

***ELF as a self-translation practice:
towards a pedagogy of contact in the Italian
as a Foreign Language (IFL) classroom***

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Abstract

This research reports on a project which was conducted in Puglia (Southern Italy) from September 2016 to March 2017. It involved a series of lesson observations and interviews with Italian L2 teachers working for the SPRAR project ('Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati') and for some NGOs that cooperate in the regional management of the migrant crisis. The teachers involved in the research project teach Italian as L2 to Multicultural and Multilingual Native Speakers from a variety of countries, who share the legal status of refugees. They are symbolically called upon to serve as the bridge between the cultures the migrants have left behind and the new host culture, which is often perceived as hostile.

In line with Canagarajah's translanguaging theory (2013), we maintain that individuals – especially the migrants - are not only capable of but also in need of adapting to new communicative practices in order to negotiate, mediate and adapt to the new changing paradigms of the contemporary world. The paradigm of 'superdiversity' (Vertovec 2007) helps us to consider that the emerging phenomena of translanguaging social contact generated by globalisation, mobility and migration is encouraging the proposal of new theoretical and practical concepts. The deterritorialised and transidiomatic 'supergroup' (Vertovec, 2007; Blommaert & Rampton, 2011) of IFL (Italian as a Foreign Language) teachers and their migrant students represents the complex arena of new social and linguistic research debates, since it problematises the relationship between linguistic communities and nation-states, and between the systematic knowledge of languages and their relationships to other cultures.

¹ Although the authors conceived the paper together, Annarita Taronna is mainly responsible for the Introduction and section 2; Section 3 and Conclusions were written by Lorena Carbonara. The authors wrote Section 4 together.

1. Introduction

The cultural turn in linguistic studies, begun in the 1980s, has led to a shift of focus from merely linguistic issues – centred on the study of words and/or texts – to the idea of language intended as an essential part of a broader cultural, literary, historical and ethical-anthropological system. More specifically, both the new and ongoing migration flows and older diasporas and colonial experiences point towards a gradual reconsideration of concepts such as language, translation, belonging, mobility, contact, nation, identity and community, as well as towards an analysis of the socio-linguistic and cultural implications for the countries on the receiving end. Among the advocates of the change, this study will take into consideration the socio-linguists Vertovec, Blommaert and Rampton and the linguists Seidlhofer, Pennycook and Canagarajah who, although from different perspectives, investigate linguistic forms and communicative strategies adopted within diasporic communities, migrant groups or contexts marked by the local, national and global circulation of people, goods and cultures. The *fil rouge* associating their research works is, first of all, a new conception of language as a place to be shared and a border to be crossed, determining phenomena such as hegemonic power relations between territories and their inhabitants.

For the specific purposes of this research, theoretical speculation will revolve around the emergence of new routes for the description and interpretation of a reality that unfolds before our eyes, with the aim of reconsidering the role of English from a hegemonic to a contact language. Such a passage decrees the end of monolingualism and of the purist idea of language as an ideological construction, historically rooted and marked by the borders of the nation-state. While moving around the world, English has generated a great number of varieties, some of which are already recognised and taught as standards (e.g. American English, Australian English etc.), while others are currently being recognised and standardised (e.g. Indian English, Caribbean English, some African varieties of English etc.). However, what makes the current scenario completely different from the colonial one is the migrations that characterise our era and that allow a growing degree of contact between people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In this context, English and its varieties seem to converge in what Canagarajah (2013) defines as a “translingual practice” that, while recognising norms and conventions imposed by dominant institutions and social groups, values the possibility for the speakers to negotiate such norms in relation to their own repertoires and translingual practices. In this kind of context, since languages are not necessarily in conflict but indeed complementary, their interrelation has to be established in more dynamic terms, overcoming the intrinsic binarism of labels like mono/multi, mono/pluri, mono/poly.

Canagarajah’s motto, “we are all translinguals,” means that we all speak a bridge language, a flexible, contingent, unstable language, suited to the

cooperative co-construction of meaning, with the final purpose of achieving successful intercultural interaction. This implies that ELF is a moving and transforming variety that follows the flow of migrant and diasporic subjects passing through borderlands and resorting to individual English varieties in their interactions. Against this background, it is possible to observe the formation of new geo-localities and linguistic identities, contaminated by multiple global cultural flows, which escape neo-colonial dystopias and hegemonic discourses on language abuse and extinction, and to embrace new practices of linguistic and cultural crossover. On these premises, the overall purpose of the paper is indeed to show how ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) can be used as a translingual practice within a specific ‘contact zone’, such as a course of Italian as a Foreign Language (IFL) for refugees and asylum seekers from war zones, extremely poor areas and other places experiencing a state of emergency. More specifically, this research aims, on the one hand, to analyse the various linguistic and communicative forms generated in the interaction between the IFL teacher and foreign students through the use of ELF; on the other, to show how the passage of English from hegemonic language to contact language leads to a re-thinking of the relevance of an exclusively monocentric model, based on the notion of the native speaker and of a largely Anglo-centric lingua-cultural dominance. In fact, the linguistic reflections which will be traced here serve to foster an innovative theoretical and methodological approach, which shall include discussions of plurality, pluricentrism and polyhedral contexts of use that characterise English nowadays. The awareness of the need for alternative methods able to challenge the hegemonic and monolithic conception of English is the only way to promote new models of transcultural communication in the various ELF contexts of use; those contexts, in fact, constitute concrete evidence of the existence of English varieties as forms of “active functional variation” (Preisler, 1999: 260).

2. Theorising ELF as a translingual practice in migratory settings

Over the last twenty years, phenomena such as mobility and migration have completely transformed the configuration of society and its demographic, socio-political, cultural and linguistic settings. The unstoppable flow of bodies, goods and cultures has led the zones crossed to adopt a radical diversification process in economic, religious, ethnographical and geo-political terms. The characteristics and dynamics generated by this process stripped off the rhetoric of multiculturalism and the melting pot which, until then, had focused on diversity as the pivotal theoretical issue for linguistics, sociolinguistics and ethno-linguistics.

Looking at these new conditions, the social anthropologist Steven Vertovec coined the term ‘superdiversity’ (2007) to define the complexity generated by the

migratory experience in the United Kingdom starting from the 1990s, and to highlight the change of migratory models:

[superdiversity] is a notion intended to underline a level and kind of complexity surpassing anything the country has previously experienced. Such a condition is distinguished by a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade (2007: 1024).

