norm is therefore understood as a form of social deviance, reason why it is stigmatized and why the users of non-standard stigmatized forms are often discriminated upon. Standardization is, in this sense, also closely related to notions of purism.

It is perhaps not surprising that findings from research into attitudes to variation in English show that NNESs tend to evaluate English varieties in a hierarchical manner (see 3.4.2), with the standard norm of English sitting at the top. As English grows deeper roots in the new peripheries, however, it is likely that the NNESs' attitudes towards variation, and, in particular, their judgements of standard and non-standard usages, may however become less predictable and more complex. Already a decade ago, Coupland claimed that the sociolinguistic diversity of the contemporary societies had had the effect of making the values associated to the standard and the non-standard more complex and less determined (2009). This claim calls into question the pervasiveness of the ideology of the standard emphasized by Milroy (2007), Niedzielski and Preston (2003), among others. In relation to English, the ideology of the standard may thus be in conflict with the increased diversity to which people living in the globalized world are nowadays exposed. It may be the case that non-standard forms of English may be actually gaining more overt prestige, as they come to enjoy more visibility in the new media environment, and, perhaps, competing language ideologies may be vying with the ideology of the standard. After all, the notion of one standard variety as the exclusive proper norm of English is at odds with its image of 'global' lingua franca, which projects it as a de-territorialized and de-nativized language, decoupling it with the native-speaker norms of the internationally accepted standards of British and American English. As observed in the introduction, in the new peripheries of English, two opposing forces seem to be operating: a centripetal one that is represented by the agents of the dissemination of English in its internationally accepted standard norms (British/RP and American), of which the ELT industry is perhaps the most prominent and active one; a centrifugal force, captured by the image of the transcultural flows of globalization (2.3.3), which spreads non-standard and hybrid forms of English in often unregulated domains of usage.

At this point, it becomes all the clearer that the notion of English as a de-territorialized and de-nativized language inherent in the concept of ELF represents itself an ideological position, and it has been argued before that the birth of ELF research in the field of applied linguistics was fundamentally motivated by ideological reasons. In Pennycook's words, "ELF is not so much a linguistic system as an ideological construct" (2012: 150), and understanding to what extent this ideology may be reflected and have an influence on the attitudes of learners of English who are located in the expanding circle is indeed one objective of this research.

3.3 Methods of language attitude research

In this section the discussion turns to the methods that are usually adopted in language attitudes research. The three main approaches to the study of language attitudes are discussed: indirect approach, direct approach, and societal treatment.

3.3.1 Indirect approach

Indirect measures of language attitudes represent the standard method of sociolinguistic research that is aimed at examining how people evaluate social groups on the basis of their speech. Typically used in studies of attitudes to accents and language varieties, the indirect approach is synonymous with the Matched Guise Technique (MGT) (Garrett 2010, McKenzie 2010). MGT consists of having respondents judge an audio sample with the same voice (usually of an actor) reading the same text many times in different accents. In this way, the listeners who are led to believe that they are listening to different speakers are actually judging not different speakers but the accents/language varieties themselves. In this sense, their judgements of the members of the social groups they associate with the speech they hear provide evidence of their social evaluation of the language varieties. Technically, the listeners use the linguistic cues, such as the accent, to infer the speaker's social group

membership, and secondarily, based on that categorization, they attribute to the speaker stereotypic traits that are commonly associated with the inferred group. The MGT has been criticized for being too acontextual and artificial, and it has become common to adopt, as a valid alternative, the Verbal Guise Technique (VGT) (Garrett 2010), in which the judges are listening to actual speakers in real contexts. The fact of using authentic material, however, has its own set of limitations, since other factors may intervene in the process of categorization and evaluation of the speech, such, as e.g, the speakers' gender, their voice timbre and other prosodic features, which make it difficult to establish a straightforward relationship between the evaluative reaction and a specific language variety or accent.

The MGT and VGT tests are usually designed to measure the intensity of the attitudes, through scales associated to the two dimensions of status and solidarity. In addition, since attitudes are latent and implicit, these indirect measures are considered to be the most appropriate method to access the deeper underlying attitudes that overt opinions and beliefs may conceal. In some contexts, people may operate with two value systems (or two sets of attitudes) alongside each other, while only being conscious of one of them. Therefore, there may be a mismatch between the privately held attitudes and the overt attitudes that the participants in a research study are ready to communicate explicitly and publicly. Niedzielski and Preston (2003) remarked that these tests "presumably circumvent respondent tendencies in more direct questioning to take positions which present an optimum image to the interviewer" (ibid.: 9). The social desirability bias, that is, the tendency to present an ideal image of oneself and so underreport socially undesirable thoughts or feelings, and the acquiescence bias, corresponding to a tendency to agree with the researcher, regardless of one's true opinions on a subject, represent the most common threat to the validity of a research. The advantage of MGT and VGT tests thus lies in their acknowledged ability to get around the conscious, reflexive process of reasoning and, therefore, they also reduce the risk of biased responses.

3.3.2 Direct approach

The direct approach is the method characteristic of folk linguistics research (Niedzielski and Preston 2003) and has found much application in studies of attitudes related to the pedagogical context of ELT. Unlike the indirect measures, which infer attitudes from responses to samples of language use, this method does not seek to get around the conscious process of thought and is rather concerned with the folk beliefs and opinions about language and language-related matters, from which the underlying attitudes can be secondarily deduced. The direct approach consists of asking people to explicitly articulate their views and opinions and, to this end, it utilizes interviews, questionnaires, focus groups and other methods, such as the map-labelling task, by which the respondents identify and judge language varieties on a blank map, without having any exposure to them. The advantage of the direct approach is that it is able to provide a more contextualized view of the attitudes than the speaker evaluation tests of matched and verbal guise do.

Niedzielski and Preston pointed out that folk beliefs do not represent "static set of wisdoms trotted out at opportune or culturally caricaturistic moments", but rather a "dynamic process which allows nonspecialists to provide an account of the environment" and, based on this assumption, they argued for the advantages for researchers of presenting respondents "with problems and areas which expose the process of their thinking about language, perhaps even taking them down paths which they have not trod before" (2003: 24). In other words, people do not walk around with a set of Likert scales in their head, and a more contextualized approach is needed to understand how they make sense of the sociolinguistic reality in which they are immersed. Furthermore, in this perspective, consistency of point of view, which is regarded as a tenet of data collection in scientific research, is not a demand that is made on the folk, who are allowed to change their viewpoint and contradict themselves, for instance, in the course of an interview.

Similar assumptions also underlie the approaches to the study of language attitudes that were developed within the frameworks of discourse analysis and social constructionism.

Both approaches emphasize the dynamic nature of the process of social categorization and evaluation at the root of attitude formation, and from this perspective, attitudes are viewed as a discursive formation. As such, they only exist within argumentative contexts, that is, not only are attitudes about issues, but they are also ways of arguing about issues; besides, because of their constructed character, attitudinal positions may also shift as they are expressed and negotiated in the course of social interaction (Potter and Wetherell 1987, cited in Garrett 2010).

In brief, the direct method is able to capture the dynamic and constructed nature of attitudes and situate them in context. However, for all its advantages, it also has its own drawbacks. First of all, since it mainly confines language attitude research into qualitative measures, it makes it difficult for the researcher to reach generalizations about community-level phenomena. Yet the major disadvantage of the direct measures relates in particular to their being subject to acquiescence and social desirability bias, which are likely to undermine the validity of the data. The tendency to agree with a questionnaire item, for instance, regardless of one's actual evaluation of the attitude statement, and that of answering to the researcher in ways that are regarded as socially appropriate, are indeed more likely occur in studies that use data collection instruments, such as interviews or questionnaires. For this reason, a direct approach to the study of language attitudes needs to adopt strategies that reduce the risk of response biases. For instance, the questions, in an interview or in a questionnaire, have to be carefully formulated in ways that are not slanted nor ambiguous; also, sometimes, the real purpose of a research ought to be concealed so as not to affect the participants in their responses.

3.3.3 Societal treatment

The least obtrusive method for investigating language attitudes is represented by the societal treatment approach, aimed at understanding how languages and their speakers are treated in public discourse. This approach accesses attitudes by means of inference, from various kinds of observed behavior and sources, instead of directly eliciting them. Under the umbrella term societal treatment, a wide range of studies that utilize different approaches and techniques are included, such as ethnographic studies, critical discourse analysis and content analysis of documents and published materials of various kinds (e.g. school textbooks, language use in advertisements, letters to newspaper editors, studies that analyze the linguistic landscape (Landry and Bourhis 1997), studies of language accents treatment in movies and TV. Besides its unobtrusiveness, societal treatment has the advantage of providing a background view of the ideologies, beliefs and attitudes that prevail in a social context. Although the methods of societal treatment only allow to collect data that do not lend themselves to the rigor of statistical analysis, they are also convenient for practical reasons, when direct and indirect approaches cannot be adopted, e.g., for methodologically restrictive factors (Schmied 1991).

In conclusion, there are various methods available to the study of attitudes to language; it has been argued that a combination of the three main approaches above summarized is capable of yielding more reliable and significant results, and a number of studies have integrated different techniques of data collection and analysis in a triangulation of methods. Obviously, the choice of method corresponds to the objectives of a research, and in the case of the present study a direct approach was selected as the most appropriate (see chapter 4).

The next section of the chapter provides an overview of the existing research in attitudes towards English. First, attitude studies that focus on English varieties and accents are reviewed, then the attention is shifted to those attitude studies that were conducted in ELT contexts. The latter include investigations into the attitudes of teachers and teacher practitioners, studies that examined the attitudes of learners in the expanding circle, and those that looked at the attitudes of learners towards their NESTs and NNESTs. Finally, a number of recent studies that investigated the attitudes towards EMI in higher education (HE) are reviewed.

3.4 A review of language attitudes studies

It was observed before that the existing literature on language attitudes includes a vast and diverse spectrum of studies that relate to many areas of research. Inaugurated within the research field of social psychology, where attitudes to linguistic facts are an aspect of a wider interest for the individuals' emotional responses to socially significant facts, with the work of Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner and Fillenbaum (1960) on the "speaker evaluation paradigm" in bilingual settings, the study of language attitudes soon after became a central concern in sociolinguistics research, where, as argued in precedence (3.2), attitudes to linguistic facts are regarded as key drivers of change. In more than half a century, language attitude studies have accumulated and diversified, according to their specific object, objectives, theoretical perspective and methodology.

3.4.1 Attitudes of NESs to English varieties and accents

A good deal of past research has primarily focused on documenting attitudes toward variation in English in the core-English speaking countries, where speakers differentiate between standard and non-standard accents and/or varieties of English (dialects), on the basis of their perceived adherence or not to the codified norms defining correct usage in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. The first significant study of attitudes towards standard and non-standard varieties of English was conducted by Tucker and Lambert (1969) among a sample of American college students by means of an MGT test. The results proved that attitudes towards standard and non-standard English varieties vary considerably, and highlighted that race is a determinant factor of influence in shaping stereotyped images of the social groups associated to the speech samples. Soon after, Giles' (1970) MGT study examined the evaluations of a sample of secondary school students in Wales and South West England of various native and non-native accents found in the country. The study concluded that RP was judged more positively on all traits than all the other speech varieties, which confirmed the dominance of the ideology of the standard language.

After these first two significant studies, more research work that investigated NESs' attitudes towards (both native- and non-native) English accents and varieties in inner circle countries followed. The majority of these studies employed MGT tests. Ball's (1983) series of MGT studies of attitudes towards the NE and NNE accents that are commonly found in Australia concluded that standard RP was rated highest in terms of competence (status), but rather low on the sociability scale (solidarity), while non-standard accents were not unanimously and indistinctly stigmatized. The prestige of RP was confirmed also in New Zealand by Huygens and Vaughan's (1983) verbal guise test study of attitudes towards speech styles typically heard in the country. These and other studies undertaken among NESs in the core English-speaking countries (see McKenzie 2010: 54) were consistent in finding that standard and nonstandard NES speech elicit different evaluative reactions, along the solidarity and status dimensions. Since standard varieties tend to be associated with dominant socioeconomic groups, speakers who adhere to the perceived rules of the standard norm tend to be attributed higher status than the non-standard speakers. On the other hand, since the attribution of solidarity is mostly based on in-group loyalty, speakers of non-standard varieties tend to receive higher rates than the standard speakers, in terms of solidarity, when they are from the same linguistic group as the judges. Non-standard speech thus often possesses covert prestige, which coexists with the overt prestige that is attributed to the standard.

It has also been suggested by other studies that there may be more than one standard within a single national context, that is, a regional standard can coexist with the national standard, which is apparently at odds with the ideology of the standard language. For instance, Gordon and Abell (1990) found that a cultivated New Zealand variety vied with RP on status while receiving higher rates in terms of attractiveness. Edwards and Jacobsen (1987) found that, in Nova Scotia, a local variety operated as a sort of regional standard that combines the evaluative profile of a regional variety, with high ratings on social attractiveness, with that of the codified standard norm, with high ratings on status and competence. Analogously, in South West Wales a local regional standard was identified by Garrett, Coupland and Williams (1995). Similar evaluative profiles have also been found within the USA; for instance, Stewart, Ryan and Giles' verbal guise study (1985) investigated the attitudes towards RP

and American English, finding that the former was afforded higher social status and less social attractiveness than the latter, even if it was considered less intelligible.

Niedzielski and Preston's (2003) folk linguistics studies in perceptual dialectology carried out in the US, demonstrated that perceptions of what the folk consider "correct", "accent-free" or otherwise termed "normal" English vary considerably, which points to the difficulty of identifying what the standard is actually thought to correspond to. However, the same authors argued that the American folk also show a unanimous tendency to uphold the standard, especially in school, where they believe that all work must be carried out in the only one prestigious and "correct" norm of English. Even though they recognize the social need for non-standards, also confirmed by the high rates that these normally receive in terms of pleasantness – which is meant as synonym for solidarity, in folk linguistics works – they do not extend to them any linguistic status, and simply regard them as improper and incorrect. All of which led Niedzielski and Preston to conclude that "there is a double consciousness regarding language in the US",

> a great deal of insecurity which defers to a historical (perhaps eventually British-based) standard, felt by some to be even a "hyperstandard" good only for writing and fancy occasions. In its proper educational environment, this variety is OK: outside it, it is "uppity" or "condescending". It is, however, the historically, abstractly "correct" form of the language. Nonstandards are the democratic side of this coin. They represent family and community solidarity, but, as a US national linguistic insecurity would have it, they are just plain "wrong". (2003: 234)

The codification of the histories of the English language were referred to before (3.2.1) as a key aspect of the process of the legitimization of the standard language; it should not come as a surprise, then, that speakers of what is represented in such histories as an offspring of the original and prestigious English should feel that sort of insecurity and defer to the RP. However, it has also been observed, in the same chapter section, by referring to Coupland (2009), that the sociolinguistic complexities of the era of globalization may have made the values associated to the standard and the non-standard less predictable, and possibly foster fewer negative attitudes towards the latter, while undermining the primacy of the RP. An online language attitude survey was conducted in the UK as preliminary to the BBC *Voices* project (BBC 2005, as cited in Garrett 2010: 13), which was aimed at exploring language variation within the country in the wake of the new millennium. More than five thousand respondents rated NE and NNE accents, showing clear preference for standard English over non-standards. The more than three decades that separated this survey from Giles' study mentioned above did not appear to have altered the picture in any substantial way, as there had been hardly any shift in deference towards the standard. However, the ratings attributed the non-standards did seem to hint at possible changes in attitudes, as the younger respondents showed a tendency to view the generally stigmatized non-standard varieties less unfavorably (for a comparison, see Garrett 2010: 172-77). The increased vitality of American English on the world stage, in particular, is arguably a key factor of possible change in attitudes, and it has also been suggested that an American standard may be actually on its way to replacing RP as the internationally recognized prestigious variety of English. For instance, in a larger-scale verbal guise study than the ones that have been referred to so far, Bayard et al. (2001) already suggested two decades ago that attitudes to RP were changing, if compared with earlier findings. This study involved respondents from Australia, New Zealand and the USA and looked at the attitudes to British and American standard English, Australian and New Zealand Englishes, finding that American English was rated highest in terms of status and power by the speakers of the other varieties, which seemed to point to the fact that an American standard was a likely candidate for substituting RP as the most prestigious English. A folk linguistics study, reported in Garret et al. 2005, that investigated the attitudes to the same Englishes – collecting data from the USA, UK, Australia, New Zealand – presented a more complex and diversified picture that the earlier VGT tests had done, suggesting, for instance, that there can be different standard varieties for different domains. Most interestingly, there turned out to be a clear distinction between the two internationally recognized prestigious standards. American English emerged from the finding as a sort of 'global' standard of English, and was associated with power, dominance and various kinds of excesses. If compared with Bayard et al.'s previously mentioned study, the overwhelmingly negative judgements of American English marked a significant change of

attitudes. Since the data were collected at a time when Washington was preparing its occupation of Iraq and a propaganda was being broadcasted worldwide for what was termed a 'global war on terrorism', this change has been interpreted as a possible echo of those events (Garrett 2010). In the same study, English English, instead, was unanimously associated with images of authenticity, heritage, tradition and history, which have also been identified as a key strategy for the marketing of TESOL courses in the UK (Pegrum 2004, cited in Garrett 2010: 195). Regardless of the crucial influence that current historical events may have on shaping attitudes, the idea of a double standard that emerged from Garrett et al.'s folk linguistics study is also a relevant aspect of the attitudes to English that were found in the present research study, as it is illustrated further on (chapter 6).

As non-standard speech tends to be stigmatized, all the more so is the perceived foreign-accented speech of NNES, which has been generally found to receive negative evaluations, in the core English-speaking countries. A number of studies have examined the attitudes of NESs to foreign accents of particular identified nationalities, concluding, in broad terms, that the prestige accorded to an identified non-native accent is directly related to the prestige that is accorded to the country of origin of the speaker (Pantos and Perkins 2013). It was pointed out in section 3.2 that accent-related attitudes frequently reveal prejudice. In this regard, Lippi-Green's study of US NES' attitudes towards native speech (2012) provided evidence that attitudes towards NNESs show patterns that are based on factors that are irrelevant to language proficiency, such as ethnicity, race, nationality; in particular, only those accents that are "linked to skin that isn't white" or to "a third-world homeland" usually receive a negative evaluation (ibid.: 253). Subtirelu' (2015) study on US students' evaluations of NNESTs of mathematics on the website RateMyProfessors.com revealed how instructors who are broadly defined as "Asian" are judged negatively in terms of teaching competence because of their NNE accent. The author observed that while students frequently offer high praise to their NESTs, they hardly ever do so to their "Asian" NNESTs, and the instructors' NNE accent often serves as the excuse to question their overall competence in the subject they teach and ultimately delegitimize them. In the same section (3.2), it was also observed that stereotypes about the speakers' social groups often create expectations; for instance, Lindemann (2005) found that stereotypical images of certain NNES groups have an influence on the negative attitude towards their accent even though such negative judgements are made without any first-hand experience with speakers belonging to those groups. Furthermore, other studies of NESs' attitudes to NNESs' accented speech (Kang & Rubin 2009, Rubin 1992, Rubin & Smith 1990) have found that ratings of the same speakers can change depending on how those speakers are presented, and that the same linguistic features receive a different evaluation depending on who is perceived as using them. These studies have also highlighted the complex relationship that exists between attitude and intelligibility, revealing that expectation of foreign-accented speech based on the visual perception of foreignness is sufficient to trigger an anti-foreigner bias and negatively affect the comprehension of the NNES's speech, even when this does not present the characteristics of a marked foreign accent. These findings point to the fact that if difficulty in understanding a non-native accent may lead to negative attitudes, the opposite is none the less true. That is, a prejudicial negative attitude towards an accent can lead to poorer comprehension, and so make it complicated to determine the root problem (Lindemann & Campbell 2018). Furthermore, it has been found that when prejudice plays a role in the perception of speech and its rating, negative attitudes lead to poorer comprehension rather than the reverse (Jenkins 2007).

3.4.2 Attitudes of NNESs to English varieties and accents

The perceptions of the NNESs have also received the attention of sociolinguistic research in language attitudes. Regional and social variation within the core English-speaking countries, however, has been rarely included in studies of NNESs' attitudes, and "the tendency has been to investigate non-native speaker attitudes towards 'the English language', conceptualised as a single entity" (McKenzie 2010: 58). A relatively small number of studies of NNESs' attitudes have looked at the evaluations of standard and non-standard varieties of English, and native and non-native English speech. Two verbal guise studies conducted in Denmark (Ladegaard 1998, Ladegaard and Sachdev 2006) confirmed the dominance of the standard language ideology, as their findings were in accord with those of most studies conducted in the core English-speaking countries that revealed a preference for RP. In both

these studies RP was rated highest on status, competence, and linguistic superiority, although not on social attractiveness, and the second study also confirmed the high vitality of the US culture. What is arguably the most interesting aspect of Ladegaard and Sachdev's (2006) study, is that it suggested a "language-culture discrepancy hypothesis" (Galloway and Rose: 2015: 181), which indicated that it is possible to hold positive attitudes toward members of a linguistic group without wanting to embrace their culture, including the language variety – and so the accent – that characterizes it. As it is illustrated further on when discussing this study's findings (chapter 7), it is indeed possible that learners of English in the expanding circle are attracted by the American entertainment culture, but that they also still identify RP as the only appropriate classroom model, possibly under the influence of their teachers and, more generally, the prevailing pedagogical models that are informed by the standard language ideology.

The NNESs' negative judgements of their own speech were found in Korea by Yook and Lindemann (2013), and in China by Xu, Wang and Case (2010). Similarly, McKenzie's (2008) VGT study of the attitudes of Japanese university students towards multiple English accents, including their own, found that students rated NESs higher than NNESs on status traits, and that varieties of English were judged in a hierarchical manner, with American English on top, above RP, as the preferred model. In Japan, American English is the prevalent model in ELT, and these and other findings (e.g, from Jenkins 2007, Kirkpatrick and Zhichang 2002) have highlighted the importance of a familiarity factor in attitudes. The ELT classroom obviously plays a key role in contributing to shaping the attitudes to English; furthermore, it is arguably the case that in those expanding circle countries where the influence of American models of language supersedes that of British models, both in and out of the ELT context, the NNESs are more likely to recognize the American variety as the legitimate and prestigious standard.

The factor of familiarity also suggests that the NNESs may hold more complex attitudes and judge non-standard varieties of English in no predictable manner, as they may not necessarily stigmatize them and accept them as legitimate target models, possibly under the influence of personal experience of direct exposure to one or more non-standard varieties of English. Furthermore, some studies on attitudes of NNES to NE and NNE speech have also revealed that "intelligibility (…) does not always equate with acceptance" (Galloway & Rose 2015: 183), as some NNESs express a preference for standard English and NES accents, although they regard their own L1 inflected accent as more intelligible. These last considerations, as it is shown further on, are of particular relevance in relation to the attitudes towards ELF. In brief, the general conclusion that can be drawn from the studies so far referred to is that both NES and NNES show a tendency to provide negative ratings or descriptions of NNE speech and gravitate towards standard English, which is clear evidence of the powerful influence of native speakerism and standard language ideology in shaping attitudes to English.

3.4.3 Attitudes studies in ELT contexts of the expanding circle

Several studies of attitudes towards English in the expanding circle have been conducted in the context of ELT. The existing research literature that has investigated the attitudes towards English in relation to its teaching and learning encompasses a variety of foci. Much of it was aimed at assessing the pedagogical models and practices in use in the expanding circle, with the purpose of supporting the paradigm shift away from the prevailing native-speakerism. Some studies looked at the attitudes of teachers and practitioners, some looked at the attitudes of students and focused in particular on how an ELF-informed approach to ELT is or may be received, while other studies have examined the students' attitudes towards their NESTs and NNESTs. A specific line of research has also developed to investigate the attitudes towards the expanding EMI in the internationalized universities. All these research strands are relevant in relation to the present research. This section of the chapter presents a review of relevant studies of teachers' and students' attitudes towards an ELF-informed approach to ELT, studies of student's attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs, studies of attitudes to EMI.

3.4.3.1 Attitudes towards ELF and ELF-informed teaching models

Some studies of attitudes carried out in ELT contexts have had the specific aim of assessing the dominance of NE norms in the expanding circle and understanding whether a more inclusive and ELF-informed approach to ELT would find immediate support in teachers and learners. In what constitutes one of the first studies of learners' and teacher practitioners' attitudes to ELF ever published, which involved participants from 45 countries, Timmis (2002) found a clear preference and desire to sound like NESs, which led him to conclude that it is inappropriate to set a target that does not meet the learner's aspirations. At the beginning of the new millenium, a similar generalized preference for native English norms was found by Decke-Cornill (2002) in Germany, Murray (2003) in Switzerland, Seidlhofer and Widdowson (2003) in Austria, Grau (2005) in Germany, Kuo (2006) with NNES international students in the UK, Matsuda (2003) in Japan, Sifakis and Sougari (2005) in Greece. Interesting insights came from a longitudinal study conducted with learners of English in a target language environment by Adolphs (2005), who elicited the attitudes to English of 24 students in an intensive English language course in the UK through interviews conducted at two-monthly intervals over a period of six months. The results showed that the students tended to have simplistic and stereotypical notions of what constitutes a NES, and that, when they encountered the actual speech varieties that are found in an inner circle country, they did not find what they expected. It has been observed before that stereotypes create expectations, and that prejudice is as much a factor of influence on attitudes as familiarity is; the participants showed an attachment to a preconceived idea of standard English that led them to judge negatively that did not fit with that idea of standard. All the studies here referred to are reviewed at length in Galloway and Rose (2015) and Jenkins (2007). Jenkins (ibid.) highlighted that practicing teachers, pre-service teachers and learners alike generally were found to gravitate towards the NE English norms and tended to regard the NESs as the sole legitimate owners of English, in spite of its widely acknowledged global dimension. In most of the studies here mentioned, students were found to lean towards NE norms even when they were quite open towards incorporating a more inclusive and ELF-aware perspective into ELT and agreed on the priority of intelligibility over adherence to NE pronunciation standards. Jenkins also remarked that the analysis of the data, in most of those studies, revealed "some sort of contradiction, ambivalence, or a possibly deep-seated bias among the participants, although in most such cases it stops short of exploring in depth the reasons for such phenomena" (ibid.: 105), and she pointed to methodological shortcomings that prevented to investigate the deeper underlying attitudes that lie beneath the explicitly articulated beliefs that, in those studies, had been often taken at face-value. In her own studies of attitudes towards ELF, she set out to obviate the risks of preventing a fuller understanding of the attitudes by combining an analysis of written and spoken material with the direct method of folk linguistics. First, she analyzed three articles that discussed ELF (Kuo 2006, Sobkowiak 2005, Prodromou 2006, as cited in Jenkins 2007: 112) and a selection of discussions of ELF and the LFC among both NESTs and NNESTs. Then, she conducted a questionnaire study and an interview study with teachers of English. The questionnaire involved 326 teachers, of which 300 were NNESs, from a variety of expanding circle countries; the interviews involved 17 NNESTs. Form both the analysis of the written and spoken material, and the questionnaire and interview studies, a conservative orientation towards ELT emerged. The findings revealed deeply entrenched attitudes and an emotional, perhaps even irrational attachment to native English, which NNESTs regard as the most desirable model for ELT and international communication. The NNESTs' attitudes towards ELF, however, were rather ambivalent, and revealed a conflict between their identities as successful teachers, on the one hand, and as members of their L1 group and of a wider ELF community, on the other. Furthermore, it was shown that even when the idea of ELF could be conceived, there seemed to be a sort of "theory/practice divide" (Galloway & Rose 2015: 189): ELF was accepted in the abstract but tended to be rejected as a classroom practice.

3.4.3.2 Recent studies of teachers' attitudes

At the time of its publication, Jenkins 2007 represented the largest-scale and arguably most thorough study on NNESTs' attitudes to ELF. Since then, other studies have appeared that investigate the attitudes of practicing teachers taking pre-service courses aimed at sensitizing them to the pedagogical implications that the global

dimension of English has for ELT. In Japan, Suzuki (2011) found that attitudes to English depend on past exposure and knowledge of NNE, and although practitioners recognized the need to raise learners' awareness of the multifaceted realties of English standard language ideology was identified as a chief barrier to change. In Vietnam, Doan (2014) interviewed 11 lecturers on a practitioner education course that called for a more inclusive ELT model that included cultural diversity and linguistic variation. The participants observed that, since there seemed to be no other practical options, the default one was that of teaching the NE linguistic and cultural norms. Familiarity and convention were found to be a key factor of influence on the NNESTs' attitudes to target varieties of English also by a recent study by Mohr, Jansen and Forsberg (2021) conducted in Sweden and Germany with eighty ELT practitioners. The findings also revealed that the NES ideal was deeply ingrained among the participants. This study, however, was not conceived within an ELF perspective and was rather aimed at exploring the possibility of the use of a neutral European English variety in the EFL classroom in the context of the post-Brexit referendum of June 2016. In Turkey, Dilek and Ozdemir (2015) study with ELT practitioners found that ELF instruction and familiarity with ELF fostered positive attitudes towards a more inclusive approach to ELT and move away from a strictly normative perspective. In Turkey and Greece, Sifakis and Bayyurt (2015, 2018) developed a teacher education project that was successful in raising the participants' awareness of their assumptions on ELT and helped them explore new pedagogical approaches, although many continued to resort to the traditional classroom methods. With the explicit aim of gathering information which might be used to inform the policies and practices of ELT in the expanding circle, Soruç (2015) administered a questionnaire to 45 NNESTs from five expanding circle countries, of whom 10 were later interviewed. Quite predictably, and in line with previous research, the results suggested a strong preference for ENL norms. Indeed, when teachers were asked to express their opinions on ENL *versus* ELF they articulated their answers in terms of an opposition between proper, correct English, one the one hand, and incorrect or broken English on the other, which, once again, pointed to the influence of standard language ideology. Interestingly, the NNESTs who were interviewed also referred to a patronizing attitude that learners may perceive if ELF were encouraged against adherence to NE norms, an attitude, the author argued, which may in turn lead to resentment. However, Soruç and Griffiths, in a recent study (2021) that explored the views of twenty-four of pre-service teachers after exposure to a variety of ELF awareness-raising tasks through a questionnaire and interviews, found that through awareness-raising teachers can be encouraged to change their methods. In the specific, the teachers were found to give less value to error correction than to intelligibility, respect linguistic and cultural identity, be more tolerant, open-minded and, most importantly, realistic about language use in the real world.

In Italy, Vettorel (2016) investigated whether a module of a preservice WE- and ELF-informed teacher education course could influence the attitudes of the NNESTs. The findings showed that the NNESTs' attitudes to variation and ELF were changed, their awareness of ELF was raised and some of them also claimed that they were ready to move towards the new approach to ELT that was being proposed. However, adherence to the prescriptive norms of the recognized standard, the lack of materials, the sheer number of varieties of English, the perceived difficulty for the students and, most importantly, the need to provide them with a standard reference model, in addition to other time-related constraints, were pointed out as major barriers to change. Lopriore (2016) also examined the views of a number of trainees who were taking a teacher education course that introduced ELF and discussed its pedagogical implications. She found that the participants had a positive attitude to an ELF- and WE-informed approached to ELT, although they were not equipped to improve learners' negotiating strategies. As in Vettorel's study (2016), lack of materials and time constraints were highlighted as barriers to change. Cameron and Galloway (2019) examined the views on the GELT pedagogical model (2.4.2) of a number of pre- and in-service TESOL practitioners enrolled in one of the UK's largest MSc TESOL programs. By using a mixed methods approach consisting of five initial interviews and a follow-up questionnaire with 66 respondents, aimed at discovering whether the interview findings were generalizable, the authors asked which, if any, of the GELT proposals were considered viable, and what insights the participants had regarding possible barriers to instigating a paradigm shift. The study revealed that that the Global Englishes model had made little headway into traditional TESOL

classrooms, where native-speakerism was still dominating, which led the authors to conclude that curriculum innovation requires a complete conceptual transition that practitioners need time and lots of support to put into effect. Galloway and Numajiri 2020 reported on a similar study conducted with pre-service and in-service practitioners at the same TESOL master's program, comprising 47 responses to an online questionnaire and 21 interviews. The findings confirmed a general orientation towards NE norms that nevertheless coexisted with positive attitudes towards GELT. The authors concluded that simply introducing a new perspective into a teacher education curriculum and materials was insufficient, and mere reference to ELF could not on its own instigate a paradigm shift away from native-speakerism. Highlighting assessment and attachment to standard English as the major barriers to innovation, they argued for the need for clear guidance for curricular change.

3.4.3.3 Studies of student's attitudes

Although suggestions for a paradigm shift, in the light of the rise of English as a lingua franca, have been repeatedly put forward in applied linguistic literature, rather little research has been conducted so far on the possible influence that a renewed pedagogy for ELT may have on the learners. Most studies of attitudes to ELF and an ELF-oriented pedagogy of English have involved mostly teachers and prospective teachers, while comparatively fewer studies have examined the students' attitudes. However, interest in this topic has been growing and some recent studies have been developed with the aim of bridging this gap in research. In a mixed-method study that combined quantitative and qualitative measures, utilizing questionnaires, interviews and focus groups, with an ethnographic approach, Galloway (2011, 2013, 2017) looked at the attitudes of a population of 3rd and 4th year English majors at a Japanese University. The study aimed to support the proposed changes in the pedagogy of English in the expanding circle and showcase the effects that an English language course that incorporated a GE perspective had on the learners' attitudes to English and ELT. The participants were divided in an experimental group, which comprised students who were taking a Global Englishes content-based English course, and and a control group, which included students who were taking a Tourism content-based English course. The participants were surveyed with pre- and post-course questionnaires, interviews and focus groups, about their perceptions over one semester. The overall results showed that the participants believed that proficiency in English consists of sounding like a NES, who are regarded as the target interlocutors, and that English belongs to the NESs, despite its global dimension. Although students showed awareness of NNE varieties and felt more comfortable when speaking to other NNES students, they gave more importance to NE accent over intelligibility or successful communication, while they also judged NNE English accents hierarchically and regarded NNE, in general, as incorrect English. The experimental group, though, showed increased awareness of the multifaceted realities of English and was found to have more positive attitudes towards ELF and NNE, which was understood as proof that the GE (Global Englishes) class had had a considerable impact on the students. The conclusion the author drew was that, in spite of their awareness and their positive attitudes towards a more inclusive approach to ELT, students were still under the influence of native-speakerism and the standard language ideology, and that they tended to regard their educational setting as an EFL one. Galloway and Rose (2013) conducted another attitude study program at Japanese university, in a bilingual business degree. They used a mixed-method approach which included a questionnaire with 120 students, a focus group with student assistants, and a focus group with the course instructors. Within the course, visiting senior and postgraduate international students who assisted students in the classroom provided an opportunity for real-life exposure to NNE and ELF usage. The findings showed that both the students and the student assistants held positive attitudes to their course experience, in terms of exposure to different English accents and the use of ELF, and also revealed that the students were aware of their possible future usage of English in ELF settings, despite their teachers' assumption that they would need to adhere to NE norms. Although it was not technically an attitude study, another study conducted by Galloway and Rose (2017) revealed how an awareness-raising task in an English language classroom in Japan was found to influence the attitudes of students. Through a presentation task, the students selected and explored the English varieties that were salient to their interests and experiences, and, in so doing, they were found to raise their awareness of variation in English and challenge the deep-seated attitudes towards NNE and NE norms.

Wang's (2013) study looked at the attitudes of 502 Chinese university students and 267 Chinese professionals, through questionnaires and interviews, finding that the preference for an exonormative NE model is only one side of the NNESs' attitudinal picture. While the respondents believed in the centrality of NES norms of English use, which they thought would bring them social advantages, and they conceptualized English as a monolithic and fixed entity, they also acknowledged the communicative function of English that diverges from the NES norms, and they also believed that conformity to NES norms conflicts with the need to assert one's cultural identity. These findings led the author to conclude that there was a need for change from monolithic English to pluralistic Englishes in mainstream ELT. Wang and Jenkins (2016) investigated the impact of intercultural experience through ELF on the attitudes of Chinese users of English. The data for their study were gathered through 769 questionnaires and 35 interviews. The findings revealed that the lack of ELF experience helps to maintain the assumption that conformity to NE is needed for mutual intelligibility, whereas experience with ELF communication questions the supposedly exclusive connection between nativeness and intelligibility, thus challenging the relevance of NE norms for successful intercultural communication. ELF experience was also found to raise awareness of intercultural communication strategies as a key factor for effective communication, although the participants raised the issue of what constitutes intelligible English. The authors concluded that while their study allowed for the understanding of how experience of ELF usage affects beliefs about the intelligibility of English, the correlation between ELF experience and attitudes towards ELF remained to be further investigated. With the aim of assessing the feasibility of the ELF paradigm, Fang's (2016) study investigated to what extent the attitudes of a sample of students at a university located in southeast China towards their own and other English accents were informed and affected by the ideology of the standard language. Drawing data from 309 questionnaires and 9 face-to-face interviews, he found that native speakerism and standard language ideology were still entrenched in the students' minds, and that although a local Chinese English accent was recognized, the acceptability level remained relatively low. A few students nevertheless recognized that NE accents are not a universal solution for communication problems, which led the author to argue that the necessity of NE norms as the benchmark may start to be questioned. Tamimi Sa'd's (2018) investigation into the perceptions of 51 Iranian EFL learners toward accented speech and its relationship with identity, from an EIL perspective – which in this paper is used as synonym for ELF – confirmed a general orientation towards NE norms. The questionnaires and the interviews conducted for the study showed an overwhelming preference for native accents, which learners strived to imitate in the firm belief that they represent the best target model of learning. The findings also indicated that the participants held negative stereotypes of NNE accents. Based on these findings, the author concluded that there is a need to raise the learners' awareness as to the status of English in today's world, to lead them to not view the deviations from the NE standard norms as an error, and understand that all users of English, whether NESs or NNESs, are entitled to have equal ownership over English. Griffiths and Soruç's (2019) study investigated the perceptions of ELF among non-English major students, from a wide variety of national origins, a part of whom were studying in a foreign language environment where English is not spoken beyond the classroom, and another part of whom were studying in a target language situation where English the native language of the greatest majority of the local population. Drawing data from a questionnaire, the authors found that the students' attitudes were ambivalent, in that they expressed both a desire to attain native-like proficiency but also showed considerable tolerance of ELF. While little difference was found according to nationality or subject major, the students in the target language environment displayed much more tolerance of ELF than their peers who were learning English in an EFL setting. The former group also seemed to be less concerned with the goal of native-like competence, as they tended to believe that correct usage is not important as long as you can communicate effectively. The EFL students were instead significantly more in agreement that they wanted to achieve a native-speaker level. Based on their findings, the authors wondered whether the everyday use of English as a medium of communication pre-disposed the students in the target language environment to be more tolerant of NNE usages, as long as these allowed to convey the message. Also, as the participants in Adolphs' (2005) study above referred to, the students in the ENL environment must have been made aware, by exposure to real-life usage of English, that NESs themselves do not always adhere to the standard norms of correctness. On the contrary, the

students in the EFL environment, who were removed from the daily necessity to communicate in real-life situations possibly tended to take the task of learning English in a more idealistic way and set their goal accordingly. These considerations led the authors to conclude that study-abroad programs are an effective way of promoting ELF, while they also emphasized the importance of giving learners choice, regarding the degree to which they personally wish to strive for native-like competence versus communicative effectiveness.

A common thread of all the recent studies here reviewed, once again, is that students and teachers alike tended to show a strong attachment to NE norms. This should not come as a surprise, since NE codified norms are set as the target of learning and assessment in ELT. Also, possibly because no specific variety of English can be recognized as being in use among the NNESs of the new peripheries, the ELF reality is often ignored. Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that if a paradigm shift is to be put into effect, structural changes are needed, otherwise the prevailing attitudes cannot be easily changed and the gap between theory and practice above referred to cannot be bridged.

3.4.3.4 Students' attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs

It has been previously observed that prejudiced attitudes to NNE speech have been reported to affect the NNESs' opportunities in society, and the existence of hiring biases against the NNESTs in the ELT industry has also been mentioned. The native-speaker tenet of ELT (2.4.1) has in fact consequences in terms of employment opportunities for the NNESTs, and a NNEST movement has been expanding over the last two decades with the aim of raising awareness, within the ELT professional circles, about issues of inequality, discrimination and marginalization (Braine and Selvi 2018; Mahboob 2010, 2018). Within this framework, and against the wider background of the realities of ELF, a number of studies have been conducted in the expanding circle that investigated the attitudes of students towards their NESTs and NNESTs. Barratt and Kontra's (2000) studies in China, with 100 learners and 54 teachers, and Hungary, with 116 students and 58 teachers, showed that while the NESTs were valued for their authenticity and speaking skills, they were found lacking in grammar teaching skills and cultural awareness. Similarly, Benke and Medgyes' (2005) questionnaire study with 422 NNE learners of English in Hungary revealed that students value more teaching ability over the native-speaker status in a teacher; teaching ability, however, was not conceptualized in detail. In the same study, speaking skills and pronunciation were highlighted as the main advantages of NESTs over the NNESTs. Lasagabaster and Sierra's (2005) questionnaire study with 76 students from the Basque Country also found that the NESTs were preferred for their pronunciation, speaking skills and for their representing an authentic model of the target NES culture. Benke and Medgyes (op.cit.) and Lasagabaster and Sierra (op.cit.) also pointed to the possible influence that proficiency level may have on students' attitudes. Perhaps not surprisingly, analogous findings to those so far mentioned came from a study of the views of NNES ESL learners in a core-English speaking country. Mahboob's (2004) qualitative study, using a discourse-analytic technique, analyzed 32 assays of students of various proficiency levels and different L1s who were enrolled in an intensive English course at a Midwestern ESL program. The students' perceptions of their ESL teachers emphasized the NNESTs' own experience as learners and their knowledge of the grammar as advantages, while the NESTs were valued for their speaking skills and their knowledge of the target culture.

More recent studies confirmed this general pattern. He and Miller (2011) investigated the attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs in China by drawing data from a mixed method study that included a survey questionnaire and an MGT test with 984 college students and their teachers, and 103 interviews at four universities in different parts of the country. The findings showed that he advantages of the NNESTs related to the fact that they had experience of learners of English, they were good at teaching grammar and translating and, most importantly, they were more familiar with the Chinese way of teaching and learning, especially the Chinese testing system. The strengths of the NESTs, on the other hand, were that they represented good models for the target language and culture, with the implication that English was learned as a foreign language, and that they were better at teaching oral skills. The authors concluded that college English classes should be taught by both Chinese and NESTs, since students

were found to favor of a combination of both NNESTs and NESTs. Florence Ma's (2014) group interview study with 30 secondary school students from three different schools in Hong Kong looked at what students perceived as being the advantages and disadvantages of learning English from the NESTs and the local NNESTs. The results showed that the disadvantages of one category of teachers seemed to be the reverse of the advantages of the other, as, in line with previous research, NNESTs were preferred mainly for their proficiency in the students' L1 and their knowledge of students' learning difficulties, whereas proficiency in English was highlighted as the chief perceived advantage of the NESTs. This view of the advantages and disadvantages of learning English from NESTs and non-NESTs was confirmed also by Walkinshaw and Oanh's (2014) study, which was carried out with 100 university students in Vietnam and Japan. The participants viewed the NESTs as models of pronunciation and correct language use, as well as being repositories of cultural knowledge, while they found them poor at explaining grammar. The NNESTs were instead perceived as good teachers of grammar and were valued for their ability to resort to the students' L1 when necessary. Students also found classroom interaction with non-NESTs easier because of their shared culture. As in studies of attitudes to accents previously referred to, the NNESTs' pronunciation was often deemed inferior to that of the NESTs, although more intelligible. Some respondents advocated learning from both types of teachers, depending on the learners' level and the specific skill being taught. Buckingham's (2014) MGT study with almost 350 students in Oman revealed a generalized preference for speakers and accents that students understand to be from the UK, which confirms the influential role of RP in this area of the expanding circle. However, the participants' responses to the native speakers of Arabic was also favorable, which led the author to conclude that while many EFL students in Oman may continue to consider an exonormative model to be the socially desirable acquisition goal, for reasons of prestige, a favorable presentations of proficient NNES with local accents may positively impact on the students' confidence in their speaking abilities in English, in a region where English is a second rather than a foreign language for a high number of people who work in tertiary institutions. Partially contradictory results emerged from two distinct studies conducted in Italy by Clark that investigated the students' perceptions of their EMI instructors. In a study (2018) that looked at the interaction between NNESTs and NNES learners, the students who participated overwhelmingly declared that they would prefer NESTs, and while most of the participants in the other study (2017) also expressed preference for the NESTs, quite contrary to the expectations, one out of four were found to be totally against them. In the same study (ibid.), half of the respondents also said that they had no difficulty in understanding the NNESTs, while many also noted that they felt more confident when speaking to a NNEST of their same L1.

To sum up, all the studies of attitudes to NESTs and NNESTs here referred to, suggested that most language learners highly value native English and prefer to follow a NES model. Predictably, they all revealed a generalized preference for the NESTs, as regards, in particular, pronunciation and spoken communication skills, on the one hand, and their knowledge of what is considered the target culture, according to the prevailing EFL pedagogical model, on the other. After all, also studies of self-perceptions of NNESTs' have highlighted a non-ideal language ability and cultural knowledge as a major disadvantage (see, e.g., Gonzalez 2016). Several advantages specific to the NNESTs were however widely recognized in the studies here referred to, and some pointed out, in particular, that when teachers and learners share the same L1 they also tend to share an ease of mutual comprehension.

3.4.3.5 Attitudes to EMI

Other studies have focused on EMI in the framework of the internationalization of HE. Although research into EMI has proliferated in the last decade, a relatively low share of publications focused on Europe (Wilkinson 2017). Furthermore, research on EMI has focused mostly on lecturers' experiences and perceptions and fewer studies have investigated the views of the students. However, interest in the learners' perspective is growing, and papers that report on students' EMI experiences have multiplicated in the last few years. Jensen et al.'s (2013) study that looked at students' attitudes to their teachers' English in EMI, in a major business school in Denmark, concluded that the NNESTs' English language proficiency was a significant predictor of the students' perceptions of the NNESTs' general competence and vice versa. Two noticeable studies showed that that the use of ELF in EMI was not incompatible with a multilingual approach: Tarnopolsky and Goodman (2012), in Eastern Ukraine,

and Kuteeva et al. (2015), in Sweden, revealed that teachers and students alike considered the use of the L1 in the classroom to be a natural function of the need for mutual comprehension, and normally adopted translanguaging strategies in order to ensure effective communication. Doiz et al. (2019) looked at the views on EMI of 145 Spanish students and 145 Italian students enrolled on English-taught programs, with the aim of understanding the learners' linguistic demands. Findings showed that both groups favored language assistance, although they considered that this was not part of their content lecturer's responsibilities. The data also revealed differences linked to the specific disciplines, which led the author to conclude that the students' specialization had an impact on their perceptions of the EMI experience.

A number of studies were conducted exclusively in Italian universities. Ackerley (2017) surveyed 111 students enrolled in various master's degree courses at the University of Padova, finding generalized satisfaction with the EMI experience. Approximately three-quarters of the participants also highlighted the advantages of improving their English comprehension skills and learning subject-specific vocabulary while studying academic content. The two above-mentioned studies by Clark were also conducted at the University of Padova. In one of these (Clark 2017), a questionnaire was administered to 37 domestic and 9 international students enrolled in a two-year postgraduate degree EMI course held at the Department of Political and Juridical Sciences and International Relations. Most participants in this study expressed satisfaction with their EMI experience and the level of their lecturers' English; they also reported that the course had helped improve their English language skills. The results also revealed differences between domestic and international students, the latter tending to be less critical of their NNESTs' language competence, except for pronunciation, and between first-year and second-year students. Interestingly, first-year students were more critical of their lecturers than second-year students and, unlike the latter, they showed a tendency to use language as a measure of the overall quality of a lecture. These findings led Clark to suggest that, over the two years of EMI, students were able to reflect on the idea that successful communication and the effectiveness of a lecture are not merely a question of proficient language use, but they depend in great measure on the teaching methodology and the lecturers' ability to stimulate discussion in class. Clark's subsequent study (2018) was part of the wider LEAP (Learning English for Academic Purposes) project, an initiative of the University of Padova Language Centre aimed at supporting lecturers who are required to teach in English. 75 EMI Master's degree students, of which 48 of the social sciences and 27 from a science department, responded to an online questionnaire in which they were asked to evaluate their EMI experience. As previously mentioned, the participants in this study declared overwhelmingly that they would prefer NES lecturers, thus confirming the findings of other studies of learners' attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs. Costa and Mariotti (2017) administered a questionnaire to 160 graduate EMI students from the Economics and Engineering Departments of three universities located in Northern Italy, finding that one of the most important reasons for enrolling on EMI programs was that these can lead to an equal or better learning of the subject matter compared to traditional Italian-medium courses. The participants also stated that there was room for improvement as far as their lecturers' competence in English was concerned. In a more recent study (Costa & Mariotti 2020), the same authors explored how linguistic diversity in internationalized Italian universities was dealt with by the institution and by the students, and how it affected the learning process. Rowland and Murray's (2020) qualitative study involving twelve students (and six lecturers) of an EMI Master's level program in Biomedical Sciences indicated that flexible attitudes towards the use of the students' L1 was an important determinant of the widely reported learners' satisfaction with the EMI experience. Other recent studies involving Italian students were conducted by Costa. One of these (Costa 2017), pointed to NNESTs' pronunciation as the area on which students tended to be more judgmental, although some also said to feel relieved to see NNE as an attainable target model. The other study (Costa 2018) reported on one of the few cases in which the decision-making process behind the implementation of an EMI program had been documented: the pre-feasibility study included an interview with the Dean, and a student questionnaire, which once again revealed that students had a positive attitude towards EMI. Guarda's (2018) study reported on the vastest research carried out so far in Italy on the student's perceptions of EMI. Adopting a mixed-method approach that combined an online questionnaire, one-to-one interviews and a

focus group the study looked at the perceptions of 1,357 students enrolled on a variety of English-taught programs at the University of Padova. The findings revealed that, although the majority of the participants did not face any major difficulties while attending their English-taught courses, a common observation was that studying through English required more focus and attention; nevertheless, most participants also claimed that English was not a barrier to learning content, and they did not feel that they would have learned more if the same courses had been taught in their L1. In addition, besides context-dependent factors such as organizational problems, the major difficulties highlighted by some participants were mostly related to language than to subject content; one problematic aspect, in particular, was represented by the heterogeneous competence levels among NNESTs and classmates. In regard to the NNESTs' competence, some respondents pointed to a lack of fluency and spontaneity, as well as a strong influence of the L1 on their lecturers' speech, as a potentially negative factor for the overall the quality of teaching.

In brief, positive attitudes towards EMI are a common finding in all the studies conducted in Italy, although the NNESTs' competence in English also emerged as a problematic aspect. The small-scale size of most of these studies, however, prevents further generalizations, and there is clearly a need of more research that suggests measures that facilitate the effective implementation of English-taught programs in the internationalized Italian universities.

3.5 Chapter summary

This chapter defined the theoretical-methodological field in which the present research study is positioned. The concepts of attitude and language attitude were presented and discussed. The methodological approaches to the studies of attitude to language were outlined and the advantages and disadvantages of each one of them were highlighted. Finally, the review of the relevant literature in the field of research of attitudes towards English variation, ELF, the native- and non-native-speaker lecturers and EMI was provided. The previous research findings presented here revealed the high vitality of the NE norms, and it was suggested that structural change is needed in order to shift the pedagogical practices of ELT way from the traditional EFL model in use in the new peripheries of English. However, attitudes are not straightforward, and many are the factors that influence them; in regard to this, though, most of the studies here reviewed did not offer much information as to the possible reasons behind the attitudes. Some studies, nevertheless, proved that tasks, activities and syllabuses that are specifically designed to raise the practitioners', the teachers' and the learners' awareness of variation in English, and of the existence of the realities of ELF, have indeed an impact on the attitudes and can facilitate the change towards a more inclusive approach to ELT that has been advocated for by many researchers in the field of applied linguistics. Many of these studies were conducted in ELT contexts, that is where the English language was the subject of learning, and where the participants were positioned in the role of learners. There is arguably need for more research that investigates the perceptions of and attitudes to English and ELF held by students who not necessarily voluntarily choose to pursue an academic degree in the field of English studies of English linguistics. Also, most existing studies of learners' attitudes focused on the linguistic aspect of ELT, rather than the cultural content that is traditionally associated to the language in traditional EFL pedagogical model. Finally, there seems to be lack of research that traces the views and attitudes of learners of the new peripheries of English to the ideological and structural factors that contribute to shaping them. By adopting the method of folk linguistics, this study aimed precisely to uncover this ideological underpinning and to point to the structural barriers that thwart the efforts to bring about a paradigm shift. While it is difficult to generalize from the results of context-specific single-case studies, it is hoped that this research may provide a valuable contribution to the task of exploring the feasibility of a renewed approach to the teaching of English. In the next chapter, the design of this research study is outlined.

4. Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodology adopted for the study, and the motivation for its use. It includes the description of the setting in which the research was carried out, the methods and tools developed for the collection and analysis of the data. In regard to the latter, the data collection procedure is outlined, and the development of the research tools is discussed.

4.1 The Setting

The study was carried out at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia (UNIMORE), a medium-sized university with a population of approximately 21,000 undergraduate students coming from various parts of Italy, and approximately 2,000 international students, at the time of the investigation. Like many other universities of the peninsula, UNIMORE has also embraced internationalization: it has established 236 collaboration agreements with universities located in all the five continents, with more than 1,000 students involved in outward and inward mobility programs every academic year, and, since the 2015-2016, it has also been offering four EMI Master's degree programs. UNIMORE includes thirteen different Departments and offers a wide range of undergraduate programs in a number of disciplinary areas, from the hard sciences to the humanities. It is located at the heart of one of the main economic hubs of Italy. With its highly specialized export-oriented productive system, and its vast network of international collaborations in the field of education, the area of Reggio Emilia and Modena is a dynamic economic and cultural environment, where the demand for English-proficient speakers in the labor market is high.

As previously observed (2.1), in line with a worldwide trend, the vitality of the English language in Italy has grown dramatically, over the last two decades. For one thing, exposure to English has massively increased, and although Italy has always been a 'dubbing' country, the offer of original language movies and TV has nowadays multiplicated, thanks to the TV on demand and the new media. In addition, the functions and domains of use of English have expanded up to a point where, for more and more people in key professional positions, English is now actually in the position to be regarded as a second – rather than foreign – language. The great vitality of English, in turn, can represent an important factor for motivation to learning, as much as it facilitates the learning process itself. Notwithstanding that, Italians are still reported to fare rather low, compared to the citizens of most other Europeans nations, in terms of level of proficiency in English – although, it must be pointed out, the validity and reliability of the statistics[3] on which such judgements are based are questionable. Aside from that, following a reform of the public system of education adopted in 2004 and corresponding to a global trend of increased pressure to acquire competence in English (see 2.1), English in Italy is now a mandatory subject since elementary school, while English classes are also offered in many preschools. In line with the EU Education and Training strategy (ET 2020), the Italian public system of education has witnessed a shift, in the last two decades, towards a utilitarian and economistic model that has repositioned education as a determinant of economic performance and key to the individual's participation in the new globalized economy; within this framework, increased emphasis is nowadays being put on competence in English as part and parcel of the soft skills toolkit of today's 'global' citizens.

All this considered, a population of students at an Italian university arguably offered a fresh perspective from which to investigate the new realities of English and assess whether the established EFL model of ELT is perceived to be effective and in tune with demands placed upon the learners by today's society. The contradiction between the native-speakerism of EFL and the lingua franca status that English has acquired for its future users,

[3] https://www.thelocal.it/20191105/italy-ranked-the-worst-in-the-eu-for-speaking-english , See, for example, the recent EF English Proficiency Index (EPI) survey: https://www.ef.se/epi/

in particular, can be better appreciated from the vantage point of a new periphery of English, where the changes that have characterized the sociolinguistic realities of English are arguably more glaring. In this respect, the area in which UNIMORE is located perfectly qualified as a new periphery of English, where the younger generation is made to feel pressure to acquire competence in English and so gain an edge in the job market. Also, as a public university, UNIMORE attracts students from a relatively varied socio-economic background and from different parts of Italy, all of which was thought to add to the unpredictability of the findings and make the investigation more interesting.

In addition to this, in order to understand the participants' views and put forward hypothesis as to the reasons for their perceptions and attitudes, attitude studies must circumscribe their field of enquiry; therefore, a focus on a single specific context and direct knowledge of it can yield more accurate and credible results. As a native speaker of Italian who had worked for over fifteen years as a high school teacher of foreign languages (English and Spanish), the author of this study possesses a solid knowledge of the educational setting in which the participants had learned English before entering university; most importantly, he has gained hands-on experience with the pedagogical models of foreign language teaching that are adopted throughout the entire cycle of secondary education in the Italian system. Also, as a local citizen, he is well familiar with the socio-cultural setting of the Reggio Emilia and Modena area. On top of this, the researcher's position of a postgraduate student in the UNIMORE Doctoral school in Humanities allowed him to obtain permission to carry out the research (from the Director of the Departments) and gain access to the students of a number of courses of some of the degree programs offered by the three Departments where the study was conducted.

As pointed out in the introduction (1.4) the choice to find the participants for the study in three different Departments responded to the need to examine the attitudes to English of a varied population of students; as a matter of fact, as it is shown further on (chapter 7), not all the interviewed students were found to be familiar with the notion of ELF and the issues that have become the focus of the related field of scholarly research. However, in all the degree programs attended by the participants found for the study, a working competence in English was a necessary requirement. At the time of investigation, for all the students who were contacted for the research within the DCE, and for those contacted within the DESU, with the only exception of the students who were majoring in Psychology, a minimum level of B1 in English was a requirement for the attainment of the BA title. English featured as the most in-demand major in the language degree programs of the DSLC, where the requested proficiency level was (obviously) higher, although it also depended on whether English was chosen as major or as a second language of study: C1 or B2, respectively, for the attainment of a BA degree, C2 or C1 for an English-taught EMI program. The English language course for the Additional Educational Requirements (OFA) assessment exam where a few participants were reached for the study was aimed at preparing the students for the attainment of the minimum prerequisite of a B1 proficiency level, necessary to complete the first year of the BA programs in Languages.

Also, as remarked in 1.3, as students located in a new periphery of English, all the participants were potential future users of ELF. The degree programs attended by the participants that were accessed at the DCE are designed to prepare the students for professional careers in the fields of communication and marketing, where the English language plays a key role. Furthermore, a good number of participants reached at the DCE were receiving training in linguistics, which was thought to make the participants' viewpoint particularly interesting, in relation to the topics of the research. The Department of Education and Humanities trains future professionals in the field of early childhood education, where English is likely to play an ever more important though perhaps not uncontested role in the future. Whereas the quasi totality of the participants reached at the DSLC were attending an EMI master's program and had received explicit ELF instruction, which allowed for a comparison between their views and attitudes and those of the students who attended the Italian-medium (IMI) courses of the other Departments. On top of this, all the English-medium courses attended by the participants accessed at the DSLC had been taught by NNESTs, with the exception of one course that had been taught by a visiting NEST.

As a final observation, it is important to point out that the research was carried out in great part during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. As it is commented in the following chapter (4.2.1), the data for the qualitative analysis were almost entirely collected during the lockdown (from March to June 2020), and the research instruments had to be partly redesigned to adapt the methodology to the changed contextual conditions.

4.2 Research methods and instruments

This research adopted what is conventionally defined as a mixed-methods approach (Punch 2013, Creswell & Creswell 2017). It integrated two different and complementary tools for the collection of the data – a structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview, as well as a qualitative and a quantitative technique in the analysis of the data sets obtained, although with an emphasis on the qualitative interpretation of the findings.

It is customary in the research fields of linguistics and the social sciences to distinguish between qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative research, in Creswell and Creswell's words, "is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (2017: 4); it includes a variety of approaches (phenomenological, ethnographic, grounded theory, case study) and adopts tools that yield data that are suitable for subjective interpretation, such as observations, narratives, interviews and focus groups. Quantitative research, instead, conventionally indicates studies that employ the questionnaire, a research tool that yields numerical data that can be analyzed by using statistical procedures. Defined by the same authors as "an approach for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables" (ibid.), which can be measured, quantitative research deals with objective data (numbers), favor a deductive approach and aims to produce results that can be generalized and replicated. However, it has been observed that such a clear-cut distinction between qualitative and quantitative research "is problematic and of limited value" (Allwood 2012: 1418), since qualitative research is a very heterogeneous field and "features of qualitative and quantitative research overlap to a great extent" (ibid.: 1428). For this reason, it has been argued that it only makes sense to differentiate between the types of analysis through which data are interpreted, rather than the methods of and the related tools for data collection (Pallotti 2016). Furthermore, if the quantitative/qualitative distinction is abandoned "it is possible to use and combine different types of research methods without subscribing either to the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research or the 'Mixed methods' school" (Allwood 2012: 1427). Whether a neat distinction between qualitative and quantitative research methods is accepted or not, and regardless of the epistemological pertinence of the concept of mixed-method approach, different methods for the collection of the data on the same research topic are known to mutually support each other´s advantages, and it is acknowledged that their combination increases the validity and reliability of the findings (Flick 2018). In this study, the use of the questionnaire and the interview provided a set of complementary data on the same topics being investigated and contributed to obtaining a broader knowledge about the object of the research. It is important to point out here that each set of data was analyzed in its own right (see chapters 5 and 6), and although the questionnaire results and the insights obtained from the interviews complemented and were discussed in relation to each other, this study did not seek to align them and generate confirmatory results.

The design and implementation of the two research instruments is discussed in detail further on (4.2.2, 4.2.3), but for now, a few remarks are due. The questionnaire consisted mainly of close-ended questions; it allowed to access a large number of students (254), trace general trends and formalize comparisons. The respondent's age was the only numerical variable that appeared in the questionnaire (item # 69). The object of all the other items were qualitative characters, that is, they described non-quantifiable attributes, and, as such, the modalities that they could take as values coincided thus with ordinal or nominal categories. Most of these attributes were operationalized as ordinal variables, that is, they were arranged on an ordinal scale; some were operationalized as nominal binary (yes/no) variables, and a few as others as nominal non-dichotomous categories. The questionnaire results lent themselves to a descriptive statistical analysis, which, by definition, did not aim to generalize the results beyond the sample itself, yet they still offered an accurate overview of a sizeable population of NNES

university students. The in-depth individual interviews involved a total number of 29 students. 28 interviews were considered valid, corresponding to the 11% of the questionnaire respondents. The attitudes towards English of the participants in this study were thus uncovered by close examination of their responses to the statements that were explicitly formulated in the questionnaire (the items), and by analyzing their overt views, as these were expressed in the in-depth individual interviews. Particularly the interviews allowed the researcher to formulate hypothesis as to the reasons and motivations for the participants' attitudes and gain deeper insights into their ideological underpinning.

The research method adopted for this study draws on folk linguistics and the direct approaches to the study of language attitudes. It was observed in chapter 3 that direct approaches infer attitudes to language from overt beliefs and opinions and so allow to provide a contextualized view of the attitudes themselves; likewise, folk linguistics research is concerned with the conscious reflective process of reasoning through which the non-experts in matters of linguistics provide an account of the sociolinguistic reality. Since this study took as its object the learners' views on the English language and on the ELT pedagogical methods and practices, it was deemed important to elicit the participants' overt opinions and their consciously formulated beliefs about, in the specific, the legitimacy of the NE and the NNE norm, the NESs and the NNESs as target models, the traditional EFL approach and an ELF-informed approach to the pedagogy of English. In accordance with the principles of folk linguistics research, the participants were allowed to shift their position, change their viewpoint, and so provide a dynamic account of the reality with which the researcher confronted them in the course of the interview. The individual interviews (4.2.3) were precisely developed to this end, based on the assumption that the arguments made by the participants in response to open questions possibly provide explanations for their expressed beliefs and opinions, and therefore more accurately reflect their deeper attitudinal orientations, as well as the reasons for the latter. Kvale (2007) observed that "[t]he qualitative interview seeks qualitative knowledge as expressed in normal language (…) aims at nuanced accounts of different aspects of the interviewee's life's world" (11-12); in qualitative interviews "the focus is on nuanced descriptions that depict the qualitative diversity, the many differences and varieties of a phenomenon, rather than on ending up with fixed categorizations" (12). Furthermore, he pointed out that "[i]n the course of an interview, subjects can change their descriptions, and meaning, about a theme. The subjects may discover for themselves new aspects of the subjects they are describing, and suddenly see relations that they have not been aware of earlier" (13). The choice to draw on folk linguistics methodology was also suggested by the fact that all the participants were undergraduate students, at the time of the investigation; also, although some of them had received training in general linguistics, and others were attending English-taught courses and had previously attended ELF-awareness raising courses, they all could be regarded as non-experts in the research field in which this dissertation study is positioned. Therefore, it was thought that their views could qualify as folk – that is, non-expert – beliefs and opinions. As a matter of fact, as the analysis of the interviews has revealed (chapter 6), the arguments they made to support their views also contained commonsensical and stereotypical notions about language and language acquisition.

The analysis of qualitative data such as those collected through interviews can be variously approached (see, e.g.: Kvale 2007: 103-19 for an overview of different modes of analysis of interview data). The strategies that were adopted for the analysis of the interview data collected for this dissertation can be classified as qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is a practical method for analyzing a vast corpus of written data because it allows to summarize large texts into smaller bits of information by representing them with few words and expressions, and it can be conducted with any type of written material, included interview transcripts. Under the general label of qualitative content analysis, different procedures "from imaginative and artful speculation to following well-defined analytical moves, from deductive categorization to inductive pattern finding" (Dörnyei 2007: 242) have been included, in a variety of scholarly research fields. As observed by Dörnyei, "when scholars do not wish to affiliate themselves too closely with a specific methodology, they often use the broad term of 'qualitative content analysis' to characterize the collection of generic analytical moves that are applied to establish patterns in the data." (245). In Weber's (1990) definition, qualitative content analysis is a research method that

uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text; technically, it consists in the process of examining a text for the purpose of classifying it into an efficient number of categories that capture similar meanings. As defined by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), in its broadest sense, content analysis "defines the process of summarizing and reporting written data – the main contents of data and their messages. More strictly speaking, it defines a strict and systematic set of procedures for the rigorous analysis, examination and verification of the contents of written data" (Cohen et al. 2007: 475); it is therefore interpretive and subjective. In brief, there is not one agreed-upon definition of content analysis, as the term does not describe one specific method with a single well-defined set of procedures; rather, it is used to refer to any systematic process of classification, based on coding and identifying themes or patterns in a text. The categories for coding and the coding scheme, in turn, can be developed both inductively and deductively, they can be alternatively derived from the data, from existing theories and from previous research. Whereas in a directed approach to content analysis the coding categories for the analysis are based on an existing theory or on previous research findings, in conventional qualitative content analysis the researcher must immerse himself in the data and allow the topics to emerge from the latter; the coding categories that she/he uses for the analysis are therefore derived directly and inductively from the data. For these characteristics, conventional qualitative content analysis is a well-suited approach for studies whose aim is to describe a phenomenon, and when the existing theory or research literature on the object of the study is either relatively limited or in constant evolution, as it is arguably the case with the burgeoning ELF research field. In this research study, the coding of the interview data started from the participants' own words and, even though the raw data were approached with a clear picture in mind of the topics that had been addressed, and of the relations they bore to the existing literature reviewed in chapters 2 and 3, no pre-defined categories were imposed upon them; on the contrary, the categories and names for the categories were allowed to flow from the data. The advantage of adopting a conventional approach to qualitative content analysis was precisely that this method allowed to gain direct information from the participants. Through this approach, the researcher immersed himself in the data, allowing new insights to emerge, and so the knowledge generated from the analysis was based on the participants' unique perspectives and grounded in the actual corpus of interviews.

However, just as many are the definitions of qualitative content analysis, so are the suggested strategies to carry it out in practice. Too rigid a method of operation was therefore thought to be unavailing, and although in the coding and categorizing process no preconceived categories or theoretical perspectives were imposed on the data, it nevertheless seemed appropriate and effective to admit both inductive and deductive reasoning in their interpretation. Qualitative content analysis is also often referred to as "'latent level analysis', because it concerns a second-level, interpretive analysis of the underlying deeper meaning of the data" (Dörnyei: 245-46) and, according to Dörnyei, it is "inherently a language-based analysis" (ibid.: 243). As observed by Kvale "[m]eaning and language are interwoven; in the practice of interview analysis, the focus on meaning versus linguistic form does imply rather different techniques, however" (2007: 104). In Kvale's interpretation, though, apparently in contradiction with Dörney's claim about the fundamental language-based nature of qualitative analysis, qualitative content analysis is fundamentally a meaning-based analysis. As a matter of fact, qualitative content analysis normally identifies individual themes as the unit for analysis, rather than the linguistic units of the text, which are instead most often used in quantitative analysis of the content. In discussing the various modes of analysis of interviews, Kvale (2007) distinguished between those that focus on meaning and those that take as their object the linguistic forms through which the meaning is constructed and communicated. Yet precisely because meaning and language cannot be neatly separated, while deep reading the transcripts for the purpose of coding and categorizing the content of the interviews, attention was also paid to the linguistic and pragmatic forms by which the participant communicated her/his content. In other words, although the emphasis was on *what* was being said by the interviewee, the analysis of the data had also to take in consideration *how* it was being said. Unlike discourse analysis, though, which focuses on language and is concerned with the production of social meaning through talk and texts, content analysis does not view language as the core topic of research; that is, it is not primarily concerned with how people use language to construct their account of the social world and create

their intended effects of truth (Kvale 2007). In the perspective of the method of analysis adopted in this research, the content of the speech produced by the interviewees was thus taken at face value. Although the pragmatic aspects of the interaction were necessarily taken account of, in order to better understand the participants' attitudes that were implied in the overt views they communicated in the course of the interviews, the interviewees' speech was not dissected and subjected to a detailed linguistic analysis, which would have diverted the researcher from his primary objective of identifying a number of recurring themes and issues related to their perceptions of the English language and its learning. Furthermore, although the interpretation of the participants' speech necessarily located their views and attitudes in the broader social context, a deep and thorough examination of the participants' linguistic repertoires and of how the latter were linked and contributed to restating different representations of the social world was not carried out. It must be also observed that the all interviews except two were conducted in Italian, and a discourse-analytic approach to the interview data would have necessarily situated the study within the field of Italian linguistics.

4.2.1 Data collection procedure

The fieldwork took place from December 2019 to May 2020. One student who expressed his desire to participate in the research, though, was allowed to complete the questionnaire in September 2020, when the analysis of the data was still in its early stage. A total number of 254 questionnaire responses were collected. Representativeness of the participants sample was not sought, that is, the sample chosen for the study was not meant to reflect the characteristics of a larger group such as, for instance, the entire population of students studying at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, nor in the least that of the entire population of NNES students studying in Italy. For this reason, the participants for this study were selected through convenience (non-probability) sampling (Given 2008, Creswell and Creswell 2017), a method that requires no criteria other than people being available and willing to participate in the study. This method also proved particularly practical, given the time-related and logistical constraints to carrying out a larger scale survey-type of study that would have ensured the widest possible variety of participants and allow to build an explanatory model by means of inferential statistics techniques. In addition to this, convenience sampling proved to be an extremely practical method in the circumstances created by the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, when all in-presence activities at the university where the research was being carried were suspended and students could only be accessed via email. The questionnaire was developed and posted online using the Google Modules app; a link to the questionnaire was generated and posted on the researcher's institutional webpage. Access to the questionnaire was restricted to the students of UNIMORE: in order to access it, the students had to use their institutional account. Also, to ensure the validity of the responses, a limit was set to the users' ability to respond only once.

The participants studying at the Department of Education were reached with the help of a professor who was teaching History of Education and Psychopedagogy at the time of the investigation, who sent a group email to all the contacts of his students' database with an invitation to participate in the research by completing the questionnaire. A link to the latter was also posted on his personal Dolly page. Several participants studying at the department of Communications and Economics were accessed with the help of two professors among the students who were attending the courses taught by the former: Linguistic variation and communication, Linguistic analysis for communication, Digital Language, and Introductory Linguistics. The professors invited their students to complete the questionnaire by posting a message on the notice board of their personal Dolly page, in which the dissertation research and its objectives were briefly introduced. The researcher was also hosted in each of their classes, on one occasion, so that he could personally present his dissertation research study and directly ask for the students' collaboration. The researcher also gave a webinar presentation on the topic of English in the era of digital communication, as part of the undergraduate course in Digital Communication. On this occasion, he was able to present in more detail his research work and find students who volunteered their participation; ten students (R29 – R38) completed the questionnaire in the presence of the researcher. Within the same Department, other participants were accessed with the help of a professor who was teaching Sociology of Labor at the time of the research; the professor posted a message on the notice board of the Dolly page of his course, in which the research

objectives were briefly presented and an invitation to collaborate in the collection of the data was extended to the students. Within the department of Languages and Cultures, the participants were accessed with the help of two professors, who hosted the researcher in their respective classes of English language, for the LCE program, and Development and Economics, for the LACOM program. On these occasions, the researcher presented his dissertation research to the attending students. A message including a presentation of the research project and a link to the questionnaire was also posted on the professors' personal Dolly page. The same notice was also posted by two other instructors on the Dolly page of their respective courses of the MA program in LACOM: Digital Communication and Human Rights and Marketing and Digital Communication. The request for collaboration was also extended by the researcher himself to the nine students of the LCE who attended the OFA (Additional Educational Requirements) English course he was teaching at the time of the investigation.

A sequential approach was thus adopted in the collection of the data, whereby the interviews were conducted only after the completion of the questionnaire. Although it would have been useful and advantageous to select the participants for the interviews based on their questionnaire responses, which would have allowed to have a representative sample, this was not possible. The interviewees were therefore found based on their availability. 142 out of 254 respondents (55.9% of the total) to the questionnaire gave their consent to be contacted for the interview and were subsequently sent an email by the researcher with a request for availability. A total number of 30 respondents out of 142 (21%) confirmed their availability, and 29 of these (20%) eventually volunteered to be interviewed. The interviews were scheduled according to the students' and the researcher's timetables. The first eight interviews were conducted face-to-face, in the PhD and Post-Doctoral Researchers' office in Santa Eufemia block, in the city of Modena, home to the Department of Languages and Cultures, and the analogous office in Palazzo Dossetti of Reggio Emilia, where the Departments of Communication and that of Education were located. The lockdown ordered in the whole country during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis required a redefinition of the timeline for the data collection and also a partial revision of the research instruments. Starting from 9th March 2020, face-to face interviews could no longer be conducted within the University premises of Reggio and Modena, and therefore all the interviews (21) that had been scheduled for after that date had to be rescheduled and conducted in distance modality, using Skype and Google Meet. Four interviews were conducted in two stages, in order to allow the students more time to cover topics that had emerged from previous interviews. The original design of the research also included the focus group as a tool for the collection of data for the qualitative analysis. One impediment to conducting the focus groups was initially found to be the difficulty of adjusting the focus group sessions to the students' tight and conflicting schedules. After the lockdown was ordered, though, a greater problem emerged related to the impossibility of meeting face-to-face within the university premises, and the researcher eventually decided to take the focus groups off the table. Major doubts arose about the theoretical validity and the practical soundness of setting up a group in distance modality, being the focus group an instrument that is based on the idea of sharing the same physical space and that is specifically designed to foster face-to-face interaction (Krueger 2014). Table 4.1 shows the number of students who participated in the study on a data collection timeline.

Table 4.1: data collection timeline.

	12/2019	**01/2020**	**02/2020**	**03/2020**	**04/2020**	**05/2020**	**09/2020**	Tot. nr. students
Nr. Questionnaire responses	145	74	5		28	1	1	254
Face-to-face interview #			1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	7, 8				8
Distance interview #				9, 10, 11, 12, 13	14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 19bis*, 20, 21, 21bis*, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 27bis*, 28, 29	1bis*		21

The next two sections of this chapter present and discuss in detail the design and implementation of the research instruments.

4.2.2 The questionnaire

The questionnaire allowed the researcher to gather a large amount of readily processable information in a short time interval. Its objective was to collect as much data as possible in order to gain a quick understanding of certain trends and identify the main topics of interest to be further explored in the subsequent session of interviews. This section describes the development of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was developed through Google Modules. Access to the online form was restricted to the students of UNIMORE, and the institutional email addresses of the respondents were automatically collected. However, these were used only to get back to the students who consented to be contacted for the interview, and it was made sure that the students' participation remained confidential and their responses anonymous. This arguably contributed to reducing the risks of social desirability bias and acquiescence bias, which, in turn, might have raised issues of validity of the results. The confidentiality terms were clearly stated at the beginning of the questionnaire. As noted by Dörnyei, "if a questionnaire is too long or monotonous, respondents may begin to respond inaccurately as a result of tiredness or boredom" (2003: 14). This risk of respondent fatigue was prevented by making the questionnaire as brief as possible; after testing a first draft of the questionnaire with three different students who were asked to measure how much time it took each one of them to fill it in, the number of questions was contained so as to make sure that it would not require more than 20-25 minutes to complete the form. The different sections of the questionnaire were clearly defined and numbered, the instructions and all the items were written in both English and Italian, and they were formulated in the clearest possible way, in order to avoid ambiguities. To this end, the instructions were typed in bold.

Through the questionnaire, the researcher aimed to find answers to questions that are based upon the theories and insights offered by the existing literature that has been reviewed in the chapters 2 and 3. In developing the questionnaire, a deductive approach was therefore adopted. Based on the existing literature, and in order to provide answers to the research questions, two thematic macro-areas were identified:

- The 'global' dimension of English (including the spread of English and its impact; the status, roles and functions of English in today's world)
- The teaching and learning of English (and the EFL model in particular)

However, the questionnaire, as it was finally designed, only introduced the topic of ELT, as it was decided that the students' opinions on the teaching of English (related to the research questions 2 and 3) would be best explored by means of the interview instrument, as it is illustrated in the following section (4.2.3).

The purpose of the questionnaire was to also to relate these topics to the students' own personal background, including their exposure to and use of the English language. To this end, a number of items that targeted the students' demographic and background information were included in the questionnaire.

Table 4.2 cross-references the topics to the research questions and the questionnaire items.

Table 4.2: topics, research questions and questionnaire item #.

Topic		**Research question (RQ)**	**Questionnaire Item #**
Demographic information **Exchange students only*	Age		69
	Gender		70
	Grade		71
	Home University*		72
	Degree		73
	Major in home University*		73.1
Background information	Mother tongue		1
	English learning experience		2, 2.1, 4, 7
	Other languages learned		3
	Abroad experience		5 – 6.1
	Future mobility intentions		10 – 11
	Use of English		63 – 68
Attitudes towards English		RQ1: what are the students' attitudes towards English?	8, 9
What is English is and does	The spread of English and its causes	RQ1	12 – 17
	The functions of English	RQ1, RQ2: what are the students' attitudes towards ELF?	18 – 25
	English as a necessary skill	RQ1	26 – 29
	English as a 'global' lingua franca	RQ2	30 – 34
	English, modernity and progress	RQ1	35 – 38
	Power imbalance between NESs and NNESs	RQ2	39, 40
	English and the world's linguistic and cultural diversity	RQ1, RQ2	41 – 54.1
English language teaching and learning	Three tenets of ELT: monolingual teaching, native-speakerism, early start	RQ3: what are the students' opinions on the teaching of English?	55 – 58
	Foreign language learning and English in school	RQ3	59
	Preferred destination to go study English	RQ1, RQ3	60
	Pronunciation target model	RQ1, RQ2, RQ3	61 – 62.1

The questionnaire items were arranged into four different sections. The first section (#1 – #11) covered the respondent's personal background information in relation to her/his learning experience and future intentions; it also included a direct question about her/his affective attitude to English and one item about her/his perception of the importance of English for her/his own future. Section I provided the researcher with an overview of the students' background that helped contextualize their views and attitudes, as revealed by the other responses, and helped suggested possible interpretations of the possible reasons underlying those attitudes. The items of the first sections, though, were not meant to be interpreted as a set of predictor variables that supposedly explained the variance in the other responses. The second section, which included the most items, covered the wide thematic area of English as a 'global' language. It offered a view of the respondents' perceptions of the causes and consequences of the 'global' spread of English, of the roles, the functions and the perceived status of English in today's world. Some of the statements and questions included in section II reproduced the typical – and stereotypical – arguments used to account for the widespread use of English and are articulated in the terms of what the English language *does* and of what it *is* (see Phillipson 1992: 271-88). The items of this section were arranged in a thematic sequence, with questions on related topics grouped together. Items from # 12 to # 17 addressed the spread of English and its causes; items from # 18 to # 25 asked whether the respondents thought English was useful to perform a series of specific functions; items from # 26 to # 29 asked whether the respondents viewed English as a necessary skill; items from # 30 to # 34 more specifically addressed the lingua franca role of English; items from # 35 to # 38 linked the English language to modernity and development; items # 39 and # 40 addressed the power imbalance between NESs and NNESs; items from # 41 to # 50 asked about the respondents' views of the impact of English on the world's linguistic and cultural diversity; items from # 51 to # 54.1 asked whether the respondent thought that English enjoys some kind of special status compared to the other languages of the world. However, the questionnaire as it was made available online to the students did not present any sub-sections and the thematic sub-categorization drawn here merely serves a descriptive purpose; also, it helped the researcher to identify the thematic nodes to be analyzed and further explored in the interviews. Section III (# 55 – 60) asked about the students' views on the teaching of English. Four items # 55 – # 58 that were directly related to the third research question reproduced the tenets of the traditional English language pedagogy: the monolingual fallacy, native-speakerism, the early start fallacy (see 2.4.1). Item # 59 elicited an opinion on the mandatory status of English in the school curriculum, while item # 60 related to variation and the target model of learning. Section IV (# 61 – # 68) asked about the students' opinion of their own pronunciation and pronunciation target model, and also included a set of questions asking the respondent to give an approximate measure of her/his everyday exposure to and use of English outside the learning context. These last questions (# 63– #68) complemented the background information provided in the first section. The choice to break up the background information in one first and one last section was dictated by the need to reduce the risk of fatigue effect (see above), which is actually more likely to influence the responses toward the end of a questionnaire. The first section asking personal information was therefore kept brief so that the respondents could move on quickly to the heart of the matter. On top of this, it was thought that the personal questions asked in section IV might have influenced the responses to the questions in the other sections, if asked before them, since they would have made the questionnaire appear as too focused on personal details. For the same reason, the respondents were asked to specify their age, gender, year of course and degree program only at the end of the fourth thematic section (# 69 – # 73.1). As already pointed out, the personal information was not meant to represent a set of predictor variables, in which case it would have made sense to put it all at the beginning of the questionnaire.

