English(es) and beyond: Towards multilingualism in a multifaceted and permeable family of languages

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The present volume aims to focus on language variation in the context of global movements and language contact. It will explore the role of language in spatial and social mobility across geographical and cultural borders in the contemporary world in which barriers are becoming increasingly permeable due primarily to globalisation.

Globalisation is a recent, multi-dimensional phenomenon that has affected the social, cultural, economic and political basics of all societies and has also impacted international communication by highlighting the need for a global lingua franca. Breaking down language barriers through the use of a communal and vehicular language is not a recent phenomenon; people of different cultures and territories have implemented such a solution throughout history[1], but English, for a variety of different reasons, appears to be the language predestined to fulfil the task better than any other. Since the end of the 18th century, the predictions on the diffusion and the role of English have been clearcut: "English will be the most respectable language in the world and the most universally read and spoken in the next century, if not before the close of this one" (John Adams, second President of the USA, 1780, quoted in Crystal, 2003, p. 74).

Hence, the volume and this introductory essay will focus on English in particular, nevertheless other languages or varieties will be discussed in covering issues related largely to language-contact situations. Language contact is a central aspect in language change: interaction with other languages and other dialectal varieties of one language is a source of innovation in pronunciation, syntax, and vocabulary and, when protracted, it generally leads to bilingualism or multilingualism. The contexts covered in the present volume are those of diaspora (*Calabrese*; *Furiassi*), migration (*Guido*; *Guzzo*; *Vigo*) and detention (*Grasso*), together with issues of multilingualism (*Latorraca*; *Nardi*), minority languages' decline (*Micheli*, *Legère*), identity and belonging (*Bevilacqua*; *Calabrese*; *Guido*; *Guzzo*; *Pellegrino*), language and accessibility (*Iaia*), some of which are also intersected with the topic of translanguaging (*Latorraca*; *Vigo*).

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A discussion of the English language must be predicated on a concise historical reconstruction in order to explain how the native language of a relatively small island nation was able to develop and spread to this extent. Although widely accounted for, the two diasporas outlined by Kachru (1992a) regarding the achievement of the present status of the English language must be mentioned[2]. Through the first and second diasporas, English has reached the majority of the world's nations, has gained the unquestionable role of international language, and it is now widely regarded as having become the 'global language'. The reasons for this status have been clearly explained by Crystal (2007): a language becomes 'global' when it acquires a special role recognised in every country as a consequence of the political, economic and military power of its speakers. Due to its position, English can be spoken as the native language (ENL), as a second language (ESL) or as a foreign language (EFL). A simple and well-designed representation of World Englishes is Kachru's division into three concentric circles: the *Inner Circle*, the *Outer Circle* and the *Expanding Circle* (Kachru, 1992b, p. 356). His World English paradigm is considered "the most influential model" by Jenkins (2003, p. 15), seeking to document the variation in present-day English based largely on geographical context. Despite being the first to recognise the legitimacy of norms other than those of the Inner Circle, even this highly recognised model has its limits: the many grey areas between the circles (see Mair, 2016, among others) are not satisfactorily explained or defined, thus stressing the need for a re-positioning of research into World Englishes within the context of the "sociolinguistics of globalization" (Blommaert, 2010; Coupland, 2010).

With the increasing spread of English globally, many terms and labels have arisen alongside 'global English' in order to address the complexity and variation of English usage today, including 'World English/es', 'English as a lingua franca' (EFL), 'linguistic imperialism', and 'language hybridity'. Each of these has its own peculiarities and assumptions regarding linguistic norms, variation, and capital.

'World English(es)' refers to forms of English that have been developed by non-native speakers. The awareness of their existence in the early 1980s led to the emergence of an effervescent sub-field of research into English linguistics at the intersection of dialectology, sociolinguistics and historical linguistics, aiming not only to understand the linguistic repercussions of colonialism but also to identify and follow the diachronic and synchronic variations around the world.

'English as a lingua franca' (ELF) has been given different definitions by different scholars. We quote and follow the seminal one given by Firth, who states that it is "the kind of English used between speakers of different languages and cultural backgrounds; it is a 'contact language' between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen *foreign* language of communication" (1996, p. 240). With English being the current lingua franca, it can no longer be considered as the ownership of native speakers which foreign learners must aspire to. It needs to adapt to the needs of its speakers worldwide, although this calls for the variation and changing of old standardised habits and the development

of new languages or new Englishes. What is clear is that those Englishes used for international communication purposes are no longer only the two main standard varieties: British and American English. The concept of World English is therefore a pluricentric one, with a gradual shift away from the traditional centres and the emergence of multidimensional locations and uses accompanied by a further increase in its importance as the "global lingua franca" (Weber, 1997), although it is in fact a 'global language' at its apogee rather than a 'lingua franca' proper.