The new paradigm marked by superdiversity became epochal in those years, as it portrayed an unprecedented process of “diversification of diversity” (ibid. 1025). While previously migrants to the United Kingdom came largely from ex-colonies, starting from the 1990s there was an increase of ‘new immigrants’ that did not fit in any of the existing, static conceptions of ethnicity. This transnational/creole model represents a development and a rift that is in contrast with the adaptive varieties of the old model; in fact, it concerns processes of hybrid and syncretised identity-making in which the cultures, values and norms of the receiving territories are grafted onto the main features of the place of origin. As it will be explained in greater depth in section 3, dedicated to the use of ELF as a self-translation practice in classes of Italian as a Foreign Language, the sense of belonging to the place of origin of the learning immigrants is fostered by linguistic practices that allow for ongoing relations between the two lands and a growing awareness of bifocality (Vertovec, 2004) for the subjects involved.

The paradigm of superdiversity is also an epistemological one, considering that the emerging phenomena of social contact and diversification generated by globalisation, mobility and migration also encouraged the proposal of new concepts, replacing that of ‘speech community’. One example is the term ‘supergroups’ to define deterritorialised and transidiomatic communities of speakers that move within the new scenario of superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007; Blommaert & Rampton, 2011). These ‘supergroups’ – an example of which may be the one that includes Italian teachers and the immigrant learners who which may be made up of Italian teachers, as well as the immigrant learners who reciprocally resort to ELF while teaching and learning ILF – represent new social and linguistic groups that problematise the relationship between the notions of “linguistic community” (intended as a form of cultural development) and “nation-state” (intended as a political institution). In particular, superdiversity introduces a multi-dimensional fluidity and activates a movement that goes beyond the idea of language as a predefined structure, seeing it as the product of a practice and of a reiterated social activity – thus imagining identity as a variable characteristic that is moulded through the interaction with the other. On such

premises, we may introduce some of the research questions that inspired this work: how does the emerging geo-linguistic role of ELF in migration contexts move away from the standard, often defined as ‘proper’ English?; what are the implications for language teaching in contexts of language contact involving ELF, the host languages and the repertoires of the L1s spoken by immigrant learners?

Given the present scenario, characterised by the constant evolution of the linguistic models available for the speakers and by the heterogeneity of the contexts of its use, it is nowadays counterproductive to cling to the idea of ‘proper English’ or to perpetrate a hierarchical vision of ‘Englishes’ in which some are more valid than the others. Once we have become aware of the dynamics that led to the international spread of English, we might agree with Rajagopalan (2004: 11), who provocatively states that “English has no native speakers,” thus marking a sort of transfer of property from its (former) native speakers to its new speakers. In this context, it may seem legitimate to wonder what standard English (which some influential linguists like Widdowson (2003: 27) define as ‘proper English’) really is:

We can talk about proper English in terms of conformity to encoding convention. But this is not the only answer. We can also think of words being in their proper place with reference to their communicative purpose. Here we are concerned not with the internal relationship of words as encoded forms, but with the external relationship of words with the context of their actual occurrence, and propriety is not now a matter of their correctness of form in a sentence, but of their appropriateness of function in an utterance.

Hence, ‘proper English’ is defined as the ‘right’ way of speaking English, accepted as a model of correctness and appropriateness for successful communication. However, the expression ‘proper English’ is also used with a broader acceptance to define both a group of speakers and a set of linguistic practices regarded as correct, standard and central. Such a perspective helps understand the reason why the supporters of this model strongly disapprove of the use of ELF, demonising the fact that it resorts to simplified forms of English, that it is also culturally neutral and that it is believed to generate endless problems because of what is looked upon as impoverished lexicon, inaccurate phonetics and semantics – allegedly a cause of lexical and grammatical ambiguity. For these reasons, each linguistic variety that has emerged over time – which will subsequently be discussed in this work – as an alternative to standard English has been derogatorily defined as ‘broken English’ or ‘English with an accent’: expressions aimed at stressing the risk associated with these varieties: to spoil and corrupt the pure variety that belongs by right to the so-called ‘natives’.

The perspective adopted here to reread the concepts of language and linguistic community concretely highlights the complexity of ELF as a translocal, transcultural and translingual practice, through which social actors living and enlivening the communities can creatively co-construct and negotiate the meanings of their interactions, innovating networks and social categories, across communicative genres and territorial borders. In this scenario, the plurality of languages – and consequently their comparison and reciprocal translation – is today given new visibility thanks to migration. Being hospitable and recognising the rights of the immigrant – the right to asylum, health, education, work and citizenship – also concerns the immigrant’s language, which is a depository of identity, memory and belonging. For those who migrate, preserving this relationship with their inherited language means being able to interact with the people in the host country on the basis of their own culture. In these specific migration contexts, ELF can be used as a contact language – as happens every day in language mediation practices for asylum seekers – maintaining language features and efficient strategies that preserve the presence of other languages and cultures, thus enabling speakers to feel aware of equality in communication, of pluralism and of the basic linguistic and cultural rights they are entitled to.²

Since its origins, ELF has provided a tool for communication among people of different linguistic backgrounds (Jenkins 2000; 2007; Seidlhofer et al. 2006, Guido & Seidlhofer, 2014) who choose English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for intercultural communication. This approach is different from the study of English as a foreign language, which is tightly bound to its British historical origins. While EFL is acquired with the purpose of approximating the native variety of English, ELF represents a supplemental linguistic system that results from language contact and evolution where at times the number of languages and cultures in play are no longer numerable or identifiable (Cogo, 2009). Communicative situations, like the ones analysed in sections 3 and 4, see English used as a lingua franca and are thus intrinsically plurilingual, as at least two different linguistic codes are involved at any one time: the L1 of each speaker and English. In this kind of contexts, the meaning is consequently co-constructed through strategies of interaction that are mainly cooperative and aimed at adjustment. Given the intercultural nature of those contexts, the participants deploy all the resources of their plurilinguistic and pluricultural repertoires in order to communicate effectively. This implies that the conventionality of the

² This perspective is linked to the theoretical paradigm recently elaborated by the Japanese sociologist of communication Yukio Tsuda (2008), who describes a global society structured hierarchically, where native speakers of English dominate, followed by those who have it as a L2 or learn it as a foreign language, and at the bottom, those who cannot speak the language at all. In particular, to contrast the threat represented by the use of English as hegemonic, Tsuda proposes the concept of an ‘ecology of languages’, which implies education to multilingualism.

norms of standard English can be altered, mediated or negotiated on the basis of specific communicative needs, as stated by Hülmbauer (2013: 55):

Conventionality, which is native-speaker related, loses some of its importance when we are concerned with intercultural speaker communities. In a shift of focus from correctness towards communicative effectiveness, also the use of conventionalised encoded items such as collocations, idioms, and grammatical idiosyncrasies is re-evaluated as problematic among intercultural speakers.