Multi-item scales were not adopted, yet several questions and statements were included in the questionnaire that elicited the respondent's opinions on the same content area from various angles. The construct of 'attitude to English', as understood in this research, comprises different interrelated aspects and is not to be understood as the one single target at which the various items of the questionnaire are all directly aimed. In the specific, the respondents' attitudes were both directly elicited, as in item # 8 and # 9, and inferred from opinions and beliefs, as in most of the other items. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions, including a majority of four-

points continuous scale items (forced Likert scale), some binary options (a yes/no categorical scale), and one multiple choice item. Some items, though, also incorporated an open-end component allowing the respondent the option of specifying a previously given answer or writing in a category not included in the given list. The four-point continuous scales used to measure the items were of three types: the 'strongly agree/agree/disagree/strongly disagree' scale measured the different levels of agreement with a given attitudinal statement; the 'very much/moderately/not very much/not at all' scale measured the degree of preference or satisfaction with personal experiences and empirical facts; the scale of frequency 'most of the time/some of the time/rarely/never', measured how often something was being or had been done. The four point-scale of agreement has the advantage of compelling respondents to come off the fence, and the choice of using it, instead of, e.g., a five-points or a seven-points Likert scale, was dictated, first of all, by the desire to prevent respondents using the middle category for neutral responses to avoid making a real choice. It was thought that the statements included in the questionnaire, after all, did not leave much room for neutrality, as they all concerned the respondent's everyday reality. The risk of forcing a choice when respondents had no opinion was thus thought to be a minor one. On top of that, the forced Likert scale also appeared as the most practical and convenient choice, since it allowed to conflate the agree/strongly agree and the disagree/strongly disagree pairs each into a single category and transform the results into a set of dichotomous variables, so as to distinguish a positive orientation from a negative orientation, and easily explore possible correlations between different variables. As stated above, the questionnaire was developed with the purpose of providing an overview of the students' general orientation towards the topics under investigation, and a fine-grained measure of the intensity of the attitudes, as in attitude studies that adopt indirect approaches (see 3.3), was not sought. Care was taken to avoid asking multiple questions, which may have elicited ambiguous responses, and slanted questions too, which may have in turn have yielded invalid results. However, after looking at a number of responses while still in the process of collecting them, question # 2 proved to be not well-formulated. The question was not re-formulated and corrected in the online form because such an operation would have required the researcher to have the respondents who had already completed the questionnaire do it a second time; since this was not feasible, rephrasing item # 2 while still in the process of collecting responses would have raised doubts about the reliability of the research instrument itself. In addition, the validity of the responses to this and a the closely related follow-up question (# 2.1) could nevertheless be verified (see further on). Also, after a careful consideration, the statement of item # 40 appeared to be too slanted and was eventually excluded from the analysis of the data. While asking the respondents about the NESs' acceptance of NNNE, item # 40 also suggested that NESs are biased against the NNESs, and even though prejudiced attitudes towards the NNESs are a common finding in studies in NESs' attitudes to English speech, it did not seem appropriate to assume such prejudiced view as a matter-of-fact reality. It has been pointed out that in some studies of attitudes towards English questions regarding variation in English were formulated in a way that suggested that there are only two legitimate varieties of English: the English and the American (see Galloway and Rose 2015: 190-91). In this study, such a risk was avoided; however, in item #60, which asked which country from a list the students thought was the best destination for studying English, the provided list could not possibly include all the countries one can think of. Although more inclusive, such a list may still have implicitly suggested a hierarchical order of English varieties. Besides the inner circle countries, only South Africa and India were included in the list, and all other outer circle countries were listed as "another Asian country", "another African country", while other possible options were left to the respondent to write in a given space (see appendix A).

4.2.3 The interviews

Whereas the questionnaire was designed to provide a general view of the students' attitudes to English and ELF (research questions 1 and 2), and only introduced the topic of ELT (research question 3), the interviews were developed and carried out in order to gain deeper insights into the participants' attitudes and provide more detailed answers, in particular, to the research questions 3 and 4. In the second phase of data collection the researcher specifically strived to investigate the student's beliefs and opinions in regard to the pedagogy of the English language and, in particular, whether they felt that the way they had been or were being taught English had been

or was in tune with their perceived needs and the demands of today's world. All the interviewees were NNESs who had learned English mainly through formal education. As it has been previously observed (1.4), while NNES students have learned, learn and use English in the EFL classroom, in their out-of-school experience they may have been exposed to and used different types of English that do not necessarily correspond to the classroom target model. Furthermore, it was observed earlier on (2.4.2) that the current role of English as a global lingua franca cast doubts on the relevance of the principle of integrative motivation and the appropriateness of the ENL cultural models associated to the teaching of the English language in the EFL classroom. On the basis of all these considerations, the interrelated topics of linguistic variation in English and the ownership of English, the learning target model, and the cultural content of the English language classroom took center stage in the interviews. A mixed method approach assumes that, if questionnaires do not allow to probe deeply into an issue and tend to result in rather superficial data (Dörnyei 2003), the use of the in-depth interview can compensate for that limitation. The individual interviews conducted for this study complemented the questionnaire in that they also had the objective of following up on the most relevant topics and controversial issues that had emerged from analyzing the questionnaires. The in-depth semi-structured format also gave the participants a chance to expand on the responses to the questionnaire items and elaborate and elucidate their position on certain points.

The interviews with native speakers of Italian were conducted in Italian, in order to make the participants more comfortable and avoid the risk of limiting discussion. The two international students who participated were given the possibility of choosing either Italian or English, and also of switching between the two; they decided however to be interviewed in English. The interviews had been set to last approximately forty-five minutes. However, some interviewees manifested a desire to speak at greater length and so as not to interfere with the participant's narrative, and because of time constraints on either the researcher's or the participant's schedule, three interviews had to be interrupted and were resumed at a later time. In addition, the two students who had taken part in the first two interviews, in February 2020, were contacted again for a follow-up in May 2020, after a substantial number of other fellow students of theirs who were doing the same MA program in LACOM had taken part in the research, in order to explore the topic of EMI which had not been initially covered in those first two interviews. Only one of these replied and consented to be interviewed again. The follow-up interviews were set to last not more than fifteen minutes. Since the interview sought the participants' overt views, and because there seemed to be no reason why it had to be assumed that the subject matter appeared to the interviewees as one that was not open to public discussion, the purpose of the interviews was not concealed. All the interviews were audio-recorded with a voice recorder, listened again and then transcribed. The transcription conventions are presented in Chapter 6 (see fig. 6.1). The students also received a copy of the interview transcript and were invited to provide the researcher with their feedback; only eight of these, though, replied to the researcher and confirmed the validity of the transcripts.

At the beginning of each interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and the format of the interview; he also clearly stated the terms of confidentiality, giving assurance that the participant's privacy would be respected. He then invited the interviewee to talk as extensively as she/he wished about her/his experience with the English language, in and out of a formal learning context. The first part of the interview was thus focused on the interviewee's personal narrative, which allowed the researcher to gain as much information as possible about the student's background and relate the topics under discussion to her/his personal experience. The personal narrative also made it possible to minimize the role of the interviewer and foster the interviewee's autonomy. After this personal narrative, each interview followed a semi-structured script, which ensured coverage of a few key topics and consistency between the different interviews. To this end, an interview grid was designed in which a number of common topics were listed. At the same time, this format was flexible enough to allow the participants to speak as freely as possible, volunteer topics and autonomously steer the discussion back to previous ones. Before conducting each interview, the researcher had also analyzed the interviewee's individual questionnaire results, checking for outlying responses, ambiguous or contradictory positions. In the course of each interview, specific issues of interest that had emerged from the individual questionnaires were explored by asking the interviewee to expand, clarify and elaborate on their responses. The interview grid that was designed for the first

two interviews (see appendix B), which served as a pilot, was later revised, although without any significant changes in regard to the topics included.

In accordance with the research questions and on the basis of on an overview of the questionnaire results, three key thematic areas were initially identified:

1) English as a necessary skill and the related importance of English for the student's future
2) The target model of English learning
3) The student's personal experience as a learner of English

In the first version of the interview, a key question and a number of follow-up questions were associated to each of the three topics. This grid, however, proved to be too rigid and during the first two interviews the researcher though it better to let the student steer the discussion without forcing a pre-defined sequence of questions. In the final version of the grid (see appendix C), which was adopted for all the subsequent interviews the key points were redefined as follows:

1) The importance of English for the student's future
2) The student's English learning experience against the background of the contemporary realities of English
3) The cultural content of the English classroom

Whereas in the pilot version of the interview grid the personal narrative was meant to include the student's future goals and aspirations, in the final version, these were separated from the past and present experience with the English language, and the student's plans for the after-graduation were asked only at the end of the interview or as a transition question, from one to another topic, depending on how each interview progressed. Considering that more than half of the interviewees were still at the beginning of their university course, it was thought they may not necessarily have clear plans regarding their post-graduate life, and therefore a direct question about their future goals could have perhaps been perceived as not particularly relevant, might have caught the interviewees off-guard and disrupted the free flow of the interview. It was also thought that the participants' past experience as learners, as directly related to the object of investigation, had to be kept apart from their future intentions, which relate instead to the students' background information that helped contextualize their views and opinions. Finally, the interviewee's future intentions were thought to be best left for she/he to volunteer, when she/he was asked to explain what she/he meant when she/he agreed in the questionnaire that English was important for her/his future. The importance of English for the student's future was also decoupled, in the grid, from the view that English is a necessary skill in today's world, since a question formulated in a way that assumed a correlation between the personal view of the student and the ideological view of English as a necessity in today's world would have been too slanted. The ELT target models were considered as a sub-theme, together with other topics such as variation in English and ownership of the language, of the more general topic of the student's English learning experience. The cultural content of the ELT classroom was added in the final version of the interview grid as a separate topic, for mere purposes of clarity. In sum, the grid in its final version was designed to be as flexible as possible, so that it could simply orient the researcher and make sure that all the topics of interest in relation to each interviewee were covered. Besides the key questions, a number of other questions that could be possibly asked were listed and organized by topic, although no predefined sequence of questions was set. All the topics and the questions listed in the grid are interrelated and the researcher let the student decide what she/he thought the most important things to be talked about were; each interview actually followed its own path.

In the course of the interview, the researcher alternated different types of questions: direct questions and indirect questions, follow-up questions, probing questions, specifying questions, interpreting questions (Kvale 2007: 60-62). In agreement with the principles of qualitative interviewing, the questions were mainly open ended, and they were always specific to the participants' comments, rather than based on a preexisting theory with which the student may not have been familiar. In some cases, though, links with topics of academic interest were established,

whenever these were thought to contextualize the interviewee's own comments and encourage the interviewee to explore a new path in the process of her/his reasoning. As observed by Kvale (ibid.) knowledge in an interview is constructed in the interaction itself between the interviewers and the interviewee, and the latter may be open to obtaining new insights from the former if she/he perceives the interview as an enriching experience. In this regard, the role of graduate student of the interviewer, in compensating for the power asymmetry between interviewer and interviewee, seemed to foster, on many occasions, a positive and collaborative interpersonal dynamic, which made the interviewee well-disposed to discuss also academic content matters with the researcher as if with a peer. Furthermore, the interview questions were formulated in a brief and simple way and were asked in such a manner as to always relate the topics of interest to the participant's personal experience. So as not to interfere with the interviewee's thematic progression, in the course of the interview, follow up questions tended to be of a developmental kind, that is, they were based upon the previous arguments put forth by the interviewee, rather than abruptly shifting the direction towards new topics. Similarly, by asking probing questions, the interviewer sought elaboration of a previous point made by the respondent or tried to obtain a more complete or specific comment on a response given to a questionnaire item. He also employed silence, at certain points, in order to allow the interviewee to further the interview her/himself by adding significant information, making associations and/or exploring new topics. When presenting the interview format, the interviewees were encouraged to speak openly and honestly and, in the course of the interviews, every attempt was made to be as unobtrusive as possible, minimizing interruptions and offering supportive nods and agreement. Excessive verbalization was avoided, so as not to distract the interviewee and interrupt the stream of his arguments, although in some cases a thorough explanation of the question being asked turned out to be necessary. On the whole, the interviewer tried to adhere to Kvale's principle of "presuppositionless", assuming a "qualified naiveté" and avoiding "posing pre-formulated questions with respect to prepared categories for the analysis" (ibid.:12). By exhibiting sensitivity, openness and curiosity to the interviewee's argument, the interviewer also sought to reduce the power asymmetry that inevitably characterizes qualitative research interviews (see ibid.: 14-15).

5. Analysis of the data: the questionnaire

In this chapter, a detailed description of the questionnaire results in relation to the research questions is provided. Before turning to the analysis of the collected responses, though, a few methodological remarks preliminary to the description of the data analysis procedure are in order. It was pointed out in precedence (4.2.1) that the participants to this research study were selected through convenience sampling, and precisely because this research was not aimed at generalizing the collected results beyond the participants sample, the method of inferential statistics was not adopted in the elaboration of the questionnaire responses. The main objective of the questionnaire was in fact that of gaining an understanding of certain general trends which, although only relevant for the respondents' sample, they nevertheless suggested topics and issues related to the research questions to follow up on in the interviews. The construct of 'views on English' that the questionnaire addressed, as understood in this research, encompassed a variety of interrelated yet distinct aspects, and the respondents' attitudes to English and its learning were in fact inferred from various angles. Only two questions were included in section one that directly elicited the respondent's attitude. item # 8 asked the respondent's degree of intensity of her/his own affective attitude to English, while # 9 targeted instead the cognitive component of the attitude to English, asking the respondent to indicate her/his level of agreement with the claim that English was important for her/his future. As illustrated in 4.2.2, although section II covered the same thematic area of the global dimension of English, and section II addressed the topic of ELT, the sets of items included in each section were not designed to get at one single construct as a set of multi-item scales. Multi-item scales are variously phrased though analogous questions and statements (Dörnyei 2003: 32-35); the items of section II, instead, actually measured the levels of agreement with a number of different – although interrelated – statements, each reproducing a commonsense or stereotypical view of what the English language does or is. Analogously, the items in section III addressed each a different tenet of ELT and could not be construed as aimed at one single target. Although taken together they all provided an overview of the respondent's beliefs, opinions about and attitudes to English, it would not have been methodologically appropriate to transform the four-point Likert scales into scales of discrete numbers and aggregate their respective scores. By the same token, an internal consistency test was not performed; a questionnaire's internal consistency reliability is in fact measured by statistical means when all the items that comprise the questionnaire are aimed at the same construct (ibid.: 111-13).

In the next section (5.1), the data analysis tools are presented, and the data analysis procedure is outlined. Section 5.2 presents the questionnaire results in relation to the research questions.

5.1 Questionnaire data analysis tools and procedure

The Google module form used for the questionnaire automatically provided a summary of the responses and visualized the frequency distribution of the modalities taken by each item's variables or categories in charts and histograms. Once the results were revised and validated, updated charts and histograms were also created with Microsoft Excel so as to get an overview of the results. The collected responses were also automatically stored and organized by Google Sheets in a spreadsheet, in which each row featured the responses from each respondent, and each column featured an item question from the questionnaire. The spreadsheet was then converted to a Microsoft Excel file, in which pivot tables of two kinds were also created to summarize and manipulate the data. While frequency tables showed the mere distribution of the variable modalities, data were also tabulated in contingency tables, in order to examine possible relationships of dependence and suggest correlations between the responses to different items.

Contingency tables (cross-tabulations) were used to show and examine the combined frequency distributions of the modalities of two characters X and Y, which were obtained from the responses to two different items. The contingency tables allowed to observe the simultaneous occurrence of the values Xi of X and Yj of Y, either in the entire sample or in selected groups of respondents and were used, in the specific, when a relationship between

the modalities Xn of X and Yn of Y was supposed to be there. In order to check for possible relationships of dependence between variables, the data were tabulated in 2x2 contingency tables. However, only few items included nominal dichotomous (yes/no) variables; as illustrated in 4.2.2, most variables were of the qualitative ordinal type, and they were operationalized in four-level multiple choice scales that measured either the level of agreement with a statement, of satisfaction with an experience, or frequency of a behavior. Precisely because the variables were of the qualitative type, the associated 4-point scale could not aim to not provide a precise measure, that is to say, the strength of agreement/disagreement, the degree of satisfaction/dissatisfaction and the level of frequency of a behavior had to be considered as relative and subjective concepts, that depended, to some extent, on the respondent's individual cognition. Therefore, when a relationship of dependence between the responses to two different items was hypothesized, it seemed reasonable to treat the responses collected for each item as binary sets representing opposing views, attitudes, habits. The ordinal variables measured by the forced Likert ordinal scales were therefore transformed into dichotomous variables, providing only binary categories of agreement/disagreement, satisfaction/dissatisfaction, positive and negative (such as, e.g., use and no use of English with other NNESs). This procedure also proved extremely practical and convenient, for the purpose of suggesting general trends in the respondents' sample.

Once a set of data selected according to two binary variables were cross tabulated in a 2x2 contingency table, measures of associations were calculated. First, the p-value from the Chi-Square test for independence was obtained by using the provided formula in the Excel spreadsheet. In calculating the p-value the significance value α was set at .05, which meant that if $p < .05$, then the null hypothesis that the two variables were completely independent could be confidently rejected. The chi-square test for independence was also repeated in order to obtain the actual chi-square statistic value. Whereas the Excel file allowed to perform Chi-square tests that only yielded the *p*-value, together with simple calculations such as adding and subtracting, and other formulas, like counts and averages, the actual chi-square statistic value was obtained by using an online chi-square calculator[4]. The online calculator also yielded the value of the chi-square statistic with the Yates correction, often used to make sure that the type-I error of rejecting a true null hypothesis is avoided. A disadvantage of the chi-square statistic lies in the fact that it is an absolute index; that is, its value depends on the number of observations included in the contingency table and can be any number between zero – when variables are completely independent – and plus infinity. In order to avert problems of interpretation of the chi-square value and further increase the validity of the results, other measures of association, based on the chi-square statistics were also obtained using a scientific calculator (TI-30X Plus).

Cramér's V, sometimes referred to as Cramér's phi and denoted as φ_c, a measure of association that is commonly used between two nominal variables, was calculated. As a value that indicates the degree the intercorrelation of two discrete variables, φ_c is a symmetrical measure, and it is very practical and convenient when nominal data are considered, since it does not depend on which variable is placed in the columns and which in the rows. Cramér's V was obtained from the following formula:

$\varphi c = \sqrt{\frac{\chi^2}{N}}$, whereby χ^2 is the chi-square statistic, N stands for the total number of observations in the questionnaire, φ_c is the obtained Cramer's V index of intercorrelation. Cramér's V varies from 0 (corresponding to no association between the variables) to 1 (complete association) and reaches 1 only when one variable is completely determined by the other (Iodice 2008: 168).

Since the contingency table and the chi-squared test of independence only revealed if two sets of data were independent or not but did not reveal the strength of the relationship of dependence, Pearson's contingency coefficient (Pearson C) was also calculated. Pearson C was determined from the following formula:

[4] Chi Square Calculator 2x2 (socscistatistics.com) .

$C = \sqrt{\frac{\chi^2}{N+\chi^2}}$, whereby χ^2 is the chi-square statistic, N stands for the total number of observations in the questionnaire, C is the obtained contingency coefficient (ibid.).

The contingency coefficient, though, is only a rough measure that does not precisely quantify the degree of dependence between two variables. However, Pearson's C can only take on positive values, and if it is near (or equal to) zero, no association between the two variables can be said to exist, that is, the two variables are independent of each other; if C, instead, is away from zero there can be confidently said to be some degree of correlation. One of the disadvantages to the contingency coefficient, though, is it generally does not achieve 1 even if variables are completely dependent on one another; furthermore, its value depends on the number of rows and columns in the table. For this reason, the theoretical maximum C value (C max) was determined for the 2x2 contingency table that were used to cross-tabulate the data of the questionnaire. The C max is derived from the following formula:

$C\ max = \sqrt{\frac{K-1}{K}}$, whereby K stands for the number of rows and columns in the table (which must be equal) (ibid.). It followed that, for a two-by-two table, $C\ max = \sqrt{\frac{1}{2}}$, that is, C had a possible maximum value of 0.707.

Therefore, if the value obtained for C was found to be closer to the C max, revealing a high degree of association, a strong correlation could be said to be there. Normally, a moderate degree of correlation, revealed by a Pearson C value that lies between .30 and .49, is said to indicate a medium correlation; whereas a low degree of association, revealing a small correlation, is indicated by a value that is below .29 (ibid.).

It must be emphasized that the measures of association that were calculated from the cross-tabulations of the data could only be used as a rough guide and did not allow to draw any definitive conclusion as to the relationship between responses to different questionnaire items. Correlation is in fact not causation and, as stated in 4.2.2, this study did not postulate a set of predictor variables on the basis of which the modalities taken by all the other variables could be explained.

5.2 Results

This section presents the results obtained from the analysis of the questionnaire responses, in relation to the research questions. In 5.2.1 the background information provided by the respondents is presented and discussed. In the next section (5.2.2), a general overview of the results is offered by commenting the collected responses to each item and by exploring relationships between the responses to different items; to this end, the results of the cross-tabulations that were preformed and the related measures of associations that were calculated are presented. In 5.2.3, the findings obtained from the analysis of the collected responses are summarized in relation to the research questions. In presenting the results, when mention is made of a specific respondent, this is referred to by means of an alphanumeric code, composed by the letter R followed by the ordinal number derived from the date of the responses, from the oldest to the newest. R1 corresponds thus to the first respondent in chronological order, while R254 corresponds to the latest.

5.2.1 The respondents

A total number of valid 254 questionnaire responses were collected from the students of three Departments. 111 respondents were studying at the DCE, 106 were studying at the DESU, and 37 respondents were enrolled in the languages programs offered at the DSLC. Table 5.1 shows the number and percentages of respondents that were accessed within each of the three Departments of UNIMORE.

Table 5.1: number of respondents by Department.

Department	**n. of respondents**	**(%)**
Department of Communication and Economics (DCE)	111	43.70%
Department of Education and Humanities (DESU)	106	41.73%
Department of Studies on Language and Culture (DSLC)	37	14.57%

Out of the 111 respondents who were accessed within the courses offered at the DCE, 70 were enrolled in the bachelor's degree program in Marketing and Business Organization (MOI henceforth): 62 were in their first year, 4 in their second year and 4 in their third year of study. One respondent (R200) was a third-year student of the BA program in Mechanical Engineering (ME), offered at the "Enzo Ferrari" Department of Engineering, located in Modena. Since he was attending the undergraduate course in Sociology of Labor were most of the MOI students were accessed, he was included in the same database with the latter. 11 respondents studying at the DCE were enrolled in the MA program in Advertising, Digital Communication and Creative Business Processes (PICI henceforth); of these, 9 were in their first year and 2 in their second year. 27 respondents were doing the BA program in Communication Sciences (SCO henceforth): 17 were in their first year, 8 in their second year, 1 was a first-year student. In addition to these, one exchange student (R9) who was attending the Linguistic Variation and Communication course, when she completed the questionnaire, indicated SCO as her degree program and said she was in her fifth year, by which she was actually referring to the year of the unspecified degree program she was enrolled in at her home university (Jena University, Germany). One respondent (R30) had indicated in the questionnaire that he was attending the fourth year of the SCO bachelor's degree program, which is actually a three-year program. He was contacted by email and asked to clarify the incongruence in his responses; he replied by saying that he was actually attending the first year of the MA program in Management and Business Communication (MCI henceforth). The data were subsequently corrected. Overall, 2 respondents were enrolled in the MCI Master's degree program. 97 out of the 106 respondents who were studying at the DESU were enrolled in the bachelor's degree program in Education for Early Childhood Services and Socio-Pedagogical Context (SEDU henceforth); of these, 47 were in their first year, 30 in their second year and 20 in their third year. 8 respondents were enrolled in the bachelor's degree program in Psychological Sciences and Techniques (STPS henceforth), an interuniversity program with the University of Parma: 1 was a freshman, 4 were in their second year, 3 were in their third year. 1 respondent was doing her second year of the master's degree program in Pedagogy (SPED henceforth). 34 out of the 37 respondents of the DSLC were doing the English-taught MA program in Languages for Communication in International Enterprises and Organizations **(**LACOM henceforth); 24 were in their second year, 10 in their first year. The other 3 respondents were first-year students of the BA program in European Languages and Cultures.

Table 5.2 on p. 78 shows the distribution of the respondents by degree program (item #73).

Table 5.2: number of respondents by degree program.

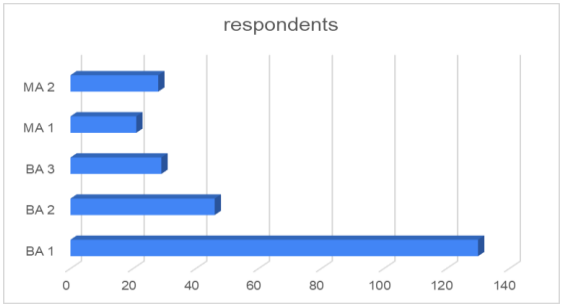
Degree Program	n. respondents	percentage
MOI	70	27.56%
Ing Mec	1	0.40%
SCO	27	11%
PICI	11	4.30%
MCI	2	0.80%
SEDU	97	38.20%
STPS	8	3.15%
SPED	1	0.40%
LACOM	34	13.39%
LCE	3	1.18%

The junior students comprised more than half of the sample; in total, the respondents who were attending their first year of a BA program were 130; the respondents who were in their second and third year of a BA program were, respectively, 46 and 29. The MA students who replied to the questionnaire were 48, of whom 21 in their first and 27 in their second and last year. 1 exchange student was in her last year of course too, although at her home university, and was attending the SCO bachelor's program at the time of the investigation. The table (5.3) and figure (5.1) below shows the numbers and percentages of respondents for each year of course (item #71).

Table 5.3: number of respondents by year of course.

year of course	n. respondents	percentage
BA 1	130	51.18%
BA 2	46	18.11%
BA 3	29	11.42%
MA 1	21	8.27%
MA 2	28	11.02%

Fig. 5.1



On the whole, only 3 were the exchange students (item #72) who completed the questionnaire: the above referred to student from Jena University (R9), a 24-year-old female native speaker of German; a 23-year-old female native speaker of Vietnamese (R17) majoring in "Literature" at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities (Ho Chi Min City, Viet Nam), who was also attending the SCO program; a 24-year-old female bilingual native speaker of Russian and Belarusian (R38), who was doing a "Bachelor of Communication in communication studies" with a specialization in "New media" at the "European Humanities University" (Vilnius, Lithuania), her home university, and was attending the PICI program at UNIMORE.

The mean age of the respondents (item # 69) was calculated by using the 'average' function in the excel spreadsheet. The respondents' age range was 18 – 57, with a mean age of 23.6. 19 years old was the overall sample's mode, with 51 respondents of that age; also, as many as 48 respondents were 20-year-old students and, quite predictably, most of the respondents (77% of the total sample) were concentrated within the 19 – 24 years old age range. In appendix D, table D.1 presents the absolute frequencies of the respondents' age (# 69) and also visualizes the mode age; table D.2 shows the frequencies for item #69 (age) by degree program (# 73) and visualizes the mode values for each of the latter; table D.3 shows the age frequencies by gender (#70).

Table 5.4 below presents the values for the mean and mode age of the respondents by degree course and of the overall sample.

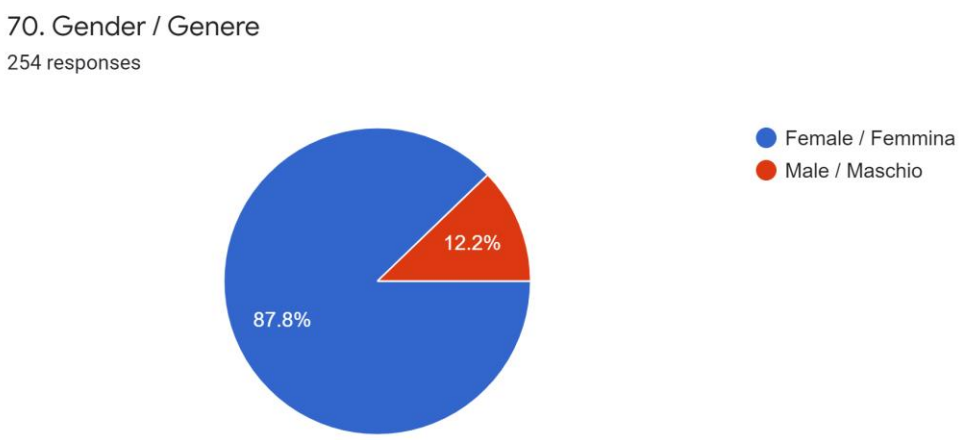
Table 5.4: mean and mode age of respondents.

Mean and mode age of respondents	**Degree program**									**Sample**
	MOI	SCO	PICI	MCI	SEDU	STPS	SPED	LCE	LACOM	
Mean	22.1	21.1	24.6	22.5	25.2	24.1	(24)	27.3	23.6	23.6
Mode	19	20	24	/	20	20, 22	(24)	/	23	19

Looking at the distribution of the frequencies from the frequency tables, it stands out that the highest mean age was found in the group of respondents who were enrolled in the SEDU bachelor's program, which included 23 out of the 35 respondents who were over 30 years old at the time of investigation. This perhaps unexpected value is explained by the fact that many in-service education professionals were studying to earn the SEDU degree, which had been set as a necessary qualification for exercising the profession of socio-pedagogical educator, starting from the academic year 2021/2022, by a recent reform[5].

As the pie chart below reveals, the very broad majority of the respondents were females (87.8%).

Figure 5.2: respondents' gender relative frequencies (item #70).



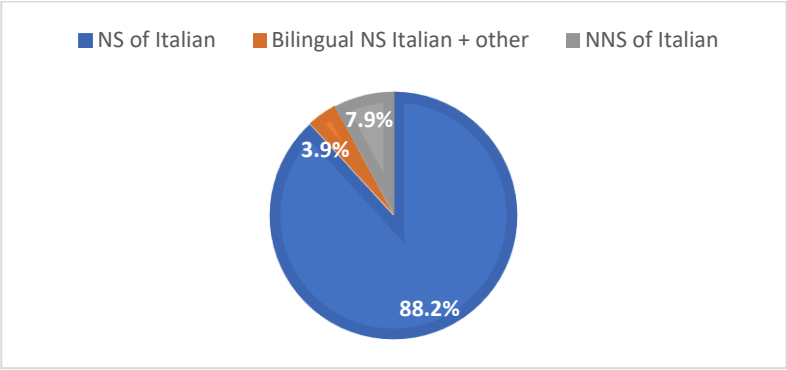
As table 5.5 on p.80 shows, no remarkable differences were found in the distribution of the respondents' gender between the different departments and degree programs. An appreciably higher percentage of males, though, was found among the respondents of PICI, although only 11 respondents in total were enrolled in this program, and those of MOI.

[5] DDL 2443 of 1st January 2018.

Table 5.5: respondents' gender (item #70) by department and degree program (item #73).

Gender by degree program	**Gender**		Tot
Degree program	**F**	**M**	
MOI	57 (80.3%)	13 (19.7%)	70
MOI ing mec		1	1
SCO	25 (92.6%)	2 (7.4%)	27
PICI	8 (72.7%)	3 (27.3%)	11
SCO MCI	1	1	2
DCE respondents total	*91 (82%)*	*20 (18%)*	*111*
SEDU	89 (92.7%)	8 (7.3%)	97
STPS	6 (75%)	2 (25%)	8
SPED	1		1
DESU respondents total	*96 (90.6%)*	*10 (9.4%)*	*106*
LACOM	33 (97%)	1 (3%)	34
LCE	3		3
DSLC respondents total	*36 (97.3%)*	*1 (2.7%)*	*37*
Tot	**223 (87.8%)**	**31 (12.2%)**	254

Figure 5.3: relative frequencies of native and non-native speakers of Italian (item #1).



As the pie chart above shows, the participants were by a vast majority (88.2%) monolingual native speakers of Italian; 10 respondents (3.9%) were bilingual native speakers of Italian + another language, while 20 (7.9%) were non-native speakers of Italian. No NES participated in the questionnaire. Table D.4 in appendix D presents the different mother tongues of the respondents, each with its absolute frequencies.

Table 5.6 on p.81 shows the distribution, by Department and degree course, of the native and non-native speakers of Italian.

Table 5.6: native and non-native speakers of Italian.

Mother tongue	**Respondents by degree program and Department**												
	MOI*	SCO	PICI	MCI	*tot DCE*	SEDU	STPS	SPED	*tot DES*	LACOM	LCE	*tot DSLC*	tot
NS of Italian	59	22	10	2	*93*	89	7	1	*97*	32	2	*34*	**224**
Bilingual NS Italian + other	5	0	0	0	*5*	3	0	0	*3*	1	1	*2*	**10**
NNS of Italian	7	5	1	0	*13*	5	1	0	*6*	1	0	*1*	**20**
subtot	71	27	11	2	*111*	97	8	1	*106*	34	3	*37*	254

The highest percentage of non-native speakers of Italian (11.7%) was found in the DCE, whereas only one speaker of Italian as a second language was attending the languages programs of the DSLC where the respondents were accessed.

Only two respondents declared that they had been born and raised in an English-speaking country (item # 4). R39, a 20-year-old female Italian native speaker student attending the second year of SCO program, and R236 (S22). R39 was asked to confirm her response when she was contacted by the researcher to clarify her contradictory answers to items # 2 and # 2.1 (see further on); R236 was asked to expand on her response when she was interviewed[6]. Both respondents corrected themselves, pointing out that they had misunderstood the question. Therefore, their response to item # 4 in the questionnaire was invalidated, and it was concluded that none of the respondents declared that she/he had been born and raised in an English-speaking country.

The questionnaire respondents' demographics above summarized clearly show that, although diverse in terms of course of study chosen and, to some extent, of years of course, the sample was nevertheless fairly homogeneous in terms of age, gender and first language. Most importantly, all the participants were NNESs who had been born, raised and educated in an expanding circle context where English is learned in school as foreign language.

The majority of the respondents – 181, corresponding to the 71.3% of the sample – said they were learning English either as an academic subject or otherwise (item # 7), at the time of the questionnaire data collection.

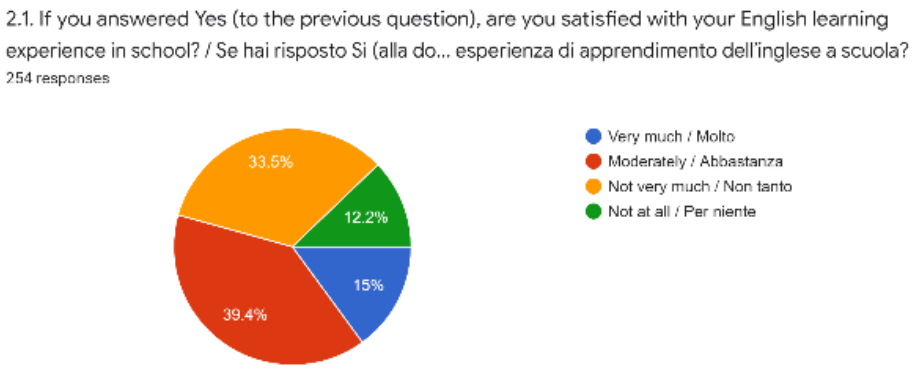
243 respondents, corresponding to the 95.7% of the total, indicated that they had learned English in school or otherwise (item # 2). However, all the respondents also answered to the follow-up question # 2.1 that asked to express the degree of satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with one's English learning experience, although it was clearly stated that one should have answered that question only in case of an affirmative answer to item # 2. The 11 respondents who answered 'no' to item # 2 were contacted and asked to clarify the apparent contradiction in their responses. Nine respondents replied to the researcher's request and provided an explanation for the contradiction in their answer. Eight of these, pointing to the ambiguity in the formulation of the item that was commented in 4.2.2, said they had interpreted the question as 'have you achieved a sufficient level of competence in English in school or otherwise?', and not as 'have you received English language instruction while you were in school or otherwise?'. They also specified that they had indeed received English language instruction in school, since they all had attended school in Italy, where English is a mandatory subject, thus confirming the validity their answer to item # 2.1. Another respondent (R110), a 44-year-old student of SEDU, confirmed the validity of her negative answer to item # 2, observing that English was not a mandatory subject, in Italy, when she attended school. She commented that she also answered to question of item # 2.1 since she was learning English at the time of the investigation, as indicated by her response to item # 7. The other two respondents, R151 and R213, who answered 'no' to item # 2.1 were contacted a second time, yet they never replied. Since, as stated in 4.2.2, it was

[6] R236 is S22 in the interviews (chapter 6).

not possible to collect the data a second time, their responses to item # 2 could not be validated. However, the possibility that they may also have interpreted the verb 'to learn' in item # 2 as the other respondents, and that they had indeed received English language instruction in school, was taken in consideration. Furthermore, R151 and R213 also stated that they were studying English at the time of the investigation (item # 7), so it still made sense to inquire about their degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their experience of learners of English. It was therefore concluded that all the responses to item #2.1 could be considered valid, precisely because all the respondents either had learned or were learning English at the time of the questionnaire, and so it could be safely assumed that they all were able to express an opinion on their experience of learners of the English language.

Table 5.7 and figure 5.4: *degree of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the English learning experience (item # 2.1) – absolute and relative frequencies*.

Are you satisfied with your English learning experience?	n. respondents
Very much	38 (15%)
Moderately	100 (39.4%)
Not very much	85 (33.5%)
Not at all	31 (12.2%)
Tot	*254 (100%)*



Only a slight majority of the respondents (54.4%) expressed satisfaction with their English learning experience; of these, however, little more than one third (corresponding to the 15% of the total of the respondents) indicated a high degree of satisfaction. The responses on the whole seemed to suggest a general tendency to be cautions both in the negative and the positive judgement of one's English learning experience in school. The responses to item # 2.1 were also analyzed in relation to the different age ranges. It was hypothesized that the judgement of younger learners may differ from that of older learners, possibly suggesting a topic to be addressed in the interviews.

Table 5.8: satisfaction or dissatisfaction with English learning experience by age range:

Are you satisfied with your English learning experience?	**Age ranges**				*Tot.*
	18-24 age range	**25-29 age range**	**30-35 age range**	**≥ 36 age range**	
Very much	28 (14.1%)	4 (20%)	4 (25%)	2 (10.5%)	*38*
Moderately	83 (41.7%)	7 (35%)	6 (37.5%)	4 (21%)	*100*
Not very much	66 (33.2%)	6 (30%)	4 (25%)	9 (47.4%)	*85*
Not at all	22 (11%)	3 (15%)	2 (12.5%)	4 (21%)	*31*
Tot.	*199*	*20*	*16*	*19*	*254*

As the table above shows, a slightly higher percentage of satisfied respondents were found within the 30-35 age range that in the other ranges, whereas the older age range presented a slightly higher percentage of respondents who were dissatisfied with their experience of learners of English. Given the huge difference between the number of respondents of the 18-25 age range (199) and those of the other three age ranges, though, the differences that were found could hardly said to hold any significance. Even the cross tabulation of the added absolute frequencies of moderate and strong satisfaction, and moderate and absolute dissatisfaction, in columns, with the 18-25 age range and the over-36 age range, in rows, yielded a p-value, a Cramer V and a Pearson C values that suggested a very low degree of association between age and satisfaction/dissatisfaction:

Table 5.9: cross tabulation of item # 2.1 with 18-25 and ≥ 36 age ranges.

Item # 2.1 by age range	satisfied	dissatisfied	*Tot.*
18-25 age range	111 (106.8) [0.16]	88 (92.2) [0.19]	199
≥ 36 age range	6 (10.2) [1.73]	13 (8.8) [2]	19
Tot.	117	101	218

In the contingency table, beside each value for the observed cell totals are the expected cell totals in round brackets, and the chi-square statistic for each cell in square brackets.

Chi square statistic = 4.0849

The *p*-value = .043267. Significant at $p < .05$.

[Chi-square statistic with Yates correction = 3.1697. The corresponding *p*-value = .075018. Not significant at $p < .05$].

Cramer V = 0.1268

Pearson C = 0.1258

Based on these calculations, it was concluded that a generational factor in relation to the positive or negative judgements of the English learning experience could not be suggested as a key topic to be further investigated in the interviews.

The vast majority of the respondents had also learned one or more other foreign languages as a school or academic subject (item # 3). Only twenty-five respondents, out of a total number of 252 valid responses, declared that they had not learned any foreign language other than English. Obviously, none of the latter was enrolled in one of the programs offered by the DSLC; also, quite predictably, the mean age of this group of respondents was higher (25.8 years old) than the entire sample's mean age. In Italy, the same legislative decree passed in 2004 that made the teaching of English mandatory in primary schools also enforced the teaching of a second language of the European Union in lower and upper secondary schools; before then, only few lower secondary schools and some specific curricula of upper secondary schools offered an additional foreign language besides English. Five respondents said they had learned Italian as an L2. Table 5.10 on p.84 presents all the languages other than English learned in school and/or university by the respondents.

Table 5.10: languages other than English learned in school and/or university.

Language	*Nr. respondents*		Language	*Nr. respondents*
French	*206*		Chinese	*6*
Spanish	*84*		Portuguese	*5*
German	*83*		Italian L2	*5*
Russian	*11*		Japanese	*2*
Arabic	*6*		Other languages*	*20*

*The other languages learner by the respondents were: Ukrainian, Romanian, Lithuanian, Czech, Kazakh, with 1 mention each. Latin and Ancient Greek were also mentioned respectively by 13 and 2 respondents.

100 respondents, corresponding to the 39.4% of the sample, declared that they had had a study abroad or a working experience in an English-speaking country (item # 5); 125 respondents (49.2%) said they had had a study or work experience in a non-English speaking country (item # 6). 96 (37.8%) were the respondents who had never been either to an English speaking or a non-English speaking country for a study or work experience.

As the tables E.1, E.1.1, E.2, E.2.1 in Appendix E show, the cross tabulation of the responses to items # 5 and # 6 with the respondent's age showed that the lowest percentage of students who had never been to an English- and non-English-speaking country to study or work was found in the oldest age range, followed by the younger age range that included a majority of freshmen who presumably had not had yet as many opportunities of mobility as their fellow students aged between 25 and 35, at the time of the questionnaire. The cross-tabulation of the responses to item # and item # 6, as shown in table 5.11, revealed that only the 37.8% of the respondents had not had any abroad experiences.

Table 5.11: cross tabulations of items # 5 and # 6.

Cross tabulation of items # 5 and # 6	Have you had a study/work experience in a non-English speaking country?		
Have you had a study/work experience in an English-speaking country?	Yes / Sì	No / No	*Tot.*
Yes / Sì	67 (26.4%)	33 (13%)	100 (39.4%)
No / No	58 (22.8%)	96 (37.8%)	154 (60.6%)
Tot.	125 (49.2%)	129 (50.8%)	*254*

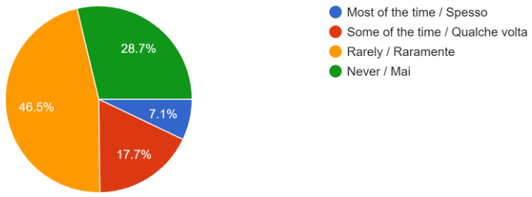
In sum, with almost two thirds of respondents on the whole with an abroad experience in their background, and in consideration of the fact that only the oldest age range presented percentages of 'yes' and 'no' responses that deviated substantially from the overall sample average (see Appendix E), the results obtained for item # 5 and # 6 arguably confirm the generalized trend of increased outward international student mobility that has characterized the two decades that preceded the Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

The follow-up question # 6.1 asked whether the respondents' background included the use of English as a lingua franca. 11 responses to item # 6.1 were not validated, because the respondents had answered negatively to item # 6. Out of 125 valid responses, 42 (33.6%) indicated that English was used as a link language in communication involving other non-native speakers of English most of the times, 39 (31.2%) some of the time, while only 24 (19.2%) and 20 (16%) responses indicated that English had been used for that function, respectively, rarely, and never. On the whole, almost 2 out of 3 respondents (64.8%) who had had a study abroad or work stage experience in a non-English speaking country said they had used English with NNESs to some extent.

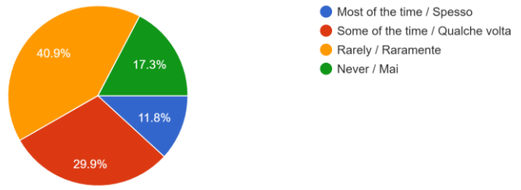
The items # 63 – 68 in section IV complemented the background information provided by the respondents in the first section of the questionnaire. Figure 5.5 on p.85 visualizes the relative frequencies of the collected responses to each item in a set of pie charts.

Figure 5.5: use of English in speaking and writing and exposure to English by reading and viewing.

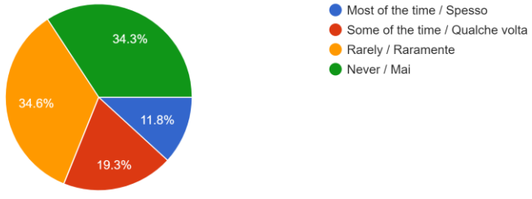
63. How often do you happen to speak English with native English-speakers, outside the learning context? / Con quale frequenza ti capita di parlare ...inglese, al di fuori del contesto di apprendimento?
254 responses



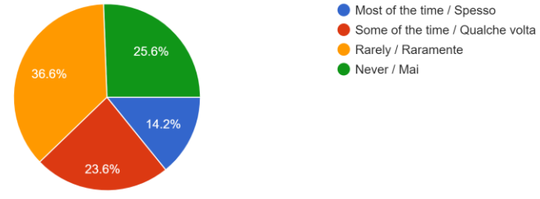
64. How often do you happen to speak English with NON-native English-speakers, outside the learning context? / Con quale frequenza ti capita d...inglese, al di fuori del contesto di apprendimento?
254 responses



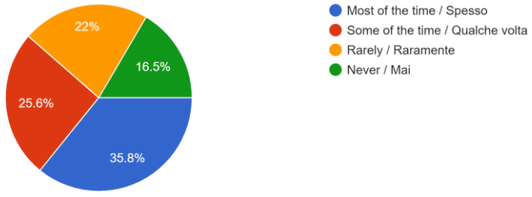
65. How often do you happen to communicate in English in writing with native speakers outside the learning context (email, messenger, whatsap...di apprendimento (email, messenger, whatsapp...)?
254 responses



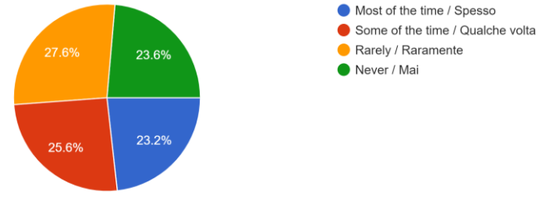
66. How often do you happen to communicate in English in writing with NON-native speakers outside the learning context (using email, messe...dimento (usando la email, messenger, whatsapp...)?
254 responses



67. How often do you watch movies, TV series and programs in English, outside the learning context? / Con quale frequenza guardi film, serie T...inglese, al di fuori del contesto di apprendimento?
254 responses



68. How often do you read in English outside the learning context? / Con quale frequenza leggi in inglese al di fuori del contesto di apprendimento?
254 responses



The responses to items # 65 and # 64 indicated that English was used rather more frequently with other NNESs than it was with NESs, even though the percentages of students who declared that they used English outside the learning contest most or some of the time only represented a minority. Looking at the distribution of the responses to items # 63 and # 64 in the different degree programs and Departments (Table E.3 and table E.4 in Appendix E), no remarkable differences were found; only a marginally higher percentage of respondents of the DSLC indicated that they used English in speaking most or some of the time with NESs, and a considerably higher percentage of them said they spoke with NNESs most of the time; whereas the highest percentages of respondents who said they never used English in speaking were found in the DESU.

Still, as table 5.12 shows, only 33 respondents (corresponding to the 13% of the sample) said that they never used English either with NESs or with other NNESs, which suggests that, however marginal, English does have a part as a language of spoken communication in the respondent's linguistic repertoire.

Table 5.12: frequency of use of English in speaking with NESs and NNESs (cross tabulation of # 63 and # 64).

How often do you speak English with NESs? (# 63)	How often do you speak English with NNESs? (# 64)				*Tot.*
	Most of the time	Some of the time	Rarely	Never	
Most of the time	10 (3.9%)	6 (2.4%)	2 (0.8%)		*18 (7.1%)*
Some of the time	13 (5.1%)	22 (8.7%)	7 (2.8%)	3 (1.2%)	*45 (17.7%)*
Rarely	3 (1.2%)	41 (16.1%)	66 (26%)	8 (3.2%)	*118 (46.5%)*
Never	4 (1.6%)	7 (2.8%)	29 (11.4%)	33 (13%)	*73 (28.7%)*
Tot.	*30 (11.8%)*	*76 (29.9%)*	*104 (41%)*	*44 (17.3%)*	*254*

As indicated by the responses to items # 65 and # 66, slightly higher was the percentage of respondents that used English with NESs in writing than they did in speaking, whereas a smaller percentage of respondents said they used it in writing than they did in speaking with NNESs. No remarkable differences were found in the distribution of the responses to items # 65 and # 66 in the different Departments and degree programs (see tables E.5 and E.6 in Appendix E), except for a relatively higher percentage of 'most of the time' responses in the DSLC and a slightly higher percentage of 'never' responses in the DESU.

Significantly higher was instead the percentage of respondents who said that most or some of the time they watched movies or TV programs in English (# 67), confirming the trend of increased exposure to the English language afforded by the new media technologies and, in particular, the increased popularity of on-demand and online streaming watching that has characterized the last decade. It must be remarked that most responses were collected before the lockdown measures were enforced due to the Covid-19 pandemic crisis (4.2.1). Since March 2020, a sharp surge in TV watching and online streaming, as demonstrated by the rapid increase in subscriptions to on-demand video services, has been confirmed by surveys and reported in the news[7]. Hypothesizing that the effects of the lockdown measures might be reflected in the responses to item # 67, the 30 responses collected after March 2020 were compared to those collected before the pandemic crisis erupted, and it was found that the responses collected while the lockdown measures were in force indicated more screen time dedicated to the English language. However, by cross tabulating the responses to item # 67 collected before and after the lockdown measures were enforced with item # 73 (table 5.12), it was found that 19 out of the 20 'most of the time' responses collected during the lockdown were given by students of LACOM, who presumably had a particular interest in maximizing their exposure to the English language outside the classroom. Furthermore, only six out of thirty

[7] See, e.g.: https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/la-tv-on-demand-fa-pieno-abbonati-ADMawvs , published 7 October 2020; https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/european-streaming-market-netflix-amazon-dominate , published 9 February 2021.

respondents were enrolled in either one of the other degree programs, and it was therefore concluded that there was no way of knowing whether the lockdown possibly was a factor of influence on the responses to item # 67.

Table 5.13: responses to item # 67 by degree program collected before and after the lockdown was ordered.

# 67 / # 73 before/after the lockdown	How often do you watch movies, Tv series and programs in English outside the learning context?								*Tot.*
	most of the time		some of the time		rarely		never		
Time of collection	before	after	before	after	before	after	before	after	
MOI	20		15		18	1	17		
Tot.	*20*		*15*		*19*		*17*		*71*
SCO	11		8	1	3	1	3		
Tot.	*11*		*9*		*4*		*3*		*27*
PICI	3	1	6	1					
Tot.	*4*		*7*						*11*
MCI	1		1						
Tot.	*1*		*1*						*2*
SEDU	25		23		28	1	20		
Tot.	*25*		*23*		*29*		*20*		*97*
SPED	1								
Tot.	*1*								*1*
STPS	3		5						
Tot.	*3*		*5*						*8*
LACOM	7	19	2	2	1	2		1	
Tot.	*26*		*7*		*3*		*1*		*34*
LCE			1		1		1		
Tot.			*1*		*1*		*1*		*3*
Tot.	*71*	*20*	*61*	*4*	*51*	*5*	*41*	*1*	*254*

The total number of LACOM students who answered ‘most of the time’ to item # 67 represented a substantial majority (70.3%), yet the distribution of the responses in the different degree programs and Departments (see also table E.7 in Appendix E) revealed that a considerable percentage of respondents of the DESU and the DCE too favored exposure to English through watching movies and programs.

Fewer, instead, were the respondents who said that they read in English (item # 68) most or some of the time, with almost one quarter of the sample indicating that they never did, and little more than one quarter saying they rarely did. As table E.8 in appendix E shows, even in this case though, significant differences were found in the distribution of the responses between different Departments: while approximately nine out of ten respondents of the languages programs of the DSLC indicated that they read most or some of the time in English, the responses collected in the DCE showed instead an equal distribution between the four levels of frequency, and approximately three out of four respondents of the DESU indicated that they rarely and never read in English.

In brief, with regard to the background information provided by the responses to the items of section IV here considered, the general pattern is that the English does not tend to be actively used very often by the respondents, least of all with NESs, whereas passive exposure to English is more frequently obtained by TV and movie viewing than by reading, although not irrelevant was the percentage of respondents who said they did read in English some or most of the time. As it was to be expected, the highest values on the four-point scale of frequency for items # 63 – # 69 were indicated by the respondents studying the English-taught LACOM degree program; among the DESU respondents, on the other hand, were found the greatest percentage of students who never got any exposure to English by either reading or watching, and never did communicate in English in speaking or writing.

5.2.2 General overview of the results:

Item # 8 asked a direct question on the affective attitude towards English. As table 5.14 shows, the greatest majority of the respondents (87.4%) expressed a positive attitude, while only 4 respondents (0.6%) said they did not like the English language at all.

5.2.2.1 Attitudes to English directly elicited

Table 5.14: affective attitude towards English directly elicited.

how much do you like the English language?	n. respondents
Very much	135 (53.1%)
Moderately	87 (34.3%)
Not very much	28 (11%)
Not at all	4 (1.6%)
Tot.	*254*

In asking whether the respondent believed that the English language was important for her/his future, item # 9 targeted a cognitive aspect of the respondent's attitude towards English. As can be seen in table 5.15, the quasi totality of the respondents confirmed the importance of English for their future, with 68.5% of the sample expressing a strong level of agreement, and 28.7% simply agreeing with the statement.

Table 5.15: perceived importance of English for the student's future.

English is important for my future	n. respondents
Strongly agree	174 (68.5%)
Agree	73 (28.7%)
Disagree	3 (1.2%)
Strongly disagree	4 (1.6%)
Tot.	*254*

5.2.2.2 Attitudes to international mobility

Items # 10 and # 11 elicited the respondent's attitude to a future prospect of international mobility. 141 respondents (55.5%) agreed that they would like to go to an English-speaking country to continue their studies and/or find a job; 129 respondents (50.8%) said they would like to go to a non-English-speaking country to continue their studies and/or find a job. The cross tabulation of the responses to items # 10 and # 11 showed that less than one third of the respondents (30.7%) did not express a positive attitude towards international mobility.

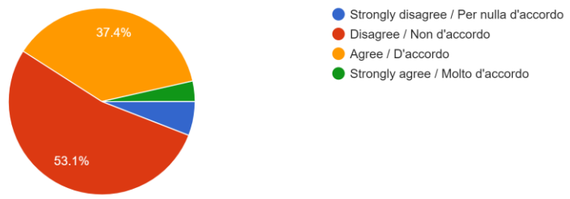
Table 5.16: cross tabulations of items # 10 and # 11 (attitude towards international mobility).

# 10 In the future, I would like to go to an English-speaking country to continue my studies and/or find a job	# 11 In the future, I would like to go to a NON-English-speaking country to continue my studies and/or find a job.		
	Yes / Sì	No / No	*Tot.*
Yes / Sì	94 (37%)	47 (18.5%)	*141 (55.5%)*
No / No	35 (13.8%)	78 (30.7%)	*113 (44.5%)*
Tot.	*129 (50.8%)*	*125 (49.2%)*	*254*

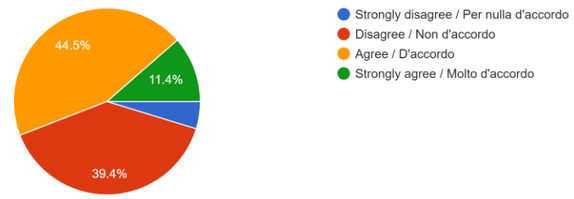
5.2.2.3 The global dimension of English (questionnaire section II)

Fig. 5.6: the spread of English and its causes (items # 12 – 17):

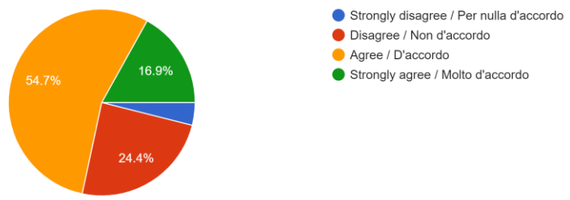
12. The use of English is so widespread in today's world because English is easy to learn / L'uso dell'inglese è così diffuso nel mondo di oggi perchè l'inglese è facile da imparare
254 responses



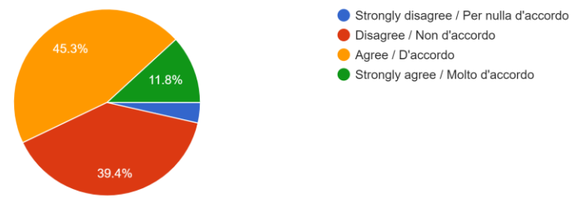
13. The use of English is so widespread in today's world because it is imposed / L'uso dell'inglese è così diffuso nel mondo di oggi perchè viene imposto
254 responses



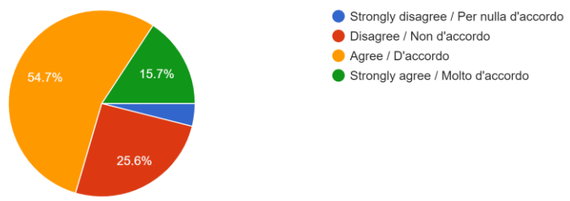
14. The use of English is so widespread in today's world because it naturally spread all over the globe / L'uso dell'inglese è così diffuso nel mondo ...nglese si è diffuso naturalmente per tutto il mondo
254 responses



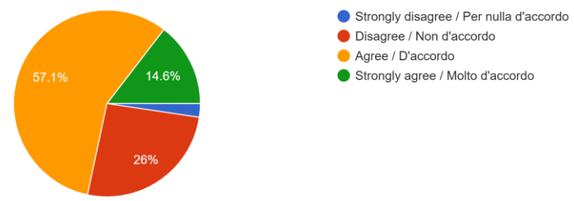
15. The use of English is so widespread in today's world because the British Empire spread it throughout the world / L'uso dell'inglese è così dif...ndo di oggi perchè lo ha diffuso l'impero britannico
254 responses



16. The use of English is so widespread in today's world because of the power and influence of the USA / L'uso dell'inglese è così diffuso nel mondo di o...per via del potere e dell'influenza degli Stati Uniti
254 responses



17. The use of English is so widespread because people see no other choice than to learn and use it if they want to get by nowadays / L'uso dell'ingles...he impararlo e usarlo se vuole cavarsela oggigiorno
254 responses



As explained in chapter section 4.2.2, the questionnaire items grouped in section II covered different topics related to the global dimension of English. The relative frequencies obtained from the responses to the various sets of items related to the same topic are visualized in the pie charts in fig. 5.6 (p.89).

The notion that there are intrinsic characteristics to the English language that make it easy to learn is an oft-cited though arguably unsounded reason for the spread of English throughout the globe (see Crystal 1997: 7-8). As the collected responses to item # 12 show, while the majority of the respondents disagreed (135 in total) and strongly disagreed (15 in total), a significant portion of the sample still expressed agreement with this ill-founded idea. It was however not possible to infer from the questionnaire data alone whether the respondents who disagreed with statement # 12 thought that English did not spread for that reason *although* it is actually easy to learn, or whether they thought that English could not be considered an easy-to-learn language in the first place. The topic was singled out as important one to be further explored in the interviews.

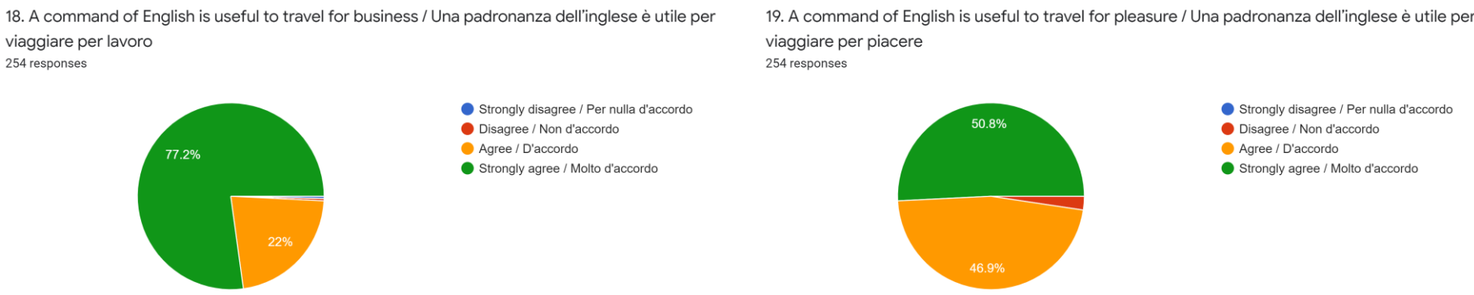
The idea expressed by statement # 13 that the English language is in some way being imposed was found to prevail among the respondents, although only by a small majority, whereas almost three respondents out of four agreed with the statement of item # 14 that the spread of English is due to natural causes (see 2.1.2).

Table 5.17: English is so widespread in today's world because it naturally spread all over the globe (item # 14)

The use of English is so widespread in today's world because it is imposed (# 13)	The use of English natural spread is so widespread in today's world because it naturally spread all over the globe (# 14)				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	*Tot.*
Strongly agree	8	9	10	2	*29*
Agree	24	49	36	4	*113*
Disagree	8	75	15	2	*100*
Strongly disagree	3	6	1	2	*12*
Tot.	*43*	*139*	*62*	*10*	*254*

From the cross-tabulation of the responses to items # 13 and # 14 (see table 5.17) it emerged that as many as 90 respondents agreed (or strongly disagreed) with both the statements, thus seemingly contradicting themselves. The apparent inconsistencies in the responses to items # 13 and # 14 suggested therefore the topic of the natural spread of English as a particularly relevant one to further explore with the interviewees. Indeed, as the interview data analysis illustrates (chapter 6), the term 'natural' was interpreted by some participants in a way that actually did not contradict the idea that the use of English was imposed, neither did it conflict with the view that the global spread was related to the political and economic power of the USA, and the British Empire before them (items # 15 and # 16). Not surprisingly, there were more respondents who attributed the spread of English to the power and influence of the USA than there were who traced the status and the roles of English in today's world back to the legacy of British imperialism. As the pie chart presenting the responses to item # 17 above shows, most respondents also provided a pragmatic, utilitarian reason for the widespread use of English throughout the globe, which also emerged as a relevant topic in the interviews (chapter 6).

Fig. 5.7: the functions of English (items # 18 – 25)



The responses to item # 18, with 196 ‘strongly agree’ and 56 ‘agree’, clearly show that the students who participated in the questionnaire viewed English as the language of the globalized business across the hyper-connected world. The claim that English is useful to travel for pleasure in item # 19 received a slightly lower level of approval, although only 6 respondent expressed disagreement and none of them strongly disagreed with the statement. The responses to items # 21, with only 46 ‘disagree’, prove that, by vast majority, the students who filled in the questionnaire considered English as the language of the internet; whereas a significantly higher percentage of respondents (31.9% in total) did not agree with statement # 21 that English is useful to watch the latest movies and TV shows, perhaps because, in spite of the increased popularity of online streaming and on demand TV services that have made available movies and TV programs in their original language, Italy has always been a ‘dubbing’ country, where almost all foreign movies and TV shows are traditionally dubbed into Italian before they are seen on screen. The responses to item # 21 were cross tabulated with the responses to item # 67, which asked the respondent to indicate the level of frequency with which she/he received exposure to English by watching (see above).

Table 5.18: cross tabulation of items # 21 and # 67.

A command of English is useful to watch the latest movies and Tv programs (#67)	**How often do you watch movies and TV in English? (#21)**				*Tot.*
	Most of the time	**Some of the time**	**Rarely**	**Never**	
Strongly agree	33	6	10	2	*51*
Agree	43	45	25	9	*122*
Disagree	14	14	19	24	*71*
Strongly disagree	1		2	7	*10*
Tot.	*91*	*65*	*56*	*42*	*254*

The values obtained from the cross tabulation illustrated in table 5.18 clearly suggested that there was some association between the perception of the usefulness of a command of the English language for the purpose indicated in item # 21 and a respondent’s habit of watching movie and TV in English. Indeed, as it should have been reasonably expected, the majority of the respondents who said they watched TV and movies in English most or some of the time expressed agreement with item # 21. However, the distribution of the responses to item # 21 given by the respondents who indicated that they rarely or never watched movies and TV programs in English between the agreement and disagreement poles of the scale for item # 67 did not present particularly notable differences; the fact that 34 out of 122 respondents who agreed with the latter rarely and never watched movies and TV in English suggested that the relationship between the responses to the two items was not a straightforward one. To further asses the nature of the relationship between the responses to the two items a chi-square test was run, and the measures of association derived from the chi-square statistic were calculated. First, the responses to each item were split in two halves: 173 responses indicating agreement and 81 responses indicating disagreement with item #67; 156 responses indicating a habit of watching TV and movies in English (some and most of the times), 98 responses indicating a lack of that habit (corresponding to rarely or not ever watching TV and movies in English).

Table 5. 19: chi square test for items # 67 and # 21.

A command of English is useful to watch the latest movies and TV shows (# 21)	How often do you watch movies, TV series and programs in English? (# 67)		Tot.
	Some + most of the times	Rarely + never	
Agreement	127 (106.25) [4.05]	46 (66.75) [6.45]	173
Disagreement	29 (49.75) [8.65]	52 (31.25) [13.77]	81
Tot.	156	98	254

In the contingency table, beside each value for the observed cell totals are the expected cell totals in round brackets, and the chi-square statistic for each cell in square brackets.

Chi-square statistic = 32.9286.

P-value = < 0.00001 (significant at $p < .05$).

[The chi-square statistic with Yates correction is 31.3606. The *p*-value is < 0.00001. Significant at $p < .05$].

Cramer V = 0.3601

Pearson C = 0.3388

The values obtained from the calculations suggested a moderate degree of association between the variables, confirming that no linear relationship could be said to exist between the responses to the two items.

The largest share of 'disagree' answers (46.1%) in the sub-section of the questionnaire that targeted the functions of English were given in response to the statement of item # 22, although a substantial percentage of students (38.2%) also agreed that the English language is the vehicle of the latest trends in lifestyle.

Only 11 respondents overall disagreed (and none strongly disagreed) that a command of English is useful to communicate with other NNESs (item # 23), confirming a clear tendency to view English as a lingua franca for intercultural communication. The responses to item # 23 were also cross tabulated with those given to item # 6.1 (see table 5.19), where the students who had had an experience of international mobility to a non-English-speaking country indicated the frequency with which they used English to communicate with other NNESs.

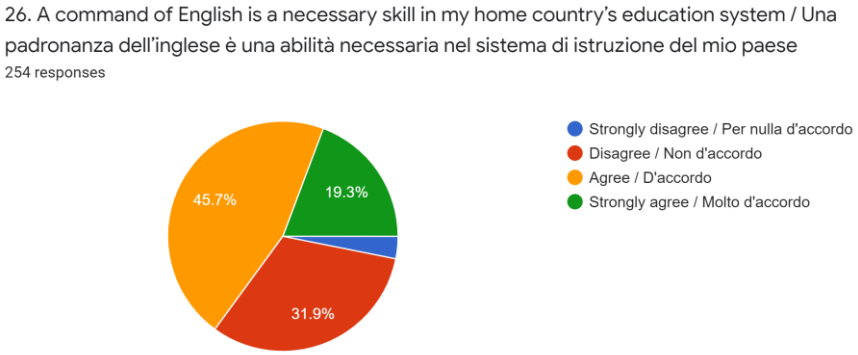
Table 5.20: cross tabulation of items # 23 and # 6.1.

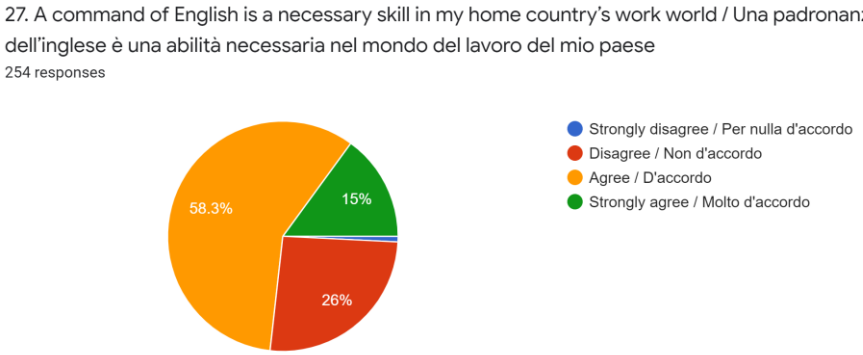
Did you use English to communicate with other NNESs? (# 6.1)	A command of English is useful to communicate with other NNESs (#23)				*Tot.*
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Most of the time	26	16			*42*
Some of the time	18	20	1		*39*
Rarely	11	12	1		*24*
Never	9	9	2		*20*
Tot.	*64*	*57*	*4*		*125*

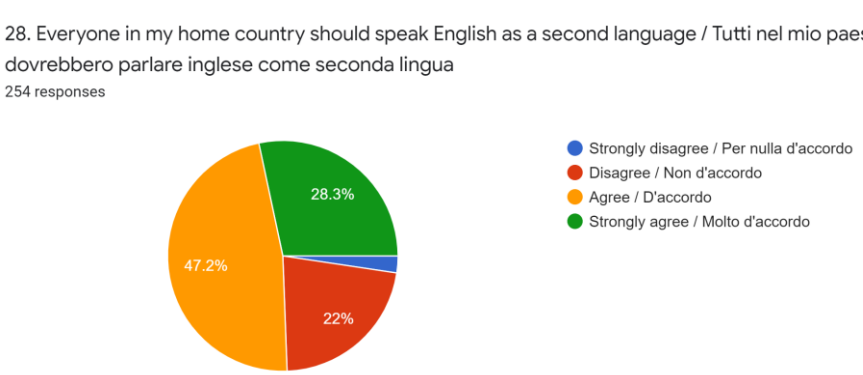
Out of the 125 respondents who provided valid responses to item # 6.1, 4 disagreed with item # 23, and only one of these indicated that he had used English as a link language some of the time. On the other hand, even the 24 respondents who said they had rarely used English and the 20 respondents who indicated that they had never used English in that function still recognized its usefulness as a lingua franca.

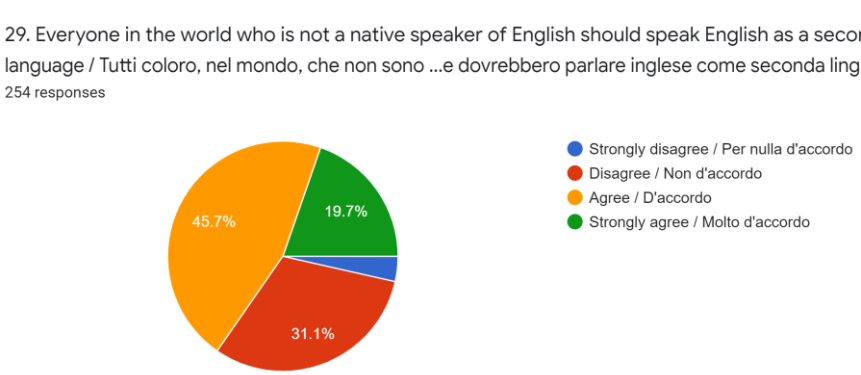
It was pointed out, in chapter 2, that within the framework of adapting education to the demands of a fast-changing globalized market, competence in English has come to be represented as a skill that gives individuals a competitive edge in the globalized labor market and, by extension, as key to a country's modernization and economic success. This ideology that links English to competitiveness was reproduced by the statements # 24 and # 25. The view that being proficient in English boosts one's competitiveness in the labor market was found to prevail among the respondents, 144 (56.7%) of whom strongly agreed and 101 (39.8%) of whom agreed with the statement # 24; only one respondent strongly disagreed, and 8 respondents disagreed with item # 24. The percentage of disagreement with the view expressed in item # 25 that a population that is proficient in English boosts its own country's competitiveness was instead higher (24%, corresponding to 61 respondents), although the vast majority of the respondents still expressed agreement with it, with 130 (51.2%) 'agree' responses and 63 (24.8%) strongly 'agree' responses in total.

Fig. 5.8: English as a necessary skill.









The view that English is a necessary skill in today's world was reproduced by the statements # 26 – 29. Figure 5.8 (p.94) visualizes the results for those items in pie charts.

By examining the individual responses to item # 26 it was found that only one exchange student, R38, the bilingual native speaker of Russian and Belarusian based in Lithuania did not agree. The same respondent though strongly agreed that English is a necessary skill in her own country's work world. Conversely, the exchange student from Germany agreed with item # 26 but disagreed with item # 27. It seemed safe to assume that all the other respondents who disagreed and strongly disagreed with either item understood the statement # 26 as referring to Italy and, in this sense, it is interesting to see how the view that English is a skill that's necessary in the Italian education system education and work world was found to prevail by large majority in the sample.

In accordance with the responses to the previous items, the results obtained for item # 28 revealed that approximately little more than three quarters of the sample also expressed agreement with the idea that everyone in Italy should speak English as a second language. The percentage of agreement with the statement # 29 that English ought to be a second language to everyone in the world was lower although still representing the majority of the sample.

The statements # 30 – 34 variously reproduce the view of English as a 'global' lingua franca. The pie charts in fig. 5.9 on p. 96 summarize the results obtained for each of these items.

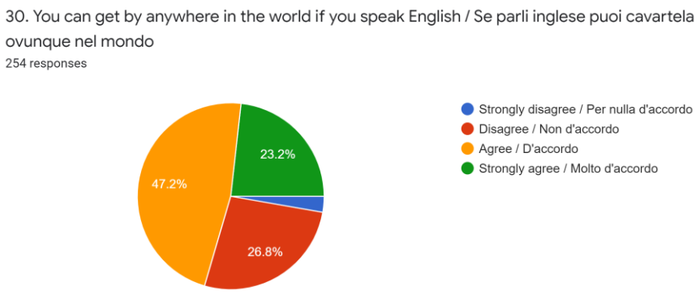
Looking at the pie charts in fig. 5.9, it seems evident that the overwhelming majority of the respondents assumed that English functions as a global lingua franca. Only 1 respondent strongly disagreed, and 8 respondents disagreed with the idea that English is the language of globalization (item #34), 14 respondents disagreed with the idea that English is the essential language of modern technology (item #31); 19 respondents disagreed, and one strongly disagreed with the view that English is the language of business (item # 33).

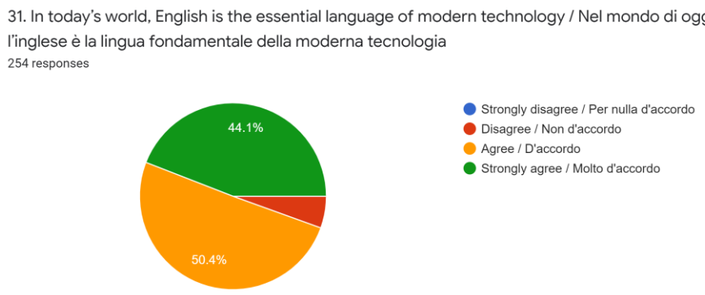
The responses to item # 30, though, also suggest that a considerable portion of the respondents' sample were aware that many are the places, throughout the four corners of the world, where one would hardly get by with only the English language.

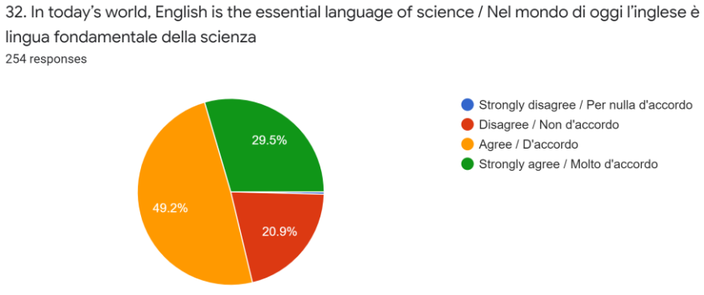
As can be seen in fig. 5.9, a considerable portion of respondents also did not agree (53 'disagree' and 1 'strongly disagree' responses) with the idea expressed in item # 32 that English is the essential language of science, perhaps because, in spite of the advance of English as a lingua franca of academic and scientific research, the national traditions of research are still strong in the European continent, and in Italy, in the specific, a great deal of scientific work is carried out in the national language.

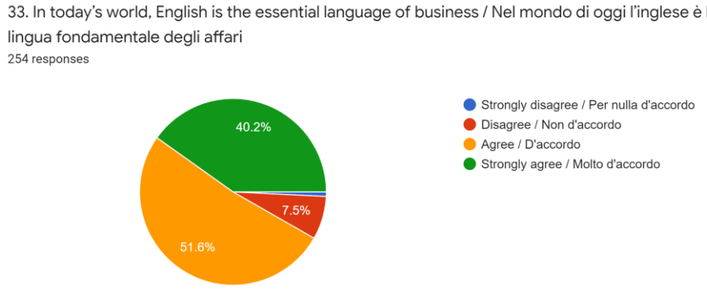
All these topics that related to various aspects of the lingua franca role of English in today's world were further discussed in the interviews.

Fig. 5.9: English as a 'global' lingua franca.









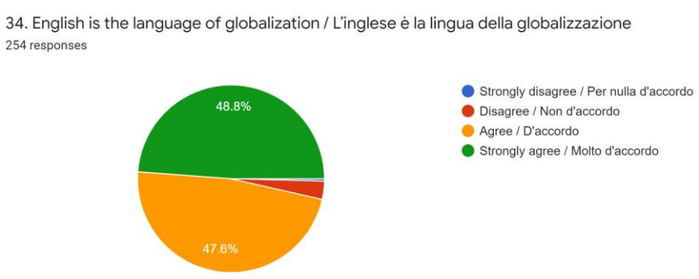
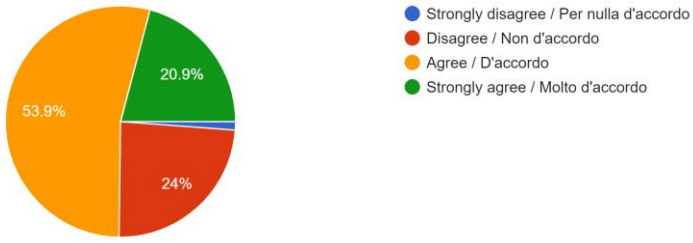
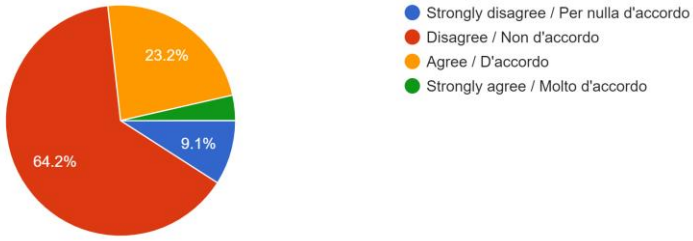


Fig. 5.10: English, modernity, development and progress.

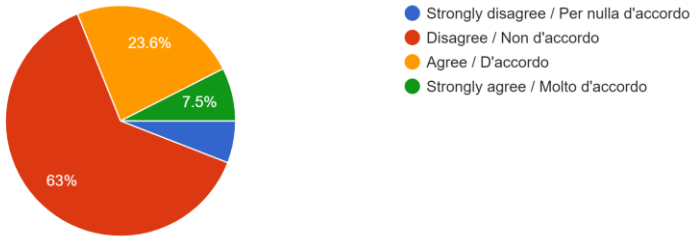
35. English is the language of progress / L'inglese è la lingua del progresso
254 responses



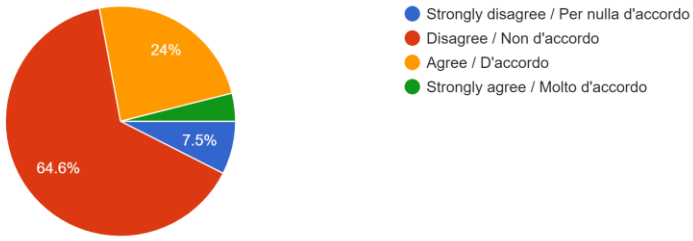
36. English is the language of democracy / L'inglese è la lingua della democrazia
254 responses



37. Proficiency in English is typical only of the populations of the most modern and developed nations / Un'alta competenza in inglese è tipica so...popolazioni delle nazioni più moderne e sviluppate
254 responses



38. Low competence in English in a country's population correlates with the country's backwardness / Una scarsa competenza in inglese n...un paese correla con l'arretratezza di quel paese
254 responses



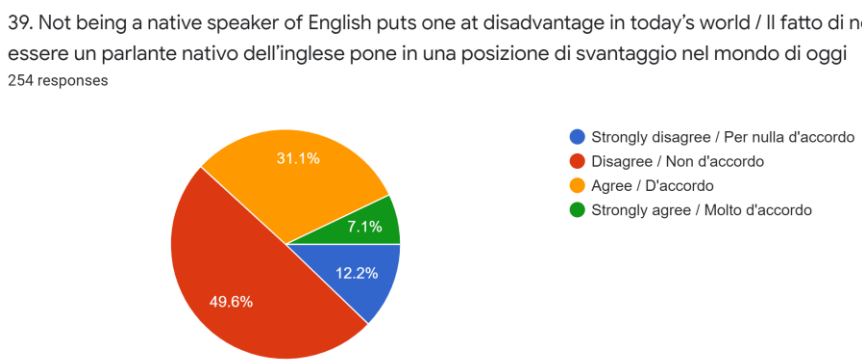
Items # 35 – 38 required the respondents to express their agreement or disagreement with a series of statements that reproduced the view referred to in chapter 2 that links English with modernity, development and progress.

