

Vasilica Mocanu*

English as a lingua franca and European identity – parallelisms in their development

<https://doi.org/10.1515/jelf-2022-2074>

Published online ■■■

Abstract: This paper examines the relationship between English as a lingua franca (henceforth ELF) and European identity. In the first place, the ELF phenomenon and its status in the European context, where multilingual policies prevail, are discussed. Secondly, this article addresses how globalization has triggered identification processes that are novel and should be treated as such and it analyses the characteristics of an alleged European identity, triggered by the pulse of globalizing processes. The role ELF may play in identification processes with Europe is examined. Finally, this article demonstrates that the flexible and hybrid nature of both ELF and European identity make them two very similar phenomena that add an extra layer to localized languages and national identities, respectively. Under this light, the hypothesis is presented that ELF and European identity are interconnected, and that ELF may be an essential condition for a sense of European identity to form.

Keywords: English as a lingua franca; European identity; globalization; multilingualism

Resum: Aquest article examina la relació entre l'anglès com a llengua franca (d'ara endavant ELF) i la identitat europea. En primer lloc, es presenta el fenomen ELF i la seva situació en el context europeu, on predominen les polítiques multilingües. En segon lloc, aquest article aborda com la globalització ha desencadenat processos d'identificació que són nous i s'han de tractar com a tals i analitza les característiques d'una suposada identitat europea, desencadenada per la pressió dels processos globalitzadors. S'hi examina el paper que pot tenir l'ELF en els processos d'identificació amb Europa. Finalment, aquest article demostra que la naturalesa flexible i híbrida tant d'ELF com de la identitat europea fa que siguin fenòmens molt similars que afegeixen una capa extra a les llengües i identitats locals respectivament. En aquesta línia, es presenta la

*Corresponding author: Vasilica Mocanu, LINDES Research Group, Universidad de Salamanca (https://ror.org/02f40zc51), Calle Placentinos, 18, 87008 Salamanca, Spain, E-mail: vasim@usal.es. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3879-1886>

hipòtesi que l'ELF i la d'identitat europea estan interconnectades, i que l'ELF pot ser una condició essencial per a la formació d'una identitat europea.

Paraules clau: l' anglès com a llengua franca; identitat europea; globalització; multilingüisme

1 ELF – a unique phenomenon

English as a lingua franca (ELF) is “English used in intercultural communication chiefly, if not exclusively, among its non-native speakers from different first languages, and often in ways that differ substantially from native English” (Jenkins 2017: 1). Llorca (2015) provides a metaphorical account of how ELF connects individuals from many origins by comparing it to a boat which can take people from many points on one shore to several points on other shores. And just as boats can be very different in form and function (size, comfort, for fishing, for towing, etc.), so ELF users and their language skills will be different, and the communicative functions of ELF can be of various types. Finally, the use of ELF in conversations “may also suffer accidents and instances of miscommunication” (Llorca 2015: 20), which can usually be repaired since, like boats, ELF interactions are flexible enough to keep on going even under the vicissitudes of fortune.

Collaboratively constructed intelligibility is one of the key properties of ELF, given the priority in ELF interactions of ensuring mutual understanding and successful communication. On the other hand, formal accuracy based on native speaker language use is an expression of a rigid conception of language education. Focusing on accuracy in reproducing native speaker models can thus be equated to a rigid bridge connecting speakers to one single destination, a single local community, rather than the global community of ELF users (Llorca 2015). On this note, Cogo and Dewey (2012) make the point that in spite of the fact that code and context of ELF speakers might not be shared, “there is still something else that speakers of ELF can build on – this is, the awareness of being involved in an especially diverse linguacultural encounter, where speakers are predominantly using English as a second/additional language and thus tend to share a rather unsteady common ground” (Cogo and Dewey 2012: 115). Accordingly, the ideal speaker of ELF “is not a native speaker but a fluent bilingual speaker, who retains a national identity in terms of accent, and who also has the special skills required to negotiate understanding with another non-native speaker” (Graddol 2006: 87), in an encounter where the instability and lack of a single shared set of communicative norms binds speakers together,

regardless of how transitory their encounters are (Cogo and Dewey 2012). Therefore, ELF research has repeatedly emphasized the importance of pragmatic strategies that pave the way for intercultural communication (see the several chapters on this in Jenkins et al. [2017]).

In the European Union (EU), English, in theory, has equal importance to other languages. However, in practice, it has a very different status, serving as the lingua franca of communication in a variety of professional domains and on “all levels of society in practically all walks of life” (Seidlhofer et al. 2006: 8). However, and despite the fact that English is the *de facto* lingua franca, its meanings for different people across Europe can significantly differ since “the uses of the language as a wider means of communication are various and coexist with other languages with their own cultural and political claims” (Seidlhofer et al. 2006: 8). In the discourse of the EU, the dominance of English is regarded as a threat to multilingualism and language diversity, which is probably why the EU holds back when it comes to language policies that acknowledge the actual role of English in Europe.