In most cases, the non-conventional use of the language does not generate misunderstandings; indeed, the meaning can become even more explicit, for example with the insertion of clarifying elements (e.g. 'black colour', 'discuss about', 'return back') or with the creation of 'unusual' words formed by derivation (e.g. 'unformal', 'bigness', 'increasement') (Seidlhofer, 2011:143-145). Nevertheless, simplification is only one of the adjustment strategies enacted to facilitate communication. Others include morphological adaptation through the use of simpler grammatical structures, lexical repetition aimed at clarification and explicitness, reassuring pronunciation and voice tone, the slowing down of speech, reduction of sentence length and the increase of pauses (Mauranen, 2007).

Thanks to the contribution of Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey, the state of the art of ELF has been marked by further efforts to systematise its main features and phonological, lexical, grammatical-lexical and pragmatic peculiarities. In particular, from a phonological point of view, ELF speakers use strategies of phonetic adjustment in order to facilitate the task of their interlocutors. Among these, some were classified by Jenkins (2000) as crucial, or LFC (Lingua Franca Core), namely the adjustment of fricatives /θ/ and /ð/, of initial consonant clusters, of the length of vowel sounds and of accents.

On a lexical and grammatical-lexical level, Seidlhofer (2004) provided a broad description of the main features of current ELF, which may be summarised as follows: loss of final -s on the verb of the third person singular in the present simple; the interchangeable nature of the relative pronouns *who* and *which*; the omission of definite and indefinite articles where they would be compulsory in English as a Native Language (ENL), as well as the insertion of articles where they would not be required in ENL; the insertion of redundant prepositions in sentences like 'we have to study about...'; excessive and repetitive use of semantically generic verbs such as *make*, *have*, *put*, *take*; the replacement of infinitives with subordinates starting with 'that', e.g. *I want that* (instead of *I want to...*).

From a pragmatic point of view, the mutuality of construction and comprehension of meaning in interaction was the first feature of ELF to be

examined in the studies carried out by Firth (1996), House (1999) and Meierkord (2004). The research on ELF evolved by focusing on the negotiation and resolution of misunderstandings as a crucial aspect for successful communication among non-native speakers. In these cases, ELF interlocutors need a specific interactional and pragmatic competence in order to promptly signal a lack of understanding and not to interrupt the communication flow. To this end, certain pragmatic strategies are activated – such as repetition, explanation, self-reparation and paraphrasing – which can be adopted in various interactional contexts, e.g. after a long pause, a very short answer or an overlapping statement, so as to safeguard mutual comprehension and intelligibility. Another recurrent pragmatic strategy is the collaborative construction of meaning through more or less explicit linguistic practices such as ‘code-switching’ or the use of synonyms.

However, adjustment strategies also include extra-linguistic components, such as those related to body language (e.g. smiling eyes, body direction, gestures, facial expressions) and behaviour, for example ignoring mistakes and redundancies. Hesitation or pauses are often used in conversation as strategies for the reparation, clarification or contextualisation of a specific misunderstanding, in line with what Firth (1996) calls the ‘let it pass’ and ‘make it normal’ principles. Both linguistic and extra-linguistic strategies reinforce the role of English as a dynamic language, because intergroup contact produces transformations and proves the vitality of language communities (or speaker communities), bringing out the adaptive and resilient nature of culture.

In migration contexts, ELF can be adapted to the situation, or vice versa, thus allowing for the activation of multiple identities in interactional contexts and discursive practices. This dynamicity characterises the ability of the ELF speaker to act through language both in his/her country of origin and in that of arrival or, more generically, to construct alternative identities within ‘third spaces’: ones that do not coincide with national borders. Numerous linguists, sociolinguists, ethno-linguists and language anthropologists have felt the need to highlight the hybrid, plural and fragmentary nature of the identities shaped by the globalised world, as well as to define them with terms and concepts that are literally or metaphorically linked to the idea of acting with language. Among them, Jacquemet (2005) elaborates the concept of ‘transidiomaticity’, with reference to transidiomatic practices that help to negotiate – rather than to mandate – the linguistic norms that incorporate agency, locality and speaker’s context in the complexity of interaction:

Transidiomatic practices are the results of the co-presence of multilingual talk (exercised by de/reterritorialized speakers) and electronic media, in contexts heavily structured by social indexicalities and semiotic codes. Anyone present in transnational environments, whose talk is mediated by deterritorialized technologies, and who interacts with both present and distant people, will find herself

producing transidiomatic practices (2005: 265).

An emblematic and concrete example of transidiomatic practices is the use of ELF in migration contexts, where the issue of the self is at the core, along with the possibility for those speaking English to *creatively* negotiate the place, space and belonging of English with their lives proposing an alternative model to the national communities.

The creation and spread of linguistic models that shed light on migration-related intercultural communication legitimise the theorisation of contact and complexity linguistics as part of this research. Although each of the aforementioned definitions is referred to specific contexts of use, they all share a common aim: to describe linguistic practices that go beyond the ideological frameworks imposed by the nation-state. In this scenario, ELF becomes a place for change, adaptation and formulation; indeed, it embodies what Canagarajah (1999: 2) called the ‘resistance perspective’, through which those who use English as a contact language “may find ways to negotiate, alter and oppose political structures, and reconstruct their languages, cultures, identities to their advantage”. The purpose of this research is to re-imagine English in more inclusive, ethical and democratic terms, as a lingua franca and contact practice. According to such a perspective, English should not be studied as a foreign language, nor should it be associated with western culture only; rather it should become a translangual practice spoken by migrant, diasporic or post-colonial subjects that live in or across borderlands and make use of individual varieties of English in their everyday interactions.

