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Università
Ca'Foscari
Venezia

Ca' Foscari
Dorsoduro 3246
30123 Venezia

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Intercultural Communication:
International Tourists in Venice

Supervisor
Ch.ma Prof.ssa Cesiri Daniela

Graduand
Anna Chiara Ferrarese
Matricola 833767

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ABSTRACT

Questo elaborato si propone di approfondire il tema della comunicazione interculturale in ambito turistico, prendendo come spunto di ricerca il turista internazionale che si reca a Venezia. Domanda di fondo è se questa ormai longeva destinazione turistica sia davvero preparata ad accogliere turisti che provengono da culture lontane e parlano lingue diverse. Nell'interazione tra il personale turistico e il turista straniero, la componente culturale e quella linguistica rendono lo scambio comunicativo più complesso rispetto a quello tra persone appartenenti allo stesso ambiente culturale. La cultura influenza profondamente i nostri comportamenti, le nostre aspettative, le nostre idee e costruzioni mentali: nel mondo del turismo è importante non sottovalutare tali aspetti, poiché da questi scaturiscono incomprensioni e atteggiamenti negativi che vanno a influire sull' esperienza turistica complessiva. Attraverso questa tesi si intendono analizzare gli aspetti rilevanti della comunicazione interculturale, per capirne le problematiche al fine di proporre soluzioni adeguate. La presenza di una lingua franca come l'inglese acquisisce un ruolo fondamentale nel permettere una comunicazione efficace tra l'ospite straniero e il personale turistico. Varie strategie sono impiegate tra parlanti non nativi di inglese per superare le difficoltà linguistiche e comunicare in modo chiaro e comprensibile. Oggigiorno l'inglese permette l'interazione tra persone provenienti da qualsiasi parte del mondo. Anche l'industria turistica si può avvalere di questa lingua veicolare per fornire tutte le informazioni necessarie ai fini della realizzazione della vacanza, non solo per quanto riguarda il momento decisionale e di prenotazione, ma anche durante la vacanza stessa. Dai siti specializzati ai centri di informazione turistica, senza escludere la segnaletica, ogni tipo di informazione deve essere facilmente fruibile dal turista straniero. Attraverso l'analisi del caso di Venezia, verranno individuate le problematiche esistenti nella comunicazione tra il personale turistico e il turista straniero, sia per quanto riguarda le barriere culturali che quelle linguistiche; inoltre, verrà analizzato il livello e la qualità di informazione che la destinazione turistica offre e le eventuali carenze percepite dai turisti, nonché alcuni suggerimenti per migliorarle.

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>

In the last decade, the world of tourism has become increasingly internationalized. Thanks to the growing globalization, people living and working in tourist destinations have the chance to interact with visitors coming from various cultures and speaking different languages. Compared to domestic tourism, international tourism is more challenging because of the linguistic and cultural components that influence the communication between hosts and guests.

Tourism is a doorway to other cultures, the medium to gather together people from different countries. Although contacts might be quite superficial, tourism encounters may produce both positive and negative outcomes. From the perception of these encounters during the holiday, tourists may develop attachment and appreciation for the hosts and their culture or, instead, they may reinforce negative stereotypes and diffidence.

In intercultural contexts, interpersonal communication becomes more complex. Verbal and non-verbal behaviour normally produced spontaneously and unconsciously during a conversation between people of the same country, become something to think carefully through and not to undervalue when involving people of different cultures. The elements of each culture not only have a high influence on the way people behave, but also on the way they think. Even languages are influenced by the culture of their speakers, and some concepts may be expressed differently from language to language or they might not even exist in some languages. A common example is the number of words the Eskimo language employs to say 'snow', which are not translatable into other languages because they only belong to the Eskimos'. The life experience of these people has influenced the way they think, behave and speak. As Hofstede (2010:6) suggests, everyone has a "software of the mind", that is the ensemble of values, time perception, social hierarchy and other characteristics that influence the way in which people see the surrounding world. All the shared meanings, values, rules, beliefs and symbols converge of each culture also dictate the way in which we relate to others. Consequently, it is important to know to what extent culture influences our behaviour and why one culture is different from

another. Being aware of these differences allows to find the best way to deal with persons from other countries.

Having a good intercultural communication competence is the first step towards understanding other people and communicate effectively with them no matter the language they speak. This is the topic analysed in **<u>Chapter One</u>**, in which also the concept of culture and the way through which the message is communicated will be discussed. As Balboni (1998:28) states, "we are first looked at and then listened to", consequently, when communicating in an intercultural culture, it is important not only to be conscious of what we are saying, but also of the way in which we communicate it. Culture affects our verbal communication as well as our non-verbal messages: it dictates how and when we express ourselves, the way we move (kinesics), we dress (dress code), we physically relate to our interlocutors (proxemics) and we talk (para-linguistics).

As for the verbal communication, today people have the possibility to communicate through a common language. English has become the current Lingua Franca, which helps people communicate with one another although belonging to distant countries and speaking different mother tongues. **<u>Chapter Two</u>** analyses the diffusion of English and the its development in a multicultural context. From the colonial period, an increasing number of countries have acquired English as the language of communication, leading towards the definition of "inner circle", "outer circle" and "expanding circle" made by Kachru (in Quirk & Widdowson, 1985: 12-13). In the expanding circle, non-native speakers of English employ it for different purposes, namely business, technology, academic discourse and tourism. English as Lingua Franca (ELF) is evolving into an international language, less linked to the English-speaking countries and more adaptable to the interlocutors' need, who shape it through their culture and their personal experiences. The success of ELF resides in the ability of the speakers to overcome their diversity and communicate effectively. Through the analysis of its features, the Chapter discusses the evolution of a language that first belonged to a small number of countries and know it is spoken by an increasing number of people worldwide. The contrast between English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and ELF will be another point of discussion. The 'errors' corrected in the classes of English as foreign language are re-evaluated as

expressions of the speaker's diversity in ELF. Innovations, simplification, regularisation are among the salient characteristics of ELF. Intelligibility is the main purpose of this vehicular language and its speakers adopt a number of strategies in order to achieve it.

Chapter Three will analyse more in detail the communication in the tourism destination. Although the spread of new technologies helps tourists find all kinds of information and easily book and schedule their trip in advance, the human and relational factors remain of predominant importance in the tourist experience. Staff in hotels, restaurants, information point along with service workers, inhabitants and other on-site staff, are important sources of information often questioned by the tourists. Their knowledge of English and their behaviour towards the foreign tourists are essential in order to provide a positive tourist experience. The encounter between tourists and people working in the tourism field may determine the satisfaction of the entire holiday.

Chapter Four will examine, empirically, the relationship between hosts and guests in Venice. The results of a survey addressed to the foreign tourists will assess the preparation of Venice as an international destination. Through the eyes of real tourists, the hospitality industry of Venice will be evaluated both from a linguistic and a cultural point of view. Thanks to a series of questions, the survey will discover whether misunderstandings and incomprehension have occurred between tourists and hosts, and whether these problems are related to a linguistic or to a cultural factor. The impressions and feelings expressed by the interviewees will highlight the points of weakness of the tourism industry in Venice. Some questions will also take into consideration the amount of information available in the city and some critical situations experienced during the vacation. From the analysis of the results, it will be possible to assess Venice as an international destination, understand its points of strength and weakness and provide some possible solutions to the critical aspects experienced by the tourists.

CHAPTER 1

Intercultural Communication

1.1 The Communication Process: its elements and functions

At least once during our holidays we have felt embarrassed when, coming across a lost tourist who asked for information, we were not able to understand what s/he was saying; or we were surprised because we could not explain why that group of foreign visitors behaved so 'oddly', or why, instead, they looked at us like you were doing something 'wrong'. Being a tourist, as well as living in a tourist destination, naturally exposes us to these kind of situations, which are important to understand and successfully overcome.

Tourism brings together people of different cultures who speak different languages and have a different way of thinking. It is the perfect stage for intercultural communication, "a process in which people from different cultures try to understand what others from different cultures try to communicate and what their messages mean" (Reisinger & Dimanche, 2008: 167).

In our lives, communication plays an essential role in maintaining human relations. It is a need for every individual to express him/herself through the process of transferring information, ideas or emotions to another person or group of people, through a verbal or non-verbal language (Ceylan et al., 2012:1100). As Habke & Sept (1993:423) affirm, communication is a process of "imperfect exchanges", as a matter of fact the success of communication depends on a variety of aspects such as language, culture and personality. It is not about achieving similarity or agreement with the counterpart, but understanding what others are trying to communicate and what their message is. It is "a symbolic, interpretative, transactional, contextual process in which people create shared meanings" (Lustig & Koester, 2013:12).

Communication is a process that is in constant evolution and change: it involves past and present experiences and future expectations; its meanings can

differ from one context to another, from one person to another and from one country to another country.

Generally speaking, a communicative process always implies a "sender" who sends a "message" to a "receiver" through a "medium" (Stazio, 2002: 18). Communication affects us in many ways and different definitions exist depending on the focus (the medium or the message, for instance). It concerns human language, as a matter of fact even the cells of our body communicate using special signals, similarly telecommunications let us communicate in different ways. Nevertheless, communication would not exist without a subject who sends the message and another subject who receives it, and the most traditional way to deliver a message is face to face interaction, through interpersonal communication, which concerns intercultural communication as well. In interpersonal communication, the focus is on the sender and the receiver, and the relations that exist between them at the same time and space. The **sender** is the source of information, the one who intentionally elaborates the message and starts the process of communication. However, the **receiver** is not a passive subject, as s/he selects the information, s/he pays attention to the message he is receiving, s/he interprets it and more importantly, s/he gives feedbacks to the sender. Feedback can be intentional, like a comment, an answer to a question, an action, or unintentional like an imperceptible look on one's face or a body's movement. Moreover, during a conversation the roles of sender and receiver are interchangeable (Stazio, 2002:19).

The **message** conveys a package of information that can arrive distorted to the receiver. In fact, the effectiveness of the message depends on "the importance that it gains in relation to other signals and messages" (Ibid.). The receiver makes a selection of the pieces of information. Motivation, intensity and values affect his/her attention and consequently his/her interpretation of the message. According to Stazio, these values are strictly related to:

- the competence of the receiver, which means his capacity of comprehension and elaboration of the message content;
- the source, its authority and importance from the receiver's perspective;
- the medium, which can be more or less fair or suitable.

As far as the **medium**[1] is concerned, different ways of conveying a message exist, for example writing or speaking, but also through the mass medias such as television or the radio. From here on, the medium we will refer to will be the language.

Language is a code, an ensemble of rules with the aim of processing and transmitting a message. Like other codes, language has its own signs and symbols combined through a system of norms. According Saussure (1959:66-67), each sign is the result of the combination of a 'signifier' (the sound-image, that is the physical element of the word composed of phonemes and graphemes) and one or more 'signified' (the concept, the image that we associate to that word). What bounds the signifier with the signified are the social conventions of the linguistic community which are completely arbitrary. Consequently, from a linguistic perspective, the message is a sequence of signs selected from a code through a process of selection and combination. For this message to be effective, the sender has to choose a code and to put the signs in a sequence. If the receiver is capable of decoding the message and, then, interpreting it by the attribution of a meaning, the process of communication is completed and the message has arrived. Jakobson calls the effect that the sender wants to obtain "primary intention", and the receiver's intention to adhere to it (or not) "secondary intention" (Stazio, 2000: 144). Nevertheless, we have to bear in mind that the characteristics of the receiver, but also the communicative context, can twist the mean of the original message. The context in which the communication takes place is another core element that affects this process. Samovar et al. (2010:18) distinguish four dimensions of the context:

- the environmental context is the physical setting, the location in which the communication takes place;
- the cultural context, which deeply influences the communication and brings the values, rules and social behaviours of each culture in the communication event[2];

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[1] The word 'medium' and 'channel' are often used interchangeably; however, channel refers more specifically to the physical support, such as the radio waves or the speech organs (Stazio, 2000: 20).

[2] Samovar et al. indicate "time" as another dimension, but I prefer to link it to the cultural context because as we discuss the role of culture in the next chapters we will see how time is strictly related to cultural sphere.

- the occasion refers to the event itself. Depending on the occasion (a chat with a friend, an official ceremony, a vacation) we behave differently;
- the number of people involved in the conversation: communication changes whether we are talking to one person or to a group of people.

The context works as a "reference code" (Jakobson, 1960:353), therefore in order to understand the message the receiver has to share the same knowledge of the sender; when this does not happen, misunderstanding and incomprehension undermine communication. In the intercultural encounter the social context and the set of rules and traditions of a culture play an important role becoming one of the major issues in intercultural communication; as we will see, sometimes sharing a common language does not prevent speakers from misunderstanding the interlocutor due to a lack of knowledge of the respective cultures.

In his Closing Statements: Linguistics and Poetics (1960) Roman Jakobson individuates six different functions of communication, depending on the importance of some elements of communication with respect to the others:

1. the **expressive function** has the focus on the sender of the message, in particular his/her personality, the way in which s/he expresses his/her feelings or his/her attitude during the communicative process: interjections and emphatic speech are representative of this type of communication;
2. the **conative** or **directive function** relates to the receiver of the message and the intention to modify his/her behaviour; persuasion, command or suggestion enter this category;
3. the **referential** or **informational function** refers to the context: in this case there is a constant reference to the external reality by using adverbs of time and space, verbs, pronouns, etcetera;
4. the **phatic** or **interactional function** prolongs the contact between the sender and the receiver, with some expressions that interrupt, verify, maintain or establish the conversation;

5. in the **poetic function** attention is on the message and its construction; poetry is included in this category because it emphasizes specific elements of the language by changing the articulation of the sentence;

6. the **meta-linguistic function** mainly deals with the code, which is considered the object of the utterance; through it, sender and receiver can verify whether they are using the same vocabulary or grammar.

1.2   Interpersonal communication: non-Verbal Communication in intercultural encounters

So far we have seen that communication can be analysed from different points of view: from the code or medium used, the number of subjects involved, etcetera. Nevertheless, it is also possible to make a distinction between a type of communication that implicates the presence of both the sender and the receiver in the same space, at the same time, and another type that occurs at different times and in different spaces. We will refer to the former as "interpersonal communication" and to the latter as "mediated communication"[3] (or "mass communication"), which involves the information and communication technology (Stazio, 2000: 29).

Interpersonal communication deals with several elements of the culture and society of the persons involved. In fact, the subjects are in an inter-dependence relation and they share and exchange the same code, they co-create and interpret the meanings, and they reciprocally respect their role in society (Stazio, 2000:30). Compared to mediated communication, the basic difference is, in the latter case, the absence or delay of feedback from the audience/receive. In interpersonal communication, the feedback - verbal and non-verbal - is visible and allows the sender to adjust the conversation according to the receiver's reaction.

The tourism industry heavily relies on this kind of mediated interaction: advertisements on TV and in magazines, brochures, leaflets and, above all, the Internet, they all send messages that can reach anyone, at different times and in

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[3] As we are analysing the moment of contact between the host and the tourist, we will focus on the first type of interaction, which presupposes the encounter of the subjects in the same place at the same time.

different places of the world. As a consequence, it is difficult to have access to the feedback from the audience, but there are other ways to test the effectiveness of this type of communication, like customer's surveys or the analysis of the product impact on the consumption volume.

On one hand mediated communication is essential to promote a venue and to attract new visitors to a destination, but on the other hand the core of the tourist experience lies on the destination itself: from arrival to departure. It is during this period that a tourist faces various (inter)personal exchanges, which will influence the perception s/he has of the place and his/her degree of satisfaction (Sparks & Callan, 1992:215). Even though in the last decades marketing has developed the concept of personalization in the mediated services while minimizing human interaction, in the hospitality industry the human factor still has a unique impact and can make the difference (Power & Riegel, 1993:305).

