

## Pragmatic strategies in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) for tourism

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### Abstract

*Rooted in Jenkins's (2015) multilingual perspective on ELF communication, this investigation analyses overt, covert, and translanguaging practices within the specialised language domain of tourism.*

*It aims to yield practical insights into the strategic and dynamic use of speakers' multilingual repertoires as pragmatic strategies (i.e., the pedagogical, interpersonal, and interpreting functions) in accomplishing complex social and cognitive activities in the Italian tourist industry.*

*Data triangulation from an emic observational perspective, through the Ethnography of Communication, illustrates speakers' complex multilingual and expanded linguistic repertoires, further enriched by the etic standpoint offered by Conversation Analysis as a microanalytic approach to language.*

*Findings informed by interactants' attitudes and orientations towards ELF communication ascertain how they assist in achieving communicative functions. They foster implications for teaching and learning practices through naturally occurring conversation extracts within a constructivist approach to language learning, enabling one to take advantage of the complexities of language and communication more holistically.*

**Keywords:** *multilingual strategies; overt, covert, and translanguaging practices; ELF, constructivism.*

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## 1. Introduction

The article discusses Tourism English as a significant research area within English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), emphasising its sociocultural, discursive, and sociolinguistic dimensions. It highlights the dynamic nature of ELF as a language-contact phenomenon, where speakers utilise multilingual and semiotic resources to enhance communication. Jenkins's contributions have

redefined ELF as English as a Multilingual Franca, positioning it as one resource among many in multilingual interactions. This perspective showcases the variability and complexity of ELF and underscores the difference between multilingual and monolingual users in terms of intercultural communicative competence. Furthermore, closely related to this research, which aims to explore the pragmatic functionality and multilingual strategic use of individual repertoires in tourism, Cogo (2016) seeks to capture “*linguaging*” or “*translinguaging*” practices within speakers’ repertoires. Languages in contact with English utilise multilingual resources based on communicative needs, contextual factors, and ideological implications for meaning-making. The theoretical perspective emphasises speakers’ conscious resistance to the monolingual ideological separation of languages, enabling them to intentionally convey meaning and address power asymmetries.

This approach matches recent research on multilingualism and includes different ideas within the same framework. These ideas involve flexible bilingual teaching (e. g., Creese & Blackledge, 2010; 2015), *translinguaging* (e. g., García, 2009; García & Li Wei, 2014), *translingual practices* (e. g., Canagarajah, 2011; 2013), *polylinguaging* (e. g., Jørgensen, 2008; Jørgensen et al., 2011), *super-diversity* (e. g., Vertovec, 2006; 2007), and *mobile resources* (e. g., Blommaert, 2010). Communicative strategies connect directly to multilingual resources, as they are part of what people learn and experience with languages over time and in different places. Therefore, *translingual practices* and other multilingual strategies aid communication by recognising each person's uniqueness and diversity as distinguished strengths.

This study challenges fixed language boundaries and identity limits by using data from the tourism field to explore and explain practical strategies and multilingual resources as language forms that arise from a specific psychological and social setting.

Finally, this article proposes an innovative learning approach that begins with natural conversations and integrates research data into academic practice for added value, following Biggs' Constructive Alignment approach (2003). Its teaching activities aim to present relevant knowledge and skills, fostering critical thinking and transformative learning through group work and discussion. The assessment aligns with the intended learning outcomes, promoting a learner-centred approach that recognises student diversity and utilises technology to reduce emotional barriers, enhance motivation, and encourage creativity.

## **2. This Study’s Multilingual Approach.**

Research has demonstrated that multilingual elements are a prevalent feature of ELF communication. Although references to other languages are not unusual, ELF interactions are not solely based on the English language but frequently incorporate items from different languages, primarily from the mother tongues of ELF users.

The multilingual aspects of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) can be categorised into *overt and covert multilingual phenomena* (Cogo, 2018). On the one hand, spoken and written ELF communication encompasses two or more languages, each serving distinct roles or communicative functions within discourse. These *overt multilingual phenomena may include* code-switching or similar practices of alternating between two or more languages or varieties in conversation (e.g., transfer, approximation through form-based and semantic strategies, approximate idioms and collocations, new word formation, and novel idiomatic expressions). Furthermore, instances of a more fluid approach to multilingual practices, such as translanguaging, also belong to this category. On the other hand, specific grammatical elements, vocabulary, or other linguistic features influenced by speakers' diverse languages may go unnoticed due to their more cognitive nature. Although communication in English often remains superficial, these multilingual influences are covertly recognised or manifested in conversation and are referred to as *covert multilingual phenomena*.