3. ELF as a self-translation practice in IFL classrooms

This research reports on a project that was conducted in Puglia (Southern Italy) from September 2016 to March 2017. It involved a series of lesson observations and interviews with Italian L2 teachers working for the SPRAR project (*‘Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati’*) and for some NGOs that cooperate in the regional management of the migrant crisis. It was divided into four main phases based respectively on:

1. the formulation of the research hypotheses and the questionnaire;
2. interviews with teachers;
3. class observations;
4. data analysis.

The following table is a sample of the questionnaire used to conduct the semi-structured interviews with the teachers. Since the conversations with them offered a variety of meaningful insights, questions and answers cannot be

condensed into a formal grid. The teachers responded with enthusiasm to the challenge of examining their own teaching practices, sharing with the interviewers their reflections on both theoretical knowledge and actual practice. This process required a certain degree of critical reflection and awareness of the ways the interviewers/researchers and teachers represent themselves and others, both linguistically and culturally, with specific attention to the cases in which the so-called ‘marginalized’ – in this case the migrants – are involved. In line with the reflexivity trend, which is spreading across many academic fields, as Byrd Clark and Dervin point out, the work was grounded on the assumption that research/teaching practices should constantly be questioned. In Byrd Clark & Dervin’s words:

Awareness [...] appears to carry with it at least three issues/aspects: (1) the betterment of the human being/citizen/person through research and/or lived experiences and learning about one’s self via others, (2) something to overcome, and (3) a need to become aware of the illusions of the social world as well as our own representations and engagements with them (Byrd Clark & Dervin, 2014: 23).

Indeed, it is outstanding the belief that our research/teaching practices may contribute to the betterment of the citizen and the community since they are meant to work for the overcoming of cultural and racial prejudices, and for a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play in the multicultural world we live in as researchers, teachers and people. The questionnaire thus served as a kind of guideline to conduct the interviews, which were influenced by contingent factors, such as the emotions and feelings expressed by the teachers, their degree of involvement in their students’ socio-cultural conditions, and the response to all this in terms of theoretical awareness (the majority of the teachers interviewed possesses a certificate for teaching Italian as L2 and/or a university degree in Foreign Languages or Political Science) and of personal motivation and attitude.

Questionnaire Sample:

<u>Personal data</u>	<u>Specific questions</u>	<u>Other</u>
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Gender:	Number of students in each	Reflect on:
Name and Surname:	class:	- self-translation
Place of birth:	Age (average):	practices;
Education:	Gender (%):	- strategies used for
Previous Experience:	Nationalities:	accommodation, simplification
Experience abroad:	Motivation:	and management of
Motivation:	Course organisation (levels,	intercultural conflicts;
Recruitment:	materials and tests):	- use of elements of
Languages Spoken:	Use of ELF:	Italian/foreign culture.

The teaching/learning dynamics at play in the language classroom have been described through the use of a variety of figures, images and metaphors over time. Over the last thirty years, they have been mostly supported by and supporters of the idea that the teachers’ aim should be the creation of the conditions for learning, as they do not merely transfer information and knowledge to the students. Among the scholars that have focused research on this subject, Northcote offers a summary of the most popular metaphors related to teaching/learning practices in a 2006 article, where she provides the following table (2006: 253).

Northcote’s table (2006)

Table 1: Some previously reported metaphors for teaching and learning

Type of metaphor	Metaphor	Research studies
Epistemological metaphors	Learning as a process of receiving knowledge. Knowledge as objects. Mind as a container.	Brownlee (1998, 2001), Dunkin and Precians (1992), Archer (1999), Chan (2000), Jehng, Johnston and Anderson (1993), Bereiter (2000)
Construction metaphors	Learning as pulling it all together. Learning as building understandings. Learner is a builder.	Munby and Russell (1990), Van Patten, Chao and Reigeluth (1986), Hager (2004)
Coaching metaphors	Teacher as coach. Learner as a player.	Hopper (1999), McShane (2002), Curtner-Smith (1997)
Acquisition and participation metaphors	Learner as a sponge, a collector Learner as contributor. Learner as participant.	Hildebrand (1999), Sfard (1998)
Interaction, change and persuasion metaphors	Teaching as persuasion. Learning is a process of conceptual change. Learning as growth.	Fives and Alexander (2001), Koschmann (1999), Hager (2004), McShane (2002), Murphy (2001)
Metaphors that cite teachers and learners as artists	Learning as creative construction and personal enlightenment. Teacher as performer.	Epp (1999), McShane (2002)

The abovementioned coaching, acquisition and participation metaphors seem to be the most appropriate in the context of migration since motivation and participation play a big role in such language classrooms. In this context, the teaching/learning practice acquires new meaningful elements that are related to the autobiographical and self-translation dynamics at play. The teaching/learning

practice is inevitably influenced by the environment in which teachers and students find themselves, such as the location and size of the classrooms, the number of students in class and the constant arrival and departure of people, the critical situation of students in terms of post-traumatic syndromes and their political/social status. We maintain that the constant act of self-translation, which is unavoidable in such multilingual contexts, can be seen as a possibility to explore multilingualism and hybridity, a way to give voice to plural autobiographies, reflecting a world “where every day millions of individuals, out of choice or necessity, translate themselves into different cultures and languages” (Cordingly, 2013: 6).

In a recent study, Zamboni concentrates on another popular metaphor used to define the class environment, that of ‘bridging’ between cultures, and she focuses on the definition of Multicultural and Multilingual Native Speakers (MMNSs). She states that: “Having moved from the country where they were born and raised into a new and often foreign geographical and cultural environment, MMNSs inhabit a mediated space between two cultures” (2014: 18). The teachers involved in our research project teach Italian as L2 to MMNSs from a variety of countries, who share the legal status of refugees. They are symbolically called upon to serve as the bridge between the cultures the migrants have left behind and the new host culture, which is often perceived as hostile. We have selected six cases that will represent our case study:

1. two teachers in Bari (SPRAR/ARCI);
2. two teachers in Lecce (SPRAR/ARCI);
3. one teacher in Taranto (Centro d’Accoglienza/Salam NGO)
4. one teacher in Martina Franca (SPRAR/Salam NGO).

In five out of six cases, the students of the language courses are migrants enrolled in the national SPRAR project; they are adults, couples or families, aged between 18 and 50 (plus two cases of people over 60). Only in one case are the students all minors, residents at the local ‘*Centro d’Accoglienza*’. The teachers interviewed are Italian women;³ they speak at least one European language (English and/or French) and use it in class to build bridges with their students; in one case, the teacher also speaks Arabic. The students come from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Senegal, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, Ghana, Mali and Northern Africa and they can be divided into three major groups: Anglophones, Francophones and Arabophones. In this study, we will concentrate on the Anglophones as their second language, whatever their regional or national idioms, is English. But firstly, some general considerations are needed.

