The English as a Foreign Language / Lingua Franca Debate: Sensitising Teachers of English as a Foreign Language Towards Teaching English as a Lingua Franca

El debate del inglés como lengua extranjera o como lengua franca: sensibilización de docentes de inglés como lengua extranjera hacia la enseñanza del inglés como lengua franca

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The function of English as a lingua franca for communication needs rethinking in the teaching of English as a foreign language classroom as a consequence of globalisation. The present contribution is an empirical study carried out in an Italian university environment which aims to show how teachers should take on board awareness raising activities in the recognition of other varieties of English which, albeit not exploited as benchmarks for language testing and certification, must nevertheless boast a relevant place in the global scenario. This can be achieved in practical terms by interrogating an expressly made corpus of Chinese English news texts and carrying out simple concordance activities.

Key words: Awareness raising, concordances, English as a foreign language, English as a lingua franca, globalisation.

Debido a los procesos de globalización, la función del inglés como herramienta internacional o como lengua franca para la comunicación exige un replanteamiento de la enseñanza del inglés como idioma extranjero. En este artículo se presenta un estudio empírico llevado a cabo en un contexto universitario italiano que pretende mostrar cómo los docentes deberían desempeñar actividades para facilitar el reconocimiento de otras variedades del inglés que, al no ser utilizadas como modelos de evaluación y certificación lingüística, exigen en cambio una mayor atención en el escenario global. En la práctica, esto puede realizarse analizando un corpus específico de textos periodísticos en inglés chino y llevando a cabo actividades sencillas de concordancias.

Palabras clave: concordancias, inglés como lengua extranjera, inglés como lengua franca, facilitación del reconocimiento, globalización.

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Introduction

The worldwide spread of English is just one of the many different developments subsumed under the general phenomenon of globalisation. It is furthermore associated with boundless mobilities and, as such, is the language of globalisation (Gnutzmann & Intemann, 2008, p. 9).

If, on the one hand it is true that language is a vital commodity in the globalised world, it is on the other also true that globalisation raises issues for second language learning and teaching. As a result, the function of English as an international tool or as a lingua franca (ELF) for communication needs rethinking in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. This does not only require that teachers help their students develop the linguistic skills needed to understand various kinds of accents and in turn be understood by others, but it also paves the way for an enhanced awareness of the existence of non-native speakers all over the world who use English as a means of communication. With this in mind, it is essential that teachers respond appropriately (and pragmatically) to equipping their students with the skills needed in the face of cultural and linguistic differences emerging between interactants in an international context, as, for example, Mauranen (2006) has highlighted in her study of misunderstanding and repair strategies in ELF communication.

The present contribution is an empirical study which investigates how instances of written ELF can be used to make EFL teachers come to terms with the concept of the other; in particular, the other with respect to the standard (British or American) English model, object and target of an institutional teaching syllabus. This otherness exists in its own right and as a natural consequence of cultural and sociolinguistic realities in other parts of the world. Thanks to developing technology and the widespread availability of documents, teachers are now in a position to access and save in electronic format –assembled as a general or specific corpus and which they can subsequently interrogate– a large amount of authentic English data from all corners of the world. This innovative means of retrieving and investigating information about the language has clear implications for future teacher training courses and the updating of EFL teaching methodology.

The work we present is supported by corpus evidence provided by a collection of articles from the on-line version of the *China Daily* newspaper, published in China, a country belonging to Kachru's (1985) Expanding Circle[1]. The aim of our analysis is two-fold, both purposes linked to each other like a pair of stepping stones: 1) to sensitise teachers of the existence of different Englishes around the world, which represent the voices and interests of different non-native speakers in their sociolinguistic and cultural uses of the language by identifying unfamiliar or even inventive lexico-grammatical features that appear in the corpus; 2) to propose an analytical framework that can be applied to any variety of texts in order to enhance EFL teaching methodology.

Thus we emphasize that the main aim of this paper does not lie in an attempt to investigate how much regularity/stability there actually is in the use of a standard form of English (EFL), but simply to raise awareness and acceptance of other Englishes.

From a contextual point of view, the paper will first provide some background information on the Italian university teaching context, and then focus on some of the main issues prevalent in the EFL and ELF debate. After a description of our objectives, methods and materials, preliminary data will be provided from a small-scale case study, carried

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1   Regarding the Englishes spoken around the world, Kachru devised a three circle concentric model - inner, outer and expanding.

out on a corpus of articles from the on-line version of the *China Daily* newspaper. Results from this study will serve as a possible instance of good practice for teachers in creating awareness-raising activities for themselves (and consequently their students), such as interrogating a corpus of articles from the above-mentioned newspaper (or indeed others) and investigating unfamiliar localised forms that may be identified (with respect to the standard language) by means of a simple concordancing software[2].