The practice of translanguaging among speakers showcases the creative potential of connecting linguistic forms and other modes of communication with indistinct boundaries. For instance, various languages, prefixes, suffixes, and the simultaneous use of modes such as text, photos, emoticons, ideograms, symbols, and punctuation create a unique, original, and unrepeatable effect. Consequently, separately analysing these modes would obliterate the intended meaning and impact of the message, disregarding the “transgressive mixture of modalities” (Dovchin et al., 2015, p. 16) it embodies. It represents a “process of transmodal translation in chains of semiosis” (Newfield, 2017, p. 103), which transcends multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), as the boundaries of each mode blur when they converge, resulting in a meaning that is uncommon yet consistently acceptable among multilingual and multicultural individuals who share common trans-experiences.

### **3. Methodology of Investigation.**

The study employs an ethnographic approach, combining conversation analysis with the ethnography of communication to examine spoken interactions in natural conversations. It explores speakers' attitudes toward English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in international communication and their management of linguistic resources in tourism contexts.

Data analysis is enriched by semi-structured interviews, which include questions about linguistic practices and provide insights into speakers' real-time choices (for detailed analysis, see Parise, 2022). Triangulation of various information sources enhances the objectivity of the data. The researcher interprets the unique resources constructed during interactions, focusing on language mixing and meshing phenomena such as code-switching and translanguaging. A detailed analysis is conducted on specific words and constructions that approximate or deviate

from standard English at the phonological and morphological levels. Some linguistic resources are *ad hoc* usages (Widdowson, 2020), arising from bilingual forms used by speakers.

Retrospective interviews and metalinguistic reflections help assess participants' language repertoires and attitudes toward multilingualism. Conversation analysis (CA) examines accommodation and recipient design in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) to achieve shared understanding (Kaur, 2016). The study explores tensions between local practices and broader contexts to understand how speakers adapt to communicative demands while fulfilling their roles in institutional discourse. Emphasising sequential communication patterns rather than isolated utterances reveals the social organisation of conversation and the normative expectations behind discourse sequences. This highlights the need to revise conventional turn-taking awareness and address misunderstandings, errors, and corrections, underscoring participants' commitment to effective communication. Regular sense-making offers sociological insights into interpersonal relationships and the meanings derived from dialogue.

The Ethnography of Communication grounds this study in the interdependence of language use and social context. This framework (Gumperz & Hymes, 1964, 1972) encompasses diverse means and practices of communication, enhancing methodological rigour in analysing authentic communication events in the tourism sector. The reflexive analysis of interview data reveals attitudes toward ELF and multilingual strategies in multi/transcultural communication. Engaging with international tourists allows for developing probing questions through questionnaires and interviews, supporting the primary data collection of naturally occurring conversations.

The SPEAKING acronym, adapted from Hymes (1972), addresses processual and situational aspects of conversations and interviews. While Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) typically focuses on using utterances for communicative actions through 'performative verbs' and 'sentential moods' (Searle, 1969), this study employs it to analyse both the speaker's intention and the listener's inference capacity. The analysis reveals strategies that enhance communication effectiveness by examining the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary forces of conversational turns from a syntagmatic and paradigmatic perspective. The social exchanges also illustrate intertextuality and multimodal hybridity in postmodern communication. Evidence from conversations and interview responses reflects participants' attitudes and motivations towards multilingualism, demonstrating that accommodative language behaviour impacts performance rates, processes, and efficiency, regardless of sociocultural backgrounds. Participants demonstrate sensitivity to English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), using it to construct identities and creatively assert their purposes through text organisation, knowledge negotiation, and meaning expansion. This highlights how non-standard English usage interrelates with social practices, influencing attitudes toward ELF and enhancing conversation analysis among its users.

The pedagogic approach it inspires is centred on learning outcomes (LOs) to enhance student understanding and skills in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and sociolinguistics. The LOs focus on three key areas: a) declarative knowledge of ELF principles; b) cognitive or practical skills for task accomplishment in the tourist domain; and c) evidence of competence for professional development in the special language of tourism.

The approach to learning emphasises transformative education, encouraging students to reflect critically and engage in deep learning rather than superficial knowledge retention. The teaching praxis has six sections: 1. Ice-breaking activity and content presentation; 2. Introduction to ELF research; 3. Data presentation and background information; 4. Teaching activity using naturally occurring conversation; 5. Workshop analysing data for pragmatic language strategies; 6. Conclusion and assignment instructions for support.