³ Antonella Petrera, Giusi Aglieri, Federica Gargiulo, Angelica Lillo, Alessandra Apollonio and Roberta Antonacci are the teachers cited in this article as part of our case study.

All the teachers involved in the interviews declare they use ELF in class; sometimes, it is also supported by French, and in one case by Arabic. They all state that the use of ELF decreases as the learners reach a higher level of proficiency in Italian (A2 is the maximum level achieved). They all agree that the presence of a lingua franca is necessary for either achieving the objective of the lesson (i.e. the explanation of a grammar rule), or creating a positive welcoming environment for the students. Hospitality, as stated in the previous section, is achieved by acknowledging the presence of other languages in class apart from English, and by fostering equality in communication. Indeed, the communicative approach that each teacher uses takes into account the autobiography of the students. It is important to highlight that the learners in this context are not considered only as students but that they are always referred to as ‘*beneficiari*/beneficiaries’, since they are the recipients of a complex governmental project including the language course as part of a set of measures designed to foster integration. The project actions are described as follows:

[...] they go beyond the mere distribution of bed and board, foreseeing also a degree of information, accompaniment, assistance and orientation through the construction of individual paths of socio-economic insertion.⁴

Since they are involved in such a complex network of relationships and inspired by the general mission of the SPRAR project, all the teachers share the belief that autobiography and self-translation play a crucial role in such multilingual and multicultural classes, particularly because of the personal backgrounds of the students/beneficiaries. They report that autobiographical aspects emerge over the course of the lessons with a certain degree of difficulty, since the students share the experience of migration from wars and persecutions and, as stated by all the teachers, do not readily talk about the journey to Italy. Yet they show a high degree of pride when they are asked about where they come from and what their native language is.⁵ Self-translation becomes crucial since it is both linguistically and symbolically necessary: students translate constantly from their mother tongues into ELF or Italian, and teachers constantly translate from Italian into ELF; furthermore, the students’ autobiographies have to be symbolically translated into the host culture.

The use of the students’ native languages – meaning they either teach the teachers some expressions in their own mother tongues or the teachers already know them – is considered an important element for the construction of a positive environment in class, i.e. a prerequisite for hospitality. One of the teachers reports as follows on the use of a ‘class pidgin’, an inter-language that

⁴ See <http://www.sprar.it/la-storia>, consulted 27/02/2017. Translation mine.

⁵ From the interview with Federica Gargiulo, February 2017.

she shares with her students and that may be considered a ‘translingual practice’ in Canagarajah’s terms:

‘How far?’ and ‘Abi?’, which respectively mean ‘How are you?’ and ‘Ok?/Isn’t it?/Right?’ in Nigerian pidgin, are used among us all to interact with each other. It’s fun and it makes us feel a team because we don’t use these expressions outside the classroom with other people.⁶

The creation of a ‘third space’, in Bhabha’s terms, whether voluntary or involuntary, becomes fundamental for the establishment of intimacy between the teacher and her students (1994). This ‘language of the heart’⁷ (i.e. the above mentioned ‘class pidgin’ or the use of the students’ native languages in class) fosters the condition for learning and works as a strategy of hospitality and mutual integration.⁸ The language that students speak when they are not talking to the teacher is mainly their native language, as they usually sit in national groups in class (especially when rooms are large and they sit around big tables). Otherwise, they use the pidgin they brought with them from the experience of migration. The most interesting example encountered is the expression ‘sim-sim’, which is used by all the students, no matter what their country of origin is, to express the concept of ‘the same/*lo stesso*’.⁹ We suppose that, over the course of the journey, the need to relate to people speaking a variety of foreign languages and the urge to communicate in the conflict zones fostered the construction of an oral lingua franca based on English.

Collecting other expressions like this is not easy since, as previously said, the experience of the journey represents a delicate topic for all the students. According to the teachers, the trauma of the journey across the Mediterranean shapes the students’ lives, and they often start the narration of their migration experience with their arrival at Lampedusa. Especially in the case of minors, the teacher reports a great difficulty in the explanation of vocabulary related to home and family.¹⁰ Furthermore, all the teachers consider the narration of parts of their own autobiography necessary for the construction of empathy and trust as well as an opportunity to talk about intercultural encounters, as defined by the Council of Europe’s White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue ‘Living together as equals in dignity’.¹¹ When we asked them if they use autobiography as a contact strategy, we collected a series of interesting examples:

⁶ From the interview with Giusi Aglieri, February 2017.

⁷ From the interview with Angelica Lillo, February 2017.

⁸ See Appendix for examples of the support intercultural visual material present in some of the classes.

⁹ From the interviews with Alessandra Apollonio and Roberta Antonacci, March 2017.

¹⁰ From the interview with Federica Gargiulo, February 2017.

¹¹ See http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/autobiography/default_en.asp#lien_inactif, consulted

- 1) “We talked about marriage, as I am going to get married soon, and we took the chance to talk about polygamy and monogamy in our various cultures;”
- 2) “When I meet them the first day, I say I have two kids, they like the fact you don’t have problems talking about yourself, but I noticed that if they are asked about their family it becomes painful;”
- 3) “When they get to know me well, they may start talking about their past and the narration is always using ELF; they use ELF to make sure I understand;”
- 4) “Once I told a student who was sick to go and breathe some sea air and she replied that she hates the sea because of what happened to her. I realised I have to be careful about what I say to them.”¹²

During the observations, we noticed that the teachers constantly shift from Italian into English or French, and some of the most proficient students (both in English or French and Italian) play the part of interpreters for the others, offering explanations and translation when needed. Among other pragmatic strategies, as illustrated in the previous section, code-mixing (by students) and code-switching (by teachers) are widely present, and they represent the result of the constant self-translation that each actor in the class performs. We maintain that these acts of self-translation are the expression of the self’s “complex web of tensions produced by its multilingual dialogue within itself” (Klimkiewicz, 2013: 190).

