

## **Conceptualizing ELF as a Translanguaging Phenomenon: Covert and Overt Resources in a Transnational Workplace**

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### **1. Introduction**

Traditionally, English language research has been approached separately from other languages research. The two areas of ELF and multilingualism have been seen as two separate disciplines: multilingualism, which concerns languages other than English on one side, and ELF research, which supposedly focuses exclusively on English, on the other. This may in part be due to the tendency to see English as isolated from other languages, especially in the role of “the language of globalization” or “the language of international communication”. However, this separation is paradoxical, to say the least: when English is used as a lingua franca it becomes less foreign, but also “less English” and closer to other languages because of the cross-linguistic, or trans-linguistic, influences of the resources in the users’ repertoire or their sociolinguistic contexts. This is essentially the idea that I will explore in more details in the remainder of this paper.

ELF as a phenomenon, therefore, 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. However, especially for people outside this research field, the ‘English’ part of the acronym ELF has become more prominent and the lingua franca aspect has been overlooked or even confused with the ‘international’ perspective, reducing ELF to something like ‘just English in international contexts’.

This paper is an attempt to balancing out that undue tendency to focus on the first part of the ELF acronym, by re-situating the issue of multilingualism more centrally in ELF research and conceptualizing ELF within a multilingual perspective. So the aims of this paper are twofold. First, to show that research on multilingualism and research on ELF can and should inform each other, rather than be kept separate. Second, and as a consequence of the first, to demonstrate that ELF is a multilingual phenomenon even when the multilingual aspects are not obvious, i.e. when it seems that it is only English.

I start by reviewing the literature on ELF and multilingual research, together with the shift to a multilingual perspective and the view of ELF communication in a translanguaging space. I then illustrate this perspective by analyzing data collected in a transnational workplace and exploring the different kind of resources, covert and overt, constructed by ELF speakers. Finally, I point out how translanguaging does not completely do away with ideologies of language separation, but speakers may still exploit them to make meaning in naturally occurring

communication.

## **2. Literature review: the “multilingual turn” and translanguaging**

Recently, there has been an epistemological shift in applied linguistics towards the “multilingual turn”, that is the need to move away from the monolingual bias that has dominated, and in some cases “contaminated”, the foundational concepts and areas of applied linguistics, among which SLA, TESOL and bilingual education (cf. Conteh and Meier 2014, May 2013). In the old paradigm, bi- and multi-lingualism are viewed through a monolingual linguistic ideology, which conceives languages as separate and fixed entities, submitted to monolingual norms. In practical terms, this means that individuals’ bi- and multi-lingualism tends to be interpreted as the sum of different languages. In the new multilingual turn, instead, languages are not seen as separate. Languages are then seen as linguistic resources, which are merging, meshing and ‘languaging’ (Jørgensen) in semiotic repertoires.

Of course, the fact that languages influence each other through language contact has been a phenomenon of interest especially by scholars concerned with creoles, vernaculars and similar linguistic phenomena, but their research was not informed by a multilingual perspective, instead underpinned by the monolingual stability of codes in contact. However, research on multilingualism has contributed to bring to light the general monolingual bias in language research (cf. Auer 2007, Auer and Li Wei 2007), which focused on a monolingual approach to language description and analysis and tended to research languages as separate entities.

Another contribution of the multilingual turn has been a critical view of the deficit approach to bi- multi-lingualism, a critique of the notion of native speaker, and the related concepts of interlanguage and cross-linguistic interference<sup>1</sup>. These are critiques that particularly align the multilingual turn with ELF research.

SLA research and ELT research and practices have been equally responsible for the monolingual bias and the separation approach. In these areas, there is still a tendency to see monolingualism as unmarked, and a monolingual bias as the yardstick against which all language research, and second language users, should be evaluated. In both fields of research, the foundations of the disciplines lay on comparisons between so-called native and non-native speakers, monolinguals and multilinguals, and between participants’ (or subjects’, in traditional SLA terms) competence in different and separate languages.

However, lately “the multilingual turn” has started to redress the balance by criticizing this monolingual linguistic ideology and proposing an “epistemic reorientation” (Ortega 2013: 48), in the direction of multilingual or translingual practices (Canagarajah 2013) and

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<sup>1</sup> For lack of space, I will not be able to address these critiques here, but suffice to say that they have been extensively explored in many publications, among which Auer 2007, Auer and Li Wei 2007, Canagarajah 2013, Conteh and Meyer 2014, Ortega 2013.