Much of the tension between English and other European languages originates at the identity level; it is, in fact, a matter of sensing that one’s national identity is threatened in which the English language plays a pivotal role. This opposition to the power of English as a single language does not seem to come from smaller language communities (Ammon 2006) in which, in fact, “it simplifies their choice of foreign language studies and use” (Ammon 2006: 323). It is the large language communities (e.g. German, French) who fear a spread of English, which might entail “the attrition of functions of their own language, especially as regards the EU institutional working language or lingua franca” (Ammon 2006: 323). Apparently, these language communities do not fear the “death” of their language but as Ammon argues the “[f]ear of loss of function is, however, widespread among the large language communities or their linguistically sensitive citizens and is not based on mere imagination” (Ammon 2006: 323).

This idea is also explored by Phillipson (2003), who claims that “English might be seen as a kind of linguistic cuckoo, taking over where other breeds of languages have historically nested and acquitted territorial rights, and obliging non-native speakers of English to acquire the behavioral habits and linguistic forms of English” (Phillipson 2003: 4). Phillipson further states that “[t]he pressure of globalization and Europeanization might be strengthening English at the expense of all the other languages of Europe” (Phillipson 2003: 7). However, these arguments are only tenable if we continue to adhere to a rather conventional notion of language which takes onboard a “description of languages or language varieties as stable and separate entities associated with distinct communities of

speakers” and which “depends on an assumption of homogeneity” (Widdowson 2016: 32). On this note, shifting our focus from English as a language that belongs to a few nations and conforms to a few national identities, to ELF, a phenomenon endowed with the existing identity traits of its speakers, including their linguistic repertoires, the perceived potential for identity-related conflict between ELF and other languages might decrease significantly. Widdowson’s (2016) conceptualization of ELF as a “virtual language”, “a system with a generative encoding potential whose properties can only be inferred from its variable use” (Widdowson 2016: 33), is illuminating in this sense. Needless to say, all languages have adaptive variability, since they have to serve communicative needs across different contexts; this is, there is a presupposed “availability to users of an unrealized meaning-making resource of a virtual language” (Widdowson 2016: 32). ELF, therefore, is as communicatively normal as any other language despite the common assumption of its abnormality due to its deviation from “normal use”. However, the peculiarity of ELF stems from the fact that its users “also have to find ways of accommodating to each other across their different linguacultural backgrounds” (Widdowson 2016: 35), and here is where identity comes into play: “a highly politicized process in which social actors claim, contest, and negotiate power and authority” (Bucholtz and Hall 2008: 151). According to these authors, “[w]hen identities are forged in relation to language, they become bound up with language ideologies, which, as historically rooted and publicly articulated statements of cultural belief about language and its users, mediate between the interactional moment and broader socio-political structures” (Bucholtz and Hall 2008: 151). As for this moment, conceptualizations of English as historically bound to certain nations are still in trend. However, the ELF phenomenon, whose extension has been exacerbated by globalization (Mauranen, for instance claims that “speakers of the roughly 7,000 recognized languages of the world can be in some kind of contact with English” [Mauranen 2017: 9]) may be a turn of the screw in our traditional understanding of language-related identification processes. A look at how identities are constructed under the pulse of globalization might give us clues about why ELF is a unique phenomenon whose role in the construction of identities must be studied accordingly.

2 Identity in postmodern globalized societies

Globalization, defined by Blommaert (2010) as the “intensified flows of capital, goods, people, images and discourses around the globe, driven by technological innovations mainly in the field of media and information and communication technology, and resulting in new patterns of global activity, community

organization and culture” (Blommaert 2010: 13), has given place to an unprecedented scale of mobility. Under these conditions, the life-project of affected individuals assumes the form of a “dynamic (i.e. perpetually adjustable) complex within which subjects situate their practices and behaviour” (Blommaert and Varis 2015: 5) formed by different ‘repertoires’ which are permanently in a state of change. Consequently, individuals need to adapt to these new forms in order to be acknowledged as authentic members in a given domain; that is, in order to be accepted as members of a certain community. These repertoires come together to constitute our identities, which are “the key to what we can be or can perform – in social life” (Blommaert and Varis 2015: 15) and, despite not resonating with older models of identification processes (for instance, one nation – one language – one identity), they do invest people with order.