While the majority of the respondents expressed agreement with the notion that English is the language of progress (item # 35), almost three quarters of the sample did not agree with the statement of item # 36 that English is the language of democracy (163 'disagree' and 23 'strongly disagree' responses). However, since as many as 59 students agreed and 9 strongly agreed with this stereotypical notion, the topic was identified as one to follow up in the interviews. With five participants who had agreed and two participants who had strongly agreed with the stereotypical view that English is the language of democracy, the interviewee sample turned out to be perfectly representative of the questionnaire respondents' sample, with regard to the responses to item # 36. The possibility to directly ask the participants to argue their responses allowed the researcher to understand how this scientifically unsound statement had been interpreted (refer to 6.3.1.4 and 6.3.1.10).

The majority of the respondents also did not agree with the two complementary statements of items # 37 and # 38 that established a correlation between the level of proficiency in English of a country's population with the level of development of the country. However, 19 respondents strongly agreed, and 60 respondents agreed with item # 37, while 10 'strongly agree' and 61 'agree' responses were given to item # 38, all of which apparently suggested that also some Italian students possibly perceive a direct link between English language skills on the one hand, and individual and societal development on the other, as expressed in the rhetoric of English and development which served to justify the perpetuation of the linguistic policies of colonial times in the outer circle (Mohanty 2017, refer back to 2.2.2). This topic too was further explored in some of the interviews (refer to chapter 6).

The items # 39 and # 40 targeted the relationship between NESs and NNESs. Item # 40, though, as pointed out in chapter 4.2.2, was eventually excluded from the data analysis, because it appeared too slanted. Although negative attitudes towards NNE accents and also overt discrimination of foreign-accented speakers in ENL countries have been reported in attitude studies (see chapter 3.4.1), such a de-contextualized claim as that of item # 40 implicitly suggested that NESs are, as a matter of fact, indistinctly intolerant towards the NNESs.

Fig. 5.11: power imbalance between NESs and NNESs.

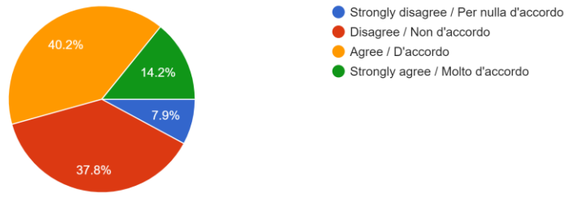


As figure 5.10 shows, more than six respondents out of ten did not agree that not being a native speaker puts one at disadvantage in today's world; the interesting finding, though, is that a relevant portion of the respondents' sample (97 students in total) held the opposite view, which in turn suggested that a power imbalance is felt by these NNES students who possibly perceive the advantages of not having to go through the efforts of learning English as an additional language.

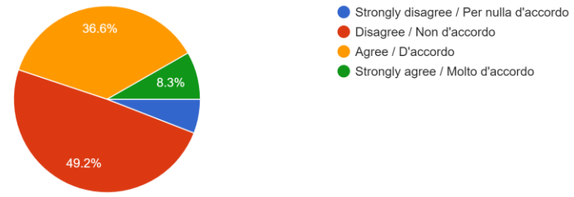
The items # 41 – 50 elicited the respondents' views about the impact of the spread of English on the world's linguistic and cultural diversity. The figure below provides an overview of the responses to these items.

Fig. 5.12: English and the world's linguistic and cultural diversity.

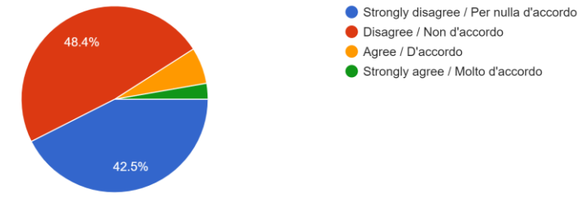
41. It is better to use exclusively English as a link language between speakers of different languages than to have to translate to and from a number of la...ifferenti che dovere tradurre tra le diverse lingue
254 responses



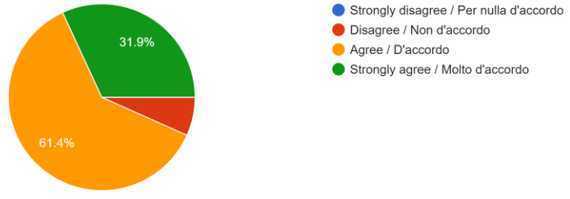
42. Using English as the single common language of international communication is unfair to speakers of other languages / Usare l'inglese come u...inatorio nei confronti dei parlanti di altre lingue
254 responses



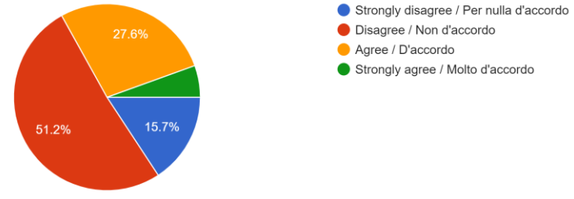
43. Native speakers of English don't need to learn a foreign language / I parlanti nativi di inglese non hanno bisogno di imparare una lingua straniera
254 responses



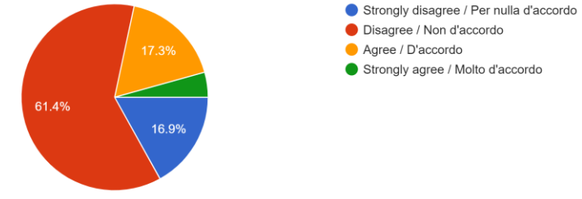
44. Native speakers of English should learn (at least) a foreign language / I parlanti nativi di inglese dovrebbero imparare (almeno) una lingua straniera
254 responses



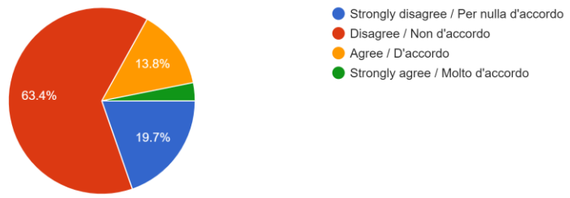
45. The use of a single global language promotes peace and democracy in the world / L'uso di un'unica lingua globale promuove la pace e la democrazia nel mondo
254 responses



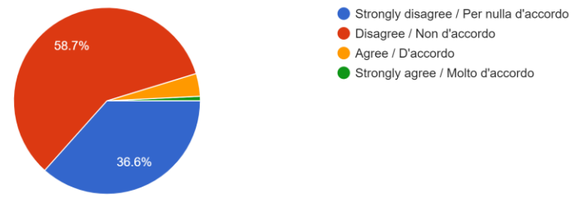
46. English is a threat to the world's linguistic and cultural diversity / L'inglese è una minaccia alla diversità linguistica e culturale del mondo
254 responses



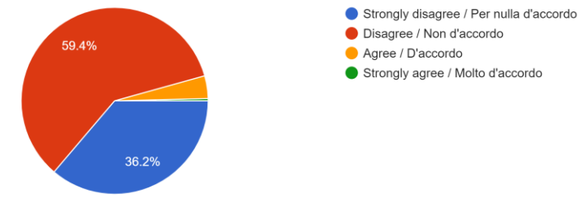
47. An increased use of English in education in a non-English speaking country is bound to lower the standards of the country's national language /...impoverimento della lingua nazionale di quel paese
254 responses



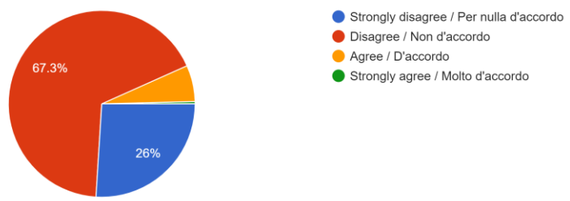
48. English is a threat to my home country's national language / L'inglese è una minaccia alla lingua nazionale del mio paese
254 responses



49. English is a threat to the local cultures and traditions in my home country / L'inglese è una minaccia alle culture e tradizioni locali, nel mio paese
254 responses



50. The widespread use of English in the world, in so many domains, should be prevented / L'uso diffuso dell'inglese nel mondo, in cosi tanti contesti, dovrebbe essere evitato
254 responses



The relationship between the use of English as a lingua franca and the principle of respecting one's right to use their own native language appeared to be a rather controversial topic. Only a narrow majority (54.4%) of respondents agreed that using a single link language is better than having to translate to and from a variety of languages; similarly, 55.1% of the respondents did not agree that the use of English as the single language of international communication is not fair to the speakers of other languages, therefore supposedly implying that no issues of inequality are entailed in the use of English as a lingua franca. The percentages of respondents who indicated a strong level of agreement and disagreement, for both items, represented a rather thin share, which suggests that it's possible that not all respondents had a well-thought-out opinion on the topic. Furthermore, the cross tabulation of the responses to items # 41 and # 42 (see table 5.21) revealed that there was no correspondence between the negative responses to the former and the positive responses to the latter. That is to say, not all the respondents who disagreed that it is better to use a single link language than to resort to translating between languages held the view that an exclusive use of English as a lingua franca was unfair to the NNESs, and vice-versa.

Table 5.21: cross tabulation of items # 41 and # 42.

It is better to use English as the single link language than to have to translate (# 41)	Using English as link language for international communication is unfair to the NNESs (#42)				Tot.
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disgree	Strongly disagree	
Strongly agree	2	8	19	7	36
Agree	4	26	67	5	102
Disagree	6	53	35	2	96
Strongly disagree	9	6	4	1	20
Tot.	21	93	125	15	254

The measures of association were nevertheless calculated for the total number of responses indicating either agreement or disagreement with the two items; for the purpose, a two-by-two contingency table was set up and a chi-square test was run:

Table 5.22: chi-square test of (added) values for agreement and disagreement (with items # 41 and # 42.

#41	# 42		Tot.
	Agreement	Disagreement	
Agreement	40 (61.94) [7.77]	98 (76.06) [6.33]	138
Disagreement	74 (52.06) [9.24]	42 (63.94) [7.53]	116
Tot.	114	140	254

In the contingency table, beside each value for the observed cell totals are the expected cell totals in round brackets, and the chi-square statistic for each cell in square brackets.

Chi square statistic = 30.8664.

P-value = < 0.00001. (Significant at $p < .05$).

[The chi-square statistic with Yates correction is 29.4754. The *p*-value is < 0.00001. Significant at $p < .0$].

Cramer V = 0.3486

Pearson C = 0.3292

The results obtained from the chi-square test suggested a moderate degree of association between the responses to the two items, confirming that the relationship was not a direct one.

The pie chart the summarizes the responses to item # 43 clearly reveals that less than one respondent out of ten agreed that NESs do not need to learn a foreign language, and an even lower percentage of the sample did not agree that NESs should learn one or more languages (# 44). By cross tabulating the responses to items #43 and #

44 it was found that most respondents who did not agree that the NESs do not need to learn a foreign language also agreed that they should learn (at least) one foreign language, which means that there is no direct relationship between the two opinions.

Table 5.23: cross tabulation of items # 43 and # 44.

# 43 NES don't need to learn a foreign language	# 44 NESs should learn (at least) a foreign language				*Tot*
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Strongly agree	4	3	0	0	7
Agree	3	8	5	0	16
Disagree	15	98	10	0	123
Strongly disagree	59	47	2	0	108
Tot	81	156	17	0	254

The view expressed in item # 45 that the use of one language promotes peace and democracy has always been a tenet of the monolingual language policies that the multilingual countries of the outer circle inherited from the colonial era. While three quarters of the sample expressed disagreement with this empirically unsubstantiated view, the interesting finding was that as many as 70 respondents agreed and 14 respondents strongly agreed with it. The ideology of monolingualism expressed by the claim of item # 45 was therefore identified as a topic to address in the interviews (refer to 6.3.1.8).

Less than one quarter of the sample agreed with the view expressed in item # 46 that the global spread of English represents a threat to the world's linguistic and cultural diversity. It seemed safe to assume, then, that most respondents did not perceive any issues of domain erosion nor of marginalization of linguistic groups in the advance of English.

Statement # 47 expressed the purists' concern for the preservation of the supposed intactness of a language, which is allegedly threatened by the advance of English in the education systems of a non-English-speaking country. The fear that the increased use of English and the related spread of the Anglicisms in the linguistic habits of the native speakers of Italian are ultimately bound to 'corrupt' and cause the decay of the Italian language is not an entirely unpopular one, and it has often been voiced in the media. Although the overwhelming majority of respondents did not agree with the statement # 47, a total of 44 'agree' and 11 'strongly agree' responses were collected, suggesting the topic as one to consider for discussion in the interviews (refer to 6.3.1.8 and 6.3.1.9).

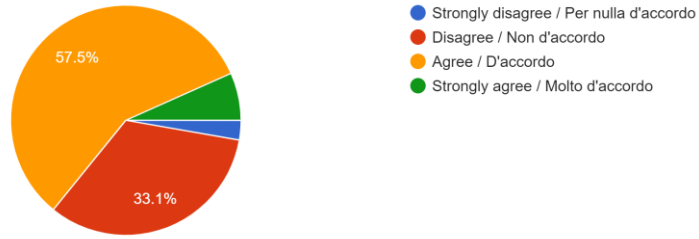
As it was reasonable to expect, very few were instead the respondents who agreed that the English language represented a threat to their own country's national language and cultural traditions: 10 respondents agreed and 2 respondents strongly agreed with item # 48, 10 respondents agreed and 1 strongly agreed with item # 49. These findings were in fact consistent with the overall positive attitude towards English revealed by most of the other questionnaire responses; also, regardless of the attitude one has towards the spread of English, the objective risks of domain erosion and loss, in the new peripheries of English, as of now, are confined to very limited and specific contexts, and so a generalized perception of English as a threat would have been an arguably odd finding.

In agreement with the general trend suggested by the responses so far analyzed, the vast majority of the respondents also expressed disagreement with the view that the widespread use of English in the world, in so many domains, should be prevented; only 16 'agree' and one 'strongly agree' responses to item # 50 were collected.

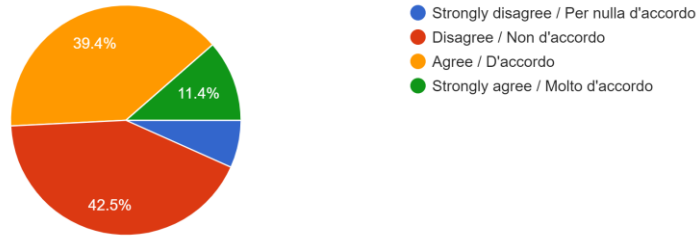
The items # 51 to # 54.1 addressed the relationship between English and the other languages of the world. The diagrams in fig 5.13 (p 102) summarize the responses to items # 51, # 52, # 53 and # 54.

Fig. 5.13: English and the other languages of the world.

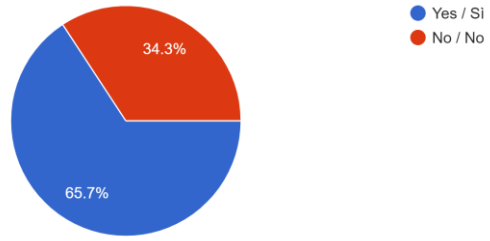
51. English is better suited than any other language to function as a global language / L'inglese è meglio adatto di ogni altra lingua a funzionare come lingua globale
254 responses



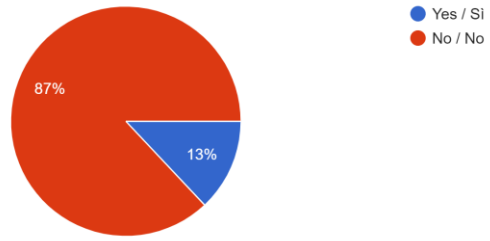
52. All languages, in theory, can perform the functions of English / Tutte le lingue, in teoria, possono svolgere le funzioni dell'inglese
254 responses



53. There are other languages in the world that are as equally important as English / Ci sono altre lingue nel mondo importanti tanto quanto l'inglese
254 responses



54. There are other languages in the world that are more important than English / Ci sono altre lingue nel mondo che sono più importanti dell'inglese
254 responses



146 respondents agreed and 17 respondents strongly agreed that English is better suited to function as a global language than any other language. Although the large majority of the sample expressed agreement, the 7 'strongly disagree' and the 84 'disagree' responses pointed to the controversial nature of the view expressed in item # 51. As it is shown in chapter 6, the topic was also brought up with some of the interviewees, who variously interpreted the idea of a particular suitability of English for the function of global link language.

The respondents were split in half over the idea that all the languages in theory can perform the functions of English (item # 52). The caveat 'in theory' included the statement was meant to ask the respondent to focus on the inherent characteristics of languages, and to not provide an answer that was based on the contingent sociolinguistic realities of the contemporary world. There was no way of finding out whether it was differently understood other than raising the topic with the respondents who participated in the interviews; the questionnaire results alone, though, pointed to the contentious nature of the matter.

The responses to items # 51 and # 52 were cross tabulated to see if some correlation between the two views could be hypothesized (table 5.24); subsequently, a chi-square statistic test was run, and the related measures of association were calculated for the total number of responses indicating agreement and disagreement with each item (in table 5.25).

Table 5.24: cross tabulation of items # 51 and # 52.

English better suited than any other	**All languages in theory can perform the functions of English (# 52)**				*Tot*
language to function as a global language (# 51)	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Strongly agree	4	6	4	3	*17*
Agree	11	57	71	7	*146*
Disagree	2	35	32	15	*84*
Strongly disagree	0	2	1	4	*7*
Tot.	*17*	*100*	*108*	*29*	*254*

Table 5.25: chi-square test for (added) values of agreement and disagreement with items # 51 and # 52.

# 51	# 52		Tot.
	Agreement	Disagreement	
Agreement	78 (75.08) [0.11]	85 (87.92) [0.1]	163
Disagreement	39 (41.92) [0.2]	52 (49.08) [0.17]	91
Tot.	117	137	254

In the contingency table, beside each value for the observed cell totals are the expected cell totals in round brackets, and the chi-square statistic for each cell in square brackets.

Chi-square statistic = 0.5866.

P-value is .443741. (*Not* significant at $p < .05$).

[The chi-square statistic with Yates correction is 0.4027. The *p*-value is .525673. *Not* significant at $p < .05$].

Cramer V = 0.0481.

Pearson C = 0.0480.

The values obtained from the calculations suggested that the responses to the two items were independent of each other. Therefore, the hypothesis of a correlation between the view of a special suitability of English for the function of global language and the view that not all languages can perform the functions of English was not pursued.

The items # 53 and # 54 asked the respondents to consider whether they thought that there were other languages that are respectively as important as or more important than English. 167 respondents (out of 254, 65.7%) said

that there were other languages in the world that are as important as English, whereas only 33 out of 254 (13%) respondents answered affirmatively to item # 54. The responses to items # 53 and # 54 were also examined to see if there were any noticeable differences between the groups of respondents belonging to different degree programs. Tables 5.26 and 5.27 summarize the results of the cross tabulation of items # 53 and # 54 with item # 73 (degree program).

Table 5.26: cross tabulation of item # 53 with item # 73 (degree program of the respondent).

Degree program (#73)	There are other languages that are as important as English (#53)		
	Yes	No	*Tot. f*
LACOM	21 (61.8%)	13 (38.2%)	*34*
LCE	2	1	*3*
MCI		2	*2*
MOI	46 (65.7%)	24 (34.3%)	*70*
MOling mec	1		*1*
PICI	10 (90.1%)	1 (<1%)	*11*
SCO	18 (66.7%)	9 (33.3%)	*27*
SEDU	64 (66%)	33 (34%)	*97*
SPED		1	*1*
STPS	5	3	*8*
Tot.	*167 (65.7%)*	*87 (34.3%)*	*254*

The relative frequencies for a tot. f (absolute frequency value) < 10 was not calculated.

Table 5.27: cross tabulation of item # 54 with item # 73 (degree program of the respondent).

Degree program (# 73)	There are other languages that are more important than English (# 54)		
	Yes	No	*Tot.*
LACOM	2 (5.9%)	32 (94.1%)	*34*
LCE		3	*3*
MCI		2	*2*
MOI	9 (12.9%)	61 (87.1%)	*70*
MOling mec		1	*1*
PICI	2 (11.8%)	9 (81.8%)	*11*
SCO	4 (14.8%)	23 (85.2%)	*27*
SEDU	15 (15.5%)	82 (84.5%)	*97*
SPED		1	*1*
STPS	1	7	*8*
Tot.	*33 (13%)*	*221 (87%)*	*254*

The relative frequencies for a tot. f (absolute frequency value) < 10 was not calculated.

Considering that the total number of respondents from certain degree programs (LCE, MCI, PICI, SPED, STPS) was too small to have any statistical significance at all even at a merely descriptive level, tables 5.26 and 5.27 clearly show that no particularly remarkable deviations from the overall sample were found. Comparatively, only

a slightly lower rate of students of LACOM declared that there are other languages that are as important as English while a little more markedly lower was the percentage of LACOM students who stated that there are languages that are more important than English. If such subtle differences deserve an explanation, this can perhaps be related to the importance that English assumed in their EMI course of study.

The most interesting data were provided by the follow up questions to each item (items # 53.1 and # 54.1), where the respondents were asked to indicate what language(s) they believed were as important as or more important than English. A total number of 163 respondents mentioned one or more languages that they believed are as important as English; 29 respondents in total mentioned one or more languages as being more important than English. Tables F.1 and F.2 in Appendix F list all the responses given respectively to item # 53.1 and item # 54.1 in alphabetic order. The tables 5.28 and 5.29 below summarize the results by reporting all the languages mentioned (whether alone or in combination with other languages) and the total number of mentions for each single language.

Table 5.28: other languages that are as important as English (item #53.1).

Languages mentioned		Nr. mentions
1	Chinese/Mandarin	94
2	Spanish	81
3	French	49
4	Arabic	27
5	German	25
6	Russian	21
7	Japanese	10
8	All/Any/Every language(s)	10
9	Italian	8
10	Portuguese	3
11	Eastern languages	2
12	Ancient Greek	1
13	Hindi	1
14	Latin	1
15	Northern European languages	1
16	Slavic languages	1
Tot.		*335*

Chinese was the language that received the most mentions in response to item # 53.1, followed by Spanish and French. As shown in table F.1 in appendix F, four respondents argued their response to item 53.1. R226 commented that Chinese and Spanish are "the most spoken languages in the world" and that they are "marginalized in the Italian education system" whose offer of foreign languages is limited to German and French. R226 was also interviewed (S16), and the topic of the failures of foreign language instruction in her own experience as a pupil in Italian schools was discussed further in the course of the interview (refer to 6.3.2). R153 highlighted the "historical-cultural" importance of Latin, ancient Greek and Italian. R4 also pointed to the link that ties language to culture in arguing that "all languages share the same importance because they define a specific culture", whereas R126 distinguished between the importance, versatility and spread of a language, and remarked that while all languages are important some are more versatile or more widely spread than others. R126 was also interviewed, and her comments (S4) provided deeper insights into this view of hers (refer chapter 6).

Table 5.29: other languages that are more important than English (item # 54.1).

Languages mentioned		Nr mentions
1	Chinese	14
2	Spanish	7
3	Arabic	4
4	French	4
5	German	2
6	Russian	3
7	Portuguese	2
8	Japanese	1
9	"(keeping one's) mother tongue"	2
10	"Oriental languages"	1
11	"for each country its own language"	1
12	All/every language(s)"	2
Tot.		*43*

Chinese and Spanish also received the most mentions as languages that are believed to be more important than English. Interestingly, two respondents (R24, R131) wrote that one's mother tongue is more important than English, and one respondent (R124) wrote "for each country its own language". Seven respondents argued their response to item # 54.1 (see table F.2 in Appendix F for the verbatim responses). R226 said that "based on economic considerations we can mention Chinese" and observed that the importance of a language is a relative concept. R211 wrote "perhaps Chinese and Arab in the work world", thus also viewing the importance of a language in terms of the economic power of communities of their native speakers. R153 understood the concept of importance in terms of the spread of a language and mentioned French and Spanish, pluricentric languages like English that are "spoken in various nations of the world". Two respondents instead denied that the importance of a language depends on its number of speakers and pointed out that all languages are equally important. While one of them (R106) also observed that "English is just the simplest and most spreaded" (sic.), the other (R115) observed that "it does not matter how many people speak them. What matters is that they are there for communication" (sic). These arguments though represent an exception to a more generalized tendency to identify specific languages as being either as important or more important than English.

In conclusion, the responses to items # 53.1 and 54.1 overall suggest that the respondents tended to 1) view languages in terms of the economic power of the national communities of their native speakers, 2) understand the world's sociolinguistic realities from a Eurocentric viewpoint. Apart from Chinese, Russian and Arabic, the other languages that were mostly mentioned are those that are traditionally offered as subjects of foreign language instruction in the Italian education system.

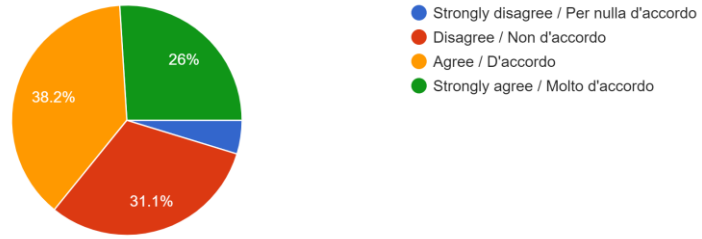
5.2.2.4 Views on English language teaching (questionnaire section III)

As explained in section 4.2.2, section III directly elicited the respondents' opinions on ELT. Items # 55 and # 56 targeted the tenet that that English is best taught monolingually; item # 57 targeted the ideology of native-speakerism as this is reflected in the idea that English is best taught by NESTs; item # 58 targeted the tenet according to which the earlier English learning starts (in classroom-based instruction) the better the learning results. The responses to items # 55 – 58 are visualized in fig. 5.14 (p. 106).

Figure 5.14: three tenets of ELT (monolingual tenet, native-speakerism, 'early start' tenet)

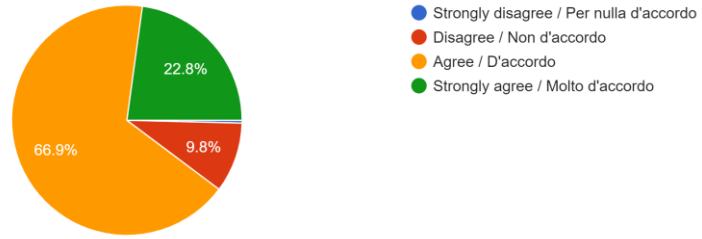
55. Teachers of English must avoid using the students' mother tongue (e.g. Italian) in the classroom / Gli insegnanti di inglese non devono usare la lingua madre degli studenti (es. l'italiano) in aula

254 responses



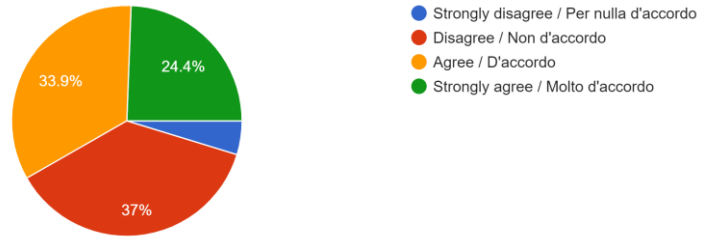
56. Teachers of English also have to be able to speak their students' mother tongue / Gli insegnanti di inglese devono anche sapere parlare la lingua madre dei loro studenti

254 responses



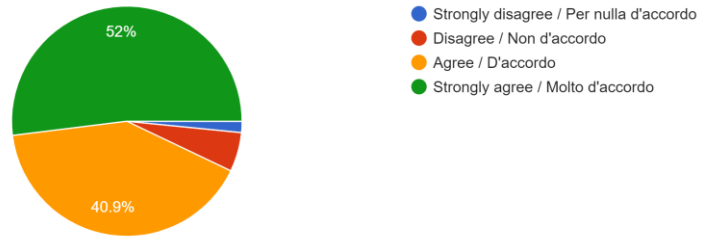
57. The best teacher of English is a native speaker of English / Il migliore insegnante d'inglese è un parlante nativo dell'inglese

254 responses



58. English learning in my home country should start from pre-school / L'apprendimento dell'inglese nel mio paese dovrebbe iniziare sin dalla scuola dell'infanzia

254 responses

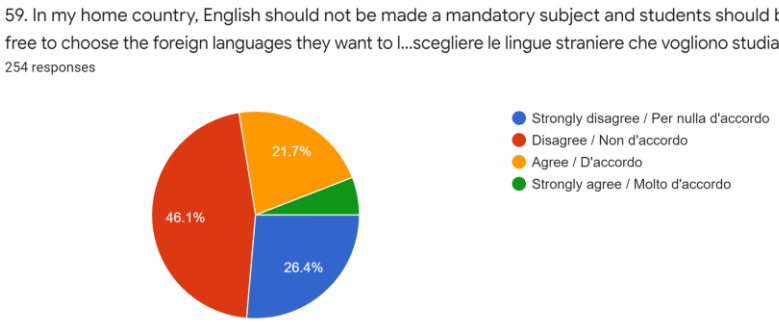


While little less than two thirds of the sample (64.2%) expressed agreement with the monolingual tenet (and only 12 respondents strongly disagreed that the students' L1 should be used in the English classroom), the overwhelming majority of the respondents (89.8% of the entire sample) agreed or strongly agreed that the teachers must also be able to speak the learner's native language (item # 56), hence suggesting that they believed that the L1 can provide useful support to the learning process.

A slight tendency to prefer the NESTs was revealed by the responses to item # 57, with little more than half of the sample expressing agreement: 33.9% of 'agree' and 24.4% of 'strongly agree' responses. Significantly, though, the largest share of the responses was represented by the 'disagree' option (37%). The responses to item # 57 overall seemed to suggest that the choice between a NEST and a NNEST may not be understood by learners as a straightforward one.

A wide agreement was instead found on the idea that English learning should start already in preschool (item # 58). While this is a commonsense notion (refer to 2.4.1), given the relevance that the early-start tenet has acquired in the context of a trend to lower the age at which English learning starts in the education systems of Europe (refer to 1.4), the topic was identified as a particularly interesting one to further explore in the interviews (refer to 6.3.2.9).

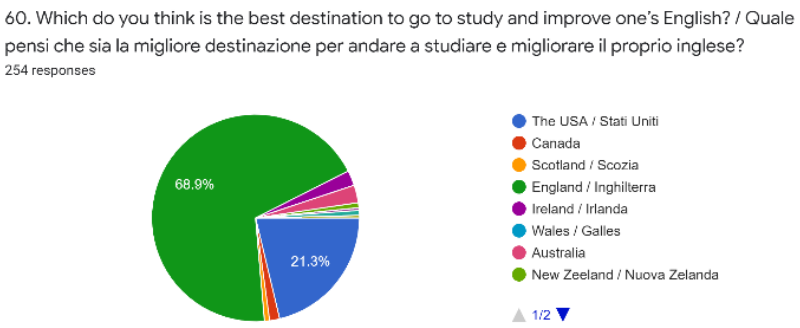
Figure 5.15: the learning of English and other foreign languages in the education system (item # 59).



As the pie chat in fig. 5.15 shows, little more than one fourth of the total sample disagreed or strongly disagreed that English learning should be left to the learners' free choice, thus revealing that the mandatory status of English as a school and academic subject is largely uncontested.

Table 5.30 and figure 5.16: preferred destination to go to study English.

Item # 60	nr. respondents	percentage
England	175	68.9%
The USA	54	21.3%
Australia	7	2.8%
Ireland	6	2.4%
Canada	4	1.6%
Another Asian country	2	< 1%
New Zeeland	2	< 1%
Scotland	2	< 1%
India	1	< 1%
Other	1	< 1%
Tot.	*254*	*100%*



As table 5.30 and the pie chart 5.16 on p. 108 clearly show, England received the most mentions as the preferred target language destination; little more than two respondents out of ten indicated the USA, while the other responses all taken together only account for less than the 10% of the total sample.

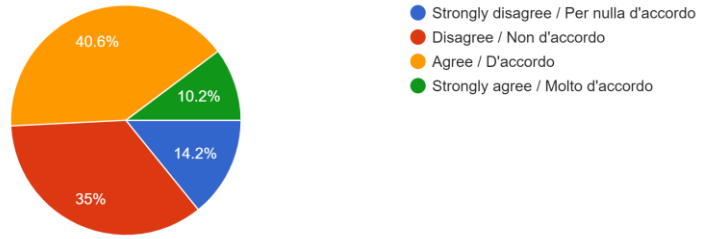
The results are consistent with the findings in attitude studies (refer to 3.4.2) that revealed a generalized tendency among NNESs to view English varieties in a hierarchical manner and seem to indicate a strong influence of the EFL pedagogical model and practices, which projects England as home to the 'correct' English. However, the possibility that other considerations that are unrelated to the appropriateness of the English varieties as learning target models may have oriented the respondent in selecting the best destination was also entertained. Some respondents, for instance, may have indicated a country where they simply wished to travel because of a personal interest in its culture, or the destination which they found more convenient in terms of costs and distance.

5.2.2.5 Pronunciation target model (questionnaire section IV)

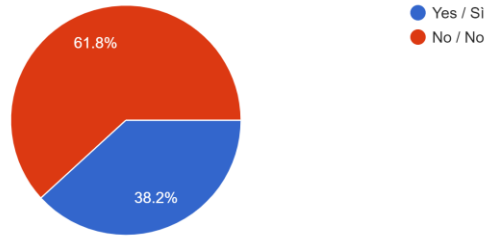
Four items (# 61 – # 62.1) in section IV asked the respondents to give their opinion on their own pronunciation and indicate what pronunciation target model they set for themselves.

Figure 5.17: perception of one's own pronunciation and pronunciation target model.

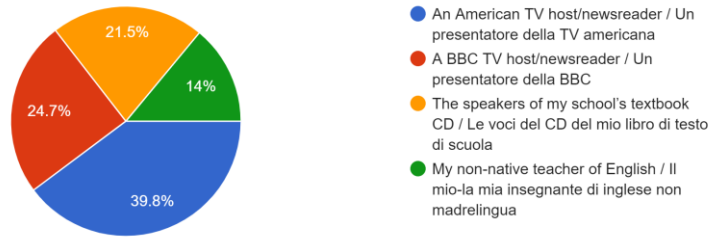
61. I am comfortable with my English pronunciation / Sono a mio agio con la mia pronuncia in inglese
254 responses



62. Do you try to imitate a particular accent or speech style when you speak English? / Cerchi di imitare un particolare accento o stile di parlata quando parli inglese?
254 responses



62.1. If you answered Yes to the previous question, who do you want to sound like when you speak English? / Se hai risposto Si alla domanda precedente, a chi vuoi assomigliare quando parli inglese?
93 responses



The pie chart for item # 61 shows that the sample was split in two almost perfect halves, with 129 respondents being comfortable and 125 respondents not being comfortable with their English pronunciation. The cross tabulation of the responses to item # 61 by degree program (item # 73), though, reveled a different picture, as can be seen in table 5.31.

Table 5.31: responses to item # 61 by degree program.

I am comfortable with my English pronunciation (#61)	Degree program (#73)												
	LACOM	LCE	*Tot. DSLC*	MCI	MOI*	PICI	SCO	*Tot. DCE*	SEDU	SPED	STPS	*Tot. DESU*	*Tot*
Strongly agree	5		*5*		6	2	5	*13*	7		1	*8*	*26*
Agree	24	1	*25*	1	25	5	14	*45*	31		2	*33*	*103*
Disagree	4		*4*		32	4	7	*43*	37	1	4	*42*	*89*
Strongly disagree	1	2	*3*	1	8		1	*10*	22		1	*23*	*36*
Tot	*34*	*3*	*37*	*2*	*71*	*11*	*27*	*111*	*97*	*1*	*8*	*106*	*254*

*The MOI group of respondents includes one student of the BA in Mechanical Engineering.

It is not at all surprising that the quasi-totality of the students of LACOM expressed agreement with statement # 61, while only five of them expressed lack of confidence with their own pronunciation. Nevertheless, although this result is not statistically significant, two 'strongly disagree' responses out of three were given by the students of LCE with identified learning gaps in English who had been assigned Additional Educational Requirements (OFA). It seemed fair to assume that while the students of an English-taught program had developed a high level of proficiency and some of them perhaps also a native-like accent, the students of the languages programs in general had higher expectations as regards the learning target and perhaps set the bar high for themselves. Awareness of one's own learning gaps, in this regard, may also have influenced the perception of one's own pronunciation. The responses obtained by the students of the DCE did not instead deviate from those obtained from the entire sample. The higher rate of disagreement was found among the respondents of the DESU: only 41 out of 106 students (38.7%) in total expressed confidence with their own pronunciation in English.

As the pie chart for item # 62 in figure 5.17 shows, less than four respondents out of ten declared that they tried to imitate a specific speech model when speaking English. The responses to item # 62 were cross tabulated with item # 73 to observe the distribution of the 'yes' and 'no' responses in relation to the degree program.

Table 5.32: responses to item # 62 by degree program.

Do you try to imitate a particular accent or speech style when you speak English? (#62)	Degree program (# 73)												
	LACOM	LCE	*Tot DSLC*	MCI	MOI*	PICI	SCO	*Tot DCE*	SEDU	SPED	STPS	*Tot DESU*	*Tot*
Yes	16	2	*18*	1	24	4	13	*42*	35		2	*37*	*97*
No	18	1	*19*	1	47	7	14	*69*	62	1	6	*69*	*157*
Tot	*34*	*3*	*37*	*2*	*71*	*11*	*27*	*111*	*97*	*1*	*8*	*106*	*254*

*The MOI group of respondents includes one student of the BA in Mechanical Engineering.

As shown in the table above, the highest percentage of respondents who stated that they imitated a particular accent or speech style were found within the DSLC group, whereas the percentage was considerably lower among the respondents accessed within the degree programs of the other departments. While the relatively small number of respondents overall accessed within the languages programs of the DSLC did not allow to draw definitive conclusions, it is still significant that little more than one out of three respondents enrolled in the degree programs

in whose curriculum English was not a major academic subject answered affirmatively to item # 62, hence suggesting that pursuing a specific ideal of pronunciation was perhaps not a major concern of theirs.

However, a total number of 121 respondents (46.7% of the entire sample) also specified a target model for English pronunciation. The pie chart for the responses to item # 62.1 reveals at first glance that, overall, an American English standard was the preferred target, surpassing both a British standard (BBC English) and the pre-recorded audio tracks that are usually attached to the school textbook's CD. In item # 62.1, though, a space was also provided for the respondents to specify any other target model that was not included in the multiple-choice list in item # 62.1. In appendix G, the synthetic table G.1 summarizes the responses to item # 62.1 without reporting the additional responses offered by the students; the analytic table G.2 reports all the additional information volunteered by the students in response to the question and specifies in what degree program each respondent was enrolled. The two tables below summarize the responses.

Table 5.33 reports the absolute and relative frequencies of all the target models indicated and mentioned in response to item # 62.1.

Table 5.34 on p. 113 compares the responses to the same item obtained from the students of the three different Departments.

Table 5.33: target model of pronunciation (item # 62.1).

Pronunciation target model (#62.1)	absolute frequencies	relative frequencies
American English	40	33%
RP/British English	29	24%
Irish	1	< 1%
Australian (Sidney)	1	< 1%
School textbook CD	20	16.50%
unspecified NES	5	4.10%
"clearest correct pronunciation"	1	< 1%
my family*	1	< 1%
NNEST	12	9.90%
(unspeficied) teachers	3	2.50%
myself/nobody	6	5%
other	2	1.70%
Tot.	*121*	*100%*

*The respondent (R106) was a bilingual native speaker of Italian and English.

Table 5.34: target model of pronunciation (item # 62.1) by Department.

Pronunciation target model (#62.1)	Absolute and relative frequencies by Department			*Tot.*
	DSLC	DCE	DESU	
.AmE	7	23	10	*40*
RP/British English	10	9	10	*29*
Irish	1			*1*
Australian (Sidney)		1		*1*
School textbook CD	2	7	11	*20*
unspecified NES		2	3	*5*
"clearest correct pronunciation"	1			*1*
my family*			1	*1*
NNEST	1	6	5	*12*
(unspecified) teachers			3	*3*
myself/nobody	2	2	2	*6*
other		2		*2*

*The respondent (R106) was a bilingual native speaker of Italian and English.

As the table G.2 in appendix G shows, the responses provided by the students in the additional space of item # 62.1 offered interesting details, although the general picture presented in figure 5.17 was not altered in any substantial way. As shown in the tables (5.33 and 5.34) above, only 12 respondents overall indicated their NNESTs as a target model, although it cannot be confidently concluded that a positive attitude towards NNE can be suggested, since one student may also identify a NNEST as a model because of the teacher's native-like pronunciation. One respondent from the LCE degree program who indicated the NNEST as a target model also pointed out that pronunciation must be as clear as possible, an observation that raises the question of what clarity depends on; possibly, as a respondent of LACOM wrote, clarity is thought to go together with correctness (see table 11.2), which would confirm that a NNEST may be esteemed for her/his native-like pronunciation. The relative frequency of American English was significantly higher among the respondents of the DCE, whereas among the respondents of the DESU, on the other hand, the non-authentic pre-recorded speech samples of the school textbook's CD was identified more frequently as the target model for pronunciation, although only by one response in comparison to the other two most-mentioned models. While the prevailing orientation towards an American model of pronunciation is easily explained by the fact that American TV shows and movies represent the major source of English language input outside the English classroom for most Italian learners, it is interesting to see that the British standard was the preferred model among the respondents of the DSLC. Students enrolled in the degree programs in foreign languages may in fact have based their response on the consideration that RP is usually adopted as target model and yardstick of reference of the English classroom.

5.3 Chapter summary

The questionnaire yielded a large amount of data, providing a general outlook on the views and attitudes of a varied population of undergraduate students on what the English language is and does, and a good insight into their attitudes towards English and ELF.

The favorable attitude towards English that the vast majority of the respondents indicated in response to items # 8 and # 9 were consistent with the overall picture that the responses to the other items in section II painted. A clear tendency was revealed to view English as window to the world. As noted in the previous section, the vast majority of the respondents regarded English as a 'global' lingua franca and appeared to hold a pragmatic, utilitarian attitude towards its advance throughout the globe. A view of English as a necessary skill that gives individuals a competitive edge in the globalized labor market and, by extension, as key to a country's modernization and economic success, was found to prevail. Also, very few were the respondents who perceived the advance of English as a threat to the world's linguistic and cultural diversity and their own country's language and culture in particular. Rather more controversial though was the topic of the relationship between the use of English as a lingua franca and the principle of respecting one's right to use their own native language.

As regards the respondents' views on ELT, agreement with the basic tenets of monolingual teaching and the early start largely prevailed, whereas only little more than half of the sample expressed a preference for the NESTs.

Interestingly, the respondents' views on pronunciation revealed a preference for American English over British English, even though England was indicated as the best destination for English learners. As it is illustrated in the next chapter, the dichotomy British English – American English emerged as a relevant theme in the interviewees' comments on the nature and functions of the English language, as well as its teaching.

In this sense, the questionnaire was helpful in that it also provided a framework for the interviews, allowing key themes, concepts, and issues to emerge and suggesting thematic areas to be further explored. Little information was gathered in particular on how the students perceived English teaching and learning. In that regard, the questionnaire only represented a starting point, and richer data that were obtained from 28 valid interviews with students who were enrolled in the three Departments, which are presented and analyzed in the next chapter.

6. Analysis of the data: the interviews

In this chapter the data obtained from the interviews are presented. Section 6.1 describes the data analysis tools and procedure. Section 6.2 presents the background information on the participants. Section 6.3 provides a detailed analysis of the interview data. The results are arranged in different sub-sections, according to the topics that emerged from the analysis. At the end of the chapter, section 6.4 briefly summarizes the results.

6.1 Interview data analysis tools and procedure

In this section, the analysis tools are presented, and the data analysis procedure is outlined. In describing the stages through which the analysis was carried out, the transcription conventions are explained, and the development of the thematic framework used for the thematic coding of the interviews is delineated.

6.1.1 Tools

The recordings of the interviews were transcribed manually, and a Word file was created for each individual interview. A research journal was kept in which thoughts, reflections and insights were annotated throughout the entire process of reading, coding and analyzing the transcripts. A memo file **(**Rubin & Rubin 2012) in Word format was also created in which all the comments and notes were gathered to the purpose of developing a thematic framework for the analysis of the data. Although the key process in qualitative content analysis is represented by coding, it is widely agreed among researchers that it should be complemented by other analytical tools "that can help to 'grow the ideas' and to develop them into the final main theme(s) of the study" (Dörnyei 2007: 254). In this perspective, "analytic memos (…) are invaluable in facilitating second-level coding and are also likely to contain the embryos of some of the main conclusions to be drawn from the study" (ibid.). In addition to writing a memo, profiles of each interview were also drafted. An interview profile is a summary of the interviewees' arguments, "a compilation of the interviewee's own words, using the first-person voice of the participant, with only minimal transitional additions and clarifications by the researcher" (Dörnyei 2007: 255), in which the most salient points and themes are highlighted. The thematic framework of analysis was created using an excel spreadsheet.

6.1.2 Data analysis

The analysis of the interview data involved five stages:

1 Data familiarization

2. Transcription

3 First-level coding

3. Second-level coding

4. Definition of the thematic framework

5. Thematic analysis

It is important to point out that although the analysis is summarized here as a series of sequential stages, it was not carried out in a strictly linear fashion. All five stages are thus interlinked, and while the sequential approach guaranteed that the analysis of the data was carried out in a verifiable and systematic manner, it was also made sure that it was not constrained into too rigid set of formalized procedures. As observed by Dörnyei, any type of analysis of qualitative data involves an iterative process that inevitably follows "a nonlinear, 'zigzag' pattern: we move back and forth between data collection, data analysis and data interpretation depending on the emergent results" (2007: 243). Qualitative analysis thus necessarily "needs to be flexible, data-led" (ibid.: 244), so as to allow new insights to emerge freely from the raw data. In this regard, it is important to observe that the process

of identifying the themes and categories that would eventually define the framework of analysis actually started already at the stage of familiarization with the recorded interviews and during the transcription process. Although "[t]he first step in data analysis is to transform the recordings into a textual form." (ibid.: 246), the formal analysis procedure is necessarily preceded by familiarization with the content of the recorded interviews, to get a sense of the data as a whole before the coding breaks them into parts. While the thoughts, observations, and topics of particular interest began to be noted in the research journal in the course of conducting the individual interviews, more extensive familiarization with the data only started after the end of the interview session. Once all interviews had been conducted, each recorded interview was listened to several times and more notes were taken, with the purpose of identifying the key points and issues raised by the students.

Subsequently, the interviews were transcribed in Word files. Since there is not one single transcription convention that fits all research purposes and that can be automatically adopted, Dörnyei's suggestion was heeded to adopt "a principled 'pick-and-mix' procedure" (ibid.: 248) to select and combine ideas from the many widely used transcription schemes that are out there and individualize the format and norms that best fit the research purposes. In order to preserve the highest level of accuracy of the transcripts and guarantee their readability, a precise transcribing method was necessary that allowed to include the significant prosodic features and any other detail that could have a bearing on the interpretation of the data. Stalling words, phonetic pronunciation variations and invented words, hesitations, silences, pauses, false starts, fillers, overlaps, and interruptions were noted, as well as any non-verbal feedback and contextual information that was deemed relevant to the interpretation of the spoken interactions. The transcription conventions were based on Niedzielski and Preston (2003) and the VOICE project (2007). They are presented in figure 6.1. on p.117. As can be seen, they include the high rising terminal (HRT) contour, also commonly referred to as the 'uptalk' intonation pattern, a prosodic featured observed across different English varieties that has also been recently identified as an object of borrowing into other languages (Andersen 2014). As a very specific type of final rising pitch, the HRT contour was distinguished from the common rising intonation typical of questions and a specific notation was devised to the purpose of appropriately representing it.

By fixating the recordings into a written form, the transcription process also allowed to develop a closer relationship with the interview data, to get to know these thoroughly and eventually begin the formal and structured coding process. While in the process of transcribing the recordings, more thoughts and reflections were written in the journal and the transcripts too began to be annotated for any relevant topics raised by the interviewee. Once completed, proof-read, and checked for consistency, the interview transcripts were read through again several times in order to obtain a general sense of the data. The most relevant and most interesting-looking passages of each individual interview transcript were highlighted, even if they were not directly linked to the immediate focus area of the research. In this way new insights were allowed to emerge, and more annotations were made in the form of comments in the document's margin. Contextually, all the notes taken in the research journal and the annotations made in the interview transcripts were put together into thematic clusters in the memo file, from which the first draft for the thematic framework was eventually created.

Although the process of analyzing qualitative data formally starts with coding, Dörnyei observes that "a considerable amount of analysis has already taken place when we begin the actual coding process" and that "making sense of our first impressions is a crucial pre-coding move" (2007: 250). The pre-coding reflections here outlined contributed to shaping the researcher's thinking about the data and allowed him to get more than a rough idea of the thematic categories that would eventually ensue from coding process. Familiarization with the interview data also led to the compilation of the above-mentioned interview profiles. In these, the researcher added comments that anticipated the arguments that would be fully developed at the stage of thematic analysis and introduced the first points of discussion that are illustrated in chapter 7.

Fig.6.1: interview transcription conventions (adapted from Niedzielski & Preston 2003, VOICE 2007).

S1 , R	Students (numbered according to date of interview) and researcher (R)
[name1], [city], [company]	Anonymization (open list): aliases are numbered consecutively
[ENLcity1], [ESLcountry]	ENL, ESL, EFL are added when deemed relevant (and not necessarily repeated)
[	Overlapping utterances
]	End of overlap (if duration is not represented by the size of the transcription)
[[	Simultaneous utterances (two speakers start talking at the same time)
=	Linked or continued utterances
(.)	Brief pause in speech (less than one second)
(3)	Approximate length of pause in seconds
:	Length (repeated to show greater length of syllable)
.	Falling (final) intonation followed by pause
,	Continuing (list) intonation
!	Animated talk or exclamation
?	Rising intonation (question)
<?> molto numerose </?>	High-rising terminal contour (´uptalk´ intonation pattern)
CAPS	Emphatic or contrastive stress
(.hhh) (hhh.)	Breathe in and breath out
( )	Transcriber's doubt / incomprehensible word(s)
io (non ci rientravo)	Guess at the word(s)
sono (im-)	Guess at some part of the words
ing-	Abrupt cutoffs and false starts
@	Laughter (one @ symbol for approximately one syllable)
<@> ovviamente sì </@>	Utterances spoken laughing
<LNen> proficiency</LNen>	Utterances in other language (en = English, de = German, it = Italian, ru = Russian)
<pvc> interava </pvc>	Pronunciation variation and coinages (invented words)
<pvc>…{communication}</pvc>	corresponding existing word added when identifiable and/or not evident from context
<pvc>…<ipa> knoʊ</ipa> </pvc>	when particularly salient, phonetic representation of pronunciation variation is added
<ono> bā′ä wä′wä′ </ono>	Onomatopoeic noises in IPA symbols (when speakers pronounce sounds instead of words)
<low ley> okay </low key>	Speaking modes (open list)
<clears throat>	Speaker's noises (open list)
<nods>	Nonverbal feedback added when deemed important (open list)
{əˈdʌlt}	Phonetic representation of a word is added when deemed relevant, e.g. to contrast accents
{talking to somebody in her room}	Contextual information is added between curly brackets

After the familiarization stage, the coding process was initiated. The coding of the interview transcripts was an iterative, non-linear process by which the data were revisited many times, allowing new and more salient categories to emerge and parallels and links to be established between different interviews. Although the interviews built on the questionnaire results and the main thematic areas covered in the interviews were thus predefined, the interviews were nevertheless treated as an independent data set and the categories used for coding them were data driven. It was observed in precedence (refer to 4.2) that the categories used for the qualitative content analysis as it was approached in this research were not created pre-ordinately but derived responsively from the data. Although all the interviews followed the same guidelines, the qualitative data yielded by each individual interview were unique. Hence the analytic categories had necessarily to be found in the data, instead of bringing codes to the data. Data-driven coding thus allowed to pay close attention to what the interviewees actually communicated and to define codes that faithfully reflected their personal views and opinions.

First-level coding was done firstly by identifying the key segments of each interview were the interviewee raised prominent topics and issues. Each individual interview transcript was coded and recoded times and again, and an initial series of descriptive codes characterized by a low degree of inference was gradually replaced and integrated with more and more fine-grained and abstract codes. For instance, a code labelled 'focus on grammar does not prepare to real-life use of English' was renamed 'theory-practice gap'.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) argued that "data might be recoded on a second or third reading, as codes (…) should enable the researcher to catch the complexity and comprehensiveness of the data" (481). In similar vein, Dörnyei points out that "[e]very qualitative analytical method contains a second-level coding process because in most investigations we want to go beyond a mere descriptive labelling of the relevant data segments" (2007: 252). As ideas that went beyond each individual interview emerged and patterns were observed across interviews, a systematic second-level coding of the whole corpus of interviews was carried out, precisely with the aim of capturing the more abstract commonalities and making generalizations. This was done firstly by going through the different interviews and listing all the codes that had been identified in each of them; after that, the similar or closely related categories were clustered together under a superordinate label. The transcripts were then re-read, some of the codes revised and certain passages of the interviews were recoded again. By iterating this procedure more than once, a conclusive list of codes was finalized. In this way, second-level coding eventually led to the development of the thematic framework of analysis.

As a first step in the development of the thematic framework, an analytic table was compiled using an Excel spreadsheet which listed each interviewee's number in rows the codes in columns. The occurrence of a topic indicated by the codes in each interview was noted by writing a keyword or a synthetic description of the interviewee's argument in the corresponding cell. As much as it allowed to recognize the relevant topic in each individual interview, the table allowed to visualize the occurrence of themes across all interviews and identify patterns in the entire data set. The frequency of the topics was also documented to identify the more prominent ones and see which ones occurred together. Once the interviewees' profiles were compared and common patterns identified, the list of codes was reviewed one more time to obtain consistency and see how the codes fell into clusters. An overarching category was created for each cluster; as defined by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (ibid.), categories "are the main groupings of constructs or key features of the text, showing links between units of analysis" (479) and are specifically used in the coding process to cluster together correlated codes. To give an example, at this stage the above-mentioned code "theory-practice gap" was grouped together with other codes under the overarching category of "pedagogical failures".

Finally, the thematic framework for the analysis of the interview data was created (see fig. 6.2) in which the codes were arranged in hierarchical order under two broad thematic categories: (1) 'what English is and does', which included the interviewees' views of the sociolinguistic realties of English; (2) the interviewees' views on 'English language teaching'. A third category including the opinions on (3) 'English-medium instruction' was eventually

added, even though the topic of English-medium instruction was discussed only by ten interviewees enrolled in the LACOM program.

Fig. 6.2: the interview thematic framework.

1. What English is and does

1.1 Variation in English(es)

1.2 Ownership of English

1.3 English as a global language

1.4 English as a link language

1.5 The culture of English

1.6 English as a necessary skill

1.7 Causes of the global spread of English

1.8 English and the world's linguistic and cultural diversity

1.9 Anglicisms

1.10 Stereotype of English as a straight-to-the-point language

2 English language teaching

2.1 Pedagogical failure (1): decontextualized teaching

2.2 Pedagogical failure (2): theory-practice gap

2.3 Pedagogical failure (3): a registral failure

2.4 Pedagogical failure (4): monolithic English

2.5 Pedagogical failure (5): contextual factors

2.6 Teachers (NESTs and NNESTs)

2.7 Target model

2.8 Monolingual tenet

2.9 Early start tenet

2.10 Naturalistic learning *versus* classroom-based instruction.

2.11 Inequalities

2.12 Cultural content of the EFL curriculum

2.13 English in Italy

2.14 Stereotype of English as an easy-to-learn language

3. English medium instruction*

3.1 Advantages of EMI

3.2 Problems of EMI

*The views of EMI were discussed only by ten participants of LACOM.

In addition to discussing the topics identified by the codes included in the thematic framework, the participants also gave important background information in the course of the interviews. Although it was not included in the thematic framework, the background information too was coded and noted in the analytic table spreadsheet, for purposes of immediate reference during the analysis of the interview data. Once the thematic framework of analysis had been defined, the analysis of the interviews was undertaken according to the themes listed in figure 6.2. The results of the analysis are presented in section 6.3.

6.2 The Participants

A total number of 29 interviews were conducted between February and May 2020. Out of 29 interviews, 28 were considered valid. One interview (S15) proved impossible to transcribe because of its poor audio quality. Since the student did not reply to the researcher's request to repeat the interview, S15 was eventually discarded. Although S15 was excluded from the data analysis, the numbers assigned to the interviews at the stage of data collection were not changed. For this reason, an interview labelled 'S15' is missing from the interview data set.

The majority of the participants were females (twenty-six out of twenty-eight) and in the last year of their MA program. Twelve interviewees were students of LACOM, ten of whom were in their second year, two in their first year. Nine interviewees were accessed in the DCE: three were first-year students of MOI; three were students of PICI of whom one was in the first and two in the second year; one was a first-year student of SCO; one was a first-year student of MCI. Of the seven students accessed in the DESU, one was attending the second year of STPS, and six were students of SEDU: two in the first year, three in the second year and one in the third year. The age range was from 19 to 40 years, the mean age was 24.25 and the mode age, that is, the age that appeared most frequently in the data set, was 23 years old.

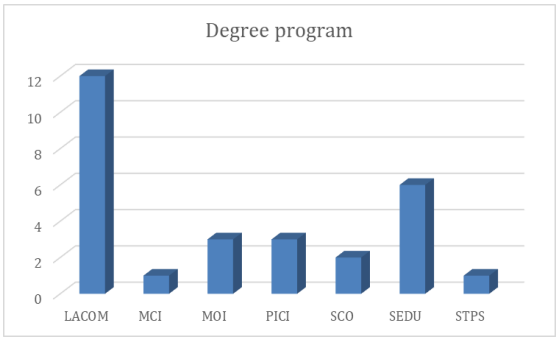
The degree program, year of course, age and gender of the participants are summarized in table 6.3 and figure 6.1 on p.121.

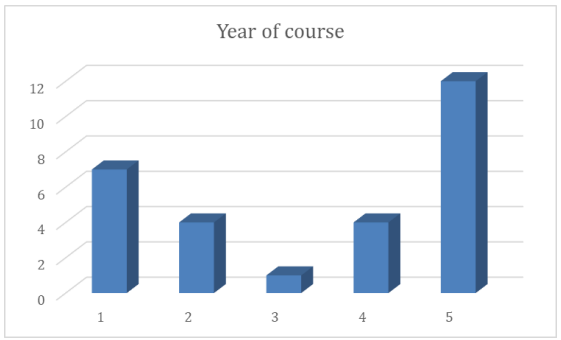
With only three students of MOI and six students of SEDU, the interviewees sample was not fully representative of the questionnaire sample. However, as it was pointed out above (sections 4.2 and 6.1) the interviews were analyzed as an independent data set. Furthermore, the participants represented nevertheless a fairly heterogenous group of undergraduate students, and although none of the exchange students who completed the questionnaire was interviewed, two respondents, S7 and S22, were international students respectively from Viet Nam and Russia.

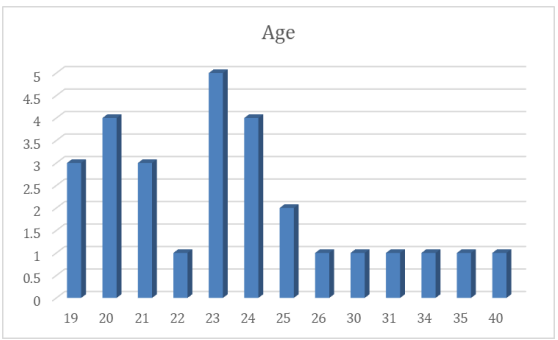
Table 6.3: the interviewees.

N°	Year	Degree prog.	Age	Gender
S1	4	LACOM	21	F
S2	4	LACOM	21	F
S3	1	MOI	20	F
S4	2	SEDU	30	F
S5	2	STPS	20	F
S6	2	SEDU	20	F
S7	1	SCO	19	F
S8	2	SEDU	35	M
S9	1	SEDU	23	F
S10	1	MOI	19	F
S11	1	SEDU	21	M
S12	1	MOI	19	F
S13	3	SEDU	31	F
S14	5	PICI	24	F
S16	5	PICI	40	F
S17	4	PICI	24	F
S18	4	MCI	22	F
S19	5	LACOM	23	F
S20	5	LACOM	26	F
S21	5	LACOM	25	F
S22	5	LACOM	34	F
S23	5	LACOM	24	F
S24	5	LACOM	24	F
S25	5	LACOM	23	F
S26	5	LACOM	25	F
S27	5	LACOM	23	F
S28	5	LACOM	23	F
S29	1	SCO	20	F

Figure 6.1: the interviewees.







6.2.1 The participants' background

The analysis of the interviews identified six topics related to the interviewee's background that were pertinent to her/his personal experience with the English language and its learning:

1. Personal interest in the English language
2. Exposure to English
3. Study-/work-abroad experiences
4. Use of English
5. Why English is important (reasons)
6. Future intentions

The data related to each topic are presented in turn.

1. Personal interest in the English language

Twenty-one participants in total either were asked or spontaneously commented whether a personal interest in the English language had been a factor for their motivation to learn it. Only two respondents, S3 and S29, denied that English was of special interest for them. While one student, S12, suggested that an interest in English can be developed out of necessity, since "English is now part of daily life therefore one way or the other you have to learn a bit of it" ("l'inglese oramai fa parte di tutti i giorni quindi: qualcosina per forza la la dovevi imparare"), eighteen interviewees explicitly mentioned having always had personal liking for the English language. Four of them (S5, S6, S8, S18) emphasized their "passion" for expanding its learning beyond the space of formal instruction.

2. Exposure to English

Several interviewees related their interest in the English language to mainstream pop culture, citing American TV series and movies as the main source of English language input beyond the formal space of the English classroom. Twenty-two participants in total spoke of their out-of-classroom exposure to English. Four interviewees said that their exposure to English through pop culture was rather limited. S22 commented on her previous experience in Russia, arguing that the very limited occasion that her home country offered to be exposed to English were perhaps to be traced back to the insularity of Russian culture. S6 said she only occasionally watched videos on YouTube, while S17 and S29 pointed out that their cultural tastes were not mainstream, hence implying that their opportunities to receive English-language input in the out-of-class were rather limited. S17 was actually very explicit on this point:

> "ci sono in Italia ancora secondo me (.) pochi canali e: o meglio ci sono ALcuni canali specifici dove (.) s- l'inglese e dove u:hm (.) ti puoi sentire coinvolto grazie alla lingua inglese. invece ci s- però se tu non prediligi quei canali cioè se io non sono un <LNen> nerd </LNen> se io non non faccio non gioco al computer o cosa per il resto è un po' difficile"
>
> *there are in Italy I believe (.) few channels e:r or better there are SOme specific channels where (.) English e:r where (.) you can be captivated thanks to the English language. on the contrary there a- but if you do not like those channels I mean I am not a nerd if I don't do I don't play computer games or anything it is otherwise difficult*

S17's comment here reported pointed to pop culture as a key aspect of the culture that is associated to the English language, a topic that is considered further on (refer to section 6.3.1.5). At this point, it is important to note that S17 hinted at the importance that pop culture can have for the youth as a key incentive to learning English.

3. Study-/work-abroad experiences

Nineteen out of twenty-six Italian students in total had had at least a study- or work-abroad experience. Also considering that two interviewees were international students, international student mobility was well represented in the sample, with three participants out of four with one or more of such experiences in their background. As argued further on, the presence or absence of abroad experiences in the students' background had a major influence in shaping their views of English (section 6.3.1) and English teaching and learning in particular (section 6.3.2).

4. Use of English

Several participants spoke of their use of English in relation to their past abroad experiences, where English was the ordinary medium of communication with NESs and NNESs alike. However, S17 observed that the fact of spending some time in an ENL country as an exchange student does not automatically increase the chances of using English outside the academic context. She commented that she had "found it difficult to speak English outside the academic context" ("ho fatto fatica a parlare l'inglese al di fuori del contesto Universitario") because Erasmus students are seen "as a class of students apart" ("come studenti A PARTE"). Eight interviewees who had

had work experiences in their home country commented that they had used English as a link language for international communication on their job, although their use of English outside the academic context, in Italy, had otherwise always been very limited. S7, who was a nun of the Sisters of the Lovers of the Holy Cross, said that she made instead constant use of English, which was the language of wider communication within her international congregation.

5. Why English is important (reasons)

Besides S7, all the other interviewees cited both personal and academic/professional reasons, often indistinguishable one from the other, for the perceived importance of English. Hence, they confirmed the prevailing orientation of the questionnaire respondents to view English as an important tool for social inclusion. As made explicit by S12, who argued that English has nowadays become part of our daily life (see above), all the interviewees assumed the importance of English to be a sort of matter-of-fact reality to which the younger generation needs to adapt.

6. Future intentions

Eighteen participants spoke of their future intentions, emphasizing the key role that English was bound to play in that regard. Whether they aimed to spend some time abroad, to further their studies or find a job, or whether they had no plans to relocate out of Italy, they all envisaged themselves as future users of English. In brief, as regards their (non-academic) background, the participants could be divided in two groups. One group comprised the majority of the interviewees, who either had had long term international experiences (exchange programs and internships) or otherwise had always had a special interest for cultivating the English language in their own home country. Another group included a minority of participants (S3, S12, S13, S22, S29) who had had no experiences abroad, although they did not question the importance of English, nevertheless.

6.3 Results

This chapter section analyzes the interview data in relation to the three thematic areas included in the framework of analysis. Extracts from the interview transcripts are reported to illustrate the results of the analysis. The omitted parts are represented by three stops between square brackets: […]. All transcript extracts that run for less than three lines are reported with quotation marks between brackets after their translation to English, which is inserted as an in-text citation. Extracts longer than three lines are instead set off from the main paragraph without quotation marks; their translation is provided in italics. The extracts were translated in a faithful manner, in order to preserve the precise meaning of the original and be completely faithful to the intentions of the interviewee. When relevant, especially in the longer extracts, prosodic features are also included in the translation.

6.3.1 What English is and does

The participants' views of what English is and does are reported in this section according to the main topics identified in the thematic framework.

6.3.1.1 Variation in English(es)

All the students that were interviewed were aware of the existence of a plurality of English varieties and/or accents. A tendency though was observed to discuss variation in terms of a dichotomy between American- and British English. Few other ENL varieties were also mentioned: Australian English, with four mentions in total, New Zeeland English, with two mentions, Canadian English, South African English, Indian English and Jamaican English, each with one mention.

S19 had a clear picture of a hierarchy of accents that reproduced the historical trajectory of English from the core English-speaking countries to the peripheries. She observed that the accents of the UK, the USA, Australia and New Zeeland, together with the "subgroups of the UK" like "cockney etcetera" ("i sottogruppi tipo del del

<LNen> UK </LNen> quindi abbiamo il <LNen> cockney, </LNen> no? eccetera") "are perhaps the most typical", "the most widespread", "the most used by native speakers" ("sono forse gli accenti più tipici", "gli accenti un po' più popolari? (.) un po' più diffusi?", "quelli un po' più utilizzati dai <LNen> native speaker </LNen>").

Only three students mentioned internal variation within the inner circle, pointing out that direct contact in the target language environment had raised their awareness of the existence of different English accents. S18, who had spent one year of high school in the USA, regarded dialectal variation as a peculiar characteristic of the north American continent. S22, on the other hand, who had never had long term abroad experiences, observed that her limited proficiency did not allow her to distinguish between different varieties of English. Similarly, S29, who had no abroad experiences in her background, said that although she was aware that there are linguistic differences, she remarked that she was no expert in matters of varieties of English.

Several LACOM students, who had received explicit ELF instruction, remarked the importance of raising awareness of variation and pointed out that English is not a monolithic language (refer also to 6.3.2.4). S1, for instance, commented that "in the last few years" she had been taught that "English is not a sort of dogmatic language but there are instead varieties that are equally used and usable that it is important to know or at least to be aware that they exist" ("negli ultimi anni e:hm ho imparato mi è stato insegnato e: che la lingua inglese non è un tipo di lingua inglese e: dogmatico tra virgolette ma esistono e varietà ugualmente utilizzabili e utilizzate che occorre conoscere occorre anche solo essere consapevoli della loro esistenza"). S2 related variation to the current realities of the post-colonial, globalized world, commenting that "a real English" as that which is usually taught in the English classrooms is not there anymore:

> credo che al giorno d'oggi non non risieda più questo genere di questo <LNen> real English </LNen>. perché: con la contaminazione appunto linguistica culturale che c'è al giorno d'oggi secondo me questa (.) questo <LNen> core </LNen> linguistico non esiste più è stato contaminato. […] un posto secondo me che al giorno d'oggi abbia ancora questa lingua incontaminata non c'è.
>
> *I believe that nowadays there is not not this kind of <LNen> real English </LNen> anymore because with the linguistic and cultural contamination that is there nowadays indeed, I believe that this (.) this a linguistic <LNen> core </LNen> is not there anymore it has been contaminated […] a place in my opinion that nowadays still has this uncontaminated English is nowhere to be found*.

S2's observation revealed that she was aware that the realities of English contradict the monolithic image of a "uncontaminated" English. However, she suggested that linguistic variation had resulted from the dynamics of cultural and linguistic "contamination" brought about by the processes of globalization. She thus seemed to imply that there once used to be a "real English", which (perhaps) only lately has become contaminated; she did not suggest that the (standard) norm of an "uncontaminated" English is actually an abstraction.

On the contrary, S21 pointed out the abstract character of Standard English, by claiming that in her opinion "English is not a language that has, you know, a standard accent, as we are often led to believe in high and middle school" ("l'inglese per me non è non è una l- cioè non è una lingua che ha una (1) e: (1) come dire un accento standard (.) e:hm come invece spesso ci fanno credere anche al liceo alle medie"). The abstract character of the standard was also highlighted by two students of PICI who had received training in linguistics. S16 observed that "having studied linguistics and having learned that basically a language changes, doesn't it? I mean not only the Italian language but also English changes" ("avendo fatto e: (.) linguistica no? e avendo imparato fondamentalmente che la lingua cambia e (.) non cambia sono in italiano cambia in inglese anche in l'inglese"), "the language mixed with the inflections of other countries? I mean maybe England is not what we have in our mind that is our stereotype" ("la lingua si è mescolata un po' con e:hm (.) con le cadenze e: di altri stati? (.) cioè forse l'Inghilterra e: non è più quello che e:: che pens- che abbiamo in testa noi che è un po' il nostro stereotipo"). As her words show, S16 was aware that the image of England as a homogeneous linguistic space that is home to an idealized English language is just a stereotype.

S14, who also held a BA in languages and literatures of Asia and Africa, highlighted the key role that GELT instruction (refer to section 2.4.2) and her study-abroad experiences in EFL countries had played in raising her sociolinguistic awareness. She commented that the teacher of her BA GELT course "had opened up a world to her not exactly in regard to English but Global Englishes that is different varieties of English" ("mi ha aperto un po' un mondo sul non tanto l'inglese quanto e: <LNen> Global Englishes </LNen> quindi diversi diverse varietà di inglese."), and had made students "regard all the varieties of English not as varieties that had to be disparaged but rather as varieties that had something MORE" ("ci ha fatto apprezzare quindi tutte le diverse varietà di inglese non come varietà diciamo che dovevano essere sminuite ma anzi come varietà che avevano un qualcosa in PIÙ"). She added that, as an Erasmus student in China and Spain, having found herself to speak "with other NNESs but also NESs, in all cases" she had learned "to respect also the diversities of the English that was used not only by the English speakers language one not British" ("mi sono trovata a parlare inglese con pers- con parlanti non nativi (.) o anche con parlanti nativi ma comunque i:n in tutti questi casi io ho imparato ad apprezzare anche le diversità del dell'inglese che veniva utilizzato quindi non solo i parlanti inglesi (.) lingua uno no:n non britannici <fast>"). She also remarked that her "passion for linguistics" (avendo anche u- una passione un po' per la linguistica") she paid much attention ("ci faccio molto più: più caso") to variation in English. As she pointed out, not only had her awareness of variation been raised, but she had also been led to change her attitudes towards non-native English varieties.

Different attitudes towards variation were found across the participants. While S20, for instance, said that she was interested in exploring different varieties of English, S13 commented that the existence of multiple varieties of English complicates the comprehension for EFL learners. S26, who like S18 had been an international student in the USA, mentioned variation within the north American continent, expressing a positive attitude towards different American English accents. However, S26's favorable attitude towards American varieties of English coexisted with a negative attitude towards non-native English (refer also to 6.3.2.7). The existence of prejudice against certain ESL varieties of English was reported by S3, as shown in the extract below:

> quando i nigeriani vanno ad esempio in America o in Inghilterra devono sempre un attimino studiare rivedere l'inglese perché (1) e: la gente comunque non ti capisce o comunque FA FINTA di non capirti=
>
> R: =uhm in che senso fa finta? Interessante
>
> S3: e::hm perché vedono un accento diverso di conseguenza (.) diciamo che e: c'è u:n (.) adesso devo trovare il termine (3) si vuole un attimino e: (1) è come una guerra nel senso
>
> R: <low key> uh </low key>
>
> S3: si vuole che la propria lingua vinca (.) di conseguenza (.) anche se il tuo inglese va bene fanno finta di non capirlo (1) perché si vuole primeggiare"
>
> *S3: […] when Nigerians go to America or to England they always have to study to revise a bit their English because (.) e:r people anyways won't understand you or anyways they PRETEND they do not to understand you=*
>
> *R: = what do you mean they pretend? Interesting*
>
> *S3: e:r because they see a different accent and consequently (.) let's say that there's a a (.) I have to find the term now (3) one wants to e:r (1) it is like a war I mean*
>
> *R: <low key> uh </low key*
>
> *S3: one wants her/his own language to win (.) consequently (.) even if your English is okay they pretend they do not understand you (1) because one wants to feel superior*

Although she could not find the words to describe the prejudicial attitudes towards ESL speakers, S3 made the point well and clear. As a bilingual native speaker of Italian and French of African origins, she must have had first-hand experience with similar prejudicial attitudes towards non-native speakers.

In conclusion, the interviewees' views on variation overall suggested the importance of awareness-raising of the existence of a plurality of English varieties and of their equal legitimacy trough explicit instruction.

6.3.1.2 Ownership of English

Twenty-one participants expressed more or less overt opinions about the ownership of the English language. Broadly speaking, three different views on the topic were observed.

One group comprising nine interviewees identified the NESs from the core English-speaking countries as the only legitimate owners of English. S8, for instance, explicitly commented that English belongs to the British and the Americans, being England and the US the focal points from which the language spread. Rather ambivalent was instead the view on the topic expressed by S25, who also legitimized non-standard and NNE varieties, although she suggested that as an ESL speaker, "one tends to forget the rules of grammar" ("ci si tende a scordare le le regole grammaticali"), hence characterizing ESL speakers as perpetual learners of the language. She nevertheless noted that ESL varieties "have an accent of their own but it is functional to communication" ("hanno un loro accento ma è funzionale per la comunicazione"). S26 instead, while also hinting strongly that English belongs to the NESs from core English-speaking countries, also observed that it is nowadays used as a link language, with the implication that it can be appropriated by anyone as a de-nativized tool (refer also to 6.3.1.5). S29 answered the researchers' question "to whom do you associate the image of the native speakers of English?" ("se tu de- pensi al ai <LNen> native speakers </LNen> dell'inglese […] questa imagine a chi la associ?") saying "obviously England because since I was a child they have been telling us about England" ("ovviamente all'Inghilterra perché da quando sono piccola così che ci parlano dell'Inghilterra"), thus acknowledging the influence that her learning experience had had in shaping her view.

Another group of interviewees expressed a view of English as a pluricentric language that spread beyond its original core to reach a global dimension. S4 argued that English "has become a language I am not saying everyone's language but much more widespread than its origins" ("è diventata una lingua u: un po' n- non voglio dire di tutti però molto più: allargata rispetto alla sua origine"). S27 observed that besides the ENL countries, "there are also other countries in which English is the official language" ("ci sono anche tanti altri stati in cui l'inglese è lingua ufficiale"), therefore suggesting that English belongs to the speakers of both the ENL and the ESL countries.

A third group of participants held a view of English as a language that everyone (NES and NNESs alike) can lay claim to. S2 and S9, for instance, argued that English belongs to everyone who uses it regardless of their level of proficiency, and S10 added that it is so because it is more or less easily learned by everyone (refer to 6.3.2.14). S6 as well did not base her idea of ownership on the scope of proficiency, commenting that English also belongs to ESL speakers and all the Italians who use anglicisms (refer to 6.3.1.9). S1 said that English belongs to all those who speak it and desire to learn it; she also remarked that "it may be rather egoistic thinking the predominance of the English language on the part of a particular ethnic group or population" ("potrebbe essere un pensiero un po' egoistico il predominio della lingua inglese da parte di una particolare etnia o popolazione"), by which words she seemed to mean that no NES group to claim exclusive ownership of English. Although she was not explicit on this point, S23 thus hinted that the NNESs have a right to claim ownership of English. Interestingly, only three students of this latter group had received explicit ELF instruction.

Two other respondents offered a rather more complex view of the ownership of English. Being asked who she thought English belonged to, S5 answered with a question: "nel senso anche di classi sociali? oppure in generale di paesi?" ("I mean in terms of social classes? or also countries?"). The researcher invited her to feel free to interpret the question in her own way, and she replied that she was taught to think that English belongs to the NESs from the core English-speaking countries, namely England and the USA, because they are the most visible countries on TV and in newspapers. However, she also pointed out that thanks to its great vitality, at least in Europe, English can nowadays be said to belong to almost everyone. She clarified that in her view English belongs

in the specific to all those who have access to education, irrespective of the level of one's competence, whose extent may vary from knowing a few words and having native-like proficiency. She went on to argue that when she thought of English, she thought of the people who can afford the costs of the language courses and exchange programs abroad. In her own words:

> secondo me appunto è lingua lingua di tutti perché alla fine secondo me un po' tutti nel senso penso all'Europa in particolare o comunque alle persone che sono che hanno accesso alla alla scuola […] quando penso all'inglese penso magari anche a classi sociali che comunque si possono permettere ovviamente anche la diciamo la l'accesso alla scuola e ovviamente anche ai corsi perché (.) un costo ce l'ha ovviamente il fatto di dover frequentare un corso all'estero o dover far l'Erasmus è sempre una spesa ovviamente quindi forse non tutti sempre se lo possono permettere.
>
> *In my opinion English is the language of is everyone's language because at the end of the day I think it belongs to almost everyone I am thinking of Europe in particular or anyways to those who have access to education […] when I think of English I think maybe also to the social classes that can afford obviously also the let's say access to education and obviously to the (language) courses because (.) they do have a cost obviously the fact of having to attend a course abroad or to have to do an Erasmus program it is always as expense obviously and so not everyone can always afford it*

The clear implication in S5's comment was that there are costs entailed in developing proficiency in English, and hence in gaining the right to lay claim to its ownership, which not everyone can afford (also refer to 6.3.2.11). Interestingly, S5 thus shifted the focus of discussion from the geographical distribution to the social distribution of competence in English. Similarly, S17's comments on the costs of access to international mobility programs (refer to 6.3.2.11) suggested that in addition to the NESs, English belongs to a class of internationally educated cosmopolitans.

6.3.1.3 English as a global language

The majority of the participants held a view of English as a widespread and easily accessible language on a global scale. Some participants described it as a sort of universal language. For instance, S1 said that it is "spoken almost universally in a great number of contexts" ("parlata quasi universalmente in un vasto numero di contesti"). S11 argued that "everyone has some knowledge of English therefore (.) it is the international language" ("mi vien da dire che tutti sanno l'inglese quindi (.) l'inglese è la l- è la lingua internazionale."). S12 commented that "besides being the second most spoken language in the world therefore if you can speak English you can let's say get about anywhere" ("bè oltre che essere la seconda lingua: più parlata al mondo quindi se sai l'inglese puoi: diciamo muoverti un po' dappertutto"); S7 argued that it is "the language for all people who want to integrate". Being asked to confirm whether she believed that English is the language of globalization, S9 pointed to its great vitality, perhaps overemphasizing its supposedly universal character:

> "che piaccia <?> o meno l'inglese </?> è la lingua di base di comunicazione per qualsiasi cosa è la lingua che viene usata molto spesso (.) all'interno della tecnologia che non viene quasi più tradotto niente quindi (.) l'inglese SERVE è: la lingua che mette in comunicazione chiunque perché: ci sono milioni miliardi di lingue nel mondo non so neanche quante siano però l'inglese è la base di qualsiasi cosa quando si deve: avere un'informazione magari più precisa su qualcosa si cerca in inglese quando si vuole parlare con persone che parlano lingue diverse di solito si tenta la via dell'inglese come prima cosa i documenti più ufficiali anche all'interno del mondo del lavoro per quanto: per quanto poco io l'abbia visto nel senso che lavoro da meno di un anno sono tutti: in inglese perché: chiunque può leggerli quindi sì è la lingua della globalizzazione e serve. serve tantissimo.
>
> *whether we like it or not English is the basic language of communication for anything it is the language that is most often used (.) within the domain of technology as almost nothing is translated anymore (.) English IS NECESSARY it i:s the language that connects everyone because there are millions billions of languages in*

the world I don't even know how many they are but English is the basis of anything when one needs to: have more precise information about something you search it in English when one wants to speak to people who speak different languages normally one first tries the way of English the most official documents in the work world a:s as little as I could see I mean I have only been working for less than a year they are all in English because anyone can read them therefore yes it is the language of globalization and it is necessary. it is very much of help.

On a slightly different note, S15 pointed out that English is not a universal language and that Chinese and Spanish compete with it for the role of global language. S27 mentioned Spanish and Arab as other languages with a global dimension and observed that however global, English is not universal. She said that, based on her personal experience, "both in South America and Africa it is maybe not very difficult but rare to find someone who is very fluent in English" ("sia in Sudamerica che in Africa è:hm (.) è è molto difficile trovare una persona che parli m- non dico molto difficile però è raro trovare una persona (.) e: con un livello ci uno m- o molto fluente di inglese. e lo dico per esperienza appunto punto personale per quanto riguarda il Sudamerica."). Along the same lines, S24 remarked that her internship experience in an Eastern European country had debunked the myth of English a universally valid global lingua franca, although she also acknowledged the fact that it is the most widely used international language. She commented that she had approached the study of English with the idea that it would function as a language of wider communication, but her experience had showed her that "English actually is not always a passe-partout" (non è effettivamente sempre sempre un e: un passe-partout").