Interpersonal communication is the sum of two important aspects that are inextricably intertwined: verbal and non-verbal communication. Although in verbal communication differences are more obvious (as we will see in Section 1.3) because of language barriers or difference in accents and vocabulary, non-verbal communication should not be underestimated, since it can create miscommunication in intercultural contexts.

The main difference between verbal and non-verbal communication is intentionality: the use of language has usually an intentional basis; on the other hand, if we usually control part of our non-verbal communication we also frequently, and unintentionally, produce gestures and movements that are interpreted by our interlocutor (Stazio, 2000:34).

Samovar et al. (2010:246) define non-verbal communication as "all those non-verbal stimuli in a communication setting that are generated by both the source and his or her use of the environment and that have potential message value for the source or receiver". In addition, according to Balboni (1998:28), first, we are looked at and then we are listened to; as a matter of fact 83% of information comes from our eyes, and only 11% from our ears. We usually judge the persons in front of us by the manner of their dressing, their facial expression, even by their type of handshake. Although verbal communication is the primary instrument of communication, we

should not forget the importance of non-verbal signs. Our emotions – fear, joy, anger or sadness – have an impact on our posture, eyes and facial expressions (Samovar et al., 2010:245). Indeed, the non-verbal sphere includes four categories:

1. **Kinesics**, which refers to the body movements involved during the interaction, from the eye gaze and the facial expressions (e.g. smiling and puffing) to gestures and postures of hands and arms but also of legs and feet;
2. **Proxemics** relates to the use of space and the physical distance between the subjects, for example touching the other person, kissing our interlocutor, invading one's personal space;
3. **Dress code**, which has to do with formality, informality and social respect but also with the use of objects like earrings, piercings, watches and other status symbols;
4. **Para-linguistics** deals with the non-linguistic aspects of language, such as the tone of the voice, intonation, pauses and other types of vocalisation (e.g. crying, laughing or sighing).

Our body conveys a great deal of unintentional information, for instance, sweating or blushing represents a visible state of agitation or embarrassment; however, it is also an instrument for highlighting or reinforcing our conversation in an intentional way. In interpersonal encounters, non-verbal communication "can complement, intensify and even contradict what is said" (Sparks & Callan, 1992: 218).

Lustig & Koester (2013:190-192) divide non-verbal behaviours in five categories. Firstly, emblems have specific meanings and are used as substitutes of verbal communication (one example is the peace symbol created with the index and middle fingers). Secondly, illustrators that usually do not have meanings because they are tied to the verbal message (like lifting our arms and moving them in a half-circle when describing a high mountain). Then, adaptors are personal movements that occur as a reaction to an individual, physical or psychological, state. Examples are the tapping of a pencil, or fidgeting and scratching an itch. Regulators help "synchronize the back-and-forth nature of conversation" (Ibid.), they include head nods or back-channel signals (like uh-huhm) and are culture-specific and usually

unintentional. Finally, affect displays identify all kinds of behaviours that show feelings and emotions.

We tend to think that non-verbal communication is universally understood, but it is not so. Just like verbal communication, it shares a deep connection with culture: both are influenced and bound to the speaker's culture. Cultural background, socio-economic influences, education, gender, age, personal preferences and idiosyncrasies affect communication between people (Samovar et al., 2010:248). Attention is drawn to the fact that even though people share the same basic emotions, culture dictates how and when to express them (Samovar et al., 2010:250). In many Mediterranean countries, it is common to show and exaggerate signs of grief or sadness. On the contrary, the Japanese and the Chinese cultures consider restraint of strong feelings such as anger, sadness or love, as sign of maturity and wisdom (Sue & Sue, 1990:54).

Gestures and acts that we take for granted in our culture can become meaningless or even offensive in others. One emblematic example is the wrong assumption that smiling for Japanese people is a sign of courtesy: Western people tend to see them as a very polite community. However, the act of smiling often conceals embarrassment or reserve, since, in the Japanese culture, it is not allowed to show negative emotions in public and respond negatively to a host (Samovar et al., 2010:261; Balboni, 2000: 51-87). This might lead to a serious misunderstanding in tourism encounters as, for instance, it might happen that after the receptionist's explanations of the hotel rules, a Japanese would smile instead of asking for a clarification and the hotelier would, instead, take this smile as a sign of agreement and understanding.

Another body movement that is potentially misleading is nodding: in Western cultures, it represents agreement but it is not as universal as we think; as a matter of fact in the Eastern Mediterranean region, it states the opposite (Balboni, 1999:53). Moreover, in Ethiopia, people express agreement by throwing their head back, and in Borneo they raise their eyebrows (Samovar et al., 2010:248).

Other differences concern the use of space and gestures. It is of common knowledge that people from Northern countries are considered 'colder', more emotionally detached from populations living in Southern countries, since they

gesticulate little and maintain a significant physical distance with their interlocutor (Reisinger & Dimanche, 2008:170). On the contrary, people from Sothern countries are considered to be 'warmer' because they gesticulate much and they generally touch or stay very close to their interlocutor.

Eye contact is another delicate subject. In Western countries, looking into the interlocutor's eye means openness and attention whereas in Eastern countries and in the Middle East it communicates a challenge or even an erotic proposal (Balboni, 2000: 51).

Therefore, the encounter of two persons who have opposite habits can become a total disaster if they are not aware of all these differences. Many misunderstandings and tensions are the result of a basic ignorance of the other's habits and culture. It is easier to communicate with a person of the same country because we share not only the same verbal language, but also the same non-verbal code and we know exactly what a gesture or a reaction means.

In the Figure1 Reisinger & Dimanche (2008:172) summarize some non-verbal behaviours and identify in which countries they are practiced.

Cultural Characteristics	Communication Characteristics	Countries Displaying Characteristics
Non-verbal Signals Indirect (Gudykunst et al., 1988; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Hall, 1976/ 1977, 1983)	Implicit indirect messages, focus on meanings, use of body language and non-verbal cues, ambiguity, use of intermediaries	Middle East, Latin America (Dodd, 1998); Japan, Korea,China, South Africa (Gudykunst et al., 1988; Hall, 1976/1977, 1983); African-American, Japan, Korea (Lustig & Koester, 1993); African-American, Japan, Korea, Thailand, China (Condon & Yousef, 1975; Stewart, 1971)
Space (proxemics) (Hall, 1976/1977, 1983)	Large physical distance during communication, need for personal space	North Europe, North America (Remland et al., 1992); Great Britain, the United States, Germany, Australia (Gudykunst et al., 1995); Scotland, Sweden, Germany (Hall & Hall, 1990); Japan, China, the United States Americans (Andersen et al., 1990); Northern Europe, Canada (Hall & Hall, 1990)
	Small physical distance, importance of physical intimacy	Middle East, Africa, Latin America, Southern Europe (Dodd, 1998); South America, Latin America, Southern Europe, Mediterranean region, Arab countries, Indonesia (Andersen et al., 1990); Middle East (Ruch, 1989); Mexico Condon, 1985)
Contact-cultures (Argyle, 1986)	People touch each other in social conversations	Middle East, Latin America, Southern and Eastern Europe (Condon & Yousef, 1975; Hecht et al., 1989; Stewart, 1971); Mexico (Condon, 1985); Latin America, Middle East, Israel, Greece, Eastern Europe (Samovar et al., 1998)
Non-contact cultures (distance cultures) (Argyle, 1986)	People do not touch each other	Asia, Northern Europe, North America (Hecht et al., 1989; Stewart, 1971; Condon & Yousef, 1975); Japan (Rowland, 1985); Germany, the United Kingdom, Scandinavia (Samovar et al., 1998)
Eye gaze	Look directly into the eyes during conversations Look away, face each other less directly	Europe, the United States (Lustig & Koester, 1993) African-Americans (Lustig & Koester, 1993)

Figure 1: Table of non-verbal signals affecting intercultural communication (Reisinger & Dimanche 2008: 172)

1.3   Verbal communication in intercultural encounters

Language is merely a set of shared symbols or signs that a cooperative group of people has mutually agreed to use to create meaning. The relationship between the selected sign and the agreed meaning is quite often arbitrary. (Samovar et al., 2010: 225)

The quotation above implies that language is complex to define but its intrinsic mechanisms are even more complicated to understand. People normally communicate with a group of people that shares the same symbols and meanings, consequently there are not considerable problems in delivering the message successfully. But when people who speak different languages come into contact, the peculiarity and the subjectivity of each language system becomes clear, leading towards problems of communication. What was considered 'normal' and agreed in the former situation, then it becomes questionable by the counterpart. A new "set of shared symbols" (Samovar et al., 2010: 255) and meanings has to be created in order to deliver and receive the message correctly.

As far as verbal communication is concerned, differences between codes are more obvious when referred to people who speak different languages. Yet, differences are also found in small areas of the same country where people speak different dialects. Accents and jargons may influence also the verbal communication and characterise a certain type of communication.

In intercultural encounters, verbal communication faces many problems. Even when using a 'lingua franca', each person thinks primarily in his/her native language and, consequently, this way of thinking emphasizes the differences between the culture and social background from which s/he comes from (Reisinger & Dimanche, 2008: 120). In particular, these differences consist in variation in vocabulary, in grammar and linguistic relativity.

In the case of variation in vocabulary, the same meaning can be expressed with different words. Even between English speakers, differences exist in the lexicon. One of the many examples is the word 'lift', which is common in British English but in American English it corresponds to the word 'elevator'. In some countries, there are more ways to refer to the same thing or to address to a person. For instance, in the

Eskimo language there are from 7 to 50 different words for 'snow' (Lustig & Koester, 2013: 164); the Kamayura Indians of Brazil have only one word to describe blue and green and the Dani of West New Guinea divide colours only in two words, the equivalents of 'dark' and 'light' in English (Lustig & Koester, 2013: 164). In addition, many languages have pronouns that mark the social status (e.g. tu/vous in French, io/lei in Italian) and also highlight the relationship between the speakers. In Thailand and Japan, where power and hierarchical relationships are highly valued, people address to each other using different forms depending on their respective status. Beside formal and informal register there are also honorific registers, and the pronouns "I" and "you" vary from situation to situation (Mariani, 2006: 93).

As regards variation in linguistic grammar, each culture has its way of seeing the world and expressing itself, a "software of the mind" (Hofstede, 2010: 6) that is an ensemble of values, time perception, social hierarchy and other cultural characteristics.

Finally, linguistic relativity shows differences that concern ethnicity, social class, politics, generations but also dialects, accents, jargons and argots (Whorf, 1956). Even when speaking the same language, people pronounce words or use grammar rules differently.

Among his many contributions to the study of linguistics, Saussure (1959: 8-15) draws a distinction between langue (language) that identifies the construction of rules in a language and the social product of a community, and parole (the human speech) that is the creative way in which the speakers produce messages and employ the code to express themselves.

Verbal communication allows us to transfer information to other individuals through a 'verbal code'. Verbal code is "a set of rules about the use of words in the creation of messages" (Lustig & Koester, 2013: 154). Five different sets of rules combined together create the verbal code: phonology, morphology, semantics, syntactics and pragmatics. The basic sound units are called phonemes and compose the signifiers. Phonemes combine to form morphemes, which are the smallest units bearing a meaning. Together, phonemes and morphemes create the structure of a language (Stazio, 2000: 45).

Semantics studies the meaning of the words. Everything we say in language has meanings, designative or sociative, denotative or connotative (Jiang, 2000:329). When communicating, we can use words in different ways: by using denotative meanings, that are objective and commonly accepted, or connotative meanings, which are more personal and specific to a particular person (Lustig & Koester, 2013:157). Connotative meanings are particularly important in intercultural communication because a word in one language can have a different connotation in another, such as being used only in specific circumstances or even being offensive.

Syntactics has to do with the words' order in the sentences. In this respect, it is important to bear in mind the role of the context and the extra linguistic aspects during the communication exchange: this is what pragmatics deals with. Pragmatics studies "the effect of language on human perceptions and behaviours" (Lustig & Koester, 2013:158). When talking to someone, there are some information that we usually do not provide because we assume are already part of the receiver's background knowledge. Especially when dealing with other cultures, there is a great deal of information that we, wrongly, take for granted. What one says is not always what one means to say. Culture permeate all communication processes, and the meaning of a sentence is not always literally expressed (Mariani, 2015:2).

Austin (1962:94-107) individuates several speech acts that can be uttered by a speaker: locutionary acts are the act of saying something, illocutionary acts involve the meaning conveyed, the speaker's intention, perlocutionary acts concern the actual effect on the receiver. Pragmatics analyses the actual use of the language in social contexts, and the effects that result from the linguistic exchange between participants in a conversation. We can say that pragmatics links language with culture and allows people to understand and be understood effectively in a given cultural context.

Hall (1976) distinguishes two types of communication in relation to the context. In High-Context communication (HC) most of the information conveyed are implicit and reside either in the physical context (the emphasis is also on non-verbal communication) or internally within the participants, consequently very little is explicitly told in the message itself. In this type of communication

> When talking about something that they have on their minds, a high-context individual will expect his interlocutor to know what's bothering him, so that he doesn't have to be specific. The result is that he will talk around and around the point putting all pieces in place except the crucial one. (Hall, 1976:113)

The effort of putting all the pieces together is up to the interlocutor. This is why when Western people read Japanese novels, they feel as something is missing. Japanese culture is high-context and if readers do not know much about it, they cannot grasp what lies beneath the written words. On the other hand, in Low-Context communication (LC) information are explicitly encoded in the message (usually in the linguistic code). When two persons of the opposite context communication relate, some miscommunication and irritation may occur. HC may find LC too direct, impolite and less sensible, vice versa LC may be perceived as inscrutable and unfathomable (Hall, 1976:113).

Theoretically, we are free to talk or to remain silent, we can choose the topic of conversation, ask questions, accept or refuse something; however, this is not entirely or always true. More often than not, it is important the ability to interpret the meaning not literally and know when to speak and when to remain silent (turn taking), what level of courtesy or formality to use and many other important nuances of the verbal communication. There might be some idioms that a speaker would certainly do not understand or misunderstand if s/he does do not know the cultural background of his/her interlocutor(s). For example, in the United States it is common to end a conversation with "see you at lunch sometime" (translated from Mariani, 2015:7) without expecting any reply; but if the other person does not know this formula and s/he answers "ok, when? Would Friday suit you?" this can cause awkwardness for the first speaker had no real intention of making an invitation (Ibid.).

This is also evident in the difference between Italian vs American salutation formulae: for an Italian speaker the answer to the question 'hi, how are you?' can be 'I'm fine' but also 'not very well' followed by an explanation. However, in English it is just a rhetorical question, a simple greeting and does not require any answer (Castiglioni, 2011:60).

Moreover, in every culture there are some topics that are not allowed to be spoken of in public as well as some actions better not to perform publicly or even forbidden at all: they are called "taboo" (Fershtman et al., 2011:139). In Italy, for instance, talking about mental illness is generally avoided (Balboni, 1999:37). In other cultures personal questions about one's work or private life (for instance in Saudi Arabia and in South Africa) are considered rude and disrespectful (Samovar et al., 2010:306). In Chile, Argentina and Venezuela politics represents a taboo. Also money and love are not topics to talk through in some countries. There are also taboos related to non-verbal aspects: for example, in the Philippines touching a child's head is not allowed if one is not a relative, otherwise you can be mistaken for a child molester (Balboni, 1999:37). Staring someone in the eyes is also to be avoided in Japan.