“translanguaging” (García and Li Wei 2014). The approach also involves a reconceptualization of multilingualism itself, not as a deficient realization in any of the languages in the individual’s repertoire, but a holistic approach to the repertoire as a whole. Translanguaging, with the emphasis on the prefix trans-, allows to move away from additive concepts of bilingualism and draw more attention to the transformative perspective, which implies a different view of linguistic resources as in relation to each other, transforming each other and creating new repertoires.

### **2.1. ELF and multilingualism: covert and overt resources**

Compared to other aspects of investigation, studies on multilingual aspects of ELF are still a minority. And this is quite surprising in light of the fact that ELF is in itself a multilingual phenomenon, originating from language contact and globalization. As mentioned before, the ‘Lingua Franca’ aspect of ELF is about a contact language perspective and the key role of multilingual resources in negotiating and re-negotiating the repertoire in communicative interaction.

So if ELF is not only about English, it is important to explore in what ways it is multilingual. The multilingual resources that constitute an integral part of the phenomenon are complex, of various kinds, as they depend on the sociocultural context of communication, the constellation of participants and their linguistic repertoires. In this study I am going to explore two main kinds: the covert and the overt multilingual resources.

The linguistic resources in an individual repertoire are inevitably constructed, adapted and changed in contact with various linguistic resources and in interaction within a specific context. And how these resources are constructed in an individual’s repertoire can sometimes be difficult to see, not so clear or evident. These *covert multilingual influences* are of a more cognitive nature, resulting from contact in the repertoire of the participants, but they seem English on the surface. Beneath the surface, however, covert resources offer insights into how speakers “make” their repertoire, what resources they bring with them, and the knowledge and experience that shapes their language.

For example, Hülmbauer (2011) explores the use of coinages, such as ‘dictature’; ‘card’; ‘overfulled’, which are traditionally described as “false friends”, but she re-coins as “true friends” (Hülmbauer 2011: 142) because they do not create problems in the conversation and they actually help the participants’ understanding, relying on the similarities within the participants’ repertoire of resources. Cogo and Dewey (2012) also explore some examples of covert resources in their study of discourse strategies used in ELF naturally occurring conversations. Among these is the use of idiomatic expressions translated from their own L1 or other languages in their repertoire into English and explain their meaning. For instance, the

expression “stepping on stones” (ibid, 131) is a literal translation from a Japanese idiomatic expression, which is used to warn someone to be attentive, not to lower their guard, because this may cause one to step on stones and fall. In “stepping on stones” example the Japanese participant, who translated the idiom, only used English wording and not the Japanese original, but she engaged in a negotiation of the covert multilingual resource, which otherwise would not have been understood by the interlocutors.

Overall, the studies mentioned above (and others that have analysed multilingualism and ELF, such as Hülmbauer 2009, Pölzl and Seidlhofer 2006, Klimpfinger 2009, Cogo 2009, 2010, Seidlhofer 2011, Vettorel 2014) operate mainly from a framework of language separation, rather than translanguaging. However, what is included in covert resources are processes of translation, or better transformation, whereby the linguistic resources used are not necessarily the result of direct translation from one language to another (or a switch from language A to language B), but of contact and therefore transformation into something different and new.

The second kind of multilingual resources, *overt* resources, include expressions of multilingualism that are obviously recognized as mixing of different linguistic resources, such as codeswitching and translanguaging. Even though these two language alternation phenomena are part of different traditions of research and different paradigms of reference, they both have in common the obvious display of heterogeneity. Although, in line with García (2009), I see codeswitching as part of translanguaging (also cf. below), traditionally codeswitching is considered a different phenomenon, one that involves language alternation of traditionally separate languages.