On a similar note, Baker (2015) refers to the changes triggered by globalization that affect our way to relate to languages, cultures, and identities, by affirming that “[i]n terms of cultural identity this means that fixed relationships between languages, cultures and identities no longer hold” (Baker 2015: 119). Drawing on Pennycook (2010), Baker (2015) emphasizes the terms “metroethnicity” and “metrolingualism”, for which Pennycook (2010) provides the following explanation:

As language learners move around the world in search of English or other desirable languages, or stay at home but tune in to new digital worlds through screens, mobiles and headphones the possibilities of being something not yet culturally imagined mobilizes new identity options. And in these popular transcultural flows, languages, cultures and identities are frequently mixed. (Pennycook 2010: 85)

For the purpose of this paper, a definition of identity as both an individual and a societal phenomenon is considered. Joseph (2016) contemplates both in his account of how identities are manifested in language: “as first, the categories and labels that people attach to themselves and others to signal their belonging; second, as the indexed ways of speaking and through which they perform their belonging; and third, as the interpretations that others make of those indices” (Joseph 2016: 19). At an individual level, Norton (2013) defines ‘identity’ as “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (Norton 2013: 45). At a societal level, in language-related identification processes, the community “may be, to some extent, a reconstruction of past communities and historically constituted relationships, but also a community of the imagination, a desired community that offers possibilities for an enhanced range of identity options in the future” (Norton 2013: 3). For Norton (2013), identities are a “site of struggle”, since individuals might encounter the acceptance or hereby lack of it when they try to access new communities of speakers. Ultimately,

this might lead individuals to invest in or divest from (this is: to devote time and economic resources) learning the languages of these communities in an attempt to become legitimate members (for an extended explanation of the concept of investment, see Darvin and Norton 2015).

In relation to the nature of ELF-based networks, Mauranen (2017) states that the concept of community is not appropriate when it comes to define them because “[m]uch communication in ELF is ephemeral, and takes place in transient encounters” (Mauranen 2017: 11). However, on a different note, Cogo and Dewey (2012) affirm that our understanding of ‘community’ has shifted in a radical way towards a concept that “now has far less to do with proximity or geographic location – less to do with group cohesion on a face-to-face basis – and far more to do with a more virtual notion of interactional networks that may operate entirely independently of physical setting” (Cogo and Dewey 2012: 163). These interactional networks, regardless of being face-to-face or virtual – for instance, Kalocsái (2013) gives an account of face-to-face ELF interaction among Erasmus students in Hungary, and Iaia (2016) examines the use of ELF interactions in videogames – do share their temporary nature. It is within these type of communities that ELF usually operates, being, in Blommaert and Varis’ (2015) words, a repertoire, or an indexed way of speaking (Joseph 2016) that performs belonging to a novel and unique type of community triggered by globalizing processes and which exists alongside many other combinations of linguacultural communities. Since the European Union embodies this type of communities to a considerable extent, the following lines will focus on the characteristics of an alleged European identity and the role of ELF in identification processes with Europe.

3 European identity

Almost two centuries ago, Victor Hugo presaged the birth of a European identity in his speech at the 1849 International Peace Congress in Paris by claiming that “[a] day will come when all nations on our continent will form a European brotherhood”. Many difficulties arise, though, when it comes to defining what Europe is founded on, assuming there are, in fact, any common foundations that will resound with all European citizens. One of these difficulties stems from the very wording by means of which identification processes with Europe are expressed. For instance, Llurda et al. (2016), signal the “tension between the concepts of identity and citizenship” (Llurda et al. 2016: 324). In order to emphasize the connections and differences between these two terms, the authors affirm that identity is related “to the individual and their positioning towards a culture or

group of people” (Llurda et al. 2016: 324), while citizenship is related to “formally established bonds linking an individual to a given national society, by means of some kind of mutual allegiance that might involve feelings of identity but will also emphasize the rights and obligations of citizens with regards to their national state” (Llurda et al. 2016: 324).

In the discourse of the European Commission, the concepts of European identity and European citizenship are also blurry. For instance, the 2017 Eurobarometer survey (European Commission 2017: 37), under the title “European citizenship”, included the following question:

Please tell me how attached you feel to...

- Your city/town/village
- Our country
- The European Union
- Europe

The wording here is to a considerable extent problematic. First of all, the use of pronouns is outstanding. While for the city, town, and village, the pronoun is “your”, when it comes to the country, it is “our” that is used. On the other hand, European Union is preceded by “the”, which does not really express any sense of belonging, in the same way as “Europe”, which is not preceded by any pronoun. This could indicate preference for a sort of identification model in the form of Matryoshka dolls suggested by Risse (2004), with local, national, and supra-national (beyond the nation, and implying more than one nation) identities. However, not less outstanding is the fact that the European Union reinforces in its discourse a strong sense of belonging to the nation and a certain distance with Europe. Furthermore, while the title refers to citizenship, a rather aseptic, legal term, the question itself asks about attachment, which relates to fondness and affection. In any case, the results show that more than half of Europeans (54%) expressed allegiance to the European Union, including 14% who felt much attached. Similarly, 64% of respondents declared they felt attached to Europe. At the same time, the sense of adherence to their city, town, or village was considerably higher (89%). When it came to their countries, 92% of respondents reported a sense of endearment. From these results, it can be inferred that while the majority of EU citizens identify with Europe, they appear to feel substantially more attached to their city and nation state. What is interesting to observe is the fact that attachment to Europe (64%) is higher than attachment to the European Union (54%) (European Commission 2017), showing evidence that European people make the distinction between Europe and the EU when it comes to identification processes. And this might be related to the above-mentioned

wording, which is, in fact, symptomatic of the rather unclear definition of what Europe actually is.