To sum up, our background culture affects our freedom to express ourselves, and each verbal and non-verbal interaction follows some implicit rules (Mariani, 2015:1). What influences communication is the context and communicative situation, the relationship between the speakers and the rules of the culture's speakers. As we are discussing verbal communication, it is important not to forget that silence plays also an important role in the communicative process. There is a substantial difference between Western cultures (Americans and Latin Americans, especially) and Eastern cultures (Asians, Indians but also Native Americans). For the former, talking is highly valued whereas silence is perceived as uncomfortable, conveying uncertainty, lack of interest, injured feelings (Samovar, 2010:280). Consequently, Western people tend to fill a moment of silence with "small talk" (Ibid.). On the contrary, in Eastern cultures silence means many things. In Japan, a person who remains silent is considered more credible, honest and sincere. Moreover, silence avoids situations of disagreement and conflict. When a Japanese disagrees with his/her interlocutor, s/he prefers not to speak and even leave the conversation. Due to this behaviour, misunderstanding happens when an American and a Japanese meet, for example in a business context, and after an offer the Japanese remains in silence to consider it, but the American interprets it as a sign of rejection or uncertainty (Adler, 2008:252).

In verbal communication, it is important to consider the role of turn taking. When dealing with persons of cultures that are more 'jealous' of their

communicative space, it is better not to interrupt and respect the interlocutor's turn (Balboni, 1999). This is especially the case of Americans and Northern people; on the other hand, Latin and Southern people are more flexible and also more 'cooperative' when speaking, thus they allow interruptions or have their sentence finished by their interlocutor.

1.4 The Role of Culture and the Culture Shock Experience

So far, we have seen how much culture can influence our behaviour and communication habits; but how and to what extent culture affects the communication process?

We carry within ourselves certain patterns of thinking, feeling and acting that are learned throughout our entire lifetime. As Hofstede explains in his works, using the analogy of the way computers are programmed, "these patterns" are "mental programs or […] software of the mind. The sources of one's mental programs lie within the social environment in which one grew up and collected one's life experiences" (Hofstede et al., 2010:5). Family, school, the living community influence our 'programs'.

Hall (1959:119) points out that "culture is communication and communication is culture". This sentence explains well the tight link that exists between communication and culture. We learn our culture via communication but, at the same time, our communication reflects our culture and is in turn influenced by it (Samovar et al., 2010:22).

First of all, we should clarify the meaning of the word culture. It is difficult to provide a satisfying and thorough definition because of the complexity of meanings and contexts in which the term is used. In the context of the present work, it can be defined as a shared meaning system, a mix of values, rules, beliefs and symbols (Triandis, 2000:146). "It consists of how we relate to other people, how we think, how we behave and how we view the world" (Rodriguez, 1999:20). Culture gives us shared meanings that make sense of ourselves and of the world and guides us through life. Triandis (1994:23) gives a more complete definition:

Culture is a set of human-made objective and subjective elements that in the past have increased the probability of survival and resulted in satisfaction for the participants in an ecological niche, and thus became shared among those who could communicate with each other because they had a common language and they lived in the same time and place. (Triandis, 1994:23)

This definition highlights the fact that the elements constituting the notion of culture – objective and subjective – are creations of the people who live in the same place and at the same time. When two people of different cultures meet, their system of values, rules and symbols suddenly collides. History, religion, family, social organization, values and language form, all together, the basic elements of one culture and distinguish it from another one.

Culture has some important characteristics that one should take into consideration when operating in an intercultural context: it is not something acquired instinctively or genetically, but it has to be transmitted from generation to generation and learned and experienced during our entire life (Hofstede, 2010:6).
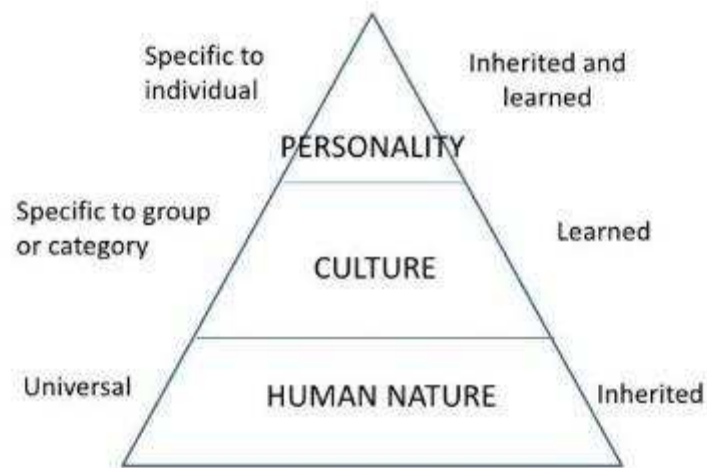

Figure 2: Hofstede's (2010:6) representation of three levels of uniqueness in human mental programming.

Moreover "the various facets of culture are interrelated", culture affects everything, even our way to interpret the world around us. "It is shared and [it] defines the

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boundaries of different groups" (Hall, 1976:16). It is what identifies us as part of a group and at the same time what gives us our personal identity. It was developed thousands of years ago and is the sum of accumulated experience and knowledge but it is also dynamic as it constantly changes to adapt to new situations and environments. It is influenced by various environmental factors (micro, e.g. peer or organizational rules, and macro, e.g. economy, politics, geography). It facilitates verbal and non-verbal communication. Furthermore, it is functional – each culture has a function to perform and a purpose that provides guidelines for the behaviour of a particular group of people – and arbitrary: certain behaviours are acceptable in one culture and not acceptable in other cultures (Samovar et al., 2010:106).

In a tourist destination, one can distinguish three types of cultures that meet simultaneously: tourist culture, host culture and tourism culture. **Tourist culture** is the culture belonging to the tourist. It contributes to explain the tourists' behaviour, nevertheless tourists usually behave differently when they are away from home, since they are also influenced by the host culture and the distance from their home country (Samovar et al., 2010:104). **Host culture** refers to the culture of the host country, with all its values, traditions and symbols. We also have a **tourism culture**, which can be described as the merge of the tourist culture with the host culture. It is "the outcome of the behaviour of all participants involved in the tourism process" in that specific destination (Samovar et al., 2010:104). The hospitality products and services, the relations and the communication exchanges that occur in the tourism context refer to this type of culture. Those working in the hospitality field in the host country should always learn something about the culture of the incoming tourists in order to make them feel more at ease and avoid cultural misunderstanding.

When travelling abroad, we may arrive to a place where things are very different if compared to what is familiar to us. People speak another language and they behave differently. Culture is experienced like an onion: externally we can only see the superficial shell but inside it hides something more difficult to grasp from the outside. What we see first are usually symbols: words, fashion articles, music and objects that carry particular meanings (Hofstede, 2010:392). The second sub-level of the onion relates to heroes. Heroes are models of behaviour, people or icons to be inspired of. (Hofstede, 2010:384). Rituals, instead refers to the traditions and

external, socially essential behaviours like shaking hands or bowing, included the way language is used. All the three categories are practices of each culture and externalize and reflect the underlying internal values. Values form the basis of the conscious and more superficial manifestations of our culture: they defines the "standards of desirability, goodness and beauty that serve as broad guidelines for social living" (Macionis, 1998:34). Values help people decide what is good and what is bad, right or wrong, dangerous or safe, and the general qualities we need to carry on with our routine. Travellers, tourists and migrants can make efforts to learn symbols, heroes and rituals from another country, but they probably would not recognize the values underneath.
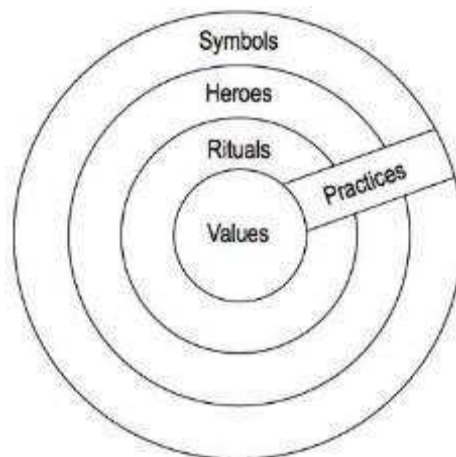

Figure 3: The representation of culture from Hofstede's (2010:8) Onion Diagram.

One of the great effects of tourism is that it allows people to break the isolation of cultural group, thus creating the awareness that there are other people and other cultures different from our own. Everyone who has travelled to another country may have experienced a feeling of distress, helplessness, unfamiliarity, strangeness and even isolation, especially when the host culture had little in common with his/her own culture. These feelings are part of what is called "culture shock" (Ryan & Twibell, 2000:412). The term, first introduced in the 1960s by the anthropologist Kalvero Oberg, identifies "a mental estate that occurs when you go from a familiar environment to an unfamiliar one and you find that your old, established patterns of

behaviour are ineffective" (Ibid.). The more the two countries differ in terms of cultural distance, the bigger the cultural shock will be. For example, an Italian tourist will be more comfortable in a Western country such as Spain or France than in an Eastern country such as China or in a Middle-East country such as Egypt where traditions and local habits are distant from his own.

Culture shock goes through phases (Samovar et al., 2010:396-399). In each phase, the individual who finds him/herself in a foreign country experiences certain feelings. The four stages follow a U-shaped curve, from a top point to a lower and then to the top again. They are indicative of what one may experience in a given situation, however the stages are not clear-cut, and not everyone experiences them in the same way. The first phase is the "excitement phase"[4] (Samovar et al., 2010:398) of leaving one's country, the euphoria that accompanies a new travel. Then, the foreigner finds him/herself in a country where the population speaks a different language, possibly incomprehensible, and has different habits and rules, and s/he strives for adapting to the new situation. Frustration, stress, anxiety, incertitude, irritation, and even anger, characterize this period called "disenchantment phase" (when the culture shock reaches its maximum). The "beginning resolution phase" follows, in which the foreigner begins to understand the new culture and gradually adjusts to it. Hofstede (2010:385) calls this stage "acculturation", that is the process of "learning to live in a new culture" (Samovar et al., 2010:400). Finally, in the "effective function phase", the visitor understands the new culture and s/he is able to behave and act according to the new values, customs and communication patterns of the host country.

Typically, migrants and people who spend a significant amount of time in a given country experience the whole U-shaped curve. Migrants have two options: if they continue to share their original values but they also accept the host culture, they will integrate themselves in the new community; on the contrary, their refusal to keep contact with the host country can lead towards marginalization or even segregation if they deny their culture of origin, as illustrated in Figure 4 (Spitzberg & Chagnon, 2009:27).

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[4] In Hofstede (2010:385) the same stages correspond to: euphoria, culture shock, acculturation and stable state.

Despite the smaller period of time at disposal and a more superficial contact with the host population, tourists may encounter difficulties too. They may not experience every stage of the U-shaped curve, but if not properly managed, even the second stage of disenchantment can ruin the holiday experience. Some adaptation strategies help the outsider to fit in the new environment; learning about the host culture and habits and having a direct contact with native people are two important solutions to prevent culture shock (Samovar et al., 2010:402).
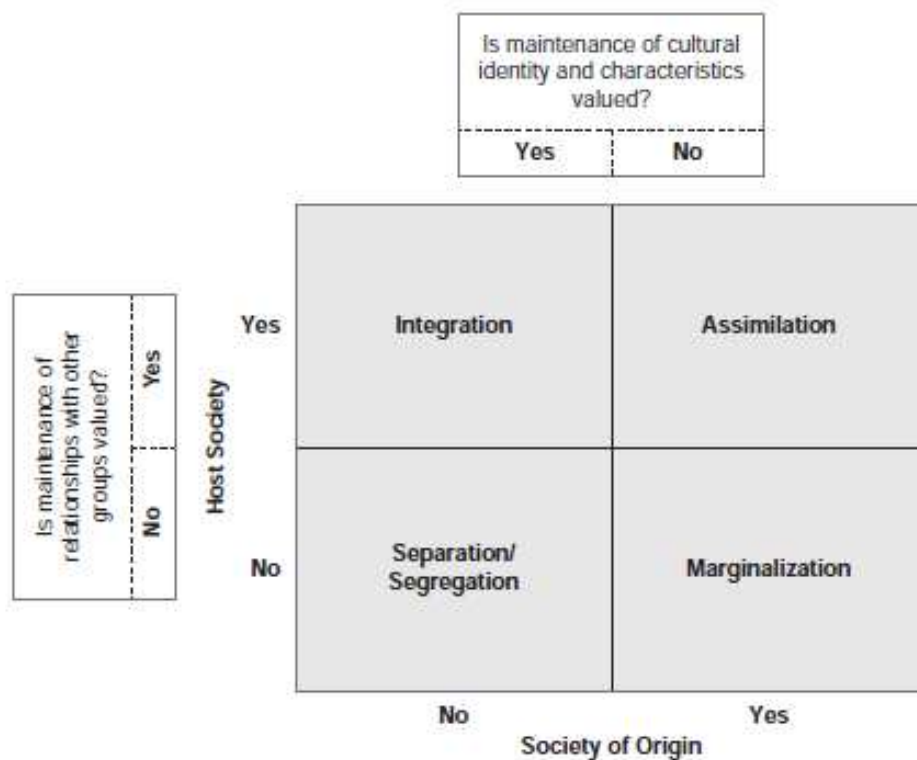
Figure 4: The four possibilities of integration in the host country exist depending on the relationship between the society of origin and the host society (Spitzberg & Chagnon, 2009:27).

1.5 Cultural diversity, cultural patterns and intercultural communication

Cultural factors influence individual human behaviour; as a matter of fact, "individuals generally act in ways that correspond to cultural influences and expectations" (Berry, 1997:6).

Reisinger & Dimanche (2010:209) point out that "the greater similarity in cultural backgrounds, the more attracted interactants are to each other and more intense is their contact […]; the cultural familiarity and similarity facilitates interactions because it reduces uncertainty and anxiety". Difficulties in interaction do not depend on the presence or absence of differences, but on the degree of cultural dissimilarity. The degree of similarity of the cultures also influences social interaction between the foreigner and the host country. The greater the similarity, the more attracted the foreigner is in having contact with the locals.

It is fundamental to be conscious of the inevitable cultural differences for a better intercultural communication in order to find some points of similarity. "The success of an intercultural encounter is characterized by reaching an agreement as to the negotiated meanings and norms" (Reisinger & Dimanche, 2008:53). Nevertheless, negotiation is not that simple. When two persons from different countries interact, they have to make an effort in order to reach an agreement.

We are naturally more inclined to speak to people who are closer to us, both physically and emotionally. Even as regards culture, we are attracted more by people with a similar cultural background to our own, and we tend to avoid contacts with whom we judge too different from ourselves. In intercultural contexts, we have to go beyond these personal and cultural boundaries to learn a new point of view. Being able to listen, observe, analyse and interpret the surrounding world and different situations are fundamental skills during intercultural encounters. Also being sensible and flexible, patient and empathic, curious about a novelty, helps us be effective communicators in intercultural situations. It is important to be non-judgemental and ask for clarification since what one is saying perhaps is not what s/he intends to say or what we have understood (Balboni, 2015:8). For the best solution is negotiation of the meaning: if we really understand what the other is communicating, no more misunderstandings should interfere in our communication.

The first step towards mutual comprehension is knowing what characterizes cultural diversity and to what extent cultures are different. Triandis (2000:147-148) identifies some patterns that correspond to the way each culture influences people's behaviour. These structures are representative patterns that are not to be considered strictly. One culture can present two opposite characteristics at the same time, or be

halfway between the two systems; it also happens that some individuals show both characteristics but their culture influences the way in which these are expressed.