The same observation that the realities of English do not correspond to the commonsense view of a language that is spoken globally were made by S20, who had had a study-abroad experience in China, and S28 who had been an exchange student in Russia. First-hand experience in EFL countries had showed them that English is not spoken everywhere and by everyone, and as some of their colleagues claimed. S22, who had been born and raised in Russia, confirmed that English proficiency is very low, on average, among Russians:

> there are quite few people who speak really English who are able for example to reply confidently when they're approached e:r at the street (.) by a foreigner (.) with a request for indications (1) so uhm (.) (that thing) is due to the fact that we are quite not that much exposed not that not that opened to English speaking countries <?> as Europe for example </?>

However, S28 commented that as an exchange student she had perceived an ongoing process of expansion of the English language in Russia, where the demand for English was increasing, which led her to conclude that the role of English as a global language was not in dispute after all.

It was observed in the previous section (6.3.1.3) that S5 based her view of the ownership of English on a consideration of social class. Thus, she regarded English as a global language though with the caveat that, as a second or foreign language, it is only accessible to those who can afford the costs that are entailed in developing a high level of proficiency in a target language environment.

The comments of S8 and S26 contained clear indications that the global dimension of English reflects a global process of Americanization of society. S8 referred to American culture as the major force behind the global advance of English. S26 made an explicit association between English as a global language and the spread of US culture; the scope of the latter, in her perception, is not limited to pop entertainment culture, but also to academic culture (refer to 6.3.1.5 for an analysis of the topic of the culture of the English language). In regard to the ties between the global dimension of English and US culture, the views of S18 were particularly interesting. S18 argued her view of English as a global language on the basis of a distinction between American and British English, and commented that while she associated American English to pop culture, she identified (standard) British English as the international language of the academia:

> per quello che vedo sui social, le serie tivù come hai detto te, i film piuttosto che le canzoni la lingua della globalizzazione è l'inglese sì: ma l'inglese con una accezione più americana. e lo spiego: in termini: molto

semplicistici: di una ragione puramente economica e: consumistica perché: c'è stato il <LNen> boom </LNen> dell'America ovviamente che (.) ha portato l'America a a: ai vertici: (.) e: del del mondo […] la lingua della globalizzazione è americana sì però se io penso alla scienza (.) quindi a tutti gli articoli scientifici tutto quanto e: l'asso- uhm l'associo mi viene di più cioè (.) proprio per l'impostazione della lingua scientifica e: è e: la ricollego di più al <LNen> British English </LNen> quindi è comunque sempre e: inglese okay però dal punto di vista della globalizzazione dell'in- del (.) della cultura e dell'educazione è più: <LNen> British </LNen> appunto perché forse come dicevo prima è più impostata: è più:: uhm rigorosa

from what I can see on the social media, tee vee series as you said, movies and pop songs the language of globalization is English yes it is but English in its American version. and I explain it in the very simple terms of a merely economic and consumerist reason because there was the boom of America which obviously brought America to the top of of the world […] the language of globalization is American yes but if I think of science instead (.) and so of all the scientific papers and all that a:nd I associa- I associate it to it seems to me rather I mean (.) precisely because of the structure of scientific language e:r it is e:r I link it rather to British English therefore it is always English anyways okay but from the viewpoint of globalization of the in- of (.) of culture and education it is mo:re British indeed because maybe as I was saying before it is more structured more rigorous

S18 perceived the global trend of *Englishization* of scientific research and education as a global spread of British English because in her view the latter is more "structured" and "rigorous" than American English. Such terms quite obviously indicated that S18 associated the use of English in formal regulated contexts to the British English standard norm. On the other hand, American English had been the language of informal communication during her study-abroad year in the USA, as well as the language of pop culture. In brief, in her views of the globalization of the English language, the diatopic and the diaphasic levels of variation coincided (refer to 6.3.2.7 for the participants' views of British and American English).

6.3.1.4 English as a link language

Twenty-three participants in total spoke of English as a link language for international and/or intercultural communication. Five of them also commented that it is by virtue of this role that English is the language of democracy, as stated in questionnaire item # 36 (refer to 5.2.2.3), in that it has made it possible for a great number of people to voice their opinions on global platform.

As shown in the extract reported in the previous section, S9 held a view of English as a "language that connects everyone" and that "anyone can read". Two other participants used the metaphor of the bridge that links speakers of different languages. S3 said that English is "the one and only language that functions as a bridge" (": è: l'unica lingua: che fa da ponte"); S7 commented that "we can we can talk like English is the bridge (.) to: connect with the a:ll languages.". S2 said that English "is a meeting point hence indeed to allow people who come from different backgrounds to communicate" ("è un punto di incontro. quindi appunto per far comunicare persone che provengono da e: da <LNen> background </LNen> diversi"). S2 was also daily user of English as a link language with the other international friends she had made as an exchange student in Ireland, and she emphasized the role of English as the language of international student mobility. S6 was a user of English as a link language, in communication with both NESs and NNESs, although most often with the latter. She occasionally worked for a renowned organization based in her hometown which promotes a celebrated preschool educational approach worldwide. At one point, without having ever mentioned the term before during the interview, the researcher asked her to confirm whether she considered English to function as an international link language; she replied: "yes exactly, e:r I'd say (.) uhm you got a point @ precisely that." ("sì. sì e: direi proprio: (.) uhm centrato il punto @ proprio quello.).

S16 had also made use of English as a link language for both international and internal communication in an Italian-based company, prior to resuming her studies at the DCE. She commented that during her work experience

she had “used English on a daily basis both with her colleagues who worked in the same company (“l'inglese lo usavo: quotidianamente. sia con colleghi che erano e:hm che lavoravano nella mia stessa azienda”) and “since it was an international company people also came from other countries and so English was used as a link language” (“siccome era un'azienda internazionale le persone arrivavano anche da e: da altri paesi quindi si usava l’inglese come lingua a: (.) come <LNen> link language </LNen>”). She also added an interesting observation:

> la cosa che a me ha sempre no- non sono l'unica anche altri colleghi che ha sempre fatto un po' un po' specie è che seppur ci siano state persone che (.) si sono trasferite lì da (1) sono anni e anni che abitano in Italia per dirla molto brevemente e comunque l’ing- la: l’italiano non l’hanno mai imparato quindi e: cosa succedeva che se anche ci fo- c’era una persona all'interno di un <LNen> meeting </LNen> in cui tutti eravamo italiani c’era solo una persona in cui che non era italiana e: noi dovevamo fare i <LNen> meeting </LNen> in inglese (1) ed era una sorta di che (.) e:hm era una cosa normale (.) quando tanto normale non è […] nessuno si adattato a imparare l'italiano […] quindi facevamo spesso <LNen> meeting </LNen> in inglese anche all'interno dell'azienda (.) tra colleghi in uffici (.) sempre localizzati in Italia fondamentalmente. (…) era normale cioè e utilizzare la lingua inglese (.) quando forse era norma- sarebbe stato normale utilizzare l’italiano invece.
>
> *the thing that had always I am no- I am not the only one also other colleagues were rather rather shocked by the fact that although there were people who (.) had relocated to Italy since (1) they have lived in Italy for years and years to put it briefly and by the way Eng- e:r they have never learned Italian therefore what happened was that even if there we- there was one person in a meeting who was not Italian a:nd we had to conduct meetings in English (1) and it was sort of (.) e:r it was normal (.) when actually it is not quite a normal thing […] nobody adapted themselves to learning Italian […] therefore we conducted our meetings in English even within the company (.) among colleagues in offices (.) always based in Italy basically. […] it was normal to use English (.) when maybe it was no- when it would have been normal to use Italian instead*

S16’s comments on the use of English for internal communication in the company in which she had worked clearly indicated a critical stance on her part. The Italian expression “fare specie” (“to shock”), her remarks that it was considered normal to use English while this was not actually quite a normal thing, and that no non-native speaker of Italian ever adapted themselves and used the Italian language, clearly manifested a negative attitude towards the use of English as a default language, which she found unmotivated.

As observed in the preceding section, S24 commented that she had always thought of English as a "passe-partout" for the international traveler, although her experiences in Eastern Europe showed her that in English was unable to perform that function and made her realize that the notion of a universally valid language of wider communication was a myth. Similarly, the comments of S20, S22, S27 and S28 on the global dimension of English put in perspective the notion of English as a universal link language.

Only seven participants used the expression “lingua franca” (in relation to English). Quite interestingly, one of them (S4) had not received explicit ELF instruction. Not surprisingly, the other six interviewees were all students of LACOM, who on the contrary had attended ELF-informed courses. S1 mentioned the term ‘lingua franca’ twice, first in relation to the global spread of English. First, she observed that English “in several countries is now considered a lingua franca let’s say a contact language” (“adesso in un gran numero di paesi del mondo sia considerata come una lingua diciamo franca una lingua di contatto”); subsequently, she claimed that English is the language “of a great number of speakers e:r from who uses it as a first language who uses it as a second language, language for teaching lingua franca etcetera” (“è di un vasto numero di parlanti e: da chi lo utilizza come prima lingua chi lo utilizza come seconda lingua, lingua per l’insegnamento lingua franca eccetera”). S4 also mentioned the term lingua franca in two occasions. Initially, she recognized the role of English as a lingua franca while commenting that proficiency in English allows one to access a great number of resources. She said that “English which which often is a language I am inclined to say a lingua franca allows to: access many more resources” (“l’inglese che che spesso è una lingua mi viene da dire franca permette di: accedere a molte più

risorse."). Further on in the interview, she observed that at adult age English is used as a lingua franca for intercultural communication, when arguing that adherence to a specific model of pronunciation is secondary to the need to make oneself understood (refer to 6.3.2.7).

S21 mentioned the term lingua franca in relation to the objective of English learning, which, in her view, is that of "feeling that you can communicate with a language so that it can really be a lingua franca" ("sentirsi (.) che puoi comunicare con una lingua (.) capito? per far sì che sia una lingua franca per davvero."). S23 said that "English was chosen as a lingua franca" ("l'inglese è stata la lingua scelta come lingua franca"), while S19 emphasized the advantages for scientific and academic research of having English functioning as such. S28 while acknowledging that English is not spoken universally, commented that, "after all, we are still living in an epoch when knowing English is necessary there is not any other lingua franca in sight" ("ancora siamo in un in un'epoca in cui sapere l'inglese è: fondamentale non c'è un'altra lingua franca: in vista.").

Whereas all these participants highlighted the advantages of English as a lingua franca, S25 revealed a more ambivalent attitude towards its use. She referred to it three times in the course of the interview. One first time, highlighting the importance for young learners to become proficient in English, she observed that English is the lingua franca of computer science and business. In two other occasions, while commenting on the impact of the advance of English on the other national languages, she argued that English as a lingua franca represents a threat for the integrity of the other languages and for linguistic diversity (see 6.3.1.8 for details on this topic).

The participants' attitudes towards ELF will be discussed in chapter 7. For now, it is important to observe that even though some participants did not spoke overtly of English as a link language or a global language of wider communication, the topic was present between the lines of all the interviews. As perhaps the most visible feature of the contemporary realities of English, the lingua franca role of English interrelated with most other topics of discussion. This section reported only the most relevant comments that focused on English as a link language.

6.3.1.5 The culture of English

A particularly salient topic that emerged from the interview data was the relationship between language and culture. The participants' characterizations of the culture of the English language were grouped in four main clusters, each corresponding to a different understanding of the language-culture relationship.

The cultural load of English and ties with US culture

One group that included the majority of the interviewees represented English as a language that is loaded with cultural values, even though they also recognized its instrumental function of a link language (refer to previous section). A strong suggestion that English in its role of contact language may not simply function as a tool but it also carries a specific culture came by S7. As observed in precedence (refer to 6.2.1), she said that English was the vehicular language used within her religious congregation, which has strong ties in the USA. It is argued here that as much as English served the instrumental function of connecting speakers of different languages, within S7's religious group, it also performed cultural work and, in this sense, it was the language of a very specific culture – namely evangelization. Oddly enough, S8's interest for cultivating the English language had been fueled in part by his religious commitment. As he recounted, he had converted to evangelicalism and precisely his knowledge of English had allowed him to pursue his theological studies:

> l'interesse e specifico sulla teologia è: E in concomitanza con la lingua inglese è stato e: come posso dire una (.) uno strumento per approfondire quello che è stato il mio percorso di fede che è: iniziato nel duemilaetredici […] avere ap- la possibilità di accedere alle fonti originarie quindi autori principalmente americani o inglesi e: mi ha permesso proprio di fare approfondimenti di poter e: quindi ecco es- espandere e:hm la mia conoscenza e i miei studi teologici.
>
> *my specific interest in theology is AND together with the English language was e:r how can I say a (.) a tool that allowed me to pursue my journey of faith which started in two thousand and thirteen […] the f- the fact*

of having the opportunity to access the original sources therefore mainly American and English authors e:r allowed me to research and so e:r to be able to ex- expand e:r my theological studies.

Besides his interest in reformed theology, the American TV series and his relatives who resided in the USA were S8's main sources of English language input. In addition, as observed in relation to the topic of English as a global language, S8 tied the contemporary vitality of English to the economic and cultural influence of the USA. In brief, no hint that English could be perceived as a culturally neutral language was found in his comments.

Several interviewees associated English with specific ENL cultures. S12, for instance, commented that English "is not only a means of communication (.) that is if one thinks of English one doesn't don't think about English only BUT indeed (.) one associates it immediately to the United States or England and to all the all the monuments and the history that lies behind the language" ("non è solo un mezzo di comunicazione (.) cioè appunto se uno pensa all'inglese non non pensa soltanto all'inglese come lingua MA appunto (.) la la si associa subito o agli Stati Uniti o a o all'Inghilterra e quindi a tutte le a tutti i monumenti la storia che sta dietro i due paesi."). Evidently influenced by her experience as an EFL learner, she instinctively associated English to the target culture of the two core English-speaking countries that are normally represented in the classroom textbooks (refer also to 6.3.2.12). Similarly, S5 instinctively associated the English language to British and American culture and highlighted the salience of Anglo-American culture in the media landscape. She said that when she thinks about English "I think of American or British culture but that is because they are the most present I don't know in TV series, TV, and also in newspapers" ("quando penso all'inglese penso alla cultura o americana o inglese ma perché secondo me sono anche quelli principalmente presenti appunto non so nelle serie, in tivù, o anche nei giornali"). At another point in the interview, she restated the same culture-language link by referring to American TV series as the major source of English language input. S20 too represented English as a language that is tied to the communities of NESs. Observing that due to its dominance in the mediascape American English is the variety to which learners are mostly exposed, she suggested that English, in her view, is not dis-embedded from a specific type of culture, namely US pop entertainment culture.

As observed in precedence (refer to 6.2.1), S17 too emphasized youth pop culture (computer games and specific TV channels) as the major point of contact with the English language for many of her peers. Her characterization of English as tied to a "nerd" culture was clear indication that in her perception English carries a cultural load. Along similar lines, S21 remarked that most movies that are shown in Italy are American productions, while S29 mentioned the key influence of US pop culture in defining the learners' perception of the English language. S28 too made an explicit association between English and US pop culture. She commented that her interest for the English language coincided with an interest for American pop music, movies and TV, emphasizing that "nowadays we are very much dominated by (.) TV series, movies, actually especially American ones" ("ora come ora (.) anche dal punto di vista della produzione culturale siamo molto dominati da (.) serie, film, cioè soprattutto in realtà americane").

S18 emphasized the key role that pop culture has as a major incentive to English learning. Confirming that she had not developed the same interest for the other foreign languages she had studied in high school, she made a comparison between English on the one hand, and German and French on the other:

> per quanto riguarda l'inglese ho <LNen> feedback </LNen> costanti e continui (.) dalla musica dal cinema: da: dalle notizie insomma da u:hm e poi dalla mia famiglia ospitante. per co- bè guarda il tedesco (.) cioè possiamo proprio anche quasi depennarlo dalle lingue che io conosco perché cioè proprio u:hm la mia conoscenza del tedesco non va oltre la letteratura e: tedesca che io ho imparato: (.) e alle superiori […] e: appunto non ho stimoli verso: la lingua tedesca perché d- uhm di musica francese eh sì scusa francese ciao di musica tedesca non ne ascolto, ma non ne ascolto (.) anche perché non (.) cioè non non non arriva non semplicemente non non arriva no? dovrei andarla a cercare dovrei fare presuppone un un atteggiamento attivo che insomma non ho nei confronti della lingua tedesca. per quanto riguarda il francese (.) è un po' una fase intermedia (.) […] quindi insomma il francese è una lingua sicuramente presente nella mia vita di quanto

non sia il il tedesco ma non è comunque presente: allo stesso livello del dell'inglese ecco. non ho neanche gli stessi stimoli.

as regards English I have constant and continuous feedback (.) from music to cinema fro:m from the news so from u:hm and also from my host family. as far as well look we might as well cross out German from the list of languages I know because my knowledge of German does not extend beyond the: German literature that I learned e:r (.) in high school […] a:nd indeed I do not have incentives towards German language because o- uhmf I do not listen to French music oh sorry German music, but I do not listen to it (.) also because I don't (.) I mean it doesn't not not get simply it does not not get here does it? I should search for it I should it presupposes an active attitude which I do not have towards the German language as regards French (.) it is sort of an intermediate phase […] and so French is certainly a language more present in my life than German but anyways not as present a:s not at the same level of English I mean. I do not even get the same incentives.

The expressions "it presupposes an active attitude" and "I do not even get the same incentives" pointed to the limited exposure S18 could get to German and French. S18 stated the obvious when she argued that German and French did not offer as many incentives to expand their learning beyond an instructional setting as the English language did. Unlike English, German and French are not the vehicle of a globalized youth culture, hence the German and French language input one can get outside a learning context is rather limited. Although the youth culture that speaks English is globalized, it is stressed here that its ties with the US context are unmistakable, as S18 herself revealed:

c'è questa ragazza che e cerchiamo e sì cerchiamo scusa che seguiamo sui social (.) e::hm che e: ha:m parla f- fluentemente la lingua: inglese ha fatto la scuola americana a-nche lei dall'asilo fino all''università e quindi m- molte volte p-parla e tra virgolette anche insegna ai suoi <LNen> followers </LNen> e: delle espressioni idiomatiche […] espressioni appunto che vengono da serie tivù: e: piuttosto che meme online. tipo adesso c'è non so la moda delle Karen <LNen> I'm a Karen </LNen> per delineare una persona cinquantenne che si lamenta un sacco cose cose del genere[8]

there is this girl whom we look for and oh my look for sorry we follow on social media (.) e:r who e:r ha: speaks f- fluent the la: the English language she attended the American school a-s well from preschool to university therefore she o- often speaks and also quote unquote teaches her <LNen> followers </LNen> e:r some idiomatic expressions […] expressions that actually come from TV series a:nd or online memes. like now there is this Karen fad Karen <LNen> I'm a Karen </LNen> to delineate a person in her fifties who complains about a lot of stuff things things like that

S18 also mentioned her personal experience with English as an academic language. She remarked that in her Italian-taught MA program half of what they did was in English ("metà in inglese e metà in italiano"). However, rather than viewing English as a de-nativized lingua franca, it was noted before (6.3.1.3) that she identified British English as the language of the internationalized academia. All this considered, there seemed to be clear indications in her interview that S18 viewed English as a language that is loaded with specific cultural values and norms. No doubt influenced by her experience in the USA and an enthusiastic attitude towards (American) English, S18 did not seem to be able to conceive the idea of English as decoupled from specific ENL cultural references. Rather, as an active user of English, she seemed to aim to integrate into the US American culture.

Like S18, S26 too highlighted the fact that there is not a culture "surrounding" German ("una cultura attorno") as a disincentive to its learning, and by referring to both pop culture and academic culture she characterized the globalization of English as a process of Americanization:

[8] S18 was referring to a meme that had become popular a few years before as a way to satirize the class-based and racially charged prejudice that African-American often face in the USA (refer to: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-53588201).

l'inglese è una lingua così diffusa come e:hm lingua di comunicazione per chi e: non la parla come prima lingua (.) soprattutto per l'influenza e: americana […] basti solo vedere che tutte le serie tivù che guardiamo adesso sono americane (.) e: a parte la casa di carta e: @@ e quindi insomma secondo me è (.) è è probabilmente la cultura più e: che (.) che uhm viene fuori più (.) e: più forte e: nel nel nello studio dell'inglese e:hm anche perché e: la maggioranza dei libri di testo e: che si studiano e: all'università e: spesso sono americani e: quasi tutti quelli di economia per esempio (.) e:hm quindi non so (.) a me per me è (.) la parte più forte (.) e dietro all'inglese e:hm

English is so widespread e:r as a language of communication for those who e:r do not speak it as first language (.) especially because of the e:r American influence […] suffice it to see that all the tv series that we watch nowadays are American (.) a:nd a part from the house of paper a:nd @@ and so in my opinion it is (.) it it is probably the culture e:r that (.) turns out to be the most (.) e:r the strongest in the study of English e:r also because the majority of the textbooks that are used e:r in university e:r they are often American e:r almost all the economics books for instance (.) e:r therefore I don't know to me in my opinion it is (.) the strongest part (.) er behind English e:r

As the extract shows, through her suggestion that the internationalization of HE is tied to the spread of US academic culture, S26 characterized English as a culture-specific language.

Similarly, S19 perceived the adoption of the English medium in HE to go hand in hand with the adoption of a specific academic culture, hence suggesting that the role of English in the internationalization of HE is not merely that of a transactional currency (refer to 6.3.3 for the LACOM students' views of EMI). She claimed that marketing was "quintessentially an English-medium subject" ("il marketing penso che è proprio la (.) non lo so la materia: pe- per antonomasia no? dell'inglese") and that it was natural for her to associate it to the English language and the US culture. She repeatedly remarked that receiving the same academic content in her second language of choice (Spanish) would have sounded "strange" to her ("mi suonerebbe tanto tanto strano", "mi farebbe strano", "mi suonerebbe tanto strano", "mi suonerebbe tanto tanto strano") and, therefore, she would have approached the study of the subject with "a less involved attitude" ("ci andrei più con: una mentalità distaccata"). Expressing a negative attitude towards translating certain technical terms from English to Spanish, which she found "an obscene thing" ("la (trovo) una cosa oscena") she further confirmed that she saw a perhaps inextricable link between certain disciplinary fields and the English language. In this sense, she projected English as a culturally loaded language. More than that, the fact that she also seemed to be aware that her view of a close association between certain subjects and English may simply be based on prejudice ("è u:n un'idea probabilmente che io ho che deriva da <@> dei pregiudizi </@>") showed that she was not unaware of the attitudinal underpinning of her own opinions. Further on, she made an implicit association between English and modernity, by remarking that studying certain subjects in English "gives one the idea of the more advanced aspect of the subject":

qualcosa che sia totalmente in inglese secondo me dà proprio (.) non lo so que:l quel quid in più @ quell'aspetto: come posso dire? più: u:hm uhm più avanzato de della materia cioè pensare magari di fare ecco marketing in italiano sì perché no? però in inglese (.) non lo so è: mentalmente: è più interessante forse.

Something that is completely in English in my opinion really gives one (.) I don't know that added something @ the aspect how can I say? mo:re u:r ur more advanced aspect of the subject that is to think of doing marketing in Italian why not? But in English (.) I don't know it is e:r mentally it is perhaps more interesting

The fact that she was trying to find the words to rationalize her feeling, confirmed also by the prosodic features in her speech (hesitations, false starts, pauses and other fillers), could be arguably interpreted as proof that her view of English as more appropriate to communicating a specific academic content had no basis in empirical facts. Even so, besides a favorable attitude to English, which she made explicit, and regardless of how this influenced

her views, her words provided another indication that she perceived English as a language that is loaded with specific cultural values.

S13 argued that English was important for her future because she aimed to do research, hence English would allow her to access a wealth of scientific resources. However, while acknowledging that English functions as the lingua franca of a transnational academic community, she nevertheless represented English as the vehicle of a culturally specific line of scientific research:

> mi piacerebbe fare ricerca dopo se se riuscissi in qualche modo a entrare in un ambito di ricerca mi piacerebbe molto e anche solo per leggere dei testi di ricerca anche se non la volessi fare ma volessi INFORmarmi (.) l'inglese è la lingua principale utilizzata quindi sicuramente aiuta tantissimo […] nella mia cooperativa viene abbiamo un centro (.) per ragazzi e:hm re- riabilitativo u:hm in cui si utilizza il metodo: cabas che è un metodo utilizzato per l- con l'autismo in particolare e: ed è un metodo che è studiato per lo più in e: in America o in paesi anglosassoni per cui adesso iniziano a uscire (.) tante ricerche e testi anche italiani ma i primi testi e i- la maggioranza delle ricerche e dei testi sono in in lingua inglese
>
> *I would like to do research after graduation if I could in some way get into a a research field I would like it very much even if only to read research texts even if I did not want to do it but I only wanted to keep myself INFORmed (.) English is the most used language therefore it is very useful […] in my cooperative it is we have a center (.) a rehabilitation center for kids u:r where the cabas method is used it is a method used especially for the with autism particularly a:nd it is a method that is studied mostly e:r in America or in Anglo-Saxon countries therefore now many research works and texts have started to appear (.) also in Italian but the first texts and most research and texts are in English*

The approach to education S13 referred to in the extract reported above is the Comprehensive Application of Behaviour Analysis to Schooling (CABAS®). It is a research-driven system-wide approach aimed at providing individualized educational programs for children and young people with and without disabilities (refer to Greer 1997). It was developed at the Teachers College of the Columbia University in response to the educational crisis that was brought to light in the United States by the Coleman report, published by the US government in 1966 (Colman 1966). Speculating whether the technology of instruction that had fueled S13's investment in taking her learning of English further has some universal value is clearly beyond the scope of this analysis. However, as a matter of fact, the CABAS method was established in a very specific societal context, in the framework of a specific education system and in peculiar historical circumstances. All this considered, it seems to follow that English as an academic language did not turn out from her comment as a culturally neutral language.

A comment on the impact of English as a lingua franca of academic research was made by S22 (refer to 6.3.1.8), through which she manifestly characterized English as a language that, as it spreads, also performs cultural work. Her views were thus incompatible with a notion of English as a culturally neutral language. S25 was asked a direct question whether she believed that a language was the expression of a specific culture. She replied,

> sì assolutamente sì al di là di ciò che diciamo (.) come lo possiamo chiamare? il e::hm l'impostazione mentale di una lingua per cui io:: italiano nel mio esprimermi (.) u:hm tendo ad essere molto teatrale invece il francese (.) più logico e cartesiano (.) si s- però secondo me vi è anche (.) un altro:: come dire e:hm vi sono dei campi dove certe lingue sono più applicabili rispetto ad altre. in cucina (.) nella cucina noi abbiamo a che fare con (.) un po' di italiano perché l'italiano culturalmente tradizionalmente è cucina e abbiamo a che fare con il francese (.) l'inglese non lo vediamo se non nell'informatica nel <LNen> business </LNen> cioè sono dei canali dell'economia di oggi. delle nuove tecnologie di oggi.
>
> *yes absolutely yes leaving aside what we call (.) how can we call it? the e:r the mindset of a language by which I: as an Italian in my expression (.) u:r tend to be theatrical whereas the French (.) are more logical and cartesian (.) th- I think there is also (.) another e:r I mean e:r there are fields where certain languages are more applicable than others. in cooking (.) in cooking we have some Italian because Italian is culturally*

traditionally it is cooking and we have French (.) we don't see English except in computer science in business that is the channels of today's economy. of the new technologies of today.

Arguing that distinctive essential and innate characteristics set apart the native speakers of different languages, S25 reproduced a stereotyped view of the relationship between language and culture according to which to each language there corresponds a peculiar "mindset". However, she also further illustrated her answer to the researcher's question by pointing to the cultural influence that distinct speech communities have had each in a specific area of human activity. Nevertheless, her belief that there is an inextricable link between language and "mindset" seemed to suggest that her claim that "there are fields where certain languages are more applicable than others" was not simply based on a socio-historical consideration. The researcher invited her to clarify her take on the subject, asking her whether she thought that any other language could be used in the domains that were dominated by a specific language and whether she thought that there was an inextricable link between language and culture. She replied that different languages "cannot do the same thing":

no non possono fare la stessa cosa. […] l'inglese è utile in nel business e: nel nell'informatica perché è economico (.) e: è semplice (.) […] quindi anche internamente molto creativo. l'italiano (.) non è così quindi farebbe m- MOlta fatica […] il francese ha molta immaginazione […] è già mentalmente su- mentalmente è già così culturalmente molto logico […] l'italiano (.) non è così […] è una lingua molto teatrale

no they cannot do the same thing […] English is useful in in business a:nd in in computer science because it is economical (.) it is it is simple […] therefore it is also internally very creative. Italian (.) is not like that therefore it would find it VEry hard […] French has a lot of imagination […] it is already mentally mentally it is already culturally it is very logical […] Italian (.) is not like that […] it is a very theatrical language

Her belief that English is "simple" and "economical" is commented further on (refer to 6.3.1.10 and 6.3.2.14). At this point, it is noted that S25 seemed to mistake the distinct rhetorical and stylistic conventions that are in use within specific linguistic communities (but not in others) for the intrinsic properties of a language. Furthermore, in her argument language and culture were one thing, as she also made explicit by claiming, at another point in the interview, that "it is difficult to learn a (foreign) language without losing one's peculiar cultural essence" ("è difficile per nell'apprendimento e: apprendere una lingua senza snaturare la propria cultura."). Although unsubstantiated and unsound, the claim that it is not possible to learn a foreign language without losing one's own peculiar cultural essence seemed to confirm that in S25's view each language is the carrier of a specific culture. S25 thus appeared to be reproducing some sort of folk version of the Saphir-Whorf hypothesis that establishes an inextricable link between language and thought. Certainly S25's understanding of the relationship between language and the (cultural) identity of its native speakers was clearly at odds with a characterization of English as a culturally neutral language. As it is commented further on (refer to 6.3.2.7), S25 was influenced by her background in translation studies, and she had a very strong perception that specific cultural connotations are inscribed in the native usages of a language.

English as a pluricentric language

Only two interviewees explicitly represented English as a pluricentric language. S14, who had received GELT instruction, commented that English is shaped by various cultures. Her views were thus more consistent with a WE model of multiculturalism than with an ELF model of fluidity in culture. She remarked that the GELT course she had attended had made her aware of the existence of various cultures that found their expression through a distinct variety of English. She mentioned in particular "African English", commenting that "it is as if (.) in African English you can feel all the weight of the history: let's say of African people". ("un po' come se (.) nell'inglese africano si senta tutto il peso della storia: diciamo del popolo africano."). However, she actually mistook African American English for African English, in referring to the traditional spiritual song 'Sing Low, Sweet Chariot' they had analyzed in class ("mi è rimasta molto impressa l'analisi che abbiamo fatto di: o:h <LNen sweet chariot </LNen>"). S27 too pointed to the pluricentricity of English, depicting it as a language that is tied

to a plurality of ENL and ESL cultures. Like many other interviewees, she also highlighted the key role of US pop entertainment culture. There was no hint throughout her interview that English can be understood to be floating culture-free.

ELF as the language of cross-culturality

Two other interviewees, S1 and S2, who were attending an ELF course at the time of the investigation, reproduced throughout their interviews the typical ELF arguments that emphasize the role of English as a transactional currency that is devoid of any specific ENL cultural references. S1 characterized English as a truly global language that allows the expression of any culture, saying

> <slow> personalmente non credo che sia </slow> u: un'espressione di una cultura singola in quanto l'inglese è adesso utilizzato come lingua ufficiale in vari paesi, seconda in altri paesi o comunque lingua di apprendimento in un gran numero di stati pertanto credo che non sia più l'espressione della cultura inglese per esempio britannica ma penso che u:hm sia una lingua che permetta l'espressione di varie culture.
>
> *<slow> personally I don't think it is </slow> the e: expression of a single culture since English is nowadays used as an official language in many countries, second language in other countries or anyways language of learning in several states therefore I believe that it is not anymore the expression of English culture British for instance but I think that u:r it is a language that allows for the expression of various cultures*.

Similarly, S2 viewed English as a language that is shaped by various cultures that crossbreed. Mentioning that she had done her BA dissertation on the topic of cross culturality ("nella mia tesi triennale ho fatto appunto questa e: <LNen> cross </LNen> culturalità") she claimed that, based on her knowledge on the topic,

> al giorno d'oggi l'inglese non appartiene né a una né all'altra ma viene un po' e: formata da diverse culture quindi è: e: non so come: un piatto di pasta che da ogni parte del mondo viene fatto qualcosa [...] quindi secondo me no non appartiene a una cultura in generale ma è appunto il FRUtto di diverse culture. se si può ancora parlare di culture al giorno d'oggi.
>
> *English nowadays does not belong to neither one nor the other culture but it is rather shaped by by various cultures therefore it i:s it is I don't know like a pasta dish in which something from all parts of the world is added […] therefore in my opinion no it does not belong to one culture in general but it is the PROduct of different cultures, if one can still talk about cultures nowadays*.

Her final aside observation "if one can still talk about cultures nowadays" led the researcher to ask her to clarify what she meant; she replied:

> se: ci sono ancora culture appunto INcontaminate come ho detto prima perché appunto siamo in continua comunicazione in continuo contatto che (.) non so ancora non so se posso ancora definirmi italiana al cento per cento se (.) sono andata tre anni i:n in Irlanda se ho viaggiato in Inghilterra son andata in Spagna diverse diverse caratteristiche che magari ho appreso diverse sì esperienze che hanno fatto sì che la mia cultura o il mio la mia <LNen> inner person </LNen> non sia proprio cento per cento italiana ma che abbia alcune sfumature di diverse culture.
>
> *i:f there are still UNcontaminated cultures as I said before because we are constantly in communication in continuous contact so that (.) I don't know yet I don't know if I can define myself hundred percent Italian if I spent three years in Ireland I travelled to England I went to Spain different different characteristics which maybe I have picked up yes various experiences which have made my culture or my my inner person not exactly hundred percent Italian but with also shades of other cultures.*

She further clarified that this peculiarity of being "not hundred percent Italian" was a characteristic of her generation "because we are more inclined to travel, more inclined to see and explore the world, to speak different languages" ("perché siamo più propensi a viaggiare, più propensi a e: vedere a esplorare il mondo, a parlare lingue

diverse"). Interestingly, her explanation appeared to contain her personal interpretation of the post-structuralist concept of culture as hybrid, fluid and emergent (refer to 2.4.2). As the argument that followed revealed, she was thus reproducing the view that in the context of the globalized world the notion of culture cannot be defined anymore on the basis of its ties to the nation. Consistent with this view is the ideology of cosmopolitanism that she quite explicitly expressed in emphasizing the increased international mobility that characterizes the students of her generation. A little further on in the interview, she restated the opinion that English is the product of cross-culturality, a language that can be adopted and adapted by the NNESs.

An inherent ambivalence

A few other interviewees pointed to an ambivalence inherent in English. In S4's view, the culture of English was at once the culture of the core ENL countries and also a global, mobile and unstable culture. She spoke of English as a pluricentric language with an "original matrix" ("matrice originaria"), but also one which is being increasingly adopted by people located beyond its original geographical core. Consistent with this view, she associated English to ENL cultural models, and the English literary tradition in the specific (refer to 6.3.2.12), but she also argued that English is a language that travels and is appropriated around the world in some kind of fluid form, something akin to Pennycook's image of the "transcultural flows" (2007a). She pointed out that the ENL cultures and the hybrid cultures that find their expression in English "are two souls that coexist" ("sono due anime che coesistono"). Asked about the location of the culture of the English language, she commented that "it all becomes very flexible" ("diventa tutto molto plastic"), because "especially nowadays with colonialism with t- all the migrations caused by multiple economic social historical factors actually there is a such a contamination that it is difficult to imagine a single center" ("con il colonialismo con l- tutte le migrazioni dovute poi a molteplici fattori economici sociali storici effettivamente c'è una contaminazione tale per cui è difficilissimo immaginare (.hhh) un solo un solo centro".

The inherent ambivalence of the English language was also implicit in S24's comments, who pointed to the ties the English language has with ENL cultures, bus also represented it as a culturally-neutral tool for communication between speakers of other languages. Similarly, S10 argued that English is "two distinct things" at the same time, that is, it is the language of the ENL cultures but also a denativized language that contains all cultures:

> i nativi hanno ci- come come inglesi hanno una loro cultura però l'inglese indubbiamente è diventato appunto una lingua e: una <LNen> link language </LNen> quindi e::hm (1) quindi diciamo che l'inglese in sé no no ha una cult- non ha una cultura e allo stesso tempo contiene tutte le culture perché comunque cioè è utilizzato come SCAMbio di parola però allo stesso tempo comunque e: l'inglese porta magari a degli inglesi gli americani comunque tutti quelli che parlano e: come <LNen> mother language </LNen> e: hanno sicuramente la loro cultura quindi secondo me le due cose sono separate ecco.
>
> *the natives as as English people have a culture of their own but English no doubt has become a language e:r a link language therefore e::r (1) therefore let's say that English in itself does not have a cult- does not have a culture but at the same time contains all cultures because it is anyways used as an EXCHange of word but at the same time anyways e:r English brings maybe the English people the Americans anyways all those who speak it e:r as mother language e:r they surely have their own culture but the two things are separated that's it*.

S9 remarked at one point in the interview that all languages carry the load of a specific culture, because a language "is not merely something that stands alone but carries along an infinite number of historical cultural things" ("una lingua non è <@> soltanto </@> u- una cosa a sé stante ma si porta dietro <fast> una quantità di cose a livello storico culturale che sono </fast> (.) infinite"). However, her overall views as she expressed them throughout the interview, suggested that there is an implicit ambivalence to the English language, which carries a specific culture while at the same time it is also a global language that belongs to anyone who use it. In particular, she suggested

that English belongs to a transnational class of internationally educated cosmopolitan students, hence it is the language of a specific 'culture', namely international youth cosmopolitanism (see also 7.1 and 7.2).

6.3.1.6 English as a necessary skill

Twenty-five interviews in total included comments on English as a necessary skill. Some interviewees were categorical in claiming that English was indispensable in today's world. Some instead hedged their claim, drawing distinctions between different domains of language use or highlighting the value of multilingualism. Others even questioned the view of English as an indispensable tool, implicitly suggesting that the commonsense notion of a necessary skill ought not to be taken literally.

S8 observed that many key sectors of today's society are permeated by English and stated that that since it is the language of technological progress, "even a laborer nowadays hardly he cannot have at least a minimum competence in English I'd say" ("anche per dire l'operaio oggigiorno difficilmente può: non avere almeno una minima conoscenza dell'inglese ecco"). S9 arguably overemphasized the importance of English in today's world with her claim reported in section 6.3.1.3 that English is "the basic language of communication for everything" ("l'inglese è la base di qualsiasi cosa"), which, as pointed out before, misrepresented the world's sociolinguistic reality. Furthermore, while it is a fact that English functions as an international language of knowledge dissemination, her view that "when one needs to: have more precise information about something you search it in English" ("quando si deve: avere un'informazione magari più precisa su qualcosa si cerca in inglese") seemed to imply that in order to be validated, knowledge must be in English, as if the English language were the source of all relevant knowledge (refer to 6.3.1.3 for the full extract).

S20 also viewed English as a fundamental tool for international communication and a basic skill in todays' labor market. She argued that "some knowledge of English is the basic nowadays. I mean it is not an added value anymore bu:t a minimum requirement that's what it is" ("sapere un po' di inglese è la base al giorno d'oggi. cioè non è neanche più diventato un più ma: il minimo ecco."). S25 hinted at the key role of English in today's labor market when she made considerations on the implications of ineffective English teaching in the Italian school system (refer also to 6.3.2.1). She commented that "ineffective teaching o- of English in high schools (.) e:r already represents let's say a weakness with which our human capital (.) e:r will enter the labor market" ("un insegnamento pre- uh precario de- dell'inglese alle superiori (.) e: rappresenta già un diciamo una debolezza con cui poi il nostro capitale umano italiano (.) e: si presenterà a sua volta al mercato del lavoro"). By establishing a cause-and-effect link between poor teaching and the lack of competitiveness of the human capital in the labor market, S25 explicitly linked proficiency in English to individual competitiveness. It is evident that S25's understanding of the goals of foreign language education were consistent with the principles of human capital theory (refer to 2.1), and it is within this ideological framework that she represented English as a necessary skill.

S11 commented that English had an important part in his life ("una parte importante: della mia vita"). Prior to enrolling in SEDU, he had studied computer science in high school and had recently started an online business in the field of social media management. Since his product was in English ("il mio prodotto è in inglese") and spoke English to his customers ("parlo in inglese con i miei clienti"), he said "without English I would be out of this world" ("senza inglese io uhm sarei fuori dal mondo diciamo"). However, he also added that he did not see how English could possibly have the same importance in his future job in the field of education, since "as an educator" he "could not see the same need to speak English" ("come educatore non non vedo questa esigenza di parlare inglese"). Nevertheless, he also claimed that the English language in the future is bound to become an "essential factor" ("fattore essenziale") of daily life. The perception that English has now become part of the NNESs' daily life was communicated by S12, who pointed out its importance in both education and the labor market. S6 instead denied that English was a necessary skill in the Italian education system, though she also emphasized that there was great demand for English-proficient people in the organization with which she collaborated, which had international contacts (as mentioned in 6.3.1.4). S5 commented that the importance of English in the Italian labor market was relative as it depended on the type of job ("dipende anche dal tipo di lavoro"). However, she believed

that “right now one has to know English that is basic competence in English is an important asset” (“ora come ora cioè bisogna saperla cioè almeno aver la base secondo me è importante”).

S16’s comments on the use of English as a default language within the Italian-based multinational company where she had previously worked (refer to section 6.3.1.4) highlighted that working competence in English is an ever-more necessary skill in the domain of business. She remarked that “for us it was fundamental that the person that spoke English that had good knowledge good knowledge of English” (“per noi a: che la persona che parlasse inglese avesse delle conoscenze delle buone conoscenze di inglese era fondamentale”) and repeated five times throughout the interview that being able to speak English was “essential” (“era essenziale”). She also added that in the work world as she experienced it “we are asked to: eh as if English was our s- our to be bilingual. or OR that was my experience” (“ci viene chiesto di: eh come fosse che l’inglese fosse la s- la nostra: essere bilingue. o O è stata la mia esperienza”). As noted above, S16 worked for multinational brand, and it is no surprise that English was so much valued in her company as she told. However, as it was observed before (6.3.1.4), English had been for her the working language by default and S16 could not see the point of having to use it in the company’s headquarters, which were located in Italy. Furthermore, she also observed that, as much as her company demanded native-like proficiency ("being bilingual") in English, competence in Spanish was also very much valued and needed, since her company had business relations with South America. On the whole, S16’s comments seemed to suggest that in spite of being represented as a tool that is necessary in order to operate in certain business domains, the use of English may not always be indispensable.

S21 argued that whereas in certain job positions English is a necessary skill, in other job positions it is completely unnecessary. However, she pointed out that an English-proficient candidate will be always preferred over the non-proficient one, because proficiency in English “signals openness towards the others”, it is a way of “being connected” to the outside world; English, she commented,

> è una competenza in più che serve in ogni caso per ormai in quasi tutti i lavori e: però: io (penso che) un datore di lavoro che: anche se non ti serve cioè anche se per esempio tu sei u:n non so (1) u:hm (.) adesso (.) magari u- un parrucchiere […] un datore di lavoro e: se se ha due parrucchieri uno che è stato in un paese: anglofono oppure da qualche altra parte nel mondo sa sa bene l’inglese l'altro che non l'ha fatto cioè io penso che sceglierà (.) comunque sia quello che (.) conosce un'altra lingua perché è un modo per essere connessi con gli altri e quindi è: (.) cioè conoscere un'altra lingua e proprio un (.) essere connessi in qualche modo con con l'esterno non non conosc- conoscere solo la tua è come un una sorta di chiusura direi.
>
> *is an added competence which is anyways useful for almost any job a:nd bu:t I (believe that) an employer who: even if you do not need it that is even if you are for example you are a: I don’t know (1) u:r (.) now (.) maybe a a hairdresser […] an employer er if if he has two hairdressers one who has been to an anglophone country or any other part of the world and knows knows a good English the other who has not studied it I think he will chose (.) no matter what the one who (.) knows another language because it is a way of being connected to the others and so it is er (.) I mean knowing another language is actually a (.) being connected somehow with with the outside world not not knowing only your language it is like some sort of narrow-mindedness*

Her argument that being proficient in English looks good on a candidate regardless of the actual need to use English in the job position sought for clearly suggested that English proficiency is considered as a mark of prestige. English, then, rather than being a necessary skill, is a status symbol, and in this sense proficiency in English does enhance one’s competitiveness in the labor market irrespective of the actual need to use it.

S14 highlighted the importance of English in higher education, where it has acquired a privileged role as the language of much academic knowledge. She also mentioned its importance in the labor market, especially for PICI students, who are likely to work in the future for multinational corporations. However, she pointed out that an exclusive focus on English may be misguided, since, she commented, “English is one among many

competences that you need to have but just as you know English at least from my own point of view the more languages you know the (.) better it is" ("l'inglese è una di tan- delle tante competenze che devi avere ma così come l'inglese almeno dal mio punto di vista più lingue sai (.) meglio è.").

S24 commented that English cannot be said to be a necessary skill in the Italian labor market, since "the work world is not only made of jobs that make you move around and necessarily make you use languages that are not your mother tongue ("il mondo del lavoro non è fatto soltanto secondo me di: (.) di: diciamo di lavori che ti fanno spostare che ti fanno: e: comunque usare necessariamente: lingue che non sono: che non sono la tua lingua madre"), and there also jobs that remain local and for which English is not needed at all. At another point in the course of the interview, she acknowledged the importance of English although, like S14, she also remarked that proficiency in other (foreign) languages is just as important in the labor market.

S17 put the importance of proficiency in English in the labor market in perspective and also pointed out that speaking more languages is actually more important than speaking only English. She claimed that as much as it is represented as necessary, proficiency in English by itself is not automatically a gateway of opportunities. She commented that "coming back to Italy with a higher level of competence okay in English (.) it IS NOT that it immediately opens up the doors of the work world for you" ("tornando in Italia con una maggiore competenza okay nella lingua inglese (.) NON È che immediatamente ti apre le porte al mondo del lavoro") and that although proficiency in English "is absolutely an added value it's not all that" ("è un valore aggiunto assolutamente sì però non è tutto lì"). In her view, many were the factors that contribute to enhancing one's chances of success in the labor market. Further on, she added that she believed that there are other languages, such as Spanish and German, that are very important in the domain of business, and mentioned some friends of hers who actually used German more than English in their job. She went on to argue that being proficient in English nevertheless gives one an edge and that in this regard she viewed English as a "discriminating factor" ("una discriminante"). However, as if to hedge her claim, she also restated her point that proficiency in English is just one among many skills that are valued in the labor market, and that multilingualism is more advantageous than speaking only English as an additional language. Her view that English functions a discriminating factor was particularly interesting, as it suggested a perception of English as a sign of social distinction, rather than an actually necessary skill. Similarly, as previously observed, S21's viewed proficiency in English as a mark of prestige that projects a better image to potential employers, regardless of the actual need to use English on the job.

6.3.1.7 Causes of the global spread of English

At various points throughout the interview, each student was invited to comment on the spread of English and/or give reasons for her/his responses to the questionnaire items that addressed the same topic (# 12 - # 17). By large majority, the participants attributed the causes of the global spread to historical-economic reasons and explicitly mentioned the power of the US as a major driving force behind the advance of English in today's world. Some of them, however, also referred to intrinsic properties of the English language that supposedly accounted for its expansion throughout the globe. S1, for instance, believed that the spread of English had been a natural process and interpreted the term 'natural' as a series of interrelated causes: the political and socio-cultural influence of the ENL countries, in addition to the influence of the Internet and the social media in more recent times. However, she also claimed that the ease of learning it facilitated the spread of English, saying "I believe that […] its quote unquote simplicity in some respects e:r favored the establishment the establishing of I'd say a certain predominance" ("penso che […] la sua tra virgolette semplicità sotto certi aspetti e:hm abbia favorito lo stabilimento lo stabilizzarsi di direi in un certo predominio.").

Five participants in total mentioned the supposed ease of learning English (refer to 6.3.2.14) as a reason why it has gained its global status. S4 argued that English was there for the take and that its success had not derived from any inherent characteristics, except maybe its ease of learning:

trovo che da un lato sia e:hm di di un po' più facile apprendimento forse per questo poi si è guadagnata un ruolo speciale […] è stata più forse una una contingenza o una sì una situazione in cui ci siamo ritrovati (.hhh) per cui effettivamente è diventata poi una via privilegiata per accedere a alcune risorse non magari per una sua caratteristica specifica se non appunto forse la (.) l'apparente uhm facilità nell'apprendimento.

I believe on the one hand that it is a bit easier to learn and for this reason it has gained a special role […] maybe it was rather a contingency or a situation in which we have found ourselves (.hhh) therefore actually it has become a privileged means to access certain resources and maybe not a specific characteristic of its if not indeed maybe the (.) apparent ur ease of learning.

However, her claim that English is an ever more easily accessible language (refer to 6.3.1.3) arguably suggested that the apparent ease of learning perceived by some students is rather a consequence and not a cause of the unprecedented vitality of English in today's world (refer to 6.3.2.14).

S1 also added that the spread of English had not entailed any "imposition" and that it had been, on the contrary, a smooth process. English, in her view, had not been forced upon anyone and she personally did not feel compelled to learn it:

penso che (.) non ci sia stata un'imposizione (.) particolarmente forzata almeno io non mi sento particolarmente forzata a dover imparare inglese […] penso che e: partendo magari da (.) ragioni di tipo storico e intrinseche alla lingua come dicevamo prima e: sia stato forse uno (.) uno (.) uno sviluppo e un primato che è stato raggiunto magari senza (.) senza troppi: (.) come dire (.) senza troppe difficoltà quasi.

I think that (.) there wasn't any imposition (.) particularly forced at least I do not feel particularly forced to have to learn English […] I think that e: starting maybe from historical reasons and intrinsic to the language as we were saying before er it was maybe a (.) a (.) a development and a primacy that was reached maybe (.) without too many: (.) how can I say (.) without too many difficulties almost.

S2's comment on the topic highlighted that the NNESs drive the current spread of English because they perceive its usefulness, hence they deliberately and consciously adapt to an inescapable reality. She said that the advance of English "is a change to which we have to we have to be (1) eh to which we have to adapt. therefore (.) it is naturally widespread because we are spreading it but that is because we are perceiving its usefulness" ("è un cambiamento al quale dobbiamo dobbiamo essere (1) eh a cui dobbiamo adeguarci. quindi: (.) è naturalmente diffuso perché lo stiamo diffondendo noi ma perché stiam vedendo la sua utilità").

S28, like several other interviewees, commented that the spread of English was linked to the economic and political power of the USA and also remarked that the worldwide expansion English had not been masterminded ("non credo che sia stata imposta a tavolino la lingua inglese ecco"). S5 argued that English spread "naturally" ("in maniera naturale") since it was there for the take and the speakers of other languages adapted to a matter-of-fact reality. However, she also remarked that it had been "initially imposed" ("inizialmente è stato imposto"). Further on, she observed that the spread was not to be attributed to intrinsic properties of the language and restated her belief that external factors had propelled English forward throughout the globe.

S29 as well denied the existence of inherent properties of the English language as a factor that facilitated its diffusion and highlighted the political dimension of the causes of the spread. Commenting questionnaire item #12 she stated that "it is not that English spread because it is easy to learn but because there were er important political and social influences especially political ones." ("non è che si è diffuso perché è facile da imparare ma perché vi sono state una serie di influenze a livello politico e sociale e: importanti soprattutto a livello politico."). She also remarked at various points in the interview that English had been imposed ("imposto") to the speakers of other languages. Quite interestingly, though, she observed that the fact of English having been imposed did not mean that the imposition had been deliberately masterminded. At one point she explained that the imposition of English was not to be understood as some sort of overt coercion, but rather an "indirect imposition" ("un'imposizione: indiretta") a "transformation that is achieved over time" ("una trasformazione che avviene col tempo") of which

one does not become aware ("una persona non se ne accorge"), so that in the end "it is difficult to understand what was the real cause" (" è difficile capire realmente qual è stata la vera causa"). Her perception that the 'spread' of English resulted not from over coercion but from a series of social and historical processes that cannot be easily disentangled reproduced the key argument of the theory of linguistic imperialism (refer to 2.1.2), even though she actually never used the terms 'imperialism' or 'imperialistic' in her comments. It is perhaps no accident that unlike most other interviewees, S29 showed acute awareness of the historical processes that brought English to spread throughout the globe and that made it an international link language. In order to account for the spread of English, she summarized the history of colonization of the 'new world' until the US Independence and also mentioned the colonization of Africa. S29 was also the only participant who mentioned military power as a factor for the spread of English, when later in the interview she commented that throughout history certain Nation States, such as Russia, Japan and the USA had wielded their military power to impose their language upon other populations.

6.3.1.8 English and the world's linguistic and cultural diversity.

Several interviewees commented on their responses to the questionnaire items that addressed the relationship between English and the world's linguistic and cultural diversity, and further expanded on the topic. A pragmatic view of the relationship prevailed among the participants, who by majority emphasized the advantage of having a widely spoken language that can link speakers of different L1s.

S9, for instance, although she remarked that all languages deserve respect, viewed English as "the most practical" ("la più pratica") language and one that facilitates communication between native speakers of other languages (refer also to 6.3.1.10). S13 spoke of English as a "convenient" ("conveniente") language, highlighting its established role of lingua franca of computer science and its privileged role in scientific research. S24, who questioned the image of English as a "passe-partout" (refer to 6.3.1.3) for international communication and also mentioned other languages that are equally important in the labor market (refer to 6.3.1.6), nevertheless acknowledged that English is the most widely used international language and remarked that she did not perceive any threat in its spread.

S2, as commented in the previous section of this chapter, argued that the advance of English on the global stage is a changing reality to which NNESs have to adapt, and commented that having English functioning as a common language makes communication more efficient than having to translate between different languages. However, she also observed that the widespread use of English puts the NNESs at disadvantage. S16 recalled how her experience in an Italian based multinational company (refer to 6.3.1.4) had showed her that the non-proficient speakers of English were disadvantaged and implicitly suggested that English does not put everyone on equal footing. She said, "I am certain about this thing I mean it is really a conviction that I have developed that if you don't know English well and you cannot speak it well you are disadvantaged yes." ("sono certa di questa cosa cioè proprio è una convinzione che che ho maturato e che se tu non conosci bene l'inglese e non lo parli: bene sei svantaggiato sì."). A power imbalance between NESs and NNESs was hinted at by S17, who spoke of English as a "discriminating factor" (refer to 6.3.1.6), arguing that the increased importance of English gives the NES and a class of internationally educated multilingual cosmopolitans an edge over EFL learners in today's world. However, she did not speak of the spread of English as a threat to any other languages. S12 explicitly denied that the spread of English is a threat to the vitality of Italian because it is learned additively in the Italian education system. However, she also observed that the increased importance of English disadvantages the older generation of NNESs who have not had the opportunities – and supposedly do not have the same capabilities – to develop proficiency in the language.

On the contrary, some interviewees viewed the spread of English as a possible threat to the world's linguistic diversity. S21, for instance, distinguished between the pragmatic recognition of the primacy of English in the world's economy from the ethical principle of equal importance of all languages. Furthermore, despite her overall positive attitude towards English and its lingua franca role, she also revealed a concern for the respect of linguistic

and cultural diversity and expressed a fear that Italian runs the risk of being overshadowed by English. Her strong feelings for her home language and culture are revealed in the extract that follows:

> vengono dei turisti qua da noi io ho lavorato in una gelateria e in vari ristoranti quando vengono dei turisti (.) io mi sono accorta nel tempo che e: le persone neanche (.) neanche ciao buongiorno e: grazie (.) […] non c'è nemmeno un una un desiderio di: avvicinarsi culturalmente all'altro no? […] l'inglese che viene in Italia (.) sa che gli Italiani devono parlare in inglese perché perché è la lingua della globalizzazione allora io sono tranquillo e ti parlo in quella lingua lì cioè non si sforzano neanche un attimo di: (.) di avvicinarsi a te cioè vengono a visitare il tuo paese ma della tua lingua gliene frega niente capito? quindi questa cosa (.) mi ha mi ha sempre dato fastidio […] anche come viene influenzata la lingua no? cioè tante parole che che io utilizzo tutto il giorno e: ma anche in ambiti lavorativi e u:h (.) tanti altri ambiti lavorativi gli ingegneri tutti quelli che lavorano con le macchine ci sono tantissimi termini inglesi e:hm (.) benché io (.) ami tra virgolette la lingua perché u:hm la sfrutto tantissimo un po' mi dà fastidio questa cosa nel senso che e: (.) cioè si: s- dando dando la possibilità all'inglese di (.) di essere sempre con noi noi diamo meno possibilità all'italiano (.) cioè di imparare cose in italiano parole in italiano secondo me.
>
> *tourists come over here to visit us I used to work in an ice cream shop and in various restaurants when tourists come in (.) I realized over time that er people don't even (.) not even hi how are you a:nd thank you […] there is not even a a a desire to get culturally closer to the other you know? […] the English person who comes to Italy knows that Italians must speak English because because it is the language of globalization therefore I am fine I speak to you in that language that is they don't even make an effort to: (.) get closer to you that is they come to visit your country but they couldn't care less about your language you know what I mean? so this thing (.) it has always has always bothered me […] also how the language is influenced you know? I mean many words that that I use all the time a:nd also in work contexts er ur (.) many work contexts the engineers all those who work with machines there are a lot of English terms e:r (.) although I (.) quote unquote I love the language because u:r I use it a lot I find this thing rather annoying in the sense that e:r (.) I mean if i- giving giving English the opportunity to (.) to be always with us we give fewer possibilities to Italian (.) I mean to learn things in Italian words in Italian in my opinion.*

Her views on the spread of anglicisms are commented in the next chapter section (6.3.1.9). It is drawn attention here to S21's perception that the behavior of the NESs who visit Italy and take for granted that Italians must speak English, while not even trying to learn and speak a little Italian, is a lack of respect for the Italian language and culture. Along similar lines, S23 commented that the NESs should not presume that English is a universal language and she suggested that they should change their attitude towards the NNEs and their non-native-like English, showing respect and interest for the other languages and cultures. Recounting her experience as an intern in an Italian company, she commented:

> parlando con un rappresentante britannico e: insomma era una cosa che mi ha fatto notare che e: i dipendenti italiani non sapessero (.) parlare inglese come forse dovrebbero. che secondo me si può essere d'accordo (.) ma anche no nel senso perché l'azienda è italiana quindi secondo me dovrebbe esserci anche una volontà da parte delle aziende straniere di provare a conoscere la tua lingua e la tua cultura più che (.) e: dato che l'inglese è stata la lingua scelta come lingua franca allora (.) tutto il mondo deve saperlo cioè c'è un po' un'ambivalenza in questa cosa secondo me
>
> *talking with a British representative e:r I mean it was something that he made me notice that e:r the Italian employees could not (.) speak English as they probably should. which in my opinion you can agree with that (.) but also you cannot I mean because the company is Italian therefore in my opinion there should be also a willingness on the part of foreign businesses to try to learn your language and your culture rather than (.) er since English has been the language that has been chosen as a lingua franca then (.) everyone must know it that is there is some sort of ambivalence in this this in my opinion*

S23's remark that the NESs do not even try to learn other languages and cultures suggests that she perceived some sort of power imbalance between the NESs and the NNESs which makes the NESs feel superior in some way. Her argument that it would be fair to expect a different attitude on the part of the NESs, suggested that she feared that the primacy of English can possibly lead to the marginalization of her home language and culture. Interestingly, she pinpointed the heart of the matter when she spoke of the "ambivalence" of having a language with native speakers functioning in the role of lingua franca which, by definition, has no native speakers. The same ambivalence was pointed out by S27, who spoke of the "paradox" ("paradosso") inherent in English, a language that facilitates international communication, on the one hand, but one whose advance poses a threat to linguistic diversity:

> un po' una contraddizione e un paradosso anche ecco paradosso nel senso che e: una singola lingua che viene parlata da tutto il mondo ovviamente è una minaccia alla diversità linguistica e culturale perché viene a mancare questa grandissima parte ma ha come (.) lato positivo ha il fatto che tutti riusciamo a comunicare nel modo più chiaro possibile.
>
> *rather a contradiction and a paradox here it is paradox in the sense that e:r a single language that is spoken by everyone is obviously a threat to linguistic and cultural diversity because this great part goes lost but it also has as (.) a perk the fact that we can all communicate in the clearest possible way*.

S5 commented that in the long run the widespread use of English on a global scale is bound to reduce the world's linguistic diversity. She said,

> può anche darsi che poco a poco l- lingue quelle: proprio meno presenti a livello mondiale poco a poco comincino a: sparire proprio per per questa e: per questa domiNAnza ecco della lingua inglese quindi sì effettivamente potrebbe essere un pericolo.
>
> *it is possible that little by little l-languages tho:se actually less vital on a global scale little by little they may start to disappear precisely because because this e:r of this domiNAnce that is of the English language therefore yes actually this may be a danger*.

S25, in accordance with her belief that there are specific domains where certain languages are more suitable than others (refer to 6.3.1.5), argued that not all languages can perform the functions of English. However, she also held a strong belief that English is a threat to the other languages. She said that "the global presence of English e:r therefore as a lingua franca represents a threat to any language (.) if these other second world languages cannot defend themeselves" ("la presenza globale e: dell'inglese quindi come linga lingua franca rappresenta una minaccia per qualsiasi lingua (.) nel momento in cui l- queste seconde lingue mondiali non sono capaci di difendersi."). She also suggested that the other (national) languages ought to "react" ("reagire") to the intrusion of English in their domains and claimed that the Italian language is not "reacting well" ("l'italiano non sta reagendo bene."). Throughout the interview, S25 spoke at length of the contact-induced phenomena brought about by the pervasive presence of English, revealing an overt negative attitude towards them. She made it explicit that her convictions were shaped by her background in translation studies and, as it is shown in the next section (6.3.1.9), she voiced purist arguments for the preservation of the lexical and grammatical integrity of the other languages against the advance of English. Her perception of English as a threat and her word choices pointed out above were clear proof of her conservatism.

S22, on her part, denied English any special status and argued that French, for instance, could have come to play the same role if history had turned out differently. However, she also suggested that English can represent a threat to linguistic diversity. In the specific, she spoke of the risks of erosion faced by the national traditions of academic research (refer to 2.2.3), especially in the field of humanities. All the same, she hedged her claim by observing that that was not an idea of hers and that she had "read it somewhere":

> maybe maybe it's not my my idea but I read it somewhere that the fact that the English is language of science and technology in some way e:r uhm like e:r do- it doesn't allow (.) the (.) ide- the (.) the thought (.) of (.)

Russian Chinese French scientists er to progress as a to progress er ev- er the scientists are able to think in their own language so by default as er (.) the most prominent scientific journals are all language e:r are all published in English so the scientist have to (.) like think in advance and they will present and they will put their ideas in English maybe in some way it affects the e:r u:hrm (.) most in humanities @@ it affects the: national way of thinking which is way of thinking in our own language. and in case we are writing fo:r e:r scientific journal (.) we're bound to think partly at least in English (.) so.

The risk of erosion of the national traditions of academic research entailed by the adoption of English as a lingua franca was also pointed out by S26, who understood the problem of having to produce knowledge in English as one of dumbing down of the quality of academic content:

a me piace molto che e: l'inglese sia (.) una lingua (.) sia la lingua usata anche per eh tutto ciò che è articoli scientifici e così via perché ovviamente la la rende fruibile a me (.) la rende fruibile a me e a e a tutti gli altri che parlano inglese che è la maggioranza e: della della comunità scientifica accademica. e: questo però è anche (.) negativo nel senso che ovviamente vengono perse quelle sfumature e quelle possibilità di espressione che ci sono in altre lingue se un articolo viene scritto in inglese invece che nella lingua (.) e:hm insomma de- (.) nativa e: del ricercatore, o insomma e:hm (.) e ovviamente e:hm fa abbassare diciamo (.) il livello anche involontariamente eh? e: la qualità di un lavoro che magari può essere fatto benissimo ma in una lingua oscura (.) conosciuta a pochi (.) e: e mi dispiace perché vuol dire che si perde (.) e: si perde lavoro valido probabilmente (.) ehm <low key> però. non so </low key> è una questione di (.) e: costo beneficio credo anche.

I really like it that English e:r English is (.) a language (.) is a language that is used for er all that is scientific papers and so on because obviously this makes it accessible to me too (.) it makes it accessible to me and all those who speak English who are the majority e:r of the of the scientific academic community. e:r but this is also (.) a negative fact I mean because obviously those shades and those possibilities of expression that are there in other languages are lost if a paper is written in English instead of in the language (.) e:r I mean of (.) native language of the researcher, or I mean e:r (.) and obviously e:r it also lowers let's say (.) the level even if involuntarily you know? e:r the quality of a work which can be done very well in an obscure language (.) known to the few (.) e:r and I am sorry about this because it means that there goes lost (.) e:r possibly valuable work goes lost (.) e:r ehm <low key> but. I don't know </low key> it is a matter of (.) e:r cost benefit I believe also.

Her final remark that it is also a matter of cost and benefit, though, showed that despite her perception of the risks entailed in the advance of English, she held a pragmatic attitude towards the adoption of English as a common language of the international academic community.

S29, who firmly believed that any other language could be in the position that English had come to secure as an international link language, perceived the privileging of English as a form of overt discrimination. She commented that it is "wrong" to privilege English over other (foreign) languages in the education system because in this way one culture is granted a superior status:

allo scegliere una lingua e:: come la lingua della globalizzazione appunto appunto della connessione è e vai a (.) a mettere in le altre lingue in e: minor d- le vai a rendere meno importanti. e secondo me è anche poi un errore perché i:n questo modo qua rendi una cultura superiore tra virgolette più importante rispetto a delle altre e questo e: secondo me è sbagliato

as you choose one language e::r as the language of globalization indeed indeed of the linkage and you (.) place the other languages in e:r less and you make them less important. and in my opinion it is a mistake because i:n this way you make one culture quote unquote superior more important than the others and this e:r in my opinion is wrong

As observed before (6.3.1.7), her view that English is being imposed upon the speakers of other languages surfaced at various points in her interview. Her perception that English plays an imperialist role was confirmed by her view of the negative impact of English on the world's linguistic and cultural diversity. It was also clear from her comment on the topic that she did not regard English as a neutral lingua franca.

The views on the relationship between English and the world's linguistic diversity were in some interviews strictly interrelated to the topic of anglicisms, which is presented separately in the next chapter section.

6.3.1.9 Anglicisms

The use of anglicisms in Italian emerged as a particularly interesting topic. Some interviewees commented extensively on the spread of anglicisms in the Italian language, revealing mixed attitudes towards the use of English loanwords and expressions, and pointing to their pragmatic salience.

Mixed attitudes towards anglicisms

S21 first mentioned the presence of anglicisms in the linguistic habits of the Italians when she argued that the massive exposure to English greatly contributes to facilitating its learning (refer to 6.3.2.14). Further on in the interview, as the extract reported in the previous section showed, she referred once again to the presence of anglicisms when she communicated her fear that Italian will probably be marginalized by English. In spite of her overall positive attitude to English, her phrase "I find this thing rather annoying" ("un po' mi dà fastidio questa cosa") revealed a negative attitude towards a use of anglicisms that she perceived as excessive and unmotivated. It seems then that it is possible to hold a positive attitude towards English yet at the same time view with disfavor the habit of borrowing English loanwords and expressions.

S25 spoke at great length of the spread of anglicisms and their impact on the Italian language. She was very forthright in expressing her negative attitude towards lexical borrowing from English. In a series of related arguments, S25 revealed a purist concern for the preservation of the integrity of the national languages against the threat of decay brought about by what she perceived as an uncritical adoption of English terms and expressions. She claimed,

> è molto facile per economia linguistica lasciarsi trasportare dagli anglicismi di oggi (.) e:hm siamo probabilmente più arricchiti di anglicismi che di vere regole grammaticali che dovremmo seguire per comunicare al meglio (.) in inglese. quindi il primo problema la presenza e:hm (.) cospicua dell'inglese nell'italiano anche in forme spesso sbagliate e la mancata reazione dell'italiano nel ricrearsi e nell'affrontare la presenza dell'inglese. e:hm essere a m- a mio avviso essere invasi da una lingua e:hm (.) senza cercare e: degli diciamo delle soluzioni di matrice nativa di matrice linguistica nativa è un primo <LNen> step </LNen> ecco appunto è un primo passo verso una un mancato apprendimento non solo della lingua ma anche della lingua straniera che (.) sta interferendo con la nostra sostanzialmente non siamo consapevoli di ciò che capita.
>
> *it is very easy for reasons of linguistic economy to surrender to today's anglicisms (.) e:r we are probably more enriched by anglicisms than by real grammar rules that we should follow to communicate in the best possible way (.) in English. therefore the first problem the presence e:r (.) the conspicuous presence of English in Italian also in forms that are often wrong and Italian's failure to react to recreate itself and face the presence of English. e:r to be in m- in my opinion to be invaded by a language e:r (.) without looking for e:r let's say native solutions of native linguistic origin is a first step that is indeed a first step towards a failure to learn not only the language but also the foreign language which (.) is interfering with ours basically we are not aware of what is going on.*

Although a little confused, her argument pointed to a contradiction between the Italians' low proficiency in English and their tendency to overuse anglicisms. Interestingly, she seemed to see a cause-and-effect relationship between the excessive use of anglicisms and the failure to develop the knowledge of "the grammar rules we should use to communicate in the best possible way in English". As already observed, she viewed the spread of English

as a threat and her lexical choices – "react", "invaded", "is interfering" ("reazione", "invasi", "sta interferendo") – were particularly revealing of her negative attitude towards language contact. At another point in the interview, she returned to the same topic, referring to the spread of English "as a double-edged sword" ("un arma a doppio taglio"), to claim that the Italian language's "failure to react" ("mancata reazione") to the pervasive presence of English, which leads to the spread of anglicisms that are changing the way Italians speak, is one first step towards the corruption of the Italian language. In her argument, she compared Italian with French:

> il francese è (.) non solo ha un'enorme creatività linguistica e vi è proprio una commissione e: che cerca di elaborare sempre più materiale nativo per far fronte agli anglicismi e sembra funzionare (.) ma il francese (.) sembra anche essere un po' più: resistente da un punto di vista grammaticale. vi è in corso un (.) un c- un cambiamento nella grammatica italiana per colpa degli anglicismi quindi ovviamente si parla di e:hm (.) formule (.) e: grammaticali e: in quanto tali non ci rendiamo conto del cambiamento un esempio che mi ricordo (.) e: eclatante fu la frase sono un ingegnere (1) è i- è inglese (.) è inglese <LNen> I'm an engineer </LNen> quindi quel quell'articolo indeterminativo nell'italiano di qualche decennio fa non c'era io sono ingegnere. […] forse molti errori potrebbero non nascere molti anglicismi potrebbero non essere presenti in italiano solo per (.) pigrizia (.) per uhm per uhm u:hm perché abbiamo e: perché manchiamo di creare: materiale nostro perché è più facile usare quello degli altri.
>
> *French is (.) not only it has an enormous linguistic creativity and there is an appropriate commission er that tries to elaborate more and more native material to face anglicisms and it appears to be working (.) but French (.) also seems to be a little mo:re resistant from a grammatical viewpoint. It is underway a (.) a c- change in the Italian language is underway for the fault of the anglicisms therefore obviously we are talking about e:r (.) formulas (.) grammatical formulas a:nd as such we are not aware of the change an example that I remember (.) e:r a striking one was the phrase sono un ingegnere (1) it is e- is is English (.) it's English <LNen> I'm an engineer </LNen> therefore that that indeterminate article in Italian a few decades ago was not there io sono ingegnere. […] maybe many errors may not arise many anglicisms may not be present in Italian only for (.) laziness (.) for u:r for u:r because we e:r we fail to create our own material because it is easier to use that of the others.*

Without consideration of her unsubstantiated belief that the grammar of French "is more resistant", which no doubt derives from the fact the language policies of France have taken measures to curb the spread of anglicisms, the most relevant aspect of S25's comment was her implicit view that languages ought to be kept separated. Once again, this view of hers that the integrity of each language should be preserved, as well as the very lexical choices she made to argue her point – "reagire", "resistente", "colpa" ("react" "resistant", "for the fault of") – revealed her negative attitude to language contact and change. As can be seen in the extract reported above, her argument for the preservation of the integrity of the Italian language included a suggestion that Italians, like the French, should create linguistic material of their own in order to keep in check the phenomena of lexical borrowing from English and ultimately prevent spread of "errors" that (supposedly) corrupt the Italian language. Throughout the interview, she also repeatedly spoke of "awareness" ("consapevolezza") in relation to the use of anglicisms. She expressed a belief that awareness of one's linguistic choices would avoid the excessive use of anglicisms and the fossilization of errors that eventually result in permanent change. However, it must also be noted that the example she made to support her argument reported in the extract above was based on a wrong assumption. The use of the indefinite article with nouns denoting professions is actually well-formed in various regional varieties of Italian, although not 'correct' according to prescriptive grammars that are based on the standard norms of the language. Furthermore, in no way does the use of the indefinite article seem to be the result of remote contact with English. Most importantly, as also several other participants did when they discussed their views on the teaching and learning of English (refer to the next chapter 6.3.2), S25 showed a marked tendency to use prescription in description, which in turn revealed a strong influence of the ideology of the standard language (refer back to 3.2.1). In conclusion, not only did S25 think that languages ought to be kept separate, but she also held a strong belief the rules of the standard ought to be respected. At another point, S25 added that language contact can

nevertheless be enriching if a language reacts ("reagire") to it by creating material of its own. She said, "the other languages must try as hard as they can to (.) react and most importantly the linguistic material (.) e:r the foreign material that we receive" ("le altre lingue devono cercare il più possibile di (.) reagire e soprattutto il materiale linguistico (.) e:hm straniero che riceviamo"). As a conclusion, she restated once again her belief that the Italian language is not "reacting well" (refer back to 6.3.1.8).

Negative attitudes to anglicisms are often found in public discourse. That is what S6 had in mind when she claimed that "there are people who frown upon this thing" ("c'è chi la vede male <@> come cosa</@> […] c'è chi la vede molto male"). However, her attitude towards the use of anglicisms was a favorable one, although with the caveat that when they are not necessary anglicisms should not be used because an excessive use can be irritating. Nonetheless, she also remarked that in certain contexts where having a common vocabulary facilitates communication, such as the domain of internet, anglicisms are instead useful:

> e effettivamente portata all'ennesima potenza diventa quasi fastidiosa come cosa quando si può evitare invece come e:hm (.) proprio per per esprimere delle parole (.) più (.) internazionali magari oppure nel mondo della rete nel mondo di internet e: di quelle cose lì è più (.) è più facile avere anche una lingua comune o delle parole comuni per capirsi.
>
> *actually if pushed to the limits this thing becomes annoying when you can avoid it instead as a e:r (.) precisely to to express words (.) more (.) international words maybe or in the web world a:nd those things it is more (.) it is easier to have also a common language or some common words to understand each other*.

In another turn, expanding on the same topic, she expressed a folk view of the untranslatability of languages:

> secondo me esistono delle parole che hanno proprio uno specifico significato e che in un'altra lingua non non rendono così bene. è lo stesso discorso del dialetto volendo che ci sono delle parole che si dicono in dialetto e che (.) ne in i- dette in italiano magari non avrebbero neanche una loro traduzione o se ce l'hanno non non hanno una grande (.) potenzialità espressiva.
>
> *in my opinion there are certain words that have a specific meaning which in another language do not not convey the same meaning. it is the same thing with the dialect if you like there are words in dialect which (.) in i- in Italian maybe they would not even have a translation or if they do have one they do not not have that great (.) expressive potential*.

Her comment actually pointed to the cultural connotations that are embedded in a language's words and expressions. She seemed to believe that since certain terms and phrases evoke images and associations that are culture-specific, those connotations would be inevitably lost in translation. As a matter of fact, the difficulty of transferring the meaning of culture-dependent words to another language, hence the need to preserve the expressive qualities conveyed by the original language, is perhaps the mother of all the translator's problems. The most interesting insights, though, came from the subsequent turn, after she was asked to provide an example of an English word for which she thought there (supposedly) was no translation. She made the example of the adapted anglicism "fittare", which she had frequently found in the social media and used in conversations with her friends. She claimed that there was no Italian equivalent for it or, as she hastened to add, even if it there was one, she could not recall any, and that fact that she could not was proof that the the English term was to her more easily accessible and so its use "made it easier" to convey the intended meaning:

> FITTARE con anche una trasformazione e: in italiano e: che e è proprio l'emblema secondo me perché (.) e <LNen> fit </LNen> n- non ha una vera e propria traduzione in italiano o se ce l'ha non mi viene in mente in questo momento quindi è già e indicativo di quanto e salti alla mente prima di: della parola italiana perché è più semplice non so […] si può si può dire in con una specie di gioco di parole che la parola fittare sta FITTA MEGLIO @ nella nella lingua nel parlato

FITTARE with also a transformation e.r in Italian e.r which is exactly the emblem in my opinion because (.) <LNen> fit </LNen> does not have a real translation in Italian or if it has one I cannot recall it now therefore it is by itself indicative of how more quickly it comes off the top of your head than the: the Italian word because it is simpler I don't know […] one can say by some sort of play on words that the word fittare fits FITTA BETTER @ in the the spoken language

Despite her claim that she could not find an Italian equivalent for the English verb 'to fit', her use of the verb "sta" (which translates the English 'fits'), as shown in the extract, proved exactly the contrary. While S6 did not seem to be aware also of the fact that the anglicism "fittare" is homonymous to the Italian verb for the English "to rent", her argument was especially indicative of the fact that she was perhaps so familiar with the English verb 'to fit' that she did not even bother to think of an Italian equivalent. As Mauranen (2018) noted, in multilingual speakers' repertoires the most easily accessible items are not necessarily those of the first-acquired language.

S14, for instance, commented that since she was a proficient ESL speaker of English it was natural for her to use certain English expressions. However, she also observed that there are anglicisms that have become common usage in the domain of social media, regardless of the internet users' level proficiency in the English language:

determinate cose mi verrebbe da dirle di inglese e (.) e non le dico perché so che non mi non mi capirebbero però tutte quelle espressioni che si sono diffuse un po' e: con Istagram, o: diciamo quelle un po': (.) un po' fatte tipo <LNen> are you there? </LNen> questo magari e: la utilizzi anche con persone che non sanno l'inglese perché ormai hanno capito che quella espressione si usa in quel determinato contesto.

certain things come to my mind in English and (.) and I do not say them in English because I know that they would not not understand me but all those expressions that have spread in part through istagram o:r let's say those that are kind o:f (.) kind of catchphrases like <LNen> are you there? </LNen> this you use maybe also with people who cannot speak English because by now they have realized that that expression is used in that particular context.

The pragmatic salience of anglicisms

It was reported in section 6.3.1.2 that S6 claimed that English belongs to everyone, including the NNESs who borrow English loanwords and expressions "to better express something" ("per us- esprimere meglio qualcosa nella propria lingua"), "to find the best words to say something" ("per trovare le parole migliori per per dire qualcosa"). While her claim that English "says it better" unmistakably revealed a positive attitude to English, it also hinted at the possible reasons behind the use of anglicisms. In that regard, S25, who was highly critical of the spread anglicisms, pointed to the connotations of high status that anglicisms carry. She claimed that "what Italians do when they repeat anglicisms and overuse them is in order to raise (.) the the their own level their own they sort of give the impression of being e:r let's say sophisticated and learned a::nd and it is it is the only reason (.) why they use anglicisms." ("quello che fanno gli italiani quando ripetono degli anglicismi e ne abusano è per innalzare (.) i:l il il proprio livello il proprio danno una sorta di aria e:hm diciamo co- costruita e sapiente e:: ed è ed è l'unico motivo (.) per cui usano gli anglicismi."). Suggesting that Italians use anglicisms for mere reasons of prestige, S25 correctly identified one of the reasons behind their use. S17 too highlighted the connotations of prestige with which anglicisms are charged when she commented that some of her friends use American English "slang" expressions to "show off" ("mettersi in mostra", "c'è uno sfoggio di sè"), "thinking of make an impression" ("pensando di darsi un tono") and proving that they are proficient in English, as if to say "look I know how to speak slang" ("guarda so e: parlare con lo <LNen> slang </LNen>"), "look I know English better than you" ("guarda so l'inglese meglio di te").

However, looking back at S6' comments, there seemed to be no indications the use of the anglicisms *fittare* she referred to carried connotations of high status. Actually, S6 merely suggested that when Italians opt for an English word or expression instead of its Italian equivalent, they make a marked choice. Since 'to fit' does have an Italian equivalent and, most importantly, S6 actually was aware of it, "fittare" clearly represented an instance of marked

borrowing. Moving beyond the dichotomy of prestige and necessity borrowing, a distinction between marked and unmarked choices has been proposed (Furiassi 2018) according to which the pragmatic markedness effects of a borrowed item depend on the existence of other semantically close equivalents in the receptor language. That is to say that S6 consciously preferred to use the anglicism rather than its Italian equivalent, and in doing so she endowed the English expression with a certain degree of pragmatic salience. It has been observed that pragmatically borrowed items carry signals about speaker attitudes (ibid.), and, as noted before, a positive attitude to English certainly shaped S6's perception that Anglicisms get through the message better than their Italian equivalent. While the preference for "fittare" certainly revealed S6's attitude to English, it also perhaps corresponded to a desire to signal her belonging to a cosmopolitan class of young internet users.