In relation to this, Chopin (2018) states that because the geographical identity of Europe is rather difficult to grasp, values, such as pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between men and women seem to be what the Union is founded on, despite the fact they are shared by the individual states to different degrees. Chopin (2018) also makes the point, though, that “[i]n spite of this specific feature of European identity in terms of values, it remains that the latter often seem too abstract to provide an adequate response in terms of founding a particular identity, understood in the sense of a feeling of belonging to a group with which its members can identify, as being the ‘same’ – the etymology of identity is ‘idem’” (Chopin 2018: 2). In any case, if we go back to the results mentioned above, the fact that a considerable percentage of Europeans report a feeling of attachment to their countries, town, cities, and villages, and also a sense of attachment to Europe and the EU, points to the existence of multiple levels of identification and, most especially, to the fact that European, national, and local identities can co-exist within a single individual, in the fashion of Risse’s (2004) model of identification constituted by Matryoshka dolls mentioned before. On this note, Smith (1992) adopts a historical approach to state that the cultural history of humanity has been “a successive differentiation (but also enlargement) of processes of identification” (Smith 1992: 58), whose number and scale were relatively limited in the simplest and earliest societies. In spite of the power of national identities, individuals seem to possess multiple identities which “may reinforce national identities or cross-cut them” (Smith 1992: 59).

If geographical identity is difficult to grasp and values are too abstract to invest people with a sense of belonging, what then bonds Europeans together? The answer might rely in that, in fact, they all have other primary identities which coexist among other sorts of identifications in a complex mix of identities that do, nevertheless, invest their lives with meaning. That is to say, for the time being, nobody is born as *only* European, and every European has to accommodate within a community of individuals whose primary contexts and languages are diverse and different but who, nevertheless, have certain common objectives. In this sense, Marques Santos and Silva (2011: 24) make the point that networks that are based on shared values are created by letting people experience “reciprocity”, which stems from having common objectives. Ultimately, this experience seems to lead to social trust, which is positively correlated to increased cooperation. Taken to the ELF terrain, this resounds to the cooperation between diverse ELF speakers, as highlighted by Vettorel (2019): “ELF interactions have been shown to be characterized by the speakers’ mutual

cooperation in the co-construction of meaning. Repetition, paraphrasing, as well as self- and other-repair and pre-emptive moves have emerged as important strategies, together with the exploitation of multilingual resources and *reper-toires*” (Vettorel 2019: 179).

Under this light, the following lines will explore the parallelisms between ELF, whose peculiarity stems from the fact that its users “also have to find ways of accommodating to each other across their different linguacultural backgrounds” (Widdowson 2016: 35) and European identity, which, according to Hassner (2012) has an intermediate nature that must accept, both from a human and an economic point of view, to act as a part of both the “globalized whole” and nation state that maintains their “discrete identities”.

4 ELF and the European identity turn

Reporting on a polling project conducted by the European Union in 2007, T. Garton Ash (*The Guardian*) made the claim that “[t]he heart of the democratic problem in Europe, it is not Brussels, it’s Babel!” (Garton Ash 2007), after observing that despite having to deal with a sample of 3,500 people from across Europe, the biggest problem of the EU was not the logistics, but the linguistics: that is, investing more than £175,000 for a weekend-long translation and interpreting services to and from the 23 official European languages at that time. As for the moment, Europe recognizes 24 official and working languages (Croatian was added to the salad bowl in 2013). According to the website of the European Union, one of the EU’s founding principles is multilingualism and its language policy, “a unique approach, unequalled by multilingual countries or international organisations” (European Commission 2022), which aims at “communicating with its citizens in their own languages, protecting Europe’s rich linguistic diversity and promoting language learning in Europe” (European Commission 2022).

It is true that the approach might be rather unique in its defense of multilingualism as an asset. However, it has a double morality in theory, and a tremendous resource-consuming nature in practice. The first arises from the incongruence of pretending that language diversity is supported because “EU nationals have the right to use any of the 24 official languages to communicate with the EU institutions, and the institutions must reply in the same language” (European Union 2012), while millions of speakers of “minority” languages (Catalan, for instance) do not have the right to communicate with the EU in their first language, since their languages have not been granted any sort of official status. The latter calls into question the actual results of such an expensive policy when it comes to identification processes in Europe. How eager are Europeans to

get involved in learning other European languages? In her study with Erasmus students in Northern, Eastern, and Southern Europe, Mocanu (2019) showed how Erasmus students from different countries had very positive attitudes and expectations towards English across the three contexts, both at the beginning and at the end of the stay, but these were considerably lower with regard to three of the local languages (Finnish, Romanian, and Catalan). In fact, even more negative attitudes towards Finnish and Catalan were showed at the end of the stay, indicating that the participants not only did not want to invest in the local languages but they were actually bothered by their presence. The only language that seemed to stand out from the rest of the local languages was Spanish (Mocanu and Llurda 2020).