Codeswitching, has probably been the most researched overt phenomenon of multilingual alternation, and there has been an increasing number of studies on code-switching in ELF contexts too. Cogo’s (2009) study shows how codeswitching can be used as an accommodation strategy, and speakers’ creative use of their multilingual repertoire is helpful in maintaining social relations and constructing group membership. Socio-cultural aspects are also central in Klimpfinger’s 2009 study, which analyses codeswitching examples in the VOICE (Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English) corpus from a conversation analytic perspective, and finds that signaling culture is one of the common functions of codeswitching, together with specifying an addressee, appealing for assistance and introducing a new idea. Vettorel’s (2014) study of blogging in ELF online communities found that codeswitching is a common practice among bloggers. This research has also shown how ELF viewed from a multilingual perspective can be “liberating since for many speakers, its use seems to encourage a relatively unconstrained exploitation of the resources of English and a readiness to draw on resources available through plurilingual channels.” (Hülmbauer and Seidlhofer 2013: 400). What all this ELF research points us to is that while there has been an attempt to explore the multilingual

aspect, the idea of English resources separated from other languages is still quite widespread even in ELF research.

Lately the approach focusing on systematic codeswitching has been under renewed scrutiny, also by ELF researchers (see Jenkins 2015), when considered in relation to another type of language alternation, i.e. Translanguaging. The phenomenon of *Translanguaging* “goes beyond what has been termed code-switching” and “includes it, as well as other kinds of bilingual language use and bilingual contact” (García 2009: 45). In translanguaging, linguistic resources are not separated or treated as distinct systems, they are instead creatively transformed into new linguistic realities. This translanguaging space, where multilinguals transform language separation into new possibilities, “has its own transformative power” and “it entails tension, conflict, competition, difference and change in a number of spheres, ranging from ideologies, policies and practices to historical and current contexts” (García and Li Wei 2014: 24).

Adopting a *translanguaging* perspective for ELF means approaching the field in a way that the interplay between multilingualism and ‘English’ defies the countability usually associated with individual languages, and possibly emphasizes translanguaging in more super-diverse contexts. While the translanguaging approach seems incompatible with the term codeswitching, the idea of language separation may still play a role in ELF communication. Even if codeswitching may seem to be an outdated approach for researchers, multilingual speakers may still be invoking traditional language alternation emphasizing separate languages, as I will explore later. The rest of the paper will hopefully contribute to clarifying the relation between translanguaging and codeswitching in a specific community of practice of ELF speakers and hopefully also respond to Jenkins’ (2015) call for a development of the concept of translanguaging in relation to ELF.

## **2.2. ELF from a translanguaging perspective**

ELF research so far has focused on the use of and reliance on multilingual resources of various kinds, especially in a language separation/codeswitching perspective, but the emphasis needs to shift to the repertoire of resources available in the community of speakers. Research in this field has focused particularly on the first languages of the participants, on pointing out where they are from and what language they speak, but other linguistic resources in the participants’ repertoire are particularly important in the negotiation of meaning and exploitation of potential meaning-making aspects. García (2012: 1, emphasis in original) explains that, rather than one main language and other second or third languages, where linguistic hierarchies are reproduced at individual level, “bilinguals have *one linguistic repertoire* from which they

select features *strategically* to communicate effectively”. The strategic exploitation of resources becomes relevant in the community explored in this paper.

Apart from shifting the focus to the repertoire, research has also shown the relevance of monolingual ideologies in multilingual speakers’ practices. García and Li Wei maintain that “bilingual speakers are often able to recognize themselves only as subjects that speak two separate languages. In so doing, bilingual speakers become complicit in their own domination as they often conform to monolingual monoglossic practices that constrain their own bilingualism to two separate autonomous languages, although at times they may resist by engaging in fluid language practices.” (García and Li Wei 2014: 15). The “fluid language practices” which are referred to in this quote are the translanguaging practices that multilingual speakers engage with and that transcend linguistic separations. However, what García and Li Wei also point out is that the same multilingual speakers that engage in fluid, translanguaging practices are the same that describe their own practices in monolingual terms or they constrain their own performance along monolingual lines.