Here are some examples of code-switching, generalisation/simplification and first-language interference:

- 1) Teacher: “Questo è il verbo ‘venire’, to come, right? *Allora, X scrivilo alla lavagna*, “come here!”
1. Anglophone student: “What does it mean ‘*apprendista*’? Teacher: “It means ‘learner’.”
2. Anglophone student: “*Frequento una straniera scuola.*” (Interference from English)

In the first example, the teacher consciously switches from Italian into English to motivate the student she is talking to, and she considers English as an anchor or a bridge. In the second example, the teacher opts for a lexical generalisation/simplification to translate the specific term ‘*apprendista*’, in the attempt to provide the student with an easy-to-understand definition. In the third case, the student’s background knowledge of English interferes with his accuracy in Italian when resorting to the inverted word order concerning “*una straniera*”

24.02.2017.

¹² For the sake of privacy, we will not state the teacher’s name where detailed personal information is given.

scuola”. These aspects will be treated in greater depth in the next section, where we will illustrate the transition from the use of what can be likened to a form of ‘foreigner talk’ to the proximity-based approach or mitigation strategy.

The most common ELF expressions used in class, either reported by the teachers or directly observed, are: ‘try’, ‘try again’, ‘read’, ‘understand?’, ‘don’t understand’, ‘have I been clear?’, ‘what’s the meaning of... in English?’, ‘in Italian, the meaning of this is...’, ‘in Italian, we say/do...’. This shows how ELF – which we consider to be the contact language *par excellence* – is mainly used for giving commands (clarity), checking the phatic function, assuring that communication is working and that contact is established and maintained among the participants in the communicative situation (efficacy). The ‘side effect’ of the use of ELF in such a functional way is nevertheless the creation of a positive learning environment where students are involved in a multilingual process of self-translation. Of course, this is possible where no one is excluded from the communicative situation due to a lack of English competence, as in the case of the Francophone and Arabophone groups, and it should never interfere with the learning of Italian. A balanced use of Italian, ELF and of the students’ native languages should be seen as an opportunity to overcome the constraints of monolingualism, in line with what Canagarajah defines as a translanguaging practice (2013), examined extensively in the previous section.

Some concluding remarks are necessary to prepare the ground for future research developments. The state of the art of migration in Puglia, as far as linguistic integration and the use of ELF are concerned, reveals that the majority of IFL teachers are qualified to teach Italian as L2 or, if not qualified, they are aware of teaching/learning practice issues and sensitive to issues of autobiography and self-translation. Furthermore, IFL teachers use books (*Facile Facile. Libro di Italiano per studenti stranieri*. Level A1)¹³ but mostly prepare their own lessons on the basis of daily routines and autobiographical events and they all report: 1) the use of ELF or another lingua franca or a pidgin/interlanguage in class (with differences in percentages of use that range from 50% to 10% of the lesson time); 2) the use of mitigation strategies in class; 3) positive feedback from the students when their native languages are considered in class.

As the data confirm, the research questions were answered positively and ELF can definitively be considered and experienced in terms of a translanguaging practice. Although there is still the tendency to avoid the use of ELF entirely when Italian proficiency grows, we observed that the creation of a multilingual environment produces positive effects on the students. Like Klimkiewicz, we believe that “self-translation, as multilingual exchange with the self, can illuminate the shaping of a multilingual subjectivity and fragmented identity against a more fixed and rooted monolingual self” (2013: 198). With the help of

¹³ *Facile Facile. Libro di Italiano per studenti stranieri*. Level A1. P. Cassiani, L. Mattioli, A. Parini, Nina Edizioni, Pesaro, 2008.

teachers' strategies, based on a profound awareness of the complex context in which they operate, students can incorporate their autobiographical experience into their learning practices and eventually become conscious translingual individuals.

4. Shaping new pedagogical strategies and models: from foreigner talk to the mitigation approach

This section is a further attempt to answer the last research question, which is focused on the investigation of the implications for language teaching in contexts of language contact involving ELF, the host languages and the repertoires of the L1s spoken by immigrant learners. To this end, we will briefly return to the notion of foreigner talk, in order to propose a new paradigm, which we deem more appropriate for the investigation of teaching/learning practices in the migration context. At a first glance, the foreigner talk defined by Lipski (2005) is used by teachers in the very first stages of the teaching practice, and it concerns both Italian and English sentences, as in the expressions “Y, go to school tomorrow?” or “*Dire, Y, non ti preoccupare!*”. The tone of voice, the inflection and the grammar mistakes are among the most common characteristics of the way teachers talk in class. Unlike teacher’s talk, the language used by teachers in migration contexts may appear closer to the foreigner talk in various terms:

3. suprasegmental (exaggerated intonation, more gestures, high pitch or wide range, loudness, onomatopoeia, more pauses, slower tempo);
4. phonological (clear enunciation, phonological simplification);
5. semantic (more concrete lexicon, increased use of definition);
6. syntactic (simplified clausal structures, simplified phrasal structures e.g. fewer articles, fewer possessives, omitted pronouns (Hatch, 1983 in Boulima, 1999: 23-25).

But what differentiates the IFL teacher’s talk from foreigner talk in our context is awareness: teachers consciously make mistakes in order to simplify the sentences and make communication work. Mistakes do not depend on a lack of proficiency and there is never the perception of a superior status on the part of the native speaker (Gallaway & Richards, 1994: 259). Indeed, the teachers interviewed agree on the necessity to use gestures and a slower tempo, clear enunciation and a concrete lexicon for the sake of communication, and they never consider their students unable to understand. They all share the awareness that simplified phrasal structures are fundamental and that, in some cases, conscious mistakes in order to assure understanding can be considered an option. As emphasised in the first section of this article, in theorising on the use of ELF, Hülmbauer emphasises the shift of focus from correctness towards

communicative effectiveness, which may also characterise the use of the foreigner talk (2013: 55), and the non-standard interlanguage talk used by students (Galloway & Richards, 1994: 259).

But in the context of multicultural classrooms, like those we observed in this study, where factors like integration, tolerance, respect and conflict are at issue every day, the use of ELF becomes more and more controversial. On the one hand, it provides teachers with the chance to avoid communication gaps or misunderstandings, and allows Anglophone students to express themselves when their knowledge of Italian is still too weak; on the other hand, as reported by some of the teachers, it may continue to engender a form of discrimination against those students who are illiterate or completely lacking in English competence.