This leads us to Canagarajah (2007) who affirms that “[w]hat brings people together in communities is not what they share – language, discourse, or values – but interests to be accomplished” (Canagarajah 2007: 936). In Mocanu’s (2019) study, the reported interest was to construct an identity that would position young Europeans in a category of individuals with international experience, thought to be very much sought by the globalized employment market which demands mobility, flexibility and diversification of professional skills (Heller and Duchêne 2016). And English was clearly the language that this community of the imagination seemed to speak. One might say, though, that those students in Catalonia were eager to take Spanish on board. While this is true, the interest in learning Spanish did not come at the expense of English and, in any case, the message is the same: educated, mobile European youth are not eager to embrace any kind of multilingualism *per se*. Similarly, in another study with former Erasmus students, Ruet (2020) shows that despite the discourse around linguistic diversity, multilingual competence is not really valued by employers. Nevertheless, multilingualism continues to be one of the apparent hallmarks of the European Union. As previously mentioned, threats seem to arise from a fear of English substituting first languages with a one and only collective language, based on “interpretations of ELF as potentially threatening other languages and ideologies of native speakerism” (Cogo 2017: 362).

This fear shows similarities to the one spread by the formation of a European identity: this is, that it comes at the expense of national identities (Fligstein 2014). This can be encountered in the parallelisms that are made between, on the one hand, ELF and languages that do not serve the same purposes of a lingua franca, and on the other hand, between European identity and other identities that do not serve the same purposes a supranational (a community that goes beyond the nation and involves different national states) identity does. However, while it is clear that traditional understandings of language and identity have been

deconstructed in the face of globalization, it is less clear what their new shape looks like.

In relation to the above, the EU has remained silent, leaving an empty discursive space on European identity that has been occupied by the populist movements arising on the continent in the last years (Chopin 2018). However, while the European Union has kept its lips buttoned, how to close the gap between the EU and its citizens has led to prolific discussions in literature (to mention just a few: Castells 2002; Duchesne 2008; Shehaj 2015; Van Middelaar 2016). Elsewhere, Tekiner (2020) suggests a solution based on two measures. On the one hand, he proposes that Europe readdresses the “cultural essence of the Union’s identity-related policies” and resets “the European Identity on a civic ground” (Tekiner 2020: 2). This is – focusing on the instrumental functions as core to identification processes with Europe – more in the “citizenship” trend mentioned in Llorca et al. (2016), which is understood as a mix of formal agreements based on feelings of identity and rights and obligations of citizens with the supranational organization.

In this way, European citizens might not feel they need to sacrifice their loyalties to their nations by identifying with a supranational identity. On the other hand, Tekiner (2020) suggests the European Union should grant its identity on a much more communicative basis, putting ordinary people (and not the European elites) in the center. In other words, Europe needs to revert the production of its policies (identity-related or not) from the top to the bottom, in line with Breidbach (2003), who claims that “[w]ith reference to identity formation, a sense of belonging is dependent on the opportunity to participate in the societal life of the polity in question” (Breidbach 2003: 10). Such a bottom-up policy could definitely be a step forward in processes of identification with Europe. Its logistics, though, depends very much on the linguistics, as Zhu (2014) claims, “we have come to the view that language practices and identity are mutually dependent and interconnected. Language practices index and symbolise identities, which in turn impact on and feed back into language practices” (Zhu 2014: 218).

A bottom-up policy implies listening to the voices of ordinary citizens and displacing the elites from the center, and it requires a reformulation of its language-related aspects. Multilingualism, in the way it is understood and praised by the EU, has been adopted and practiced almost exclusively by the European elites (Breidbach 2002; Flores 2013; Flores and Rosa 2015). This is not to say that the wider population in Europe is monolingual, nor that multilingualism is something to demonize. However, the different symbolic values given to languages, and the open preference for certain linguistic repertoires, generate difference and inequality between individuals educated for example in international schools and

those that acquired their multilingual repertoires through other means, such as migratory processes (Piller 2016). On this note, Flores (2013), in a critical review of Europe's plurilingual policy, challenges the reader to reflect upon "how plurilingualism may unwittingly be used as a tool of neoliberal governance that reinforces rather than challenges current relations of power" (Flores 2013: 509). Similarly, Lau and Van Viegen (2020) make the point that flexible multilingual pedagogies with a view to the individual language-learning trajectories of students can lead to successful improvement of language competences. For the time being, ELF seems to play a substantial role in the application of more socially just multilingual policies.