ELF practices are constantly brought into being in context of communication, by the participants and their negotiation and co-construction of the repertoire, and for that reason they are also not free, simple or egalitarian (see Cogo 2016). Canagarajah reflects on the powerful nature of ideologies, which “have the possibility of being reproduced in social relationships, educational settings, and language interactions” (Canagarajah 2013: 201). Language ideologies also play an important role on ELF communication and language use. In fact, while individual actions may not be necessarily determined by ideological discourses, they are certainly affected by them. The normative character of ideologies has already been demonstrated in empirical studies (cf. Nekvapil and Sherman 2013, Nicholas and Stark 2014, among others), but not much research has addressed the extent to which ideologies affect language use, especially how speakers exploit ideologies of monolingualism in multilingual communication. This final part of this paper is a contribution in that direction. Speakers in the community explored in this paper also show resistance with their translanguaging practices but, unlike Canagarajah’s participants emphasizing the suppressive role of ideologies, they also exploit the monolingual ideological separation of languages and use it to their own advantage – to co-construct meaning and address issues of power relations in communication.

### **3. Methodological observations**

The data collected and analysed in this paper comes from a research project into ELF and multilingualism in a professional community of practice. The empirical data collection was conducted in a small Information Technology company (under the pseudonym of ‘IT Services’,

also cf. Cogo 2012) based in London, UK. The company provides IT services for small businesses and individuals locally and in Europe. With a total number of eight members employees (including the two directors), the company's internal communication takes place in their UK office, but communication with clients is mainly virtual and takes place from wherever location the IT Services staff and clients happen to be.

The fieldwork conducted in the company included observational data, document collection, interviews and focus groups with the employees and directors, audio recordings of naturally-occurring conversations and retrospective interviews with the participants to the recorded conversations. The overall aim of the project was to investigate the sociolinguistic practices of a transnational workplace from a linguistic ethnographic perspective (Copland and Creese 2015), and the extent to which multilingual resources were part of the sociolinguistic practices of this ELF professional community.

The conversations recorded and analysed for this paper took place over Skype, a voice-over protocol system that allows for both video and audio calls. They involve three main participants in a long-term project concerning the set-up of an online invoicing system for a German based client. The participants involved in the conversations are (here identified with pseudonyms) Pedro (P), the IT consultant, Maria (M), the director of the German company, and Helmut (H), the accountant working for the German company. They all developed quite rich and complex repertoires of resources. P and M are from Spanish-speaking backgrounds and H from German background, but they have been living in different places and experienced different sociolinguistic realities, which added to their knowledge of other linguistic resources. According to the interviews carried out with the three participants, and for the purposes of this paper and the conversations analysed below, it is important to point out that P speaks a bit of German, M speaks German rather well and H speaks Spanish to a decent level. They all speak English for their work practices.

The complexity of the participants' repertoires creates challenges from a transcription perspective. When representing multilingual resources in their translanguaging practices it seems contradictory to mark clear boundaries between participants' resources. Translanguaging is about crossing boundaries and merging them, to the extent that linguistic resources sometimes do not clearly pertain to one language or the other. In the data analysis and transcription below, however, I have still used boundary marks for multilingual resources because the purposes of the paper is about showing that these resources are used and how they are used, though the analysis tries to go beyond these forced compartmentalizations.

## **4. Data Analysis**

### **4.1. Covert resources: the ELF translanguaging space**

This section provides two examples of exploiting covert multilingual resources in ELF communication. As covert multilingual resources, the following excerpts may sound like “English” in form, but they are what traditionally would be seen as translations or transformations from another language. In other words, they may be seen or heard like “English”, but they are covert representations of the participants’ multilingual repertoire, or transformations resulting from their multilingual pool of resources.

**Excerpt 1** – P (Spanish-speaking background) and M (Spanish-speaking background) are discussing an invoice with H (German background). M refers to her customers’ tendency to complain about payment.

- 1 P: she want for each type eh method of payments a  
2 different thing at the end of the invoice  
3 M: here yes no but this here it say please send  
4 → me the money and they reclamate always

The verb “reclamate” in line 4 is particularly important here because the participant is using it to make an argument. She is asking P to mention the methods of payment on the invoice on the grounds that if they are not included customers would complain (in her words, *reclamate*)<sup>2</sup>. And this is not all. If we take into account the repertoire of the ELF speakers involved in this exchange it will become obvious how the creative use of “reclamate” can be understood by the participants involved. The verb “reclamate” could be related to Spanish, where the verb “reclamar” means to complain /to express dissatisfaction. This is used in conjunction with –ate, which is a suffix for verb formation normally added to words of Latin origin (as in “locate”, “alleviate”, “activate” and similar). Spanish is the first language of P and M, but for the German accountant (H), who is also present in the conversation, this term could also have been understood because of his knowledge of Spanish, which he developed by working with M. The term “reclamate” can therefore be assumed to be shared by the speakers in the conversation because of their multilingual repertoires, either as coming from their first language or because they are part of a community of practice, which has seen this term being used in their common repertoire. There is no evidence in the analysis of the conversation that shows that “reclamate” might create problems, rather, because of its covert multilingual nature, it can even be assumed that this term would facilitate the process of understanding.