#### **4. Data Analysis.**

The epistemological standpoint of this study sample regards speakers' "linguaging" (Jørgensen, 2008) of semiotic resources as a pragmatic strategy for achieving situated meaning-making.

First, *overt* multilingual strategies were examined to verify their functional purposes and interrelations. For example: a) the shared experience of non-nativeness; b) the collaborative creation of meaning; and c) the development of a sense of intercultural community belonging or identity. These practices include translanguaging (cf. Jenkins, 2015; Cogo, 2018), which represents a flexible and integrated approach to utilising one's original repertoire of communicative resources, transcending the rigid and fixed separation between languages (Garcia & Li, 2014; Li, 2016; Cogo, 2012, 2018). Next, *covert* multilingual influences are highlighted, denoting cognitive associations across languages that facilitate understanding among speakers with a common linguistic repertoire.

In certain instances, analyses have examined occurrences that evoke non-standard phonetic or morphological forms. Conversely, the investigation began with pronunciation as a clear manifestation of more complex semantic implications concerning word meaning. Furthermore, specific attention has been devoted to the pragmatic perlocutionary effect intended by the speaker to inspire and enlighten the audience.

**Extract 1:** "*Necropolis*" (S1: Italian; SS: Italian, Argentinian, American, Japanese, Swedish, Polish, Romanian, Korean, French, Belgian; S2: Argentinian; S3: French) – Part 1.

- 8    **S1:** this plain and this hills are occupied by <CL1/><LNlat> enotriions  
         </LNlat></CL1> er  
9       er indigenous people who lived principally er in- on the hill and IN this  
         ROOM in particular we

- 10 can see the <pvc> (objects) /abdʒekt/{objects} </pvc> coming from erm  
the sites of <L1it>  
11 torre mordillo </L1it> (.) the site of <L1it> broia di trebisacce </L1it> and  
the necropolis of <fast>

The linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the participants in the interaction—Latin, Italian, and English—are shared and continually negotiated to enhance mutual understanding. The tour guide (line 8) refers to the local inhabitants of the region by their Latin name – enotrians – without translating it into English. To ensure clarity, she employs a pre-realisation strategy, anticipating that her audience may not be familiar with the term. The paraphrased description that follows ensures understanding and alleviates potential difficulties. The absence of prolonged hesitations after this utterance and the lack of questions from the museum visitors define the conversational segment from lines 8 to 10. The guide receives non-verbal feedback through the participants’ gazes, indicating their engagement.

She employs a consolidated translation technique to clarify a related term by paraphrasing the concept in more general language. This approach likely reflects her experience with other groups, as she articulates it fluently. However, there is a brief hesitation in selecting the correct preposition, “in” versus “on”, when describing the location. Observing visitors’ reactions to the name, she confidently asserts that “Enotria” is a brand of red wine distributed globally by Calabria. Tourists often try, buy, or read about this wine before visiting the museum, providing the guide with a shared cultural framework upon which to build.

This subtle multilingual strategy establishes a semantic connection between various linguistic elements, particularly the term “wine” and the toponym “Enotria,” enhancing comprehension. It connects expressions in a formula (Enotria: Calabrian world-renowned wine = Enotrians: indigenous people of Calabria), organising understanding across different local, regional, and global contexts. The extract proceeds with a dialogic sequence.

**Extract 2:** “*Necropolis*” (S1: Italian; SS: Italian, Argentinian, American, Japanese, Swedish, Polish, Romanian, Korean, French, Belgian; S2: Argentinian; S3: French) – Part Two.

- 12 <L1it>francavilla marittima </L1it> </fast> (.) er something, er do  
you know the words  
13 mecropoli...er the meaning the means of the word me- mecropol-  
necropolis?  
14 SS: Yeah  
15 S1: mhm yeah what is?  
16 SS: <1> cemetery </1>