The relationship between ELF and multilingualism corresponds to what Jenkins (2015) identifies as the third phase in the development of ELF-related research. In an attempt to further develop a conceptual framework that would define this phenomenon, Jenkins (2015) brings to the fore Makoni and Pennycook's (2012) insights on "lingua franca multilingualism", in which they claim that "languages are so deeply intertwined and fused into each other that the level of fluidity renders it difficult to determine any boundaries that may indicate that there are different languages involved" (Makoni and Pennycook 2012: 447). In relation to this, Cogo (2016) states that "ELF as a phenomenon [...] has always been multilingual – in the sense that the 'lingua franca' aspect of the acronym ELF has always been about a contact language perspective and the key role of multilingual resources" (Cogo 2016: 61). On this note, Sherman (2017) views ELF as "one of many strategies for solving communicative and sociocultural problems, both on the macro and microlevel" (Sherman 2017: 15). At the European level, Cogo (2012, 2016), Hülbauer and Seidlhofer (2013) and Studer and Werlen (2012) have studied and demonstrated the close relationship between ELF and European multilingualism. An example of such initiatives, in Europe, is being materialized in the ENRICH (English as a Lingua Franca for Inclusive Multilingual Classrooms) project. Its objective is to exploit "the benefits of ELF in adopting an inclusive pedagogical approach in multilingual classrooms" which also takes on board learners from migrant backgrounds, with the aim to "develop the learners' ELF-related communicative competences and other transversal skills crucial for employability and social inclusion in today's increasingly multilingual and demanding world" (<http://enrichproject.eu/>, accessed 8 January 2022).

5 Final remarks

It is a fact that globalisation has triggered new spaces for identification and communication, and Europe has been experiencing them in the first person for a

few decades now. Thirty years after the Treaty of Maastricht (1992), and almost two centuries after Hugo predicted its birth, we still struggle to define the European identity. And, despite having a common language at our disposal, the EU still considers English a native variety and bases its language policy on an alleged multilingualism that separates languages in compartmented entities, allowing, in this way, the accumulation of symbolic capital to those who can afford education in the languages perceived to have power, representation, and demand. To my understanding, the EU might fear that officializing English as the main vehicle for European communication, and thus identification with Europe, would benefit some speakers and disadvantage others. Little attention, though, seems to be paid to how the multilingual policies promoted by the EU do actually already categorize speakers according to linguistic hierarchies which determine individuals to invest or divest (Norton 2013) from learning given languages as well as to the need to reassess how we conceptualize what English means for the community of Europeans with the UK (the biggest community of native speakers of English) leaving the EU.

Attending to the parallelisms between the development of a European identity and ELF, this paper makes the point that, for creating bonds between Europeans, decisions should be made from the bottom, and the voices of ordinary citizens should be listened by the EU. And the “various constellations, sub-national, national, and supra-national” of the European polity “become accessible through English on the one hand and through competence in other languages on the other” (Breidbach 2003: 21). The latter work well at local and national levels for all European citizens, regardless of the languages they speak as L1s. However, for the supranational level, “English has already become the very linguistic means to give speakers, especially of lesser-used languages, their voice within a European public discourse” (Breidbach 2003: 20). Since it is at this level where the ordinary European citizen is expected to create bonds with other Europeans, by the very means of communicative participation, denying the role of ELF as a mediator between the global and the local and a catalyst in support of this “cosmopolitan, multifaceted, and multilingual” (Duff 2015: 59) European identity to come into being, would only hinder its development. As Kramersch (2016) affirms, “ELF provides contacts, connections, alignments, and affiliations, collaborations, support, solidarity, but it can only bring people together and provide a forum for negotiation to be” (Kramersch 2016: 181).

Acknowledgments: I would like to kindly thank Enric Llorca for introducing ELF to me and for his support in the writing process, as well as the reviewers of this manuscript for their priceless work.

Research funding: Development of disciplinary literacies in English as a lingua franca at university – (LIDISELF) – PID2019-107451GB-I00. Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades.