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<sup>2</sup> The participants involved in the meeting must have understood the point made by M, and therefore the use of “reclamate”, because nobody is raising the issue. In other words, from a conversational perspective, participants did not start a negotiation of meaning, they did not ask for clarifications or similar. It is not a let-it-pass strategy either, because the point made is of particular importance to the discussion of the invoice.

In the second example below, I am going to analyse another covert resource, which is something of a prepositional nature.

**Excerpt 2** – H (German background) and P (Spanish background) are describing the list of items included in the invoice. H wants to draw P’s attention to an item towards the end of the list.

- 1 H: down under it says first two  
2 P: [yes  
3 H: [position one position two position one is the  
4 article no?

In line 1, “down under” could come from the German “unten drunter” (or “weiter unten”), or “underneath”, and possibly the German “unterhalb”, which mean below, downward. H explained that he meant “further down”, not sequentially but jumping some of the items in the list. The use of “down under” may not seem that important in the light of the whole conversation, but when we consider that the participants are sitting at their desks, located in different offices, and looking at a document (the invoice) on a computer screen, the use of this expression becomes much more relevant. The speakers cannot point to an item in the invoice because they do not see each other, but they can try to use more visual or effective expressions to describe what they are looking at. So, while the expression in line 1 has potentially been translated or transformed from German, which might be considered as problematic for people who encounter it for the first time, its use in the conversation does not seem to hinder the participants’ comprehension and in fact it helps P understand what they are talking about (confirmed by “yes” in line 2), and thus continue to address H’s concern with the invoice.

The expression “down under” is a creative use of the participant’s multilingual repertoire to make the explanation more effective. In other words, just using the adverb “down” would not have been as clear as “down under” because the item they are referring to is further down in the list and not the last one. Using the multilingual repertoire in translation helped H express himself more effectively.

While previous examples pertain mainly to the lexico-grammatical level, instances of covert resources within pragmatics and phonetics/phonology can also be found. The pragmatic covert resources, however, are more difficult to identify since they are not necessarily translation or transformations of multilingual resources but interpretations of intercultural strategies or discourse conventions. The phonological covert resources, instead, can be identified more easily throughout the data. One example is when an English word is pronounced

in a German way, or a Spanish way, by the participants.

**Excerpt 3** – H (German background) and P (Spanish background) are talking about the term “invoice maturity”.

- 1 H: when you go down you know
- 2 P: Yes
- 3 H: what is invoice maturity (/mə'turəti/) P

In line 3, H pronounces the term “maturity” as /mə'turəti/, with a clear German influence in the pronunciation of the dental plosive as /t/, rather than /tʃ/, and in the pronunciation of the back vowel as /u/, rather than /ʊ/. Pronunciation is indeed a very important level of analysis because its covert multilingual influence actually becomes overt in the very moment when pronunciation takes place and the word, the turn or utterance are produced. In that sense, pronunciation examples cut across the divide between covert and overt resources, clearly showing how it may be rather difficult for ELF multilingual resources to fall clearly within one category or the other.

Finally, the implications for this kind of covert creativity, go beyond facilitating understanding and are much more profound. First of all, participants are multilingual and it is difficult to clearly demarcate where one language begins and another ends. The translation is not the result of a clearly identifiable language A translated into language B, but the result of language contact and transformation, where influences of German and Spanish resources, all developed in different ways and to different extent in an individual's repertoire, get transformed into some other linguistic resource, something that is called “English”. Secondly, we could argue that the notion of “community of practice” here is clearly grounded on a notion of repertoire which is not unitary, or pertaining to one language “English”, but on a shared translanguaging space, where linguistic resources coexist, interact and make meaning with non-linguistic, multimodal resources. Finally, participants in these exchanges are not trying to find the “correct English word”, but are using whatever resources available in their multilingual repertoire and transforming them to make them accessible and understandable in context. The translanguaging processes at play in these covert resources examples are based on transformations and possibly negotiations, rather than on adherence to unitary concepts of language.