In such a context, if English is used as a lingua franca, these classrooms also become an ideal setting for the study of intercultural pragmatics. In fact, the interlocutors share English as a common language but come from different sociocultural backgrounds where there are “preferred ways of saying things” (Kecskes, 2007: 192). In order to support these theoretical assumptions, we show two examples below of task-based activities carried out by ILF teachers in a multicultural class of migrants speaking ELF as a mediating language:

1. Lesson topic: how to read and write birthdates

a. Teacher: *X vieni a scrivere la tua data di nascita?*

Student: What?

Teacher: Your birthdate. Day, month and year. Ok?

Student: Oh yeah, *sì*. I'm sorry. *Capito*.

(Student writes 1980 on the whiteboard)

Teacher: *Leggi i numeri della data ora*.

Student: *Mille novecento ott...* I'm sorry, I...

Teacher: *Non preoccuparti*. No problem. *È difficile.. mille novecento ottanta*. (repeating slower) *Mille novecento ottanta*. Ripeti ora. Once more.

Student: *Mille novecento ottanta*.

Teacher: Very good! *Molto bene! Bravo!*

2. Lesson task: the teacher asks three students to read and understand a dialogue¹⁴ on ‘Che lavoro fai?’ (What’s your job?)

a. Mustafa (Student 1): *Ciao Olga, ti presento mia moglie, si chiama Zobra*.

Olga (Student 2): *Piacere, Zobra, io sono Olga. Parli italiano?*

Zohra (Student 3): *Parlo poco*.

¹⁴ Activity taken from *Facile Facile. Libro di Italiano per studenti stranieri*. Level A1. P. Cassiani, L. Mattioli, A. Parini, Nina Edizioni, Pesaro, 2008.

Olga: *Che lavoro fai?*

Mustafa: *Lei no lavora, è casalinga.*

(Teacher intervenes in the dialogue and says: *non lavora*; negation in Italian is *non*;

Student 1: The meaning of *casalinga*? I don't know the word.

Teacher: The woman who works in the house, housewife. Clear now?)

b. Zohra: *E tu lavori?*

Olga: *Si faccio la badante da tre giorni.*

(Student 2: I'm sorry, don't know the meaning of *badante*.)

Teacher: *Nessun problema. Badante* is the person who cares somebody, an older person usually. Clear now?

Student 2: Oh, yeah.)

c. Mustafa: *Ti piace questo lavoro?*

Olga: *Sì, mi piace ma è un po' faticoso. E tu Mustafa al ristorante cosa fai?*

(Student 2: Sorry, *faticoso* means?)

Teacher: Hard, difficult)

d. Mustafa: *Lavoro come lavapiatti, solo il fine settimana.*

Olga: *Ti piace il tuo lavoro?*

Mustafa: *Sì mi piace, però guadagno poco e non sono in regola.*

Olga: *Io sono in prova per una settimana; se tutto va bene, la signora mi mette in regola. Scusa che ore sono?*

Mustafa: *Sono le 17.45.*

Olga: *Oh! È tardi, ti saluto.*

Mustafa and Zohra: *Ciao Olga, ci vediamo presto.*

(Student 2: I'm sorry but I don't understand some words. I guess *sono in prova* means somebody is testing me, right? But *Non sono in regola* means?

Teacher: Yes, yes, somebody is testing you. You're right! *Bravo. Non sono in regola* means that you don't have a regular contract.

From a close reading and analysis of the two activities, in which both the teacher and the student intervene to clarify the correctness of some specific words, it emerges that mitigation is the most practised pedagogical strategy in the multicultural classroom under examination. Mitigation (or 'downgrading') is a cover term for a set of strategies, rooted in a meta-pragmatic awareness, by which people try to make their saying/doing more effective (Caffi, 1999: 882). The notion of mitigation, which emerged in pragmatics in the '80s (Fraser, 1980), readily lends itself to connecting different fields (e.g. pragmatics and classical rhetoric), different categories (e.g. illocution and perlocution), and different perspectives (e.g. sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic approaches to

communication). Within the study of discourse, mitigation is broadly defined as a weakening or downgrading of interactional parameters, which affects the allocation and redistribution of rights and obligations (Caffi, 1999), as a way “to ease the anticipated unwelcome effect” (Fraser, 1999: 342) or as a “reduction of vulnerability” (Martinovski, 2000).

Mitigation is expressed in concrete linguistic patterns such as elliptic clauses, cut-off words, self-repetitions, pauses, lower and reassuring tone, gestures and modal expressions, etc., which seem to be independent of language, culture and legal system (Martinovski, 2000). For the purposes of this research, mitigation is conceived of as a cognitive but also a linguistic and a social phenomenon. The project carried out in the IFL classrooms adds more concrete reflections to the use of mitigation in specific educational settings in which teachers apparently adopt such pragma-linguistic strategies as a way to avoid demotivation through standard correction, given its face-threatening nature and its disruptive potential if performed in what students/interlocutors might perceive as the ‘wrong’ way of learning or expressing themselves in Italian. Adopted as a pedagogical strategy, mitigation may engender a new teaching and learning approach based on the complementary use of ELF and IFL, giving prominence to such mutual values as proximity, sharing, understanding and closeness.

In the present work, which takes its data from a larger corpus of transcripts of several interactions occurring between IFL teachers and migrant students who generally use ELF as their ‘anchor’ language, different kinds of mitigators and mitigation strategies are discussed along with the potential effects they entail with regard to the foreign language learning process. Among them, we shall mention some of the most remarkable examples which characterise the interactions shown above: token agreements (e.g. Teacher: clear now? Student: oh, yeah); use of hedges (e.g.: I guess, it seems); requests for clarification (e.g. What?; The meaning of..?, Clear now?); use of prefacing positive remarks towards the addressee (e.g. *molto bene!*, *bravo!*); suggestions (e.g. *ripeti ora*, once more); expression of regret (e.g. oh, yeah, *sì*. I’m sorry; *mille novecento ott...* I’m sorry, I.; I’m sorry, don’t know the meaning of *badante*; I’m sorry but I don’t understand some words.).