References

- Ammon, Ulrich. 2006. Language conflicts in the European Union. On finding a politically acceptable and practicable solution for EU institution that satisfies diverging interests. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 16(3). 319–338.
- Baker, Will. 2015. *Culture and identity through English as a lingua franca. Rethinking concepts and goals in intercultural communication*. Berlin & Boston: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Blommaert, Jan. 2010. *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Blommaert, Jan & Piia Varis. 2015. Enoughness, accent and light communities: Essays on contemporary identities. *Tilburg Papers in Culture Studies* 139. <https://research.tilburguniversity.edu/en/publications/enoughness-accent-and-light-communities-essays-on-contemporary-id> (accessed 7 November 2021).
- Breidbach, Stephan. 2003. *Plurilingualism, democratic citizenship in Europe and the role of English*. Language Policy Division DG IV – Directorate of School, Out-of-School and Higher Education. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Bucholtz, Marry & Kira Hall. 2008. Finding identity: Theory and data. *Multilingua* 27(1/2). 151–163.
- Canagarajah, Suraj. 2007. Lingua franca English, multilingual communities, and language acquisition. *The Modern Language Journal* 91(1). 923–939.
- Castells, Manuel. 2002. The Construction of European identity. In Maria João Rodrigues (ed.), *The new knowledge economy in Europe: A strategy for international competitiveness and social cohesion*, 232–241. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Chopin, Thierry. 2018. Europe and the identity challenge: Who are “we”? *European Issues* 466. 1–6.
- Cogo, Alicia. 2012. ELF and super-diversity: A case study of ELF multilingual practices from a business context. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca* 2(2). 287–313.
- Cogo, Alicia. 2016. Conceptualizing ELF as a translanguaging phenomenon: Covert and overt resources in a transnational workplace. *Waseda Working Papers in ELF (English as a Lingua Franca)* 5. 61–77.
- Cogo, Alicia. 2017. ELF and multilingualism. In Jennifer Jenkins, Will Baker & Dewey Martin (eds.), *The Routledge handbook of English as a lingua franca*, 357–368. London: Routledge.
- Cogo, Alicia & Martin Dewey. 2012. *Analysing English as a lingua franca. A corpus-driven investigation*. London & New York: Continuum.
- Darvin, Ron & Bonny Norton. 2015. Identity and a model of investment in applied linguistics. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 35. 36–56.
- Duchesne, Sophie. 2008. Waiting for a European identity ... Reflections on the process of identification with Europe. *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 9(4). 397–410.
- Duff, Patricia. 2015. Transnationalism, multilingualism, and identity. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 35. 57–80.

- European Union. 2012. Charter of fundamental rights of The European Union. *Official Journal of the European Union* C326/395. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A12012P%2FTXT>.
- European Commission. 2017. Standard Eurobarometer 87: Public opinion in the European Union. *First Results*. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2142> (accessed 15 January 2022).
- European Commission. 2022. Languages. https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/languages_en (accessed 5 April 2022).
- Fligstein, Neil. 2014. *Ugly politics of the crisis*. The European. <http://en.theeuropean.eu/neil-fligstein/7903-the-future-of-europe-and-the-european-identity> (accessed 8 January 2022).
- Flores, Nelson. 2013. The unexamined relationship between neoliberalism and plurilingualism: A cautionary tale. *TESOL Quarterly* 47(3). 500–520.
- Flores, Nelson & Jonathan Rosa. 2015. Undoing appropriateness: Raciolinguistic ideologies and language diversity in education. *Harvard Educational Review* 85(2). 149–171.
- Garton Ash, Timothy. 2007. Never mind the treaty squabbles. Europe's real problem is Babel. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/oct/18/comment.politics> (accessed January 2022).
- Graddol, David. 2006. *English next*. London: British Council. https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/pub_english_next.pdf (accessed 8 January 2022).
- Hassner, Pierre. 2012. *The paradoxes of European identity*. Avesta, Sweden: Lecture at Engelsberg Seminar, June.
- Heller, Monica & Alexandre Duchêne. 2016. Treating language as an economic resource: Discourse, data and debate. In Nikolas Coupland (ed.), *Sociolinguistics: Theoretical debates*, 139–156. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hülmbauer, Cornelia & Barbara Seidlhofer. 2013. English as a lingua franca in European multilingualism. In Anne-Claude Berthoud, François Grin & Georges Lüdi (eds.), *Exploring the dynamics of multilingualism*, 387–406. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Iaia, Pietro Luigi. 2016. *Analysing English as a lingua franca in video games. Linguistic features, experiential and functional dimensions of online and scripted interactions*. Peter Lang: Bern.
- Jenkins, Jennifer. 2015. Repositioning English and multilingualism in English as a lingua franca. *Englishes in Practice* 2(3). 49–85.
- Jenkins, Jennifer. 2017. The future of English as a lingua franca? In Jennifer Jenkins, Will Baker & Dewey Martin (eds.), *The Routledge handbook of English as a lingua franca*, 594–605. London & New York: Routledge.
- Jenkins, Jennifer, Will Baker & Dewey Martin (eds.). 2017. *The Routledge handbook of English as a lingua franca*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Joseph, John E. 2016. Historical perspectives on language and identity. In Sean Preece (ed.), *The Routledge handbook of language and identity*, 19–33. Basingstoke: Routledge.
- Kalocsái, Karolina. 2013. *Communities of practice and English as a lingua franca. A study of Erasmus students in a Central European context*. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Kramsch, Claire. 2016. Multilingual identity and ELF. In Maire-Luise Pitzl & Ruth Osimk-Teasdale (eds.), *English as a lingua franca: Perspectives and prospects*, 179–186. Boston & Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Lau, Sunny M. C. & Saskia Van Viegen (eds.). 2020. *Plurilingual pedagogies: Critical and creative endeavors for equitable language (in) education*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer.
- Llurda, Enric. 2015. The value of ELF in the Expanding Circle. *Journal of College of World Englishes* 18. 19–26.