PATTERN A	PATTERN B
Complex	Simple
Tight	Loose
Individualist	Collectivist
Vertical (large power distance)	Horizontal (small power distance)
Universalist	Particularist
Diffuse	Specific
Instrumental	Expressive
Active	Passive
Emotional expression	Suppression
Weak avoidance uncertainty	Strong avoidance uncertainty
Femininity	Masculinity
Long-term orientation	Short-term orientation

Figure 5: Patterns and value dimensions that can be found in cultures (Triandis, 2010:147-149).

Figure 5 shows some "cultural syndromes" (Ibid.) that can be found in our culture. When travelling abroad, visitors who confront with cultures that belongs to the opposite pattern may be in conflict with what they normally experience. A common situation involves people belonging to a vertical society versus those belonging to a horizontal society: in the former inequalities are expected, people are submissive and obey to their superior without questioning, whereas in the latter equality is important and personal initiative is expected. Vertical cultures or, in Hofstede's (2010) terms,

"large power distance cultures" accept hierarchy and respect authority; for example, in the Japanese language there are many ways to address someone depending on his/her status and hierarchical place. In horizontal cultures people tend to see others as equals and to be more independent. A tourist who belongs to a horizontal culture would probably struggle to accept people's behaviour in a horizontal society.

In his work on cultural dimensions, Hofstede (2010) statistically analysed the collectivist vs. the individualist parameter along with power distance, masculinity vs. femininity, avoidance uncertainty and long- vs. short-term orientation. The findings suggest that the dominant group of each culture has a tendency towards one pole of each dimension.

As far as individualism vs. collectivism is concerned, individualist cultures concentrate on the importance of the single person or what must be done to succeed in one task; collectivists, on the contrary, avoid conflict and everything they do is for the community's sake and harmony. If individualists believe in direct and honest talk, collectivists may choose to communicate indirectly to avoid losing face. Triandis (2000:147) suggests that "individualism emerges in societies that are both complex and loose; collectivism in societies that are simple and tight". Moreover, collectivists may perceive individualists as too concerned about themselves and with a lost sense of community (Mesquita, 2001:69), which, in the tourism field, may be reflected in their management of the service supplier.

A further distinction is between universalists, who are usually also individualists, "treat others on the basis of universal criteria (e.g. all competent persons regardless of who they are in sex, age, race, etc. are acceptable employees)" (Ibid.) and particularists, who, instead, treat each person differently, "on the basis of who the person is" (Ibid.).

In simple cultures, people usually have the same beliefs and attitudes; the social structure is much simpler than in complex societies. Tight cultures have many rules and norms, and people criticize those who do not follow these rules. Tightness is more likely to exist in relatively isolated cultures: Japan is one illustrative example, in fact in this country people fear to be criticized for not acting properly or being different from the majority, even when being different means have curly hair (Kidder, 1992:385). In one of the several studies on bilingualism (Ervin-Tripp, 1968)

results show that the same person says different things depending on the language s/he is employing. In one example from Ervin-Tripp (1968: 203-204), a Japanese-American woman finished the sentence "When my wishes conflict with my family…" in two different ways depending on the language she was speaking. In Japanese she concluded "…it is a time of great unhappiness" and in English "…I do what I want". It is surprising to see how opposite the Japanese and the English endings are, although uttered by the same person. This change is probably not be attributed to the language system itself but to the "environment and the culture attached to the language" (Kanno, 2000:1). This research also confirms how important the role of culture is and how deeply it affects the linguistic system.

The active and passive category refers to the attitude towards the environment: in the former people change the environment to fit their own needs, they are more competitive and emphasize self-fulfilment; in the latter people change themselves to fit into the environment, they are more cooperative and emphasize the experience of living for its own sake.

In the table below, the label 'diffuse cultures' refers to cultures that have a generalization attitude, for example they judge someone on the basis of his work; specific cultures discriminate different aspects and if a person does not like someone's work, that does not mean that s/he does not like the person.

Instrumental cultures focus on the duty and to get the job done, while expressive cultures prefer to enjoy the relationships and even prefer a chat with a friend instead to their duties (e.g., Latin Americans).

Culture influences also the attitude towards time, giving more importance to the past, the present or the future (Samovar et al., 2010:212-213). Hofstede (2010:235-276) calls the attitude towards the future, typical of Eastern cultures (e.g. China, Taiwan or Japan), as "long-term orientation". People who are more historically more attached to traditions instead, belong to the "short-term orientation" dimension (e.g. Nigeria, Zimbabwe, United States, Great Britain).

Finally, some cultures freely express their emotions no matter the consequences, and others control them, especially the negative ones. Given all these characteristics, when two cultures that belong to opposite patterns meet, there can be misunderstandings because of the different attitudes they have towards the world.

One way in which people can overcome their cultural differences is through the **communication accommodation theory**, developed by Giles (1991), whereby people choose to converge their communication patterns towards another culture, or to diverge from it (Lustig & Koester, 2013:171). Convergence means that the interactant seeks to identify with the other for social approval by showing similarity and facilitating the relationship through the changing of linguistic and paralinguistic behaviour; on the contrary, if s/he diverges, s/he accentuates the differences between his/her culture and the other's. The ability of adaptation depends on some components that Samovar et al. (2010:385-386) identify as: motivation to communicate, an appropriate fund of cultural knowledge, appropriate communication skills, sensitivity and character. In the tourism sector convergence is one appropriate way to deal with international customers and make them feel at ease.

1.6 Intercultural communication competence and problems of miscommunication

Intercultural interaction is something that has to be learned, or at least experienced. In fact, scholars usually refer to "intercultural communication competence" as "the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts" (Bennett, 2004: 6). This is not much different from the communication competence that concerns people of the same country and culture; but it adds the presence of cultural differences, which have repercussions on the communication process.

Generally speaking, the competences that one person needs when interacting with another person from the same cultural context are (Balboni, 2015:5):

- the linguistic competence, in order to understand and produce proper sentences from a morpho-syntactic, phonological, lexical and semantic point of view;
- the extra-linguistic competence, to understand the non-verbal communication (e.g., kinesic or proxemic competence);
- the contextual competence, which includes socio-linguistic, pragma-linguistic and cultural competence.

Every communicative act is also characterized by a communication event, that is the situation in which the communication takes place, for example a telephone call, a public speech or interaction during a cocktail party.

When dealing with foreigners the situation becomes more complicated. There might be problems concerning the verbal communication (the sound of language, grammatical aspects, choice of topics) but also non-verbal communication (e.g., distance between interlocutors); there might also be problems linked to cultural values, such as the culture-bound concepts of time, hierarchy, sexuality and many so forth. In theory, as Mariani (2015:1) notes, we are free to choose how to express ourselves, make requests, express compliments, accept or refuse an invitation but, in reality, culture heavily affects our choices.

During an encounter, "people form, compare, judge, ascribe, negotiate, confirm and challenge their cultural identities" (Reisinger & Dimanche, 2008:53). In this process, "people also negotiate stereotypes, opinions, norms, and meanings" (Ibid.).

Triandis (2000:149) discusses four level of competence: the first one is the **unconscious incompetence**, in which people are not aware of their cultural differences and related problems. When they realize that they are miscommunicating – even though they do not understand why – they enter the stage of **conscious incompetence**. The third level is **conscious competence**, when people know more about the other's culture and understand it better; with a considerable effort, they begin to communicate correctly. The final level is the correct communication without any effort for the speaker, i.e. the **unconscious competence**.

Miscommunication might happen in a number of ways; when it occurs, a "fundamental attribution error" (Triandis, 2000:149) may induce to consider the wrong cause for a particular behaviour. For example, Triandis (Ibid.) describes the case of two diplomats going to dinner. The inviter asks the other diplomat to have dinner together because he likes him. The invitee, however, may think that "his boss told him to invite me so he has to". Obviously, the meaning of the invitation changes for the two diplomats. This happens when a group attributes a behaviour to internal factors and the other groups to external factors.

Another factor of miscommunication is paying more attention to non-verbal aspects or interpreting incorrectly the signals (such as gestures, eye contact, distance

between bodies, etcetera). This is typical of collectivist cultures, which pay more attention to the context and to external cues rather than to the verbal message.

The concept of time also varies from culture to culture and may cause some problems in intercultural communication. Punctuality is the most obvious reason for irritation. Germans, who are known to be very punctual and to strictly respect schedules, can hardly stand Italian or Latin peoples, who tend to constantly be late at meetings. This behaviour is linked to the cultural pattern that Hofstede (2010:189) calls the "uncertainty avoidance value dimension", which

> defines the extent to which people within a culture are made nervous by situations which they perceive as unstructured, unclear, or unpredictable, situations which they therefore try to avoid by maintaining strict codes of behaviour and a belief in absolute truths (Hofstede 1986:308).

High-uncertainty avoidance cultures (e.g., Greece, Portugal and Japan) usually avoid ambiguity by providing rules, rituals and social protocols. Low-uncertainty avoidance cultures, instead, are more tolerant with the unusual and with people showing different ideas; they dislike hierarchy and they are more flexible in their structures (Samovar et al., 2010: 203).

As regards the perception of time, there is also a distinction between "monochromic" and "polychromic" cultures (Triandis, 2000:149). In monochromic cultures, people are used to do one thing at the time and happen to be confused and frustrated by people from polychromic cultures who carry on several things and conversations simultaneously (Ibid.). In addition, the structure of time may also change from the "linear" structure to the "circular" structure. In the linear time pattern, messages follow the structure from 1 to 2 to 3 etcetera, until the end, without any digression (which, in case, is left at the end). This rigid structure allows the avoidance of uncertainty. The opposite attitude is represented as a spiral: in some cultures people might start from the conclusion and, then, state the previous facts, or skip from one point to another without following a specific order. The sentence 'we can skip this point and return to it after afterwards' can be common in flexible cultures (such as the Italian one) but during a business meeting someone who comes

from a linear culture can feel it like an insult or take it as a bad way to deal with things (Balboni, 1999:42).

Finally, another cause of miscommunication are stereotypes, prejudices and generalizations. Cultural diversity sometimes brings along beliefs and attitudes toward other cultural groups, which are not fully based on the truth. Human beings have a psychological need to categorize and classify in 'labels' in order to simplify the complexity of our world and society (Samovar et al., 2010:170), thus we invent cognitive structures that help represent people in categories. However, categorizations have generally negative assumptions and they narrow our perceptions. We also tend to generalize incorrectly and to rely on the mental constructions we already have in mind without considering the real situation. This leads to communication that can be unsuccessful, oversimplified, exaggerated and overgeneralized. The only way to fight stereotypical conventions is through face-to-face contact with members of different cultures (Samovar et al., 2010:172). The more we get to know the other, the 'different', the less we leave room to prejudices and stereotypes that might cloud our judgment.

Ethnocentrism might also be considered one of the obstacles to effective intercultural communication. Ethnocentrism is important because it concerns our pride in belonging to a certain culture and serves to construct our social identity. However, if taken to the extreme, it is a counterproductive attitude that leads to consider our culture superior and the others inferior or even wrong (Samovar et al., 2010:180). We cannot stop seeing other cultures through "the narrow lens of our own culture" (Nanda & Warms, 2007:15); we judge the others through our beliefs and values; we evaluate by the standards of our culture, and this evaluation tend to be unfavourable (Hofstede, 2010:387). When regularly exposed to foreign visitors, however, a person may develop polycentrism as well as develop the ability to understand foreigners according to the foreigners' standards.

The acquisition of intercultural communication abilities happens through three phases: awareness, knowledge and skills. **Awareness** is where it all starts: the recognition that 'I' carry a particular mental software because of the way I was brought up and that the others, brought up in a different environment, carry a different mental software for equally good reasons (Hofstede, 2010:420).

Knowledge consists in the principle, whereby if we want to interact with other cultures we have to learn about these very cultures. **Skills** are based on awareness and knowledge plus practice. Whoever acquires these abilities becomes capable of recognizing the symbols of the other cultures and interpreting them. It is fundamental to be conscious of how our own culture influences the way we observe reality and communicate in it. A successful intercultural communication starts only after being aware that differences exist.

Dealing with tourists is not about dealing with some 'strangers' who happen to visit our country and have to conform to our social and cultural rules. It is a more delicate task that let us eventually spread our culture and communicate it to these temporary visitors not only in the form of some historical lessons, but also by means of a deeper explication of what we are as a culture and a community. Furthermore, there must not be any kind of barrier between hosts and guests, but only a desire to know new people and new customs. In the end, we all travel to enrich our mind and soul, and we have to be conscious of the important task of working with tourists. On the one hand we give, but on the other we can receive much more, just by letting this possibility open.

CHAPTER 2

Language and Communication

2.1 English as a Lingua Franca

In the previous chapter, we have seen how culture influences communication among persons of different origins. Nevertheless, what makes possible to communicate more effectively with people around the world (besides being conscious of our cultural differences and habits) is a common language.

In the past, popular languages such as Greek and Latin, Swahili, Spanish and English, played a crucial role in connecting different communities from distant locations (Ceserani, 2012:6). Whether for the main purpose of trade or for hunger of territory but also to spread the culture of the dominant country, a language of communication has always been necessary. However, no language has reached such an influence as English has today, becoming pervasive in many aspects of our daily lives. It is not just about trade and power anymore, although the United Kingdom before, and the United States after, have had and still have a remarkable influence on the entire world. Nevertheless, this is not a sufficient explanation for the pervasive status English has reached in the working and personal life of 1,500 million people (http://www.statista.com/statistics/266808/the-most-spoken-languages-worldwide/). If we think how many times per day we employ English for conversation, or to listen to music, watch movies and read websites, it appears that those who do not speak English are likely to be cut off from the rest of the world. Globalisation has brought 'us' together and technological advancements have accelerated changes in the nature of communications.

English begins to gain importance as communication tool in the early 17th century (Mauranen & Ranta, 2009:1). The British colonisation spread it in many parts of the world, generating new forms and varieties. Some distinctions exist depending on the diffusion of English in the countries around the world. Kachru (in Quirk & Widdowson, 1985:12-13) divides speakers of English in three different

circles: the "inner circle" includes the Native English-speaking countries, such as England, USA, New Zealand and Canada, for instance. In these countries, English has its historical and sociolinguistic roots and is used as a primary language. The "outer circle" includes the former colonies of the British Empire (e.g., India, Nigeria and Singapore), where English was adopted as a second language as well as native varieties called "New Englishes" or "World Englishes" that were born from the encounter with the native languages (Vettorel, 2014:54). Finally, the "expanding circle" includes those countries where English is becoming an important communication tool in many areas, for example in business, technology, science and education. Although it has not acquired an official status and plays no historical or institutional role, it is employed for communication purposes among people of different mother tongues. The expanding circle includes a great number of countries from all over the world, a number that is constantly growing.

Most of the recent expansion of English resides on the rise of the Internet, in the mid-1990s (Mauranen, 2012:3). The possibility of communicating simultaneously with people from one side of the world to the other without any need to speak face to face has been a revolution in the communication sector. Nowadays, social networks, blogs and skype are the key to global communication.