Of all these features, the expression of regret is one of the most frequent mitigating learning strategies used by students in the IFL-ELF interactions as an attempt to mitigate their difficulty by using the apologetic ‘I’m sorry.’ Quite remarkably, though the speakers here may have a high linguistic competence in English (as most of them demonstrated in class) it could be said that their pragmatic competence in ELF is slightly faulty. According to Kreutel (2007), expressions of regret are often overused by non-native speakers of English. This might be due to the fact that the acquisition of the expression ‘I’m sorry’ occurs at the earliest stages of L2 learning. As pointed out by Kreutel, the overuse of this strategy by non-native speakers might have unwelcome effects:

‘I’m sorry’ is said to be generally overused by non-native speakers because it

is acquired relatively early and used as a general means of avoiding confrontation by expressing humbleness and deference. Conversely, among native speakers, ‘I’m sorry’ is usually associated with apologies, that is, the speaker acknowledges a mistake or failure on his or her part [...]. This expression of reverence may be inappropriate when it comes to disagreement, indicating that a differing opinion is not necessarily a failure the speaker needs to apologize for (Kreutel, 2007: 331).

Furthermore, the mitigating repetition of ‘I’m sorry’ also matches the teacher’s friendly way to support the students’ insecurity with such relieving expressions as ‘no problem’ or ‘yes, yes, you’re right!’. What seems to occur is what Kreutel (2007: 338) calls “the sandwich pattern,” where mitigation is practised by both the teacher and the students, and might be related to a common desire to keep the area free of conflict since the participants know they are involved in a collaborative task.

As a result, from the excerpts illustrated we realise that corrections are formulated in a very soft way, and the confirmation of a statement is usually followed by the teacher’s mitigating and reassuring statement: “*Non preoccuparti*. No problem. *È difficile...mille novecento ottanta* (repeating slower). *Mille novecento ottanta*. *Ripeti ora*. Once more.” These are evident examples of mitigation strategies also known as repair and redressive actions, referring to the processes available to speakers through which they can deal with the problems which arise in their talk (Liddicoat 2007). Repair is a broader concept than simply the correction of errors in talk by replacing an incorrect form with a correct one, although such corrections are a part of repair. Drawing on the examples of the interactions mentioned above, the organisation of repair is based on different combinations (Sacks, Jefferson & Schegloff, 1977) as experienced by the teacher and the students in the classes observed:

- 1) self-initiated self-repair: the speaker of the repairable item both indicates a problem in the talk and resolves the problem (see the example from the activity 1a as shown above: “Teacher: *Non preoccuparti*. No problem. *È difficile.. mille novecento ottanta*. (repeating slower) *Mille novecento ottanta*. *Ripeti ora*. Once more”);
- 2) self-initiated other-repair: the speaker of the repairable item indicates a problem in the talk, but the recipient resolves the problem (see the example from the activity 1a as shown above: “Teacher: Your birthdate. Day, month and year. Ok? Student: Oh yeah, *sì*. I’m sorry. *Capito*.”; Student writes 1980 on the whiteboard);
- 3) other-initiated self-repair: the recipient of the repairable item indicates a problem in the talk and the speaker resolves the problem (see the example from the activity 2 b as shown above: “Student 2: I’m sorry, don’t know the meaning of *badante*. Teacher: *Nessun problema*. *Badante* is the person who cares somebody, an older person usually. Clear now? Student 2: Oh, yeah.)

The analysis of the mitigation strategies used in the ILF-ELF interactions between teachers and students may help us to approach language contact as a social and pragmatic phenomenon by looking at how language contact manifests itself in a group of speakers. ELF interactions are situations in which the average speaker is multilingual and knows that the other speakers are also multilingual, although usually with different individual multilingual repertoires (IMRs). Whether explicitly commented on or not, ELF speakers are aware that their interactions take place in emergent transcultural and translanguaging spaces. The examples of language contacts between ELF and IFL discussed in this paper also illustrate how linguistic creativity manifests itself in ELF not only in the way the virtual language of ‘English’ (Widdowson 1997: 138–140) is flexibly and creatively adapted and used, but also in the way in which non-English speech can be also integrated into ELF discourse.

5. Conclusions

The language class can never be considered a neutral space since all the participants in such a specific communicative situation bring with them their cultural and linguistic history that influences the final goal, which is the acquisition or betterment of linguistic competence. Against this background, the aim of our investigation was to highlight how this dynamic works in the IFL classroom when ELF is used. The migration context in Southern Italy offers an extremely varied set of examples and experiences that we approached according to Byrd Clark & Dervin’s reflexivity theory, mentioned in Section 3. The theoretical shift of focus from the analysis of foreigner talk to the mitigation approach was, indeed, possible since we recognised and acknowledged “a need to become aware of the illusions of the social world as well as our own representations and engagements with them” (Byrd Clark & Dervin, 2014: 23).

Approaching students, who are at the same time beneficiaries of a service included in a larger humanitarian project, required the abandonment of ideas of linguistic correctness and perfection, as well as any form of cultural and linguistic prejudice. This attitude was fundamental in order to establish the best condition for learning/teaching/researching, that is, the absence of any form of positive or negative expectations. Creating a space for surprise, namely, giving the students the same chance to fail or succeed, to disappoint or reward the teachers, was necessary to establish such conditions. Teachers showed a high degree of awareness as far as their double role as instructors and educators was concerned, and we benefited from the actual observation of such a complex educational context where respect and emotions play a crucial role. It imbued the language theories in this research with a sense of reality.

In addition to problematising the general notion of ELF in multicultural classrooms, the research indicated that language contact phenomena can be

analysed and described from different theoretical perspectives and with an emphasis on various linguistic dimensions or parameters. Results show that students with a low linguistic proficiency in IFL follow the same strategies native speakers do in order to avoid face-threats (not only to their interlocutors' face but also to their own). Moreover, they display a wide range of native-like strategies such as requesting clarification or asking for explanations through the use of ELF. It follows from this that linguistic proficiency in ELF – at least in the case of the participants in the current experiment – clearly plays a vital role in the development of pragmatic competence.

Finally, in line with Canagarajah's translingual theory (2013), we maintain that individuals are not only capable of but also in need of adapting to new communicative practices in order to negotiate, mediate and adapt to the new changing paradigms of the contemporary world. The paradigm of superdiversity, mentioned in Section 2, helps us to consider that the emerging phenomena of translingual social contact generated by globalisation, mobility and migration is encouraging the proposal of new theoretical and practical concepts. The deterritorialised and transidiomatic 'supergroup' (Vertovec, 2007; Blommaert & Rampton, 2011) of IFL teachers and their migrant students represents the complex arena of new social and linguistic research debates, since it problematises the relationship between linguistic communities and nation-states, and between the systematic knowledge of languages and their relationships to other cultures.

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