The Italian Educational context

At present English is the dominant language in the educational sector in Italy, as all over the rest of Europe, where it is primarily taught as the first foreign language and almost totally EFL biased, where accuracy is considered to be the norm, be it regarding productive skills in either the written or the spoken code. Native and non-native speakers alike demand allegiance to and achievement of the native speaker standards; neither pronunciation nor general written works are allowed to present any L1 interference. Moreover, EFL teaching institutions (in secondary and further education) design their courses often to match the requirements of international examination boards such as the University of Cambridge English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), who base their examinations on the descriptors of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)[3]. This design is also confirmed

by requirements in both academic and other professional circles where international certifications such as ESOL (First Certificate English, Cambridge Advanced and Proficiency) and (Test of English as a Foreign Language) TOEFL[4] attest the non-native speaker's ability to produce native speaker-like language and are seen as a kind of valid visiting card or key qualification on a curriculum vitae. In the particular case of Italy, university degree syllabuses look to and apply the CEFR for benchmark levels of students' competences, where an "accurate" B1 is required of non-language specialists reading for degrees in disciplines ranging from the sciences to the humanities, and a highly desirable C1-C2 for language specialists.

Interestingly enough, ESOL covers a less specific 130 countries around the world while on the TOEFL site[5], reference is made to acceptance in the Inner Circle countries (Kachru, 1985). Both sites thus imply, rather short-sightedly, that both British and American standards are the only acceptable norms on a worldwide scale. Indeed, what is emerging (Seidlhofer, 2008, p. 169) with some clarity is that in view of the present globalisation through English and of English, insistence on a 'monochrome' native-speaker standard has now become an anachronism that inevitably leads to some confusion in the discourse of and about linguistics and language teaching which manifests itself in a number of contradictions and discrepancies.

What we need is a critical appraisal of language use and language teaching analogous to what we find in other areas of English study, and a fostering

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2   The software used in this particular case was the freely downloadable ConCapp.

3   The Common European Framework of Reference is available at: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf. It is a document that consists of a series of levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) across five language strands – listening, spoken interaction, spoken production, reading and writing. It has been designed with adult language learners/users, as well as self-assessment in mind. It has the benefit of not being specific to any country or context and offers a continuum for identifying language proficiency within a self-assessment grid.

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4   While TOEFL does not take the CEFR into consideration it likewise establishes the strict criteria candidates need to satisfy in order to achieve a particular level of competence. The TOEFL test measures your ability to use and understand English at the university level. And it evaluates how well you combine your listening, reading, speaking and writing skills to perform academic tasks. http://www.ets.org/toefl/.

5   See above.

of language awareness in the true sense of the word with regard to how language functions in social contexts of use.

To be able to move forward, it is necessary for teachers to take on board the present reality which does not rely on the hegemony of the norm-based standard English, be it the British or the American model. While noting the increasing need for a lingua franca, which English may provide, Seidlhofer (1997, p. 54) highlights its repercussions on the teaching of English:

> [This constellation of factors] creates the opportunity to use the teaching of English, from early schooling onwards, as an integrative force equipping young people with two crucial assets simultaneously: the *instrumental* one of access to a lingua franca, and the *educational* one of fostering language awareness.[6]

This move forward will have no chance of survival unless, as Seidlhofer (1997, p. 54) affirms, "teacher education is carefully re-evaluated, re-thought, and re-formed", implying that teachers, both native and non-native speakers of English, must no longer simply teach what they themselves were taught to do and how to teach it in their teacher training courses. Seidlhofer (1997) supports her claim by proposing a rather useful analogy with other areas of life, such as healthcare:

> While there are sound arguments and great demands for various forms of 'alternative medicine', most doctors still rely exclusively on a repertoire of drugs and surgery simply because this is what they were taught in medical school. Genuine change in healthcare can only come in the wake of changes in medical training. (p. 54)

Such a claim is still relevant more than ten years on and needs to be applied, in our opinion, more extensively in the Italian university system.

Furthermore, it is also our view that undergraduates reading for language degrees come to the university under the false impression that they will be learning the language rather than *about* the language. Hence, teachers must set themselves the task of helping students to overcome an initial difficulty in adjusting to more theory-oriented investigative lessons that focus not on the form of the language but its particular meaning and function in the speech context.