Human beings are "social animals" (Aristotle, Politics: book I) and since cultures have met, there has always been a need for a trade language that could facilitate economic and social exchanges between groups who spoke different languages. Pidgins and creoles represent two forms of 'contact languages' born from the encounter of two languages. Pidgins are functional forms of language as their main purpose is to achieve "rudimentary transactions" using just what is "linguistically necessary to complement the context" (Seidlhofer in Mauranen & Ranta, 2009:41). The result is the merging of two different languages. When the pidgin is socially acquired and transmitted to the next generation, it can evolve into creole, which is characterised by an increase of social demands and therefore a "need to move beyond simple transactions to the interactional use of language to negotiate social meaning" (Ibid.). Consequently, "linguistic forms will naturally elaborate in order to give expression to these extended functions" (Ibid.). The result is a more articulated language characterised by features of its own. For instance, a Hawaiian

English pidgin sentence will sound like "da cat no stay in da house" (the cat is not in the house) or "I wen fix da car" (I fixed the car) where the word "wen" functions as the suffix '-ed' and signals an action happened in the past (Sakoda & Siegel, 2003:VII).

English is undergoing a similar evolution but on a global scale; as a matter of fact, in Hofstede's view (2010:388) "[t]rade languages are pidgin forms of original languages, and the trade language of the modern world can be considered a form of business pidgin English". It is worth noting that this language is very often involved in conversations between speakers whose native language is not English, especially in business meetings (Jenkins, 2007:4).

In tourism, as well as in other domains (such as business or academic fields), English is the vehicular language for communication. It has achieved the status of "Lingua Franca", which is in essence "a contact language used among people who do not share a first language, and is commonly understood to mean a second (or subsequent) language of its speakers" (Jenkins, 2007:1). Those who speak English as L2 have even outnumbered native speakers and, in a not so far future, this would possibly bring consequences and a shift in the normative models of the language itself (Mauranen, 2012:2).

The massive spread that English is experiencing "increases the variability and possible accelerated change of the language" (Seidlhofer in Mauranen & Ranta, 2009:41). Although today British English and American English are considered the 'standard' varieties to imitate, in the future "alteration in social and political power on the international scene" (Mauranen, 2012:2) may lead eventually towards a shift to other varieties that today have less prestige. British and American accents are linked to power and success, whereas non-native speakers perceive their non-native accents as unpleasant[5] (Jenkins, 2007:212). One day this perception might change or not, however in non-native speakers' point of view, intelligibility and efficiency win over any native-like accent, especially when non-native speakers are involved. In the world of business, there is no time to think about the linguistic issues: the main point is to pass the information efficiently in order to get the work done (Ehrenreich in Mauranen & Ranta, 2009:137).

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[5] For a further investigation on how the different accents and forms of English are perceived see Jenkins (2007).

Working in international contexts is challenging but it also has its advantages. As a matter of fact, during the communicative process, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) speakers "make use of their shared resources by adapting them in-situ according to the sociocultural context where they are operating and considering the interlocutors' perceived sociolinguistic repertoire and known-in-common practices" (Cogo, 2012:289). ELF interactants do not share the same culture nor the same beliefs, but they result to be even more cooperative because of the differences they have to overcome. In Cogo's view ELF represents a "social phenomenon", as it is "learnt and practiced in a social context and through collaboration with other users" (Ibid.).

Widdowson (2004:361) recognizes the role of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) separated from the English of native speakers (NS) when he states that

> the functional range of the language is not thereby restricted, but on the contrary enhanced, for it enables users to express themselves more freely without having to confirm to norms which represent the socio-cultural identity of other people. (Widdowson 2004:361)

Language is closely linked to the culture of a community, and so is the English spoken in the inner circle. However, ELF is "hybrid, fluid and variable" (Cogo, 2012:289) and its communicative effectiveness resides in these characteristics. The heterogeneous background of speakers shapes it and, although the model still remains Standard British English, ELF is increasingly free from the cultural norms of the native speakers of English. All things considered, languages are shaped by their users and each modification in the language should be recognized as a "legitimate development" (Widdowson, 2004:136) and not as a mere learners' mistake. Nevertheless, many scholars still do not recognize ELF as a legitimate variety and criticize the attempt to give it prominence (Jenkins, 2007:23). It is difficult to trace the features of ELF, also because it is too early for the changes to be fixed in the language and accepted by the community of ELF speakers, however some recurring patterns are already visible, as we will discuss in the following chapters.

2.2 ELF vs. EFL

It is important to make a distinction between ELF and EFL. The main difference lays in the purpose: EFL is studied at school and its target is NS English, consequently it aims at making the students speak closer to the native speakers. Variations are judged as mistakes in a "deficit perspective" (Cavalheiro, 2015:51). On the contrary, ELF adopts a "difference perspective", in which variations are considered "valid alternatives" or innovations, and "all types of Englishes are considered unique" (Ibid.).

If ELF is the result of the contact and evolution of different languages and is mostly employed during intercultural encounters, EFL has a pedagogic purpose and is employed in the artificial context of teaching classes. As a consequence, EFL is generally characterised by a fossilization into the standard rules of the British English grammar, whereas ELF conforms to more flexible and heterogeneous rules. A native speaker can use both EFL and ELF when communicating, but the context and situations establish which one suits best as a communicative tool. In an intercultural context, ELF seems to contribute more effectively to the development of pragmatic abilities because "communicative competence among learners/users is intimately linked with the negotiation of meaning" (Cavalheiro, 2015:52).

In her works, Jenkins goes through the dispute whether ELF is to consider a "legitimate English" (Jenkins, 2007:23) or not, her position being that ELF has to be considered a variety of English, more precisely not a single variety but a plurality of different varieties, in the same way as New Englishes are. Moreover, she defends also differences in accents due to regional origins, claiming that

> these so-called 'errors' should be considered legitimate features of the speaker's
> regional (NNS) English accent, thus putting NNS accents on an equal footing
> with regional NS accents [in order to give] NNS English speakers the same right
> to express their geographical origins in their English as has always been enjoyed
> by NS English speakers. (Jenkins, 2007:23)

Accepting regional accents does not mean being completely free to create a brand new pronunciation, because freedom of expression still remains subject to

intelligibility and there are some kinds of pronunciation that may cause misunderstandings and others that do not. In "The Phonology of English as an International Language", Jenkins (2000) presents her pronunciation proposal, in which she identifies the "Lingua Franca Core" (Ibid.:24), which is the ensemble of the pronunciation features that may cause miscommunication and those, instead, that do not affect the communication comprehension (Ibid.). In summary, the common features to be aware of in order to prevent miscommunication are the following ones:

- "consonant sounds except voiced/voiceless 'th' and dark 'l',
- vowel length contrasts (e.g. the difference between the vowels in '**pi**tch' and '**pea**ch'),
- restrictions on consonant deletion (in particular, not omitting sounds at the beginning and in the middle of words),
- nuclear (or tonic) stress production/placement" (Jenkins 2007:12).

On the contrary, elision, assimilation and weak forms are some examples of non-core features, and generally do not affect intelligibility. Other examples are:

- "vowel quality except for the vowel sound in RP 'f<u>u</u>r',
- consonants in (NS English) clusters separated by the addition of vowels (e.g. Japanese English 'product' becomes peroducuto) as well as vowels added to consonants at the ends of words (e.g. Korean English 'luggage' as luggagi),
- consonant sound 'th' (e.g. German 'think' as sink), and l (e.g. in French English, the 'l' in 'hotel' pronounced by raising the tip rather than the back of the tongue),
- word stress placement,
- pitch direction" (Jenkins, 2007:13).

Learners should be free to decide whether to make ELF rather than EFL their model and be taught only features that would help them to make their communication with other NNS intelligible (Jenkins, 2007:23). In this way, they could adjust their way of speaking by accommodating to their interlocutor. For instance, a French would know

that when speaking to an Italian s/he can elide the /h/ sound at the beginning of a word like 'head' and his/her speech would still remain comprehensible, whereas s/he should pay more attention with interlocutors of other nationalities. The same goes for those who replace the sound /w/ with /v/ or other similar sounds (Jenkins, 2007:13).

In some parts of the world, Spoken English is considered to be a variety of Standard English, close to it but with some characteristics that make it not entirely 'acceptable', even for the same speakers, to whom Standard English still remains the model with the highest prestige, worth imitating. However, we have to overcome the general idea that the only English possible to communicate is the native spoken English, and consider the possibility that a more international and endonormative language that supports our diversity exists. After all, identity is a complex matter and is not something fixed: it varies from one context to another, each context being "defined by intervening social variables that are expressed through the language" (Omoniyi and White, 2006:2). Social relationships shape communicative exchanges and more than one identity may be "articulated in a given context" involving a "dynamic of identities management" (Ibid.). The accent is certainly one of the most distinguishable signs of identity and a strong indicator of group membership both within and outside the speech community. Even though the majority of non-native speakers of English are in some way 'ashamed' of their national accent and would prefer to speak like a native (Jenkins, 2007:174), removing our accent, besides being a pointless and challenging effort, it is not the right way to look at the problem.

2.3 Features of ELF

Linguistic systems are not just some sets of rules that appeared from nowhere and were randomly combined together but, on the contrary, they "are motivated in some way or another" (Halliday 1985:11). As a matter of fact, forms are motivated by the social functions a language has evolved to perform, and so the organization of language needs to be explained in terms of a functional theory (Ibid.). This is true for ELF too: its main function being communication between people who do not share the same L1, it is developing some peculiar features that diverge from Standard

English. It is not possible though to talk about a single variety of ELF because many varieties are recognizable and the changes do not occur homogenously but depend from the speaker, the context and the particular event (Mauranen, 2012:2). However, some common features exist and they are globally spread, showing that NNS often follow similar patterns during their conversation in ELF even though belonging to different L1 languages.

Frequently, global trends are readjusted into local variants: one example is the American Pizza, which resembles the Italian Pizza but for an Italian it tastes completely differently. The same happens with the Indian cuisine imported in Great Britain and many other traditions 'readjusted' to fit a new culture. Languages follow a similar readjustment; local communities assimilate and adapt new linguistic systems creating heterogeneous forms called 'similects', which are varieties of a language spoken by people of the same L1 (Mauranen, 2012:28). Some examples are popularly known as "Finglish" for Finnish-influenced English, "Swinglish" for Swedish-influenced English and "Dunglish" for Dutch-influenced English, to name only a few (Ibid.). They originate from cross-linguistic influence among people who share the same first language and result from the combination of a common repertoire of L1 with the L2, in this case English. Nevertheless, even speakers of similects are not part of a homogeneous community because each interactant of ELF can produce a personal feature not shared by the others, consequently "each speaker's idiolect is a new hybrid" (Mauranen, 2012:29).

Despite all these differences and varieties, NNS of ELF from different L1s share as many features that allow them to communicate effectively and overcome linguistic diversity.

The first common feature is the apparent absence of stable rules. Sometimes ELF departs from the rules of Standard English, sometimes it closely converges to them (Hulmbauer in Mauranen & Ranta, 2009:323). It could seem confusing and leading towards total incomprehension, but in this apparent chaos ELF speakers have the ability to understand each other quite effectively.

Simplification seems to be a frequent choice in ELF. Users of ELF tend to regularise exceptions (i.e. irregular verbs such as 'breaked' vs 'broken', uncountable nouns employed as countable such as 'staffs' or 'informations'), leading towards a

loss in markedness, especially as far as grammar and phonology are concerned (Jenkins, 2007:130). Irregular forms are likely to be transformed in regular forms where possible, or substituted by more simple words with a resembling meaning.

Along with simplification, another related feature is the levelling process. It consists in a reduction of variant and marked forms replaced by words that are more familiar. For example, the verb 'run' is preferred to the more outdated 'scurry' and 'big' is more employed than its synonym 'immense' (Jenkins, 2007:32). The levelling process affects idiomatic phraseology, irregular plurals, past tense forms but also word order in indirect questions and the third-person singular '–s' ending. This is also true for Standard English, in which words such as 'run' and 'big' are more frequently used than other forms. High-frequency words are shown to be more stable and less likely to become obsolete and replaced by other words in the long period (Mauranen, 2012:79).

Simplification is not the only pattern recognizable in ELF. Although many aspects of the language are simplified, the lexicon follows the opposite pattern. When speaking a second language, the speakers' first language influences the linguistic elaboration process and this is why, for example, they have trouble in recalling new vocabulary in a foreign language. Consequently, they often experience a phenomenon called "approximation" (Mauranen, 2012:41). Approximated words resemble to those in Standard English but are slightly different. If the items are firmly entrenched in the speaker's memory, because they are common words or they are frequently used in a conversation, precision is higher and approximation is unlikely to be performed. On the contrary, this process takes place if words are rare and difficult to memorize. It is not clear yet what are the precise mechanisms that make some items more salient than others, perhaps the context, previous experiences or other cognitive factors. Anyway, when speakers are not certain of some words, their mind mixes what it knows in order to create a meaningful word and overcome this temporary difficulty. By approximating certain forms, speakers contribute to the achievement of communicative success. For instance, even though 'guarantable' is not a Standard English word, in a conversation between users of ELF the sentence 'nothing is guarantable' does not cause miscomprehension and everyone knows that the meaning conveyed is the same as 'guaranteed'. In this example, NNSs mix what

they remember and what is easier to process for them: the verb 'to guarantee' with the common adjective suffix '-able'. The result is intelligible and this so-called error can pass without notice during the conversation.

Mauranen (2012) lists many examples recorded during her research on the ELFA Corpus[6]. Approximated words such as "successing" or "negated" (Mauranen, 2012:101) are some of the recurrent items found in ELF conversations. Furthermore, correct words may be employed with non-standard verbs or prepositions, as in "the question **made**", "**say** some comments" or "a brief comment **of** this" (Mauranen, 2012: 43).

Beside approximation, lexicon is also the stage where linguistic innovations are more frequent. Since a very large number of people uses ELF, their linguistic and cultural background naturally influences the way they express themselves. Idioms and metaphors undergo this influence more heavily because they subdue to a "territorial imperative" (Seidlhofer & Widdowson, 2007:368): language and culture are strongly related, and idioms and metaphors are usually the reflection of people's traditions and history. In the case of ELF there is no such relation, as the language does not 'belong' to any of the speakers' culture. Nevertheless, this lack of territorial imperative is overcome by a general creativity in the language production.

As far as metaphors are concerned, three types of innovation can happen: metaphors can be related to existing metaphors in Standard English and re-introduced "via formal variation of the expression" (Pitzl in Mauranen & Ranta, 2009:317) with slight differences (prepositions, word order, etcetera); secondly, they can be simply translated from the L1 into English; thirdly, they can be created ad hoc. The purpose of metaphors' innovation are multiple: they can provide emphasis, increase explicitness, allow talking about abstract concepts with concrete examples, but also increase clarity and semantic transparency (Ibid.).

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[6] **ELFA Corpus** (Corpus of English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings) consists in the recording of some events (mainly seminars, conferences and lectures) that took place in two Universities in Finland (Tampere and Helsinki) from 2001 to 2007. Fifty-one different first-language backgrounds were identified (only 5% of the participants were NS) and more than a million words of spoken language were recorded and analysed (http://www.helsinki.fi/englanti/elfa/elfacorpus.html).

Looking further into ELF features, there are other specific patterns frequently found in ELF conversations.

As far as syntax is concerned, many speakers of ELF drop the definite article 'the' in some cases and add it in others, but it is not a random choice as it could seem at first sight. The avoidance of the article in cases where ENL (English native language) employs it, is justified by an "exploiting redundancy" (Dewey in Mauranen & Ranta, 2009:62-66): if the noun is preceded by words whose meaning intrinsically expresses uniqueness like 'first', 'only', 'best', 'next', 'same' the article is likely to be dropped as in "I'm same as you" (Ibid.). On the other hand, when talking about uncountable and abstract things, speakers of ELF add the article (where ENL does not employ it). This pattern allows speakers to emphasise the noun they are referring to and to "enhance prominence" (Ibid.) of nouns of general reference (e.g. **the** life, **the** children, **the** society). Speakers of ELF also have a tendency to employ the article 'the' more often than speakers of ENL, who prefer the indefinite article 'a/an' (Mauranen, 2012:129).