- Llurda, Enric, Lidia Gallego-Balsà, Claudia Barahona & Xavier Martin-Rubió. 2016. Erasmus student mobility and the construction of European citizenship. *The Language Learning Journal* 44(3). 323–346.
- Makoni, Sinfree & Alastair Pennycook. 2012. Disinventing multilingualism: From monological multilingualism to multilingual francas. In Marilyn Martin-Jones, Adrian Blackledge & Angela Creese (eds.), *The Routledge handbook of multilingualism*, 439–453. London: Routledge.
- Marques Santos, Paula & Monica Silva. 2011. European identity – Supranational citizenship. *JANUS.NET e-Journal of International Relations* 2(1). 14–26.
- Mauranen, Anna. 2017. Conceptualising ELF. In Jennifer Jenkins, Will Baker & Dewey Martin (eds.), *The Routledge handbook of English as a lingua franca*, 7–24. London: Routledge.
- Mocanu, Vasilica. 2019. *A mixed method approach to identity, investment, and language learning in study abroad: The case of Erasmus students in Finland, Romania, and Catalonia*. Lleida: Universitat de Lleida, Department of English and Linguistics Unpublished doctoral thesis. <http://hdl.handle.net/10459.1/67492> (accessed 5 July 2020).
- Mocanu, Vasilica & Enric Llurda. 2020. Constructing and reconstructing attitudes towards languages in study abroad. In Ana Bocanegra-Valle (ed.), *Applied linguistics and knowledge transfer. Internationalisation, employability and social challenges*, 181–202. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Norton, Bonny. 2013. *Identity and language learning. Extending the conversation*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Pennycook, Alastair. 2010. *Language as a local practice*. London: Routledge.
- Phillipson, Robert. 2003. *English-only Europe? Challenging language policy*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Piller, Ingrid. 2016. *Linguistic diversity and social justice: An introduction to applied sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Risse, Thomas. 2004. European institutions and identity change: What have we learned? In Richard K. Herrmann, Marilyn Brewer & Thomas Risse (eds.), *Identities in Europe and the institutions of the European Union*, 247–271. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Ruet, Magali. 2020. Et après? Répercussions d'une mobilité académique sur un parcours de vie. *Journal of International Mobility* 8. 99–124.
- Seidhofer, Barbara, Angelika Breitender & Marie-Luise Pitzl. 2006. English as a lingua franca in Europe: Challenges for Applied Linguistics. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 26. 3–34.
- Shehaj, Albana. 2015. How is a European identity significant to the future of the European Union? Open Democracy. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/how-is-european-identity-significant-to-future-of-europeanunion/> (accessed 8 January 2022).
- Sherman, Tamah. 2017. ELF and the EU/wider Europe. In Jennifer Jenkins, Will Baker & Dewey Martin (eds.), *The Routledge handbook of English as a lingua franca*, 115–125. London: Routledge.
- Smith, Anthony D. 1992. National identity and the idea of European unity. *International Affairs* 68(1). 55–76.
- Studer, Patrick & Iwar Werlen. 2012. *Linguistic diversity in Europe. Current trends and discourses*. Boston & Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Tekiner, Ugur. 2020. The European identity: An attempt at a novel approach. *E-International Relations*. <https://www.e-ir.info/2020/04/15/the-european-identity-an-attempt-at-a-novel-approach/> (accessed 13 April 2022).

- Van Middelaar, Luuk. 2016. Pourquoi forger un récit européen ? La politique identitaire en Europe. Nécessités et contraintes d'unrécit commun. In Arjakovsky Antoine (ed.), *Histoire de la conscience européenne*, 31–56. Paris: Editions Salvator.
- Vettorel, Paola. 2019. Communication strategies and co-construction of meaning in ELF: Drawing on “Multilingual Resource Pools”. Strategie di comunicazione e co-costruzione del significato nell’ ELF attraverso risorse multilingue (‘Multilingual Resource Pools’). *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca* 8(2). 179–210.
- Widdowson, Henry. 2016. ELF, adaptive variability and virtual language. In Marie-Luise Pitzl & Ruth Osimk-Teasdale (eds.), *English as a lingua franca: Perspectives and prospects*, 32–37. Boston & Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Zhu, Hua. 2014. *Exploring intercultural communication: Language in action*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Bionote

Vasilica Mocanu

LINDES Research Group, Universidad de Salamanca (<https://ror.org/02f40zc51>), Calle Placentinos, 18, 87008 Salamanca, Spain

vasim@usal.es

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3879-1886>

Vasilica Mocanu is a researcher in Applied Linguistics and an assistant professor at the University of Salamanca. Her mixed methods research delves into the relationship between language and identity under globalizing processes that trigger human mobility. Vasilica has graduated in English Studies and she obtained her MA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language from Universitat de Lleida. In 2019, she received her doctoral degree with a dissertation on the implications of study abroad for identity development. Vasilica has been a visiting research fellow at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada (2017) and at the Institute of Multilingualism – University of Fribourg, Switzerland (2018).