At another point in her interview, S6 restated her positive attitude to anglicisms, already implicit in her belief that certain English words "say it better". Based on her awareness that boundaries between different languages are porous, she expressed the opinion that contact between languages is enriching and distanced herself from the advocates of linguistic purism who held the opposite view. However, she also reiterated the point that, when they makes things less comprehensible, anglicisms ought to be avoided:

> molte persone pensano che e: aggiunger- inserire parole di derivazione straniera in generale non solo inglesi nella lingua di di tutti i giorni nell'i- dentro all'italiano sia una minaccia per l'italiano stesso e pe- quindi per la cultura italiana. io credo che più che una minaccia possa essere un arricchimento. a questa: a alla lingua italiana che: che poi alla fine nessuna lingua ha un confine ben delimitato perché ci sono origini di termini che vengono da chissà dove e: (.) e cose insomma son- è tutto è tutto un po' mischiato già all'origine quindi mischiarlo ancora di più e: se solo se è utile però perchè quando quando si vedono poi quelle situazioni dove: mi vengono in mente i nomi di mestieri e di e: i <LNen> manager </LNen> di non so che cosa e dopo mettendoli magari in inglese si capisce meno e quindi diventa meno utile e non più: funzionale e quindi in quel caso non (.) può diventare una minaccia.
>
> *lots of people think that e:r adding words of foreign origin in general not only English in everyday language in i- in Italian is a threat to Italian itself and fo- and so for Italian culture. I believe that rather than a threat it can be enriching. for this fo- for the Italian language whi:ch which at the end of the day no language has a clearly defined boundary because there are origins of terms that come from who knows where a:nd (.) and what I mean they are it is all it is all a little mixed up already at the origins therefore to mix it further e:r only if it useful however because when when one sees those situations whe:re I am thinking of the names of professions and of a:nd the <LNen> manager </LNen> of I don't know what and then by saying them in English maybe one does not understand just as well and so it becomes less useful and no:t functional anymore and therefore in that case it is not (.) it can become a threat.*

Her final remark that the use of certain anglicisms may be confusing and thus not functional once again pointed to the pragmatic salience that making the marked choice of opting for an English term has. It is possible that S6 was hinting that the use of anglicisms may also serve the purpose of concealing a perhaps unpleasant or unpopular reality. When the interviews were conducted, an argument that had been part for some time in the Italian public debate concerning the reform of the laws that had restructured the labor relations[9] held that the use of certain anglicisms had precisely the intention of sanitizing the reality of the measures that had been taken. It cannot be known for certain whether S6 had that controversy in mind, as she was not explicit in this regard. In any case, the crux of the matter here at stake is that the use of English loanwords rather than their Italian equivalent is no neutral choice and that was clearly reflected in S6's arguments.

[9] The reform proposals in question had culminated in the 'Jobs Act', a bill passed by the government a few years earlier with the aim of restructuring work and employment relations.

S18 said that she constantly used English expressions when reporting or commenting the memes or popular videos that she found on the web, in her text conversations with some friends of hers who, like her, were highly proficient in English. She said, "a good part of our messages a:re in English or anyways sometimes m- mixed English and Italian beca:use there are<LNen> reference </LNen> to: meme o:r articles or videos e::r that are indeed in English therefore it would not not make sense to translate them and their meaning would get lost" ("buona parte dei nostri messaggi: sono: in inglese o comunque a volte m- mischiati inglese e italiano perché: ci sono <LNen> reference </LNen> a: meme piuttosto che: articoli piuttosto che video. e:: che appunto: cioè sono in inglese quindi tradurli non non avrebbe senso e si perderebbe e: il il significato"). She added that although it was possible to translate them, the English expressions better convey the intended meaning; in her words, "it is not that they are untranslatable but i- in English in my opinion they co-better convey the message. I mean <LNen> it's raining cats and dogs </LNen> is much better than it ra- *piove a catinelle*." ("non è che siano intraducibili però i- in inglese secondo me re- re- rendono meglio. cioè <LNen> it's raining cats and dogs </LNen> è molto più bello di: pio- s- piove a catinelle."). Further on, she clarified this point, adding that the use of the Italian equivalent of an English idiom would subtract "the original expression's peculiar traits and meaning" ("perde tutto il (.) il colore e e insomma il il senso.").

It was mentioned earlier on that Mauranen (2018) observed the most easily accessible items in a multilingual speaker's repertoire are not necessarily those of the speaker's L1. As proficient speakers of English, S18 and her friends possibly found it natural to use English expressions. However, it is particularly interesting to see that S18, like S6, also believed that the English equivalent of an existent Italian expression "says it better". In this sense, S18 also pointed to the pragmatic salience of anglicisms. By using English expressions S18 and her Italian friends made marked choices, perhaps with the intent of signaling their positive affective attitude to English or also their high level of proficiency, their solidarity, and perhaps a desire to belong to the culture and the native speakers with whom they associated those expressions. It was clear from S18's interview that her study abroad experience in the USA had had a crucial influence, as she made it explicit when she commented that she divided her life experience "in pre- and post-America" ("io divido la mia vita in (.) <LNen> pre-America and post-America") (refer to 6.3.2.10). It seemed then that her enthusiastic attitude towards American English and US culture that emerged from her interview shaped her perception that an English expression better conveys the meaning than its Italian equivalent.

Like S6 and S18, S9 too claimed that certain English expressions are untranslatable as they do not find an Italian equivalent. Being S9 an English-proficient internationally educated cosmopolitan, it is very likely that not all the most readily accessible items of her multilingual repertoire were those of her Italian lexicon. That is to say, she actually found it easier to express certain concepts in English, as she pointed out by saying that "very often I find it easier to express a concept in English (.) rather than in Italian" ("molto spesso mi viene più semplice esprimere un concetto IN inglese (.) di quanto non sia in italiano"). Her liking for the English language was made explicit in the interview. Interestingly, she also seemed to signal her positive attitude to English by means of her intonation, which reproduced the high rising terminal contour (HRTC) (also commonly referred to as 'uptalk') that is typical of certain English speech styles but utterly uncommon in Italian. Twenty-one occurrences of HRTC in total were counted throughout the forty-two turns of her interview. One turn in particular featured four instances of it, when she answered the researcher question whether she ever happened to use English in her hometown, outside a work environment:

> u:hm <?> poco in realtà </?> nel senso che: lo utilizzo appunto: <?> tanto tra amici </?> però sono amici che sento solo (.) via Skype o <?> o diversamente </?> u:hm un po' con mia sorella perché mia sorella ha studiato per un anno in America quando era al Liceo quindi (.) talvolta ci viene più comodo anche tra di noi comunicare in inglese per casa quando sono <?> piccole comunicazioni ad esempio </?> e: però con con gli amici nella vita quotidiana m- molto poco veramente veramente poco a volte: mi farebbe comodo così dire una cosa in inglese ma (.hhh) trovo molto poco riscontro specialmente nelle persone della mia età a volte faccio veramente fatica a comunicare se si tratta di inglese.

u:r <?> very little actually </?> I mean e:r I use it indee:d: <?> with friends </?> but they are friends whom I only hear from (.) via Skype or <?> or otherwise </?> u:r a little with my sister because my sister studied for one year in America when she was in high school therefore (.) sometimes it suits us better to communicate between us in English at home when it is about <?> small communications for instance </?> a:nd however with with my friends in my everyday life v- very little actually actually a little sometimes e: I would rather say something in English but (.hhh) I get very little feedback especially from people my age sometimes I find it really hard to communicate if it is English.

In this particular turn, where she lamented the fact that her use of English was rather limited, by imitating the typical HRTC pattern of many NESs, S9 was possibly manifesting her desire to speak English and perhaps also her high level of proficiency. In brief, it is suggested here that S9's use of the uptalk intonation carried a certain degree of pragmatic salience. A category of "pragmatic borrowing" (PB), distinct from lexical borrowing, has been coined to refer to "a variety of phenomena whose common feature is that they do not contribute to the propositional content of utterances, but act as constraints on the interpretation process due to their subjective, textual, and interpersonal pragmatic functions" (Andersen 2014: 17-8). As a broad conception, PB extends the borrowing of linguistic features (from English) to intonation, including the use of HRTC. The case of the uptalk as it was observed in S9's interview was however a single instance of idiosyncratic use of the intonation contour and so it did not technically qualify as a case of borrowing. Nevertheless, just as code-switching and lexical borrowing can be seen as the two poles of a continuum, since borrowed items normally occur initially as emblematic switches that demonstrate the speaker's ability to code-switch, it has been argued that borrowed pragmatic features too also initially occur as individual idiosyncrasies (ibid.). The significance of uptalk in native English varieties is a complex one and it has undergone changes over the decades (and so have the attitudes towards it). The interesting aspect, though, of S9's use of the uptalk contour was the attitudinal significance it suggested. Considering the widespread use of the uptalk in the speaking habits of the new generations of NESs, it can be hypothesized that by transferring it into Italian, S9 aimed to be identified as a member of a cosmopolitan class of highly proficient English users and perhaps lay claim to the English language, as also other arguments she put forth in the interview seemed to confirm.

6.3.1.10 Stereotypes of the English language

The interviewees' views of what English is and does also reproduced stereotypes.

A "straight-to-the point" language

Particularly a stereotype of English as a "straight-to-the point" and "pragmatic" language emerged from a few interviews. S8 supported his belief that there are intrinsic properties to the English language that supposedly make it the best candidate for being the language of globalization and democracy with the following argument: "English seems to me a language that has in some respects a tendency to be more synthetic and more direct it lends itself less to quote unquote uhmf allow me to use this term mincing words, o:r misunderstandings" ("l'inglese mi sembra una lingua che abbia per certi versi una tendenza a essere più sintetico più diretto si presta meno tra virgolette a uhmf passami il termine giri di parole, o: fraintendimenti"). Later in the interview, S8 argued his point that English is a language that facilitates the most straight-to-the-point way of expression and creates the least misunderstandings. He claimed that English is a language that

> tende mettiamola così o che porta o che SPROna il più possibile a avere una (.) diciamo un essere un modo diretto di: esprimersi in modo che comunque sintetico un modo che può arrivare al punto con meno parole e:hm quindi in quel senso anche più schietto trasparente e: crea meno problemi magari di fraintendimenti
>
> *tends to let's put it this way or leads one or that encourages one as much as possible to have a (.) let's say to be a direct way o:f expressing oneself in a synthetic way a way to get to the point with less words e:r so in that sense as well also more straightforward transparent a:nd creates least problems of misunderstandings*

It goes without saying that breakdowns in communication depend on the relationship between the interlocutors and that the characteristics of the code by itself in no way can trigger or prevent misunderstandings. Since it seemed very unlikely that S8 was not aware of the basic principles of communication, it is hypothesized here that it was his positive attitude towards English that made him perceive English as an intrinsically straight-to-the point language. Although he claimed that he was an avid reader of English, S8 was perhaps familiar with a comparatively limited range of registers and styles of written and spoken English. Even more likely, S8 was familiar with specific rhetorical styles of communication typical of the Anglo-Saxon tradition which are characterized by conciseness, plainness, and a straightforward syntax. Perhaps for this reason, it appeared to him that English is a language that has the intrinsic property of making communication more straightforward. This tentative hypothesis rested on research findings that have investigated the rhetorical approach of English academic discourse (see, e.g. Bennet 2007), but could not be verified.

Arguing that English is unlike any other language, S9 too characterized English as a straight-to-the-point language:

> l'inglese è la più: è veramente la più pratica per fare certe cose per (.) la varietà di vocabolario e tutto quanto. però effettivamente trovo che ci siano certe lingue che (.) per una comunicazione di base come quella che c'è molto spesso in inglese perché (.) l'inglese serve m- almeno per quello che ho visto io molto spesso ha comunicazioni (.) di base giusto per comprendersi e poco altro (.) ci sono lingue che per fare questo (.) utilizzano: in de- dei modi di parlare delle forme molto più complesse e fraintendibili l'inglese lo trovo veramente (.) il più semplice e il più diretto: il meno fraintendibile: tra tutte le lingue che ho studiato è veramente quella che: che può fare questa cosa tante altre non n-non riuscirebbero a farlo o sarebbe veramente molto più complesso.
>
> *English is the mo:st is really the most practical language to do certain things on account of (.) the variety of its vocabulary and all that. but actually I see that there are languages that (.) for a basic communication like that that is often there in English because (.) English is used o- at least from what I have seen very often it has communications (.) basic communications just to make oneself understood and little more (.) there are languages that in order to do this (.) use so- some ways of speaking forms that are much more complex and misunderstandable I find English really (.) the most simple and the most straightforward the least misunderstandable among all the languages I have studied and it is really the one tha:t can do this thing many others would n- not be able to do it or it would really be much more complicated*.

As a highly proficiency and frequent user of English, it is very likely that S9 found it easy to carry her messages through in English. At another point in the interview, she compared English with French and Spanish, pointing out that the former's syntactic structures are "often much simpler and more understandable" ("spesso molto più semplici e comprensibili") and that English was characterized by an "ease of communication" ("semplicità di comunicazione"). She concluded that English was the most "practical" language she had ever found ("la lingua più comoda che io abbia mai trovato"). It seemed reasonable to infer that S9 was perhaps not as fluent in the other languages as she was in English, and her comparatively limited fluency influenced her view of English as a language that is "less misunderstandable". In this sense, she personally found it complicated to be as straightforward in the other languages she had studied as she managed to be in English. In any case, her stereotyped view of English as a straight-to-the point language confirmed her positive attitude towards it. Her attributing supposedly intrinsic qualities to English that were instead merely based on a personal perception had indeed the effect of projecting English as a one-of-a-kind language.

A "scientific" language

S19 spoke of English as a "scientific" and "pragmatic" language. After observing that English is the international language of scientific research, she added that by "scientific language" she also meant that English, unlike Italian, is a "pragmatic" language, one that "goes step by step":

è una lingua scientifica perché è una lingua che va (.) come posso dire? va per <LNen> step </LNen> non è come: l'italiano il che non intendo dire che l'Italiano non abbia la sua logica anzi derivando dal latino ce l'ha e a- anche molto però e: tu sai che l'impostazione del della frase è soggetto verbo oggetto se tu li mischi non funziona o perlomeno funziona in pochi casi e quindi questo intendo che è scientifica tu sai che parti da qui e quindi sai che dopo devi seguire questo <LNen> step </LNen> e questo <LNen> step </LNen> diciamo è molto più (.) e:hm pragmatica ecco come lingua

it is a scientific language because it is a language that goes (.) how can I say that? that goes step by step, it is not like Italian by which I don't mean to say that Italian doesn't have a logic of its own on the contrary as it derives from Latin it has one and a- also very much but e:r you know that the structure of the sentence is subject verb object and if you mix them it does not work or at least it works in few cases and hence this I mean by saying it is scientific you know you start from here and therefore you know that after that you have to follow this step <LNen> step </LNen> and that <LNen> step </LNen> let's say it is much more (.) e:r pragmatic that is as a language

In her comparison with Italian, she mentioned the subject-verb-object (SVO) structure as a characteristic that, in her view, makes English more systematic and clearer. In regard to that point, it is actually true that Italian allows for a more flexible order of subject, verb, and object. Another key difference between English and Italian, for instance, is that the latter allows the pronominal direct and indirect objects to be cliticized to the verb. S19 had perhaps in mind all these (and possibly other) characteristics when she mentioned the difficulty of putting together S, V and O in an Italian phrase. Judging from her arguments, though, it seemed that S9's analytic knowledge of the English grammar led her to perceive that English, unlike Italian, has a well-defined syntactic structure. On the other hand, since she had acquired the Italian language naturally as a native speaker, she probably perceived that the syntactic structure of Italian was less clearly identifiable. In other words, it seemed very likely that as a native speaker of Italian S19 did not possess the same metalinguistic awareness she had of the morphosyntax of English, which she had developed through formal instruction. In her claim that English is "a language that goes step by step", one can clearly see how she was influenced by her analytic knowledge of the language structures which, as a learner of English, she must have learnt precisely *step by step*. In the subsequent turn, she expanded on her previous argument and qualified English as a "cohesive", "synthetic" and "reductionist" language:

è molto: COESO cioè nel senso se io voglio dire non so ti scrivo su Facebook io con un verbo solo utilizzando Facebook no? come proprio VErbo riesco a dire (.) ti ho scritto su Facebook oppure ti scrivo su Facebook se io dico non so <LNen> I facebooked to you </LNen> (.) è per un italiano non suona tanto bene […] mentre in italiano io devo specificare che cosa ho fatto su quella piattaforma o con una certa cosa l'inglese diciamo è molto più: più sintetico forse anche per esempio con la costruzione con i trattini no? quando noi mettiamo l' <LNen> hyphen </LNen> fra: una parola e l'altra noi riuscia- riusciamo a fare un una costruzione molto più (.) come posso dire? sintetica che però all'interno quando noi la dobbiamo andare magari a riportare in italiano dobbiamo parafrasare perché per noi non (.) non avrebbe significato altrimenti. intendo dire scientifico cioè che è: è riduzionista magari da un certo punto di vista ecco."

it is very much COHESIVE I mean in the sense that if I want to say I don't know I write to you on Facebook I can with just one verb by using Facebook you see? precisely as a Verb I can say (.) I wrote to you on Facebook or I write to you on Facebook if I say I don't know <LNen> I facebooked to you </LNen> (.) er to an Italian it does not sound right […] whereas in Italian I have to specify what I did on that platform or with a certain thing English let's say is more synthetical maybe also for instance with the construction with the hyphen right? When we put the <LNen> hyphen </LNen> between:n one word and another we ca- we can build a much more (.) how can I say? synthetic construction which however when we have to report it in Italian maybe we have to paraphrase because for us it wouldn't (.) it wouldn't (.) not make sense otherwise. by scientific I mean that it is e:r it is reductionist maybe from a certain point of view that's it.

S19 rested her stereotypical view on two characteristics she recognized as peculiar to English. First, she correctly identified the zero-derivation process that is found in the morphological system of English, referring in particular to the verb conversion of the noun 'Facebook'. Then, she pointed to the use of hyphenated compound words, which is however anything but an exclusive characteristic of English. As regards the use of hyphenated words, it was probably the case that so many English words of that kind have been borrowed to Italian that S19 was led to perceive that the possibility of creating compound words is typical of English. She also referred to the inherent difficulty of translation that involves paraphrasing an original expression, a hurdle of translation that actually works the two ways. That is to say that Italian expressions as well might require paraphrasing when translated to English, and not only the other way round. In conclusion, while S19 correctly identified certain characteristics that are peculiar to the English language (a rigid SVO word order in unmarked choices and zero-derivation), she cited them in support of a very personal and linguistically unfounded view of English as a "scientific", "pragmatic", "cohesive", "synthetic", and "reductionist" language that "goes step by step". That stereotype was arguably shaped by the analytic knowledge of the language structures she had gained through a systematic study of grammar in formal instructional contexts. On top of that, S19 was working as a translator of scientific papers for an epidemiologist, at the time of the interview. It is thus very likely that her view of English as synthetic, pragmatic, and cohesive language was also strongly influenced by her familiarity with the rhetorical conventions of English scientific discourse which, as it has been observed, tends indeed to favor concision and plainness (Bennet 2007).

A "simple" language

S25's argument that English is "simple" and "economical" was previously reported (refer to 6.3.1.5) in relation to her view that there is an inextricable link between language, culture and worldview. This stereotype of English as an "economical" language seemed to indicate that S25 too, like her fellow student S19, possibly mistook the rhetorical, stylistic conventions of English with which she was familiar for the intrinsic morpho-syntactical properties of the language. S18 also characterized English as a one-of-a-kind language. She commented that she had found out that while French is the official language of the European Union for written communication, English performs an analogous function for spoken communication. Based on this flawed assumption, she suggested that English was probably perceived as a language with "less grammatical hurdles and less rules" ("la gente percepisce meno (.) e:hm ostacoli grammaticali meno regole") and added that "an intrinsic characteristic of the English language is that it is much more suitable for spoken communication" ("una caratteristica intrinseca della lingua inglese è che è molto più adatta alla comunicazione orale"). The extract below shows how her process of reasoning led her to assert that English was "more suitable for spoken communication":

R: okay. quindi (.) questa è una tua convinzione o stai interpretando? (.) quello che seco-=

S18: =no no! uh effettivamente è è vero e anche quando e: quando scrivo in inglese (.) molte volte=

[

R: ah

S18: =mi viene da scrivere come se stessi parlando.

R: uh uh?

S18: quindi con tutte le: gli idiomi che magari si usano mol- parla- cioè avrei an- anche se scrivo è una cosa più informale e sai meglio di me che l'informalità è una caratteristica e: più tipica del (.) insomma della lingua parlata piuttosto che di quella scritta ecco."

R: okay. then (.) is this a conviction of yours or are you interpreting? (.) that you thi-=

S18: =no no! uh actually it is it is true er even when I e:r write in English (.) many a times=

[

R: ah

S18: =I find myself writing as I was speaking.

R: uh uh?

S18: hence with all the: the idioms that maybe are used a lo- speak-that is I would ev- even if I am writing it is a more informal thing and you know better than me that informality is a characteristic e:r more typical of (.) in brief of spoken language rather than of written language that is.

As the other interviewees referred to above, S18 was quite obviously mistaking her personal knowledge of English for the intrinsic qualities of the language. The fact that she wrote in English as she was speaking, hence supposedly using the idiomatic expressions and other forms that are typical of an informal spoken register, does not mean that there are specific characteristics to the English language that allowed her to do so. In fact, S18 did not specify in what context she communicated in writing; if she communicated in writing with other students on the social media, for instance, then it is not at all surprising that she adopted the forms that are typically associated with spoken registers.

In brief, it appeared that a high level of proficiency and the analytic knowledge of the structures of the English language, on the one hand, and familiarity with only certain registers and the related domains of use of the language, on the other, made the students here referred to perceive English as a special language.

6.3.2 English language teaching.

The participants' experience as learners of English took center stage in the interviews. At some point during the interview, twenty students were asked a direct question whether they thought that the EFL pedagogical models, methods, and strategies were or were not in tune with the contemporary realities of English, and whether they thought that they responded to the needs of today's learners.

Only four interviewees in total gave a positive answer, speaking favorably of their English learning experience in school and/or university. Sixteen interviewees, instead, gave categorical negative answers. They commented that their English learning experience had not been enough motivating and variously pointed to a discrepancy between classroom learning and the out-of-classroom English they had come in contact with. However, all the twenty-eight interviewees either commented on some problematic aspects of their learning experience or made suggestions as to what to teach and how best to teach it.

The teaching and learning of English actually proved to be a particularly engaging topic of discussion. Some students even extended the scope of their comments to include more general considerations on the policies of English language teaching in formal education, pointing to contextual and systemic factors and also raising societal issues. Some of these comments included considerations on the tenets of the EFL pedagogy, the (native speaker and non-native speaker) teachers, the methods, the target model, the linguistic content as well as the cultural component of the English language curriculum. A few comments also reproduced commonsense, stereotypical views on foreign language learning and second language acquisition.

The topics related to the EFL pedagogy that emerged with particular prominence from the analysis of the interview data are presented in the following sections as they were arranged in the thematic framework. Although the topics often overlapped and interrelated in the interviewees' arguments, each topic is illustrated separately in the next sections of this chapter and the extracts from the interviews are cross-referenced for different topics.

6.3.2.1 Pedagogical failure (1): decontextualized teaching

Several respondents highlighted the decontextualized teaching of the target language as one main failure of their past English learning experience. S2 commented that the way she had been taught English in school was not motivating and did not respond to the learners' needs. She commented that English is normally taught in a sort of void:

mi hanno insegnato i colori mi hanno insegnato e: il <LNen> simple past simple present </LNen> cose semplici ma senza e:hm (.) senza mettermele in un ambito specifico o in un ambito e: professionale ecco me l'hanno insegnato me l'hanno lasciato lì tieni fanne quello che vuoi senza però darmi magari una strada da seguire più specifica […] c'è qualcosa di sbagliato.

R: uhm e secondo te in particolare cosa:

S2: cos'è?

R: cosa c'è di sbagliato secondo te in particolare? cioè sulla base della tua esperienza

S2: che l'inglese viene più secondo me insegnato come qualcosa che è da sapere ma senza e: farne vedere l'utilità che può avere. […] ti insegnano un (.) u- una (.) delle regole generali solo per farti aver la conoscenza. conoscenza che però (.) non ti dicono dove poterla applicare o PERCHÉ può essere non ti danno una ragione uno scopo ti dicono devi devi impararla perché perché devi impararla punto

they taught me the colors e:r the <LNen> simple past simple present </LNen> simple things but without e:r (.) without putting them in a specific context or in a er professional context that is they taught it to me they left it there for me do it whatever you want with it without giving me maybe a more specific way to follow […] there is something wrong.

R: ur and in your opinion what in particular:

S2: what is it?

R: what is wrong in particular in your opinion? I mean based on your experience

S2: that English in my opinion is taught as something that must be known but without e:r showing the uses to which it can be put. […] they teach you a (.) a a (.) general rules just so you have the knowledge. knowledge though that (.) they don't tell you where you can apply it or WHY it can they don't give you a reason a purpose they tell you you have to have to learn it because because you have to learn it period

As the extract shows, she lamented that her teachers had failed to center their pedagogical approach around the uses to which competence in English can be put and to relate the English learning to specific professional purposes. Further expanding on the topic, at another point in the interview, S2 argued that English learning should be based on experiences of real-life use of the language in a variety of professional contexts. She thus upheld a contextualized, profession-oriented teaching approach that seemed to be consistent with the principles of the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) method. She believed that such an approach would make learners see the usefulness of learning English, hence boost their motivation to learn it. Her suggestion was to

portare lo studente a vedere come l'inglese può essere utilizzato in un ambito specifico per esempio portarlo a fare attività fuori in un ambito (.) diversi ambiti dallo sport dal u:hm dall'azienda come viene utilizzato in un'azienda o nell'ambito e: non so (.) artistico diversi ambiti quindi fargli vedere come l'inglese può esserti utile in un ambito del genere […] si farne vedere la pref- professionalità e l'utilità per un tuo futuro ecco."

take the student to see how English can be used in a specific context for instance take him out of the classroom to do activities in a context (.) different contexts from sport to u:r business how English is used in a business environment or in a context e:r I don't know (.) artistic context different contexts therefore showing him how English can be useful to you in such a context […] yes showing the pref- professionality of English and its usefulness for your possible future that's it.

Like S2, S13 argued that English teaching should be more motivating and related to the learners' interests and needs, and also remarked that learners should be made aware of the importance of the English language in the wider societal context. Furthermore, she commented that she admired the ESP method adopted in the hospitality training vocational school where she was working as an educator. Drawing a comparison with her experience as

a high school student, she regretted that despite the scientific profile of her former school's curriculum, English scientific literature and terminology had never been never dealt with in the English classes.

S16 lamented that her English learning experience in high school had not equipped her with the communicative skills that were required for the job she later took up in a multinational company (refer to 6.3.1.6). She observed that when she had taken up that job, she had felt that her skills were "too weak" because school had not equipped her with the tools she needed ("mi sentivo debole perché la scuola fondamentalmente non mi ha dato: degli strumenti") and, in order to make up for her lack of proficiency, she had enrolled in a private English language course. Looking at the arguments put forth by S16 throughout the interview, it became clear that she held a functionalist view of education. She assumed that the purpose of higher education in particular was to prepare students for later work roles, and in accordance with this view, she implied that foreign language instruction has to be designed to meet the demands of the labor market.

The view that ELT in the Italian schools is inadequate and ineffective since it does not prepare students for the labor market was also made explicit by S25. She claimed that the way English is taught in Italy "won't bring you anywhere in the work world of today. e::r therefore in in as a language student e:r I feel I have to (.) to highlight this this failure of the pedagogical system" ("non ti porta da nessuna parte nel mondo del lavoro di oggi. e::hm quindi in in come studente di lingua e:hm mi sento di (.) di sottolineare questa questa falla nel sistema didattico").

The same view that the objectives of foreign language learning in school are directly linked to the demands of the economy was expressed also by other interviewees. For instance, S27 commented that ELT is too detached from the needs of future users of the language in the international labor market, which demands English proficient people. Vocabulary was one area in which she had found English teaching particularly lacking, based on her experience. Pointing out that the target language as it is presented in the English classroom is too decontextualized, she upheld a more practical teaching method that provides learners with the knowledge of the vocabulary they need in a work environment. Although only implicitly, S9 also advocated for a profession-oriented ELT model. She observed that, when she was in high school, English teaching had been too focused on the study of literature and history. While pointing out that the contemporary dimension of the English language had not received enough consideration, she also lamented that the curriculum of a 'Liceo linguistico' (a type of high school with a specific foreign languages profile) did not prepare students to use English in a work environment. She said,

> all'interno dei licei linguistici al momen- almeno fino a qualche anno fa quando l'ho fatto io ci si concentrava molto sulla parte di letteratura <?> molto sulla parte di storia </?> ma poco sulla parte di attualità. quindi tante comunicazioni commerciali noi non le abbiamo neanche sfiorate minimamente […] in realtà mi sono dovuta (.) mettere di nuovo a studiare un inglese un po' più pratico o anche a livello di di u:hm terminologia? detta molto semplicemente del lavoro o di tante altre cose che non avevo MAI minimamente neanche guardato (.) a scuola quello purtroppo è stato un po' una mancanza che altri che magari hanno fatto (.) un istituto un pochino più commerciale magari non hanno trovato
>
> *within the* licei linguistici *right n- at least until a few years ago when I attended one such school you would very much focus on the literature part <?> a lot on the history part </?> but little on the contemporary part. therefore many commercial communications we did not even touch upon them […] actually I had to (.) start again to study a more practical English or even at the level of of u:r terminology? briefly said of work or many other things which I had not even looked at at all (.) unfortunately that was a bit of a failure in school which maybe other students who attended (.) a little more commercial high school maybe did not find*

It seemed that the increased vitality of English in Italian professional contexts made some students perceive the education system's failure to contextualize English teaching in such a way as to provide learners with more practical skills. This perception was strictly interrelated with the clear tendency found in the interviews to view the focus on grammar as excessive and not effective as a teaching method, a topic that is commented in the next section.

6.3.2.2 Pedagogical failure (2): theory-practice gap

The majority of the interviews contained a more or less overt suggestion that English teaching should be focused on preparing learners to become confident users of English in real-life situations, rather than providing them with an analytic knowledge of the structures of the language. In this perspective, a gap that between theory and practice was emphasized as a failure of in ELT in the Italian education system. Specifically, the interviewees highlighted the advantages and disadvantages of grammar instruction and contrasted this with a communicative approach.

GT method versus communicative approach

Several interviewees viewed the study of the normative grammar as ineffective to equip learners with communicative abilities, hence pointing to the inadequacy of the traditional grammar-translation (GT) method, on the one hand, and the advantages of a communicative approach that fosters in particular the learners' speaking skills, on the other.

S19 had very definite opinions on how to make English teaching more effective. She mentioned the GT method, with its emphasis on abstract grammar rules and little focus on practicing oral communication, together with the study of literature, as the major points of criticism against traditional EFL pedagogy in Italian schools. She said, "we have a a: rather a bad habit a merit if we want at the same time of teaching (.) things in a super abstract manner. therefore we study the literature that is very important we study e:r English the grammar but then the the practice is very little." ("abbiamo un a: un po' un vizio un pregio se vogliamo allo stesso tempo di insegnare (.) le cose in modo super teorico. quindi studiamo la letteratura che è importantissima studiamo e: l'inglese la grammatica però poi il la pratica è veramente poca."). Remarking that Italians possess a good analytic knowledge of the English language but then "when we have to put it in practice we find ourselves a little more in difficulty" ("noi conosciamo la lingua da un punto di vista più teorico ma quando poi la dobbiamo mettere nella pratica ci troviamo un po' più in difficoltà"), she claimed that "there is a need to MODERNIZE the method" ("c'è bisogno un po' di: non so MODERNIZZARE l- l'approccio") adopted in the Italian schools system, and that that can be done by "focusing more on practice" rather than theory ("ci sia bisogno di un maggior (.) approfondimento della parte pratica"). Her argument that there is a need to break away from the "rather obsolete method typical of a teacher who has been part of a public institution for so many years" ("un modo un po' arcaico: non so tipico magari del professore che oramai @@ <@> fa parte di </@> di un'istituzione scolastica pubblica da anni anni anni") clearly revealed her negative attitude towards the NNESTs of the older generation (refer to 6.3.2.6). It is further suggested here that S19 was possibly giving voice also to a popular view that reflects a negative attitude towards the entire public school system, which is often represented as outdated and incapable of adjusting itself to the demands of the contemporary world. Be it as it may, that is regardless of whether her views were influenced by commonsensical notions, S19 gave voice to a feeling of dissatisfaction with a grammar driven approach to learning, with its emphasis on accuracy rather than fluency, and on theory rather than practice, which was shared by the majority of the interviewees.

S12 commented that the effectiveness of English learning "is all about the teaching method" ("tutto sta nel metodo di di insegnamento") and argued that there should be more incentives to make lessons more motivating, clearly implying that the prevailing focus on the teaching of grammar makes them instead dull. In her words: "there should be more incentives […] because I noticed that many teachers focus a lot on grammar (.) and so grammar test all right let's move on." ("ci dovrebbero essere molti più stimoli […] perché io ho notato che molti insegnanti si concentrano molto sulla grammatica (.) e quindi grammatica verifica bene e andiamo avanti."). S3 pointed out the disadvantages of the "classic traditional [teacher fronted] lesson" ("la classica lezione tradizionale") with its focus on grammar, which did not involve the students and did not prepare them to use English in actual spoken communication. She mentioned, "students were hardly ever listened to and consequently: the student could never learn (.) at least to sp- to speak" ("si ascoltavano poco gli studenti di conseguenza: lo studente non riusciva mai a imparare (.) almeno a par- a parlare").

S10 apparently based her dissatisfaction with the GT method adopted in the Italian schools on the premise that nowadays there is a need to foster the English learners' communicative skills, in view of their future role as active users of the language in work contexts. She lamented that "the Italian school foregrounds grammar which is in my opinion a mistake because when when you have to place a call maybe in a in the context of work it i:s important that the other one understands you I mean and then little by little you develop the: the: the grammar indeed." ("la scuola italiana mette la grammatica al primo posto che secondo me è un errore perché quando quando devi fare una chiamata magari in un nell'ambito lavorativo è: importante che l'altro ti capisca insomma e poi pian piano a sviluppare la: la: appunto la grammatica."). S10 argued that such an excessive focus on grammar is ineffective, first because "by developing grammar indeed many people do not learn do not learn really the language because they possibly concentrate right there" ("SVIluppando la grammatica appunto molte persone non apprendono non apprendono veramente la lingua perché si concentrano magari là"). Second, she claimed, "the fact that the Italian school is limited to grammar and not to speak with other people e:r in my opinion demotivates the students" ("il fatto che la scuola italiana sia contenuta a grammatica e non parlare con altre persone e: secondo me non motiva gli studenti"). On top of that, she added, "a focus on the grammar aspect in my opinion e:r does not equip learners with concrete abilities in the real world" ("concentrarsi soltanto sull'aspetto grammaticale secondo me e: non porta ad avere delle effettive: a- abilità nel nel mondo reale.").

Along similar lines, S4 regretted that in her experience in school the teaching of English had not been aimed at meeting the learners' communicative needs in the real world, that is it was not functional to the purposes of a future user of the language. On the other hand, she observed that the private English language courses she had attended had the advantage of being tailored to foster the learners' conversational skills. S5 too contrasted ELT in the Italian public school system and the teaching method adopted in the language course she had attended while on a study holiday. She highlighted the former's disadvantage of being excessively focused on the study of grammar rules, and the latter's merit of having the goal of fostering the learners' speaking and listening skills. In her words:

> da sempre ho studiato appunto: diciamo: le cose basilari quindi la grammatica in particolare questo secondo me (.) è un po' un aspetto negativo della scuola italiana nel senso che: ci si focalizza molto sul sulle regole grammaticali e si dà poco spazio invece al ai contenuti allo <LNen> speaking <ipa> spiːkɪng </ipa> al listening <ipa> lɪssenɪːng </ipa> </LNen> cose che invece ho a: avuto l'opportunità appunto di di studiare approfondire all'estero […] lì ovviamente si dà molto più spazio al- alla <LNen> listening <ipa> lɪssenɪːng </ipa> </LNen> alla <LNen> speaking <ipa> spiːkɪng </ipa> </LNen> e MEno alla grammatica perché appunto questo è poi l'obiettivo diciamo del (.) del corso all'estero principalmente.
>
> *I have always studied indee:d let's say: the basic things therefore the grammar in particular this in my opinion (.) is rather a negative aspect of Italian schools in the sense tha:t one focuses a lot on the grammar rules and little room is made for the contents instead for the <LNen> speaking <ipa> spiːkɪng </ipa> al listening <ipa> lɪssenɪːng </ipa> </LNen> things instead that I a: I actually had the opportunity to to study to study in depth overseas […] there obviously much more room is given to th- to the <LNen> listening <ipa> lɪssenɪːng </ipa> </LNen> alla <LNen> speaking <ipa> spiːkɪng </ipa> </LNen> and Less to grammar because indeed that is the objective let's say of the (.) the course overseas mainly*.

At another point, she returned to the same topic, lamenting that teacher-fronted lessons leave no room for the student's "free expression" ("libera espressione").

Interestingly, the same comparison between the method of ELT in the public education system and the method adopted in the private language schools was drawn by S22, in relation to her home country. Recounting her English learning experience in Russia, she commented that ELT curriculum in public schools and universities coupled the GT method with a historicist approach to the study of cultural content, and that most Russian students lamented that this traditional method did not provide them with an adequate communicative competence in English. For that reason, she said it is common practice among Russian EFL learners to turn to private language

schools, where "the golden standard is still the communicative approach". She was also very specific in that regard, mentioning the Kitaygorodskaya method[10] as a peculiar teaching approach that is very popular in Russian private language schools.

Negative effects of prescriptivism in grammar

S14 commented that the traditional teaching method adopted in the Italian education system with its focus on grammatical correctness and received pronunciation (RP), does not encourage confidence in speaking English in real-life situations. Implicitly acknowledging the influence of the standard language ideology, she argued that proficient EFL speakers show an excessive concern to adhere to the rules of "grammatical correctness" and that, apparently as a consequence, they are not capable of distinguishing between a formal written register and a spoken register. She said,

> soprattutto qui (.) un po' in Italia […] È CHE e:hm (.) chi e: diciamo chi parla inglese e ha comunque una competenza abbastanza alta cerca sempre di attenersi proprio in maniera e- e- esagerata alla correttezza grammaticale senza pensare che comunque anche noi in italiano quando parliamo non è che siamo tutti: (.) così attenti alla grammatica cioè u:h noto che non si riesce <fast> che comunque secondo me è un qualcosa che deriva da come viene insegnato </fast> l'inglese nelle scuole che deriva dal fatto che (.) non non non si riesce a fare una distinzione tra un inglese e: scritto che ha determinate regole grammaticali che ovviamente devono essere rispettate come avviene per gli italiani e un inglese che invece è quello parlato che: è diverso
>
> *especially here (.) I'd say in Italy […] IT IS THAT e:r (.) those who e:r let's say those who can speak English and have a rather high level of competence always try to conform to actually in an e- e- excessive way to grammatical correctness without thinking that even when we speak Italian we it's not that we are a:ll (.) that we care that much about grammar I mean ur I see that it is not possible to <fast> which by the way I believe is a thing that derives from the way English is taught </fast> in the schools which derives from the fact that (.) one cannot not not make a distinction between a e:r written English that has certain grammar rules and a spoken English instead whi:ch is different*

She went on to argue that the excessive focus on grammatical correctness, coupled with a pressure to adhere to RP, also hinders fluency in speaking. As the extract below shows, she lamented the fact that EFL learners in school are not made aware of a distinction that is there between the rules of English grammar and the way the NESs actually use the language, which, she quite obviously seemed to imply, deviates from those rules:

> tante volte ritrovo persone che mi dicono e:hm io ho problemi a parlare l'inglese perché ad esempio non riesco mai a capire quando devo usare <LNen> sh- should </LNen> quando devo usare <LNen> shall </LNen> (.) […] e quindi questa cosa li blocca anche nel nel parlare nel parlare con gli altri e questo diciamo secondo me è un qualcosa che deriva dalla scuola perché a scuola […] ovviamente nessuno ci dice che comunque un conto è la grammatica: IN SÉ e un conto è poi la competenza di un di un parlante: inglese piuttosto ci di- quando poi un qualcuno di noi ha modo di parlare realmente con un madrelingua inglese ci viene da dire sono tutti ignoranti perché non seguono le: le regole grammaticali […] quello che noto io e che chi studia l'inglese in Italia senza mai avere esperienza all'estero poi ha questo tipo di difficoltà che non riesce a: e: cioè il poi il troppo dover stare attento alla grammatica alla pronuncia perché ovviamente devi utilizzare perfettamente la pronuncia britannica poi […] ti viene un blocco perché e: prima di formulare una frase devo pensare a così tante cose che quindi: finisce che quella frase non la dico.
>
> *many a times people tell me e:r I have problems with speaking English because for instance I can never understand when I have to use <LNen> sh- should </LNen> when I have to use <LNen> shall </LNen> (.)*

[10] The Kitaygorodskaya method is a type of intensive communicative approach whose five basic tenets are person-centered communication, the use of role-playing in teaching materials, collective communication through teamwork, concentrated teaching materials through active learning, multi-functional tasks (Kitaygorodskaya 1986).

[…] and so this thing stops them from from from speaking with the others and this let's say in my opinion is a thing that derives from school because in school obviously nobody tells us by the way that one thing is grammar PER SE and another thing then is the competence of a an English speaker rather they tell u- when one of us then gets the chance to actually speak with a native speaker of English we want to say they are ignorant because they do not follow the the: rules of the grammar […] what I see is that those who study English in Italy without ever having had an experience overseas have this kind of problem that the cannot e:r e:e I mean the fact of having to caring to much about grammar to pronunciation because obviously you must use British pronunciation perfectly then […] you get stuck because e:r before formulating a sentence I have to think about so many things that I end up not saying that sentence.

As the extract above shows, S14 also mentioned the folk perception that NES are ignorant because they do not follow the rules of grammar. While pointing to the influence of the standard language ideology, which leads people to delegitimize all forms that do not adhere to the rules of the formal registers of Standard English that is typically used as the benchmark in the EFL classroom, S14's comment also implicitly contained a suggestion for English teachers to rethink the prescriptive approach to the teaching of grammar as well as pronunciation. As can be seen, the use of the adverb "ovviamente" ("obviously") and the deontic modality "devi" ("you must") imply that "perfectly reproducing the RP" ("utilizzare perfettamente la pronuncia britannica") is customarily and perhaps uncritically assumed by learners as the only legitimate learning target. In brief, S14 raised the whole host of implications that the failure to integrate theory with practice in English language teaching carries. Being S14 a SCO student of who had received training in linguistics it is perhaps no surprise at all that she revealed a higher degree of metalinguistic awareness than most other interviewees.

S18 as well spoke of the adoption of the GT method as a negative aspect of her English learning experience. She commented that she had been dissatisfied in particular with one of her high school teachers precisely because "her teaching method had been very much focused on grammar" ("non mi piaceva il suo modo di insegnare perché il suo modo di insegnare era molto concentrato e: sulla grammatica"). In her opinion, her teacher's prescriptive approach to grammar teaching, with lessons that were focused on exercises of grammar and translations of short sentences, did not arouse the students' motivation and curiosity. She mentioned "grammar exercises or translation exercises but (.) small sentences and not doing anything else therefore there was no incentive, no curiosity […] because actually she confined herself to saying from the grammatical point of view this is good this is not." ("esercizi di grammatica o piuttosto che esercizi di traduzione ma (.) frasettine e non fare nient'altro quindi non c'era uno stimolo, non c'era curiosità […] perché appunto lei si limitava solo a dire dal punto di vista grammaticale questo va bene e questo no."). She added that she'd rather have "a teacher who looks a little less at grammar but who stimulates you and goes beyond is right or wrong at the normative level and that u:r also teaches you things things that you can (.) actually use (.) I mean in a nutshell in real life I mean in everyday life" ("preferisco appunto un professore che magari guarda un attimo meno la grammatica ma che ti dia degli stimoli che sì vada oltre quello che è giusto o sbagliato a livello normativo e che uhm ti: insegni anche cose che ti possono (.) servire veramente (.) cioè in soldoni nella vita cioè nella vita quotidiana"). On the contrary, she claimed that the GT method adopted by her high school teacher had not equipped her to use English for ordinary communications in a target language environment. She commented that when she had arrived in America, "maybe I knew the grammar very well but I could not anymore (.) speak in everyday life a:nd say the the things that I needed" ("magari sapevo molto bene la grammatica ma non sapevo più (.) parlare nella vita quotidiana e: dire le le cose che: mi servivano").

However, notwithstanding her negative opinion of her high school teacher's method, S18 nevertheless did not seem to deny altogether the importance of having a solid knowledge of grammar as a basis on which to build one's communicative skills. She remarked that "then it goes without saying that when you are in such a context where everyone speaks English and you have studied English all your life it takes an instant to: to go ba:ck and and get in front of the situation" ("son arrivata in America e: (.) di cui avevo avessi effettivamente bisogno poi dopo va da sé che quando sei in un contesto del genere e dove parlano tutti inglese e tu hai studiato inglese comunque per tutta la tua vita ci vuole un attimo a: a ritornare: a a riprendere in mano la situazione"). Through

her final remark, she seemed indeed to imply that with a solid knowledge of grammar one can develop her/his communicative skills without too much effort, once she/he finds her-/himself in a target language environment.

Ambivalent views on grammar instruction

S9 held a rather ambivalent view on the topic. On the one hand, like many other interviewees, she pointed out that the teacher-fronted lessons do not foster the students' speaking skills ("si parla molto molto molto poco all'interno delle lezioni per come le ho vissute io"; "manca tanto la comunicazione manca tanto"), and also added the interesting consideration that an excessive emphasis on meeting a standard of correctness in the ELT classroom has the effect of inhibiting learners from speaking English in real-life. She said, "kids are afraid to speak English of making mistakes once they are outside the classroom and so even if they know it they are afraid of making mistakes anyways of pronouncing badly therefore they tend not to do it" ("i ragazzi hanno timore di parlare inglese di sbagliare una volta usciti quindi anche se lo sanno hanno comunque il timore di sbagliare di pronunciarlo male quindi tendono a non farlo"). On the other hand, S9 also acknowledged the value of grammar teaching, arguing that her English teachers in school had given her a good grammar base on which she was subsequently able to build her communicative skills. She said, "the English that I learned in school was useful to me as a basis to be able to (.) quote unquote develop English once once out of school because I did have the basis and you can tell in the sense that I have the grammar basis and many things have remained inside me" ("l'inglese che ho imparato a scuola mi è servito come base per poter (.) tra virgolette sviluppare l'inglese una volta: una volta fuori perché le basi le avevo e si vede nel senso che le basi di grammaticali comunque le ho e tante cose mi sono rimaste dentro").

S9's point that classroom-based learning, with its lack of focus on practicing communication, has the detrimental effect of inhibiting the use of English in real life situations was also made by S24, who, although she did not explicitly mention the GT method, added that being that so, schools should balance classroom learning with actual practice, from an early age (refer also to 6.3.2.10). The same argument that there is a need to balance theory with practice was also implicitly suggested by S27, who pointed out the key role that conversation classes taught by NESTs in high school had had in developing her speaking skills and preparing her for her subsequent abroad experiences and EMI instruction (refer to 6.3.2.6). S28 also commented that the weak point of her learning experience in school was represented by a lack of practice of both speaking and writing skills, together with an excessive focus on the rules of grammar and the study of literature. She added that the classes she had attended in preparation for a language certification exam had been the only occasions when she had been able to practice writing and speaking in interaction. However, she remarked that those interactions were not natural hence they were rather "inconsequential" ("lasciano il tempo che trovano"). Just as she highlighted the limitations of the traditional EFL model, like S9, S28 nevertheless also acknowledged that grammar instruction had provided her with a solid background for higher education.

The value of grammar instruction

Although they represented a minority overall, other interviewees acknowledged the value of grammar instruction as an important basis on which to subsequently build one's communicative skills. S1 said that "school grammar is an essential basis from which to start learning English" ("è essenziale partire da basi e: legate strettamente oserei dire alla grammatica scolastica"). S2 observed that grammar is the starting point ("si parte della grammatica") from which communicative skills can be subsequently developed ("da quella io parto e ho le basi per parlare poi l'inglese"). Similarly, S20 viewed the rules of grammar as a necessary basis on which communicative competence can be built. She justified the choice to adopt the GT method in the English classroom by pointing out that it is "understandable" that a teacher may aim to establish a solid "grammar basis" first, and only afterwards focus on fostering "other skills" ("posso anche capire cioè: il fatto di un ins- per un insegnante di voler (.) come come si dice? e:hm (.) volersi focalizzare per trasmett- sulla sulla grammatica per trasmettere una base (.) in modo poi da: (1) da poter sviluppare altri: (1) u:hm (.) da poter sviluppare altro"). She further added that the grammar she had been taught in school was all she had needed and that "it is up to the students" to practice listening and speaking on their own ("per quanto riguarda allenarsi con l'ascolto o col parlato sta alla persona").

S20's apparently implied that successful learning depends also on a learner's personal interests and motivation and therefore her/his willingness to extend the learning process beyond the instructional setting of the English classroom. Most interestingly, she seemed to acknowledge that learning a foreign language is a complex process and classroom-based instruction can only do part of the job.

S6 argued that the teaching of grammar is "very much needed" ("trovo che ce ne sia molto bisogno") since grammar knowledge provides students with the tools that are necessary to develop proficiency. However, she also acknowledged her difficulties in the speaking area, which indeed seemed to confirm the majority view that the traditional GT methods does not equip students with the skills to use English in actual communication. After all, unlike most other interviewees, S6 had not had any study- or work-abroad experience in an English-speaking country and the only occasions in which she had had direct contact with the target language, while she was in high school, had been the conversation classes with a NEST. On the contrary, the interviewees who were most critical with the more traditional GT approach to the teaching of English had all had study- or work-abroad experiences, which they all very much valued (refer to 6.3.2.10).

6.3.2.3 Pedagogical failure (3): a registral failure

Some interviewees who argued against a grammar driven approach to learning (refer to 6.3.2.2), with its emphasis on accuracy rather than fluency, also suggested that input from and interaction in the instructional setting is not geared to the communicative needs of learners. In this sense, they hinted at a registral failure. As the previous section of this chapter illustrated, a perception that classroom-based learning familiarizes students only with formal, written registers of English was implicit in all the comments that were reported. S14, for instance, claimed that an excessive concern to adhere to the norms of grammatical correctness of a written register of standard English and its pronunciation correlate (RP) makes learners of English incapable of distinguishing between different registers and prevents them from using English confidently in the real world.

A suggestion that traditional methods of ELT fail to equip young learners to use English with their peers in out-of-classroom informal contexts came from S17's interview. S17's comment on the pragmatic use of American English expressions (refer to 6.3.1.9) was part of a more complex argument that established a distinction between an academic, formal register, on the one hand, and an informal youth register ("slang") that her peers had learned to use by exposure to the language of pop culture, on the other. Furthermore, this argument of hers must be set against the background of her personal feelings of inadequacy related to her perception of English as a discriminating factor (refer to 6.3.2.11). While pointing out that the "informal channels" ("i canali diciamo informali") do not provide students with examples of English registers that are adequate to formal academic and work environments, S17 represented some sort of conflict between her "nerd" friends and herself. While the former demonstrated the ability to use "slang" American English expressions they had learned by playing online video games and watching TV series, S17 said that was not into "nerd" culture (refer to 6.2.1) and had set as her learning target an academic register of British English and its pronunciation correlate (RP). However, she observed that academic English had not equipped her with the communicative competence she needed to make small talk within her peer age group. Referring to the informal American English expressions used by her "nerd" friends, she commented that:

> però è efficace comunque questa parlata perché se e: io sono in (.) a cena con i miei amici così uno si mette a farfugliare qualcosa e non lo capisco e lui mi dice eh vabbè: perché io: (.) e non è che inso- queste co-lavoro qua sono sono famo- cioè è è una parola famosa una parola famosa magari in quel gioco lì quindi lui si sente di avere imparato chissà che cosa ma (.) finisce lì. invece e: chi usa (.) l'inglese in ambito accademico e quindi magari anche un po' più (.) come me insicuro sta un po' più attento e: anche a (.) a come formula le frasi ha un obiettivo magari diverso non dico: no un obiettivo uhm più importante (.) perché non è una: cioè non ci sono giudizi in quello che dico io semplicemente un obiettivo diverso cioè io voglio usare inglese pe:r il mio lavoro quindi sto un attimo più attenta a quello che dico magari (.) sì usando una pronuncia più scolastica e: che però mi mi dà la possibilità (.) èh di di farmi capire da: da tutti

but it is functional this way of speaking because if e:r I am in (.) having dinner with my friends something like that one starts to babble something and I do not understand him and he says eh well because I: (.) and it is not that I mean these thi- this fact they are they are famo- I mean it is a famous word a famous word maybe in that game hence he feels like he has learned who knows what but (.) it ends right there. whereas e:r those who use (.) English in an academic environment and so maybe a little more (.) like me insecure takes better care e:r also of (.) how he formulates the sentences maybe he has a different objective I am not saying not a u:r more important objective (.) because it's not a I mean there are no value judgments in what I am saying I am simply saying a different objective that is to say I want to use English fo:r my job therefore I care a little more about what I say maybe (.) yes using a more academic pronunciation e:r which however gives me the possibility (.) eh of of making myself understood by: by everyone

As the pauses, hesitations and false starts arguably also indicate, S17's argument seemed to reveal a feeling of insecurity perhaps derived from her inability to use the colloquial expression typical of youth language. In this sense, by remarking that her learning objectives were distinct from those of her friends, she was perhaps rationalizing her insecurity.

The view that English teaching in formal education ought to focus on the formal registers that are needed to function in work environments was made explicit by S28. In answer to the researcher's question whether she believed that the language of pop TV series and movies is an adequate model for the English classroom, she said,

u:h in realtà: no @ non è (.) nel senso che secondo me è: giusto comunque anche: (.) diciamo (.) dare un'infarinatura rispetto allo <LNen> slang </LNen> insomma alle parole più di uso comune però da una parte secondo me si rischia (.) già un impoverimento del linguaggio già appunto all'inizio quindi: soprattutto (.) pensando anche al fatto che l'inglese viene usato soprattutto in contesti formali diciamo ( ) in contesti lavorativi in cui: un certo linguaggio non è (.) specialmente accettabile però (.) e: secondo me è giusto: avere un po' l'ottica generale dei di quelli che sono le varie le varianti della lingua quello sì.

u:r actually no @it is not (.) in the sense that in my opinion it is anyways right to also (.) let's say (.) give a smattering of the <LNen> slang </LNen> I mean of the words that are most commonly used but on the one hand one risks in my opinion (.) already an impoverishment of the language already indeed at the beginning therefo:re especially (.) thinking also of the fact that English is used most of all in formal contexts le's say ( ) in work contexts in whi:ch a certain language is not (.) especially acceptable but (.) e:r in my opinion it is right to have a general overview of those that are the varieties of the language that yes.

As the extract shows, her belief in the inappropriateness of the language of pop culture was expressed as a concern for the risk of "impoverishment" of the language. However, she also claimed that English learners can be exposed to the "slang" (of pop culture) in the English classroom in the perspective of raising their awareness of variation. In brief, it was concluded that a view that traditional ELT methods offer only limited exposure to registral variation prevailed among the participants.

6.3.2.4 Pedagogical failure (4): monolithic English

A monolithic model of target language was pointed out in the interviews as another pedagogical failure. S23 lamented that in the English classroom, where British English is the only legitimate target model, "all other variations are not even considered" ("tutte le altre variazioni invece non vengono neanche mai prese in considerazione"). S25 highlighted the failure of a prescriptivist teaching method that is based on a rigid interpretation of the grammar rules of the standard variety of English (refer to 6.3.2.6), hence implicitly censuring a monolithic English model. She commented, "exactly like in Italian we have various ways of saying something and often it can also go against the rules or we can interpret one rule in different ways it doesn't mean that in the oth- in the other languages we cannot do it" ("esattamente come in italiano abbiamo diversi modi di dire una cosa e spesso può andare anche contro le regole o una regola possiamo interpretarla in maniera diversa non vuol dire che nelle al- nelle altre lingue non lo si possa fare"). Her observation that variation is a characteristic of all

languages suggested that the notion of grammaticality could be problematized if ELT shifted its focus towards a more inclusive model that introduces learners to different varieties of English. S14's argument reported in section 6.3.2.2 that an exclusive focus on grammatical correctness and RP is detrimental to fostering the learners' confidence in using English outside the classroom implicitly censured the adoption of a monolithic target model for the English classroom, which also as the effect of fostering negative attitudes towards non-standard usages of the language (refer to 6.3.2.2 for the extract of S14's interview).

Some interviewees suggested that an exclusive focus on one single variety of English does not prepare learners to deal with the dynamic heterogeneity they will encounter as future users of English outside the classroom context. S1 was very explicit on this subject, observing that the most critical aspect of her learning experience before university – hence before she received ELF instruction – was the narrow focus that presented a "monolithic view" of the English language. As she commented, because of that narrow focus, ELT in school had not equipped her with the receptive skills needed to understand the various accents that she had encountered outside the classroom:

> prima di prima degli anni universitari probabilmente l'aspetto più critico era legato proprio alla visione magari ridotta o tra virgolette e: mono: monolitica mono- insomma legata a un a una sola varietà di lingua inglese e:hm che faceva sì che al momento magari più occasionale di incontro con la lingua inglese di e: i in altri contesti o da altri parlanti o di altri paesi potesse creare un po' di difficoltà o disorientamento. sotto questo sotto vari aspetti. forse (.) un esempio può essere l'aspetto anche solo della pronuncia per esempio.
>
> *before before the university years maybe the most critical aspect was related precisely to the limited or quote unquote e:r mono- monolithic view mono- I mean related to a single variety of English language e:r which had the consequence that at the time of even the most occasional encounter with the English language of e:r I in other contexts o from other speakers from other countries it could create a few difficulties or disorientation. in this in various respects. Maybe (.) an example can be the example of even just the pronunciation for instance.*

The suggestion that an exclusive focus particularly on the British Standard norm of English does not prepare students for the multifaceted realities of English also came from S6, who used English as a link language for a job (refer to 6.3.1.4). While she expressed a preference of British English and upheld RP as the most appropriate learning target model (refer to 6.3.2.7), she also stated that she did not feel self-confident when speaking to Americans and that she had found it difficult to understand Australians, who, she mentioned, "have the reputation of having a very different and therefore less comprehensible pronunciation" ("hanno una: fama: di di ave- di avere una pronuncia molto diversa e quindi meno comprensibile."). She also commented that communication was sometimes difficult particularly with native speakers of Spanish, with Germans and especially the "Asians". Especially the latter, she pointed out, tend to "twist (the words) and maybe they do not even know the language well" ("soprattutto gli asiatici distorcono un pochino e magari non sanno bene neanche (.) neanche la la lingua"). Just as her comments proved that monolithic English as a target model does not reflect today's realities of English and suggested that there is a need to widen the scope of variation in the English classroom and prepare competent future users of ELF, S6' use of the verb "to twist" also clearly revealed the influence of the ideology of the standard language, which a monolithic model of English pedagogy greatly contributes to entrench.

S13 was aware of the fact that she found it difficult to understand accents of English different than the British Standard because in her school experience the latter had been the only variety she had been exposed to. Speaking of a couple of friends of hers who had long moved to Texas and picked up a Texan accent, she commented that "you cannot understand (.) anything <@> by now </@> of what they say before I used to understand. now they speak <ono> bā′ä wä′wä′ </ono> all open" ("non si capisce (.) niente <@> oramai </@> di quello che dicono prima capivo. adesso: parlano <ono> bā′ä wä′wä′ </ono> tutto: aperto"). Whereas the use of the term "aperto" possibly referred to the quality of certain vowels of the Texan variety of American English, the use of the onomatopoeic noises suggested the influence of the standard language ideology. Under the influence of this ideology, S13 was perhaps led to deny any linguistic status to the non-standard variety she failed to understand.

S10 made an interesting observation on the disadvantages of monolithic English in relation to the language certificates (refer also to 6.3.2.7). She pointed out that while language proficiency tests focus on the British standard variety, most students are exposed to American English, by far the most vital variety especially in pop cultural contexts. She claimed that, given the gatekeeping function that language certificates have, assessment criteria should be redefined to be more inclusive. The assessment tests were also mentioned by S26, who also raised doubts over the reliability of the certificates' scores, although she did not relate them explicitly to monolithic English. She said that she had been surprised to find out that the score she had gotten after a prolonged study-abroad experience in the USA, which she credited with having had a key role in bringing her to a high proficiency level, was exactly the same as the one she had gotten before that experience.

6.3.2.5 Pedagogical failure (5): contextual factors

Other negative points of the interviewees' English learning experience concerned contextual factors. The class group size and its heterogeneity in terms of its students' start level emerged from the interviews as the two most salient determining factors for the quality of learning outcomes.

S28, in her argument that her learning experience in the Italian schools lacked a focus on practice and the very few occasional classroom interactions were too unnatural (refer to 6.3.2.2), observed that being in a class with twenty-five NNESs who share the same L1 contributed to the unnaturalness of the learning environment. S5 observed that the small size of the classroom makes learning more effective because the limited number of students per class allows teachers to dedicate attention to each individual student. The same point that with very few students per class teachers can adopt a more individualized approach was made by S24, in relation to her EMI experience as a high-school exchange student in Finland. Along similar lines, S14 mentioned her personal experience in a private school where she had started to learn English at the age of six, remarking that in her very small size class English students could be more actively involved in their learning process ("un tipo di: di apprendimento molto più partecipato"). S9 pointed out that, in high school "classes were too big" and with "twenty-five or thirty students" per class it had "rather difficult to practice conversation or to do any exercises other than teacher-fronted lessons" ("le classi erano <?> molto numerose </?> quindi venticinque trenta persone (.) anche al liceo quindi (.) era un pochino difficile e: fare conversazione o comunque fare degli esercizi che non fossero semplicemente lezione frontale"). S8 too implicitly suggested that teaching is more efficient with small-size groups of students. Specifically, he indicated the uneven start level of the students in a class as a major impediment for teachers to successfully managing the classroom learning activities. As he remarked, in a heterogenous class, students with a higher proficiency level tend to be slowed down by less proficient students. S12 and S13 suggested that classroom management, in general, is a key factor that determines the effectiveness of teaching, with the quite obvious implication that a limited number of students who can progress at the same pace facilitates a teachers' job.

6.3.2.6 Teachers (NESTs and NNESTs)

Another structural problem of ELT in the Italian public education system that emerged from the interviews related to the teacher-hiring practices, which often cause learners in secondary education to change their teachers from one year to the next. Such discontinuity between schoolyears was highlighted by some interviewees as one of the reasons for their discontent with their English learning experience. Most of the interviewees brought attention to the key role that their teachers had played in determining their satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with their learning experience, suggesting, perhaps quite predictably, that more than anything else the teachers represent the crucial factor for the perceived quality of a student's learning experience. S1, for instance, remarked that "the teacher makes the fifty per cent of teaching" ("per me il l'i- l'insegnante fa il cinquanta per cento dell'i- del (.) dell'insegnamento"). As they commented on their previous experience with NESTs and NNESTs, the interviewees touched on a number of topics, each of which is illustrated in turn.

NESTs as embodiment of target language and culture

Some interviewees expressed a definite preference for the NESTs. S4 argued that whereas the cultural content associated of the ELT curriculum can be taught also through the L1, the teaching of the language, especially in lower the grades, should be carried out by either a NEST or a teacher with native-like competence who is able to command all the manifold lexical, semantic and phonological aspects of the target language ("tutte le sue sfumature sia semantiche lessicali che proprio fonetiche"). At two different points in the interview, S4 claimed that the greatest advantages of a teacher's native or native-like competence can be appreciated in preschool, where kids can harness their innate abilities to imitate sounds, which she assumed that people lose as they get older. It seemed then that, in her view, the NESTs represent a 'perfect' model of the target language that young kids in an EFL instructional context (supposedly) have the ability to learn by imitation. She bemoaned, though, that since English is considered as a language that belongs almost to everyone (refer to 6.3.1.2), the task of teaching English in elementary schools is often entrusted to NNESTs of other subjects who are not very proficient in English, "as if anyone who knew little more than a kid could teach it" ("come se fosse una (.) materia che comunque se qualcuno la conosce un po' più del di un bambino la può insegnare"). In pointing out that her teachers in elementary school had not been up to the job, S4 also raised wider issues related to the policies of teacher-training and hiring, suggesting that the move towards lowering the age at which English is learned in the Italian education system had possibly led to hastened decisions regarding the implementation of the English-earlier policy.

In S5's view, the advantages of being taught by a NEST related both to pronunciation and the knowledge of the target culture. She also pointed out that she could see the difference between the NNESTs who had lived in a target language environment and those who had not. She said, "people who maybe have assumed the the right pronunciation often have (.) been able to have had the opportu- the opportunity to live in the pla:ce let's say in a place abroad and so they have been able to know also besides the language also other aspects. cultural aspects" ("le persone che magari hanno assunto una il la pronuncia giusta spesso hanno (.) potuto hanno avuto l'opportu- l'opportunità di vivere nel posto: diciamo in un posto all'estero e quindi hanno potuto magari conoscere anche oltre alla lingua anche altri aspetti. culturali"). As the extract shows, the expression the "right pronunciation" unmistakably revealed the influence of native-speakerism, which led her to legitimize only a native-like pronunciation. The crucial role that the NESTs in high school had had in stimulating the interest of the students towards both the language structures and the cultural content of the English curriculum was also highlighted by S20, although she did not appear to have an overt bias for them.

S12 and S26 also held the view that the NESTs have the advantage of offering learners an authentic example of target language use. In addition to that, they both remarked that different NESTs allow students to be exposed to different varieties of English. Similarly, S23 and S25 related the advantages of being taught by a NEST to the need to maximize the exposure to and the use of the target language in classroom. Within the perspective of a monolingual approach to English teaching (refer to 6.3.2.8), S25 argued that the teaching of English should be entrusted to the NESTs because they provide exposure to "authentic" ("autentico") English. Like S4, S25 highlighted that the benefits of being exposed to authentic English can be best appreciated in the lower grades, when learners can still activate their innate mechanism for language acquisition (refer to 6.3.2.9):

> bisogna avere più possibile degli insegnanti madrelingua cioè è l'unico modo (.) che hanno dei ragazzi ancora giovani perchè fino (.) sì fino ai dodici si dice che il cervello sia un po' una spugna poi inizia già (.) un po' a irrigidirsi però è: si è ancora abbastanza giovani per sentire quel suono una volta o due o tre volte a settimana e:: abituarcisi e: sostanzialmente (.) imparare a riconoscerlo ma deve essere un suono autentico.
>
> *it is necessary to have as many native speaker teachers as possible that is it is the only way (.) that kids who are still young because until (.) yes until twelve years old it is said that the brain is rather like a sponge then it already starts (.) a bit to stiffen a:nd one is still young enough to listen to that sound once twice of three times a week a::nd get used to it a:nd basically (.) learn to recognize it but it has to be an authentic sound.*

For the same reasons, she regarded native-like pronunciation as an essential prerequisite for the NNESTs.

Ill-equipped NNESTs

S25 was very outspoken and blunt about her views on the failures of ELT in Italian schools, emphasizing that there is a "huge problem" with the quality of English teaching in Italian secondary schools. She said, "I think that we have a HUGE problem in Italy of (.) quality of English teaching e:r (.) in high school (.) and (.) previous years middle school" ("penso che in Italia abbiamo un ENORME problema in termini di (.) qualità di insegnamento dell'inglese e:hm (.) alle superiori (.) e (.) anni precedenti alle medie"). Her dissatisfaction with ELT in the Italian schools was clearly reflected in her words, which carried negative connotations. She spoke of a pedagogical flaw ("falla") (in two occasions), of "uncertain teaching" ("insegnamento precario") and of a need to "patch over" ("tappare il buco") the shortcomings of English language teaching before students gets to university. Although she recognized the existence of structural constraints, in that the weekly hours allocated to English as a school subject limit a teacher's chance of teaching effectively ("nella fretta delle poche ore che un professore ha"), she quite openly attributed the shortcomings of ELT mostly to the NNESTs. She stated that the NNESTs should completely change their approach ("è bene che i professori di oggi cambino completamente approccio") and claimed that they are ill-qualified to teach the English language. She observed that the NNESTs often teach the rules of grammar "as if they were strict and inflexible ("spesso sono e:hm insegnate come regole ferree da cui non si può scappare"), thus suggesting that her English teachers in school had tended to adopt a prescriptivist approach to grammar (refer back to 6.3.2.4). She went on to argue that it is a flaw of ELT in Italian schools that different teachers give students different interpretations of the same grammar rule, and made the example of the future tense, which she considered a "striking case". She commented,

> ed ecco che qui vi è una sorta di falla (.) dei professori che spiegano impongono una regola in un certo modo e altri professori che l- (.) la la prendono danno un'altra interpretazione il caso più eclatante è il futuro in inglese. ho sentito TANte ma tante di quelle (.) di quelle interpretazioni diversi modi di spiegare e: come a- come avviene il futuro
>
> *and here is a sort of flaw (.) of the teachers who explain impose a rule in a certain way and other teachers who t- (.) take take that rule and give it another interpretation the most striking case is the future in English. I have heard so MAny so so many of those (.) of those interpretations different ways of explaining e:r how th- how the future works*

The confusion around the same grammar rule pointed out by S25 is arguably to be attributed to the fact that English is a language that is typologically distant from Italian and hence requires ad hoc rules and explanations, which most descriptive grammars do not offer. The example she made of the future tense is, in this respect, very telling, in that the Italian future tense is translated to English through various verb forms, depending on what type of predication the Italian future tense stands for. In this sense, the confusion around the different explanations she had received of the English future tense that S25 lamented arguably derived from a confusion between linguistic form and extralinguistic reality. All this considered, it seems reasonable to suggest that the traditional grammar explanations that many English teachers give in Italian schools are perhaps not always and not completely adequate to provide clear and satisfactory explanations of certain aspects of the English grammar. When, at a later point in the interview, she was invited to expand on the topic she had previously raised of the "pedagogical errors" ("errori didattici") such as the explanation of the future tense, S25 commented that the poor quality of teaching in Italian schools depended probably on the erroneous understanding of the grammar of the English language that the NNESTs had developed as learners of English themselves ("l'interpretazione stessa (.) che gli insegnanti magari a loro volta nel corso degli studi (.) hanno e: sviluppato dell'inglese"). She further remarked, in a very assertive tone that "the English langauge is not the Italian language" ("<assertive> l'inglese non è l'italiano </assertive>)" and, therefore, the grammar of English cannot be explained in the same way as the Italian grammar. In support of her claim, once again, she mentioned the verbal system as a "striking case" ("la grammatica non può essere insegnata e: come si insegna quella italiana e: il sistema verbale è un esempio ECLAtante"). Regardless of

her dissatisfaction with and negative attitude towards the NNESTs in Italian secondary schools, S25 hinted at the key importance of providing adequate training to ELT teachers and practitioners. Most importantly, she implicitly pointed to the importance of basing grammar explanations on a thorough knowledge of the structural peculiarities that characterize the English language and avoiding the use of categories that may only be valid for the learners' L1.

The key importance of a teacher's native(-like) pronounciation

Besides S4 and S25, other interviewees expressed the opinion that their NNESTs in school had been unfit for the job and emphasized the importance for a NNEST to possess native-like competence. S8 also commented that a student's satisfaction with his/her learning experience very much depends on her/his teacher. On the one hand, he expressed his satisfaction with his middle school teacher, who possessed a native-like proficiency ("che era quasi madrelingua") and involved the students in interactive lessons that were very much focused on listening and speaking. On the other, he attributed a great deal of his dissatisfaction with his experience in high school to a teacher whose competence was poor, especially, as he remarked, at the level of pronunciation. As the extract below shows, and as it could be judged from the frequency with which he mentioned the topic, he regarded a NNEST's pronunciation as a crucial factor. He emphasized the need for a NNEST to sound like a NES and pointed out that if a teacher's pronunciation does not meet native-like standards the entire teaching job is "jeopardized":

> ho avuto questa insegnante e: che non aveva neanche lei più di tanto delle competenze delle capacità in particolar modo era molto carente e::hm nell'ambito della pronuncia o comunque nell'ambito del parlato e questo per me: è decisamente: come posso dire PROBLEMATICO come po- u:hm cioè per dirla in maniera molto: delicata: perché penso che sia fondamentale ecco se manca questa parte: viene inficiato un po' tutto il lavoro perché si tende a italianizzare o comunque ad avere un approccio anche più quasi comico tra virgolette come purtroppo é: visto anche ne: da parte del uhm nel mondo diciamo poi quello che è lo stereotipo dell'italiano che parla: l'inglese in maniera maccaronica con una tendenza più dialettale
>
> *I used to have this teacher e:r who didn't even have that many competencies the abilities in particular she was very much lacking e::r in the area of pronunciation or anyways in the speaking area and this is for me: is definitely: how can I say PROBLEMATIC like how ca- u:r I mean to put it very: gently: because I think that it is crucial tha's it if this part is lacking all the work is jeopardized because one tends to Italianize or anyways to have style that is almost more quote unquote comical like unfortunately it i:s viewed also i:n by the world let's say that is after all the stereotype of the Italian who spe:aks macaroni English with a dialectical tendency*

Although S8 said he was trying to hedge his claim by not sounding too blunt ("per dirla in maniera molto: delicata:"), the expressions "Italianize everything" ("italianizzare tutto"), "comic style" ("approccio comico"), "macaroni English" ("maccaronico") and "dialectal tendency" ("tendenza dialettale") by which he described a NNEST's L1-inflected accent, clearly revealed his negative attitude to NNE and hence a strong influence of native-speakerism. That negative attitude, in turn, is perhaps to be interpreted as a desire to shake off the stereotype of "macaroni English" that is popularly attached to Italian users of English.

Like S8, S17, who also expressed considerable dissatisfaction with her English learning experience in high school, regarded native-like pronunciation as a requisite skill of a NNEST and seemed to resent the cliché of "macaroni English". She repeatedly mentioned "the teachers' unpreparedness" ("l'impreparazione degli insegnanti") as a reason for her discontent, and spoke of her NNEST in high school, who was from the South of Italy and spoke a heavily "dialect-inflected English", as the epitome of the incompetent teacher. She remarked that such an unqualified teacher was not to be expected in her school and city, which is not, as she emphasized, "the most remote backwoods town of the South" (of Italy). She commented, "you also find the teacher who speaks to you in dialect [dialect] like my former teacher and I did I attended the liceo classico u:r in [city] I mean I was not in the friggin' remotest little village of the South which I am sorry to say this but e:r you see often there er I found

tha:t it is worse e:r from the viewpoint of the teaching of the English language" ("trovi anche l'insegnante che ti parla in dialetto [dialect] com'era la mia e io ho fa- ho fatto liceo classico u:h a [city] cioè e non ero nel nell'ultimo paesino del cavolo al sud che mi dispiace dirlo però e anche lì spesso e: ho riscontrato che: è peggio e:hm dal punto di vista dell'insegnamento della lingua inglese"). Although S17 said she had "found" ("ho riscontrato") that English is taught worse in the South than it is in her area that, it goes without saying that her claim, without any evidence that supported it, had no other value than that of reproducing a stereotype, and it could be easily inferred from her comment that S17's views were heavily influenced by native-speakerism.

A generational factor

Other interviewees were less judgmental of their former NNESTs and did not reveal biased attitudes towards the NESTs. S3 observed that "you don't have to be a native speaker to have to teach" English ("non bisogna essere (.) madrelingua (.) per (.) dovere insegnare"), and that she had had "both NESTs and NNESTs" who "were very good" ("ho avuto insegnanti sia madrelingua che non madrelingua (…) che sono stati bravissimi"). However, answering the researcher's confirming question whether she could say she was happy with her school NNESTs, she pointed to a generational factor, saying that she had been satisfied with the younger ones, but not with those of an older generation ("quelli giovani sì gli insegnanti invece: di una certa età (.) @ <@> anche no </@>"). The same negative attitude towards the NNESTs of the older generation was revealed by S19, as observed in precedence (refer back to 6.3.2.2), when she commented on the failures of traditional ways of ELT in Italian schools. The generational factor seemed to suggest that, in the context of massive exposure to authentic English and increased mobility, today's learners may perceive as inadequate those teachers who have learned English and have been trained for their profession at a time when it was common practice to learn English almost exclusively from the books, and the opportunities to integrate formal learning with hands-on experience and exposure to real-life language usage were reserved to the few.

The advantages of NNESTs

In some interviews, it was emphasized that the NNESTs have the advantage of sharing the learners' L1 and of having been learners of the target language themselves. In this respect, S22 made an interesting remark by which she refuted the native-speaker-teacher myth that holds that NESTs are better teachers than NNESTs by birthright. She referred to her personal experience as a learner of French with a native-speaker teacher:

> I had a eh eh teacher e:r of French who was a native speaker but probably: didn't have the pedagogical education so he wasn't wasn't able to e:r at my level and level of the group was pretty low (.) so his fluency was more of drawback than an advantage (.) his nativeness er because he was any- he wasn't we: were not able to express ourselves he wasn't able to understand what do we what do we need what do we need now to e:r (1) to start speaking.

S22's comment pointed first of all to the importance of teacher training ("pedagogical education") as a factor for effective teaching, rather than birthright. Second, by observing that hers was a beginners' class group level, S22 suggested that, at lower levels, learners of English may benefit more from being taught by a NNEST who speaks their L1 and has gone through the process of learning a foreign language her/himself. The exact same point that a NEST has the disadvantage of not having been a learner of the language her/himself was made by S28, who remarked that the mere fact of being a NES does not necessarily make one a good teacher, since "to know the language does not mean to be able to teach it" ("sapere la lingua non vuol dire necessariamente saperla insegnare"). She argued that "since language sort of comes naturally" to a NEST ("gli viene come naturale la lingua"), she/he "cannot fully understand the difficulties a learner of English may encounter" ("non comprendere pienamente le: le difficoltà dei (.) del parlante e cioè del suo alunno straniero"), although she also added that teacher training may overcome the problem ("se uno: poi studia didattica penso già penso che (.) il problema si possa superare"). S29 also dismissed the suggestion (as indicated by questionnaire item #57) that the NESTs are better qualified to teach English, although she also observed that they have a head start. Interestingly, she hinted

at the social consequences of native-speakerism, suggesting that the practice of privileging a NEST over a NNEST is a discrimination against qualified NNESTs who have invested a lot and worked hard:

> mi sembra più una forma anche qui di discriminazione nei confronti di chi magari ama quella lingua si impegna cerca di andare all'estero cerca di fare un percorso formativo e di anche diventare e: di apprendere tutte quelle caratteristiche particolari che possono essere non so gli slogan o i modi di dire di un determinato posto e assimilare parte della cultura inglese.
>
> *It seems to me also in this case rather like a form of discrimination against those who maybe love that language makes an effort tries to go abroad tries to undertake a training path and also to become e:r to learn all those peculiar characteristics that can be I don't know the slogans or the idiomatic expressions of a certain place and assimilate part of the English culture*.

However, her claim that a NNEST who has spent a long period of time in the target learning environment can learn the ways the language is actually used and "assimilate" part of the English culture nevertheless suggested that she regarded native-like proficiency as a requirement of a good teacher.

NESTS and NNESTs: distinct roles, distinct qualities

Other interviewees seemed to favor a combination of NNESTs and NESTs. S10, for instance, highlighted the advantages of being taught by a NEST although she also remarked that the NEST must be paired with a NNEST ("secondo me va accompagnato"). Interestingly, while S22 believed that the NNESTs are better equipped to teach learners at the lower levels, S10 repeated S4's argument that learners at a very young age would benefit more from a NEST. In S10's opinion, a NEST does not give pupils the "option b" ("l'opzione bi") of using the L1 in the classroom, and hence supposedly force them to use the target language. This belief in the advantages of maximizing the exposure to and use of the target language was clearly related to the belief in the advantages of an early start (refer to 6.3.2.9). S6, who expressed a very positive opinion of her past English learning experience, highlighted the advantages of both the NESTs and the NNESTs. She commented that her conversation (NES-)teacher in high school had had a great part in helping the students develop their communicative skills and specified that conversation classes had created an informal environment in which the students had the opportunity to practice a colloquial spoken register of English. However, she also emphasized that the best teacher is not necessarily a NEST. Like other interviewees, she also remarked that a NNEST has the advantage of better understanding the difficulties of her/his students, because he/she had to learn the language in the first place and, most importantly, can communicate with the students through their L1.

In brief, the analysis of the interviews found that the interviewees' views on their NESTs and NNESTs revealed the coexistence of two main orientations: one that was clearly influenced by native speakerism, another that acknowledged distinct and complementary qualities in each of the two categories. The interviewees' views commented in this chapter section, and the underlying attitudes towards the NESTs and NNESTs, are closely related to the topics that are commented the next three sections: the learning target model, the exclusive use of the target language in the classroom and the belief in the advantages of an early start.

6.3.2.7 Target model

The learning target model emerged from the interviews as a very engaging topic. Discussions about what constitutes a valid target for the English class were focused on mostly on British and American English (see also section 6.3.1.1) and included the interviewees' views on pronunciation and its relationship with intelligibility.

The primacy of British English

In the interviews, several references were made to what was alternatively called "British English", "London English" ("l'inglese di londra"), "the English of England" ("l'inglese dell'inghilterra"), "the English of the UK" ("l'inglese del regno unito"), as the most adequate target model, and various reasons were provided for the belief in its greater appropriateness. The preference for British English seemed to be largely dictated by convention.

Some interviewees even recognized the influence that the accepted and customary ELT practices had had on their views on the learning target model; that is to say that they were aware that the choice of setting British English as a learning target was arbitrary. For instance, S20 said that she assumed that the target model for the English class had to be British English perhaps because that was the first variety she had encountered as a student ("forse sempli- personalmente perché è il primo a cui mi sono approcciata nel mio imparare l'inglese"). Along the same lines, S4 commented that she was led to "instinctively" regard it as "a point of reference" ("potrebbe essere una cosa appunto un po' così istintiva come dicevo prima il il ritenerla e: (.) uh un il punto di riferimento") simply because all her teachers had always used British English as knowledge base and yardstick of reference. The view that teaching the English "of the UK" is a tradition in which teachers of English should follow was expressed by S6, who defined herself "somewhat of a purist" ("sono un po' purista"), emphasizing her personal liking for a British accent. The choice of British English as the most valid target model was also justified by the mere fact that, as S20 put it, it is the "original" English ("quello originale") from which all the other varieties derived. Along the same lines, S8 said, "the English accent in my opinion would be the basis but the BEST basis because clearly e:r one starts from the source that is from that which should be e:r the primary input" ("l'accento inglese secondo me sarebbe la base però e: MIGLIORE perché chiaramente e: come posso dire si parte un po' dalla sorgente cioè da quello che dovrebbe essere e: l'input uhm primario"). S3 claimed that the English of England should be the starting point for learners because it is "the pure one" ("quello puro"), hence hinting at the idealized character of the codified British standard.