This confirms the general consensus among scholars reported by Jenkins (2006, p. 173) on the importance of language awareness on the part of teachers, teacher trainers and educators in all three circles, and the need for them, together with their students, "to learn not (a variety of English), but about Englishes, their similarities and differences, issues involved in intelligibility (the strong link between language and identity, and so on)". Indeed, it is this conviction that triggered the suggested awareness-raising activities proposed in the latter part of this contribution, for the very reason that

> Language teachers must move away from viewing the non-native language as if operated in a social void. It is vital to realize the essential fact that language is, above all, a social creation and that communication is a social act. In most communities the speakers' status depends on their linguistic abilities; their intelligence, personality and even value as human beings may all be judged according to their style of speaking. Because of these factors, a socially oriented linguistics is unquestionably of immediate and practical relevance to non-native language learners; sociolinguistic research and themes must be integrated into L2 courses. (Loveday, 1982, p. 176)

EFL vs ELF

Teachers must come to terms with the fact that university students will be confused by what is meant by EFL and ELF. For them the acronyms might seem synonymous, since their practical language studies go under the name of EFL, yet what learners are required to do is to make use of their

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6   Bold in original. Changed to italics here.

institutional language training to carry out prospective future language activities in the outside "international" world. Consequently, for the uninitiated Italian student, EFL and ELF could mean one and the same thing, but it should be made clear that in the Italian language learning environment at least, the "variety" taught is only one, and more importantly, not necessarily "the one" they will encounter in other non-native speakers of English from other nations.

Furthermore, in many Italian university English departments, we are faced with a somewhat schizophrenic situation: while on the one hand, in all parts of the course of studies except practical language classes (i.e. cultural studies, literary studies, linguistics and language education) we celebrate multiculturalism, pluricentrism, postcolonial 'writing back', language variation and change and pluri-and multilingualism, on the other, the ideal, as far as language *proficiency* is concerned, is very much that of a usually monolingual native speaker of Standard English.

As we have already implied, the spread of English has an ambivalent character: it is a lingua franca necessary for international communication and it is a vehicle for the spread of a culture influenced by the United States of America and, to a lesser extent, Western Europe. The term "spread" is of the utmost significance and used in contrast to the potentially synonymous "distribution" as explained by Widdowson in his dichotomy of the two terms ("Distribution denies spread", 1997, p. 140). Neither do we intend the transplantation of a standard form of British or American English according to a phenomenon of "MacDonaldisation" or franchising of Pizza Hut and Kentucky Fried Chicken around the world.

Teachers should get their students aware that, paradoxically, aiming at native-like command of the language may even prove counterproductive

and discouraging in successful ELF communication, especially in consideration of the risk of unilateral idiomaticity, while it will make EFL communication more rewarding psychologically.

Native speaker varieties, therefore, might be considered to be 'unrealistic standards' and consequently unreachable goals for non-native learners who need the language for different purposes than do native speakers. Non-native speakers have to be intelligible to other non-native speakers as most of them will never communicate with a native speaker of English. As a consequence, it will be the task of EFL teachers to help their students develop common pragmatic strategies of achieving reciprocal understanding.[7]

Awareness Raising

Awareness raising means incorporating into the learning curriculum a familiarity with other realities that students are more than likely to meet in any of the inner, outer and extended circles, of which they may themselves become a permanent or temporary member once they have left their formal learning environment. While it is indeed not difficult for students to envisage interacting with native speakers in a native-speaker environment e.g. London or New York, teachers must realise that EFL training does not prepare their students to cope with the pragmatic difficulties of communicating with other non-native speakers like themselves in Paris, Milan, and Singapore according to the professional activity they take up after graduating. As Jenkins (2006, p. 173) aptly claims,

> Awareness raising fits well with another area of broad
>
> agreement among WE's (World Englishes) and ELF researchers:

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7   See studies by Mauranen (2006), Seidlhofer, Breiteneder and Pitzl (2006) on misunderstanding and repair strategies between non-natives.

the need for a pluricentric rather than monocentric approach to the teaching and use of English. This approach, it is believed, would enable each learner's and speaker's English to reflect his or her own sociolinguistic reality, rather than that of a usually distant native speaker.

This has direct consequences when it comes to setting the objectives for L2 learners who happen to be living in inner circle environments: "The critical question to ask is, with whom do L2 speakers of English (want to) interact? This is a crucial question for TESOL countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, but one that is rarely asked" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 173). It seems that it is just taken for granted that learning activities will simulate face to face interaction with a native speaker standing opposite, or "at the other end of the line".

The transition from EFL speaker to ELF user should be clear in the minds of the EFL teachers who will no longer look then to the benchmark levels of competence as the only objectives of their language teaching. Acceptance and recognition of such a transition will be proof that they themselves have become advocators of awareness raising and that they are in a position to transmit it to their students. Indeed, it is with this dichotomy in mind that we suggest greater and more constant attention should be paid by the teacher not just to language competence according to the native speaker norm, but to exposure to other varieties that are becoming more prominent in the world today. For this reason we decided to create an example corpus of World English to make our point. The choice fell on Chinese English as represented in the *China Daily* online newspaper, but the analytical framework that we devised could be used according to individual interest or curiosity regarding any other particular variety.