To better understand the role of English today we mention Phillipson's (1992; 2009) recognition of the linguistic power of English in terms of 'linguistic imperialism', documenting how colonial nations frequently imposed the use of English on particular nations. What is evident is that wide-ranging localisation and nativisation has hastened the ramification of different Englishes in the ESL and EFL regions. The element worth underlining is the *pluralisation* of the word 'English' occurring in many allocutions, showing the diverse aspect of English today. The term 'Englishes' is used to describe the different varieties of English in the manifold sociolinguistic context. Despite all the inevitable dissimilarities, a fundamentally uniform developmental process shaped by consistent sociolinguistic and language-contact conditions has operated in the individual instances of rerooting the English language in other territories, particularly in post-colonial settings. In particular, Schneider's dynamic model of postcolonial Englishes (2003; 2007) has become fundamental to describe the development of new Englishes, with an evolutionary perspective emphasising language ecologies. It shows how language evolves as a 'competition-and-selection' process within a pool of features of possible linguistic choices, and how certain linguistic features emerge[3]. In choosing from this pool of features, speakers are engaged in a constant redefinition and manifestation of their linguistic and social identities, continuously aligning themselves with other individuals and thereby accommodating their speech behaviour to those they wish to associate and be associated with.

Linguistic identity is a complex phenomenon that cannot be separated from other facts such as language attitudes and ideologies, and linguistic power. It is in this composite perspective that the contributions of *Calabrese* and *Furiassi* are set. Among the post-colonial English varieties of the Caribbean islands, Barbados is a prototype for diasporic contexts, therefore the sub-variety of Barbadian English is considered in *Furiassi*'s paper, with a focus on idiomatic features contributing to forging the Barbadian linguistic identity and testifying to the increased permeability of geographical barriers. Another language-contact situation in a post-colonial context is that of Indian English. This is investigated in terms of individual and collective identity construction in *Calabrese*'s study, where a corpus-based approach is employed to identify the systematic use of linguistic forms and salient features contributing to the construction of the speakers' discursive identity.

Particular attention needs to be paid to the term 'New Englishes', which "covers a multitude of varieties that are far from being uniform in their characteristics and current use" (Jenkins, 2003, p. 22). Typically, New Englishes are hybrids (Mc Arthur,

1998, p. 2) rather than homogeneous entities with a clear-cut form, with stability and flux going side by side and centripetal and centrifugal forces operating simultaneously, resulting in a varying degree of hybridisation. Scholars such as Pennycook (2007) have made a significant contribution in pointing out the hybridity of English use today, which is seen to be only one of many languages used in cross-cultural exchanges. In this way, the theory of hybridity recognises the multilingual and multicultural element of current cross-cultural exchanges.

In *Latorraca*'s contribution to the volume, the author identifies a plethora of linguistic hybrids resulting from the use of English as a global contact language in multilingual practices, which occur in the form of linguistic chimeras. She goes beyond traditional models to give relevance to the fluidity of multilingualism and English-mediated communicative practices with a hybrid-oriented perspective.

Salomone (2022) argues that English is not a force for domination but a core component of multilingualism and the transcendence of linguistic and cultural borders. Yet multilingualism can also be a coercive situation, as in the Australia-run detention context, where English is considered to be an exclusive and exclusionary resource with different roles and functions analysed through a corpus-based approach by *Grasso*, who has shown how the *linguascape* of detention is embedded within broader dynamics of power, subjugation and violence.

Multilingualism does not necessarily include English. In *Nardi*'s contribution it has been proven to play a prominent role and to be a key element even in Biblical Greek, where the increased use of participial clauses emerged to be a contact-induced phenomenon attributed to the interference of Aramaic and Hebrew, thus providing a further example of contact and permeability of ancient languages.

Language contact often occurs along borders or as a result of migration, and determines the emergence of varieties in bilingual countries such as Canada, as *Pellegrino* shows in his paper analysing the case of Chiac, a language based on Canadian French but peppered with several English linguistic influences and adopted by a growing number of speakers as a marker of identity due to different social factors.

French is also considered, together with Arabic, as a specific linguistic border. The variety of French spoken in Morocco contains many Arabisms in the institutional Family Code, a text open to linguistic interference. The corpus-based research carried out by *Bevilacqua* connects lexical choices to identity issues which link the Moroccans to the Arab culture and the Muslim religion.

The multi-layered relationship between migration, identity and linguistic diversity in England is analysed in *Guzzo*'s paper. The contemporary socio-linguistic situation of Anglo-Italians in Bedford, Peterborough and Loughborough, is investigated questioning the complexities of self- and other-identification as well as belonging of members of a heritage community in England by using a combination of variationist sociolinguistics and deductive content analysis.

In language contact situations, the use of English as a Lingua Franca involves specific communicative processes within cross-cultural specialised contexts where

non-native speakers of English interact, promoting intercultural communication by means of English as a common language. When applied to migration phenomena, and with particular reference to refugees, the acquisition of new languages depends largely on whether or not the relevant populations are integrated in the host territory and, therefore, whether their children are under pressure to be assimilated within the local populations and find it unnecessary to speak their parents' ethnic languages. Most of the time, English is adopted to overcome communication problems. *Vigo*'s paper tackles the role of translation as an accommodation practice employed to adapt the texts to migrants in Italy. This is achieved through a corpus-based analysis to highlight accommodation strategies and possible language changes.