The tour guide poses a question to the audience (line 12) - do you know the words mecropoli... or the meaning of me- necropolis- necropolis?. She establishes a precedent during the visit, facilitating tourists’ understanding and appreciation of the information provided. In doing so,

the guide hesitates, repeats herself, and mispronounces a well-known term. This deliberate repetition reassures the audience and instils confidence in their understanding. She inquires about the meaning of (line 13) *me- necropolis- necropolis*. This parallel phrasing, keyword repetition, and corrected repetition primarily seek to prevent misunderstandings from substituting the alveolar voiced nasal /n/ with the bilabial voiced nasal /m/ in the technical term *necropolis*. This deviation from the norm suggests personal involvement and diminishes any power dynamics among the participants who collectively respond to her commitment (line 14). Her didactic approach continues to monitor understanding, accelerating her speech in the subsequent turn (line 15), resulting in a truncated utterance, *mhm yeah*, and an open Wh-clarification question - *what is?* She ensures that what she articulates collaboratively advances the conversation's purpose. She requests explicit confirmation of her meaning, which is met with a concerted response from the group of visitors: 'the cemetery' (line 16). She seeks to illustrate the challenges of using and interpreting specific terminology when engaging with non-specialist speakers in the specialised tourism domain by asking for understanding on two occasions. In this excerpt, the guide emphasises parallel phrasing, keyword repetition, and thoughtful repetition to prevent misunderstanding, underscoring her commitment to ensuring the audience's comprehension.

## **5. Discussion and conclusion.**

This analysis highlights the respondents' subjective perceptions of our study on pragmatic strategies for effective communication and overcoming cultural stereotypes (Baker, 2015; 2012b; 2011). Spoken interactions reveal multilingual and multimodal strategies to achieve the following interactive functions: a) the pedagogical function, b) the interpersonal function, and c) the interpreting function.

The research indicates that participants strive to meet each other's learning needs with kindness and mutual understanding to facilitate effective intercultural communication. English serves as a foundation for international socialising (Jenkins, 2015). Respondents observe that interlocutors recognise strong multilingual knowledge, which can enhance comprehensibility. Additionally, each individual's linguacultural background is connected to their personal choices and life experiences, making it essential to establish connections with speaking partners within a communication fellowship. Consequently, tourists may develop more stable relationships rather than remain in a transient community of speakers (Pitzl, 2016). Their interactions are sufficiently long to cement these relationships and foster a strong sense of belonging. Due to their shared experiences, they naturally tend to accommodate one another, facilitating smoother conversations. In summary, the Framework for Appropriate Interactions in Tourism puts a) emphasis on multicultural and multilingual perspectives, b) negotiation of meaning among conversation partners, c) contextual factors and belief systems in stance-taking, and d) understanding the cognitive process of translanguageing through linguistic forms at the phonetic,

morphological, and syntactic levels. The active incorporation of diverse languages and multi-semiotic resources in conversation reveals a significant trend in this specialised linguistic domain, enacted by an international audience influenced by socio-historical contexts across time and space.

The prominence of these features can delineate a distinct genre within the English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) paradigm, where the “T” for tourism can be grounded in ELF principles. Teaching English for Tourism (TELF) is a multifaceted social practice with general and specific objectives that aim to influence educational, social, and economic spheres. Examining this unique area of ELF can deepen the application of sociolinguistic theory within the research community. Moreover, this study supports previous findings and provides interpretative solutions to issues that can be replicated as effective collective investigative practices. What we have learned from the strategic, dynamic, and creative use of semiotic resources to convey knowledge, skills, and competencies can inform pedagogy, facilitating improved training for tourist operators and more effective marketing strategies for promoting cultural and historical resources and local products.

Despite these promising results, there remains significant potential for further development in understanding the scope and functionality of multilingual resources in TELF. This includes addressing this study's geographical limitations and its population characteristics. Consequently, I am fully committed to outlining future trajectories and implications for classifying TELF as a genre and identifying the most effective methods and practices for teaching English, guided by these theoretical and practical findings. Therefore, a proposal for a pedagogical approach integrates disciplinary content with higher education literature to achieve action-oriented learning outcomes. It is informed by constructivist theory, which suggests that knowledge is created through personal experiences (cf. Jean Piaget, 1971; the socio-historical work of Lev Vygotsky, 1978; and the discovery learning account by Jerome Bruner, 1983). Constructivists assert that knowledge is subjective and arises from personal interpretations of experiences, indicating that understanding is context-dependent. Learning involves constructing personal interpretations that can evolve rather than merely transferring fixed knowledge from the external world. Consequently, pedagogical goals include a) exploring the English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) paradigm; b) familiarising students with qualitative research methods; c) utilising natural conversation extracts to enable students to design assessments; d) fostering connections between language use and teaching design. Teaching strategies promote group work and class discussions while providing tutorial support. In line with the Universal Design for Learning model, resources will be available in both electronic and printed formats to promote social justice and accommodate diverse learning needs.

The special language for tourism course syllabus equips future professionals with the skills necessary for effective international communication in English while also addressing language policies and individual contexts.



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