British English versus American English

Interestingly, as also revealed by a comparison between the interview data and the questionnaire responses, the majority of the interviewees who did not question the primacy of British English as a valid learning target model nevertheless expressed a personal preference for American English. In accordance with the tendency to view variation in terms of a polarity (refer back to 6.3.1.1), several interviewees drew a clear distinction between British and American English, whereby the former was regarded as the formal variety of English to be adopted in the classroom, and the latter represented the informal English variety that students encountered through out-of-class exposure. S9 was very explicit on this point, observing that as a student she had been taught the British variety, which is "traditionally passed off as" the "correct" and "real" English that ("un inglese tipicamente <background noise> fatto passare per CORRETTO"; "che <fast> tradizionalmente viene fatto passare per </fast> l'inglese vero e proprio.") even though, "in reality" she realized that "everyone uses a lot more American English" ("in realtà mi sono resa conto di come chiunque chiunque (.) usi (.) l'inglese: più americano"), by which observation she indicated that American English enjoys greater vitality than the British variety.

Some interviewees suggested that British English provides the most solid basis on which to build proficiency. In S2's view, for instance, British English has "more established" ("più fondate") grammar rules than American English, which instead lacks "significant grammar rules because it simplifies the English language" ("l'inglese americano non credo (.) abbia molte (.) e: caratteristiche grammaticali importanti perché lo semplifica molto l'inglese."). S18 described British English as a "more standard", "more grammatical" variety in which there is "less slang" ("più standard è più: grammaticale e ci sono c'è molto meno <LNen> slang") and whose rules are "clearer" and "identifiable" ("le regole sono più (.) chiare (.) possono essere inquadrate"). She observed that American English, on the other hand, is "rather chaotic" ("un po' caotico") and that since "America is a much wider area" ("è un'area comunque molto più grande"), there is more variation, in terms of pronunciation and "terminology" ("ci sono (.) termini pronunce e: tipologie diverse appunto di: cioè terminologie diverse"), more "slang", and so learners would find American English more difficult. It should not surprise that S18 regarded variation as a characteristic of American English, since as an exchange student in the US, she had had the opportunity to realize how English was actually used outside the context of the EFL class, where variation instead tends to go largely ignored.

S8 argued that knowledge of "London English" provides a solid basis that allows one to understand without much effort the American variety of English, which he characterized as "simple", "simplified" English ("SEMPLICE meno (.) a: articola s- è un po' semplificato"). He also remarked that making the opposite transition from the American to the "original British" variety of English, on the other hand, would be more complicated:

> un inglese comunque diciamo: londinese se così volessimo dire un inglese britannico: sì come base per e: perché penso che dall'inglese chiamiamolo appunto britannico originario (.) passare all'americano sia un passaggio che u:hm non ci sian grandi difficoltà […] si riesce: più agevolmente al contrario mi vien da dire che sia un pochino più sfidante un più difficile
>
> *an English let's say: London English if we wanted to call it so a British English yes as a basis for e:r because I think that from the English let's call it indeed British original (.) to pass to American English is a passage that u:r there are not that many difficulties […] you can do i:t more easily on the contrary I am inclined to say that it is a bit more challenging more difficult*

S8 further argued,

> l'americano è anche un pochino cioè parlo anche di esperienza a:hm tende a essere un pochino più: come posso dire bè accogliente per certi versi ma anche un po' meno STRETTO nell'osservanza di quelle che sono le regole anche la pronuncia cerca più di di capire anche sicuramente per il discorso anche culturale ecco che vede questo: un ambiente sicuramente più: variegato rispetto magari a l'Inghilterra o quelle zone come dicevo prima magari londinesi o di questo genere in cui è invece più a:h stretto è molto più: corretto mettiamola anche così il discorso del della lingua.
>
> *the American is also a little bit I mean I am saying this also on the basis of personal experience a:r tends to be rather le:ss how can I say well accommodating in some respects but also less STRICTLY observant of those that are the rules also the pronunciation tries to to understand more also surely because of the cultural thing you see that sees thi:s environment as mo:re varied than England maybe or those areas as I was saying before like London maybe or of that kind where language use is more a:r strict is much more correct let's say*

In brief, in S8's opinion, Americans are less strictly observant of the pronunciation rules and traced back this characteristic of theirs to what he perceived as the cultural openness of the American environment. Whereas, in his view, Americans are definitely more inclined to accommodate and "try to understand" a NNES, in England, on the contrary, and London in particular, English is spoken in a more strictly observant manner. As he added, it is better to have a strict teacher rather than an undemanding one:

> l'inglese ehm non e tende a a accomodare il la situazione ma tende più a INSEGNARE. in questo senso è chiaro che è più difficile per uno che deve imparare avere dall'altra parte come posso dire un insegnante più severo piuttosto che e un insegnante più e: accogliente ma più largo di manica nel fatto di concedere errori: su pronuncia: regole grammaticali.
>
> *the English person does not tend to accommodate the situation but rather tends to TEACH. in this sense it is clear that it is more difficult for one who has to learn to have on the other side a more strict teacher rather than e:r a teacher who is more accommodating but who also turns a blind eye, who tolerates errors of pronunciation grammar rules*

Precisely because the English people are more demanding, S8 believed that England is the best destination to go and study English, as he had also indicated in questionnaire item # 60. A tourist instead, he claimed, would feel more comfortable in the USA, precisely because Americans are supposedly more inclined to accommodate. S8's arguments reported above clearly exposed the influence of the ideology of the standard language, in that they reflected the commonsense notion that the English people strictly adhere to the rules of correctness, whereas the Americans use English in a looser manner and do not hesitate to deviate from correct English. According to this

folk opinion, rather than two distinct varieties of English in their own right, each with its respective norms, there is a primary, original, ancestral norm, and the Americans take the liberty to deflect from it. Hence, EFL learners, who are supposed to adhere to correct English, ought to better learn the original variety in its ancestral home where the rules of the language are more strictly observed. The same ideological influence surfaced from S8's characterization of Australian English, in which, he argued, "there are actually diversities not to say almost malapropisms" that are "not good for teaching" ("pensando per esempio all'australiano: ci sono proprio delle: diversità per non dire quasi <@> storpiature per certi versi </@> che mi: non pe- cioè non penso proprio che potrebbero essere BUONI nella didattica"). The ideological underpinning of his views became evident when he pointed out that "one should […] try to AVOID any type of dialectal or particular INFLUENCE (.) in English" ("bisognere- […] cercare DI EVITARE qualunque tipo di INFLUENZA diciamo dialettale o particolare (.) nell'inglese").

In the same vein as S8, S9 argued that a British pronunciation is the best target model because, since it she found it "the most difficult to understand", once learners have become familiar with it, they can easily understand any other accent ("la trovo quella un pochino più difficile da comprendere. quindi una volta che si ha quella che si comprende quella si può si può comprendere un pochino tutto il resto"). At another point in the interview, she restated her belief, arguing that British pronunciation is the "closest" ("più stretta") and the most difficult to understand among "all the correct pronunciations of English" ("tra tutte le pronunce tra virgolette CORRETTE dell'inglese la trovo quella un pochino più difficile da comprendere."). Although she did not explain which were, in her view, "the correct pronunciations of English", it seemed reasonable to assume that she had in mind the internationally recognized ENL varieties, considering that she only mentioned British, American and Australian English throughout the interview. It was not clear at all, on the other hand, what she meant by the Italian term "stretta", which appeared to be nothing but a folk notion. Although it has been translated here as "closest", it seemed also very likely that S9 was using the term in its sense of "strictly adhering" to a norm, which, in this case, was the standard norm of RP, and she possibly meant that that pronunciation was somehow impenetrable. The adjective "stretto" is in fact often used to describe a dialect that is not the least influenced by standard Italian, so as to differentiate it from those regional varieties of Italian that are positioned at some intermediate point along the dialect-standard Italian continuum. Quite interestingly, S9 also claimed that if she had first studied American English which she also characterized as "simpler with some malapropisms" ("più semplice con alcune storpiature"), she would not have been able to understand British English, whereas knowledge of the latter enabled her to "imagine" also the other varieties of English. She said, "if I had studies the American one […] I would not have been able to understand (.) the the English one instead KNOwing the English one I managed to (.) to imagine also: also the other ones without major problems" ("se avessi studiato quella americana (…) non sarei riuscita a capire (.) quella quella inglese invece SApendo quella inglese sono riuscita (.) ad immaginare anche: anche le altre senza senza grossi problemi").

In claiming that it is easier to shift from the British to the American variety of English than doing the opposite shift, S9 and S8 appeared to be drawing conclusions of seemingly general validity on the basis of their own personal experience as successful learners of English. As they made it explicit, they had first approached the study of the English language in a classroom setting where the British standard norm had been the target model by default. While British Standard English tended to be confined within the boundaries of the formal classroom setting, their out-of class-experience familiarized them instead with the American variety of English. S9 even recognized, at yet another point, that she found American English easier to understand because she had been more exposed to it than to the British standard variety. She claimed, "I am simply more accustomed to see it on internet everywhere therefore it entered my brain more than British English which is used a little less" ("sono semplicemente più abituata a vederlo su su internet da tutte le parti quindi mi è entrato più </fast> (.) e più nel cervello di quello di quello <LNen> British </LNen> che: si usa un pochino meno"). Considering the comparatively greater amount of exposure that they had received to American English as compared to the British variety, it should not surprise that, as these two students suggested, they did not find it hard to re-tune their ear to

the former. Most importantly, since there does not seem to be any sound reason why British English better than any other variety should predispose learners to understand other English accents, it seems reasonable to suggest that things may have also worked the other way round. That is to say that once a learner has studied the American variety of English, given a considerable amount of exposure to the British (or any other) variety of English, they will just as easily become able to understand the latter.

The influence of the standard language ideology was evident in all the interviewees' comments on the learning target model that juxtaposed British and American English. The stereotyped view of the American variety as simplified English and its frequent characterization as "slang" were in this regard particularly revealing. It is arguably the case that the fact of not acknowledging the presence in American English of the same grammar rules of the British standard that are traditionally taught in the English class had led some interviewees to draw the conclusion that speakers of the American variety "simplify" the English language.

A tendency was also observed, on the one hand, to regard British English as a valid target model for the development of proficiency in the language that is used in academic contexts or any other setting where formality is key in the interactions that take place. On the other hand, the American variety of English tended to be regarded as an adequate model for acquiring the conversational skills needed in everyday interactions with other people in informal contexts. As the conventional knowledge base and benchmark in instructional contexts, British English was thus represented as an adequate target model for the development of "cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)", whereas for its associations with informality (refer to 6.3.2.2 and 6.3.2.3), American English appeared to the students as the most adequate model for the development of the "Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)" (Cummins 2008).

Indicating "Queen Elizabeth" as the embodiment of her personal target language model, S17 upheld the ideal of British English because, as she explained, although a "UK pronunciation" makes one appear "pompous and pedantic", ("se uno ha una pronuncia e: <LNen> UK </LNen> insomma viene (.) v- viene visto anche un po' più (.) non so come dire u:hm come altezzoso e:hm pre- precisino"), she liked the idea of "articulating the words and make oneself clear" ("mi pia- mi piace proprio (.) il fatto di scandire le parole, il fatto che (.) anche si: si capisca quello che dico"). By contrast, she used the expression "to eat one's words" ("mangiarsi le parole") to describe the way American English "slang" is spoken, as if to stress her negative attitude towards the American variety. S17's considerations on the pragmatic salience of the "slang" American English expressions were reported in section 6.3.1.9. It was also noted in section 6.3.2.3 that S17's comments on the use of American English colloquial words and phrases included a consideration on the different objectives of language learning. It is noted here that she emphasized that, in order to further one's chances of professional development, one has to engage in a thorough study of academic English, which she identified with the British standard variety. The American English of pop culture, instead, she quite clearly implied, would not serve the same purpose.

A similar view was also expressed by S28, who, as pointed out in section 6.3.2.2, held the opinion that the English classroom should focus on the formal register of English that is used in work contexts, whereas the fact of exposing students to the "slang" could lead to "an impoverishment of the language" ("un impoverimento del linguaggio"). S5 explicitly associated the two internationally recognized English varieties with two opposite registers; she said that she did not know why but she thought of British English as the variety used in formal contexts while American English was appropriate "for conversing with her friends" ("quando penso non so a livello formale forse quello britannico però parlare con gli amici mi viene in mente più l'americano non so perché"). Her view found an easy explanation in the fact that, as an ELF learner, she had been taught to adhere to the British English target, whereas, through out-of-class exposure to pop culture, she had learned the phraseology that she found more appropriate for the casual conversations with her peers. Similarly, S20 said that she felt "more comfortable" ("più a mio agio") with American English, since she thought that it allowed her to express herself "more freely" ("più libero come espressione") and speak in a "less controlled manner" ("meno impostato"), hence suggesting that she associated

American English with non-regulated communicative contexts where the use of an informal register is more appropriate.

The importance of genuine target language input

The interviewees' comments reported so far thus indicated that classroom- and out-of-class- English tended to be conceived as two separate areas. However, a few interviewees suggested that in spite of the prestige that British English enjoys and the established conventions of ELT, teachers should look at how English is used in the real world and accept also American English as a valid reference model. S10 pointed to the contradiction between classroom and out-of-class English, arguing that "it is a mistake" to focus exclusively on "the so-called PURE English" ("si sbaglia a studiare soltanto quello e: l'inglese come lo dicono PURO") especially in language testing and assessment. She observed that the established practice of referring to the British standard as a benchmark in the English classroom and, most crucially, in language proficiency certificates, disadvantages students like her who get most of their exposure to the target language by watching American movies and TV (refer also to 6.3.2.4).

The suggestion that the English class should give learners genuine target language input also came from S4, who emphasized the importance of letting students come in contact with the "living language", a language that is "real", rather than focusing on a specific variety.:

> l'aspetto che secondo me è interessante per l'apprendente è comunque entrare in contatto con la lingua viva e quello è l- la cosa che poi va al di sopra ancora naturalmente d- del fatto che (.hhh) e: un inglese sia: uhm e: proveniente dal appunto dall'Inghilterra dall'am- dall'America o anche da (.hhh) dall'India da qualsiasi insomma paese possa provenire il fatto in generale di essere esposti a una lingua (.) che ritengo vera
>
> *the aspect that in my opinion is intersting for the learner is anyways to come in contact with the living language and that is th- the thing that overrides once again naturally th- the fact of (.hhh) e:r an English is u:r comes from from England indeed from Am- from America os also from (.hhh) from India from any I mean any country it might come from in general the fact of being exposed to a language (.) that I consider real*

Interestingly, as the extract shows, she suggested that Indian English is also a legitimate variety of English, besides the English and the American ones.

A plurality of Englishes and the importance of awareness-raising

A few other interviewees highlighted the need to expose students to a plurality of English varieties. S11 believed that exposing students to more "accents" ("accenti") would help them in the future, although he only mentioned English English and American English. S26 commented that learners should be exposed to more "versions" of English in addition to the British and the American varieties ("penso che sia giusto così penso che sia giusto imparare un po' tutte le versioni"), mentioning also Australian and South African English, and added that it is fair to have an overview of many different Englishes ("secondo me è giusto avere uno spettro di e:hm di di di tanti inglesi diversi"). S13 argued that "London English" and "American English" are the two varieties that should be taught in school although "it would be nice" ("sarebbe bello") to include also "all the Englishes of the world ("tutti gli inglesi del mondo"), but, as she lamented, there is not enough time in the school schedule ("ci son troppe poche ore scolastiche"). However, she also remarked that the processes of migration had brought to the fore the English varieties that are spoken in the former colonies, hence attention in the English class should be nevertheless turned towards those Englishes ("adesso con l'immigrazione sta diventando importante in realtà anche a mettere l'orecchio su l'inglese parlato in altri stati e: ex colonie").

Interestingly, S1's comments on the topic of the learning target model reproduced the key principles of ELF theory. On the premise that English learners in the future are most likely to become users of English in contexts of communication that involve speakers of a plurality of linguistic, cultural, and educational background, she argued for the equal legitimacy of all varieties of English and suggested that learners should develop a communicative competence that allows them to be flexible and be able to deal with a plurality of Englishes. Even

though she admitted that “school grammar” (“grammatica scolastica”) is a necessary basis on which to build one’s communicative competence (refer also to 6.2.2.2), she commented that British English is only a starting point and that, as learners progress towards more advanced levels, the scope of variation should be broadened to include also non-standard English forms. Remarking that “there is not one single English as it used to be thought” (“non esiste un solo inglese come magari si pensava un tempo”) or one “perfect English” (“un inglese perfetto”) and other “varieties with deficiencies” (“varietà che che hanno deficienze”), and acknowledging, at another point, that ELF instruction had made her aware that the English language comprises different varieties that are equally legitimate” (“ho avuto la la consapevolezza del fatto che la lingua inglese sia e: un un un insieme di v- di varietà ugualmente ugualmente legittime”), she expressed a view that today’s learners’ needs demand “an English that adapts to the context” (“un inglese direi che si adatti al contesto.”). For that reason, she concluded that NE is not necessarily “the dogmatically perfect model to imitate” (“quella perfetta dogmaticamente da imitare come modello”) and that, if necessary, users of English should also feel free to deviate from British English or any other variety that is set as a reference model (“divergere da: dal dal <LNen> British English </LNen> o da un qualsiasi inglese che si prende come modello di riferimento”).

A similar view that there is not one single variety that is more valid a target model than any other came from S24, who pointed out that ELF instruction had made her aware English is so widely used throughout the globe that the idea of referring to a specific variety as the target of learning “is a thing of the past” (“è una questione secondo me ormai superata”). Along the same lines, S2 claimed that there is not one English accent that is more valid than any other as a learning target model (“secondo me no non esiste un accento particolare che va insegnato rispetto a un altro”) because nowadays a “real English” is not anywhere to be found, since that “linguistic core” has been “contaminated” (“questo <LNen> core </LNen> linguistico non esiste più è stato contaminato”). Her observation revealed that she was aware that the realities of English contradict the monolithic image of a “pure” English that is reproduced by the traditional ELT practices. However, she seemed to believe that linguistic variation is a fairly recent phenomenon, suggesting that it had resulted from the dynamics of cultural and linguistic “contamination” brought about by the processes of globalization. By implying that there once used to be a “pure English” which has now become contaminated, she did not seem to realize that the standard norm is actually an abstraction and that variation beyond the standard norm has in fact always been there.

S14 also believed that there is not one particular variety that should be set as target model, implicitly suggesting that any variety of English can be a valid one. She explained that the GELT course she had attended as part of her previous BA program had made students aware of the pluricentricity of English and recognize that all varieties of English are equally legitimate (“ci ha fatto apprezzare quindi tutte le diverse varietà di inglese”). On top of that, she commented that, as a student with a “sort of a passion for linguistics” (“passione un po' per la linguistica”) she had developed a favorable disposition towards any accent of English, native and non-native alike. She also remarked that, although she was not made to “completely disavow British English” ("rinnegare completamente l-l'inglese britannico”) she was aware that its primacy in ELT was not to be put down to some supposedly inherent set of qualities, as a few other interviewees suggested, but rather to extra-linguistic factors. She mentioned “historical aspects” such as “colonization and the Empire” and “economic aspects like the exams and all that revolves around this language” (“molti aspetti storici sia dal punto di vista appunto della colonizzazione dell'impero ma anche poi (.) riflettendoci aspetti: economici diciamo degli esami: di tutto quello che ruota attorno a: a questa lingua”). On the other hand, as she remarked, her English learning experience in school was totally centered on a British linguistic and cultural model. She recounted a very interesting episode that had happened when she was in high school, which perfectly illustrates how the standard language ideology breeds prejudicial attitudes and how these, in turn, influence the perception of the intelligibility of an accent (refer to 3.4). When her teacher of English class asked the students in her class to listen to various speakers with different accents of English and indicate which they had found more intelligible, she specified the ones with “a heavier accent” (“un accento più marcato”), because they were actually more similar to her NNE pronunciation, whereas all her classmates selected those who had spoken with RP (“una pronuncia perfetta”). At the time, she had thought that

she had got the exercise wrong (“mi sono sentita okay ho sbagliato l’esercizio”) but, based on the knowledge she had later acquired, she remarked, she could recognize that nothing was actually wrong.

A suggestion that the British English standard norm that is used as knowledge base and benchmark in the English class is not ‘real’ and that traditional ELT practices breed stereotypical thinking about language varieties came from S16. Like S14, she pointed out that the study of linguistics had brought her to question her earlier beliefs about the nature of language and commented that just as the Italian language changes, so does English. Therefore, she concluded, the stereotypical image of England as home to “pure” (“puro”) English, after all, may not correspond to reality (“forse l’Inghilterra e: non è più quello che e:: che pens- che abbiamo in testa noi che è un po’ il nostro stereotipo”).

The ‘zero variety’

S19 too, on the one hand, believed that the English class should “diversify” the target language and expose students to various accents (“diversificare e quindi per sentire i diversi tipi di accenti”). Interestingly, when the researcher asked her whether she thought that an Indian or a Nigerian accent, for instance, could represent a valid target model, she recognized her prejudicial attitude (“potrebbe essere un pregiudizio”) towards any accent that “does not conform to the stereotyped classification of English” (“non rientra in <@> quella </@> classificazione (.) stereotipata dell’inglese”). She also added that a person “of Indian origins” (“di origini: indiane”) has “a right to find her/his own accent” ("il diritto di: di trovare il suo proprio accento”) and “use one that is different from the original accents” (“utilizzarne uno diverso da dai quelli originali.”), by which expression she seemed to refer to the inner circle varieties of English. However, on the other hand, she also claimed that if a learner wishes to attain a high level of proficiency and “work with languages” (“lavorare con le lingue”), then she/he should aim at a “neutral” (“neutrale”) pronunciation model that allows the NNES to speak without giving away her/his own identity (“parlare senza farmi e: come posso dire? <@> scoprire che non sono </@> <LNen> native speaker </LNen>”). She mentioned “that twang or that r (.) quote unquote a bit soft r a:nd the well pronounced h” (“quel quel suono nasale oppure quella erre (.) tra virgolette un po’ più moscia e: la ti acca fatta bene”) as “those peculiarities of English e::r that make you understand if a person maybe (.) is a native speaker or not or if he/she is not a native speaker you don’t you don’t realize it” (“quelle peculiarità dell'inglese e:: che ti fanno capire se una persona magari (.) è madrelingua o meno oppure se non è madrelingua però non lo non lo riscontri”). As can be easily inferred, the characteristics that she mentioned as those that distinguish the ‘neutral’ accent of English, suggested that S19 was thinking of the RP.

The same ideal of a neutral standard norm was upheld by S25, who claimed that the best learning target model is the “zero variety” (“la varietà zero”), a variety that “does not give away where the speaker is from” (“quella che non si comprende da dove da dove si proviene”). To illustrate what she meant, she described it as an English that has been stripped of all sociolectal and dialectal peculiarities and that makes the NES interlocutor “incapable of finding a geography” (“lui stesso non è capace di trovare una geografia”). It thus became clear that the “zero variety” S25 had in mind simply corresponded to an abstract standard. As it has already been observed (refer to 3.2.1), it is actually easier to define what Standard English is not that to say what it corresponds to. After all, if S25’s “zero variety” makes it impossible to detect the origins of its speaker and is “deducted from all the other varieties of English” (“dedurlo da quelle che sono le altre varietà”), it can only correspond to some sort of idealized norm that cuts through all real-life usages or, to quote Milroy and Milroy, to the “transcendental norm of correct English” (2012: 38). It was perhaps to be expected that, as former BA students of respectively linguistic mediation and translation, S19 and S25 attached great importance to standard pronunciation as a learning target. As S19 made explicit, her BA program’s instructors had “talked the student’s head off” (“in triennale ci hanno fatto una testa tanta”) about sounding like a NES.

Pronunciation and intelligibility

As it has been shown, several interviewees spoke of the target variety in terms of different "accents" of English. The tendency observed was thus to discuss the learning target model as a matter of pronunciation, rather than, for instance, syntax or vocabulary.

Some interviewees commented that pronunciation is a very important aspect of proficiency because they believed that mutual intelligibility depends on sounding like a NES and also because a native-like pronunciation represents some sort of mark of self-confidence. In S9's words, pronunciation "makes the difference" because "often a wrong pronunciation can impair communication" ("fa molto molto molto la differenza e: e molto spesso una pronuncia sbagliata può compromettere (.) una comunicazione"). Precisely for that reason, S13 argued that a (foreign) language must be spoken in the "best possible way" ("si deve parlare nel migliore dei modi"), and while the "right pronunciation" ("la giusta pronuncia") makes communication more effective "(riesci a comunicare in modo (.) più efficace"), a non-native-like pronunciation instead may not be always understood ("non sempre si comprende quello che vuoi dire"). More than that, it also shows "one's difficulties to the interlocutor" ("fai vedere una tua difficoltà all'altra persona"). In this sense, as S3's put it, a native-like pronunciation represents "that extra touch" ("quel tocco in più").

On the contrary, some other interviewees commented that pronunciation is absolutely secondary, a view that was also related to the belief that an excessive concern for adhering to a NE ideal of pronunciation inhibits learners of English from speaking confidently (refer also to 6.3.2.2). S10 was very explicit, in this regard, pointing out that fluency ("essere fluenti") is the most important thing and a NNE accent "is not something to be ashamed of" ("non è una cosa sicuramente di: sicuramente da essere <LNen> ashamed </LNen>"). S23 held ambivalent views on the subject that seem to be influenced by her awareness of the existence of negative attitudes towards NNE, on the one hand, and her belief in the exclusive legitimacy of NNE pronunciation, on the other. At one point she remarked that a "good pronunciation" ("una pronuncia e: buona") is an added value ("è una cosa che è molto più valorizzata") that grants a NNES greater prestige in other people's eyes and makes her/him appear more self-confident. At another point, she observed that, although it makes sense to imitate a NES ("va bene imitare i <LNen> native speakers </LNen>"), possibly for reasons of prestige as she had previously indicated, "it is also right to preserve one's NNES identity" ("è giusto anche preservare la tua identità").

Other interviewees remarked that the importance of speaking English with native-like pronunciation is relative, as it depends on the context of communication and the learner's objectives. In regard to the latter, S19's comment on the importance of a standard pronunciation as a learning target for students who aim to work with languages was reported before. A pragmatic view that sounding like a NES is important in the English classroom, which positions the NES as a learner, was also expressed, for instance, by S4. However, she also pointed out that she was "perfectly aware of the contradiction" ("mi rendo conto perfettamente di questa contraddizione") that exists between classroom English, a NE model, and the out-of-school use of English as a lingua franca, and argued that "when adults use English as a lingua franca" ("quando si è u:hm adulti lo si usa come lingua franca") the "type of inflection" is secondary ("poco importa il- il tipo di inflessione") to the primary need of "exchanging some concepts" ("l'importante è che ci si riescano a scambiare: alcuni concetti"). S4's comments were particularly interesting, since she had not received any explicit ELF instruction.

A view was also expressed in some interviews that intelligibility takes priority over (native-like) pronunciation, although some interviewees also specified that intelligibility depends to a certain extent on (standard-like) pronunciation. In regard to that, S21 pointed out that what matters is "not really one specific pronunciation" ("non tanto un un tipo di pronuncia") but a speaker's "willingness to make her-/himself understood" ("quanto la volontà di farsi capire") which is rather different from "rambling on and showing that you are proficient in English" ("non la volontà di (.) sproloquiare e far vedere che sai l'inglese"). By making the latter observation, S21 seemed to suggest that it is more important to not deviate too much from the target of a standard pronunciation, that is classroom English, than having a native-like proficiency which, in certain cases, might be very difficult to

understand for the NNESs who have learned English in classroom contexts. S27 also believed that being intelligible is more important than sounding like a NES. However, her comment that Spanish-, French- and Italian-inflected accents are "very marked and difficult to shed" ("molto marcati e molto difficili da: da togliersi") was indicative of a rather negative attitude towards non-native accents and suggested that she regarded intelligibility as ultimately depending on the degree of adherence to a standard model of reference. An explicit suggestion that the NNESs should not deviate too much from the standard pronunciation came from S26, who argued that NNE accents are perfectly legitimate, on the one hand, but that it is also important to pronounce words "well" ("pronunciare bene"), on the other. Precisely the use of the expression "pronounce well" revealed her belief that there is a proper way of pronouncing words which cuts across all variations. In other words, as much as they are legitimized to use English with their own L1 inflections, the NNESs should nevertheless make sure they do not deflect from a standard norm which, it is implied, remains a necessary reference target.

In brief, the data here commented have shown that the views on the learning target model and the related attitudes towards non-standard and non-native varieties of English were strongly influenced by the interviewees' learning experience. The analysis of the interviews suggested that the traditional teaching practices contributed to entrenching the received beliefs and prejudices about standard English and other varieties. Out-of-class exposure to varieties of English that do not correspond to the classroom model did not seem to undermine the primacy of RP and British English as a valid target model. On the other hand, it was found that those approaches to English teaching that are inclusive of more varieties, on the one hand, and the study of linguistics, on the other, can have significant effects on the learners' beliefs and attitudes.

6.3.2.8 Monolingual tenet

Section 6.3.2.6 reported S22's comment that highlighted the disadvantages of being taught a foreign language by a native-speaker teacher who cannot communicate efficiently with the class group through the student's L1. Although it emerged as a secondary topic, the use of the L1 in the classroom as a support to the learning process as opposed to the need to maximize the use of the target language in the English classroom was discussed by a few interviewees.

However, only one of these, S29, was against the idea that English is best taught monolingually. She observed that there are students who struggle ("ci sono appunto delle persone che fanno fatica") and it is therefore important to offer them help through the Italian language ("un aiuto attraverso l'italiano"). All the other interviewees who expressed their opinion on the topic, on the other hand, appeared to adhere to the monolingual tenet which assumes that English teaching is best approached through an exclusive use of the target language in the classroom (refer to 2.4.1). S25 was very outspoken in this regard, emphasizing that one thing that she would "absolutely change" in ELT in the public education system is the teaching medium because it is necessary to speak English in class ("una cosa che io cambierei ASSOLUTAMENTE nel sistema didattico pubblico dell'inglese è (.) la comunicazione all'interno della classe bisogna comunicare in inglese"). It was also claimed that the exclusive use of the target language would be even more efficient with younger learners, based on the assumption that young kids can harness their innate abilities to acquire a language naturally. Drawing on her experience as a teacher of English in summer camps for elementary school kids, S23 commented that rather than the L1, other tools such as "drawings" ("disegni"), and non-verbal forms of communication such as "mimicking" ("scenette") are more effective a support to the learning of a new language. She claimed that "even if at the beginning young kids do not understand what is being said, with time one can see that the language input settles in the subconscious" ("anche se nell'immediato non si capisce più vai avanti più noti che questa cosa si sedimenta sempre di più nel tuo inconscio"). In this perspective, the L1 is nothing but the last resort, to be used only if after repeated explanations a student cannot understand ("se proprio si vede che non si riesce una spiegazione nella tua lingua (.) nativa magari ti può essere fornita quello sì"). In brief, as S23's comments show, the interviewees who upheld a monolingual approach to English teaching believed that the exclusive use of the target language represents a way to create a more naturalistic learning environment (refer to 6.3.2.10).

6.3.2.9 Early start tenet

In accordance with the questionnaire results, the majority of the interviewees expressed a belief that English should be introduced as early as possible in the child's school life. Several interviewees who subscribed to the view that the earlier English is taught the better the results justified their opinion by referring to the brain plasticity of younger learners. S20, for instance, claimed that "when you are a child" ("quando si è piccoli") it is easier to "mold" ("plasmare") the brain and argued that "various studies" ("diversi studi"), which she could not specify, prove that learning more languages gives brain more "plasticity" ("elasticità"). S4 related the advantages of the younger kids' brain plasticity to the "phonetic aspects", claiming that one's ability to "master" ("padroneggiare") such aspects "gets lost with age" ("si perdono un po' crescendo").

Some of these interviewees offered personal interpretations of the critical period hypothesis (CPH), claiming that younger learners of English in instructional settings can take advantage of their innate capabilities for language acquisition (refer to 2.4.1). S25 emphasized the advantages of younger learners in the area of listening and speaking skills with the metaphor of the "sponge", commenting that "until twelve years old the brain is like a sponge but then it starts to stiffen" ("fino ai dodici si dice che il cervello sia un po' una spugna poi inizia già (.) un po' a irrigidirsi"). Along the same lines, S23 argued that at a young age "learning is absorbed better" ("l'apprendimento viene veramente assorbito maggiormente"). S5 stated that younger learners have an edge because, thanks to their "neural plasticity" ("plasticità neurale"), they "absorb a lot more" ("assorbono molto di più"), whereas older learners and particularly the adults who have not started learning English at a young age find it more difficult ("persone che che non hanno fatto ecco l'inglese fin da piccoli poi fanno fatica pensiamo anche agli adulti soprattutto no?"), supposedly because they have long lost the innate ability kids have to "absorb". S24 too supported her belief in the advantages of an early start by referring to the CPH, about which she said to have learned as a student of language pedagogy ("didattica"), and illustrated her point by making the example of bilingual children:

> è ben risaputo che alla fine una lingua prima si comincia meglio è proprio perché all'inizio appunto c'è questa plasticità maggiore della: del e: del sistema di apprendimento che va ad incrociarsi anche proprio con l'apprendimento del linguaggio quindi ovvio che quando magari per esempio un bambino cresce in una in una u:hm in una famiglia bilingue è: (.) è facilitato comunque nel e: nell'apprendimento della lingua
>
> *it is well known that at the end of the day a language the earlier you start it the better it is precisely because at the beginning there is this greater plasticity o:f of e:r of the learning system which intersects the very language acquisition process therefore it is obvious that when maybe for instance a child grows up in a in a u:r in a bilingual family he i:s (.) advantaged anyways in e:r the learning of the language*

Her words "it is well known" pointed to the fact that the notion that the earlier foreign language starts the better the outcomes is a commonsensical one, and it was arguably surprising that even though S24 had studied language pedagogy she could not distinguish a bilingual setting from an EFL instructional setting (refer to 7.3).

S14 too justified her belief in the earlier-the-better tenet with the example of bilingual children, claiming that "being bilingual from a very early age facilitates language learning at a later time" ("essere: bilingui fin da da pic- da piccolini e: aiuta nell'apprendimento delle lingue: successivamente"), without realizing that the mere fact of introducing English for a few hours per week in preschool does not by itself create the conditions for the kids to develop additive bilingualism. She further added that the kid who starts learning English in middle school "not only does not have a high level of competence, but he/she also finds it difficult to learn other languages" ("non solo non ha una competenza di inglese: alta ma nel momento in cui viene messo di fronte a un'ulteriore lingua ha ancora più difficoltà"), an argument that could be easily disproved, as there are countless examples of people who started learning English (or any other foreign language) after the end of puberty and nevertheless became highly proficient. In support of an early start of English learning, S12 mentioned her own personal experience as a bilingual, drawing a comparison with her mother, a native speaker of Polish with whom she had migrated to Italy

at a very young age, emphasizing that the latter had found it much more difficult to learn Italian then she herself had (“ha avuto molto più fatica (.) a impararlo rispetto che me”). However, she also pointed to school instruction as a key factor, besides age, that intervened in facilitating her process of language acquisition, mentioning, as an aside comment, “I actually went to school and while she [=her mother] did not” ("è vero che io andavo a scuola e lei: no”).

Without realizing that the formal instructional setting alone cannot make up for the lack of the contextual conditions that are normally found in ESL contexts, S21 claimed that kids in Italy should learn English in the way that a first language is acquired, that is, simply by “hearing it being spoken” (“i bambini devono imparare l'inglese così secondo me cioè (.) sentendolo parlare sentendolo:”). By suggesting that children should be allowed to harness their innate abilities for language acquisition, S21 seemed to be implicitly demanding that English completely ceases to be a foreign language in Italy. As a matter of fact, for children to be able to acquire English by simply hearing it spoken, they should simply be immersed in an English-speaking or a bilingual environment. However, in reality, aside from the very few English-Italian bilingual families, only a small percentage of parents can provide their kids with the means that are necessary to support a more ‘naturalistic’ way of learning English. The presumption that through exposure to the few hours that are allocated to English in the preschool timetable kids can ‘naturally’ develop their competence in the language is arguably scientifically unsound (refer to 7.3). Most importantly, as reported by the research studies that were mentioned in section 2.4.1, in the few hours per week dedicated to the teaching of English in formal school contexts, learners who are more cognitive mature actually have the edge rather than younger learners, especially in the long term.

Contrary to those findings, S27’s and S13’s arguments for the introduction of English teaching at preschool age reproduced some sort of ‘early exposure myth’, according to which mere exposure for a few hours a week to a language gives younger learners the edge in the long run. Based on the unquestionable assumption that “the more you are exposed to a language, the easier it is to learn it”, (“più si è esposti a una lingua più è facile poi impararla”), S27 argued that if kids in preschool play “with colors, numbers, puzzles and memory card games” ("con i colori con i numeri, i <LNen> puzzle, </LNen> i <LNen> memory </LNen>”) and listen to “the nursery rhymes” (“le canzoncine”), since they “learn quickly” ("i bambini imparano subito”), “when they actually start learning English in elementary school they will have an edge” (“quando andranno poi già dalle elementari in poi a studiare effettivamente tutto saranno molto più avvantaggiati”). While it is certainly true that the amount of exposure to the target language facilitates learning, the idea that young kids can learn English naturally by mere exposure to the target language few hours per week in an environment that lacks the conditions that are necessary to actually stimulate a natural acquisition process is a debatable one, as already pointed out. S13 commented that she was trying to familiarize her daughter with English and German by playing music sung in both languages to her, in the hope that this would facilitate her to learn those languages at a later age. She observed that although her daughter “obviously did not understand them” (“ovviamente non le capisce”) she nevertheless had fun and tried to repeat some words. Whereas the fact that her daughter had fun could surely represent a motivating factor, the fact that she did not understand what she was listening to, on the other hand, arguably raised doubts over the efficacy of the whole exercise. In fact, it seems reasonable to observe that if foreign language words and expressions are not repeatedly uttered in situations where a young kid is also offered any other contextual clues, she/he will simply perceive them as a string of sounds, but she/he will not be able to identify them as meaningful words. In brief, it is noted here that S13’s efforts to recreate conditions in her home environment which are similar to those that are found in bilingual communities, where young kids regularly receive significant input in two languages, were arguably doomed to failure. Even leaving aside such considerations, it was significant to find that S13 felt the need to motivate her daughter to learn English already at a very early age.

Motivation, according to S22, was the key factor that justified the need to introduce English learning at a very early age. She commented that “it’s not about the plasti- plasticity of the brain it’s about the approach of the (.) of an adult {ædʌlt}. adult {əˈdʌlt}”, in that

> once e:r a human being is e::r (1) started to: I don't know @ e:r obtain some e:r experience in life and he see that he can get er get on get through with the language she speaks than he (.) has less and less motivation to: e:r acquire a new a new language. because he see that he can get by (.) with his language with the languages that he knows.

In brief, S22 believed that English learning must start as early as possible because by the time one reaches adulthood motivation to learn a new language may have completely waned. S28 too made no mention of the innate abilities that kids possess to acquire language in a naturalistic environment, in support of her belief in the early start tenet. Commenting that "the earlier one starts the more one assimilates" ("uno prima inizia e più: e più assimila."), without mentioning age as a factor, she seemed to be merely indicating that, by starting early in life, learners have more time to dedicate to the study of the English language.

Only two interviewees opposed the idea that English learning should start as early as possible. S6 said that she had "always turned up her nose at people who think that it is greatly beneficial to introduce English learning from a very early age" ("ho sempre (.) storto un po' il naso di fronte a chi pensa e: che che introdurre i bambini all'inglese fin da piccolissimi sia: un grande vantaggio"), because she found it "rather pointless and too stressful for very young kids" ("lo trovo forse un po' u:hm inutile un po' (.) e: troppo stressante per per dei bambini così piccoli"). Considering that she was a SEDU student and that she had been working in a kindergarten, her view was presumably based on a sound knowledge of the contextual factors that undermine the effectiveness of teaching English to kids in preschool. S29**,** who, as noted earlier on, believed that English is being imposed onto the NNESs (refer to 6.3.1.7), also saw the introduction of English at the early stages of the education system as an imposition of one particular second language and as "a way of controlling the individual" ("già lì inizi a controllare tra virgolette le l'individuo perché già gli imponi una seconda lingua"). She argued her opposition to the early start tenet by claiming that a student should be free to choose the foreign language she/he want to learn ("deve essere lui stesso a scegliere quale lingua") only once they are mature enough to get to make their own choices. Quite interestingly, she drew a parallel with religion as a school subject ("stessa cosa come poi con la religione"), commenting that just as Christianity is just one among many religions, so English is one among many languages and it should not be imposed upon young learners.

6.3.2.10 Naturalistic learning versus classroom-based instruction.

In several interviews, the advantages of naturalistic learning as opposed to classroom-based instruction emerged as a prominent topic. The interviewees who: highlighted the disadvantages of focusing too much on theory and not enough on the practice of communication (6.3.2.2); pointed out the gap that exists between classroom and out-of-class English (6.3.2.3) and the limitations of a narrow focus on monolithic English (6.3.2.4); stressed the need to maximize the exposure to and the use of the target language in the classroom (6.3.2.8); and argued for the introduction of English teaching in the lower grades of education (6.3.2.9); also emphasized the fundamental role that full-immersion experiences in a target language environment had had in helping them to improve their English language skills.

It was observed before that S18 stressed the fundamental importance of her study abroad experience as a high school student in the USA, by saying that she separated her life in "pre- and post-America" (refer to 6.3.1.9). She commented that before spending a year abroad her proficiency level was basic ("prima: era u:n livello proprio scolastico"), but after having been to the USA it changed radically ("andando in America è: stato proprio cioè da così a così"). On a similar note, S26 claimed that her Erasmus program in California had represented a key turn in her English learning experience, saying "what made me change radically was to go away go away (.) er on Erasmus" ("quello che mi ha fatto cambiare assolutamente è stato andare via andare via (.) e in Erasmus"). S9 also established a clear-cut distinction between learning from the textbook and learning by experience, claiming that once she had found herself having to use English "outside" ("fuori") she "had to reinvent her English from scratch" ("ho dovuto rinventarlo reinventarlo da zero") (also refer back to 6.3.2.2). S28 pointed out the unnaturalness of the classroom environment, where communication is too planned and organized ("è tutto

impostato"). Most importantly, she very much regretted that she had never spent a long period of time in an English-speaking country, because she believed that the fact of having missed such an opportunity had created "a gap that university instruction, however intensive, would never fill". ("non avendo mai avuto esperienze: dirette (.) lunghe mettiamola così sento di avere comunque delle lacune che lo studio universitario per quanto approfondito non (.) non riuscirà mai a colmare.").

S14 commented that the Italian education system should "give the opportunity to live the language as speakers rather than learners" ("bisognerebbe e: dare la possibilità di: vivere un po' di più la lingua da: da parlanti e non tanto da studenti") by promoting student mobility, because "in order for you to develop a high level of proficiency and really speak English you need to go abroad" ("per poter sviluppare delle competenze (.) più piuttosto diciamo per poter parlare realmente l'inglese non devi trovarti nel tuo stato"). S24 as well highlighted the advantages for students of learning by practicing in an out-of-school environment over classroom learning. When she recounted her experiences as an exchange student in various non-English speaking countries, she pointed out that Italian schools "should very much promote such cultural exchanges" ("la scuola secondo me dovrebbe veramente puntare tantissimo su su questi scambi culturali") because if learning remains confined within the boundaries of the classroom students are denied the opportunity to "use the language in real life" ("utilizzo della lingua nella vita reale"). S19 also commented that Italian schools should promote mobility schemes to English-speaking countries. She very much valued her student exchange experience in the US as "the cornerstone" of the development of her English proficiency ("il fulcro del dello sviluppo poi della lingua inglese") and emphasized the advantages of naturalistic learning by drawing a faulty comparison between the English teaching practices of the Italian schools and those of the American schools. She pointed out that in the schools of the USA, "students do not study the American grammar at all" ("non studiano per niente grammatica americana") and that there is much more practice ("c'è molta più pratica"). She also observed that as NESs, Americans know the grammar rules intuitively, saying "to them it is normal like that" ("per loro è normale così"). Yet although she was aware that there is a fundamental difference between NESs and EFL/ESL learners, she nevertheless did not seem to realize that precisely that distinction invalidated her argument for the adoption of a method that may be only valid in ENL educational contexts.

S21 emphasized the advantages of having learned English in an "unconventional" way ("poco convenzionale"), as a weak student who had "never actually studied English" and was not committed to the study of the English grammar ("non ho mai studiato veramente l'inglese lo dico sempre cioè non mi sono mai messa a: (.) a imparare le regole le regole grammaticali"). She said that she had instead started learning English by listening to music, watching TV, speaking, and writing to the English-speaking friends that she had made while traveling abroad with her family. Only at a later age, she observed, had she studied the structures of the language; that is, only after sustained exposure to and a frequent use of the target language, in both speaking and writing. As she pointed out, her life experience had created the conditions that had allowed her to learn English in a way that was more akin to a natural acquisition process. Her experience, though, cannot be generalized, as the opportunities that S21 had had may be denied to many other young learners (refer to 6.3.2.11).

Unsurprisingly, all the interviewees who stressed the advantages of naturalistic learning had had at least one experience of international mobility. As much as they acknowledged the value of their own experience, by suggesting that Italian schools should promote international mobility, those interviewees also seemed to lament that there is not enough English yet in the life of the Italian students. In turn, the perception of the disadvantages of living in a country where English is mainly learned through formal instruction was perhaps to be understood in relation to the pressure to become successful users of English in an increasingly English-speaking globalized world. In this regard, S23's experience as an English-speaking babysitter was very telling, in that it showed that there are parents who feel that their children must acquire competence in English as early as possible and therefore try to make up for the lack of opportunities to acquire English in a more naturalistic way, which the Italian school alone cannot offer. As S23 herself commented, "Italians do not have many opportunities to actually practice the English language" ("noi non abbiamo grandi opportunità di (.) potere effettivamente praticare l'inglese").

Although S23's experience as an English-speaking babysitter represented one single case, which is statistically irrelevant, it nevertheless suggested that, in a societal context that puts increasing emphasis on English as a necessary skill, there is a demand for conditions that may facilitate a more naturalistic-like learning process.

As S16 mentioned, for younger kids to make the most of the few hours per week they are exposed to English in preschool, other contextual conditions should be there. There ought to be "the culture", for instance, of broadcasting English language TV, which was not there when she was younger, but which is now an emerging reality, thanks to on demand streaming services:

> ci vorrebbe tutto una (.) cioè anche non so la tivù (.) perché in Italia vabbè adesso probabilmente con le serie tivù è cambiato un po' con la tivù <LNen> on demand </LNen> è cambiata un po' questa concezione io quando ero piccola (.) cioè non ho mai visto la tivù in inglese a parte che non c'era neanche la cultura"
>
> *there should be a whole (.) I mean even just the tee vee (.) because in Italy all right now with the tee vee series things have possibly changed a little with the <LNen> on demand </LNen> tee vee this way of things had changed when I was a kid (.) I mean never did I watch English tee vee and by the way there was not even the culture*

Several interviewees pointed to the advantages of receiving genuine target language input through movies and TV viewing. Like S16, some of these emphasized a contrast between Italy, where movies are traditionally dubbed, and other European countries where English-language movies and TV programs are all offered in their original version. The Italian dubbing tradition was highlighted as particularly disadvantageous, as it denies Italians the opportunity to be exposed to English in their homes from an early age and hence to learn the language in a more naturalistic way.

6.3.2.11 Inequalities

While discussing the benefits of learning English in a naturalistic setting, S14 also commented on the costs of studying abroad. Pointing out that only few students can afford the cost of the international student mobility programs, she raised an issue of inequality in access to those resources that more than any others facilitate the attainment of a high level of proficiency in English. It was observed in section 6.3.1.6 that S17 perceived English as a "discriminating factor". She also said that she envied her fellow students who had had the opportunities to receive a cosmopolitan education and acquire more than one language 'naturally', by living abroad and studying in private international schools, and pointed out that such English-medium schools are "very expensive" ("le scuole in lingua ingle- private in lingua inglese (…) sono comunque molto costose"). Referring to a friend of hers who, having been raised in China where he had attended an English-medium international school, could speak English and Chinese with native-like proficiency, she said that "those whom I hate most" and "I envy so much" are "those students like my friend who speaks three languages" ("poi ecco i miei (.) quelli che io odio di più perché penso che se (.) che li invidio tantissimo <@> nel senso </@> sono quelli come il mio amico appunto che sa tre lingue"). She also mentioned a family she had met in Jordan, whose kids were attending an English-medium school, pointing out that it was "one of the wealthiest families of the city" and that their kids "only hung out with children of wealthy people" ("sono stata in Giordania ho conosciuto una famiglia giordana e: che mandava i suoi figli alla scuola inglese però era una famiglia e: diciamo (.) tra le più benestanti quasi della città cioè e a- e tra gli amici di questi bambini c'erano solo figli di persone ricche"). Based on those considerations, she concluded that she did not believe that English in its "most precise form" is "a language that is accessible to all" ("non penso che sia una lingua accessibile (1) a tutti nella sua forma più: u:hm (.) più (.) e:: ne- nella sua forma (.) come si dice? uhm (1) più precisa. non so come si dice."), by which comment she quite clearly meant that the opportunities that facilitate the attainment of native-like proficiency – English in its "most precise form" – represent some sort of privilege that is reserved to the few. S17's made her social envy rather explicit, and it seemed that, by remarking that international English-medium schools are not accessible to all, she was once again rationalizing her lack of self-confidence with her English proficiency level (see also 6.3.2.3). However, she also clearly suggested that

English is a crucial element of an international cosmopolitan class structure. The same suggestion, as observed in section 6.3.1.5, came from S5, when she commented on the social distribution of proficiency in English and mentioned the costs of access to certain educational opportunities.

6.3.2.12 Cultural content of the EFL curriculum

The majority of the interviewees viewed the inclusion of cultural matters into the English class curriculum as an important integration to the learning of the language. Some interviewees argued that the study of English cannot be detached from the study of the target culture, since the cultural content gives learners a contextualized view of the language. In S9's words, "a language that is learned without a culture is too cold and of little use" ("una lingua imparata senza una cultura (.) è molto fredda cioè serve veramente veramente a poco"). S1 remarked that particularly through literature learners can receive a more comprehensive view of the English language and understand its characteristics as well as the importance of studying it. ("l'apprendente può avere (.) un quadro un'idea più globale del perché sto imparando questa lingua perché questa lingua è importante o perché questa lingua ha queste caratteristiche").

Unsurprisingly, the interviewees' comments on the target culture tended to focus on literature. In fact, the English literary canon is at the core of the cultural content of the EFL curriculum of the 'Licei' (the Italian high schools with an academic profile) and many traditional BA degree programs in foreign languages offered in Italian universities. Several interviewees shared S1's view of literature as an important integration to the study of the language. S6 even remarked that although her view of the importance of including the study of literature in the English language curriculum was not shared by the majority of her fellow students, it is one flaw of the Italian school system to not include the cultural content in the English language curriculum ("uno degli errori del sistema scolastico italiano. uhm insegnare la lingua inglese in generale certe lingue straniere discostandosi dalla dal lato culturale"). Evidently, S6 was alluding to those technical and vocational schools (in Italian: 'istituti tecnici' and 'istituti professionali') where the teaching of the language does not include the study of literature. A different view expressed in some interviews held that, despite its unquestionable importance, literature can be accorded a marginal role in the English language curriculum, and that an exclusive focus on literary texts is not an effective way of teaching English.

S13 thought that the linguistic and cultural components of the curriculum can be detached one from the other ("penso che le due cose siano SLEgate l'una dall'altra"), although she also argued that the study of cultural subject matters makes language learning more motivating and feasible" ("è più motivante ed è più appropriato se: vi a-se associamo alla lingua un contenuto culturale"). The view that the cultural content can represent a motivating factor if it is tied to learner's interests was expressed by a few interviewees. However, as observed by S20, since the personal interests of the students can vary a lot, it is difficult to find a good-for-all solution, in terms of motivating content. While she acknowledged the importance of literature as a "basis" ("la letteratura è un po' cioè di base serve"), S20 also claimed that teaching would be carried out more efficiently if the English classroom also focused on "contemporary events", "things that happen in these days" ("eventi di e:hm di pertinenza corrente cioè cose che accadono attualmente"; "eventi di attualità"), "of culturally popular interest" ("di interesse culturalmente popolare"). Some interviewees emphasized the importance of opening a window to the contemporary reality as a way, to quote S13, to make learning "more realistic and credible" ("riuscire ad andare sull'attualità rende più REAlistico e credibile quello che tu stai facendo"), as well as more motivating ("aiuta tantissimo a a anche a a motivarti").

On the contrary, an excessive focus on the literary tradition and particularly a narrow Anglocentric perspective were perceived by several interviewees as a major flaw of the traditional EFL teaching practices. S9, for instance, pointed out that an exclusive focus on the history and literary tradition of England makes English "become an old language" ("diventa una lingua vecchia"). Some interviewees also pointed out that in their learning experience the cultural content of the English classroom was centered around stereotypes of England and its culture. S18 observed that the English she had been taught "was very stereotyped" ("era: molto stereotipato"), as the textbooks

adopted in her elementary and middle school reproduced "the classic cliché ("il classico cliché no?") of English lifestyle, with the English breakfast with "<LNen> sausage bacon eggs </LNen>" and the "<LNen> scones </LNen>", for instance. As she commented, her first trip to England, when she was in middle school, had dispelled that stereotyped image and made her realize that "there was much more to it" ("c- c'era ben oltre no?"). She claimed that instead of emphasizing stereotypes, teachers should let English learners have "truthful contacts" ("avere dei uhm (.) come dire quasi dei dei contatti uhm veri- cioè veritieri no?") with the target culture. Instead of "the glossy image of a guy eating American breakfast" ("la foto patinata del tipo che si mangia la l' <LNen> American breakfast </LNen>"), for instance, teachers should "use authentic materials taken from the BBC or the CNN" ("utilizzare dei contenuti veri presi da e: tipo: il canale della BBC piuttosto che della CNN"). In this way, she argued, the learning content would be "more truthful" and a student would not experience a "cultural shock" when she/he found herself/himself in the target language environment and realized that "all is not as it is portrayed in the textbooks" ("sarebbe molto più più veritiero e: ci sarebbe anche un po' meno lo <LNen> shock </LNen> culturale quando vai in un paese e: non vedi che: cioè e vedi che non è tutto come c'è sui libri ecco.").

The idea that students should be offered authentic images of the target culture rather than clichés was shared by several interviewees. Besides the importance of focusing on the contemporary dimension and offering authentic images of the target culture, a need was also emphasized to widen the scope of the English language curriculum and include other cultural contexts, beyond England and its literary tradition. S23 said that if she were to teach English, she "would try to go out of the conventional way" ("io cercherei di andare fuori dal convenzionale") because an exclusive focus on English literature offers only the colonizer's viewpoint ("punto di vista colonizzatore"). She added that although it is important to consider the English canon because that is the core from which all English-speaking literatures are derived, the scope should be widened to include "other kinds of literature" ("altri tipi di letteratura") and "other viewpoints" ("altri punti di vista"). S14 highlighted her satisfaction with the GELT approach adopted by the teacher of English of her previous BA program. She commented that that teacher of hers had introduced her to a plurality of English-speaking cultures and so had led her to question the stereotyped picture of the target culture that her previous schoolteachers had painted (refer also to 6.3.1.1 and 6.3.2.7).

Interestingly, two interviewees who had received ELF instruction, S24 and S28, seemed to question the very idea of having to refer to an ENL target culture. While they still recognized the value of literature as a key aspect of the study of the history of the English language, they also emphasized the importance of fostering the learners' intercultural competence. In S28's view, intercultural competence represented the ability to understand the interlocutor's culturally-specific pragmatic conventions and accommodate to her/him so as to prevent misunderstandings. However, such a view as that expressed by S24 and S28, which is consistent with an ELF-oriented approach to ELT that assumes English as the lingua franca of intercultural communication, did not surface from any other interviews. All the other interviewees, instead, had in mind a specific geography of the cultural content of the English curriculum. By majority, the interviewees upheld a pluricentric model of the cultural content. Some of them commented that the English curriculum should follow the spread of English from the core to the peripheries to include a global perspective. However, even when they argued for moving beyond a narrow Anglocentric focus, most of these interviewees mentioned only ENL cultures, such as "America", Canada and Australia, while South Africa and "the former colonies" only received one mention each. After all, these findings were consistent with the views expressed in section 6.3.1.5.

In brief, the prevailing view on the cultural content was one that was critical of the more traditional ways of ELT in the Italian schools. Although the value of studying literature was not downplayed, a strong suggestion also came from the interviews that the cultural content of the English curriculum should be updated to reflect the contemporary realities of English and be more authentic, so that it may receive the students' attention.

6.3.2.13 English in Italy

A perception that Italy lags behind other European countries in English proficiency was also expressed in some interviews. In that regard, S6 believed that "the current situation is frustrating" ("è limitante la situazione che c'è adesso"). She mentioned that all the staff in the organization she collaborated with had "never had any contact with the English language" ("non ha avuto approcci con l'inglese") and that they were "in despair" whenever they had incoming international delegations ("quando arrivano delle delegazioni perché sono letteralmente disperati"). Along the same lines, S26, who also worked for an organization that operated internationally, said that she found it "mind boggling" that it is "so difficult to find someone who speaks good English in Italy" ("trovo folle che in Italia (.) sia così difficile (.) e:hm (.) incontrare qualcuno che parli inglese bene"); she observed that in her office it was impossible to do anything directly in English and so everything had to be translated from Italian. She remarked that it is "unbelievable" ("allucinante") that, as lobbyists in the institutions of the European Union, her colleagues could not communicate directly in English. The observations made by S6 and S26 clearly suggested a generation gap in English proficiency.

S18 thought that Italy was "a little behind" ("ci vedo ancora un po' indietro") other countries such as, for instance, Germany and Sweden, particularly in regard to English-medium education. She pointed out that when she had been an exchange student in a middle school in Sweden, she could see that Swedish NNESTs "spoke excellent English, and could assimilate and communicate notions to the students" in English, whereas "here, there are still too few Italian NNESTs who can do the same" ("e i professori madrelingua svedese (.) parlavano l'inglese (.) in modo (.) eccezionale ed erano in grado di assimilare i concetti e uhm trasmetterli ai loro studenti e qua non u:hm ancora ancora sono ancora troppo pochi i prof che secondo me riescono a farlo"). The same idea that Italy lags behind other countries in regard to English-medium education was also expressed by S19, who argued that "if we think about the differences between English teaching in Germany and in Italy and we understand the usefulness or rather the necessity of English, we will probably come to a point where we will offer English-taught subjects" in Italian schools ("se pensiamo anche alla differenza che c'è fra l'insegnamento dell'inglese in Germania e l'insegnamento dell'inglese in Italia secondo me piano piano se se capiamo l'utilità cioè <@> la necessità </@> se vogliamo dell'inglese arriveremo anche anche noi a a proporlo anche magari in materie: diverse"). A view that Italians are not well aware of the importance and the advantages of studying English was expressed by S25, who blamed Italy's generalized low proficiency in English on the country's education system, on the one hand, although, on the other, she also claimed that Italians "do not believe in English as a useful language, rather they are almost phobic about the idea of studying it properly so as to find a job abroad" ("non è non credono assolutamente nell'inglese come lingua da utilizzare al contrario sono quasi fobici all'idea di studiarlo come si deve per andare a lavorare all'estero").

The view as expressed in the comments here reported that Italy lags behind other European countries was not unexpected at all, since it confirmed a well-known fact. However, it is interesting that the interviewees who expressed such a view also seemed to indicate a generational factor, hence suggesting that the proficiency gap between the older and the younger generations may be eventually bridged in the near future.

6.3.2.14 Stereotype of English as an easy-to-learn language

It was reported in section 6.3.1.10 that S18 suggested that English was probably perceived as a language with "less grammatical hurdles" and "less rules" than other foreign languages. Several interviewees regarded English as an easy-to-learn language, in comparison with other languages, and mentioned the ease of learning English as one factor that facilitated its global spread (refer to section 6.3.1.7).

S12, for instance, commented that English seemed to her to be "the easiest language to learn" ("la lingua: (1) uhm mi sembra più facile da studiare") and pointed out that she did not believe that "everyone starts to learn Chinese or Russian, which are much more difficult to learn" ("non credo che tutto il mondo si metta a studiare: il cinese oppure il russo (.) che sono molto più complicate da studiare"). Other interviewees referred to the ease of learning

as one major advantage that English has over Chinese in the competition for global primacy. The plus point of English that was cited particularly in comparisons with Chinese was the alphabetic writing system. In stating that English is easier to learn than Chinese the interviewees obviously assumed their own viewpoint of speakers of languages that use the Latin alphabet, yet they did not consider the possibility that somewhere in the world there can be people who hold the opposite view. However, quite interestingly, S7, who was a native speaker of Vietnamese, also mentioned the writing system in support of her view that English is easier to learn than other languages, such as, for instance, her own mother tongue. She observed that Italian and English: "are found on the Latin system (.) so it's very easy to learn it's not complicated like er sss- e:r Vietnamese system letter in Vietnamese we have we have so so many letters we have so many I mean Vietnamese is very very very difficult to learn but English different it is easy to learn.". S8 also compared English with Chinese, mentioning the writing system as the advantage of English, although he also claimed that the grammar of English is easier than that of Italian and Spanish.

S1 also argued that the ease of learning English depended, in her opinion, on "reasons that are intrinsic to the language" ("ragioni intrinseche secondo me alla lingua"); "if one thinks", as she said, that "a vast majority of its words are monomorphemic, for instance or that the conjugation of the verbs is almost identical for all persons" ("se si pensa per esempio (.) al fatto che una (.) grande maggioranza di parole siamo monomorfematiche per esempio o che la coniugazione dei verbi sia pressoché identica per tutte le persone"). The verbal paradigms were mentioned by other interviewees as another plus point of English. S5 argued that "English is an easy language, so to speak" because "at the end of the day, thinking of grammar", verbs do not have inflectional morphemes for the different persons and "remain more or less the same" ("è semplice come lingua nel senso che alla fine SEMPLICE par- per modo di dire nel senso che pensando sempre alla grammatica non so anche io tu egli sono (.) magari di- (.) sono GLI STESSI no? i verbi? rimangono più o meno gli stessi). S9 spoke of the "ease of conjugating verbs in comparison with many other languages like French and Spanish, which are much more complex" ("la semplicità del coniugare i verbi (.) rispetto a tante altre lingue come francese o spagnolo che sono molto più complesse"). S26 remarked that English is "structurally and grammatically" much simpler ("proprio strutturalmente e grammaticalmente (.) è più molto più semplice che per dire il tedesco") and hence easier-to-learn than German. By claiming that English is easier to learn than the romance languages, which have verbal inflectional systems, or German, which also uses noun case endings, the interviewees here referred to quite evidently alluded to the fact that English is mostly an analytic language. It is known that modern English developed the characteristics of an analytic language by losing most of the inflectional characteristics that characterize a synthetic language such as German, for instance, in which the relationship between words are conveyed by cases and other inflectional patterns. The levelling out of the inflectional systems of Old English seemed to be what S25 had in mind when she commented that "the grammar of English has worn away" ("la grammatica inglese si è erosa").

However, some interviewees also suggested that there are various interrelated factors that contribute to determining whether the task of learning a new language is perceived as more or less easy. Among them, motivation, amount, and quality of input, hence the opportunities a learner has to be exposed to the target language arguably are the crucial ones, as S26 herself acknowledged. As observed in section 6.3.1.5, by claiming that "there is not a culture that surrounds German", S26 pointed out that she did could find any motivation nor any incentives in the out-of-school that could support her in learning German. After stating that English is easier than German, S26 also acknowledged that she found English easy "simply" because she had been learning and speaking it for a longer time than German ("semplicemente (.) secondo me è che (.) faccio inglese da più anni parlo inglese da più anni"). She also added that she thought that English "is terribly easy to learn nowadays" ("penso che l- l- l'imparare l'inglese e: sia terribilmente facile adesso) and that considering "the amount of stuff that you can find on Netflix, also Spanish will be easy to learn in a couple of years" ("con la quantità di roba che c'è su Netflix al momento lo sarà anche lo spagnolo fra un paio d'anni"), because in her opinion, success in language learning very much depends on "the extra work one can do in the out-of class", such as "reading a book or watching an episode" although, as extra-curricular activities, they "may not be perceived as work" ("dipende anche molto da tutto il

lavoro extra che puoi fare fuori da una classe e: che può anche essere non percepito come lavoro appunto quindi guardarsi un episodio o leggere un libro e così via"). In similar vein, S21 pointed out that, in her opinion, the apparent ease of learning English greatly depends on the massive presence of the language in our daily lives. She said that "there are so many things that refer to that language which enter our heads" ("ci sono tante cose che (.) rimandano a quella lingua lì e ci entrano nella testa") and that is why English "is easier", in her opinion, "because we are more accustomed to it" ("secondo me per questo è più facile perché siamo più abituati").

S4, who also mentioned the ease of learning as one reason for the "special role" ("ruolo speciale") that English has gained, like S26, did not think that English is learned easily because of its intrinsic characteristics. On the contrary. she pointed to the number of years of learning and amount of input as the key factors. She argued that English is learned in school more easily than other foreign languages because "it is offered since early childhood" ("viene proposta sin dalla (.) e: u:hm sin dall'infanzia"), and because "in some way or other" it is present in many domains ("e poi è una lingua che in un modo o nell'altro è stata proposta in tanti ambienti"), with the obvious implication that it is easy to receive language input outside the classroom context. S23's view on the topic problematized the stereotypical notion that English is an easy-to-learn language. She argued that it takes effort to develop proficiency in English just as in any other language and, like S4, she also pointed out that "the time factor has a great influence" ("il fattore tempo influisce molto"). She observed that "we have always studied English" and that is maybe why it "turns out to be easier" ("siamo sempre stati abituati a studiare inglese e quindi anche per quello forse alla fine risulta più facile.").

S6 observed that although Russian and Chinese are very widespread languages, "in the western world the prevailing language inevitably has to be English" because the grammar of Chinese and Russian "are too difficult to learn without effort" ("in occidente dev'essere la lingua prevalente per forza di cose perché ques- le altre due lingue che ho nominato sono e: "grammaticalmente troppo complicate per essere: per essere apprese facilmente."). When the researcher asked her to confirm whether she thought that English was easy to learn regardless of any comparison with other languages, she answered "everyone says it" ("lo dicono tutti"), which proved that her view was based on a commonsense notion. A similar observation was made by S19, who acknowledged that the idea that "English is easy" and therefore "everyone learns and understands it" "is somewhat of a cliché" ("c'è un po' questo appunto cliché e: secondo cui il l'inglese è semplice quindi lo lo impariamo tutti lo capiamo tutti"). In regard to that, it is worth reminding S25's comment on her high schoolteachers' failure to provide a satisfactory and comprehensive explanation of the future tense in English (refer to 6.3.2.6). Although she also claimed that English is "the most grammatically simple language to learn" ("la lingua grammaticalmente più SEMPLICE da imparare") and a language with "little grammar, few grammar rules" ("ne ha poca e ha poche regole"), in pointing to the structural dissimilarities that distinguish the English verbal system from the Italian one, S25 actually seemed to debunk the myth that English is particularly easy to learn, in overt contradiction with her own claim. Actually, although S25 and other interviewees suggested that as an analytical language English is easier to learn than other languages which have more complex inflectional patterns, one might argue exactly the opposite. That is to say that the inflectional patterns convey an idea of systematicity and that structural regularities may eventually help the language learning process, as it is suggested in Niedzielski and Preston's folk linguistics study (2003: 248). Such a view was expressed by S28, who commented that even though English is learned extensively and exposure to it is massive in today's world, it may still be perceived as a difficult language to learn. She argued that English, unlike Russian and German which she also had been learning, is "full of irregularities and this characteristic does not make it a language that is learned intuitively" ("è piena di irregolarità (.) e quindi questo non la rende una lingua: diciamo intuitiva da imparare"). Although she observed that "we are used to hearing it", because we are immersed in a culture in which almost everyone knows some English ("siamo: abituati a sentirla perché appunto siamo immersi in questa: (.) cultura in cui l'inglese non dico che lo sanno tutti ma: ma quasi"), English lacks the regularities that she had found in German and Russian, which represent a factor that "facilitate learning" (il tedesco e il russo che (.) in quanto a irregolarità: ce ne sono molto meno secondo me. e questo può facilitare d- da un certo punto di vista l'apprendimento).

The view that English has a very complicated grammar ("una grammatica molto complicate") was also expressed by S27, who also indicated the irregularities of English as a hurdle, mentioning in particular "all the various forms of plurals" ("tutte le accezioni di plurali"), and S13, who also pointed to individual factors such as personal inclinations. S13 argued that since she had never been able to "work up any enthusiasm for foreign languages" ("non son mai riuscita ad avere: una PASsione ecco per le lingue") and had "no aptitude" for learning them ("non mi trovo bene in generale con le lingue straniere"), she found English very complicated because it has "completely different grammar rules than Italian" ("l'inglese per me questo (.) diventa molto complicato perché è completamente una: un una modalità e: grammaticale cioè ha regole grammaticali completamente diverse quindi e rispetto all'italiano"

In brief, it is noted here that whether an analytic language such as English is 'easier' to learn than other languages that use many inflections, is ultimately a subjective perception, as S6 suggested when, expanding further on this topic, she commented that the ease of learning a new language "always depends on the starting point, that is, the learners' L1" ("dipende sempre da: dal punto di partenza quindi dalla propria lingua madre."). She observed that whereas some people find French easier than English because of the former's "lexical affinity" ("affinità lessicale"), nevertheless she personally held the opposite view, which was shared by S9, who also claimed that she had found French more difficult than English. Besides the verbal system, which may not in itself be sufficient element for judging whether a language is easy to learn or not, the possibility that a negative attitude towards French had possibly shaped their perception of the difficulty of learning French was also considered. The structural affinities between one's mother tongue and the target language as a key factor that determines the perception of ease of learning of the latter were also indicated by S14 and S24. They observed that Italians inevitably find that romance languages such as French and Spanish are much easier to learn than English. The suggestion that the ease of learning a new language is after all a relative and subjective notion also came from S29 and S20. The latter pointed to individual factors such as "one's personal inclination and motivation" ("dipende anche l'inclinazione di una persona e: (.) e:hm la l'interesse del del soggetto"). In fact, her opinion that English is easy to learn seemed to be based on her own personal experience of a motivated learner who had received a great amount of exposure to the target language and frequently used it outside the context of the English classroom.

More generally, it was clear that the participants who held the stereotypical view that English is particularly easy to learn were influenced by their own personal experience. The interviewees' perception of the ease of learning English thus appeared to derive from their success as learners of the language. It seems than that once a student has achieved a high level of proficiency and is satisfied with her/his own competence in English, she/he is led to claim that English is easy to learn, as if it were an objective truth. Also, by making it appear as an objective truth, even though the reality of English proficiency in Italy suggests that many are the learners of English who struggle, the successful learner is implicitly asserting her/his own skills. However, it must be also noted that some of the interviewees who had had experiences abroad and a personal interest that had motivated them to study the English language pointed out that successful learning very much depends on individual factors like motivation and aptitude, as well as time, amount and quality of input, and the opportunities a learner has to use the language in real-life situations.

6.3.3 English-medium instruction.

A suggestion that Italy should offer more English-medium education was made explicit by S18 and S19 as they observed that Italy lags behind other European countries (refer to 6.3.2.13). S19 was attending an English-taught master's degree program of LACOM and talked extensively on the subject of EMI. Ten students of LACOM in total offered their opinions on the subject, which are presented in this chapter section. Before turning to the interview data, is important to observe that LACOM is not simply an EMI program, but it has a multilingual and multicultural vocation. At the time of the investigation, it offered all its courses in English with the exception of two courses that were held in another language of choice (French, German, Spanish), one in Italian, and elective one-year language courses in Chinese and Russian.

From the analysis of the interviews, a clear pattern emerged: all the participants except one expressed satisfaction with LACOM, although they also had reservations. All participants, however, revealed an overall positive attitude towards EMI, at least in principle, although not without ambivalences as regards its realization. While the interviewees confined most of their comments to their degree program, they also made generalizations and brought up topics of wider scope. Two main thematic categories were identified, as the participants discussed their personal experience as students of an English-taught program in terms of advantages and problems. Section 6.3.3.1 presents the students' comments on the advantages of EMI. Section 6.3.3.2 illustrates their comments on the problems of EMI.

6.3.3.1 Advantages of EMI

The perceived advantages of EMI were referred to two main topics: integrated content-and-language method and internationalization at Home (IaH) (refer to 2.2.3).

Six students expressed their opinion on the method of integrating the learning of content and language in the curriculum. S19 and S1 spoke of it in the terms of an added value ("valore in più" and valore aggiunto", respectively). S19, in the specific, said she saw the integration of language and content as an added value for two reasons: because it is a beneficial full immersion experience ("è una <LNen> full immersion </LNen> che (.) che serve"), and because the English language makes academic content more interesting and motivating, as reported in section 6.3.1.5. A similar argument for the benefits of EMI was also put forward by S25, who remarked that LACOM is "very smart" ("molto intelligente") because in its curriculum languages are applied to fields that are useful on the international level, such as economics and law. The motivating factor was also mentioned by S23, when she commented that, in consideration of the role of English as a lingua franca, studying subjects of non-linguistic discipline areas in English also makes it possible for one to see "different viewpoints" ("punti di vista differenti") and different systems ("sistemi diversi"). Interestingly, S1 observed that the integrated learning method does not necessarily have to assume native-like competence on the part of learners. She remarked that, if the "level of learning" ("livello di apprendimento") of the students is respected and language skills are gradually improved "by teaching something more little by little" ("insegnando qualcosa in più poco alla volta"), EMI can be "a constructive teaching method" ("un metodo costruttivo insomma di insegnamento"). Like S19 who highlighted the benefits of the full immersion experience, S20 and S28, each speaking of her personal reason for the choice of an EMI program, valued the integrated method as a way of maintaining and possibly improving one's English language skills. In brief, the perceived advantages of integrating language and content related to both sides, and it is perhaps not surprising that students with a background in foreign languages studies showed such a positive attitude towards English as a language of study.

Four participants related the benefits of EMI to the international experience 'at home' offered by an EMI degree program. Expressing an outward-oriented view of IaH, S27 said she choose an EMI program because she thought it would prepare her to find a job abroad or work with foreign markets. S26 also highlighted the value of EMI as an IaH experience for the students who cannot afford to go on a study abroad program, and also referred to the presence of international students as a motivating factor. The advantage of studying in an international environment was also pointed out by S1, who argued that EMI makes a degree program more accessible ("più accessibile"), as it also invites international students and that these, in turn, contribute to creating "a more constructive and motivating environment" ("un ambiente accademico più costruttivo in sé più e: invogliante"). Like S26, S19 valued EMI as an opportunity for national students who cannot afford a study abroad program. Throughout her interview, S19 also spoke enthusiastically of the visiting NEST she had had in her first year, comparing her teaching method and her way of building rapport with the students with the approach of her Italian instructors. S19 highlighted the "constructive" ("formativo") value of introducing home students to different teaching methods and perspectives: "it is a GREAT thing" ("è BELLO"), she argued, especially for a student who has never had the opportunity to study abroad because it's actually "the overseas that comes to her home" ("in realtà è l'estero che viene: a casa sua"). Aside from S19's clear preference for the

NESTs over the NNESTs, she regarded inward mobility of international teachers as a factor for motivation and quality improvement of IaH. S1 as well pointed out the value of being introduced to new methodological approaches by the international instructors. Summing up, aside from the personal instrumental motivations behind the choice of an EMI program, the students who mentioned the advantages of IaH seemed to agree that the potential appeal of an international degree program depends on more than the mere fact of offering courses in English. This was not surprising at all, given the multilingual and multicultural vocation of LACOM and the students' personal academic background.

6.3.3.2 Problems of EMI

Although all the participants expressed a positive opinion of EMI, they also had reservations about its realization in practice. By far the most prominent topic, the NNESTs' competence in English was unanimously identified by the participants as the problematic aspect of their degree program. All the interviewees held a deficit view of their NNESTs' competence in English. Five of them were more specific and described it in terms of pronunciation, while seven participants in total discussed the theme of NNESTs' proficiency in relation to intelligibility, and three also spoke of its implications for the quality of teaching and content. However, despite their negative judgements, the interviewees' attitude towards the NNESTs' competence in English seemed to be less straightforward than their negative judgement let on, and eight students also mitigated their claims by offering justifications for their NNESTs' perceived deficiency.

NNESTs' Competence, Pronunciation and Intelligibility

S25 referred to the competence in English of her NNESTs of the non-linguistic disciplinary areas in rather contradictory terms. After having stated that "communication in the classroom is anyways successful" ("la comunicazione avviene (.) per carità"), she observed, in a very assertive tone, that her NNESTs were not "up to the task" ("essere all'altezza") of communicating academic content without making "errors that sometimes break down the communication" ("sono proprio errori che IMPEDISCONO la comunicazione talvolta"). Although she stressed that that was "a huge problem" ("è un problema ENORME") that she had "constantly come upon" ("che puntualmente: ho riscontrato nel corso di questi due anni"), S25 did not specify what type or errors she was referring to.

Arguments that discussed the NNESTs' competence in terms of pronunciation and related this to intelligibility provided perhaps the most interesting insights into the students' underlying attitudes towards native and non-native(-like) speech and pointed to the complex relationship between attitude and perceptions of intelligibility. S21's words were particularly revealing in this regard. She introduced the topic by saying that it was often not easy to understand some of her NNESTs, that they were very hard to follow, and one had to pay extra attention in class, or else one would often lose the thread. To illustrate her argument, she made the example of one of her NNESTs, who was from the same area in Italy as her. S21 observed that the particular accent in her NNEST's speech that she recognized as familiar would make her lose focus in class, and she repeatedly (four times) remarked that she "could not even explain to herself how that happened" ("non so come spiegarlo veramente", "è una cosa che ancora non so spiegare bene", "non so come spiegarlo ancora non me lo so spiegare veramente"); all she could say was that "the teacher's particular inflection" would make her "miss the last word of his speech" ("fa terminare (.) le frasi (.) in un modo che quasi da f- fa sì che io perda l'ultima parola del discorso"). By stating clearly that it was a matter of loss of concentration she seemed to imply that her problem with her NNEST's speech was not exactly a matter of unintelligibility per se, that is, of being able to process the meaning of the (mis)pronounced words. In the end, S21 was well familiar with the accent she detected in her teacher's speech and she herself described the problem as one of prosody: he made his sentences end as if "in a minor tone" ("un tono minore"). Her words seemed to suggest that her loss of concentration was to be put down to attitudinal factors: indeed, she was trying to account for an unconscious reaction to the teacher's accented speech. As if to soften her claim, S21 pointed out that there were also NNESTs, who had lived abroad and were more confident with their English, that were very clear in their delivery, and, as if to further distance

herself from her negative judgement, she added that other students felt the same way about the less proficient teachers. With a final remark: "quasi (ti verrebbe da) dirgli oh senti dimmelo in italiano perché così facciamo prima" ("you'd like to tell him hey, listen tell me in Italian, it's quicker"), she revealed impatience on the part of the students as much as she pointed to an effort on the part of the NNEST.

A clear preference for the NESTs was previously pointed out in S19's argument for inward mobility as a way of improving the quality of her master's degree course; in all the participants' accounts of poor NNESTs' competence, the same native-speakerism seemed to coexist, however, with a yet different orientation. An ambivalent attitude to non-native speech was revealed by S23. After having observed that EMI is more of an advantage than a disadvantage, she argued that the fact of not receiving EMI in the best possible way can become a disadvantage ("può <@> diventare uno svantaggio </@>"), and added that the English of some of her NNESTs was rather deficient ("c'è un po' un deficit forse da parte loro"). The use of verbal hedges and fillers (pauses, "cioè", "diciamo", "insomma") in her speech suggested that she was carefully weighing her words, while laughter signaled her embarrassment: after all, she must have felt that her position as a student demanded a certain degree of deference towards her teachers. However, she was also clear in pointing out that a wrong ("sbagliata") pronunciation conveys a wrong message. Earlier in the interview, she had introduced the topic of pronunciation by saying that it is very important for proficiency and that a native-like accent is particularly valued. Nevertheless, later on, she had shifted her position, arguing that pronunciation is important only to the extent that it is functional to intelligibility and adding that it is fair for one to preserve her/his identity of NNES in speech (refer to 6.3.2.7). Very interestingly, as it was reported in section 6.3.1.8, she also related the issue of pronunciation to what she referred to as the "ambivalence" ("ambivalenza") of ELF, that is the contradiction of a culturally 'neutral' link language that one still feels pressure to use in a culturally appropriate way, by approximating NES standards. That ambivalence was reflected in her conflicted attitude towards native and non-native accents, and it is suggested here that by "wrong pronunciation", she may have been actually referring to deviations from a recognized standard that do not necessarily impede intelligibility, although she claimed the contrary. In other words, her perception of unintelligibility may have had to do more with attitude that with an actual problem in processing the NESTS's message. The idea that attitudes to non-native speech can be based on prejudice was hinted at by S26, when, recounting her previous EMI experience in another university, she said that she had been initially "worried about the quality" of the teachers' English, though in the end, "everything went well" ("all'inizio ero un po' preoccupata (.) della lor- della qualità dell'inglese dei professori invece (.) è andata molto bene e:hm").

Other interviewees expressed a less negative judgement of their NNESTs' competence. S20 said that, despite their rather deficient vocabulary ("un po' carente"), the NESTSs were nevertheless intelligible ("you understand"). S27 commented that sometimes the NNESTs were imprecise with their grammar and pronunciation but their intelligibility was never compromised. She also made it clear that she accepted code-switching[11] to Italian in the classroom as a strategy for negotiation of meaning, a view shared also by S1 (refer also to section 6.3.2.8). Earlier in the interview, S27 had also argued that pronunciation is important only to the extent that it is functional to intelligibility and that it is not necessary to be taken for NESs ("essere scambiati per parlanti nativi") (refer to 6.3.2.7).

Justifications for NNESTs' Competence

As if to distance themselves from their claims that their NNESTs did not seem to be up to the job, eight interviewees also rationalized their NNESTs' poor competence in English with justifications. S23 offered an excuse for her NNESTs' deficient competence by remarking that they had not studied (foreign) languages ("non hanno studiato lingue"), with the implication that they could not be expected to have a native-like pronunciation.

[11] The term *code switching* is here preferred to *translanguaging* because it seemed more appropriate to define the act of switching from English to Italian in the classroom, for the purpose of providing clarifications.