Another pattern concerns hypothetical if-clauses: in ENL if-clauses structure is constructed with the auxiliary verb 'will' in the main clause ('would/would have' in the 2nd and 3rd conditional) and the present tense in the if-clause (or respectively past or perfect tense in the 2nd and 3rd conditional). In ELF, speakers modified this structure, employing the auxiliary will (or would) in both the main and if-clause (Ranta in Mauranen & Ranta, 2009:94). This elaboration is probably due to the lack of the same structure in most of the speakers' languages, but further investigations need to be done in order to clarify the main causes of this variation.

During conversations in ELF the construction 'there is' is often followed by a plural noun (i.e. "there is some differences" or "there is two computers" in Ranta in Mauranen & Ranta, 2009:97). It is a feature common in ENL too, in which the contract form 'there's' is often employed with plural nouns.

In ELF the word order frequently changes: according to the normative grammar, in the indirect structure of questions (WH-questions and yes/no questions) the word order is not inverted and the subject precedes the verb as in the affirmative structure. Speakers of ELF, instead, often maintain the word order of direct questions, in which the position of subject and verb are inverted (e.g. "Do you

understand what **is he** saying?" instead of "Do you understand what **he is** saying?" in Ranta in Mauranen & Ranta, 2009: 99). Other variations in the word order concerns negative and affirmative sentences: for example, the negative particle 'not' is often misplaced, as in the examples "this point is supposed to **not** move", "it looks **not** good" or "you are welcome to see how **does it** work" (Ibid.). It seems that the only feature causing problems of communication is the non-standard question formulation, (e.g. "how many pages **we have** now?" and "**anybody can** read the first sentence?" Ibid.). In the ELFA Corpus data, these structures are often repeated or reformulated in order to overcome the communicative issues, perhaps because of the impossibility of clearly distinguishing the affirmative connotation from the questioning connotation of the sentence.

Another characteristic to point out is the lack of subject-verb agreement in many ELF conversations (e.g. "people gets" or "a nice mechanisms which do not" in Jenkins, 2007:231-235). There are also tense issues: a general overuse of the progressive form (instead of the simple form) has been noticed in ELF, perhaps because highlighting the verb in this form contribute to a more effective communication, as well as a strong use of the passive voice gives prominence to the subject.

As far as the morphology and lexicon are concerned, one distinguishable characteristic of ELF, already mentioned, is the non-standard word formation, in which NNS speakers create new words resembling standard forms (e.g. 'discriminization' for 'discrimination', 'introducted' for 'introduced').

Moreover, speakers of ELF frequently substitute the irregular forms of comparative with an "analytic comparative" (Bjorkman in Mauranen & Ranta, 2009:231-235) and, for instance, the forms 'easier' and 'cheaper' will become instead 'more easy' or 'more cheap'. On the other hand, in some cases double comparatives and superlatives are found in ELF conversations (e.g. 'more safer' or 'more and more bigger'), perhaps because of the fact that some adjectives are already entrenched in the speakers' memory in their comparative form, but they need anyway to highlight the comparison by adding the comparative word 'more'.

Speakers of ELF often transform uncountable nouns in countable nouns and create "non-standard plural forms", so there will be examples such as "very much

disadvantages" or "how many hydrogen" (Bjorkman in Mauranen & Ranta, 2009:231-235). On the other hand, speakers of ELF frequently do not mark the plural of the noun (e.g. "500 meter", "two definition", etcetera). In this case it is likely that the main information given (by the numerals 500 and two in the examples) is perceived as sufficient; moreover some speakers have trouble in pronouncing the final '-s', and for example Chinese speakers tend to avoid it (Ibid.).

The main reason for these kinds of variation could lie in a general tendency for simplification and regularisation. For example, as far as the comparative is concerned, the form 'more + adjective' is perceived as easier to remember and clearer than the other form. It could be the same for uncountable forms turned into countable, for which speakers need to make the plurality of the subject clearer to the audience. Moreover, the generic preposition 'in' seems to be preferred and employed much more than other prepositions such as 'up' or 'at' (Mauranen, 2012:129).

Sometimes words that we know as 'false friends' can become 'true friends': this feature works especially when speakers of ELF share a similar L1 linguistic repertoire. For example, mistaking the word 'card' for 'map' does not appear to be a significant communicative issue between Germans, Greeks and Italians, who have in their repertoire a similar word: "Karte" in German, "chartis" in Greek and "carta" in Italian (Hulmbauer in Mauranen, 2009:340-341). Cross-linguistic similarities influence and help the process of communication in ELF. Indeed, ELF speakers can switch to their native language (code-switching) as an accommodating strategy in order to help the conversation through.

Everyone who has studied EFL has certainly come across many of these features, usually classified as errors. Nevertheless, not only are they common among NNS but, surprisingly, they also appear in speeches of educated native speakers (as in the MICASE[7] data).

One superficial explanation to these variations in language can be the interference of the mother tongue of the speakers, who may do not share the same

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[7] The Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE) is a collection of nearly 1.8 million words of transcribed speech (almost 200 hours of recordings) from the University of Michigan (U-M) in Ann Arbor, created by researchers and students at the U-M English Language Institute (ELI). MICASE contains data from a wide range of speech events (including lectures, classroom discussions, lab sections, seminars, and advising sessions) and locations across the university (http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/CoRD/corpora/MICASE/).

constructs in their language and this may confuse them. However, this explanation is not always and entirely sufficient. The tendency to fluctuate of some grammatical elements supports the idea that some words are more entrenched in our memory than others, consequently the parts of speech weaker entrenched are more likely to undergo changes and alterations (Mauranen, 2012:135). Simplification along with diversification, new coinages and distribution of new items are recurring features of conversations in ELF. More investigation needs to be done, but so far the emerging patterns are well spread, as a matter of fact the previous features are found in conversation between NNS belonging to more than 50 different L1s. Perhaps in 20 years even native speakers will universally accept some kinds of variation, or new propositions will take place.

2.4 Communication Strategies

"Languages are shaped by their users" (Jenkins in Mauranen, 2009:10) and if the changes are effective they will stabilise into fixed forms shared by users of ELF. Despite the apparent unpredictability of ELF features, this vehicular language seeks first of all intelligibility and avoid miscommunication. What are traditionally seen as errors, they are indeed the potential and the creativity of the language. As long as speakers achieve comprehensibility, the effectiveness of the words will be prioritised over the correctness:

> (...) intelligibility is not seen to reside in the language system itself, but rather as something that must be achieved through effective, accommodative use of resources. In other words, successful communication is not tied to any one set of ENL norms, and variation is not simply a deviation from those norms. Instead, the enhanced variability that is so characteristic of ELF is seen as a creative, enterprising and inevitable result of language interaction. (Dewey in Mauranen, 2009:78)

What makes ELF communicatively so effective is this "accommodative use", suggested by Dewey (2009), of the linguistic resources available that allows interactants to overcome their cultural and linguistic differences by shaping these resources in a creative and efficient way.

So far we have seen that although being very similar to a native variety, ELF presents some important differences. Norms and rules are not pre-established and a variety of languages and cultures are involved: this is why theoretically communication would be difficult and undermined if not impossible (Kaur in Mauranen, 2009:107). However, this is not the case. The very fact that the interactants do not share a common lingua-cultural background reinforce in some way their cooperation to achieve a mutual understanding. Many strategies are employed during ELF communication to prevent misunderstanding, enhancing a proactive attitude.

ELF speakers have the ability to resort to many adapting strategies in order to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers, far more used in the communication between speakers of the same L1. There is an implicit common goal to achieve effective communication, keeping "things going, shar[ing] and develop[ing] understanding, arguments, and knowledge" (Mauranen, 2012:167). By enhancing clarity and explicitness – which are two recurring cooperative strategies in ELF – speakers are able to diminish and avoid uncertainty and unpredictability, very typical of international encounters.

Speaking in a foreign language requires a considerable effort, because "the familiar ease and fluency with which we sail from one idea to the next in our first language is constantly shattered by some gap in our knowledge of a second language" (Bialystok, 1990:1). The forms of these gaps can be, for instance, words, syntactic structures, verbal phrases, tense markers or idioms. The best way to overcome these gaps is adopting some communication strategies.

Communication strategies are "potentially conscious techniques" (Bialystok, 1990:3) that attempt to cope with difficulties in communicating and find a mutual agreement on the meaning conveyed. ELF features such as word-coinage, approximation and code-switching are, after all, important communication strategies that speakers of ELF use – consciously and unconsciously – in order to get their communication effective.

The more common but opposite strategies are the avoidance and the compensatory strategies (Zhang, 2007:45). The former consists in avoiding certain grammatical constructions or even an entire topic perceived as difficult by the

speaker, for example by dropping the conversation or by remaining silent. It is usually due to a lack of vocabulary or an insufficient knowledge of the language. Topic avoidance is not a beneficial strategy as it may cause awkwardness between the interlocutors. However, it is common to be employed in class by students of foreign languages, when the level of the language is low and they are requested to speak about many different subjects.

The latter strategy includes the majority of the strategies employed by speakers of a foreign language. Among these strategies, there is discourse reflexivity, circumlocution, word coinage, appealing for help and time-gaining strategies such as hesitation (Zhang, 2007:45).

Human speech has the ability to talk about itself. When teaching or speaking to an audience, the speaker can refer to a previous statement, highlight a particular point in the speech or anticipate what s/he is going to say ('let us now consider...', 'we will talk about...'). S/he can also give or ask for clarification about a word, or the meaning of a sentence (Cogo in Mauranen & Ranta, 2009: 256). This strategy is common to every language, but in ELF speech, in which nothing is taken for granted and meanings need to be negotiated, discourse is reflexivity employed more often.

Feedbacks are very important tools during the communication process, as they mark the agreement of the audience and their general understanding of the speech. Backchanneling ('mhm', 'mhm-hm') and agreement markers ('yeah', 'uh-uh') are examples of feedbacks. Conversation in ELF turns of speech generally last less compared to L1-L1 conversations (Mauranen, 2012:175); as a matter of fact there is a constant need to interrupt: to help the speaker by suggesting the seeking word, to obtain elucidation or to make interpretation ('are you saying/suggesting that…?'). Also speaking together is quite common and reinforces speakers' commitment/attention to the conversation. Previous discourse is also used as "springboard" to start a new discourse ('about the mention that you made...') (Mauranen, 2012:176-177). Finally, also joking and laughing help the conversation in ELF and deal with effectively managing the relations. Laughter is generally friendly, and it also "relieves the stressful experience of not finding the right words" (Mauranen, 2012:226).

Repetition plays an important role in the discourse management. Along with hesitation and pauses, it signals a temporary difficulty in the production of the speech but, in the meanwhile, it gives time to the executor to process the speech through, overcome his/her difficulties, enhance comprehensibility and show affiliation. ELF repetitions concern self-repetition, rephrasing and also other-repetition (for instance, backchannelling and springboard). Speakers of ELF repeat single words (e.g. "the, the, the") but also longer units ("and they are and they are", Mauranen, 2012:208-212).

Close to repetition is self-rephrasing. Sometimes speakers change the words but the meaning remains, as in "the poor nutrition level, this poor diet" (Ibid.). This allows them to correct themselves but also to make their statements clearer and more explicit. Some recurring rephrase markers are: 'in other words', 'I mean', 'trying to say', 'namely' and 'more specifically' to name a few. Self-rephrasing occurs more often in ELF than in ENL (78.8 times of occurrence in ELFA Corpus against 21.4 of MICASE, with "I mean" as the commonest item, Mauranen, 2012:185) The reason resides in the intrinsic nature of the second language production as well as in an overall "tendency towards explication" (Mauranen, 2012:184). Speakers self-rephrase to clarify an idea or an ambiguous utterance, or to fix a mistake. In addition, rephrasing can also prevent potential misunderstanding, and pre-empt problems rather than resolve them right away. False starts are common too, because of the stress that planning and starting a new sentence implies (Mauranen, 2012:134). They are particularly interesting because they give the speaker time to elaborate the discourse and search for the right term (e.g. "...and er dif- diverse- diversity in the other sec-sectors…") (Ibid.).

One common way to give prominence to what we are saying is changing the words' order in the utterance. By placing the element that we want to highlight at the beginning of the sentence or at the end, we make sure that our interlocutors understand the topic we are discussing or the shift occurred in topic. This strategy is called "topic negotiation", and it can be divided in "fronting" and "tail" (Mauranen, 2012:193). In the first case an additional element is dislocated at the beginning of the sentence to give it prominence (e.g., "okay than the mental workload it's difficult sometimes to assess that of course but..", Ibid.) or the utterance opens with "this is

about…" or "I have a question", which anticipate the communicative move. As for the second case, the subject is misplaced at the end of the utterance, so there will be sentences like "…it becomes completely controversial this principle*…*" or "…they are in very tight control those alcoholics..." (Ibid.:196).

Another way of negotiating the meaning is through echoing. In an intercultural context, meanings are not always clear or even commonly shared. Speakers need to participate in co-constructing the clarification of the meaning of a word through repetition or positive backchanneling. Interactants also help the speaker in need of an expression and suggest him/her a term s/he can employ. Sometimes the speaker introduces a non-standard word (e.g., a coinage) and the echoing of the other interactant signals his/her agreement to that term, which s/he may also repeat throughout the conversation.

Negotiation concerns meanings but also forms. Here a clear example of the negotiation of the form 'registrate'. S1 is not sure about the term and S5 suggests the standard form 'register', but in the end he also switches to the previous form 'registrate':

"<S1>…you can **registrate** your er how you say your…
<S5>…you can **register** you can't get married and you can't you can **register** yourself…
<S5>…very much against this, er **registration** thing because…
<S3>…between **registration** and marriage so
<S5>…got the right to **registrate** so I suppose in another ten years…
<S1>…er getting re-**registrated** was were kept together but then…" (Mauranen, 2012: 50)

The previous conversation is also a clear example of accommodation. S5 accommodate to S1 choice of word, showing affiliation and convergence. In the end, they come to reduce their dissimilarities and also simplify and clarify the speech by reducing divergent forms.

"Code-switching" (Cogo in Mauranen, 2009: 268) is another important feature of ELF as it is also an extra tool to accommodate diversity. Speakers of ELF are usually bilingual or multilingual and this is an opportunity to take advantage of when they do not share a L1. Code-switching consists on bringing up the mother tongue of

the speakers during the conversation. There are many reasons to employ it in ELF conversations. One is that it is a way to make up for temporary lapses and buy time to search for a word in English: in this case, the function of code-switching is similar to repetitions. Nevertheless, code-switching also signals solidarity and affiliation with the same multilingual community, so at the end of the conversation one speaker can answer 'grazie' and the other 'danke', using words of common knowledge (Ibid.). This communication strategy is also employed when one speaker is aware that the other speaker knows or speaks a similar language (e.g. Spanish and Italian), consequently code-switching may help or reinforce the meaning of a word or sentence and even make greater nuances of expression. ELF speakers share a "non-nativeness" that make their approach to L2 similar, often strategic.

Finally, miming along with facial expression and sound imitation, although belonging to the non-verbal communication sphere, reinforce the verbal message and help the interlocutor overcome a temporary difficulty during the communication process.