Methods, Objectives and Materials

As we have attempted to stress so far, questions about the relationship between ELF and EFL, particularly their impact on the English language classroom, must be addressed in view of learning objectives. While there is no getting away from the fact that any teaching requires the definition of goals and objectives i.e. something that the teaching and learning is directed at (in pedagogical terms, prescription), learning goals in language teaching have traditionally been formulated with reference to standard language (Seidlhofer, 2008, p. 159) as we have highlighted in previous paragraphs.

What we, as Seidlhofer (2008, p. 168), are advocating is not a rejection of all norms and standards, but a reappraisal of their justification. Particular attention should be paid to such issues as communication, accommodation and identity formation. There is no thoroughly described –let alone institutionalised– variety of EFL as yet and so it is not possible to teach and learn it, yet necessary to recognise it. As Widdowson (2003) puts it, "linguistic description cannot automatically meet pedagogic requirement" and it would therefore be wrong to assume that "findings should directly and uniquely inform what is included in language courses" (p. 106). Language teachers should thus refer to, but not defer, linguists.

In light of the above considerations, the present study has been devised with the main aim in mind of raising teachers' and subsequently students' awareness of the existence of several Englishes and not just the standard one on which their institutionalised learning is based. Accordingly, the present writers have devoted their focus of attention to articles published in the *China Daily*, the only national English-language daily newspaper distributed in China. Headquartered in Beijing,

with bureaus in Shanghai and Guangzhou, and a web site (www.chinadaily.com.cn) that projects 6 million hits a day, *China Daily* has long been the prime news source for foreign businessmen, diplomats, and academics engaged in China. The newspaper has a world-wide readership, as it is distributed in 150 countries. The corpus includes 130 articles from the local news section, collected over a period of two years (2006 and 2007) totalling about 100,000 tokens and 9,100 types.

Media language in general never fails to present a rich source of material for awareness raising activities; newspapers in particular offer numerous written text types worthy of study as confirmed by Kachru's analyses (1992, pp. 309-311) on Headline Language, Matrimonial Advertisements, Obituaries in South Asian newspapers, which illustrate what he calls variety specific "meaning" in deviation. He notes how a native speaker of English, who is not familiar with the cultural and linguistic pluralism in South Asia, would consider these language varieties deviant and/or erroneous from a lexical, collocational and semantic point of view.

Corpus collection is indeed becoming a more frequent kind of activity which teachers themselves can carry out with specific tasks in mind for their students, rather than relying on readymade, more generalised reference corpora (e.g. *The British National Corpus*; *The Bank of English*) for the simple tasks of meaning searches as well as lexico-grammatical patterns. O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter (2007) emphasise the relevance of corpora to language teaching materials, writers, course designers and language teachers and the pedagogical relevance of corpus findings in terms of understanding the vocabulary needs of language learners. Recent research (Anderson & Corbett, 2009) has more particularly addressed the exploration of English with online corpora, suggesting numerous activities for students to explore the lexis,

grammar, discourse and pronunciation of given text types and genres. More recently still, Mansfield and Poppi (in press) suggest ways in which students can also be encouraged to create their own specialised corpora to pursue investigations into areas of particular interest (e.g. evaluative adjectives on promotional websites, discourse markers, use of personal pronouns in political speeches, and so on). From the above, a clear development can be traced in methodological procedure with an emphasis on authenticity of materials and research purpose, whereby creative responsibility is gradually handed down /passed on from textbook writer to teacher, that is, from readymade authentic materials for teachers to exploit albeit with guidance, to authentic material that they collect themselves for their students. These can either be tasks searching for recurrences of linguistic phenomena in a more norm-directed context by means of generalised reference corpora, or those that will highlight the kinds of linguistic variety that emerge from the *China Daily* corpus devised for the present study.

Redressing the Balance in Course Objectives

Teachers should take into account not only the short-term objectives of their courses (the achievement of a certain level of competence in some or all of the language skills that match the norm-based EFL inner circle standards of learning the language), but also long-term ones, which should reflect the reality of the world outside the institutional environment and the actual use or performance of English in a myriad of circumstances/situations, that is, also by learning *about* the language.