#### **4.2. Overt resources: translanguaging and boundaries**

While the previous three examples explored the use of covert multilingual resources, the

following are examples of explicit, therefore more visible and obvious, multilingual resources. These are excerpts concerning ELF translanguaging, whereby “[L]anguage users employ whatever linguistic features are at their disposal to achieve their communicative aims as best as they can, regardless of how well they know the involved languages” (Jørgensen 2008: 163).

In excerpt 4, it is interesting to observe how multilingual resources are used. Here the Spanish and German parts are not used only by the Spanish and German “native” speakers respectively. M and P (both of Spanish speaking background) use German in their negotiation of what is included in the invoice, and H, who speaks very little Spanish, still uses Spanish resources in the conversation with them (though not visible in this excerpt, we can see how H uses Spanish resources in Excerpt 5, line 8).

**Excerpt 4:** – M (Spanish background), H (German background) and P (Spanish background) are discussing the list of items that needs to appear on their invoice.

1 P ah: ok ok yeah (aspiration) ah: (2.5) and then  
2 the <LNde>netto<LNde> (3) pfourteen (2) one two  
3 so the position is important one two (2) and then  
4 we have the euros (1) and then we have the the  
5 porcentage? (.) but has another name says usl  
6 u u eh <Llde>u s t ist unxxx steuer<Llde>  
7 H <LNde>was ist dis? <LNde>  
8 P <LNde>betrag (.) betrag<LNde>? <Llsp>como  
9 M prefieres?<Llsp>  
10 no <Llde>betrag<Llde> is whole amount Pedro  
11 H ah ok  
12 P <Llde>betrag<Llde> is amount  
13 H amount ok  
14 P

From lines 1 to 6, P provides a summary of the different items that should appear in the invoice and their positions on the document and tries to double check with M and H that this is fine. P’s use of German specifically refers to how the items appear on the invoice. P’s long initial turn is interspersed with long pauses, which are taken on by the participants’ observing the invoice document. In lines 5 and 6, P is unsure about the acronym UST and the accountant provides an explanation in the following turn in German. After that, P returns to using German in line 8 when he asks, in a German-Spanish way, what the item is. German linguistic resources are

part of P's repertoire and, though in his interview he underestimates his competence in German, he seems to play with it (as in line 8) and uses it actively in the discussion of the invoice. In line 9, M picks up the turn in German and then Spanish to help clarify the matter with H, who adds the translation of one of the items (line 11) and, after repeated confirmation from P (lines 12 and 14) the conversation can move on.

This 'German-Spanish way of speaking' is how P describes his translanguaging practices. In the professional community where he works, and for the specific project with H and M, it is quite common to play with linguistic resources while carrying out their working tasks. The German and Spanish words have been learnt during the frequent conversations among the participants who have created their 'common repertoire of resources'. Methodologically, of course, these observations are possible not because of the corpus data (including the transcript and analysis provided above), but because the research has been conducted through fieldwork in the company, observations and retrospective interviews with the participants. As a matter of fact, it is in the retrospective interviews carried out with the participants that the idea of using any linguistic resources available in the participants' repertoire is repeatedly mentioned. Participants in this community seem to be able to effectively use their multilingual repertoire and enjoy doing that. They show flexible practices of translanguaging – calibrating their repertoire according to how they see their interlocutors' linguistic repertoire. For instance, H uses only minimum resources of German, knowing that P does not speak much German, though M is fluent. These explanations of the resources participants are familiar with come from the fieldwork and interviews with them and their own comments. However, participants' conceptualizations of their linguistic resources are not done in terms of repertoire. Instead, their understanding of translanguaging is often explored in terms of language separations, justifying what language they speak to whom and why, and therefore also constructing a representation of 'languages' in terms of unitary and separated resources.