The same argument that one cannot expect an instructor of non-linguistic disciplines to be highly proficient was also made by S20 and S19. S24, the only interviewee who said she was not completely satisfied with her EMI degree program, after observing that her personal experience had shown her that the realization in practice of EMI is problematic, she exonerated her NNESTs from responsibility for their inadequate English by suggesting that they may have had no choice in the matter of teaching in English. She referred to "this thing of having to offer them in English" ("questa cosa di doverli erogare in inglese"), whereby the modal of obligation pointed to a demand imposed upon the NNESTs, while other features of her speech (hedges, fillers and prosodic features) revealed that she adopted certain discursive strategies that distanced herself from her own negative judgement. In particular, she made her personal opinion sound like an objective, matter-of-fact reality, by claiming that the NNESTs' were deficient for "obvious reasons" ("ovvi motivi"). A similar argument was made by S25 and S21, who suggested levity on part of the university in managing the academic staff and concluded that their university may not have been quite ready to offer EMI. The idea that this gap between principle and realization is nevertheless inevitable, was expressed by S26, who claimed that "inevitably, it's more difficult to find professors who are proficient in English" ("inevitabilmente (.) è più difficile trovare professori (.) e:h che sappiano bene l'inglese"), thus ascribing the problem of NNESTs' competence to a matter-of-fact reality, though without further expanding on the topic. S1 too excused her NNESTs by offering both kinds of justifications that are reported above: the fact that as non-language-experts they cannot be expected to be highly proficient in English, and the idea that they may not have been given a choice in the matter. Like her fellow students, she was also very cautious in articulating her negative judgement of the NNESTs' competence, by making a conspicuous use of verbal hedges and fillers, to the effect of making her statements less assertive, and also by remarking that that was a shared opinion among her fellow students.

Finally, S21 also added a psychological explanation to justify her NNESTs' poor English-speaking skills, suggesting insecurity in speech delivery stemming from the teacher's anticipation of the students' reactions to a non-native-like competence. She said, "maybe there is also on their part an inhib- ur how can I say? they kind of feel of inhibited because they know they do not know it [=English] well and so: the word I don't know they say it in a lower pitch" ("magari c'è anche da parte loro un'inibi- uhm come dire? un sentirsi un po' inibiti perché appunto sanno di non saperlo bene e quindi: la parola: che ne so la dicono più piano).

Quality of Teaching and Content

Three participants argued that the NNESTs' inadequate competence leads to lowering the quality of teaching and content. S24 nevertheless hedged her claim by stating that that was "a feeling" she had and by suggesting that it was an inevitable consequence, through use of the adverb "obviously": "ho l'impressione che questo poi […] vada a discapito ovviamente della qualità" ("I have the feeling that this eventually […] obviously goes to the detriment of the quality"). A similar view of inevitability was expressed by S26, who argued that it is inevitably difficult to find NNESTs who are proficient in English. In her argument that the deficient NNESTs' competence leads to dumbing down the academic content, S28 was more specific, as she referred to vocabulary as the level of language in which her NNESTs were found lacking. She also suggested that if an instructor's proficiency in English is poor, dumbing down the academic content is somehow inevitable. Like all the other participants who rationalized their teachers' deficiency, she also excused her NNESTs through a careful choice of words, indicated by the pauses, fillers and hedges, and made her negative judgement of NNESTs' English sound like an objective and self-evident fact, while she also suggested that her NNESTs actually excelled in their disciplinary field. She said, "reasonably if one does not have the lexicon to (.) to explain certain concept he may even be (.) the world's best professor in a certain discipline but he will never be able to: (1) to transmit knowledge in a manner (.) in as most efficient a manner as possible" ("giustamente se uno non ha il vocabolario per (.) per spiegare certi concetti può essere anche (.) il professore migliore del mondo in una certa disciplina però non riuscirà mai a: (1) a trasmettere: il sapere in una maniera (.) nella maniera più efficiente possibile").

S25 pointed to an overfocus on English as another, though absolutely secondary, negative aspect of her EMI degree program, claiming that there ought to be more courses in other languages, and mentioning Chinese and Arab, which, in her opinion, were very much needed ("ce n'è assolutamente bisogno"). Similarly, S23 argued that in spite of the advantages of EMI, given her master's degree program's multilingual and multicultural profile, an overfocus on English was rather limiting. Although she regretted that her degree program did not offer the same EMI courses in other languages, she pointed out that there are practical constraints to multilingual education: in her words, "a teacher ought to be multilingual" ("un insegnante dovrebbe essere plurilingue"). Although she did not explicitly refer to EMI as too limiting, S26 also expressed a favorable opinion of multilingual education. However, in the same vein as S23, she also remarked that such a model of internationalization of the curricula is possible only in theory, and pointed to practical constraints, observing that a multilingual model of internationalization would not be cost-efficient. The same pragmatic reasons to uphold EMI against a multilingualism model of internationalization were adduced also by S1.

On the whole, the participants' views on EMI here reported confirmed the previous studies reviewed in section 3.4.3.5 that found favorable attitudes towards integrating language and content but rather critical attitudes towards the NNESTs' English.

6.4 Chapter summary

The interview data collected for this study represented a rich textual corpus through which the views and attitudes of the students could be appreciated by examining the arguments and counterarguments that they made in response to the researcher's questions and prompts. Attention was also paid to the choice of words in which the interviewees expressed their opinions and beliefs. Each interviewee had her/his own way of speaking and the same topics were often commented on through different lexical choices. The use of certain terms in the characterization of English language varieties, accents and pronunciation features, in the specific, revealed the influence of standard language ideology and native speakerism. The analysis of the transcripts highlighted commonsense and unsubstantiated views, of whose stereotyped nature a few interviewees also seemed to be aware. In that regard, the prosodic features of the interviewee's speech provided important details. The lengthened vowels, pauses, silences, hesitations, false starts, and fillers suggested in fact that the interviewees had reservations about the validity of their own claims.

Most importantly, by vast majority, the students who were interviewed acknowledged the pivotal influence that the established practices of traditional EFL pedagogy had had on their perceptions. Although they were aware that they would very likely use English in the future in communication with other non-native speakers and recognized the international role of link language that English has in today's globalized world, a clear tendency was observed to gravitate towards British English and RP. Being British Standard English the yardstick of reference of the EFL classroom by convention, its validity of as classroom target was not questioned.

However, at the same time and in spite of the unmatched prestige of British English, under the manifest influence of US pop culture, affective attitudes tended to orient the interviewees towards an American English target model. It was also noted that while the two internationally recognized varieties tended to be associated with two separate spheres, a few interviewees also argued for the integration of out-of-class English models into the classroom practices. In fact, the interviews also revealed that, even when they did not question the accepted status of British English, students perceived that an exclusive focus in the English classroom on a single variety is rather too limiting. Excessive attention to adhere to RP, in the specific, was highlighted as detrimental to the building self-confidence and develop fluency in speaking. A few interviewees suggested that intelligibility should be prioritized over adherence to a NE target model, especially in contexts of lingua franca communications, and made the important point that the learning target depends on the learner's specific objectives.

It was noted that by vast majority the interviewees tended to perceive classroom-based instruction as not in tune with the realities of out-of-class English and inadequate to respond to their future needs of active users of the language**.** Almost all the students who participated in the interviewees eagerly commented on English teaching and pointed to the failures of the more traditional ways of EFL pedagogy. They particularly stressed the need to move beyond the GT method, by balancing theory with more practice in the classroom, and most importantly by promoting international student mobility. Their arguments clearly suggested that in a societal context of great vitality of and massive exposure to English, the students would like to learn English in a more naturalistic-like way.

An important finding was that the interviewees who had ELF and GELT instruction in their background showed awareness of the pluricentric nature of English and expressed more favorable attitudes towards NNE. The students who had attended ELF courses characterized English as a de-territorialized and de-nativized language that can be detached from specific ENL cultural models. However, their ambivalent attitudes to NNE and the use of English as a lingua franca raised doubts over whether ELF instruction alone actually led the students to eradicate the traditionally accepted pedagogical beliefs on what constitutes a valid learning target model, particularly of pronunciation. Particularly the ambivalent attitudes towards the NNESTs' competence in English expressed by the students of the LACOM, who related the major disadvantages of EMI precisely to their NNESTs' pronunciation, suggested that ELF-informed overt beliefs may coexist with a deeper-seated negative attitude towards NNE.

Interestingly, the students who had received extensive training in linguistics were able to recognize the abstract character of Standard English and showed acute awareness of the principles of linguistic variation, which led them to legitimize all varieties and accents of English. While the study of linguistics, on the one hand, and an approach to English learning that problematizes monolithic English, on the other, proved to have an effect on the students' beliefs and attitudes, the ELT's basic tenets of monolingual teaching, native-speakerism and early start were at the same time largely undisputed. Structural factors were pointed out in some interviews as a crucial influence on the students' perceptions and attitudes, and it was suggested by the findings that for a paradigm shift to be initiated in the ELT practices, structural change is also needed.

In conclusion, while the questionnaire offered some initial insights, the interviews offered a wealth of valuable information that generally confirmed the questionnaire results. However, as an independent data set, the interviews were analyzed separately and they were thus able to provide a much fuller understanding of the participant's attitudes, also suggesting possible reasons behind them.

The next chapter discussed the findings obtained from both tools used for the collection of data in relation to the research questions.

7. Discussion of the results

Chapters 5 and 6 attempted to provide answers to the research questions by presenting the data obtained respectively from the questionnaires and the interviews. The questionnaire responses offered a general picture that served as a starting point for the second phase of data collection. As already stated, they were particularly relevant in relation to the research questions 1 and 2. The interviews provided the richest data and made it possible for the researcher to gain deeper insights into the students' views and attitudes, also suggesting factors of influence on the attitudes. The research findings overall revealed consistency between the questionnaire responses and the interviews. As the interviewees expanded on their responses to the questionnaire, they complemented the data obtained through the latter, and in this sense, the interviews also strengthened the validity of the data.

The following sections discuss the results obtained from both instruments in relation to each of the four research questions generated for this study.

7.1 What are the students' attitudes towards English?

The data obtained from both the questionnaire and the interviews unequivocally revealed that positive attitudes towards English largely prevailed. Although only a minority of the students who were accessed for this study actively used the English language outside an ELT context, nevertheless by vast majority they represented it as an important tool for social inclusion in today's society. The importance of English was related to the role it plays as a language of wider communication and to the alleged potential that knowledge of English has to enhance the competitiveness of the individual in the labor market.

The high status and prestige of English was an underlying theme that ran throughout the interviewees' comments. The analysis of interviews gave clear indications that the students believed that a high level of proficiency in English represents a mark of social distinction that gives one an edge in today's globalized society, even regardless of the actual need to use the English language on one's job. As argued by S21, English proficiency looks good on a young job applicant because it indexes openness and cosmopolitanism (refer back to 6.3.1.6). In this sense, it was argued that proficiency in English was perceived as a status symbol, and it is remarked here that in the perception of several interviewees, the prestige of English appeared to be related also to its symbolic value of gateway to a cosmopolitan citizenship.

From the interviews, there also came an indication that English is indeed a crucial element of an international cosmopolitan class structure. It was observed in the previous chapter that whereas several interviewees highlighted the role that English plays as the link language of international student mobility, some of them also pointed out that the costs of international mobility are not accessible to everyone. The most interesting insights, in that regard, came from S5 and S17 (refer back to 6.3.2.11). By distinguishing the social distribution of competence in English from the notion of geographical spread, S5 raised issues of inequality in access to the resources that more than any others facilitate the attainment of a high level of proficiency in English. S17 mentioned the costs of international English-medium education when she argued her view of English as a "discriminating factor". As she observed that native-like competence in English is easily acquired by the very few who have the privilege of attending the pricey English-medium international schools, she explicitly referred to an elite class of internationally educated cosmopolitan youth. Her comment that certain opportunities are reserved to an elite also betrayed a sort of social envy, and it seemed that the fact of not belonging to a class of internationally educated cosmopolitans undermined S17's self-esteem. As she herself stated, the lack of self-confidence with English which she communicated to the researcher was closely related to her perception of English as a "discriminating factor" (refer back to 6.3.2.3).

A representative of that class of cosmopolitan youth was S9, who prior to enrolling in SEDU had spent three years in Japan studying in an English-medium international school. As it was suggested in section 6.3.1.9, she appeared

to be expressing her desire to be identified as an English-proficient cosmopolitan by means of her speech style, which transferred into Italian the high rising terminal contour (HRTC) pattern typical of many young native speakers of English.

The vast majority of the participants acknowledged the worldwide acceptance of English and its use as an international language of wider communication. The global spread of English and its advance in key educational and professional domains of the new peripheries was accepted by the participants as a sort of unstoppable phenomenon, a matter-of-fact reality to which one has to adapt, whether willingly or unwillingly. Comparatively, very few students perceived the advance of English as a potential threat to the world's linguistic and cultural diversity. In brief, the image of English that emerged from the analysis of the entire data set was that of a language of global dimension whose primacy in the world's linguistic ecology went largely unquestioned.

However, the interview findings yielded a rather more complex picture than that; in particular, they revealed that the students' attitudes towards English were not uniformly and unconditionally positive. On the one hand, the interviewee sample comprised one group of English language enthusiasts who overemphasized the importance of English in society and attributed a special status to it, representing it as a sort of one-of-a-kind language. These students, as observed in the previous chapter, characterized English as a "straight-to-the-point", "economical" and "pragmatic" language, thus attributing to it certain intrinsic qualities that assumedly make it better suited than any other language to perform its function of international language of wider communication. Those same qualities were also mentioned in support of the stereotyped view that English is objectively easy to learn. In regard to that, it has been noted that the perception of English as an easy-to-learn language (refer back to 6.3.2.14) was nothing but a subjective notion which largely depended on the students' personal successful learning experience. In fact, all the interviewees who expressed such a stereotyped view seemed confident, highly proficient users of the English language. Most of them also had long term study- or work-abroad experiences in their background. Such experiences, in turn, had had a key importance for the development of their proficiency in English. Most importantly, these students had been motivated to learn English by a personal interest for the language, which stimulated them to extend their learning process beyond the formal context of the EFL classroom.

On the other hand, not all the interviewees shared the same passion for English and viewed it as a one-of-a-kind language. As it was observed, some interviewees also highlighted the advantages of multilingualism for their future prospects of employability and mentioned knowledge of other European as well as extra-European languages as an important skill in the Italian and international labor market. Although their attitude to English was nonetheless favorable, they thus put the necessity of English in perspective, also suggesting that proficiency in English by itself is not automatically a gateway of opportunities. That is to say that a favorable attitude towards English was found to coexist with a positive attitude towards multilingualism, which in some interviews translated also into a concern for the preservation of the world's linguistic diversity. Particularly the interview data demonstrated that a liking for the English language, and an unconditional acceptance of its international functions and its advance in the new peripheries, can coexist with strong feelings for one's own national language and culture.

It was observed that the concerns about the risks of *Englishization* leading to the erosion of the national traditions of academic research that had entered the European public debate in recent years had perhaps influenced the views and attitudes of some students. The view that English should coexist in a balanced ecology that allows also other languages to thrive in key societal domains was expressed quite strongly by a number of students of LACOM. Considering that although it is an English-taught MA program, LACOM has a multilingual and multicultural vocation , it was perhaps highly predictable that the students of LACOM would show a marked sensitivity towards multilingualism and the respect of linguistic diversity. Nevertheless, in line with the greatest majority of the participants, they also seemed to safely assume that English was better positioned than any other language for the role of lingua franca for international and intercultural communication (refer to the next section of this chapter).

Even the few interviewees who spoke of the vitality of English in terms of a possible threat to other languages did not question that role and the usefulness of English. More generally, based on the analysis of the overall data, a pragmatic view of the relationship between English and the other languages of the world was found to prevail among the participants, who by majority perceived the advantages of having a widely spoken language that can link speakers of different L1s. The same pragmatic attitude was also made explicit by those interviewees of the DESU and the DCE who appeared the least enthusiastic about English and English learning.

All the interviews also suggested that today's students are under pressure to acquire proficiency in English, in a societal context that places both a utilitarian and a symbolic value on English. Even S29, the one and only interviewee who spoke of the spread of English in terms of an "imposition" (refer back to 6.3.1.7), nevertheless seemed to accept the reality of the advance of English in the world of globalization with the same pragmatism as the other participants.

Interestingly, the majority of the students who participated in this study were also not particularly concerned about the influence that English might have on the Italian language. However, in contrast to the majority view revealed by the questionnaires, a few interviewees were found to hold rather negative attitudes towards what they perceived as an excessive use of anglicisms in Italian, and one in particular (S25) believed that the preservation of the integrity of Italian was at stake. As commented in section 6.3.1.9, such findings revealed that it is possible to hold a favorable attitude towards English and *Englishization* and yet disapprove of the habit of using English loanwords and expressions.

Nonetheless, some of the interviewees who held the most overt enthusiastic attitudes to English expressed a very favorable attitude also towards the use of anglicisms, which they habitually used in informal conversation with their Italian peers. Most importantly, they indicated that certain English loanwords and expressions are endowed with pragmatic salience, as suggested by the idea that English "says it better" (refer to 6.3.1.9). Hence, those interviewees confirmed that the English language carries both connotations of prestige, on the one hand, and highly positive affective connotations, on the other. In other words, not only did some students associate English with status and success in society, but they also perceived it as "cool". Such a perception and the underlying favorable affective attitude to English were in turn clearly related to the consumer appeal of English. The findings of this study indicated US pop culture as the main source of English language input in the out-of-class for several participants. Particularly the interviews unequivocally suggested that the global spread and the related great vitality of English in the new peripheries is tied to the worldwide dissemination of US cultural products, norms and values.

The positive attitudes towards the use of English loanwords and expressions conceivably stemmed from the fact that English also indexes precisely those cultural affiliations. The comments made by S18 reported in section 6.3.1.5 were in this respect very telling, in that she made it explicit that her positive affective attitude towards English was directly related to her constant exposure to US pop culture. On top of that, she seemed to be attracted to English by a desire to integrate into US culture.

As noted in the previous chapter, English was represented by the majority of the interviewees as not detached from the specific ENL cultures. As a whole, the data obtained from both the questionnaire and the interviews included very few suggestions that the students could see English as a culturally neutral language. While the few students who had received GELT and ELF instruction represented it as a pluricentric language and also as a de-nativized and de-territorialized language that can be adopted across different cultures, the interviews were found to feature a prevalence of characterizations of English as the language of the Americans and the British (refer also to the next section). It is noted here that the specific cultural references that were found to be associated with the English language contributed to both the prestige and attractiveness of English in the eyes of the students. Although the majority of the participants represented English as a widespread and easily accessible language on a global scale, with the implication that it can be adopted also by the NNESs (refer also to 7.2), a perception that English belongs to the NES from the UK and the USA nevertheless largely prevailed. The massive exposure to

US pop culture, on the one hand, and the participants' experience as EFL learners clearly influenced the characterizations that were made of the ownership of English and English language variation.

The data obtained from both research instruments revealed that variation tended to be conceived in the terms of a dichotomy between American and British English. Considering that these are the two internationally recognized varieties of English, these findings were not unexpected at all. Interestingly, as regards the participants' attitudes to these two English varieties, the findings revealed a dual orientation. Particularly the interviews data showed that while American English was considered as the most attractive variety, British English was valued as the most prestigious one.

It was noted that attitudes to language are organized along the two evaluative dimensions of prestige or status, on the one hand, and attractiveness or solidarity, on the other (refer back to section 3.2). Previous language attitude studies were also referred to which showed that it is possible that people value a language variety along the dimension of attractiveness, and at the same time value a different variety of the same language along the dimension of prestige. Normally, the standard language variety is the one that enjoys more prestige than the non-standard varieties in the status dimension, whereas non-standard varieties often receive attributions of solidarity by their native speakers which tend to be based on in-group loyalty (refer back to 3.4.1). The findings of this study confirmed that such dual attitudes towards varieties of the same language can coexist. Since British Standard English is the language variety adopted by default as benchmark in the formal context of ELT, it was no surprise that the participants charged it with connotations of high status. As NNESs, the students who perceived American English as the most attractive variety could not base their judgement on the same kind of in-group loyalty that is found among native speakers of American English. In fact, as noted above, they appeared to base their attributions of solidarity on the specific cultural affiliations that that variety of English indexes.

What is more, as observed in the previous chapter (sections 6.3.1.3 and 6.3.2.7), in the characterizations of British and American English that were found in several interviews, the diatopic and the diaphasic levels of variation coincided. In other words, the two internationally recognized varieties of English tended to be associated with two opposing registers. While for its strong institutional support and its connotations of prestige, British Standard English and RP were associated with a formal register, the American variety tended instead to be regarded as an informal register of English, no doubt for its associations with pop culture. This perception was thus explained by the fact that while in the formal context of the EFL classroom the students had been taught to aim at a British English target, US pop culture and TV series in particular, as a source of language input, had exposed them to a more informal register of English. As it was pointed out in section 6.3.2.7, in the American varieties of English to which they had been exposed through pop culture the students had very likely found the terms and expressions that were more appropriate to communicating with their peers in informal contexts. Indeed, it was also noted in the same section that British English tended to be regarded as a valid target model for the development of cognitive academic language proficiency, while American English was indeed considered as a more appropriate model for the acquisition of the basic interpersonal communication skills.

As observed by Werner (2020), research studies in pop culture have observed that the language of pop culture is largely stigmatized as incorrect and too informal for conventional language teaching. Particularly TV discourse, which aims to approximate real-life non-standard spoken usage, tends to be highly informal and so it is considered as ungrammatical language. Furthermore, there seems to have been a recent trend in US TV series and movies towards increasing the degree of realism, by showing characters who speak English in the way it is spoken in the real world, thus marking a break with the linguistic homogenization that had traditionally characterized Hollywood productions in the past century. That being so, it does not surprise that several participants associated American English with "informality" and characterized it as a sort of slangy variety with "less grammar" and "flexible" rules that is not appropriate for the ELT classroom (refer to 6.3.2.7).

Very interestingly, the interviewees' comments that juxtaposed British and American English revealed a strong influence of the standard language ideology. The stereotyped view of American English as a "simplified" variety

and its frequent characterization as “slang” was in that regard very revealing. It was conceivably the case that the fact of not recognizing in the American English of pop culture the grammar rules of the British Standard variety that are traditionally taught in the English class had led some interviewees to draw the conclusion that the native speakers of the American variety “simplify” the English language. That is to say that, instead of recognizing that each variety of English has its own set of grammar rules and also that different registers determine different types of grammaticality (Larsen Freeman 2001, 2002), the stereotyped view of American English as a simplified variety holds that there is a unique set of grammar rules which is only found in British Standard English. Therefore, speakers of American English, instead of following their own grammar rules, fail to follow the established ones and, in this sense, American English represents a simplification of the only variety that has a well-defined grammar.

At the root of this view there seems to be a misconception of the nature of the rules of grammar, which the interviewees apparently tended to conceive as prescriptive, rather than descriptive. In fact, as learners of English, they had been prescribed to follow rules, hence they had been possibly led to believe in the reality of the abstraction of the standard variety, on the one hand, and to delegitimize any deviation from the British standard as a simplification, on the other.

Only the students who had received training in linguistics and had been introduced to the study of language variation in particular seemed to be able to recognize that Standard English is an idealization that is hardly ever realized in actual spoken as well as written language. It was reported that S2, who argued for the equal legitimacy for all varieties of English, seemed to believe that linguistic variation is a fairly recent phenomenon. She suggested that there once used to be a “pure English” which nowadays is nowhere to be found, as a result of the dynamics of cultural and linguistic “contamination” brought about by the processes of globalization. It was observed that S2 did not seem to realize that a monolithic language variety such as the standard is actually an abstraction and that variation beyond the standard norm has in fact always been there (refer to 6.3.2.7).

The lexical choices made by the interviewees through which they compared British Standard English to the other varieties of English were clear evidence of the influence of standard language ideology. For instance, deviations from the norms of the Standard were referred to as “malapropisms” and “not correct”, while the British variety was regarded as the “pure”, “original” and “correct” one.

In brief, the analysis of the results clearly showed that the traditional EFL teaching practices greatly contributed to entrenching the received beliefs and prejudices about Standard English and the other (non-standard) varieties. However, it must be also observed that besides the students’ learning experience and their out-of-class exposure to the English of US pop culture, lack of or limited direct experience in a target language environment may have also had a considerable influence on the participants’ perception of variation in English and the related views on the learning target model. In regard to that, it was reported in section 6.3.2.7 that S18 considered variation as a peculiar characteristic of American English, even though in fact “comparing the varieties of English now spoken in the United States with those in Britain, […] there is much less variation between one speaker and another, sometimes even if they live on opposite sides of the vast American continent” (Svartvik & Leech 2016: 81).

It was noted that S18, as an exchange student in the USA, had had the opportunity to realize how English was actually used outside the context of the EFL class, where language variation instead tends to go largely ignored. Conversely, the few students who had had direct experience with English NESs commented that they had found that the linguistic reality did not correspond to the monolithic standard variety of the EFL classroom. The data thus confirmed the findings of Adolph’s study (2005) mentioned in section 3.4.3.1, which revealed that when English learners encounter the actual speech varieties that are found in an inner circle country, they do not find what they expect (refer also to 3.4.3.2).

The ideology of the standard language was found to be a factor of influence on the participants' attitudes to NNE and particularly to Italian-inflected English. Such attitudes are commented in the next section, where the data analyzed in the previous chapters are discussed in relation to the second research question.

7.2 What are their attitudes towards ELF?

The questionnaire data summarized in fig. 5.3 revealed that the overwhelming majority of the respondents agreed that English represents as a 'global' lingua franca. More generally, from the analysis of the data obtained from both instruments it could be confidently concluded that the vast majority of the participants assumed without questioning that English is well positioned to function as a language of wider communication between NNESs of different L1s.

The pragmatic attitude towards the spread of English in the new peripheries that was mentioned in the previous section emerged even more openly in relation to the use of English as a lingua franca in various key domains of society. It was noted in chapter 6 that the lingua franca role of English was also accepted on pragmatic grounds by the interviewees who expressed concerns for the preservation of the world's linguistic diversity and revealed a positive attitude towards multilingualism. S22 and S26, for instance, who pointed out the risks of erosion faced by the national traditions of academic research brought about by the advance of English (refer to 6.3.1.8), nevertheless did not question the advantages of using English as a lingua franca of scientific research. Even S16, who pointed out the excesses of *Englishization* in the business domain and the related inequalities in communication between NESs and NNESs, pragmatically accepted English as a lingua franca as a matter-of-fact reality. More than that, several interviewees appeared to have made English a language of their own. As also revealed by the questionnaire results, a considerable number of participants stated that they used English in speaking and writing some or most of the time (refer back to 5.2.1). The most significant finding was that English was used by the students more with other NNESs then it was used with NESs (refer to fig. 5.5), thus confirming the relevance of English as a lingua franca in the students' lives.

However, the participants' attitudes towards the concept of English as a lingua franca as this has been developed within the ELF field of research were inferred on the basis of whether their views were consistent with the principles that underpin the ELF ideology. As it was illustrated in 2.4.2, the basic tenet of ELF decouples the English language from its cultural ties to specific communities of NESs. ELF's understanding of English is thus that of a de-nativized and deterritorialized language. It was also pointed out that ELF's notion of English as a neutral tool for inter-cultural communication highlights the instrumental function of language, separating it from its expressive and symbolic function of groupness. Another basic tenet of the ELF ideology is that interactional success is in principle detached from standard norm-adherence because a concern for communicative effectiveness overrules any considerations of formal correctness. That being so, strict adherence to the norms of the standard variety of English and to any model of native pronunciation is irrelevant, within an ELF perspective.

In this section, the findings presented in chapters 5 and 6 are discussed in relation to the extent to which the participants' attitudes were in favor of the above summarized principles.

As noted in the previous section, a view that English belongs to the NESs from the two core English-speaking countries was found to prevail in the data. Most interviewees showed limited awareness of variation in English and more generally of the geography of the English language beyond the core English-speaking countries. It was observed that the participants tended to view variation in dichotomous terms, and few other ENL varieties other than American and British (or England's) English were mentioned in the interviews. These only included Australian English, New Zeeland English, Canadian English, South African English, Indian English, and Jamaican English (refer to 6.3.1.1). The great vitality of American English and US culture, on the one hand, and the

participants' learning experience in school, on the other, had surely had a crucial influence in shaping the student's perceptions. In fact, as it was observed in chapter 2, an evident bias towards England is found in the classroom materials adopted in the Italian schools, and as a matter of fact, the more traditional ways of EFL pedagogy as they were summarized in section 2.4.1 tend to promote a narrow view of the culture of English.

It was pointed out (refer back to section 6.3.2.12) that several interviewees lamented that the EFL classroom had projected a stereotyped image of the culture of the English language, that it was heavily biased towards England and its literary history and argued that there are several cultures that are instead expressed through English. However, it was also noted that even those interviewees who spoke of English as a pluri-centric language, instinctively tended to associate it to the NESs from the core English-speaking countries and their national cultures. It was highlighted in section 7.1 that the image of English provided by the interviewees was that of a language that is loaded with culture-specific values, even though suggestions were also given in some interviews that English is also a de-nativized language that contains all cultures (refer to 6.3.1.5). Actually, the vast majority of the participants seemed to safely assume that English can be adopted and used by the NNESs as a transactional currency in international and intercultural communication. Nevertheless, they related both the prestige and the attractiveness of English to the specific cultural associations that the two internationally recognized varieties of English index. As noted in the previous section, British English, the English classroom target model, derived its prestige from its institutional support and from the images of authenticity, heritage, tradition, and history that it evokes. English though was also represented as the language of US pop culture and of international youth cosmopolitanism, both associations that conceivably made it appear "cool" in the eyes of the students.

More than that, those interviewees who referred to the role of English as the lingua franca of the international academic community suggested that, as it is adopted as a tool for that specific function, English is nonetheless also the vehicle of culture-specific content. Section 6.3.1.5 reported S13's comment that linked English as an academic lingua franca as the vehicle of a particular type of academic knowledge which had been developed in the particular societal context of the USA, in the framework of that country's education system and in peculiar historical circumstances. Similarly, S19 characterized English as a language that is loaded with specific cultural values when, commenting on her EMI experience, she claimed that marketing is "quintessentially an English-medium subject" and associated it with US culture. Suggesting that the *Englishization* of HE is not just a matter of medium of instruction, S26 too recognized the prominence of US academic culture and its predominance, in particular, in the field of economics studies.

Several suggestions as to an inherent ambivalence of English in relation to its role of 'global' lingua franca were found in the interview data. For instance, S23 mentioned the "ambivalence" of having a language with native speakers function as a lingua franca which, by definition, has no native speakers. S4 spoke of the "contradiction" that exists between the prevailing idea of learning English in a culturally appropriate way and the ways English is actually used as a lingua franca in the out-of-class (refer back to 6.3.1.8). She also added that when it is used as such the "type of inflection" hardly matters, thus implicitly legitimizing NNE accents.

As noted above, one basic principle that underpins the ELF ideology is that deference to NE norms is unnecessary and perhaps also ineffective in international and intercultural contexts of communication. Several interviewees stated that in order to carry out successful communication, a necessity of being intelligible takes priority over adherence to a native-like model of pronunciation. However, the legitimacy of NNE pronunciation seemed to be accepted in general only as an abstract principle. On the one hand, all the students who addressed the theme of pronunciation in the interviews agreed that pronunciation is important only to the extent that it is functional to successful communication. On the other hand, some of the interviewees who commented on the subject also remarked that if one aims to become highly proficient, then it is important to approximate a NE target of pronunciation. Suggestions were also given in a few interviews that possessing a native-like pronunciation represents some sort of feather in the NNES's cap, which grants the NNES greater prestige and makes her/him appear more self-confident to her/his interlocutor.

Since the participants for this study were accessed within an academic setting, it is possible that they perceived themselves as learners of English, rather than users, and for that reason they attributed great importance to NE pronunciation. As also suggested by previous attitude studies (refer to 3.4.3.2 and 3.4.3.3) in the formal learning context of the classroom, considerations on the primacy of intelligibility are overridden by the expectations that teachers have of learners as well as those that the learners have of their instructors, regardless of their NNES status. Such a suggestion seemed to be confirmed by the LACOM student's rather negative judgment of their NNESTS' English competence. The analysis of the interviewee's views on EMI (refer to 6.3.3.2) revealed that the students believed that even though English is used among NNESs as a lingua franca, a formal learning environment such as the EMI class demands that both learners and instructors adhere to the NE norms.

As the findings presented in section 6.3.3.1 showed, some of the LACOM students who were interviewed actually regarded EMI also as a way of improving English language skills, and it is also suggested here that the fact that they were enrolled in a foreign languages degree program (and not just on any EMI program) may have affected their perception of their lecturers' competence, in the sense that they may have had higher expectations as to the proficiency of their lecturers, whom they possibly saw, consciously or not, as models of language use. These higher expectations, in turn, may have affected their attitudes towards ELF *versus* adherence to NE norms. As mentioned in section 3.4.3.5, previous research (e.g., Doiz et al. 2019) suggests that the students' specialization affects their perceptions of the EMI experience, and, in this sense, research conducted in EMI programs of other Departments than the DSLC may be expected to yield different results, in regard to this matter.

Interestingly, the interview data analysis also showed that, even when the difference between being a learner and a user of English and the implications that those different roles carry were pointed out, a few interviewees suggested that mutual intelligibility ultimately depends to a great extent on the fact of sounding like a NES. That is to say that if all English learners adopt the same standard of reference and target model there is bound to be less diversity and, as a consequence, mutual comprehension is facilitated. Similar findings were reported by Wang and Jenkins (2016) who put the students' belief that conformity to NE is essential for mutual intelligibility down to lack of ELF experience (refer back to 3.4.3.3).

In brief, although the quasi totality of the participants recognized the lingua franca role of English and some of them were also aware that they would very likely use English in the future in communication with other non-native speakers, a clear tendency was observed to gravitate towards NES norms. In this sense, this study confirmed previous research findings (refer back to 3.4.2 and 3.4.3) that highlighted the attractiveness of NE varieties and a desire, on the part of students, to adopt a NE accent. However, the interviews revealed that only few students expressed a positive attitude towards NE varieties and accents other than RP and American English (refer to 6.3.2.7), and even the latter tended to be considered an inadequate model for the English classroom, as observed in the previous section of this chapter. Besides the prestige associated with the "original" English variety, pragmatic reasons related to the conventional ELT practices were also put forward for the importance of adhering to RP and the norms of the British Standard.

In accordance with the favorable orientation towards NE, as in previous attitudes studies (refer to 3.4.3), a generalized negative attitude towards NNE seemed to prevail among the participants. Even those interviewees who recognized the primacy of intelligibility in lingua franca communication, nevertheless revealed negative attitudes to NNE. The analysis of the interview data revealed that when they mentioned the NNE accents, the interviewees tended to use used prescription in description**,** thus revealing a strong influence of the ideology of the standard language. Several interviewees characterized NNE accents as "imperfect" and "wrong" and a few of them appeared to have particular issues with the Italian-inflected pronunciation. This finding confirmed previous studies reviewed by Jenkins that revealed that NNESs tend to have stricter attitudes towards speakers of their own L1 group and suggested that the cause may be "greater awareness of L1 transfer in the English accents of their L1 peer group that in the accents of other NNESs" (2007: 89). It was reported in section 6.3.2.6 that S8 stigmatized Italian-accented English as "macaroni-English", in a comment that pointed to the need for a NNEST of English

to possess native-like proficiency lest the entire teaching work is "jeopardized" (refer to 6.3.2.6). Negative attitudes towards Italian-inflected English were made explicit in the interviews by the LACOM students who related the problematic aspects of their English-taught courses to their NNESTs' competence in English. As noted in section 6.3.3.2, they expressed a deficit view of their NNESTs' English, although the analysis of their comments also suggested that their deeper attitudes towards their NNESTs' English appeared to be more ambivalent as the negative overt opinions let on.

In particular, since in the majority of the interviewees' comments competence was discussed mainly in terms of pronunciation, it was suggested that perceptions of non-intelligibility may have depended, at least in part, on an underlying pejorative attitude towards non-native accents. S20's comment on this theme was selected to illustrate this point. Although it would have taken a dedicated study to fully investigate the psycho-social dimension of S20's unconscious reaction to her teacher's accented speech, it was suggested that her concentration problem may have to be attributed to attitudinal factors. If so, the root cause of S20's problem possibly lied precisely in her familiarity with her NNEST's inflection. It may thus be the case that S20's expectations of a teacher of an EMI class had been upset by the perceived familiarity of the accent, and that that particular accent was so much at odds, to her ears, with the formal and also international, cosmopolitan dimension of the EMI class.

Reference was also made to Lindemann and Campbell's study (2018) on attitudes to NNE pronunciations (refer back to 3.4.1) that found that expectations of unintelligibility of an accent sometimes prevent an unbiased judgement on the actual intelligibility grade. In this sense, the fact of S20 losing her focus may seem to prove that negative attitudes lead to poorer comprehension. By the same token, all the interviewees' judgements of unintelligibility of their NNESTs would have to be taken with a grain of salt. When S20 suggested that insecurity leads to self-consciousness and this, in turn, leads to inhibition and hesitation in speech, and when S19 spoke of fear to be judged by a NNEST, they also hinted at the important role attitudinal factors play in ELF communication. So did all the other interviewees' who commented that an excessive concern for grammatical correctness and particularly for adherence to RP inhibits the NNESs from speaking English confidently (refer to 6.3.2.2).

Based on the participants' views on the culture of English, on pronunciation and the underlying attitudes towards native and non-native English here discussed, a conclusion that can be drawn is that their attitudes towards ELF were rather ambivalent. It must be also noted that a few interviewees who were accessed in the DSLC reproduced in their comments the typical ELF arguments that are found in ELF research literature.

ELF-awareness emerged with particular evidence in the comments of S1 and S2 (refer to 6.3), who were attending an ELF course at the time of the investigation. The possibility that their views on ELF were biased by social desirability was considered. S1 in particular seemed to be repeating the content of her ELF course, as if she were taking an exam. However, she expressed contradictory views throughout the interview which suggested that the opinions and beliefs that she explicitly communicated perhaps did not fully correspond to her deep-seated attitudes. On the one hand, she emphasized that English is a language that is detached from ENL cultural ties and made their own by the NNESs to communicate across different NNE cultures; more than that, she was very critical of the "monolithic view" of English that she had had been offered throughout her previous learning experience. On the other, she claimed that English is best learned in its original ENL monolingual setting and emphasized that a student who aims to learn English in a target language environment should avoid multicultural contexts such as London. Also, in line with the majority of the interviewees, she also held that "the English of England" should be set as the learning target. Apart from a certain pragmatism, by which she conceivably recognized the advantages of adhering to the norms of the standard variety of English that is set as yardstick of reference by the conventional EFL practices, her opinion also seemed to imply that a solid knowledge of Standard English is a prerequisite for successful lingua franca communication.

In general, ambivalent attitudes towards ELF as they were revealed by the interviewees who had received ELF instruction suggested that ELF-informed overt beliefs can coexist with a deeper-seated negative attitude towards

non-native and non-standard English norms. In this sense, this study's findings were in line with the results of earlier research (refer to 3.4.3.1) that concluded that ELF is often accepted in the abstract but resisted in practice.

Conventional ELT practices and especially language testing and assessment (refer back to 6.3.2.4) arguably played a key role in orienting the students towards NE norms. However, the interview data showed that attitudes can also be changed. Section 6.3.2.7 reported S14's comment on her change of attitude towards NNE, which she related in particular to her "passion" for linguistics. As she observed, while the teacher of her GELT-informed English course had made her aware of the pluricentricity of English, thanks to the study of linguistics she had learned recognize the abstract character of the standard language and had become aware of the principles of linguistic variation. The case of S14 thus arguably proved that however deeply they may be entrenched, negative attitudes towards NNE can be changed through awareness-raising of linguistic variation and its principles.

The next section of this chapter summarizes the participants' opinions on the teaching of the English language.

7.3 What are the students' opinions on the teaching of English?

The questionnaire data analysis only provided a rough idea of the respondents' degree of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with their English learning experience in school and/or university (refer back to 5.2.1) and their level of agreement or disagreement with three basic principles of ELT: monolingual teaching, native-speakerism, early start (refer back to. 5.2.2.4). The discussion of the student's opinions on ELT were explored in the interviews, where the participants discussed at length their previous experience of English learners in school and university, pointing out in particular the critical aspects of EFL pedagogy. As commented in section 5.2.1, the questionnaires results revealed a tendency to be cautions in making either negative or positive judgments of one's own English learning experience in school and/or university. The analysis of the data obtained from the interviews found instead that almost unanimously the students perceived the more traditional ways of EFL pedagogy as inadequate to respond to their personal needs and more generally to the demands of today's society.

The widely held perception of the limitations of the EFL teaching practices was related to a great extent to the GT method, with its emphasis on accuracy rather than fluency. Several students lamented in the interviews that the EFL classroom is too focused on teaching uncontextualized grammar rules and does not foster the learner's ability to use the language in real-life situations, especially in speaking. Some of them also suggested that an excessive concern for grammatical correctness inhibits fluency in speaking and prevents learners from developing confidence in the use of English in out-of-school contexts. As Niedzielski and Preston's pointed out, classroom instruction tends to inhibit the use of ungrammatical forms in the target language, even if they are communicatively efficient (2003: 250). However, some interviewees explicitly recognized that the study of grammar is nevertheless an efficient way of providing students with a solid basis on which they can subsequently build more practical skills. It is remarked here that although the study of grammar does not automatically translate into practical communication skills, it provides learners with an analytic knowledge and a conceptual understanding of the structures of the target language. More than that, it fosters the learners' metalinguistic awareness, by providing them with the tools they make use of to make sense of the target language structures.

It was observed in section 6.3.2.4 that a narrow focus on monolithic English was censured by a few interviewees as inadequate to prepare learners to deal with the dynamic heterogeneity they are bound to encounter as users of English once they are outside the classroom. However, it was also found that classroom English and the English language input students receive outside the formal space of the English classroom tended to be considered by the majority of the participants as two separate spheres. The same finding was reported more than a decade ago by Grau who carried out an empirical study in German secondary schools that concluded that "despite students' extensive language contact outside school, that contact does not influence the way they learn English in the classroom" (2009: 171). As already pointed out in the previous section of this chapter, the interviewees regarded the American English that dominates pop culture as inappropriate for the English classroom. American English

tended to be associated with non-standard usage and informality, two areas that are normally underrepresented if not completely ignored in the more traditional instructional practices that set British Standard as the only legitimate learning target (refer to Werner 2020). While, on the one hand, a few interviewees nevertheless indicated their wish for closer links between the classroom and the out-of-school context, on the other, a pragmatic attitude towards the learning target model prevailed among the participants, who by vast majority did not question the validity of British Standard English as the one and only knowledge base and benchmark of the ELT classroom.

As discussed in section 6.3.2.7, the standard language ideology was found to have a strong influence on the participants' views on the learning target model. The ideology of the standard language in turn, appeared to be promoted by prescriptivism in grammar teaching. S14's observations reported in section 6.3.2.2 were particularly interesting in that regard. She suggested that an excessive focus on adherence the rules of Standard English breeds prejudiced attitudes towards non-standard and non-native varieties of the target language, which, in turn, prevent unbiased judgements of the intelligibility grade of those varieties. Interestingly, her comments contained an implicit suggestion for English teachers to rethink the prescriptive approach to the teaching of grammar as well as pronunciation. Particularly the stereotyped characterizations of American English made by several interviewees (refer back to 7.1) contained an implicit suggestion that learners of English should be made aware of the descriptive nature of the rules of grammar and pronunciation.

Not only was uncontextualized grammar teaching considered ineffective, but the failure to balance theory with practice in the EFL classroom was also found to be demotivating (refer to 6.3.2.2). Motivation emerged from the interviewees' comments as a crucial factor for success in learning English. The interview data revealed that the need to foster the learners' speaking skills was paired with a need to connect the teaching practices to the learners' affective universe and, even more importantly, to the out-of-school realities of English. In a societal context of unprecedented vitality of English, it should not surprise that English learners feel the need to develop their abilities to use the target language in real-life situations.

A strong suggestion also came from the interviews that the English language curricula of the Italian schools should include more references to the contemporary dimension of English, with a focus, in particular on the many uses to which English proficiency can be put in today's globalized world (refer back to 6.3.2.12). As already noted, a narrow focus on England, its history and literary tradition, and a stereotyped image of the target culture, were highlighted as the limitations of the cultural content of the traditional EFL curriculum (refer also to 7.2). Several interviewees expressed a utilitarian, instrumentalist conception of English language learning that appeared to be congruent with the principles of human capital theory, by which foreign language education does not have any intrinsic ends but must be linked to instrumental purposes related to the demands of the market (refer back to 2.1). Particularly the interviewees' comments reported in sections 6.3.2.1 and 6.3.2.2 showed that the students believed that schools must prepare future users of English to function in a work world in which the demand for English-proficient people is on the rise.

In the perspective of making English teaching more contextualized and tailored to the learners' future needs in professional contexts, a suggestion was also given in the interviews that more school subjects should be taught through the English medium. As the analysis of the views on EMI revealed (refer to 6.3.3.1), the perceived advantages of integrating the teaching of content and language related to both sides, and the fact of receiving content in English was also valued by some interviewees as more interesting and motivating than studying the same content in Italian.

More than that, all the LACOM students who commented on the advantages and problems of EMI (refer to 6.3.3) expressed favorable attitudes towards the internationalization of education at home (IaH). Interestingly, they suggested that IaH is more than just EMI. According to Beelen and Jones' (2015) definition cited in section 2.2.3, IaH consists of the integration of an international and intercultural dimension within the curricula for all students within a domestic environment. Therefore, as the authors point out, "[s]imply providing a program in English is insufficient for it to be considered an internationalized curriculum." (2015: 69). Although some interviewees

highlighted the integration of language and content learning as the added value to their EMI master's degree program, other motivating factors were also pointed out, namely the presence of international students and teachers. However, if inward mobility was highlighted by some students as a factor for improvement of their EMI program, it was also suggested that even without an international population of students, English-taught programs were recognized as having a value of their own.

Arguments were also put forth by some students, though, that the Italian education system is not quite ready to offer EMI instruction. Besides the widely held perception of the inadequacy of the NNESTs' communicative competence in English that was reported in section 6.3.3.2, a more general view that Italy lags behind other European country in terms of English proficiency (refer to 6.3.2.13) indicated that today's students are very demanding of the Italian education system in regard to English teaching.

Several interviewees appeared to implicitly demand that the English classroom imitates a naturalistic setting, as if the conditions that favor a way of learning that is more similar to a naturalistic language acquisition process could be recreated in the classroom setting. It was observed that the interviewees who had been exchange students in a target language country emphasized the key role that their full-immersion experiences had had in fostering their communicative skills in English (refer back to 6.3.2.10). They thus pointed to the crucial distinction that is there between learning English from the textbook in a classroom setting and being immersed in a naturalistic setting, where there is much more language input available, and where learners can improve their communication skills in real-life situations.

Some interviewees explicitly pointed out the unnaturalness of the classroom setting as one contextual factor that potentially undermines the efficiency of ELT (refer back to 6.3.2.5). Quite obviously, though, since the conditions that are found in a naturalistic setting cannot be recreated in the Italian schools, it cannot be possibly expected that the formal instruction alone provides learners with the communicative competence that is developed in a target language setting, by means of constant and prolonged contact and interaction with NESs.

In brief, it seemed that some students placed demands on ELT that classroom-based instruction alone cannot possibly meet, and most importantly, they did not seem to be fully aware of that impossibility. As a matter of fact, there are contextual factors and particularly time-related constraints that arguably make the adoption of a more traditional grammar-translation method more effective, in the few hours that are allocated to English as a school subject in the school curricula, and in often over-crowded classes.

However, the emphasis that several interviewees put on the need to shift the focus of the English class away from decontextualized grammar towards communication skills suggested that the challenge of teachers is that of getting the balance right between the analytic knowledge of the rules of grammar and the practice of communication, even in the objectively complicated contextual conditions in which ELT is delivered. In other words, a suggestion came from the interviewees that teachers of English should combine the notion of language as a grammar system with the notion of a communicative tool within a real-world context. Also, they should consider the classroom as a language learning environment over the long haul, sustaining the learners' confidence and building their motivation.

As it was pointed out (refer back to 6.3.2.2), some interviewees nevertheless acknowledged that learning English as any other (foreign) language is actually a complex process, and that formal instruction alone can only do a part of the job. Besides personal motivation, a student's willingness to extend English learning beyond the formal space of the classroom was pointed out in some interviews as a key factor for success. The important role of pop culture as a source of language input in the out-of-school was repeatedly pointed out throughout the analysis and discussion of the data. However, despite the increasing vitality of English in the Italian mediascape, the interviewees lamented that there are still limited opportunities to receive genuine language input outside an instructional context. As commented in section 6.3.2.10, the Italian tradition of dubbing movies and TV shows

was highlighted as particularly disadvantageous because it denies learners the opportunity to be exposed to English from an early age.

More generally, the interview data analysis revealed a widely held perception that there is not enough English in the life of Italian students, and some students appeared to believe that the onus is on the education system to bridge that gap between Italy and other (non-English speaking) European countries, where their peers can receive a comparatively greater amount of English language input. A few interviewees lamented that Italian schools do not support the students' learning process in a classroom setting by offering opportunities to be immersed in a target language environment. As observed above, international mobility was greatly valued by the students who were interviewed and many of them claimed that schools should promote student exchange programs. None of them seemed to be fully aware, though, that there are organizational issues entailed in the setting up of international mobility schemes that Italian teachers instead know very well.

In brief, the interviews revealed that the students who participated in this study demand a lot from ELT in formal instruction and set high standards as to the learning outcomes, all of which arguably testifies to the existence of a sort of social pressure to become proficient in English. The widely held belief that the earlier English learning starts in formal education the better the outcomes in the long run, which was revealed by the analysis of the data obtained from both instruments, was further proof of a prevailing sentiment that achieving competence in English is a must for the new generations.

It was reported in section 6.3.2.9 that some interviewees justified their belief in the advantages of an early start by making the examples of bilingual children who have had the opportunity to acquire English naturally. Those students did not seem to be aware, though, that the example of bilingual children cannot be generalized to all the NNESs who live in a country where English is learned mainly in formal instructional settings. In fact, for young learners to be able to take advantage of their innate capabilities for language acquisition they must also be able to receive a considerable amount of target language input outside the context of formal instruction. As observed in section 2.4.1, the CPH (Lenneberg 1967) applies specifically to the process of language acquisition that takes place under sustained conditions of naturalistic or informal exposure to the target language. That is to say that the advantages of the younger children's "brain plasticity" that were mentioned in the interviews can only be observed in contexts where the target language is the majority language of the community of speakers (as it is the case of migrant children) or, as some students correctly exemplified, in bilingual families.

It was also argued in section 6.3.2.9 against the 'early exposure myth' reproduced in some of the interviewees' comments that it is scientifically unsound to presume that young Italian kids can 'naturally' acquire the English language merely through exposure to the few hours that are allocated to English in the preschool timetable. In section 2.4.1 research studies were referred to that investigated the relative advantages and disadvantages of younger and older learners in EFL settings (Muñoz 2006, 2008, 2011, 2014; Lightbown & Spada 2013). Based on the findings of those studies, it was noted that that the advantages related to the CPH cannot be generalized to contexts of foreign language learning. It is restated here that in the long-term, the advantage younger learners have in informal, naturalistic settings is simply not found in formal, instructional settings. In fact, in instructional settings and in absence of the contextual conditions that are found in an ESL setting, where the target language is commonly spoken in the out-of-class environment, age by itself is not a good predictor of the learning outcomes. On the contrary, for their cognitive maturity, older learners actually have an edge over the younger ones, and while age by itself cannot predict the learning outcomes, not even in the long term, amount and quality of input represent the key factor for successful learning.

It must be observed that in Italy language contact with English occurs mainly in indirect, mediated forms. Although it is true that nowadays young English learners can receive a massive amount of target language input, for instance through pop culture, and that out-of-school exposure to English can surely support informal ways of learning, the contextual conditions of Italy still make formal teaching the most effective method for learners to develop competence in English. All the interviewees who referred to the young kid's "brain plasticity" did not

seem to be aware of the radical differences that distinguish an ESL context from an EFL context, as they did not factor in any other key contextual variables that intervene in establishing the conditions for success of foreign language learning. Incidentally, it must be noted that if the interviewees had based their opinions on the advantages of an early start on what they had been taught, then one may arguably speculate whether their past education had been up to speed with recent research in second language acquisition and foreign language pedagogy. However, since the interviewees were undergraduate students, it was perhaps not to be expected that they were knowledgeable of such matters.

Regardless of that, the notion that the earlier foreign language learning starts the better the outcomes is certainly a commonsensical one, and it was significant that only the one student (S6) who had worked in a kindergarten expressed concerns about the introduction of English at the earliest stages of education. The most interesting finding, though, was that the majority of the interviewees reproduced what has arguably become a commonsense opinion that English learning in Italy should start already at the preschool stage, regardless of any considerations related to the wider contextual conditions and, perhaps even more importantly, of the resources available to schools. This was not at all surprising, considering the great emphasis that has been given in public discourse to the necessity to raise English proficient students starting from the earliest stages of formal education. Once again, the interviewees' arguments in support of the early start suggested that today's students perceive that there is a need for more English in the lives of the Italians and of more effective ways of teaching it.

In order to respond to those needs, a few interviewees thought that the use of the target language should be maximized in the English classroom. The interview data analyzed in section 6.3.2.8 revealed that the exclusive use of the target language was valued as a way of creating a more naturalistic learning environment. The analysis of the questionnaires, though, found that while a majority of little less than two thirds of the participants agreed with the monolingual principle of ELT according to which the teachers should only use English in the classroom, by vast majority they also believed that a teacher of English must also be able to communicate to the learners through their L1 (refer back to 5.2.2.4). They thus seemed to imply that the students' L1 can provide a useful support to the learning process, as also suggested by S29, the only interviewee who did not subscribe to the monolingual tenet (refer back to 6.3.2.8).

However, the interviewees who agreed that English is best taught monolingually did not distinguish between differing levels of competence in the language, that is, different stages in the learning process. On the contrary, the interesting finding was that they actually believed that the monolingual strategy should be adopted already at the earliest stages of education. Thy did not consider, though, that an explanation that is given in the target language without any support of the students L1 might not be processed as efficiently as an explanation in the student's L1. Whether at a younger age, when learners have not reached the cognitive maturity that gives older leaner the edge in classroom setting, the support of the L1 is less effective than the support of other non-verbal codes, as suggested by S23 (refer to 6.3.2.8), is actually an interesting question, though one that is beyond the scope of this research study. What was arguably most relevant in relation to the student's opinions on ELT was that the belief in the monolingual tenet was yet another indication of a perception that instructional settings should recreate the conditions that are found in naturalistic settings. Once again, as noted above, the problem with this view is that the English classroom cannot obviously make up for the lack of contextual conditions that are found in target language environments. That being so, teaching English through the use of the learners' L1 as a support is arguably more effective than by making exclusive use of the target language, all the more so at the lower stages of the learning process.

The data obtained from the interviews revealed that native-speakerism exerted a considerable influence on the participants. In accordance with the tendency to gravitate towards NE norm, several interviewees' comments suggested that native-like pronunciation is an essential prerequisite for a NNESTs. As already observed in the previous section of this chapter, the discussion of the LACOM students' attitudes towards EMI (refer to 6.3.3) suggested that the deficit view of the NNESTs' competence, which the interviewees tended to relate to their NNE

pronunciation, had more to do with prejudice than with an objective problem of intelligibility. The prejudiced view of the NNESTs was thus clear evidence of the influence of native-speakerism. It was also suggested, though, that as students of an English-taught program, the LACOM students possibly viewed their teachers as target language models, and for that reason they appeared to lean so strongly towards NESTs and NE norms.

It was also reported that the questionnaire results suggested that the choice between a NEST and a NNEST was not understood by the students as a straightforward one (refer back to 5.2.2.4). More than that, some interviewees who were not attending an English-taught degree program also recognized the advantages of being taught by a NNEST, apparently relating them to the fact that the NNESTs have been themselves learners of English. Overall, the findings of this study confirmed those of previous research (refer back to 3.4.3.4) in suggesting that learners tend to prefer the NESTs because they are target language and target culture models, on the one hand, although they also recognize the advantages of sharing an ease of mutual comprehension with the NNESTs, on the other.

A further consideration is due, regarding the possibility that some of the interviewees' comments on this topic could have been biased by acquiescence. Since the researcher was himself a NNEST, some interviewees may have been inclined to mitigate their negative attitude towards the NNESTs and say what they thought that the researcher wanted them to say. On top of that, is also possible that the instructional setting in which the research was carried out influenced the students' attitudes towards native-speakerism, and since many of them had been and were being taught English by NNESTs, they felt that they had to avoid appearing too judgmental of them.

Other interesting insights were derived from the perception that was widely held among the interviewees of English as an easy to learn language (refer back to section 6.3.2.14). On the one hand, it was observed that in a societal context of unprecedented vitality of English today's students have the opportunity to receive a considerable amount of genuine target language input, especially through the new media, and therefore can easily find motivation to learn English and are facilitated in the learning process. On the other hand, it was argued that the interviewees who claimed that English is easy to learn had been studying it for several years and had also had opportunities to extend their learning in informal ways in target language environments.

It was concluded that the stereotyped view that English is particularly easy to learn, which some participants also cited as a reason for its 'global' spread, was nothing but a subjective opinion. In particular, it was suggested that a student's personal success in learning English may have led her/him to claim that English is objectively easy to learn. More than that, it seemed also possible that the students who claimed that English is an easy-to-learn language were biased by social desirability. That is to say that by making such a claim the students projected an ideal image of themselves as confident and successful highly proficient English learners. These hypotheses were arguably confirmed by the fact that some of the students who subscribed to the easy-to-learn stereotype also claimed that Italians fare rather low on average in terms of English proficiency, a claim that seemingly contradicted the idea that that English is learned easily by anyone.

The arguments by which some interviewees supported their claim that English is easy to learn also pointed to the advantages of providing learners of English with an analytic knowledge of the structures of the target language through grammar instruction. The perception that English is easy to learn perhaps depended also on the fact that, as proficient learners who possessed an analytic knowledge of the morpho-syntactic structures of English, those interviewees may have been under the impression that there is a sort of systematicity that is peculiar to the English language. In that regard, S19's comment reported in 6.3.1.10 that English is a "pragmatic" language "that goes step by step" was particularly revealing.

Interestingly, some interviewees drew a comparison with the Italian language, in support of their view that English is particularly easy to learn. Although one might claim that Italian is objectively difficult to learn for whatever reasons related for instance to its morphosyntax, it is very likely that as native speakers of Italian, who thus acquired Italian naturally, the interviewees found it difficult to subject the structures of the Italian language to an

analytic process. For that reason, Italian appeared to them as objectively more difficult than English. This hypothesis finds support in similar findings reported by Niedzielski and Preston (2003: 246).

A very interesting suggestion came from one interviewee that regardless of how easy or difficult it may be perceived, English, as any other language, can only be described appropriately in terms of categories that are derived from the analysis of its structures and not by using categories that might be adequate only for a different language. S25's comments on her high school teachers' failure to provide thorough and coherent explanations of the use of the future tense in English (refer back to 6.3.2.6) not only proved that, after all, English may not be as easy to learn as she claimed, but also that, since there are great differences between languages, each language needs its own conceptual apparatus and terminology. As a matter of fact, the future tense is no morphosyntactic property of the English verb, and in this sense a GT approach that adopts the conceptual categories of Italian in the description of the English grammar may confuse and mislead the learners of English. Although S25's claim about the poor quality of Italian teacher's preparation was subjective and of no statistical value, she nevertheless pointed to the importance of providing high quality training to ELT teachers and practitioners.

Finally, it must be remarked that the high level of confidence with their own English proficiency that several interviewees appeared to express quite possibly influenced their opinions on their learning experience, their previous teachers and more generally their views on what should be taught and how best to teach it in the EFL classroom. In this sense, the emphasis that many of them placed on the failure of the traditional ways of ELT in Italy to produce confident and competent users of the language in real-life situations was arguably dictated by the fact that they were indeed confident and competent users of English.

The next section attempts to provide an answer to the research question n. 4.

7.4 Is an ELF-informed approach in tune with the students' own perceived needs?

In this chapter section, the participants' attitudes towards English and ELF, and their opinions on ELT are discussed in relation to ELF pedagogy. The purpose of the discussion is to interpret the findings in light of the principles that underpin an ELF-informed approach to ELT and understand whether such an approach is in tune with the students' perceived needs.

7.4.1 ELF-informed pedagogy

The principles of ELF pedagogy were illustrated in section 2.4.2. They are here recapitulated for purposes of immediate reference.

The basic principle of ELF pedagogy is that of teaching English as a lingua franca and not as a foreign language. It is thus premised on a notion of English as a de-nativized and de-territorialized language. The ELF movement fights against attitudes to English as being the exclusive property of NESs and to Standard English being the only legitimate target language variety. Therefore, the paradigm shift from EFL to ELF presupposes that English learners do not necessarily need to defer to the NES norms. An ELF-oriented approach to ELT is aimed at fostering the learners' communicative competence regardless of native-like proficiency, which is deemed an irrelevant (and often unattainable) target for future users of ELF. In other words, from an ELF-informed perspective, successful communication and intelligibility take priority over adherence to NE norms. Therefore, teachers who adopt such an approach should accept a learner's deviations from such norms, as long as the learner can carry out successful communication. Within this perspective, it is important to recognize that British Standard English, in spite of its prestige, represents for learners rather a starting point of reference than the end point of the learning process.

Besides legitimizing NNE usage ELF pedagogy also gives equal legitimacy to all ESL varieties. ELF-informed teaching thus emphasizes the importance of developing the learners' awareness of variation and their ability to

negotiate the diverse varieties of English they will encounter in in international, intercultural contexts of lingua franca communication.

In brief, an ELF-informed approach to ELT represents a pedagogical model that transcends the teaching of monolithic English and is inclusive of the diverse varieties and usages of English. In accordance with these principles, ELF pedagogy also emphasizes the need to redefine the language assessment criteria, so that they can be more inclusive.

More than that, the implications of a shift of perspective from EFL to ELF concern also the cultural content of the English language curriculum. Common to all the proposals for an ELF-informed approach to ELT that were reviewed in section 2.4.2 is an underlying view of English as a neutral tool for intercultural communication, which disembeds language from its cultural ties to a specific national community of native speakers. The ELF paradigm thus postulates that English can be regarded as a transactional currency that is decoupled from ENL cultural references. Based on this principle, it assumes that English can be taught as a de-anglicized language.

Furthermore, cultural identities through English as a lingua franca are understood as fluid, contingent, constructed and negotiated in interaction. Within this perspective, the above-mentioned principle of shifting the focus of teaching from correctness to successful communication also entails the need to foster the learners' intercultural sensitivity and competence. In this sense, the study of pragmatic conventions, which differ from culture to culture, must take center stage in the ELF-aware curriculum.

Finally, ELF-oriented pedagogy expresses a need to validate the learners' linguistic repertoires and therefore recognizes the advantages of translanguaging practices, that is, the strategic use of multiple languages in the English classroom.

7.4.2 The students' own perceived needs and the principles of ELF pedagogy

As commented in section 7.2, this study found that the students held ambivalent attitudes towards ELF. While the vast majority of the participants accepted for a fact that English is used by the NNESs as a tool for lingua franca communication, a view that English belongs to the NESs from the two core English-speaking countries was found to prevail. The analysis of the interviews also revealed that only very few students who had received explicit ELF instruction explicitly characterized English as a de-nativized and de-territorialized language. However, it was also hypothesized that their views may have been biased by social desirability, in that those students appeared to be repeating the key content points of the ELF course they had attended without them being a true reflection of their beliefs and attitudes.

Furthermore, while the students related the advantages of becoming competent users of English to its lingua franca role in the globalized world, they also appeared to draw much of their motivation to learn English from the specific ENL cultural affiliations that the English language indexes, and more than that, they were found to lean rather strongly towards NE norms. Therefore, on the one hand, the idea of teaching English as a de-territorialized and de-nativized language would surely respond to the students' own perceived need to become successful users of English as a lingua franca. On the other hand, the transition from an EFL to an ELF model may be not a smooth one since it might arguably meet with the students' criticism.

It is precisely the principle of decentering the NE norms as the target of English learning, and hence the idea of prioritizing successful communication and intelligibility over adherence to NE norms, that may not win the students over easily. It was commented in section 7.2 that this study found that ELF-informed overt beliefs can coexist with a deeper-seated negative attitude towards NNE norms, and it was concluded that ELF appeared to be accepted in the abstract but resisted in practice.

On the one hand, the analysis of the interviews showed that the vast majority of the interviewees highlighted the failure of the GT method to equip learners with practical communication skills and argued for a communicative approach to teaching that is aimed at producing confident and capable users of English in real-life situations.

Furthermore, a few interviewees claimed that the English classroom should prioritize intelligibility and pointed out that an excessive concern for native-like pronunciation inhibits fluency in speaking. Some of them even made it explicit that they did not believe that the NESs would be their target audience in the future and recognized the legitimacy of NNE in out-of-school contexts of lingua franca communication. In this sense, the findings did not seem to provide any arguments against the idea of not measuring proficiency with reference to native norms.

On the other hand, though, in spite of a generalized feeling of dissatisfaction with GT method and a unanimous perception that ELT in the Italian schools is not up to date with the current realities of English, it was also found that several interviewees held on to very 'traditional' views on English teaching, particularly in regard to the learning target model. As already noted, negative attitudes towards NNE were found to prevail among the participants.

The analysis of the interviews also showed that the students tended to use prescription in the descriptions of English varieties (refer in particular to 6.3.1.9 and 6.3.2.7). It was noted that in spite of its attractiveness, American English was associated with informality and the out-of-school. British Standard English was represented as the most appropriate if not the one and only valid target model for the English classroom. It was argued that since in the English classroom learners do not perceive themselves as real-life users of English, they tend to defer to the NE norms and particularly to the norms of British Standard English, both for pragmatic reasons related to the conventions of EFL teaching and for reasons related to the international prestige that is associated to the British variety.

Some interviewees also drew distinctions between different lingua franca communication contexts, suggesting that the concept of English as a lingua franca itself can be used to refer to different things, as it was also pointed out in section 2.2.4. They observed that whereas in certain situations such as, for instance, tourist encounters or business transactions, the purpose of getting the message across takes precedence over any considerations of grammatical correctness, in academic contexts it is important to adhere to the norms of Standard English. They thus suggested that ELF-informed teaching cannot be understood as a good-for-all method and that it must instead be tailored to the specific objectives that are set in relation to each distinct context in which learners expect to use English as a lingua franca in the future.

However, native-like pronunciation, precisely for the prestige that is associated to it, was also regarded by some students as an added value that gives NNESs distinction and confidence, regardless of the communicative context in which English is used. As argued by Mufwene, for the users of English from the expanding circle "[t]he choice is between approximating standards from the Inner Circle and ignoring them, and therefore narrowing one's range of competitiveness" (2009: 368). In this sense, this study suggested that even though the students recognized that NE norms may be irrelevant for users of English in certain contexts of real-world communication, as learners of English they rather seemed to be motivated by a desire to appear as fluent as possible, as if to reduce the power imbalance that some students were found to perceive between NESs and NNESs.

It was found that only the one student who had received GELT instruction had an overtly favorable orientation towards non-standard usages and NNE. Even the students who had attended ELF-informed courses instead attributed great importance to native-like pronunciation, which they also viewed as a sign of social distinction. It was suggested that, as students of a degree program in foreign languages, perhaps more than any other students they were motivated by the desire to attain native-like proficiency and so quite naturally they tended to gravitate towards NE norms.

Very few students appeared to regard British Standard English as nothing more than a starting point of reference for learners. As already pointed out, most participants actually characterized the British Standard variety as the only legitimate model for the English classroom. The idea of transcending the teaching of monolithic English and so broaden the scope of variation in the English classroom did not emerge as a major concern of the participants. The generalized tendency to view variation in dichotomous terms suggested that learners may not even see the

point of expanding the scope of linguistic variation beyond the two internationally recognized varieties. However, a monolithic approach to English was nevertheless pointed out by some interviewees as a failure of ELT, with the implication that it would be desirable to introduce learners to a plurality of Englishes. The students who censured a monolithic model of English were among those who showed the most acute awareness of the contradiction between classroom English and the out-of-school realities of English language variation. In this sense, an ELF-oriented approach that introduces learners to a wide range of regional and social dialects of English would surely meet the students' needs as future users of the language. Some students nevertheless pointed out that in the few hours per week that are allocated to English in school a more inclusive approach would be hardly feasible, with the implicit suggestion that a pluricentric approach to English could be adopted only in higher education, as learners of English progress through more advanced stages of learning.

The problems with monolithic English were also found to be related to the assessment criteria, which disadvantage learners who are more familiar with out-of-school varieties of English than with the abstract Standard English of the classroom. It was pointed out in section 2.4.1 that language certification exams have a washback effect on the learning objectives and the content of the English language curriculum. Research studies were referred to in section 2.4.2 that pointed to the necessity of redefining the language assessment criteria so that they reflect the ability of users of English to communicate successfully in international and intercultural contexts. The findings from this study confirmed previous research studies that concluded that the assessment tests represent a major barrier to innovation (e.g., Galloway & Numajiri 2020, referred to in section 3.4.3.2). It is restated here that an attitudinal change by which students could accept ELF in the practice and not only in the abstract may be facilitated if one such barrier to innovation is overcome. The conventional language assessment criteria and their washback effect on the content of the EFL curriculum surely had a crucial influence in orienting the students' attitudes towards the learning target and explain why the students tended to consider classroom English and out-of-school English as two separate spheres.

The gap that several students perceived between classroom English and out-of-school English also related to the cultural content of the EFL curriculum, which several students found to be outdated and not in tune with the real world. As noted in the previous section of this chapter, several suggestions were given in the interviews that it would be more motivating to expand the scope of the English language curriculum beyond a narrow and often stereotyped image of ENL culture. The contemporary realities of a 'global' language that performs instrumental functions in key societal domains was highlighted as one area that tends to be neglected in the English classroom.

The importance that the students attributed to the function of English as a 'global' lingua franca clearly suggested that the idea of teaching English as a de-territorialized and de-nativized tool for intercultural communication would certainly respond to their own perceived needs as future users of English in the real world. More than that, the instrumental view of foreign language education that most interviewees expressed is congruent with the principle of ELF pedagogy that foregrounds the transactional function of English. The emphasis that the students placed on the instrumental purposes of learning English, which they related to the chances of increasing one's competitiveness in the labor market, also suggested that the English classroom needs to foster the learners' intercultural sensitivity and competence. Although only the few students who had received ELF instruction recognized the importance of the study of pragmatic conventions and of developing intercultural competence, this tenet of ELF pedagogy is particularly relevant in view of the students' future role of users of English as a lingua franca.

However, as observed above, besides the instrumental purposes that motivated the students to become proficient in English, the attractiveness of English was found to be related by the students in great part to the specific cultural associations that the two internationally recognized varieties of English index. In this sense, the idea of decoupling English from the cultures of the nations that propelled it forward throughout the globe may still not find much support among the students, as long as these tend to view English as the language of the British and the Americans. Once again, the inherent ambivalence of English was reflected in the ambivalent attitudes of the students.

As regards the ELF principle of overcoming native-speakerism and recognizing the advantages of translanguaging practices in the English classroom, this study found that this was not a primary concern of the participants. On the contrary, the widely held perception revealed by the interviews that the English classroom must imitate a monolingual naturalistic setting arguably represents an attitudinal barrier to the paradigm shift towards a multilingual approach to English teaching. However, it was observed that since the insights obtained for this discussion came mostly from students who appeared to be motivated by a desire to reach a native-like level of proficiency that "does not give away one's NNES identity" (refer back to 6.3.2.7), the findings may be biased in this sense. This study thus suggested that a monolingual approach to teaching may be preferred by the students who have already reached a high level of competence, but, as S29 remarked, there are also "students who struggle", especially at the lower levels (refer to 6.3.2.8), and in this sense the support of their L1 in the classroom may be fundamental.

In conclusion, it can be confidently argued that an ELF-aware approach to English teaching is in tune with the students' own perceived need to become competent users of English in lingua franca communication settings. On top of that, it would surely help the students to recognize their prejudicial views and the stereotypes surrounding Standard English and the non-standard varieties of English. However, as regards the feasibility of such an approach, it is remarked once again that there are structural barriers to innovation that may have to be torn down first, otherwise learners may not see the advantages of not deferring to the NE norms, and they will still hold on to the tenets of traditional EFL pedagogy.

8. Conclusions

This chapter concludes the study by summarizing the key research findings in relation to the research objectives and questions. In section 8.1 the objectives and the rationale of the research are restated. In section 8.2 the research results are summarized to provide brief answers to the research questions. Section 8.3 discusses the study's contribution and its implications for the pedagogy of the English language. Section 8.4 addresses the credibility of the research study, discussing its reliability, validity, and limitations. Section 8.5 concludes the chapter by suggesting areas that require further research.

8.1 Objectives and rationale of the research

This research aimed to cater to the interrelated objectives of 1) offering a lens through which to assess the EFL pedagogical practices and its effect on the students' beliefs and attitudes; 2) exploring the feasibility of an ELF-oriented approach to the ELT that reflects the contemporary realties of English and responds to the students' perceived needs.

This research study was developed out of an interest in the Italian students' perceptions of what English is and does and their own perceived needs as learners and future users of English. The societal context in which this study is positioned is that of the new peripheries of the English language (refer back to 2.1.1), where the status of English is undergoing a shift from that of a foreign language towards that of a second language that is used in lingua franca communication.

It was claimed in chapter 1.3 that in such context of increased vitality of English the traditional ways of EFL pedagogy appear today outdated and possibly even obsolete. It was noted that the need to adjust the theory and practice of ELT to the changing nature of the English language outside the classroom has been long recognized by applied linguists. As illustrated in chapter 2.4, ELF scholarship has taken on the task of revising and rethinking the objectives of ELT, with a view to a paradigm shift from EFL to ELF-informed teaching.

It was noted that research work that contributes to the task of exploring the possibility of adopting an ELF-oriented approach that supersedes the traditional EFL pedagogical model is timely. It was argued that for any changes in the pedagogy of the English language to be confidently suggested, it is important to understand the perceptions and the opinions of the learners, who are the primary stakeholders of ELT. In regard to that, the relevance of attitude studies carried out in ELT contexts was highlighted.

As stated in 1.4, the rationale of this research was that an investigation into the views and attitudes of a relatively varied population of students in an Italian university can contribute to the task of assessing the established EFL pedagogical model and suggest possible ways of fine-tuning ELT in the new peripheries to the needs and goals of today's learners, who are likely to use English in lingua franca communication in the future.

8.2 Summary of the research findings

In answer to research question 1, the findings indicated that the students held a favorable attitude towards English, which they perceived as both a prestigious and attractive language. It was found that the students regarded English as an important tool for social inclusion in a globalized world that places great emphasis on English language skills. The prestige of English was found to be related in great part to its alleged potential to enhance one's chances of competitiveness in the work world and to its symbolic value as gateway to a cosmopolitan citizenship. The advance of English in the new peripheries was found to be accepted with pragmatism and although some students showed keen sensitivity to the preservation of linguistic diversity and particularly their own mother tongue, the usefulness and necessity of English in its established role of 'global' lingua franca went largely unquestioned.

Although the students acknowledged the instrumental function of English as a tool for inter-cultural communication, very few suggestions were given that the students could see English as a culturally neutral language. Specific ENL cultural references were found to be associated with English which appeared to contribute to its prestige and most importantly to its attractiveness, in the eyes of the students.

Although some students recognized that English is a pluricentric language and few of them also described it as a de-nativized and de-territorialized language that belongs to anyone who uses it, a characterization of English as the language of the Americans and the British was nevertheless found to prevail. The participants thus tended to view variation in dichotomous terms and the interview findings in particular revealed a dual orientation, in that British English was valued as the most prestigious variety and American English was regarded as the most attractive one.

The prestige of British English was found to be related to its unquestioned status as knowledge base and benchmark in ELT and more generally to its institutional support, and to the images of authenticity, heritage, tradition, and history that it evoked. The attractiveness of American English appeared instead to be related to its connotations as the language of US culture, and particularly pop culture, which emerged as the main source of English language input in the out-of-school.

Most interestingly although perhaps not surprisingly, the students were found to associate British English with a formal register and American English with an informal register, characterizing the latter as a 'simplified' and 'slangy' variety of English. The students' perceptions were found to be influenced by the standard language ideology and it was argued that at the root of the stereotyped views on variation in English there appeared to be a misconception of the nature of the rules of grammar, which the interviewees apparently tended to conceive as prescriptive, rather than descriptive. The students tended to use prescription in the description of the varieties of English and delegitimize all deviations from an accepted NE model as inappropriate and incorrect. It was argued that the students' experience as EFL learners decisively contributed to entrenching the received beliefs and prejudices about Standard English and the other varieties.

It was also found that only the students who had received training in linguistics and had been introduced to the study of language variation seemed to be able to recognize that Standard English is an idealization that is hardly ever realized in actual usage of the language.

In answer to research question 2, it was found that the students' attitudes towards ELF were rather ambivalent. On the one hand, by vast majority the participants seemed to safely assume that English can be adopted and used by the NNESs as a transactional currency for wider communication purposes. On the other hand, rather than having a sense of the global ownership of English, the students were found to relate the both the prestige and the attractiveness of English to the specific cultural associations that the two internationally recognized and codified varieties of English indexed.

The findings also suggested that as English functions as the lingua franca of higher education and research, it also performs cultural work, in that it is also the vehicle of culture-specific content. More generally, the findings indicated that the great vitality and the advance of English in the new peripheries is tied to the dissemination of US cultural products, norms, and values.

On top of all that, although the quasi totality of the participants recognized the lingua franca role of English and some of them were also aware that they would very likely use English in the future in communication with other NNESs, a clear tendency was observed to gravitate towards NE norms. This study thus confirmed previous research in students' attitudes that highlighted the attractiveness of NE varieties and revealed a desire, on the part of learners, to sound like the NESs.

However, as the interview data revealed, the students did appear to have a sense that in real-life situations the necessity of carrying out successful communication takes priority over adherence to a native-like model of

pronunciation. Also, it was commented that an excessive concern for grammatical correctness and particularly for sticking to the norms of RP inhibits the NNESs from speaking English confidently.

Even so, the legitimacy of NNE pronunciation seemed to be accepted in general only as an abstract principle. It was argued that the participants attributed great importance to NE pronunciation because they were accessed within an academic setting, and it is very likely that they perceived themselves as learners, rather than users of English. In this sense, this study confirmed previous attitude studies that found that in instructional settings, considerations on the primacy of intelligibility are overridden by the expectations that teachers have of students, as well as those that the latter have of their instructors, regardless of their status of NNESs. Interestingly, it was also suggested by a few students that, in out-of-school contexts of lingua franca communication, mutual intelligibility ultimately depends to a great extent on adherence to an internationally recognized NE model.

A generalized negative attitude towards NNE seemed to prevail among the participants, and in accordance with the above-mentioned tendency to use prescription in description, several interviewees characterized NNE accents as "imperfect" and "wrong". Even those interviewees who recognized the primacy of intelligibility in lingua franca communication nevertheless revealed negative attitudes to NNE. Such unfavorable attitudes tended to be even stricter towards the Italian-inflected pronunciation. This finding confirmed previous studies that indicated how greater awareness of L1 transfer in the English accents of one's own native speaker group than in the accents of other NNESs breeds more negative attitudes towards the former.

Most interestingly, ambivalent attitudes towards ELF were also revealed by the students who had attended ELF courses. It was suggested that ELF-informed overt beliefs can coexist with a deeper-seated negative attitude towards non-native and non-standard English norms. In this sense, this study's findings were in line with the results of previous research that concluded that ELF tends to be accepted in the abstract but resisted in practice. It was also argued that the interviewees' comments that reproduced the typical arguments of ELF research literature were possibly biased by social desirability.

Nevertheless, this study also suggested that however deeply the negative attitudes towards NNE may be entrenched, they can also be changed. If, on the one hand, the conventional ELT practices and especially language testing and assessment heavily influence the students' attitudes, on the other hand, awareness-raising of linguistic variation and its principles can facilitate a shift towards a more favorable orientation towards non-standard English and lead to an acceptance of NNE norms.

The interview data offered valuable insights in answer to research question 3. First, they revealed that the students who participated in this study were very demanding of ELT in the Italian education system and set high standards as to the learning outcomes; all of which arguably testified to the existence of a sort of social pressure to become proficient in English.

The widely held belief that the earlier English teaching is imparted in formal education the better the learning outcomes in the long run, which was revealed by the analysis of the data obtained from both instruments, was proof of a prevailing sentiment that English language skills are a must for the new generations. While only the one interviewee who had worked in a kindergarten was against the introduction of English at the earliest stages of education and apparently based her opinion on direct experience, almost unanimously the interviewees were found to hold the commonsensical opinion that English in Italy should be learned already at the preschool stage.

Several interviewees argued their support for the early start tenet by referring to the presumed advantages related to the young kid's "brain plasticity". However, it was pointed out in the discussion of the findings that the younger learner's advantages that are related to the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) (Lenneberg 1967) can only be observed in target language contexts and in bilingual families. Also, against the 'early exposure myth' reproduced in some of the interviewees' comments, it was observed that it cannot be presumed that young Italian kids can 'naturally' acquire the English language in the very few hours of the preschool timetable.

It was perhaps not be expected that as undergraduate students the interviewees were knowledgeable of matters of second language acquisition. Therefore, it was not surprising to find that they subscribed to the early start tenet, regardless of any considerations related to the wider context in which English is learned. What was arguably most interesting was that this study's findings quite clearly reflected the emphasis that has been given in public discourse to the necessity to raise English proficient students starting from the earliest stages of formal education.

The interviewees seemed to lament that that there is not enough English in the life of the Italians, and many of them were found to suggest that the onus is on the education system to bridge that gap between Italy and other (non-English speaking) European countries, where their peers can receive a comparatively greater amount of English language input.

Several interviewees greatly valued international mobility as a way of integrating classroom learning with hands-on experience and claimed that the public education system should offer learners opportunities to be immersed in a target language environment by promoting exchange programs. Suggestions were also given that more school subjects should be taught through the English medium. The perceived advantages of integrating the teaching of content and language were found to be related to both sides by the LACOM students who commented on the pros and cons of receiving English medium education.