One objection from ELF scholars to the standardised forms of international examinations is that they clearly aim to test the standard norm (British English for Cambridge ESOL and American English for TOEFL) and consequently require

candidates to produce as near as possible native speaker competence in the contextualised task they are set. We would suggest that this is a form of "tunnel vision" on the part of examination boards. Indeed, little or no space is allowed for the presentation of "non-standard" or more localised varieties of English in the written texts used for comprehension. As far as receptive skills are concerned, while varieties in accent (British, American, Australian, Scottish, etc.) in the listening comprehension section may be included, the same cannot be said of the content of written documents, which will remain within the bounds of the standard structural, lexical and pragmatic forms.

Therefore, in an age where teaching and testing are so clearly dependent on each other, the one justifying the relevance and existence of the other, as it would appear above, it is high time that we started proposing new contents in the EFL learning programme (also in view of possible future assessment at the end of the learning process) that truly reflect both the productive and receptive skills of non-native speakers of English, skills that they are likely to need in the world of global communication.

As far back as 1982 Kachru[8] was already advocating a certain awareness on the part of the language trainer in devising a particular methodological and attitudinal approach that would incorporate the following points into the language syllabus, and which are applicable to the kind of sensitizing we are advocating for our Italian students, many of which are retrievable from the corpus collected:

1. *Sociolinguistic profile*: an overview of English in its world context with discussion of selected major varieties, their users and uses. A clear distinction to be made between the use of English in a monolingual society, as opposed to a multilingual society; and its implications (e.g. code mixing, code switching).

2. *Variety exposure*: an exposition of the repertoire of major varieties of English, native and non-native: their uses and users, specific texts related to various interactional contexts, shared and non-shared features at different linguistic levels.

3. *Attitudinal neutrality*: for teaching purposes, one might focus on one specific variety and at the same time emphasise awareness and functional validity of other varieties.

4. *Range of uses*: the functional appropriateness of the lectal range of varieties within a specific variety (e.g. from educated varieties to pidgins and basilects).

5. *Contrastive pragmatics*: the relationships of discoursal and stylistic innovations and their relationships to the local conventions of culture (e.g. strategies used for persuasion, phatic communion, apologies, condolences, regrets).

6. *Multidimensionality of functions*: the linguistic implications of the functional range as in, for example, the media, literary creativity, administration, and the legal system.

It is worth mentioning here various studies carried out in Europe in general concerning the acceptance of native speaker norms both on the part of the teacher and the learner. As far as the latter is concerned, Timmis (2002) carried out a survey on 400 English students in 14 different countries which revealed that it was the learners themselves who were highly oriented to achieving a native-speaker competence. On the other hand, Murray (2003, p. 160) revealed that Swiss non-native teachers (more than native speakers teaching in Switzerland) were not inclined to accept a model based on European lingua franca

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8   The text referred to is the 1992, 2nd edition, pp. 360-361.

English, probably due to the fact that they had invested heavily themselves in near-native speaker competence and did not wish to see their achievement devalued. In the Italian situation, with examination-oriented teaching requiring specific competences, and students requiring recognition of language achievement in the form of certification, there appears to be no escaping the fact that the emphasis is still predominantly on the native-speaker norm.

Sample Activities

Considering the relevance of identity in media texts, and in particular newspapers, it is always good practice for teachers to ask students to note the sociolinguistic elements peculiar to news texts, that is, linguistic features that indicate concepts such as identity, relevance and proximity (Mansfield, 2005) with reference to readership. Newspapers are written with a particular readership in mind; a national newspaper will cover both national and international newsworthy events, while a more local one will focus on more local events. It is interesting to note how local newspapers create a local identity relevant to its local readers who are identified in and through the way news is reported. From a qualitative study of several local newspapers in the county of Yorkshire (United Kingdom), Mansfield (2005) noted how a local newspaper creates its own identity, of which it is also proud, as clearly indicated in the masthead (*The Yorkshire Post*: *Yorkshire's National Newspaper; The Asian Express: Yorkshire's No.1 Asian Newspaper*).

In the quantitative/qualitative analysis we propose here, teachers should invite students to observe similar newsworthy features of identity and relevance in the readers of the *China Daily* and their particular implications and significance in the context of this national paper's "local news sections". The first step is to carry out a frequency sort of the types and tokens in the corpus. By scrolling down the list and leaving aside for the moment function words that are bound to be highly frequent (definite/indefinite articles, prepositions, etc.) it is possible to note the frequency of content words and also "unusual" tokens/types, whether they occur as singletons or are more recurrent, as the following analysis will show. This is the starting point for investigating the data.