Thus, though data shows how participants engage in a translanguaging space, they may still perceive languages as separated by clear boundaries and, not only explain those boundaries in their interviews, but they also use them in their practices to certain effects. In Excerpt 5 below, for instance, participants carry out a clear division of labour between Spanish and English, whereby P's turns are in English and M's turns are in Spanish. P knows that in order to include H in the conversation he would need to speak mainly in English, while M knows that in order to exclude H from the conversation and only address P she would have to use only Spanish. The following example of language choices in the discussion demonstrate the participants' selection of multilingual resources for communicative effectiveness. Switching into certain languages to select/include/exclude certain participants is a way of exercising power in the conversational exchange, i.e. decide who to include or exclude.

**Excerpt 5** – H (German background), P (Spanish background) and M (Spanish background) are talking about tax on goods. M wants P to have a look at another example of how to deal with this aspect, but P wants to discuss the issue with H, i.e. the accountant.

- 1 P: I try to adapt the the(.)the programme to that (.)  
2 okay?  
3 M: <L1sp>ya para te estoy mandando ahorita una<L1sp>  
4 P: bu-but why if it's the same just don't don't bring  
5 it  
6 M: <L1sp>es si otro esta mas ordenado que el nuestro  
7 para que veas<L1sp>  
8 H: <LNsp>el dice <LNsp> he says seven percent tax on  
9 (.) the the line ninety you see that what my-  
10 P: -yeah yeah yeah yeah I have it in front of mine I  
11 I print it so

Excerpt 5 is an example of the tension between P and M concerning their role and relation to H, the accountant. P wants to include H in their conversation about the tax issue, because he is the accountant and would know how to approach the issue, but M continues to intervene and prevents H from taking the floor. This struggle is clearly emphasized by their language choices: P talks in English while M replies in Spanish, the language that H is less comfortable with. By using Spanish, M is preventing H from actively joining the conversation, though he has a passive understanding of it, as indicated by his turn in line 8, where he manages to start with a bit of Spanish before continuing in English. The fight for including or excluding a participant is here clearly signified by choosing to use or not the linguistic resources that make it possible for that participant to contribute to the talk.

While translanguaging offers individual resistance to the monolingual ideological positioning of societal requirements, adherence to the societal monolingual norm is still an option for speakers and something they can use to exercise resistance to the status quo. The individual speakers' repertoire is here not only interacting with the other speakers' repertoires, but also with the institutional requirements and the societal discourses and ideologies about language as a monolingual system.

## 5. Conclusion

It would, of course, be legitimate to think that the community and communication analysed

in this paper mainly come from a European context and participants share linguistic resources from European languages, which also makes the possibility of metalinguistic knowledge and awareness more likely. Furthermore, most studies included in the literature above also explore multilingualism in a European perspective. However, the Asian continent is the largest continent on earth and has the largest population and, consequently, a wealth of languages exist within the Asian territory, with variation and heterogeneity of languages within the continent and in the single states. With this wealth of linguistic resources it would just seem likely that overt and covert multilingual phenomena, like the ones described in this paper, would be possible, if not quite common. And while research into multilingual education and the role of ELF in Asia is well under-way (Kirkpatrick 2007, Lim and Low 2009), we need more research exploring the sociolinguistic multilingual practices of ELF in naturally occurring communication involving Asian languages.

The aim of this paper has been to demonstrate that ELF is a translanguaging phenomenon even when the multilingual resources are mainly covert, such as when the participants do not share their linguistic repertoires, and do not have other languages in common other than English. Even then, ELF is multilingual in their use of covert resources. With such a perspective, speakers' resources are not viewed as narrow discrete systems, but as larger communicative repertoires that transform, combine and overlap in rich and complex ways.

Even when on the surface we may be dealing with English only, ELF always relies on multilingual resources and multilingual transformations, which also require a multilingual understanding. This approach also includes understanding language from the participants' perspectives and the ideologies that they exploit to make meaning. Data shown in this paper demonstrates the flexible and transformative nature of ELF speakers' repertoires, but the excerpts have also shown that speakers may resist by exploiting the monolingual ideological separation of languages and using it to their own advantage – to make meaning and invoke power asymmetries.

Finally, what I hope this paper has contributed to point out is that research on ELF and research on multilingualism should not be seen as part of separate disciplines, but have much in common and more to contribute to each other.

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