Many of these strategies are employed during normal L1-L1 conversation and what strikes is that, despite all the cultural and linguistic differences between the speakers, little room is left for misunderstandings. This proves that

> "[a]ccommodating to certain shared variants in the local context, rather than conforming to some ideal notion of correctness, may not only ensure intelligibility between interlocutors, but also signal solidarity between them." (Cogo in Mauranen, 2009:255)

Some strategies are also typical features of ELF, thus is not so simple to make a distinction between ELF features and ELF communication strategies. Literal translation from L1 to ELF is a typical feature of ELF but it can also be seen as a strategy to achieve mutual comprehension. In an intercultural context, it is important to use a proper word in order not to offend the interlocutor, or verifying if one's interpretation is correct or has the opposite meaning, asking for clarification but also apologize for something wrong said or done (Mariani, 2011:282). By using all these strategies, most of which are unconsciously employed, speakers of ELF are able to communicate effectively and overcome their diversity.

In the tourism field, communicating information effectively and understanding the needs of the tourists is fundamental; tourism staff should be taught to use all these strategies in order to serve their customers in the best and most effective, as well as professional way. Vice versa through a common language, tourists can make them understand and explain their necessities. Communication will become less difficult if interactants find a common ground.

As we will see in the next chapter, the tourism industry heavily relies on people, and the service is evaluated through the tourists' satisfaction. The more they are listened to and helped throughout their vacation, the more they are happy with the overall experience and retain a positive attitude towards the places, the people and the culture they meet.

CHAPTER 3

Tourism and Communication

3.1 Sources of Information at Destination

In the tourism industry, communication plays a fundamental role since one of the main purposes is to provide information about the local services and tourism opportunities the destination offers.

People are constantly searching for information in their everyday lives: through the exchange of information, they increase their knowledge of the world and reduce their uncertainty, so that they can make conscious decisions (Fodness & Murray, 1997: 505). For tourists, information are essential at first to choose the destination, but also during the vacation to decide the attractions to visit or the recreational activities to do. In fact, through information tourists "enhance the quality of their trip by decreasing the level of associated uncertainty" (Ibid.). In other words, information are the raw material for the holiday and the medium for identifying the attractions, opportunities and services available in the territory (Franch, 2010: 226). The level of information tourists acquire influences their choices and makes the difference between satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the overall experience (Sparks & Callan, 1992: 215).

Figure 6 shows the different moments of information search (Turner, 2010:1). Tourists go through a temporally diversified search for the information needed in order to plan their holiday. During their life, people are constantly gathering information, knowledge, experiences and memories about the world and the destinations they would like to visit. This is the **ongoing search**, in which tourists also build their preferences related with travel. Then, the **pre-purchase search** leads towards the choice of the destination. The **planning search** is about all the details before the departure, whereas the **en-route search** deals with the search for information during the tourist experience. During the visit, the acquisition of information changes the perception and knowledge of the destination, both positively

and negatively and when the experience ends, tourists may continue evoking it back home, through the narration of their vacation to friends and relatives or by watching TV programmes about the destination, in what is called **after-trip search**. This search also measures the overall satisfaction about the experience: the better it has been, the more tourists are attached to their experience and maybe want to repeat it (Turner, 2010:12).
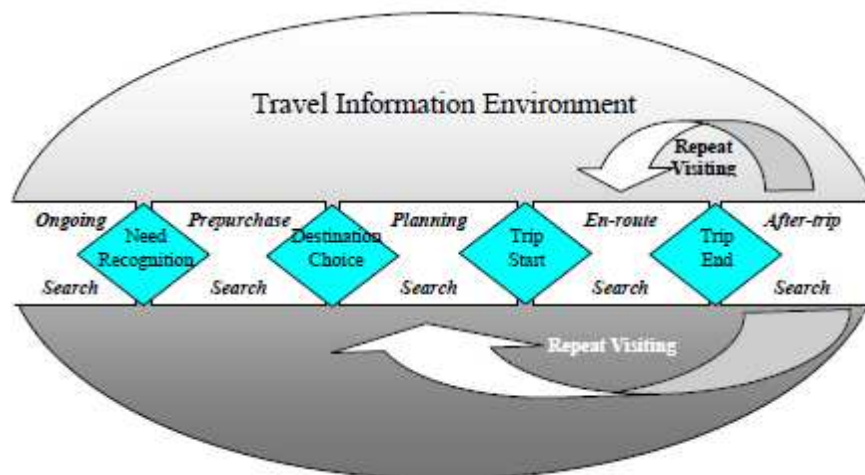

Figure 6: An extended framework of travel information search (Turner, 2010:9).

Nowadays tourists have the possibility to gather a great deal of information during the pre-purchase and planning steps. For instance, personal experience, along with friends' and relatives' advice, as well as travel agencies, heavily condition the choice, since these sources are perceived as more reliable (Fodness & Murray, 1999:227). Also travel guides, brochures, leaflets, along with medias and other promotional material are complementary sources consulted. Online material such as tourist websites, blogs and apps are increasingly important in the tourism industry, and many tourists rely on the information they find on the Internet, some of them even booking their entire holiday online (Buhalis & Hyun Jun, 2001:4).

However, at-destination sources are not to be under estimated. As a matter of fact, not every detail of the holiday is planned before the departure. Generally, conditions of lodging and transportation are the core decisions of the holiday and they are usually scheduled and booked in advance (90%), whereas restaurants and other secondary decisions are taken once arrived at the destination (70%);

recreational activities are decided both before and during the vacation (DiPietro et al., 2007: 180). Last-minute decisions (e.g., shopping and other recreational activities) are usually the result of some advice from the local staff (Di Pietro et al., 2007: 181). Consequently, it is important to understand what kind of sources tourists consult at-destination and how they deal with the information they receive, as the amount of information in their possession may contribute to the positive (or negative) outcome of their holiday. The way in which information are communicated is essential too for the tourist's satisfaction and the success of the vacation. Stakeholders should be aware of which sources of information tourists use during their vacation and provide them with an effective communication about the offer.

Once arrived at destination, besides brochures, catalogues and leaflets left in strategic places (e.g. in hotels and airports), other sources are consulted in order to gather more information about the place. First, advertisements on the flight or in the in-flight magazines, panels in the streets, the radio and the GPS system assist and provide information during the trip (Turner, 2010:12). When arrived, Tourist Information Centres (TICs) along with staff from hotels and other attractions are usually the main points of reference.

TICs are usually found in places that tourists can easily access, in the city centre or in crossing points. They are particularly relevant to the international demand because TICs' staff are able to speak many languages and also promote a differentiated offer for each tourist (Franch, 2010:227). The role of TIC's staff must be taken into account, since the way in which information is provided along with the kind of information that is transmitted influence the quality of the exchange between the tourists and the hosts (Wong & McKercher, 2011:483). Sometimes, quick and superficial answers or an annoyed and unprofessional behaviour of the staff leave the tourists unsatisfied. Moreover, standard answers not tailored to the tourist's need are equally disappointing. The ability to modify information provision depending on the interlocutor is fundamental for the satisfaction of the tourist. Interpersonal skills help the communicator to understand the tourist's need and promptly respond to his/her requests. Figure 7 illustrates the evolution of the encounter between the tourist and the staff of TIC, taking into account the factors that influence this kind of relationship.
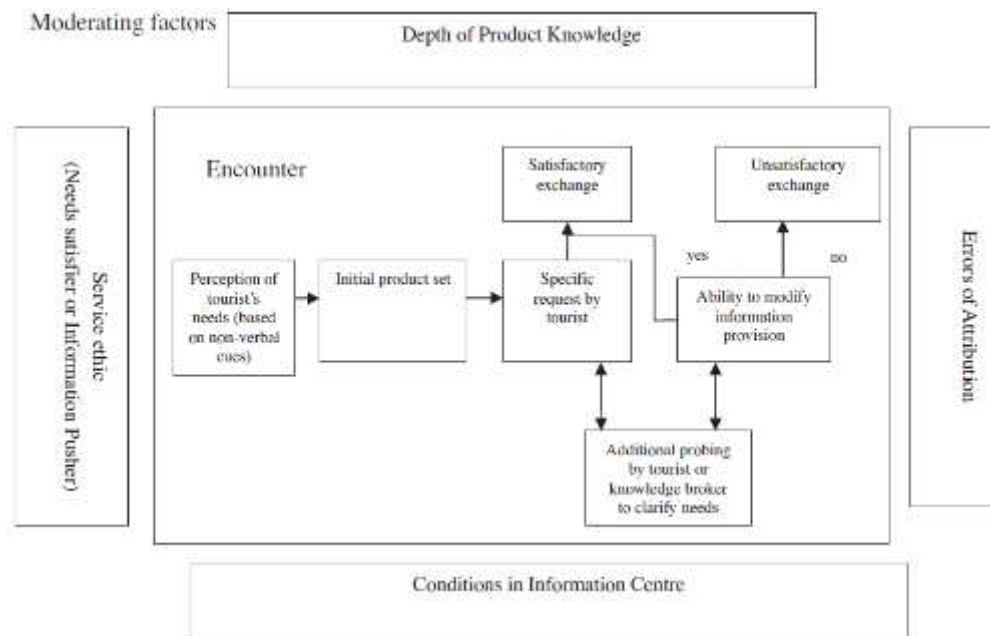
Figure 7: The evolution of the encounter between tourists and staff in TICs leading towards a satisfactory or unsatisfactory outcome (Wong & McKercher, 2011:494).

A satisfactory encounter depends most of all from the staff's attitude. Staff must not lack of a service ethic, they must be able to overcome stereotypes and focus on the single customer, they possess product knowledge and are able to communicate it to the customers. Furthermore, the condition of the TIC certainly influence the encounter, for instance a crowded centre may lead towards a hurried service (Wong & McKercher, 2011:495).

Another source of information on vacation is the local community. Studies (Rompf & Ricci 2005, DiPietro et al. 2007) show that the more the advice is profit-free, the more tourists are inclined to accept it and trust it. Inhabitants are the natural link between the destination and the activities that tourists seek to discover. Tourists trust especially "gratuitous referrals", that are pieces of advice "unaffected by monetary or other remuneration provided by a venue being recommended" (Rompf & Ricci, 2008:41). These pieces of advice are perceived as spontaneous and unaffected by secondary economic purpose and they are trusted as if they were friends' or relatives' advice.

Another strategic role is played by tour guides, who have the important role of "culture brokers" (De Kadt, 1984:57), since they serve as intermediaries between the

tourists and the host country. Consequently, what they say is important not only for the tourists who learn about the culture of the place they are visiting, but also for the destination itself. As a matter of fact, tour guides "can potentially motivate the tourists to make contact with others and create opportunities which can lead to cultural exchange" (Nettekoven in De Kadt, 1984:142). They must have a profound knowledge of the tourist venues and ancient history as well as being able to communicate the current situation of the society tourists are visiting. It is important for these people to be properly trained in order to prevent misunderstanding and avoid the spread of false or inaccurate information (Nettekoven in De Kadt, 1984:143).

Finally, as information help tourists move into the new environment and find places and things, panels, indications and itineraries along the way, they must be accessible, clear and written in a common language, when necessary, in order to be understood by any kind of foreign tourists, too. Maps around the cities, signals of places, stations and other critical points are very helpful for tourists and make their vacation less stressful and chaotic.

After all, tourists are not all the same, and many factors influence the way in which they search for information and process them. Contextual factors (cultural, social and family dimension), individual factors (motivation of the vacation, personal experience, personality) and factors related to the situation (such as time at disposal or risk perceived) influence their search for information (Rompf et al., 2005:13).

Compared to national tourists, foreign tourists experience a more stressful situation when visiting a country in terms of cultural shock. Their certainties evanish and they may experience feelings of anxiety and confusion.

However, tourism professionals can avoid stressful situations to the tourists in many ways. For example, travel guides have many tips about the documents needed to travel, the places to visit, suitable behaviour or the best way to address people but also when and how tipping, table manners, gestures to avoid or to encourage and proper clothing. In addition, hotel reception and TICs are usually the places where tourists can receive information about the destination and the culture they are visiting.

In particular, culture influences the way in which tourists utilize these sources and makes decisions (Dogan & Terry, 2004:59). For example, findings in Dogan ad Terry's study (2004) suggest that tourists from Spain, France, Netherland and Greece, are likely to use leaflets and travel guides, whereas travellers from Denmark and Finland prefer the Internet. On the contrary, travellers from Austria, Germany and United Kingdom are more likely to use travel agents or the media such as television or the radio (Dogan & Terry, 2004:66).

It is important to be aware of these differences in order to know what kind of channel tourists prefer to obtain for obtaining information, and also to improve the existing sources and make them accessible, reliable and satisfactory.

Being aware of our cultural differences does not concern only who is visiting the country, but also who is hosting those visitors. The more hosts know about their guests, the more they can satisfy their requests and needs.

The cultural background influences the customers' perceptions of the service, as each cultural group has its own expectation and standards of evaluation (Reisinger & Dimanche, 2008:235). For example, it has been found that, in a hotel, the Japanese usually search for a big bath and slippers, Italians for a clean room and the British for air-conditioning and an ocean view (Ibid.). It is not easy to accommodate all these requests, but the key to success is to customize the service for each cultural group, as it is for the different clients of a shop. Moreover, collectivist cultures pay more attention to "the interpersonal element of service" (Reisinger & Dimanche, 2008:236), on the contrary, individualist cultures are more concerned with the tangible elements of the facilities and the service promptness (Ibid.).

Furthermore, low-masculine cultures (e.g., in Brazil or Taiwan) result more sympathetic towards others and consequently are more likely to be understanding if setbacks happen. On the contrary, high-masculine cultures are usually more assertive and judgmental and are less concerned with the feelings of others. As a consequence, the former will evaluate the service more positively and the overall satisfaction perceived will be higher compared to that of members of high-masculine societies (Crotts & Erdmann, 2000: 410). An example of this behaviour is taken from the frequent situation of airline delays. Crotts & Ermann (2000: 418) reported an episode from a European television show which filmed a day in London's Heathrow Airport.

On that occasion the airplane serving the London-to-Pakistan route was constantly delayed and cameras showed the different reactions of the passengers. Pakistani people, who belong to a low-masculine society, reacted more patiently and waited seven hours for the next flight, whereas British passengers after three hours requested to be transferred to another airline and Americans, after four hours, threatened to sue the company (Crotts & Erdmann, 2000: 418).

If service providers are not aware of these cultural differences and consequent reactions, the risk is of overestimating customer satisfaction and loyalty, and not considering the resulting negative feedback that comes from a service dissatisfaction. Service quality expectations and perceptions vary from foreign customers to domestic providers. Understanding cultural differences helps "[determine] the types of service expected by culturally different customers" (Reisinger & Dimanche, 2008: 240). Moreover, tourists are more critical about services they know and value (e.g., transportation services, security, accessibility of services, freedom of choice) but, instead, they are less critical of experiences involving the local and authentic community, such as local service, food, entertainment (Reisinger & Dimanche, 2008: 241).

3.2 The Relational Factor in the Hospitality Industry

Tourism is one of the best fields where analysing intercultural encounters, because it brings together people of different nations who need to interact and communicate with the local community. Tourists are encouraged to visit a destination not only by the cultural or natural attractions, but also by the provision of services and information that make a product accessible and usable by the tourists-customers (Rispoli & Tamma, 1995: 16). As we have already seen, sources questioned at-destination are typically TICs, the local community but also local staff in hotels, restaurants, shops, attractions, service station and police and cabdrivers. The information collected usually concern lodging, transportation, restaurants and recreational activities.