Investigating features of identity

A word frequency sort of the *China Daily* corpus will highlight the number of times the possessive "China's" occurs (259 occurrences - 0.2711 %), as seen in the sample extract in Figure 1. One preliminary investigation using the concordance would be to identify the right collocates to determine the "objects" of China's possession. As the examples in Figure 1 show, it can be seen that "China's" collocates with "national" in N+1 and "defence" in N+2 position, revealing national priorities relating to defence and economy (*China's national defence policy, China's national defence and armed forces; China's national economic development*). Already emerging from this small sample are long noun groups with heavy pre-modification, which further investigation will confirm as a recurrent linguistic feature. In fact, there are numerous occurrences of *China's defence expenditure, China's border and coastal defence, China's GDP*, and so on. It could be hypothesised then that this type of Chinese English text will reveal a tendency to information packaging in noun phrases (e.g. *China's second-largest trading partner, China's comparatively underdeveloped capital markets, China's deepening reform and opening up to the outside world*).

Figure 1. Sample Concordance of "China's" - Right Sort

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158   rtime footing.  Mobilization of the Armed Forces  China's mobilization of the armed forces includes the mobi
159   fortified national defence is a strategic task of China's modernization drive.  China pursues a three-step d
160   online examples of a "harmonious society".  Dubbed China's most influential Internet competition, the contest
161   hbouring countries is also in order.  All in all, China's motivation for a more prominent role in the intern
162   The growth of defence expenditure on the basis of China's national condition conforms to the rules of milita
163    document will provide a comprehensive picture of China's national defence and the military modernization dr
164   efence and economy. It keeps the modernization of China's national defence and armed forces as an integral p
165   round, coordinated and sustainable development of China's national defence and armed forces.  China pursues a
166    force for global peace, security and stability.  China's national defence and military modernization, condu
167   ent will help foreign countries better understand China's national defence policy and its military build-up.
168   ng informationized wars by the mid-21st century.  China's national defence policy for the new stage in the n
169   fence policy which is purely defensive in nature.  China's national defence provides the guarantee for mainta
170   t, the document offers a comprehensive picture of China's national defence ranging from its security environ
171   s expected today to issue a white paper reviewing China's national defence situation in 2006.  The document
172   efence policy that is purely defensive in nature.  China's national defence, in keeping with and contributing
173   fence policy which is purely defensive in nature.  China's national defence, in keeping with and contributing
174   oundation. It is a moderate increase in step with China's national economic development. In the 1980s, China
175   oundation. It is a moderate increase in step with China's national economic development. In the 1980s, China
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Figure 2. Sample Concordance of "Surnamed" - Right Sort

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1    ws) Saved in the nick of time A 56-year-old woman surnamed Ai who tried to commit suicide on Monday, by lying
2    amily, including a 7-year-old boy and his mother, surnamed Cai, had been killed.  "I heard a very huge sound
3    band ordered to live up to prenuptial terms A man surnamed Cui who signed a contract to support his family be
4    jured. Examining the pug marks, a wildlife expert surnamed Gao, believed they were very likely those of tiger
5    to collect the oil. A security guard of a factory surnamed Ge said both drivers were slightly injured. Police
6    y are not law enforcement personnel. The old man, surnamed Hai, built a coop for more than 10 chickens and du
7    News) Man beats girlfriend over green cap A man surnamed Hao beat his girlfriend surnamed Li because of a g
8    appy life at home Guangzhou's first AIDS patient, surnamed Hua, is living a happy and harmonious life with his
9    s home to place it by the bedside of the mistress surnamed Hua. Hua, 30, said her dog also helps to take off
10   ect car's leather interior The owner of a new car surnamed Huang has been locking a cat inside the vehicle in
11   o used to visit Cai's restaurant.  Cai's husband, surnamed Huang, was not home on the day of the murders, sai
12   report about the incident from Liang's neighbor, surnamed Huang, whose door and ceiling were damaged by the
13   he villagers were found dead or injured. A farmer surnamed Ji said he witnessed two of his dogs, each weighin
14   an loses, recovers big bucks A careless passenger surnamed Kang recovered 20,000 yuan he left on a train than
15   n and cerebrovascular disease for years. A doctor surnamed Lai reminded people with heart or cerebral disease
16    green cap A man surnamed Hao beat his girlfriend surnamed Li because of a green cap she sent him as a gift.
17   Woman conned of 180,000 yuan A 60-year-old woman surnamed Li, who was defrauded of 180,000 yuan ($24,234) si
18   last blows the lid off man's gun collection A man surnamed Liang was detained after his gun went off by accid
19   in an environment that is close to nature," a vet surnamed Liu said. He was confident the farm's income would
20   uangzhou Daily) Law catches up with woman A woman surnamed Long who misused 580,000 yuan ($78,911) of a compa
21   uld rise to 15 percent in 2020 A 19-year-old girl surnamed Luo became anorexic after she refused to eat rice
22   he is seeking a mate for the dog. The dog's owner surnamed Mu said his female Tibetan mastiff named Sha Sha w
23   y damages of 206,000 yuan ($27,100) to the woman, surnamed Peng, who was incorrectly diagnosed with breast ca
24   lance but was pronounced dead on arrival. His son surnamed Su said his father had suffered from myocardial in
25   anet.com) Court appearance wrong decision A woman surnamed Tan, wanted by the police, was arrested last Wedne
26   e incident occurred on Sunday when the bus driver surnamed Wang repeatedly asked the young man to give up his
27    be taught to take care of themselves," an expert surnamed Wang said. (New Culture) Endangered species proves
28   News) A tearful omen for a luckless groom A groom surnamed Wang was caught in an awkward dilemma when he tore
29   the cab onto a road near a village where the man, surnamed Wang, lived. While the owner of the truck was busy
30   ttle when there's money to be made A Shanghai man surnamed Xin suddenly stopped his car in the emergency lane
31   nd fined 1,000 yuan ($135) for assault. The woman surnamed Xu has a daughter who is in love with a young man.
32   age in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province. Cui's wife, surnamed Xu, took him to court in June. Xu asked Cui to pay
33   ck just 4 hours into the flight. After the woman, surnamed Yang, fell ill onboard and all first-aid attempts
34   the girl to see a psychologist. The psychologist surnamed Zhang advised the parents to apologize to their da
35   t the lawsuit for lack of a legal basis. The man, surnamed Zhang, asked his stepmother repeatedly to give him
36   r coma with loving care and attention. The woman, surnamed Zhang, had been collecting garbage to raise money
37   e. For instance, two years ago a 13-year-old boy, surnamed Zhang, killed six-year-old Xiaoliang in a village
38   eople who were bad at their jobs. Another worker, surnamed Zhang, said he was concerned his name would appear
39   enzhen to attend a court case against her husband surnamed Zhang. Tan managed to escape during a police raid
40   h one of her nostrils. Friends advised the woman, surnamed Zhao, to go to a hospital in Nanjing, where a doct
41   l the beast out of the well. The buffalo's owner, surnamed Zhu, said the animal was worth 5,000 yuan ($675) -
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Similar investigations could then be carried out on post-modification to discover a possibly similar phenomenon.