Migrants in an Italian context of intercultural communication are also the subject matter of *Guido*'s investigation. The representation of West-African migrants' disrupted identities is covered in order to analyse the features of their narratives characterised by native languages transferred into their ELF variations, especially in a specialised context such as that of medical-legal issues. The linguacultural patterns emerge to contribute to the restoration of a culture-specific sense of identity previously disrupted because of the displacement from their own native injured communities.

Specialised discourse is the focus of the two above-mentioned studies and is also the topic of *Iaia*'s contribution, which, instead, tackles what he labels the 'ELFentextualization' of legal discourse, to show inter/intra lingual reformulation strategies in a context where mediators and migrants interact. The resulting texts can be considered a specific written form of lingua franca.

The shifts and movements of World Englishes offer both potential and threats. Linguistic diversity and hybridity are bound up with questions of human behaviour and identity. ELF means both accommodation and resistance as native and non-native speakers, especially when considering more 'vulnerable' languages at risk of disappearance. But the danger of the marginalisation or even extinction of minority languages is not only a threat imposed by the spread of English as a lingua franca. In Africa, for instance, two endangered languages of the Kalenjin family, Ogiek and Akie, spoken in some parts of Kenya and Tanzania, are threatened due to an unbalanced diglossia with the majority languages spoken in those areas. Their destinies and their safeguarding might differ because of different historical, ecological and political contexts, as the research and fieldwork carried out by *Micheli* and *Legère* attest and are reported in their paper.

The reality of languages is that they are the most dynamic tools of communication. Their evolution is continuous and follows two courses: one involves the changes of the language itself within the social, political and cultural context of a country and the other encompasses foreign, cross-cultural, global influences. The intrinsic dynamism of languages has been made faster and stronger by transnational mobility which has consequently determined further and multifaceted linguistic and cultural flows worldwide. In this complex scenario, it is important to refocus the lens through which the role and the nature of English can be viewed. With English-as-a-Lingua-Franca

variations emerging and gaining influence (see Seidlhofer, 2011), the identity of English is changing and is becoming itself a reflection of a plurilingual reality in which speakers typically have at their disposal a repertoire of different languages. The undeniable dominance of English, increasingly in the form of ELF, does not constitute an advance towards or danger of monolingualism, but rather a general trend towards greater plurilingualism. This view is particularly supported by Jenkins (2015) who argues that ELF should be retheorised as a 'Multilingua Franca', due to the language of individual speakers and of linguistic mixing and interdependence of languages within one global system. Hence, globalisation should not be associated with the myth of English as a killer language (Price, 1984; Nettle & Romaine, 2000), a view strongly refuted by Mufwene (2008).

The contributions to the volume have helped in the recognition, at different levels, that English serves only a partial role today in cross-border, and cross-cultural exchanges. The fact is that around three-quarters of the population currently does not speak English (Graddol, 2006) and a large proportion of today's cross-border exchanges do not occur in English but rather in the dominant language of the host society, and the world's language diversity as a whole does not appear to be under threat.

Identity issues and language choices and attitudes in lingua franca and multilingual contexts are inextricable from social arrangements, relations of power and ideologies. As far as English is concerned, at present the tasks and competing pressures influencing the development of English are how to maintain common standards and mutual or international intelligibility among those varieties of English and how to preserve national identity.

If we think of English as a family of languages (Crystal, 1997), we can consider British English as the grandmother and American English as the mother of the many brothers/sisters, sons/daughters (varieties) we have today. As English spreads across many borders, the differences among its forms start to undergo accommodation in order to maintain the acquired convention of a common language, but the differences are so large that the many varieties can be compared to families which grow, expand outside the borders of the familiar territory, enlarge, multiply, and take different paths. Traces of the ties and of the roots remain, but each member develops its own 'personality' and identity. The semantic field of 'family' – a matriarchal one (made up of "mother" tongues), with various genealogical ramifications, embraces split-ups, enlarged families, and, above all, legitimate or illegitimate heirs, among which mutual comprehension / intelligibility can be difficult to preserve – well represents the scenario in which languages fight and cooperate to survive and to preserve and warrantee communication among people, particularly across more and more permeable boundaries in which mobility increases but barriers are not always easy to overcome.

Notes

1. Esperanto is a noteworthy case in point. This *artificial language* was designed and intended to serve as a universal language that could facilitate communication between people from different linguistic backgrounds.

2. The first diaspora of English was the migration of many English speakers from the British Isles to Oceania and North America, bringing with them a language that did not change significantly over time; the second diaspora took place in the colonial contexts of Asia and Africa and brought about the rapid growth and spread of English in its many varieties worldwide.

3. The Dynamic Model outlines five major stages in the evolution of world Englishes: *foundation* (English is introduced to new territories by the settlers; *exonormative stabilisation* (stable colonial situation, the mother country sets its norms), *nativisation* (the new identity is accepted by the settlers), *endonormative stabilisation* (local norms are gradually accepted, growing national identity), *differentiation* (the new nation begins to view itself in its own right).

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