However, in accordance with the view that Italy lags behind other European country in terms of English proficiency, some students also bemoaned that the Italian education system is not quite ready to offer EMI instruction. More generally, this research study found that the students tended to perceive the traditional ways of EFL pedagogy as not in tune with their own perceived needs as future users of English in a society that places great emphasis on English language skills.

Several interviewees censured the GT method and particularly its emphasis on accuracy rather than fluency. The EFL classroom was found fault with for being too focused on teaching uncontextualized grammar rules, and it was lamented that such a teaching method does not foster the learners' ability to use the language in real life, especially in spoken interactions. On the one hand, the teaching of grammar was valued by a few students as an efficient way of providing learners with a solid basis on which to build more practical skills. On the other hand, many of them suggested that an excessive concern for grammatical correctness in the EFL classroom has the effect of inhibiting fluency in speaking, hence of preventing learners from developing confidence in the use of English in out-of-school contexts.

Besides being ineffective, the failure to balance theory with practice in the EFL classroom was found to be demotivating. In this sense, the need to foster the learners' communicative competence was found to be paired with a need to connect the teaching practices the out-of-school realities of English use. The interviews revealed a strong tendency to conceive ELT in utilitarian and instrumentalist terms, by which English learning does not have any intrinsic ends but must respond to the demands of the labor market.

Although the findings suggested that the English class should focus on the out-of-school realities of English and prepare future users to function in a work world that demands English skills, it was also found that classroom English and the English language input students receive outside the formal space of the English classroom tended to be considered by the majority of the participants as two separate spheres. On the one hand, a few interviewees expressed a wish for closer links between the classroom and the out-of-school context. On the other hand, a pragmatic attitude towards the learning target model largely prevailed among the participants, who by vast majority did not question the validity of British Standard English as the one and only knowledge base and benchmark of ELT.

The standard language ideology was found to have a strong influence on the participants' views on the learning target model. As it was mentioned above, the American English which represented the students' main source of out-of-school input tended to be associated with non-standard usage and informality, and for that reason it was considered inappropriate for the English classroom. More than that, only few interviewees, who had had hands-

on experience as users of English in lingua franca communication, censured a narrow focus on monolithic English for its being inadequate to prepare learners to deal with the dynamic heterogeneity they are bound to encounter as users of English once they are outside the classroom.

Regardless of any considerations about the learning target model, the unnaturalness of the classroom setting was highlighted as one contextual factor that potentially undermines the effectiveness of the learning process. The interviewees who had had study- or work-abroad experiences pointed to the crucial distinction between learning English from the textbook in a classroom setting and being immersed in a naturalistic setting. The prevalent perception that there is a need for more English in the lives of the Italian students and, most importantly, for more effective ways of teaching it, apparently led the participants to believe that the English classroom must imitate a naturalistic setting. It was found that some students appeared to place demands on ELT that classroom-based instruction alone cannot possibly meet, and it was argued that they did not seem to be fully aware of that impossibility.

However, as they emphasized the need to shift the focus of the English class away from decontextualized grammar towards the development of communicative competence, the students also implicitly suggested that teachers of English must combine the notion of language as an abstract grammar system with the notion of a communicative tool in the real world.

In accordance with the view that instructional settings must recreate the conditions that are found in naturalistic settings, the quasi totality of the interviewees were found to uphold monolingual teaching already from the earliest stages of education as a way of maximizing the use of the target language in the classroom. However, the questionnaire findings also showed that less than two thirds of the sample were found to support the monolingual tenet, and that by vast majority, the respondents also believed that a teacher of English must be able to communicate to the learners through their L1, with the implication that the L1 can provide a useful support to the learning process. The discrepancy between the findings obtained from the two instruments arguably reflected the non-representativeness of the interviewee sample, with respect to the questionnaire sample. Most interviewees were proficient learners who appeared to be motivated to attain native-like proficiency, and it was not surprising that the interview findings revealed a considerable influence of native speakerism.

In accordance with the tendency to gravitate towards NE norms, several interviewees' comments suggested that native-like pronunciation is an essential prerequisite for the NNESTs. It was argued that the deficit views of the NNESTs' competence, which the LACOM students tended to relate to their instructors' NNE pronunciation, had more to do with prejudice than with an objective problem of intelligibility. It was also suggested that as students of an English-taught program, the LACOM students possibly viewed their teachers as target language models, and for that reason they appeared to lean so strongly towards NESTs and NE norms.

Other interviewees who were not attending an English-taught degree program instead also recognized the advantages of being taught by a NNEST, apparently relating them to the fact that the NNESTs have been learners of English themselves. It was concluded that the findings of this study confirmed those of previous research in students' attitudes which revealed that the choice between a NEST and a NNEST is not a straightforward one and that while learners tend to prefer the NESTs because they are target language and target culture models, on the one hand, they also recognize the advantages of sharing an ease of mutual comprehension with the NNESTs, on the other.

While a view that the English classroom must recreate the conditions that are found in a naturalistic setting prevailed, some interviewees also acknowledged that since learning a language is a complex process, personal motivation and one's willingness to extend learning beyond the instructional setting are key factors for success.

Personal experience as successful learners of English appeared to have led several students to claim that English is objectively easy to learn. It was noted that the interviewees who claimed that English is easy to learn had been studying it for several years and had had opportunities to learn it also in informal ways in target language

environments. In addition to that, it was observed that today's students have the opportunity to receive a considerable amount of genuine target language input, especially through the new media, hence they are facilitated in the learning process.

However, it was also argued that the stereotype of English as an easy-to-learn language suggested that the students were very likely biased by social desirability. That is to say that the students projected an ideal image of themselves as confident and successful highly proficient English learners by claiming that English is objectively easy to learn, in spite of the fact that on average Italians are ranked among the least proficient speakers of English in the old continent.

In answer to research question 4, the findings indicated that an ELF-aware approach to English teaching is in tune with the students' own perceived need to become competent users of English in real-life contexts. However, this study also suggested that the transition from an EFL to an ELF model may not be a smooth one since it might arguably meet with the students' criticism.

On the one hand, considering the importance that the students attributed to the instrumental purposes of English learning, the findings did not seem to provide any arguments against the idea of not measuring the learners' proficiency with reference to NE norms. On top of that, the ELF pedagogical proposals of introducing learners to a wide range of regional and social dialects of English and fostering the learners' intercultural sensitivity and competence seemed in keeping with the students' own perceived needs as future users of English in lingua franca communication settings. On the other hand, this study also revealed that the students tended to hold on to very 'traditional' notions of English teaching, particularly in regard to the learning target model, and it was pointed out that the principle of prioritizing successful communication over adherence to NE norms may not win the students over easily.

This study suggested that even though the students recognized that NE norms are irrelevant for future users of English, as learners of English they rather seemed to be motivated by a desire to appear as fluent as possible, as if to reduce the power imbalance between NESs and NNESs and increase their range of competitiveness with respect to the other NNESs. The analysis of the interview data suggested that the findings may have been biased by the composition of the sample of the interview participants, most of whom were confident and successful learners of English who wished to attain native-like proficiency and so quite naturally gravitated towards NE norms. Interestingly, native-like pronunciation was found to be held in high regard because it was perceived as an added value that confers NNESs distinction and confidence, regardless of whether the communicative exchange involves NESs or NNESs.

Furthermore, the idea of transcending the teaching of monolithic English did not emerge as a major concern of the participants. The generalized tendency to view English language variation in dichotomous terms suggested that the students may not even see the point of adopting a more inclusive approach that increases exposure to varieties other than British English and American English and raises awareness of ELF usage.

The findings also suggested that as long as the students tend to view English as the language of the British and the Americans, the idea of decoupling English from the cultures of the nations that propelled it forward throughout the globe may not find much support.

On top of all that, the widely held perception that the English classroom must imitate a target language naturalistic setting was found to be a major attitudinal barrier to the paradigm shift away from native-speakerism towards a multilingual approach to English teaching that recognizes the advantages of translanguaging practices. Finally, confirming previous research findings, language proficiency tests, for their washback effect on the objectives and content of the English language curriculum, emerged as another barrier to innovation.

8.3 Contribution and implications of the research

This study inscribed itself in the field of ELF research, a sub-field of applied linguistic research that has been thriving and rapidly evolving in the expanding circle. Although the investigation was conducted on a relatively small population of undergraduate students at a single Italian university that was selected by non-probability sampling, it nevertheless yielded abundant data. Although they cannot be generalized, it is hoped that the research findings contributed to assessing the EFL pedagogical models adopted in the Italian public education system, and that they offered valuable insights as to how a paradigm shift in ELT can be put into effect.

Through the lenses of the students, this study looked at the critical issues of EFL pedagogy. In that regard, the findings suggested that the GT method and a rigid focus on monolithic English do not foster communicative competence, tend to promote prescriptivism, and breed negative attitudes towards non-standard usages of English. However, the findings nevertheless suggested the importance of providing learners with an analytic knowledge of the structures of the English language through grammar instruction. As regards grammar teaching, the findings also suggested that it is important that teachers describe the rules of English by using an adequate set of categories that apply to its specific morpho-syntactic properties. As a language that is typologically distant from Italian, English has its own peculiarities which demand ad hoc grammar explanations. In view of that, providing effective and high-quality training to prospective teachers of English becomes of crucial importance.

This study also indicated that teachers must adopt a descriptive approach to grammar and make students aware of the fact that the rules of grammar do not prescribe the 'proper' way of using the language but actually pin down how the language is used. Within this perspective, the notion of grammaticality may also be problematized in the English classroom. Kachru (1985) pointed out the systematic character of all the varieties of English that are spoken around the world, arguing that they are all equally valid for their own contexts. If learners of English are introduced to non-standard and non-native usages of the target language, they can be made to see that grammaticality differs across varieties of English and recognize the abstract character of Standard English.

However, the findings pointed to the importance of introducing learners to the theoretical principles of linguistic variation, rather than merely exposing them to a plurality of Englishes, as a way of bringing them to question standard language ideology and native-speakerism. The notion that the deviations from the standard are not rule-governed is identified by Niedzielski and Preston as a "folk belief which is incredibly difficult to overcome" (2003: 22). It is argued here that if the study of the English grammar is supported with a solid basis in linguistic training the students can be made aware of the rule-governed nature of the non-standard varieties of English and accept the legitimacy of NNE usage.

In fact, the study of linguistics was found to have significant effects on the learners' attitudes towards NNE. In this sense, this study also suggested that for the NE norms to be decentered in the English classroom and ELF to be accepted in the practice, explicit ELF instruction may not be sufficient. It thus seems that teachers should gradually introduce students to a plurality of English varieties and to the diversity of ELF usages only after the students have consolidated their metalinguistic competencies, as they progress through the advanced stages of learning.

Most importantly, the idea of moving beyond monolithic English does not imply that learners do not have to be familiarized with the conventions of Standard English. However, another suggestion that was derived from this study was that Standard English is not to be understood as the endpoint but rather as the starting point of the learning process.

More than that, regardless of what particular variety is selected as learning target model, the findings indicated that the English language input that students can receive in the out-of-school plays a decisive role in the development of a learner's competence. This study suggested that if the prevailing attitudes to non-standard and NNE usage are changed it is also possible for teachers to establish closer links between out-of-school English and classroom English.

The research participants also seemed to indicate that authenticity and spontaneity are key aspects of the target language input. The challenge of ELT teachers is thus to make the sequenced and organized language of the English classroom appear as natural and spontaneous as possible. In that way, the students' perception of the unnaturalness of the instructional setting may also be overcome. The implicit suggestion for ELT teachers is thus to combine the notion of language as a standardized system of rules with the notion of a communicative tool in actual contexts of communication, where those rules may be violated. In regard to that, the findings hinted at the importance of a communicative approach to ELT as a way of getting the balance right between the analytic knowledge of the structures of the language and the practice of communication skills.

This study also pointed to the critical aspects of ELF pedagogy, suggesting that there are barriers to innovation that must be torn down if a shift from EFL to ELF is to be put into effect. The findings suggested that as long as proficiency is measured against British Standard English, students will naturally defer to its norms and delegitimize all deviations from those norms. On top of that, if teachers hold on to a native speaker-based conception of proficiency that puts the onus on the NNES to adjust to the NE norms to facilitate mutual understanding, learners will arguably resist the ELF principle of prioritizing intelligibility over adherence to NE.

Therefore, for an ELF-aware approach to teaching to be feasible in practice, it seems necessary to reconceptualize the very concept of proficiency so that it reflects the ability of future users of English to carry out successful communication in lingua franca settings. Most crucially, assessment criteria in language proficiency tests should be redefined accordingly. The findings pointed to language certifications as a major barrier to the paradigm shift towards ELF, for the importance that they have come to acquire for job applications and advanced studies as proof of one's competence in English. In this sense, confirming the suggestions made by previous research, this study indicated that structural change is needed for changes in attitudes towards NNE and ELF to be brought about.

However, such a change may not be by itself sufficient. This study indicated that students tend to gravitate towards NE norms of pronunciation also because they perceive them as a sign of social distinction. Although they learn English for an actual world of intercultural encounters and not only for interacting with NESs, it seems that they nevertheless feel more confident if they possess native-like fluency.

The prestige and attractiveness related to the cultural associations that the two internationally recognized varieties of English indexed suggested that English may not be conceived as a culturally neutral language even when it is used as a transactional currency. This study arguably indicates that rather than two distinct things that coexisted in the students' perceptions, the notion of English as a de-territorialized and de-nativized language and the image of "language of the British and the Americans" are actually two sides of the same coin, and to be more specific, the former appears to be a function of the latter. In other words, it is suggested that there is a culture of English that, although it is not apparently nation-specific but is represented as 'global' and cosmopolitan, is deeply embedded in Anglo-American norms and values. In this sense, this study confirms the necessity to reframe ELF and ELF pedagogy in an equitable multilingual and multicultural framework that respects the principles of diversity and pluralism.

More than that, this study also suggested that ELF-informed teaching cannot be understood as one good-for-all method. Considering that the contexts in which learners expect to use English as a lingua franca in the future are very much diverse, ELF pedagogy must necessarily be tailored to the specific objectives that are set in relation to each distinct context. In this sense, ELF-informed classroom practice should integrate the principles of English for specific purposes (ESP) methodology.

Finally, the findings also pointed to the necessity of clearly defining the objectives of English learning in relation to the wider educational aims that are established in each instructional setting in which ELT is carried out. It was pointed out that the participants very found to be very demanding of ELT in the Italian schools and had very high expectations in regard to the learning outcomes; it is suggested here that it is important that learners are made

aware of what is and what is not an attainable goal in formal instructional settings, which cannot possibly reproduce a naturalistic one, for one thing.

8.4 Credibility

This chapter discusses the extent to which the methodology of this research study was appropriate, and its findings were believable. Credibility is addressed in three separate sections, related respectively to the reliability, validity and limitations of the research.

8.4.1 Reliability

Reliability refers to how consistent and trustworthy the results of a research are (Creswell and Creswell 2017, Kvale 2007). Since this research did not aim to build a model by means of inferential statistics techniques and generalize the results beyond the selected sample of participants, reproducibility of the results at other times by other researchers did not seem to represent a major concern.

Consistency and trustworthiness were nevertheless sought, first by carefully designing and implementing the tools for data collection, and then by rigorous and systematic analysis of the data. As observed by Dörnyei, "[t]he reliability of a psychometric instrument refers to the extent to which scores on the instrument are free from errors of measurement" (2003: 110). Since all the items in the questionnaire developed for this research study (with the exception of item # 69 asking the respondent's age) measured qualitative attributes which are of nominal nature by definition, the kind of accuracy that can be aimed at with instruments that measure numerical variables could not possibly be expected.

However, in the questionnaire, reliability is guaranteed, first of all, by its internal consistency (ibid.), that is by the homogeneity of the various items that are targeted at the same content area. An internal consistency test, though, was not performed in this research, because the questionnaire developed for this study did not use multiple item scales (see 5.1). However, as illustrated in 4.2.2, consistency was nevertheless ensured by carefully designing the items so that slightly different aspects of the same content areas were addressed, and the views and attitudes inferred from different angles.

The risk of collecting biased responses was minimized by carefully phrasing the statements and questions. Most importantly, the way the items were formulated and the nature of most of the topics that were covered did not seem to imply that one answer might be more acceptable or desirable than the others, as they did not entail issues of self-image for the respondents, whose anonymity, on top of all this, was guaranteed. Also, the position of the researcher as a postgraduate student with no authority role within the Departments where the respondents were accessed, neither any evaluator role within the degree programs in which they were enrolled, arguably further reduced the risks of social desirability bias and acquiescence bias.

In order to improve the reliability of the questionnaire, the instructions, as well as the item statements and questions, were provided in both English and Italian and, as noted above, were written in a simple and unambiguous manner. Only two items (# 2 and # 40) proved to be not well formulated, as noted in the next section of this chapter.

As mentioned in chapter section 4.2.2 the questionnaire was designed to be as brief as possible. However, the possibility that some respondents may not have chosen to give enough time and care to completing the questionnaire was considered; after all, the risk that some respondents may be unreliable and unmotivated is a recognized disadvantage of the questionnaire as a research tool (Dörnyei 2003). As the analysis of the questionnaire data showed, some responses may be interpreted as being the product of careless responding. However, it is a fact that the students participated on a voluntary basis and although the possibility of careless responding must be considered, it nevertheless seems safe to assume that most respondents completed the

questionnaire with sufficient motivation and care. On top of this, the trustworthiness of a number of questionnaire responses – no doubt a small yet still significant percentage of the total – could nevertheless be verified by commenting them with the respondents in the course of the interviews.

The reliability of the methods employed is especially crucial in research studies that gather textual data for qualitative analysis, and issues of reliability arise in particular in relation to the interview format, the transcripts and their analysis. It was pointed out above that a folk linguistics approach to the study of attitudes must assume that the interviewees feel free to change their views and shift their position on the matters being addressed in the course of the interview. In this perspective, the inconsistencies, contradictions, and ambiguities that at times emerged within the same interview, did not question its overall reliability. Most of all, the in-depth format of the interviews conducted for this study arguably ensured the trustworthiness of the interviewee's arguments, which were all grounded on their personal experience.

The reliability of the interview transcripts is usually ensured by having more subjects independently transcribing the same recording and then checking for discrepancies between the different versions. Since it was not possible in this PhD dissertation study to rely on a team of collaborators who might have assisted in the task of transcribing the recordings and most importantly test their reliability, the interviews were listened to and transcribed several times by the researcher.

Transcribing the recorded interviews proved to be a time-consuming task; the recordings of some of the distance interviews, in particular, were of rather low quality and a few sentences could not be fully reconstructed. Two interviewees were sent trimmed parts of the recording of their respective interviews and asked to help the researcher to transcribe what they had said.

In order to prove that the analysis and discussion of the participants' views was grounded on what they actually said and not on reconstructions that were based on the researcher's own perspective, a data DVD with the recordings of the interviews (see Supplementary material (1)) and the transcripts of the entire interviews (see Supplementary material (2)) are annexed to the present dissertation.

In the analysis of the interviews, consistency in assigning the same thematic category to various sets of textual data was pursued by including the interviewee's own words and not the researcher's personal interpretation of the participant's arguments. The analysis process as it was discussed in detail in chapter 6 also ensured that the coding of the transcripts was done systematically.

8.4.2 Validity

In layman's terms**,** validity means whether a research study actually investigates what it is intended to investigate (Kvale 2007). Creswell and Creswell (2017) identify eight strategies that ensure the accuracy of the findings and persuade the reader of that accuracy: triangulating the sources of data, using "member checking"; providing "a rich, thick description to convey the findings" that "may transport readers to the setting" (202); explain how the researcher's background has shaped the interpretation of the findings; presenting and discussing discrepant evidence that contradicts the findings; spending prolonged time in the setting where the research is being carried out; using peer debriefing and an external editor to review the research results.

The adoption of a mixed method approach for this research study arguably achieved triangulation of the data, which consists of comparing different sets of data, obtained through different techniques, on the same topic. However, validation was also sought by ensuring the correct adoption of the research method. To this end, the questionnaire went through several versions, its design was discussed with two experts in the field of social sciences research, and it was eventually presented for feedback to one of them before its final version was developed and posted online.

In spite of the revisions that had been made to the questionnaire prior to its posting, as it was pointed out in chapter 4.2.2, the statement # 40 and question # 2 turned out to be not well formulated, raising issued of validity of the

responses. However, while the responses to one of these (# 40) were eventually invalidated, inconsistencies only emerged from very few (eleven) answers given to # 2 and the follow-up question # 2.1. The inconsistencies could be resolved by member checking and the validity of the collected was data ensured (see the comment on item # 2 in section 5.2.1).

The first two interviews, as observed earlier on, served as a pilot version and the development of the interview format was also discussed with one expert in the research field. As it was also pointed out, the interview also had the objective of following up on the questionnaire, and therefore it provided an occasion for validation by member checking, which involves taking back the findings to the participants and determine whether they feel that they are accurate. In this regard, the interviews offered insights that allowed the researcher to understand how certain items had been interpreted, suggesting correlations between variables, possible explanations for certain general trends, and interpretations that might apply to other respondents to the questionnaire who showed similar patterns in their responses.

It must be stressed that validity "does not carry the same connotations in qualitative research as it does in quantitative research" (Crewell and Creswell 2017: 201). Since qualitative methods do not produce data that are amenable to rigorous statistical analysis, and since content analysis, in the specific, involves a high degree of subjectivity on part of the researcher, it follows that, in qualitative research, validation of the findings depends to a great extent on "determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participants or the reader" (ibid.).

As regards the textual data derived for qualitative analysis, Kvale's observation that "ascertaining the validity of the interview transcripts is more intricate than assuring their reliability" (2007: 98) was born in mind. As a decontextualized conversation, the transcript is nothing more than an interpretive reconstruction and its validity thus entirely depends on the purpose of the research. As a research that aimed to uncover the attitudes that underlie the interviewees' overtly formulated views, it was made sure that the transcriptions reflected both the linguistic and the relevant pragmatic aspects of communication (such as pauses, fillers, rising or falling intonation, laughter, speaker modes, etc.), so as to provide the researcher with a textual material that lent itself to analysis of both the referential content and the forms by which this was communicated by the interviewees. The transcription conventions in figure 6.1 (see chapter 6) precisely reflect this purpose. Furthermore, each interviewee was sent her/his interview transcript for feedback by email, although only eight students replied and confirmed that the transcripts were correct. In order to ensure validity, one interview (S15) was also discarded, as noted in section 6.2.

As noted by Kvale (2007), once it is assumed that there is no objective social reality and therefore no absolute certain knowledge can ever be gained, the quality of the knowledge produced by research becomes paramount, and so the emphasis should be placed on producing "defensible knowledge claims" (123). With the interview, in particular, "continual process validation" is needed, since "validation is embedded in every stage of the construction of knowledge throughout an interview inquiry" (124). In the process of analyzing the interview data, as new topics and links emerged, previous explanations were reconsidered and all the findings from the interviews eventually underwent a continuous process of checking, questioning, and re-interpreting. Care was taken not to assume that one explanation could account for all the diversity and incongruities that appeared from the interview data. Following Kvale's suggestions, the researcher also played "the devil's advocate" towards his findings, considering the potential sources of biases and possible alternative interpretations in the process of data analysis (2007: 123).

The researcher's background quite obviously shaped his interpretation of the findings. It was observed before that the researcher has gained a considerable hands-on experience working in secondary schools as a teacher of foreign languages and is thoroughly familiar with the EFL pedagogical model. A description of the academic setting in which the participants were selected, however brief, was also provided in this dissertation. These are factors that arguably add to the validity of the findings.

Most importantly, the analysis and the discussion of the results was grounded on the theoretical principles illustrated in chapter 2 and the findings of previous empirical studies that were reviewed in chapter 3. The second and third chapter of this dissertation together provided a framework in which conflicting views on some of the topics investigated by this study were also presented and discussed. Therefore, any negative and discrepant information that runs contrary to the interpretations suggested by the researcher may be checked for and/or refuted by referring back to the review of the literature. Finally, care was taken not to overgeneralize the results beyond the sample.

8.4.3 Limitations

Only the first two interviews served as a pilot version for the subsequent ones; no exploratory questionnaire and no full-scale pilot interview study could be carried out, by which the research tools could have been firstly tried out and fine-tuned. A number of factors intervened to limit the study in this way: first of all, time constraints and the logistic difficulties created by the lockdown during the Covid 19 pandemic. Also, since the researcher was not teaching the courses where the participants were found, with the exception of the OFA English course (see 4.2.1), he had to rely on the instructors' help and availability, as well as the students' availability, which, in turn, was complicated by a busy class and exams timetable.

For the same reasons, and because of the high number of students who participated in the first phase of data collection, the reliability of the questionnaire could not be estimated by a test-retest procedure, by which the questionnaire is administered to the same respondents at two points in time and then the responses are compared. As mentioned in 4.2.1, only on one occasion was the researcher able to introduce the questionnaire in class, to a relatively number of students (ten), and be present while they were completing it. The online format, although it proved extremely practical and also necessary in the conditions created by the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, did not make it possible for the researcher to probe or explain the questions to the students. For this reason, the possibility that some responses had been given without sufficient understanding was factored in when drawing conclusions from the questionnaire results.

It has been previously observed that the questionnaire items # 2 and # 40 proved to be not well-formulated, and the latter was excluded from the discussion of the results because the responses to it could not be clearly interpreted. Nevertheless, since inconsistencies between the answers to question # 2 and the closely related question # 2.1 were found in only eleven questionnaires, it was still possible to check their validity by directly asking the respondents for clarifications via email. However, for obvious reasons, it was not possible to determine the validity of each questionnaire item response with all the students who participated in the same way. Furthermore, although the questionnaire results were taken back to the interviewees, only a percentage (11%) of the questionnaire respondents was involved in the collection of data for qualitative analysis, and so most individual questionnaire responses were not validated by member checking (as observed in the previous section of this chapter).

The possibility that some respondents had not provided true answers about themselves was considered, yet this is a limitation that is intrinsic to any research that involves human subjects. In addition, the use of a four-point scale for certain items, although dictated by the need to avoid neutral responses, may have forced some respondents to express an opinion where they did not have a well-thought one. This hypothesis that in the impossibility of opting for a middle ground a respondent may have chosen for an option that did not fully represent her/his opinion was confirmed by S14, who mentioned in the interview that "in some questions" she had "neither agreed nor disagreed" but she had nevertheless said she had agreed because "disagreeing was too extreme" ("in alcune domande ad esempio (.) uhm io non ero né in accordo né in disaccordo (.) però av- sicuramente avrò messo sono d'accordo perché comunque mettere in disaccordo era troppo:").

On top of all that, even though participation in the research study was voluntary, as pointed out in 8.4.1, it is also possible that some respondents decided to complete the questionnaire because they felt some sort of pressure to

do so, as if to please their instructor who had sent them the invitation to participate in the research. In brief, the possibility that some respondents had succumbed to the acquiescence bias, for a number of reasons, could not be ruled out. For instance, lack or loss of interest in the subject of the questionnaire may have led a respondent to complete the questionnaire without sufficient care; a perhaps unconscious desire to please the researcher may have led the respondent to select the answers which appeared to her/him more agreeable to the social norms or to what she/he perceived to be the use that the researcher would have made of the results. Also, although issues of respondent's self-image were not thought to be a major concern in this research questionnaire (see 4.3.2), it is still possible that some respondents used the questionnaire to share the views of their own ideal version of themselves, rather than to express their true opinions. In this sense, some responses may have been biased by social desirability.

Another threat to the reliability of the results, and the questionnaire results in the specific, was represented by "the human tendency to overgeneralize" which Dörnyei defines as the "halo effect" (2003: 13), by which a respondent with a positive attitude towards English and its learning, for instance, may have been disinclined to express anything less than positive about its impact and its usefulness; conversely, a student's negative experience with the learning of English may have affected all her/his other responses, regardless of their truth. In consideration of all these limitations, it is evident that no definitive conclusions could be reached by the questionnaire alone.

Although the interviews provided richer data for the analysis and strengthened the validity of the questionnaire data, the necessity of treating the questionnaire and the interviews as two separate data sets limited the possibilities of drawing more detailed conclusions. As pointed out in section 6.2, the interviewees sample was not representative of the respondents' sample, yet non-representativeness is a limit that is intrinsic to convenience (non-probability) sampling. However, even as an independent sample, the composition of the group of the interviewees represented a further limitation of this study. As the interview data analysis revealed, the greatest majority of the students who were interviewed held a positive attitude towards English. Furthermore, three interviewees out of four had had at least a long-term study abroad experience in an English-speaking country or an English-medium academic institution, and two out of three also expressed a personal interest in the English language that had motivated them to extend their English learning beyond the instructional setting of the EFL classroom. It would have been arguably interesting to also interview a consistent number of respondents who showed a negative affective attitude towards English and did not regard it particularly important for their future, for instance. Most importantly, the convenience sampling method prevented generalization of the results and the conclusions. In particular, the limited number of students who commented on the topic of EMI (refer to 6.3.3) and the single EMI degree program where they were accessed limited the research study in this sense.

It was also observed that although it would have been useful to conduct a session of focus groups, this was not possible. Not only would the focus groups have provided the researcher with another set of data for the qualitative analysis, but they would have also arguably enabled the researcher to further reduce the risk of acquiescence and social desirability bias, which was nevertheless factored in also when analyzing the interview transcripts.

Since they participated in the research on a voluntary basis, all the students that were interviewed regarded English and particularly its teaching to be an engaging topic. Although talk was abundant and unfettered in most interviews, not all of them were conducted with the same success, and some participants spoke at greater length than others of the topics suggested by the researcher. Although the researcher tried to be unobtrusive and avoided excessive verbalization, on few occasions he had to go into a detailed explanation of the question being asked, and the interviewee merely agreed without supporting her/his reply with any arguments. Short answers clearly biased by acquiescence were given possibly because the student concluded that the researcher was an authority on the subject being discussed, hence she/he thought that nothing more needed to be said, or because the student was not highly motivated to think through the question.

However, only very few answers appeared to be biased by a tendency to agree with the interviewer, regardless of the content of the question being asked. Social desirability instead was suggested in chapter 7 to have had a substantial influence on some of the interviewees. A few comments on ELF and the ease of English learning that

seemed to be biased in that way were highlighted as particularly relevant in relation to the research questions 2 and 3.

In regard to the data analysis tools and procedure, it was pointed out above that the researcher could not rely on the help of a team of collaborators who could have assisted him in the task of transcribing the interviews, as well as in the coding and categorizing of the transcripts. In addition, although the recordings and the transcripts guaranteed the reliability of the interviews, as already mentioned, only eight interviewees confirmed the validity of the interview transcripts by replying to the researcher's request to do so. More than that, as regards the validation of the results, no systematic peer debriefing on the whole set of data obtained from both instruments could be carried out, and no external auditor could be involved in the study. Finally, it is remarked once again that the findings of this study are in no way conclusive, and they cannot obviously be generalized.

8.5 Further research

In order to confirm or disprove the validity of this study's findings, more research should be undertaken that involves a larger number of participants and allows to generalize the results beyond the initial sample. In this sense, more systematic and larger-scale studies that select the participants by probability sampling would allow to gather more detailed and generalizable data. It would be particularly useful to conduct studies over a long period of time to look at possible changes in attitudes and investigate how students use English after graduation, once they have entered the professional world. Also, studies that look at how English as a lingua franca is used in various work environments would provide useful suggestions as to how schools and universities can better prepare students for ELF usage.

Curriculum design is an area that is arguably in need of further investigation. It is important to understand at what stages the study of linguistic variation and ELF should be introduced, and how this is to be integrated in the existing foreign language curricula of secondary schools and higher education programs. In addition to that, there is a need to develop classroom materials that facilitate teachers in the task of aligning the curricula to the objectives of a renewed pedagogy of the English language.

More studies are also needed that analyze the scope and the limitations of the existing English language certifications, with a view to rethinking language proficiency assessment and testing within a framework of English as a lingua franca usage. Proposals for English language certificates that test the abilities to use English in lingua franca communication should be advanced and the redesigned exams should be tested in the practice.

More than that, research studies are also needed that investigate the feasibility of ELF pedagogy, measuring its proposals against the existing human and material resources. When proposals for a renewed approach to ELT in the Italian public education system are advanced, contextual factors must be carefully considered and the expected outcomes must be measured against the actual possibilities that are made available, particularly in terms of hours of class time.

Since proposals for change must be tested in practice, there is also a need for empirical research that provides hard evidence of the effects of an ELF-informed approach to ELT. Pilot programs in selected schools that introduce students to the basic principles of linguistic variation and expose them to ELF usage would make it possible to see how a renewed ELT curriculum is received by the students, and to assess the effects of ELF-awareness raising, in terms of the perceived image of English and attitudes towards NE and NNE usage.

More research is arguably needed also in the area of EMI within the framework of the internationalization of HE. The views and attitudes of students enrolled on EMI courses in departments other than the DSLC, for instance, remain to be investigated. Students who are not majoring in foreign languages may in fact have different expectations as to language learning and the proficiency of their NNESTs, on the one hand, and lower awareness of ELF, on the other. Also, more research works are needed that investigate how, beyond rhetoric, an ELF

perspective can concretely help reposition the internationalization of HE in an equitable multilingual and pluralistic framework that respects the principles of linguistic diversity and pluralism and prevent the risk of silencing academic traditions in languages other than English.

Finally, there is a need for more empirical research that considers the attitudinal component of communicative competence and investigates the ideological influences that breed prejudicial views and attitudes towards English varieties, accents and NNE usage. Important aspects that require to be further investigated relate to the influence of native speakerism and standard language ideology on both the students' and the teachers' views and attitudes to English and ELF. There is arguably a need to encourage a critical approach to ELT, and empirical studies are needed that examine how a reflection on the ideologies that underpin traditional approaches to ELT can also change the teachers' attitudes and how they may lead teachers to change their approach in the English classroom.

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Appendix A: the questionnaire

Questionnaire about your views on English

Questionario sulle tue opinioni riguardo alla lingua inglese

Marco Bagni, PhD Student

Dottorato in Scienze Umanistiche – Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia

I would like you to help me with my doctoral studies by answering the following questions concerning your personal opinions about English. The questionnaire is not a test; therefore, you don't have to write your name on it and there are no right or wrong answers. I kindly ask you to give your answers sincerely, so that this investigation can be successful. The contents of this form are absolutely confidential and will be used only for research purposes. The questionnaire has four parts. Please follow the instructions. You may answer in Italian or English.

Thank you very much for your help.

Ti chiedo di aiutarmi con la mia ricerca dottorale rispondendo ad una serie di domande riguardanti le tue opinioni personali sulla lingua inglese. Il questionario non è un test, pertanto è anonimo, non devi cioè scrivere il tuo nome, e non ci sono risposte giuste o sbagliate. Ti chiedo gentilmente di rispondere nella maniera più sincera possibile, così che la mia indagine possa essere valida. Il contenuto di questo questionario è assolutamente riservato, e sarà utilizzato solo a fini di ricerca. Il questionario consta di quattro parti. Segui le istruzioni. Puoi rispondere sia in italiano che in inglese.

Grazie tante per il tuo aiuto.

Do you consent to be contacted for a follow-up interview? (a limited number of students will be selected for the interview and by answering Yes, you only give your consent to being contacted)

Dai il tuo consenso a venire contattato per una successiva intervista? (un numero limitato di studenti verrà selezionato per l'intervista e marcando Sì dai soltanto dando il tuo consenso a essere contattato)

□ Yes / *Sì* □ No / *No*

If you have consented by marking Yes, please write your email in the space below.

Se hai acconsentito ad essere contattato, marcando Sì, per favore scrivi la tua email qui sotto.

SECTION I

First, please fill in this section on your personal background and English learning experience.

Prima di tutto, compila questa sezione relativa al tuo background personale e alla tua esperienza di apprendimento della lingua inglese.

1. Your mother tongue(s) is/are: / *La tua/le tue lingua/e madre è/ sono:*

2. Have you learned English is school or otherwise? / *Hai imparato l'inglese a scuola o in altro modo?*

□ Yes / *Sì* □ No / *No*

2.1. If you answered Yes (to the previous question), are you satisfied with your English learning experience in school? / *Se hai risposto Sì (alla domanda precedente), sei soddisfatto della tua esperienza di apprendimento dell'inglese a scuola?*

Very much	Moderately	Not very much	Not at all
□	□	□	□
Molto	Abbastanza	Non tanto	Per niente

3. Other languages you have learned in school/university / *Altre lingue che hai studiato a scuola/università*

4. Were you born and raised in an English-speaking country? / *Sei nato e cresciuto in un paese di lingua inglese?*
□ Yes / *Sì* □ No / *No*

5. Have you ever had a summer vacation course, a study-abroad or work stage experience in an English-speaking country? / *Hai mai fatto una vacanza studio, o un'altra esperienza di studio o lavoro, come ad esempio uno stage, in un paese di lingua inglese?*

□ Yes / *Sì* □ No / *No*

6. Have you ever had a summer vacation course, a study-abroad or work stage experience in a NON-English-speaking country? / *Hai mai fatto una vacanza studio o un'altra esperienza di studio o lavoro, come ad esempio uno stage, in un paese NON di lingua inglese?*
□ Yes / *Sì* □ No / *No*

6.1. If you answered Yes (to the previous question), did you use English to communicate? / *Se hai risposto Sì (alla domanda precedente), usavi l'inglese per comunicare?*

Most of the time	Some of the time	Rarely	Never
□	□	□	□
Spesso	*Qualche volta*	*Raramente*	*Mai*

7. Are you learning English at the moment (as part of your degree course or otherwise)? / *Stai imparando inglese attualmente? (come parte del tuo percorso di studi o in altro modo)?*

□ Yes / *Sì* □ No / *No*

8. How much do you like the English language? / *Quanto ti piace la lingua inglese?*

Very much	Moderately	Not very much	Not at all
□	□	□	□
Molto	Abbastanza	Non tanto	Per niente

9. English is important for my future / *L'inglese è importante per il mio futuro*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

□	□	□	□
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

10. In the future, I would like to go to an English-speaking country to continue my studies and/or find a job. / *In future, mi piacerebbe andare in un paese di lingua inglese per continuare i miei studi e/o trovare lavoro.*
□ Yes / *Sì* □ No / *No*

11. In the future, I would like to go to a NON-English-speaking country to continue my studies and/or find a job. / *In futuro mi piacerebbe andare in un paese NON di lingua inglese per continuare i miei studi e/o trovare lavoro*
□ Yes / *Sì* □ No / *No*

SECTION II

Now, please express your views on the English language in today's world, its role and functions, by ticking the box

Ora, per favore esprimi le tue opinioni riguardo alla lingua inglese nel mondo di oggi, ai suoi ruoli e funzioni, marcando la casellina.

12. The use of English so widespread in today's world because English is easy to learn / *L'uso dell'inglese è così diffuso nel mondo di oggi perchè l'inglese è facile da imparare*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
□	□	□	□
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

13. The use of English so widespread in today's world because it is imposed / *L'uso dell'inglese è così diffuso nel mondo di oggi perchè perchè viene imposto*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
□	□	□	□
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

14. The use of English so widespread in today's world because it naturally spread all over the globe / *L'uso dell'inglese è così diffuso nel mondo di oggi perchè l'inglese perchè si è diffuso naturalmente per tutto il mondo*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
□	□	□	□
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

15. The use of English is so widespread in today's world because the British Empire spread it to the world / *L'uso dell'inglese è così diffuso nel mondo di oggi perchè lo ha diffuso l'impero britannico*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
□	□	□	□
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

16. The use of English is so widespread in today's world because of the power and influence of the USA / *L'uso dell'inglese è così diffuso nel mondo di oggi per via del potere e dell'influenza degli USA*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
□	□	□	□
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

17. The use of English is so widespread because people see no other choice than to learn and use it if they want to get by nowadays / *L'uso dell'inglese è così diffuso nel mondo perchè la gente non ha altra scelta che impararlo e usarlo se vuole cavarsela oggigiorno*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
□	□	□	□
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

18. A command of English is useful to travel for business / *Una padronanza dell'inglese è utile per viaggiare per lavoro*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

19. A command of English is useful to travel for pleasure / *Una padronanza dell'inglese è utile per viaggiare per piacere*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

20. A command of English is useful to access information on internet / *Una padronanza dell'inglese è utile per accedere alle informazioni su internet*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

21. A command of English is useful to watch the latest movies and TV shows / *Una padronanza dell'inglese è utile per vedere gli ultimi film e programmi TV*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

22. A command of English is useful to keep up with the latest trends in lifestyle / *Una padronanza dell'inglese è utile per essere aggiornati sulle ultime mode*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

23. A command of English is useful to communicate with people from other countries and cultures who are non-native speakers of English / *Una padronanza dell'inglese è utile per comunicare con persone di altri paesi e altre culture che non sono parlanti nativi di inglese*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

24. Proficiency in English enhances the competitiveness of individuals in the labor market / *Un'alta competenza in inglese aumenta la competitività dell'individuo nel mercato del lavoro*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

25. Proficiency in English in a country's population increases the competitiveness of the country's economy / *Un'alta competenza in inglese diffusa nella popolazione di un paese aumenta la competitività dell'economia di quel paese*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

26. A command of English is a necessary skill in my home country's education system / *Una padronanza dell'inglese è una abilità necessaria nel sistema di istruzione del mio paese*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

27. A command of English is a necessary skill in my home country's work world / *Una padronanza dell'inglese è una abilità necessaria nel mondo del lavoro del mio paese*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

28. Everyone in my home country should speak English as a second language / *Tutti nel mio paese dovrebbero parlare inglese come seconda lingua*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

29. Everyone in the world who is not a native speaker of English should speak English as a second language / *Tutti coloro, nel mondo, che non sono parlanti nativi dell'inglese dovrebbero parlare inglese come seconda lingua*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

30. You can get by anywhere in the world if you speak English / *Se parli inglese puoi cavartela ovunque nel mondo*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

31. In today's world, English is the essential language of modern technology / *Nel mondo di oggi l'inglese è la lingua fondamentale della moderna tecnologia*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

32. In today's world, English is the essential language of science / *Nel mondo di oggi l'inglese è la lingua fondamentale della scienza*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

33. In today's world, English is the essential language of business / *Nel mondo di oggi l'inglese è la lingua fondamentale degli affari*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

34. English the language of globalization / *L'inglese è la lingua della globalizzazione*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

35. English the language of progress / *L'inglese è la lingua del progresso*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

36. English the language of democracy / *L'inglese è la lingua della democrazia*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

37. Proficiency in English is typical only of the populations of the most modern and developed nations / *Un'alta competenza in inglese è tipica soltanto delle popolazioni delle nazioni più moderne e sviluppate*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

38. Low competence in English in a country's population correlates with the country's backwardness / *Una scarsa competenza in inglese nella popolazione di un correla con l'arretratezza di quel paese*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

39. Not being a native speaker of English puts one at disadvantage in today's world / *Il fatto di non essere un parlante nativo dell'inglese pone in una posizione di svantaggio nel mondo di oggi*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

40. Native speakers of English should be more tolerant towards speakers of other languages and accept their non-native-like English / *I parlanti nativi di inglese dovrebbero essere più tolleranti verso i parlanti di altre lingue ed accettare il loro inglese non da madrelingua*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

41. It is better to use English as the only common language than having to translate to and from a number of languages / *È meglio usare l'inglese come unica lingua comune che dovere tradurre tra diverse lingue*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

42. Using English as the single common language of international communication is unfair to speakers of other languages / *Usare l'inglese come unica lingua comune della comunicazione internazionale è discriminatorio nei confronti dei parlanti di altre lingue*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

43. Native speakers of English don't need to learn a foreign language / *I parlanti nativi di inglese non hanno bisogno di imparare una lingua straniera*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

44. Native speakers of English should learn (at least) a foreign language / *I parlanti nativi di inglese dovrebbero imparare (almeno) una lingua straniera*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

45. The use of a single global language promotes peace and democracy in the world / *L'uso di un'unica lingua globale promuove la pace e la democrazia nel mondo*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

46. English is a threat to the world's linguistic and cultural diversity / *L'inglese è una minaccia alla diversità linguistica e culturale del mondo*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

47. An increased use of English in education in a non-English speaking country is bound to lower the standards of the country's national language / *L'espansione dell'uso dell'inglese nel sistema di istruzione di un paese non di lingua inglese è destinato a portare ad un impoverimento della lingua nazionale*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

48. English is a threat to my home country's national language / *L'inglese è una minaccia alla lingua nazionale del mio paese*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

49. English is a threat to local cultures and traditions in my home country / *L'inglese è una minaccia alle culture e tradizioni locali nel mio paese*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

50. The widespread use of English in the world, in so many domains should be prevented / *L'uso diffuso dell'inglese nel mondo, in così tanti contesti, dovrebbe essere evitato*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

51. English is better suited than any other languages to function as a global language / *L'inglese è meglio adatto di ogni altra lingua a funzionare come lingua globale*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

52. All languages, in theory, can perform the functions of English / *Tutte le lingue, in teoria, possono svolgere le funzioni dell'inglese*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

53. There are other languages in the world that are as equally important as English / *Ci sono altre lingue nel mondo importanti tanto quanto l'inglese*

□ Yes / *Sì*

□ No / *No*

53.1 If you answered yes to the previous question, please specify what language(s) / *Se hai risposto sì alla domanda precedente, per favore specifica che lingua(-e)*

If YES, please specify: / Se YES, per favore specifica:

54. There are other languages in the world that are more important than English / *Ci sono altre lingue nel mondo che sono più importanti dell'inglese*

□ Yes / *Sì*

□ No / *No*

54.1 If you answered yes to the previous question, please specify what language(s) / *Se hai risposto sì alla domanda precedente, per favore specifica che lingua(-e)*

If YES, please specify: / Se YES, per favore specifica:

SECTION III

VIEWS ON ENGLISH TEACHING

Now, please express your views on English language teaching and learning by ticking the box.
Ora, esprimi le tue opinioni sull'insegnamento e apprendimento dell'inglese, marcando la casellina.

55. Teachers of English must avoid using the students' mother tongue (e.g. Italian) in the classroom / *Gli insegnanti di inglese non devono usare la lingua madre degli studenti (es. l'italiano) in aula*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

56. Teachers of English must know how to speak their students' mother tongue / *Gli insegnanti di inglese devono sapere parlare la lingua madre dei loro studenti*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

57. The best teacher of English is a native speaker of English / *Il migliore insegnante d'inglese è un parlante native dell'inglese*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

58. English learning in your home country should start from preschool / *L'apprendimento dell'inglese nel tuo paese dovrebbe iniziare sin dalla scuola dell'infanzia*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

59. In my home country, English should not be made a mandatory subject and students should be free to choose the foreign languages they want to learn in school / *Nel mio paese, l'inglese non dovrebbe essere una materia obbligatoria a scuola e gli studenti dovrebbero essere liberi di scegliere le lingue straniere che vogliono studiare*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

60. Which do you think is the best destination to go to study and improve one's English? / Quale pensi che sia la migliore destinazione per andare a studiare e migliorare il proprio inglese?

Tick only one box: / Marca un'unica casellina:

□ the USA

□ Canada

□ England

□ Scotland

□ Ireland

□ Wales

□ Australia

□ New Zealand

□ South Africa

□ India

□ Another African country with English as official language (e.g. Nigeria, Ghana, Zambia)

□ Another Asian country with English as official language (e.g. Singapore, Hong Kong)

□ Other / Altro: _____

SECTION IV

Now, please answer these questions about your use of and exposition to English by ticking the box. If your answer is not in the list, please write in the box provided.

Ora, per favore rispondi alle seguenti domande relative alla tua esperienza di uso ed esposizione alla lingua inglese. Se la tua risposta non è nella lista, per favore scrivi nello spazio che ti è dato.

61. I am comfortable with my English pronunciation / *Sono a mio agio con la mia pronuncia in inglese*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
□	□	□	□
Per nulla d'accordo	Non d'accordo	D'accordo	Molto d'accordo

62. Do you try to imitate a particular accent or speech style when you speak English? / *Cerchi di imitare un particolare accento o stile di parlata quando parli inglese?*

□ Yes / *Sì* □ No / *No*

62.1. If you answered Yes to the previous question, who do you want to sound like when you speak English? / *Se hai risposto Sì alla domanda precedente, a chi vuoi assomigliare quando parli inglese?*

Tick only one box. Write in the space provided if your answer is not there. / *Marca un'unica casellina. Scrivi nello spazio che ti è dato se la tua risposta non è presente nelle opzioni.*

□ An American TV host/newsreader / *Un presentatore della TV americana*

□ A BBC TV host/newsreader / *Un presentatore della BBC*

□ The speakers of my school's textbook CD / *Le voci del CD del mio libro di testo di scuola*

□ My non-native teacher of English / *Il mio-la mia insegnante di inglese non madrelingua*

□ Other or someone in particular: / *Altro o qualcuno in particolare:*

63. How often do you happen to speak English with native English-speakers, outside the learning context? / *Con quale frequenza ti capita di parlare inglese con parlanti nativi di inglese, al di fuori del contesto di apprendimento?*

Most of the time	Some of the time	Rarely	Never
□	□	□	□
Spesso	*Qualche volta*	*Raramente*	*Mai*

64. How often do you happen to speak English with NON-native English-speakers, outside the learning context? / *Con quale frequenza ti capita di parlare in inglese con parlanti NON nativi dell'inglese, al di fuori del contesto di apprendimento?*

Most of the time	Some of the time	Rarely	Never
□	□	□	□
Spesso	*Qualche volta*	*Raramente*	*Mai*

65. How often do you happen to communicate in English in writing with native speakers outside the learning context (email, messenger, whatsapp…)? / *Con quale frequenza ti capita di comunicare scrivendo in inglese con parlanti nativi dell'inglese, al di fuori del contesto di apprendimento?*

Most of the time	Some of the time	Rarely	Never
□	□	□	□
Spesso	*Qualche volta*	*Raramente*	*Mai*

66. How often do you happen to communicate in English in writing with NON-native speakers outside the learning context (using email, messenger, whatsapp…)? / *Con quale frequenza ti capita di comunicare scrivendo in inglese con parlanti NON nativi dell'inglese, al di fuori del contesto di apprendimento (usando la email, messenger, whatsapp…)?*

Most of the time	Some of the time	Rarely	Never
□	□	□	□
Spesso	*Qualche volta*	*Raramente*	*Mai*

67. How often do you watch movies, TV series and programs in English outside the learning context? / *Con quale frequenza guardi film, serie TV e programmi TV in inglese al di fuori del contesto di apprendimento?*

Most of the time	Some of the time	Rarely	Never
□	□	□	□
Spesso	*Qualche volta*	*Raramente*	*Mai*

68. How often do you read in English outside the learning context? / *Con quale frequenza leggi in inglese al di fuori del contesto di apprendimento?*

Most of the time	Some of the time	Rarely	Never
□	□	□	□
Spesso	*Qualche volta*	*Raramente*	*Mai*

Please enter these personal details by tick a box and by writing in the space provided.

Per favore inserisci questi dati personal marcando la casella e scrivendo nello spazio che ti è dato.

69. Age/*età*: ☐ 70. Gender: Male / *Maschio* □ Female / *Femmina* □

71. Grade / *Anno di corso*

□ 1s / 1° □ 2nd / 2° □ 3rd / 3° □ 4th / 4° □ 5th / 5°

72. If you are an exchange student, please specify your Home University / *Se sei uno studente in scambio, per favore specifica la tua Università di provenienza:*

73. Degree course / *Corso di laurea*:

73.1. If you are an exchange student, please specify also your major at your home university / *Se sei uno studente in scambio, per favore specifica anche il tuo corso di laurea nella tua università di provenienza*

Thank you very much for participating in this study. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like a copy of the results. My email address is marco.bagni@unimore.it

Grazie per avere partecipato a questa indagine. Non esitare a contattarmi se ti interessa avere una copia dei risultati. Il mio indirizzo email è marco.bagni@unimore.it

Appendix B: pilot interview grid

PERSONAL NARRATIVE		
First, I am asking you to start by telling me what you are studying, what your goals and aspirations are. I will listen and not interrupt you until you have finished.		
TOPIC ONE: English as a necessary skill		
KEY QUESTION	Probes	Follow-ups
What is it about English that it is so important for your future?		*So, is it for personal or, let's say, academic or professional reasons that you think English is (so) important for your future?*
		What are your future intentions?
		Do you have a particular interest in the English language?
		What's your ultimate goal of learning English?
		What motivated you to learn English?
		…
TOPIC TWO: learning model		
KEY QUESTION	Probes	Follow-ups
What English should be taught and learned?		*Is there one English or more Englishes?*
		Is there a 'proper', 'correct' English? / Are some Englishes more correct than others?
		Is any place home to something like the 'real' English?
		Who owns the English language?
		Who is the NS of English?
		Is English the expression of a particular culture?
		…
TOPIC THREE: the teaching of English from the learners' viewpoint		
KEY QUESTION	Probes	Follow-ups
"Do you think that the teaching of English as you have experienced it is in tune with the contemporary realities of English and with today's learners' needs?"		*Based on your experience as a learner, what have the main problems/critical aspects of the teaching of English been?*
		Should English be learned together with cultural aspects, such as literature, current affairs, lifestyle?
		…
		(Follow up on the Questionnaire – Section IV)
		…
		…

Appendix C: interview grid

Interview Grid

GREETING AND INTRODUCTION

"Hello, first of all, thank you for coming. As I anticipated you in the questionnaire, my doctoral research is an investigation into the student's attitudes to English and, at this second stage, I am interested in particular in your views on English learning and teaching in in today's world. Your opinions are important to me, so I am asking you to please be upfront and feel free to speak openly. As in the questionnaire, there are no right and wrong answers and I will keep everything you say strictly confidential. I am recording this interview so I can listen to it later and transcribe it. If you wish, you can also request a transcript of it. This interview should not last more than 45 minutes."

PERSONAL NARRATIVE		
"Could you please tell me your name, what you are studying, and tell about your experience with the English language, in and out of school? I will listen and not interrupt you until you have finished."		
TRANSITION QUESTION		
"What are your plans after graduation?"		
KEY QUESTIONS	FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS	
"…and so, you say English is important for your future because…" …and let the student complete the sentence, or simply draw the conclusion from the answer to the previous question.	*"Have you a particular personal interest in the English language that motivated you to learn it?"* *(if the interviewee disagreed with #8 in the questionnaire: "What is it about English that you do not particularly like?"*)	TOPICS
"Do you think that the teaching of English as you have experienced it is in tune with the contemporary realities of English and with today's learners' needs?"	*"Based on your experience as a learner, what have the main problems/critical aspects of the teaching of English been?"*	Learning experience
	Comment on#56-59 in the questionnaire (the tenets of ELT)	
	"is the English you have learned in school the same English you have encountered out of school?"	Variation
	"What English should be learned?"	Appropriateness and legitimacy
	"Is there a variety of English that is more appropriate than others?"	
	"Where on the world map should we look for the appropriate English?"	
	A comment on #63 in the questionnaire	
	"Yet there is an accent of English that you prefer and try to imitate (#63.1 in the questionnaire): would it make a good model for learning?	
	"Is the English of your favorite TV shows and movies (#68 in the questionnaire) a good model for its learning?"	
	"Is pronunciation important for proficiency in English?"	Pronunciation
	A comment on #62 in questionnaire	
"Do you think that the learning of the English language should include some cultural content (like literature, current affairs, lifestyle…)?"	*"Is the English language the expression of one specific culture?"*	Cultures of English
	"Where should we look on the world map for this culture of English?"	
	"Yet/So English is (also) the language of globalization (#35 in the questionnaire): who owns the English language today?"	Ownership and legitimacy
	"Who speaks English today?"	
	"Who is the native speaker of English?"	
	"Is English (just) a (neutral) tool for communication?"	Instrumental *versus* symbolic
	"Do you think that language is (also) the expression of culture?"	
	"Yet/So English is (also) the language of globalization" (#35 in the questionnaire): "What is it about English that makes it the language of globalization/a language for intercultural communication?" (also links to #52-55 in the questionnaire)	Special status of English
	"What is it about English that makes it different from the other languages?" (if the interviewee accorded special status to English: #52-55 in the questionnaire)"	
ENDING QUESTION		
"Have you any comments on the questionnaire?"		

CONCLUSION

Thank you for your time and your collaboration.

Appendix D: demographic information

Table D.1: Number of respondents by age (#69). The mode age is in bold.

Respondents by age	Age #69																													
	18	**19**	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	48	57	Tot
Nr.	4	51	48	27	25	24	20	7	7	2	2	2	5	3	1	3	3	1	3	1	3	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	1	254

Mean age = 23.6

Table D.2: age of respondents by degree program (R #73, C #69). In bold, the value corresponding to the mode.

degree program	age																													
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	48	57	Tot
MOI	1	**28**	14	7	7	2	2		1	1		1							2		1	1				1	1			70
MOI ing mec				1																										1
SCO		9	**10**	3	1	1	1			1											1									27
PICI					1	3	4		1		1		1																	11
MCI					1	1																								2
SEDU	3	12	**21**	12	8	5	6	2	3		1	1	4	3		3	1	1	1	1	1		1		1	1	2	2	1	97
STPS		1	2		2		1								1		1													8
SPED							1																							1
LACOM				4	5	**12**	5	5	2								1													34
LCE		1	1																					1						3
Tot	4	51	48	27	25	24	20	7	7	2	2	2	5	3	1	3	3	1	3	1	3	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	1	254

Table D.3: age of respondents by gender (R #70, C #69). In bold, the value corresponding to the mode.

gender	age																													
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	48	57	**Tot**
F	4	**47**	43	22	19	21	18	6	7	2	2	2	5	3	1	2	3		2	1	3	1	1	1	1	2	2	2		223
M		4	5	5	**6**	3	2	1								1		1	1								1		1	31
Tot	4	51	48	27	25	24	20	7	7	2	2	2	5	3	1	3	3	1	3	1	3	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	1	254

Female respondents' mean age = 23.5

Male respondents' mean age = 24.6

Table D.4: respondents' mother tongue:

mother tongue	**n**
Italian	224
Italian + French	2
Italian + German	1
Italian + Albanian	1
Italian + Moroccan Darja	1
Italian + Polish	1
Italian + English	1
Italian + Macedonian	1
Italian + Spanish	1
Italian + Punjabi	1
Tot. bilingual NS Italian + other	*10*
Vietnamese	3
Arabic	2
Modovan	2
Russian	2
Chinese	1
French	1
German	1
Romanian	1
Spanish	1
Turkish	1
Polish	1
Albanian	1
Russian + Romanian	2
Russian + Belarusian	1
Tot. NNS Italian	*20*

Appendix E: respondents' background information (as provided by themselves)

Table E.1: Have you ever had a summer vacation course, a study-abroad or work stage experience in an English-speaking country? (item # 5)

# 5	age																												Tot.
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	48	57	
Yes / Sì	**1**	**17**	**18**	**9**	**9**	**11**	**13**	**5**	**2**	**1**	**1**		**3**	**1**	**1**		**2**	**1**	**1**		**1**	**1**				**1**	**1**			*100 (39.4%)*
No / No	**3**	**34**	**30**	**18**	**16**	**13**	**7**	**2**	**5**	**1**	**1**	**2**	**2**	**2**		**3**	**1**		**2**	**1**	**2**		**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**2**	**2**	**1**	*154 (60.6%)*
Tot.	*4*	*51*	*48*	*27*	*25*	*24*	*20*	*7*	*7*	*2*	*2*	*2*	*5*	*3*	*1*	*3*	*3*	*1*	*3*	*1*	*3*	*1*	*1*	*1*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*2*	*1*	*254*

Table E.1.1: Responses to item # 5 by age range:

# 5	age range				*Tot.*
	18-24	25-29	30-35	≥36	
yes	**78 (39.2%)**	**9 (45%)**	**8 (50%)**	**5 (26.3%)**	*100 (39.4%)*
no	**121 (60.8%)**	**11 (55%)**	**8 (50%)**	**14 (73.7%)**	*154 (60.6%)*
Tot.	*199*	*20*	*16*	*19*	*254*

Table E.2: Have you ever had a summer vacation course, a study-abroad or work stage experience in a non-English-speaking country? (item # 6)

# 6	age																												Tot.
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	48	57	
Yes / Sì		**29**	**18**	**10**	**13**	**14**	**14**	**5**	**3**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**2**	**2**	**1**	**1**	**3**	**1**			**2**			**1**			**1**	**1**	**1**	*125 (49.2%)*
No / No	**4**	**22**	**30**	**17**	**12**	**10**	**6**	**2**	**4**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**3**	**1**		**2**			**3**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**		**1**	**2**	**2**	**1**		*129 (50.8%)*
Tot.	*4*	*51*	*48*	*27*	*25*	*24*	*20*	*7*	*7*	*2*	*2*	*2*	*5*	*3*	*1*	*3*	*3*	*1*	*3*	*1*	*3*	*1*	*1*	*1*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*2*	*1*	*254*

Table E.2.1: Responses to item # 6 by age range:

# 6	age range				*Tot.*
	18-24	25-29	30-35	≥36	
yes	**98 (49.2%)**	**11 (55%)**	**10 (62.5%)**	**6 (31.6%)**	*125 (49.2%)*
no	**101 (50.8%)**	**9 (45%)**	**6 (37.5%)**	**13 (68.4%)**	*129 (50.8%)*
Tot.	*199*	*20*	*16*	*19*	*254*

Table E.3: use of English in speaking with NESs by degree program and Department.

Degree program and department	How often do you happen to speak with NESs? (# 63)				Tot
	Most of the time	**Some of the time**	**Rarely**	**Never**	
LACOM	5 (14.7%)	10 (29.4%)	12 (32.3%)	7 (20.6%)	34
LCE			1 (33.3%)	2 (66.7%)	3
Tot DSLC	*5 (13.5%)*	*10 (27%)*	*13 (35.1%)*	*9 (24.3%)*	*37*
MCI	1 (50%)		1 (50%)		2
MOI*	3 (4.2%)	14 (19.7%)	34 (47.9%)	20 (28.25)	71
PICI		4 (36.4%)	7 (63.6%)		11
SCO	3 (11.1%)	3 (11.1%)	15 (55.6%)	6 (22.2%)	27
Tot DCE	*7 (6.3%)*	*21 (18.9%)*	*57 (51.4%)*	*26 (23.4%)*	*111*
SEDU	6 (6.2%)	13 (13.4%)	42 (43.3%)	36 (37.1%)	97
SPED			1 (100%)		1
STPS		1 (12.5%)	5 (50%)	2 (25%)	8
Tot DESU	*6 (5.7%)*	*14 (13.2%)*	*48 (45.3%)*	*38 (35.8%)*	*106*
Total sample	18 (7.1%)	45 (17.7%)	118 (46.5%)	73 (28.7%)	254

Table E.4: use of English in speaking with NNESs by degree program and Department.

Degree program and Department	How often do you happen to speak with NNESs? (# 64)				Tot
	Most of the time	**Some of the time**	**Rarely**	**Never**	
LACOM	10 (29.4%)	10 (29.4%)	11 (32.4%)	3 (8.8%)	34
LCE			1 (33.3%)	2 (66.7%)	3
Tot DSLC	*10 (27%)*	*10 (27%)*	*12 (32.4%)*	*6 (16.2%)*	*37*
MCI	1 (50%)		1 (50%)		2
MOI*	7 (9.9%)	18 (25.4%)	32 (45%	14 (19.7%)	71
PICI	1 (8.4%)	6 (55.2%)	4 (36.4%)		11
SCO	4 (14.8%)	8 (29.6%)	13 (48.2%)	2 (7.4%)	27
Tot DCE	*13 (11.7%)*	*30 (27%)*	*50 (45%)*	*26 (14.4%)*	*111*
SEDU	7 (7.2%)	30 (31%)	39 (40.2%)	21 (21.6%)	97
SPED			1 (100%)		1
STPS		4 (50%)	2 (25%)	2 (25%)	8
Tot DESU	*7 (6.6%)*	*34 (32.1%)*	*42 (39.6%)*	*23 (21.7%)*	*106*
Total sample	30 (11.8%)	76 (29.9%)	104 (41%)	44	254

*The MOI group of respondents includes one student of the BA in Mechanical Engineering.

Table E.5: use of English in writing with NESs by degree program and Department.

Degree program and Department	How often do you happen to communicate in English in writing with NESs? (# 65)				Tot
	Most of the time	**Some of the time**	**Rarely**	**Never**	
LACOM	7 (20.6%)	9 (26.5%)	14 (41.2%)	4 (11.8%)	34
LCE			1 (33.3%)	2 (66.7%)	3
Tot DSLC	*7 (18.9%)*	*9 (24.3%)*	*15 (40.5%)*	*6 (16.2%)*	*37*
MCI	1 (50%)		1 (50%)		2
MOI*	7 (9.9%)	14 (19.7%)	27 (38%)	23 (32.4%)	71
PICI	2 (18.2%)	4 (36.4%)	2 (18.2%)	3 (27.3%)	11
SCO	3 (33.3%)	8 (29.6%)	10 (37%)	6 (22.2%)	27
Tot DCE	*13 (11.7%)*	*30 (27%)*	*50 (45%)*	*26 (14.4%)*	*111*
SEDU	9 (9.3%)	12 (12.4%)	30 (30.9%)	46 (47.4%)	97
SPED				1 (100%)	1
STPS	1 (12.5%)	2 (25%)	3 (37.5%)	2 (25%)	8
Tot DESU	*7 (6.6%)*	*34 (32.1%)*	*42 (39.6%)*	*23 (21.7%)*	*106*
Total sample	30 (11.8%)	49 (19.3%)	88 (34.6%)	87 (34.3%)	254

Table E.6: use of English in writing with NNESs by degree program and Department:

Degree program and Department	How often do you happen to communicate in English in writing with NNESs? (#66)				Tot
	Most of the time	**Some of the time**	**Rarely**	**Never**	
LACOM	9 (26.5%)	13 (38.2%)	11 (32.4%)	1 (2.9%)	34
LCE			1 (33.3%)	2 (66.7%)	3
Tot DSLC	*9 (24.3%)*	*13 (35.1%)*	*12 (32.4%)*	*3 (8.1%)*	*37*
MCI	1 (50%)			1 (50%)	2
MOI	6 (8.5%)	17 (23.9%)	25 (35.2%)	23 (32.4%)	71
PICI	4 (36.4%)	3 (27.2%)	2 (18.2%)	2 (18.2%)	11
SCO	6 (22.2%)	7 (26%)	10 (37%)	4 (14.8%)	27
Tot DCE	*17 (15.3%)*	*27 (24.3%)*	*37 (33.3%)*	*30 (27%)*	*111*
SEDU	10 (10.3%)	17 (17.5%)	41 (42.3%)	29 (28.9%)	97
SPED				1 (100%)	1
STPS		3 (37.5%)	3 (37.5%)	2 (25%)	8
Tot DESU	*10 (9.4%)*	*20 (18.9%)*	*44 (41.5%)*	*32 (30.2%)*	*106*
Total sample	36 (14.2%)	60 (23.6%)	93 (36.6%)	65 (25.6%)	254

*The MOI group of respondents includes one student of the BA in Mechanical Engineering.

Table E.7: frequency of TV/movie viewing in English by degree program and Department

Degree program and Department	How often do you watch movies, TV series and programs in English? (# 67)				Tot
	Most of the time	**Some of the time**	**Rarely**	**Never**	
LACOM	26 (76.4%)	4 (11.8%)	3 (8.8%)	1 (3%)	34
LCE		1 (33.3%)	1 (33.3%)	1 (33.3%)	3
Tot DSLC	*26 (70.3%)*	*5 (13.5%)*	*4 (10.8%)*	*2 (5.4%)*	*37*
MCI	1 (50%)	1 (50%)			2
MOI	20 (28.6%)	14 (20%)	19 (27.1%)	17 (24.3%)	70
MOIing mec		1 (100%)			1
PICI	4 (36.4%)	7 (63.6%)			11
SCO	11 (40.7%)	9 (33.3%)	4 (14.8%)	3 (11.1%)	27
Tot DCE	*36 (32.4%)*	*32 (28.8%)*	*23 (20.7%)*	*20 (18%)*	*111*
SEDU	25 (25.8%)	23 (23.7%)	29 (29.9%)	20 (20.6%)	97
SPED	1 (100%)				1
STPS	3 (37.5%)	5 (62.5%)			8
Tot DESU	*28 (26.4%)*	*28 (26.4%)*	*29 (27.4%)*	*20 (18.9%)*	*106*
Tot	91 (35.8%)	65 (25.6%)	56 (22%)	42 (16.5%)	254

Table E.8: frequency of reading in English by degree program and Department

Degree program and Department	How often do you read in English? (# 68)				Tot
	Most of the time	**Some of the time**	**Rarely**	**Never**	
LACOM	16 (47.1%)	15 (44.1%)	3 (8.8%)		34
LCE		1 (33.3%)	1 (33.3%)	1 (33.3%)	3
Tot DSLC	*16 (43.2%)*	*16 (43.2%)*	*4 (10.8%)*	*1 (2.7%)*	*37*
MCI	1 (50%)		1 (50%)		2
MOI*	14 (19.7%)	14 (19.7%)	18 (25.4)	25 (35.2%)	71
PICI	4 (36.4%)	4 (36.4%)	3 (27.6%)		11
SCO	6 (22.2%)	10 (37%)	7 (26%)	4 (14.8%)	27
Tot DCE	*25 (22.5%)*	*28 (25.2%)*	*29 (26.1%)*	*29 (26.1%)*	*111*
SEDU	17 (17.5%)	17 (17,5%)	33 (34%)	30 (31%)	97
SPED			1 (100%)		1
STPS	1 (12.5%)	4 (50%)	3 (37.5%)		8
Tot DESU	*18 (17%)*	*21 (19.8%)*	*37 (37%)*	*30 (28.3%)*	*106*
Tot	59 (23.2%)	65 (25.6%)	70 (27.6%)	60 (23.6%)	254

*The MOI group of respondents includes one student of the BA in Mechanical Engineering.

Appendix F: English and the other languages

Table F.1: verbatim responses to item # 53.1: languages that are as important as English

Respondent number	Responses to item # 53.1 – Languages that are thought to be as important as English (English translation is provided in brackets).
42	Ad esempio il cinese e il tedesco (For instance Chinese and German)
4	All languages share the same importance because they define a specific culture.
106	Any language matters
215	Arab, Chinese and French
107	arabo e cinese (Arab and Chinese)
204	Arabo e cinese (Arab and Chinese)
114	Arabo e lingue orientali (Arab and oriental languages)
109	Arabo Francese (Arab and French)
208	Arabo spagnolo francese tedesco cinese (Arab Spanish French German Chinese)
97	Arabo, cinese (Arab, Chinese)
70	Arabo, Cinese, Russo, Tedesco (Arab, Russian, German)
22	At the moment, the Chinese is very important.
73	Chinese
85	Chinese
95	chinese
243	Chinese
244	Chinese
53	Chinese
161	Chinese
5	Chinese and Spanish
65	Chinese and Spanish
232	Chinese is increasing of importance
154	Chinese mandarin
241	chinese, french
167	Chinese, Russian
101	Chinese, Russian; Arabic, Spanish
237	Chinese; Arabic
35	Cinese (Chinese)
41	Cinese
43	Cinese
61	Cinese
79	Cinese
120	Cinese
124	cinese
135	Cinese
141	CINESE
159	Cinese
170	Cinese
190	Cinese
60	Cinese
194	Cinese
211	Cinese
182	Cinese e Spagnolo (Chinese and Spanish)
242	Cinese e Spagnolo
201	cinese francese (Chinese French)

104	Cinese mandarino , hindi (Mandarin Chinese, Hindi)
13	Cinese, arabo, giapponese (Chinese, Arab, Japanese)
103	Cinese, Arabo, Russo (Chinese, Arab, Russian)
129	Cinese, arabo, russo
145	cinese, francese, spagnolo e russo (Chinese, French, Spanish, Russian)
156	Cinese, giapponese, Tedesco (Chinese, Japanese, German)
148	Cinese, spagnolo (Chinese, Spanish)
178	Cinese, Spagnolo
112	Cinese, spagnolo, francese (Chinese, Spanish, French)
189	Cinese, spagnolo, russo e tedesco (Chinese, Spanish, Russian and German)
105	cinese/arabo/russo (Chinese/Arab/Russian)
177	Cinese/Giapponese (Chinese/Japanese)
72	Every language Is important
126	Farei un distinguo fra importanza, versatilità e diffusione. Tutte le lingue sono importanti, alcune sono più versatili o diffuse di altre. (I would distinguish between importance, versatility and spread. All languages are important, some are more versatile or widespread than others.)
140	Francese cinese (French Chinese)
28	Francese (French)
45	Francese
39	francese
249	Francese spagnolo e cinese (French Spanish Chinese)
220	Francese spagnolo russo (french Spanish Russian)
121	Francese, giapponese, cinese spagnolo e portoghese (French, Japanese, Chinese Spanish and Portuguese)
32	Francese, spagnolo (French, Spanish)
202	Francese, spagnolo
29	Francese, Spagnolo e Cinese (French, Spanish and Chinese)
110	Francese, Tedesco (French, German)
206	Francese, tedesco, spagnolo e cinese (French, German, Spanish and Chinese)
47	Francese, Tedesco, spagnolo, lingue orientali (french, German, Spanish, oriental languages)
3	French, Arabic
118	French, Chinese
234	French, Chinese and Arab
185	French, chinese, Arabic and Russian
238	French, Chinese, Spanish
207	French, german and spanish languages
187	French, Spanish and Portugese
9	French, spanish, german, chinese, arabic
222	french,spanish and german
179	French/ Germany
19	Giapponese (Japanese)
99	Il cinese (Chinese)
33	Il Cinese, il Russo, il Tedesco, il Giapponese (Chinese, Russian, German, Japanese)
49	Italian, Spanish, Chinese
162	Italiano (Italian)
81	Italiano, cinese, francese, spagnolo, giapponese (Italian, Chinese, French, Spanish, Japanese)
199	italiano, francese, tedesco, spagnolo (Italian, French, German, Spanish)
23	Japanese
153	latino - greco antico - italiano (tutte e tre per l'aspetto storico-culturale) (Latin - ancient Greek – Italian (all three of them for the historical-cultural aspect)
136	Le lingue slave (Slavic languages)
54	Lingue del nord europa (Northern European languages)
51	Mandarin

226	Per lo meno il Cinese, Spagnolo che sono le due lingue più parlate al mondo e che anche nel sistema di istruzione italiano vengono considerate marginalmente in quanto si continuano a proporre (oltre all'inglese) il tedesco e il francese. (At least Cinese, Spanish which are the tow most spoken languages of the world and which also in the Italian education system are only marginally considered because the offer continues to be limited to German and French (besides English).
36	Russian, Chinese
223	Russian, Chinese
18	russo cinese arabo (Russian Chinese Arabic)
46	Russo, cinese e giapponese (Russian, Chinese, Japanese)
68	Russo, Cinese, Arabo
12	Russo, spagnolo (Russian, Spanish)
151	Russo, tedesco (Rusian, German)
17	Spagnolo (Spanish)
64	Spagnolo
69	Spagnolo
78	Spagnolo
91	Spagnolo
96	Spagnolo
184	spagnolo
191	Spagnolo
213	Spagnolo
252	spagnolo
84	spagnolo – francese (Spanish – French)
142	Spagnolo - francese – portoghese (Spanish – French – Portuguese)
143	Spagnolo e Cinese (Spanish and Chinese)
195	Spagnolo e francese (Spanish and French)
48	Spagnolo, Cinese
113	Spagnolo, Cinese
116	Spagnolo, Cinese
224	Spagnolo, cinese
250	Spagnolo, cinese
172	Spagnolo, Cinese e Arabo (Spanish, Chinese, Arabic)
138	Spagnolo, cinese, arabo
212	Spagnolo, cinese, arabo, tedesco (Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, German)
131	spagnolo, cinese, italiano, tedesco,ecc... (Spanish, Chinese, Italian, German etc…)
14	Spagnolo, francese (Spanish, French)
77	Spagnolo, francese
180	Spagnolo, francese
253	Spagnolo, francese, cinese, giapponese, arabo (Spanish, French, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic)
221	Spagnolo, Francese, Mandarino (Spanish, French, Mandarin)
98	Spagnolo, italiano, cinese, francese (Spanish, Italian, Chinese, French)
155	spagnolo, tedesco, francese. (Spanish, German, French.)
50	Spagnolo,cinese, arabo (Spanish, Chinese, Arabic)
181	Spagnolo/Francese (Spanish/French)
186	spain, chinies, russian
10	Spanish
37	Spanish
196	Spanish
209	Spanish
227	Spanish
231	Spanish
240	spanish
225	Spanish

248	Spanish and Arabic
90	Spanish and French
233	Spanish and French
52	Spanish for example but to me they're all equally important
100	Spanish, Chinese
152	Spanish, Chinese
11	Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Arabic
164	Spanish, italian, french, german ecc
147	spanish, mandarin, russian and french
24	Tedesco (German)
217	tedesco
192	Tedesco
200	tedesco francese (German, French)
160	Tedesco, francese, spagnolo, cinese (german, French, Spanish, Chinese)
139	Tedesco, spagnolo (German, Spanish)
117	Tutte (All languages)
218	Tutte
239	tutte
83	Tutte
16	Tutte le lingue nel mondo (All the world's languages)

Table F.2: verbatim responses to item # 54.1: languages that are more important than English.

Respondent number	Responses to item # 54.1 – Languages that are thought to be more important than English (English translation is provided in brackets).
106	All the language are important, English is just the simplest and the most spreaded
208	Cinese (Chinese)
79	Cinese
141	Cinese
29	Cinese
18	cinese
197	cinese
121	Cinese, francese (Chinese, French)
105	cinese/arabo (Chinese/Arabic)
177	Cinese/giapponese (Chinese/Japanese)
212	Forse cinese e arabo nel mondo del lavoro (Maybe Chinese and Arabic in the work world)
211	Francese (French)
9	French, spanish, german, arabic, chinese
131	la lingua madre (the mother tongue)
47	Lingue orientali (oriental languages)
24	Mantenere la lingua madre (keeping one's mother tongue)
27	none
125	per ogni paese la propria lingua (for each country its own language)
194	Portoghese (Portuguese)
223	Russian, Chinese
68	Russo, Cinese, Arabo (Russian, Chinese, Arabic)
151	Russo, Tedesco (Russian, German)
226	Se facciamo una valutazione economica possiamo menzionare il Cinese. Bisognerebbe specificare importanti rispetto a cosa (If we make an economic evaluation we can mention Chinese. It would have to be specified in regard to what they are important)
64	Spagnolo (Spanish)
91	Spagnolo

142	Spagnolo
180	Spagnolo
119	Spagnolo
153	spagnolo - francese (entrambe lingue parlate in diversi stati del mondo) (Spanish – French(both languages are spoken in several countries of the world))
233	Spanish and Portuguese
115	Tutte le lingue sono ugualmente importanti, non importa quante persone le parlano. Importa che esistano per comunicare. (All languages are equally important, it does not matter how many people speak them. It is important that they exist to communicate.)

Appendix G: pronunciation target model

Table G.1: pronunciation target model (item # 62.1) – synthetic table

Who do you want to sound like when you speak English? #62.1	Nr. respondents
An American TV host/newsreader	37 (30.6%)
A BBC TV host/newsreader	23 (19%)
The speakers of my school's textbook CD	20 (16.5%)
My non-native teacher of English	13 (10.7%)
Other	28 (23.1%)
Tot	*121*

Table G.2: pronunciation target model (item # 62.1) – analytic table

62.1: specifications and other responses (English translation is provided in brackets)		Degree program
A BBC TV host/newsreader	jude law	LACOM
A BBC TV host/newsreader	regina Elisabetta (Queen Elizabeth)	SEDU
A BBC TV host/newsreader	Tom Ellis	SEDU
An American TV host/newsreader	Agli attori della mia serie tv (to my TV series' actors)	SCO
An American TV host/newsreader	al mio cantante preferito (to my favorite singer)	SCO
An American TV host/newsreader	american native speaker	SCO
An American TV host/newsreader	Americano	MOI
An American TV host/newsreader	An American person in general	LACOM
An American TV host/newsreader	An English native speaker	SCO
An American TV host/newsreader	Characters of American TV shows	LACOM
An American TV host/newsreader	I'd love to have an australian accent(from sydney))	MOI
An American TV host/newsreader	Jennifer Lopez	SCO
An American TV host/newsreader	John Oliver	SEDU
An American TV host/newsreader	oprah winfey	SCO
An American TV host/newsreader	Standard American	LACOM
My non-native teacher of English	Accenti inglese (English accents)	MOI
My non-native teacher of English	Canzoni (Songs)	SEDU
My non-native teacher of English	La mia insegnante madrelingua (my non-native teacher of English)	SEDU
My non-native teacher of English	La pronuncia deve essere chiara (pronunciation must be clear)	LCE
The speakers of my school's textbook CD	a un abitante nativo inglese (to a native English citizen)	MOI
A me stesso (to myself)		MOI
A me stesso (to myself)		SEDU
A un madrelingua inglese (to a native speaker of English)		SEDU
Ad un madrelingua inglese (to a native speaker of English)		SCO
Ad una mia collega di inglese che lo parla in modo eccellente (to a collegue of mine who speaks in an excellent way)		SEDU
Al mio insegnante (to my teacher)		SEDU

Alla mia prof (to my teacher)	SEDU
Attore (actor)	MOI
Attori americani (American actors)	STPS
Cantanti delle canzoni che ascolto abitualmente (es. Ed Sheeran) Singers of songs I usually listen to (e.g. Ed Sheeran)	SEDU
Cerco di parlare bene come i nativi di inglese (I try to speak as well as a native speaker of English)	STPS
I don’t want to sound like anyone: I have my own unique accent	LACOM
I just want to provide the clearest correct pronunciation possible, in order to make myself understood	LACOM
I wish to sound like a native Canadian/American speaker.	MOI
Inglese (English)	SEDU
Irish speakers	LACOM
Like an average English speaker	SCO
My American host parents	MCI
My family	SEDU
My native teacher of English	SCO
Nessuno (nobody)	PICI
Nessuno (nobody)	SEDU
No one	LACOM
Queen Elizabeth	PICI
To a native english speaker	MOI
Una persona con la RP (a person with the RP)	LACOM
Una persona normale (an ordinary person)	MCI
When I speak English I have more of an American accent, that's because I hear it more and cause I learned it form American music and tv shows/series. I think the accent you have is what you actually hear more and learn from. Although I personally like better Aussie/New Zealand accents when I try them I sound weird and like I'm forcing it. Maybe I'll have a natural Australian accent in the future if I ever go live there to learn it :)	MOI