ELF Users as Agents of Change

Scrolling down the frequency sort also reveals "unusual" lexical items, such as "surnamed" (41 occurrences - 0.0429 %). An EFL expert would naturally expect to find "named" or "called" relating to a person or people and indicate this as erroneous. A concordance will subsequently present all the 41 occurrences on the screen (Figure 2). Looking to the left of the keyword, the student can identify all the kinds of people, more or less specific (woman,

man, Shanghai man, wildlife expert, dog's owner) that are "surnamed".

Returning to previous considerations on noun group structuring, we think it would be interesting to investigate pre-modification of other terms in what appears to be unusual noun groupings and expressions. Such a case found in the frequency sort was the hyphened "left-at-home" which occurred 17 times (0.0178%); investigation then showed that a) it was always followed by the noun "children" and b) contextual features indicated references to demands, needs, helping of such children, thus relating to a socio-cultural factor prevalent in the lives of Chinese families.

This particular example may be discussed in terms of Sinclair's (2003) concept of semantic prosody as identified through corpus investigation:

> A corpus enables us to see words grouping together to make special meanings as to the reasons why they were chosen together. This kind of meaning is called SEMANTIC PROSODY; it has been recognised in part as connotation, pragmatic meaning and attitudinal meaning, but it rarely appears in reference works that do not derive their evidence from corpora. (p. 178)[9]

According to Firth's famous claim, "You shall know a word by the company it keeps" (1957, p. 11), an examination of the co-text around the key word (to the left or to the right) will give insights into whether the term has positive or negative connotations. In the case of "left-at-home", while we have seen that it is always followed by "children", it is the other words surrounding it (help, want, needy) that contribute to suggesting a negative prosody (Figure 3).

National Sociolinguistic Impact

Sociolinguistic insights can be noted in other uses of "unusuality" in words or newly created terminologies coined to reflect the changing realities of China in recent years. An example that was again taken from the frequency sort was "information-ization" (31 occurrences - 0.0324%) with purely technological connotations (Figure 4).

Figure 3. Sample Concordance of Unusual Pre-Modification in Noun Groups "Left-At-Home Children"

Figure 4. Sample Concordance of "Unusual" Words - Informationization (Unsorted)

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9   Capitals in original.

Cultural Impact

Likewise "harmonious society" appears as a frequent collocation (18 times – 0.018%) and catchphrase[10] that is seen in the context of positive semantic prosody with the recurrence of noun and verb forms to do with building, establishing and creating a harmonious society. Lines 2 and 3 also evidence premodification with "socialist".

On similar lines to the formation of abstract nominalisation ("informationalisation") there is also a singleton in the corpus of "good-neighbourliness" ("It works to promote *good-neighbourliness*, mutual benefit and win-win"), which again is an unusual term relating to harmonious societies.

So it can be seen that corpus investigations are a useful tool in order for the teacher to organise awareness raising activities that will stimulate students to reflect on the question of otherness.

Corpora are indeed a double-edged investigative tool for both teachers and learners in the sense that the teachers can use them to enhance their own awareness and also to introduce students to an awareness raising instrument and methodology that they themselves can be trained to apply in other varieties of ELF. Simple user-friendly concordancing software makes the task a fruitful one in terms of discovery learning. These activities also train teachers (and students in turn) to search beyond limited dictionary definitions which are not likely to come up with many of the above words and expressions in the particular contexts in which they have been examined in the examples. For this reason, it is our view that corpus investigation work provides a welcome means of best practice in teacher training and teaching methodology due to the wealth of insight it brings to ELF.

Figure 5. Sample Concordance of "Harmonious Society" Noun Group


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1    rity could appear to contradict the concept of a "harmonious society". However, he sees it differently. "Chinese people
2    ompetition to find the best online examples of a "harmonious society". Dubbed China's most influential Internet competi
3    o the widening income gap in order to establish a harmonious society," the report said. The report said that both lower
4    ill continue to be our top priority in building a harmonious society in which all people are well educated, workers wel
5    ore and more critical in China's drive to build a harmonious society.  One thing that is inevitable for people of advan
6    . Wang Ren says these people give him hope that a harmonious society can be realized: A society in which people care fo
7    common people's contribution to the building of a harmonious society," Wang says. Lan's became the lead story in the fi
8    vil trials, highlighting their role in creating a harmonious society. Chief Justice Xiao Yang yesterday used a work con
9    lso explores the role of government in building a harmonious society. Through interviews with experts on politics, phil
10   ntment through helping others. "The building of a harmonious society is a process of mass involvement and can only be a
11   ommon people are significant to the building of a harmonious society. They have the right to participate and share the
12   e should be encouraged to take part in building a harmonious society. Wang agrees the government should provide better
13   llowances and so on." "The proposal of building a harmonious society and the way the Party and the government practice
14     defines "harmonious society" from the outset. "A harmonious society can provide enough space for different approaches
15    which impairs social stability. The catchphrase "harmonious society" first appeared in the report of the 16th CPC Nati
16   n politics, philosophy and sociology, it defines "harmonious society" from the outset. "A harmonious society can provid
17   erous society in an all-round way and a socialist harmonious society, and it enjoys steady economic growth, political s
18    and security, China strives to build a socialist harmonious society at home and a harmonious world to ensure both its
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10   The whole context of use is explained in one of the texts in the corpus: The catchphrase "harmonious society" first appeared in November 2002 in the report of the 16th CPC National Congress, which discussed building a moderately prosperous society in the first 20 years of this century. In September 2004, "building a harmonious socialist society" was first put forward by the 16th CPC Central Committee at its fourth plenary session, and in 2005 President Hu Jintao addressed the topic in his keynote speech at the Party School of the CPC Central Committee. In October 2006, the CPC identified the general requirements of "building a harmonious socialist society" as "democracy and the rule of law, equity and justice, honesty and fraternity, vigor and vitality, stability and order, and harmony between man and nature". "The building of a harmonious society is a process of mass involvement and can only be achieved when every individual's interest is respected and fulfilled," Wang says.

Conclusions

Globalisation changes the conditions under which language teaching and learning take place. In this sphere, as in others, some of the most significant changes are economic. People have always learnt languages for economic reasons. Some commentators have suggested that languages are coming to be treated as economic commodities, and that this view is displacing traditional ideologies in which languages were primarily symbols of ethnic or national identity.

Even without going as far as to claim that languages are nothing but commodities, however, we feel that the teaching of English at Italian universities should accommodate students' global needs for the language –most specifically the teaching of English as an international lingua franca and as a world possession (Gupta, 1999). English language education should reflect the diversity of the language and prepare learners with the co-operative skills that they require in their daily lives. This approach would include more emphasis on pragmatic fluency (House, 2002), intercultural communicative competence (Gnutzmann, 1999) and enhanced language awareness as the present study has tried to show.

We have particularly wanted to show how in the re-visiting of any teacher training programmes it is essential to include awareness raising in the recognition of other varieties, which albeit not exploited as benchmarks for language testing and certification, must nevertheless boast a relevant place in the global scenario. This is the ultimate challenge that EFL teachers have to meet if English language learning is to take concrete strides forward in today's globalised world.

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