Tourism does not sell a tangible product that people buy in advance and use afterwards; the peculiarity of the tourist product lies in its intangibility and simultaneous consumption, as it cannot be tasted, seen and neither experienced before the purchase (Callan, 1992: 213). Tourism is not about tangible things like buying a pair of shoes or a car, but more about experiences, benefits and memories. The atmosphere in a hotel or restaurant, how customers are treated at the reception, the emotions experienced, the good or bad memories left are the factors determining the quality of the holiday and the overall tourist's satisfaction (Reisinger & Dimanche, 2008: 234).

As for other service industries, the hospitality industry heavily relies on people, a true "people business" to put in Power and Riegel's words (1993: 305). The tourism product is hyper-relational, meaning that relations heavily influence the tourist experience, to the point that "[t]he tourist's perceptions of the service providers determine the overall perceptions of the tourism product quality" (Reisinger Dimanche, 2008: 237). A warm reception, staff speaking the tourist's language, the way in which information are communicated, all these variables influence customers' behaviour. As a consequence, a positive experience implies the satisfaction of the tourist, who is encouraged to spend more (financially but also in terms of holiday's duration) and also to repeat the experience and unconsciously promote by word of mouth the destination to his/her friends (Ibid.). This is why, in the service industry, it is important to build a strong relationship with the customers and pay attention to their feedbacks.

Hotel or restaurant staff are not just machines that take money from the tourists and give them in return what they pay for Working in the hospitality industry means a completely different approach.

The quality and the amount of encounters between tourists and hosts depend on "the stage of tourism development in which they occur and the type of tourists involved" (De Kadt, 1984:50). If the tourist destination is at the beginning of its life cycle, tourists are limited and inhabitants are more inclined to welcome them with a warmer reception. On the contrary, if the tourist destination is developed and stabilized, mass tourism is likely to be intrusive in local people's life, and

consequently, the locals will barely little tolerate tourists and avoid any contact with them (De Kadt, 1984:62).

The past of a nation should also be considered. Ex-colonies may still feel resentment towards tourists who remind them of their former invaders (De Kadt, 1984:60). The socio-historical context influences in part the kind of relationship between tourists and hosts, causing in some cases hostility and rivalry both socially and financially. For instance, Maltese citizens feel a certain kind of competition with the growing number of less affluent tourists as far as goods and services are concerned, resulting in a general resentment (De Kadt, 1984:61). Whereas in the past tourists belonged to the upper class, today Maltese tourism staff have to deal with tourists who are more similar to them as far as the social class and the salary are concerned, and this may cause feelings of injustice.

Another variable influencing encounters in a destination is the type of tourist involved: explorer and drifter tourists are usually more interested in making contacts with the local population, moreover they avoid mass tourism and prefer less developed destinations, unlike tourists who travel in packaged holidays (De Kadt, 1984: 51). The mass tourist usually stays in isolated resorts, which function as enclaves where the only contact with the host community is with those who work there to 'serve' them. Little space is left for the discovery of the local culture and the population (De Kadt, 1984: 52). Moreover, nowadays intercultural encounters happen more and more for economic purposes, consequently rituals, traditions, cultural events are often performed for profit, and everything seems staged and false.

During their tourist experience, tourists may encounter three different types of interlocutors (Nettekoven in De Kadt, 1984: 135):

- people directly employed in the tourism field (e.g., hotel staff, restaurant staff, museums and other attractions);
- other people not directly connected to the tourism industry (staff of local markets, banks and other facilities used by tourists but also inhabitants using the same services);
- other tourists that might be from the same or from different nationalities.

In this regard, the hotel staff as well as the overall staff operating in the tourism field, need to empathize with their customers and understand their point of view. As the internationalization of tourism is expanding, the importance of training staff in intercultural communication is becoming essential. Robert Mill, a hospitality educator, identifies some characteristics that a worker in the hospitality sector must take into account: "Being non-judgmental, avoiding moralistic, value-laden, evaluative statements, and listening in such a way that the other can fully share and explain him or herself improves communication across cultures" (Mill, 1994:69).

The way in which staff members provide the service determines tourist's satisfaction. If the staff are tactful, attentive, responsive, respectful, friendly and show personal interest, this enhances the customer's holiday experience (Reisinger & Dimanche, 2008: 237). It has been found that the **ten** most popular criteria that customers use in order to assess the service are: "reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding and knowing the customer, and tangibility" (Reisinger & Dimanche, 2008:239).

The service encounter is very much like a social encounter and "the quality of communication during this first encounter […] further establishes and confirms customer expectations about the hospitality product" (Sparks and Callan, 1992:215). Tourism has an intrinsic relational nature that must not be underestimated. Being an effective communicator requires some practice and training, and staff need to work on an effective communicative competence. Service encounters tend to be short in duration and quite superficial with "limited psychological interaction, which in turn elevates the role of observable cues" (Barker & Härtel, 2004:4). Physical components and verbal and non-verbal behaviours, especially facial expressions, are what the customers evaluate and what influences their level of satisfaction of the service. Thus, two competences are essential: effective listening and effective reaction (Ceylan et al., 2012:1101). Meeting friendly people who help and provide tourists with what they need is fundamental in order to make them feel at ease and to establish a positive relationship with them. By listening to the customers' problems and needs, the staff empathize with the tourists. Also by giving the impression of being listened to, customers feel important and gratified. Secondly, the response must be clear and the staff need to be sure that customers fully understand the

information provided (e.g., the location of the facilities, the meal hours, things to do or not to do, etcetera). Articulating ideas and feelings, but also successfully integrating the verbal and non-verbal components of the message are skills that help the communication to become more effective.

In the tourism sector, the 'communication accommodation strategy' is particularly relevant because, through it, the service provider may achieve speech convergence and get closer to the customer's linguistic and cultural world (Sparks and Callan, 1992:216). By altering the linguistic elements (speech style, accent but also the language of communication), paralinguistic elements (pitch, tone of voice) and non-verbal behaviour (gestures, smiles, body language), the service provider gets closer to the customer and is able to pass the message with little probability of being misunderstood (Ibid.): customer's needs are at the core of the service management.

As highlighted in Figure 8, at the very beginning of the service encounter there are some expectations and an initial orientation both from the guest and the host side, not to mention the past experiences, which can have been positive but also negative.
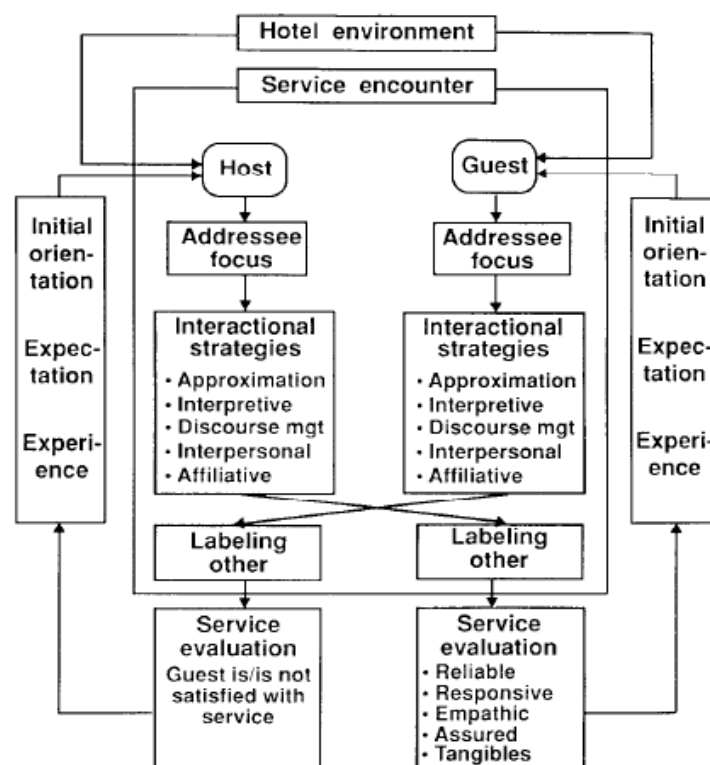

Figure 8: The communication accommodation theory applied to service encounters (Sparks and Callan, 1992:218).

Strategies involved relate to discourse management, which is the ability to choose shared topics of conversation but also to respect turn-taking. In order to establish a reliable relationship the service provider gives the customer the freedom to use interpersonal control strategies (e.g., interruptions, forms of address) and establish a status role.

Staff's convergence in language makes the level of the conversation friendlier and more helpful, but often it goes with a reduction of the norms of courtesy employed, which may annoy some customers. Not to mention non-verbal communication, which follows very specific rules from country to country (as already seen in Chapter One). Nevertheless, a staff member who smiles, nods and listens carefully to the client is surely an asset. In the end, every interactional strategy employed results in the satisfaction, or dissatisfaction, of the customer for the service offered.

As we have already seen in the previous chapters, many errors of encoding and decoding may affect the communication process: words may be unclear or meaningless for the receiver, the verbal and non-verbal channels may communicate different messages and stereotypes may interfere. If the communicator were aware of the problems s/he may face during the conversation, s/he would probably avoid them and improve the general quality of the encounter. In this respect, the service provider has many strategies to employ: s/he can simplify the syntax, increase clarity by changing pitch or loudness of voice and choose familiar topics in order to 'break the ice' and establish a trustworthy relationship (Sparks and Callan, 1992:217). However, s/he must also be aware that some forms of convergence may be inappropriate: for example, speaking too slowly may embarrass the customer and result in a negative evaluation of the service itself. This is why it is necessary for the service providers to be trained and to know how to behave in the different situations they face every day. This job does not suit everyone, and the staff must be chosen carefully among those people who are not influenced by prejudices and misconceptions as, indeed,

> pre-existing positive attitudes towards cultural diversity may incline some
> individuals to form and sustain intercultural friendship, while pre-existing

negative attitudes may discourage other persons from pursuing such intercultural contact (Barker & Härtel, 2004: 5)

Stereotypes help the staff categorize people into types of customers and predict their behaviour, but they are also dangerous especially when personal prejudices cloud the judgment and result in poor service (Sparks & Callan, 1992:216). Certain beliefs about gender, race and other kinds of prejudices are the cause of bad relations between staff and customers, resulting in embarrassment, shame and negative attitudes. They are to be entirely avoided among people who work daily in intercultural contexts.

CHAPTER 4

The case study: International Tourists in Venice

4.1 A Background Analysis of International Tourists in Venice

Venice is the favourite destination for many tourists that every years come to visit its beauty and its history. Since 1997, the number of international tourists visiting Venice has increased exponentially, exceeding the carrying capacity of the historical city and its lagoon (Santoro & Massiani, 2012:148). If, in 1949, less than 1.000.000 of overnights in the city were registered, in 1997 the tourist presence was around 4.000.000 of visitors. Today the number of tourists visiting Venice exceeds 9.000.000 and grows every year (http://statistica.regione.veneto.it).
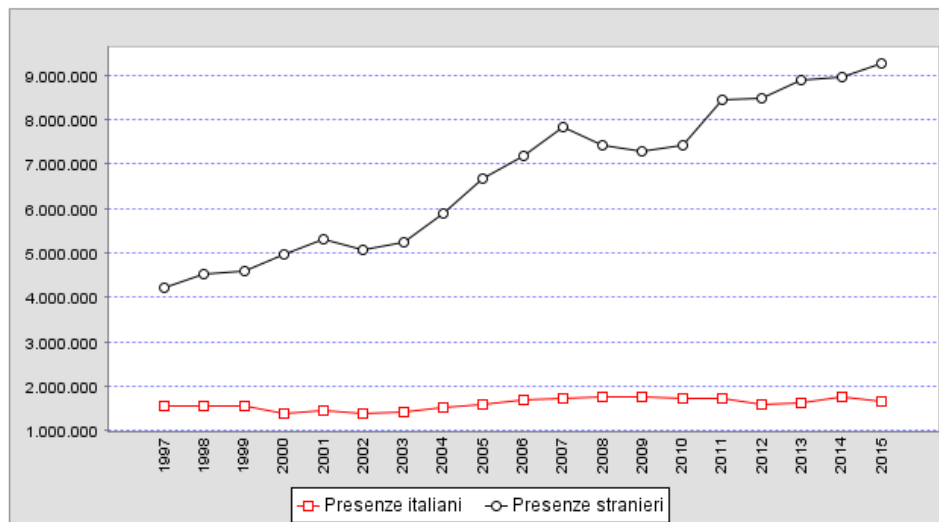

Figure 9: the chart shows the evolution of the tourist movement from 1997 to 2015. In red are the Italian presence in Venice and in black the international presence (http://statistica.regione.veneto.it).

The majority of international tourists in 2015 came from the U.S.A., with 1.392.027 total of presence, followed by Great Britain with 972.110, France with 926.845 and Germany and China with 735.344 and 451.361, respectively.

Despite the attempt of reducing the problems of this massive invasion of the city by offering diversified proposals of holidays (in order to create new itineraries and new attractions also outside of the historical centre, Ibid. 150), tourism is not decreasing and Venice every day is submerged by thousands of tourists, from a minimum of 300.000 foreign tourists in the off-season period, to a maximum of 1.200.000 in the high-season period.

The number of international tourists is far more remarkable compared to the number of Italian tourists, and it is also lifeline of the tourism in Venice. Without the foreign aid, during the crisis of the 2008-2014, the loss in terms of Italian tourists would have been far devastating (ConfCommercio, 2015). Only international tourists in 2014 spent more than 34 million of Euros. But besides the economic return, it is important to think of the tourists as guests to be welcomed and treated in the best possible way, not as wallets to empty.

Through the help of a survey, the general experience of the tourists who come to Venice will be evaluated and the critical points that emerge will be discussed in the following paragraphs. The survey will also measure the effectiveness of intercultural communication between hosts ad guests in Venice; the cultural and linguistic factors that characterize intercultural encounters analysed in the previous chapters will help determine whether the level of quality and preparation offered by the destination is up to the standards of an international clientele.

4.2 Objectives and Structure of the Survey

The main objective of the survey was to analyse international tourists in Venice and what are the issues they experience during their stay in Venice. More specifically, the purpose of the survey was to:

- Identify where the international tourists come from and their personal characteristics;
- Discover whether, during their stay, they came across problems of communication in English with the tourist staff;

- Discover whether, during their stay, they experienced some problems of intercultural communication due to a general lack of awareness and sensibility of cultural diversity of the tourist staff;
- Identify the sources of information tourists questioned before their arrival and during their holiday;
- Identify the general availability of information in English in Venice.

The survey begins with a presentation of the interviewer and a brief introduction to the topics of investigation. It is divided in four main topics, with the total amount of questions being 37.

The first topic investigates the language spoken by the tourists in their country and their general knowledge of English. Starting from the identification of their mother tongue and their knowledge of other languages, the questions are about the frequency in which they normally communicate in English and the language they usually employ when travelling. For those who are not native speakers, an opinion about how they feel about their accent is also requested.

The second topic deals with the tourists' overall experience in Venice and the problems of communication in English. They are asked to answer about the persons with whom they have interacted during their stay and whether they had problems in communicating in English with these people (more specifically if these problems were related to understanding their interlocutors and/or being understood by them). If the answer is positive, they are asked to identify the nature of the problem, for example whether they had issues in understanding because of the local people's lack of general knowledge of English or their different pronunciation, and which strategies they employed to overcome these difficulties. The last question evaluates the general level of English perceived by the tourists of the tourist staff in Venice.

The third topic refers to intercultural communication. The questions assess whether any misunderstanding related to culture has occurred between tourists and hosts. Some adjectives (both positive and negative) are suggested to the tourists and they can choose the ones that better describe the people they met during their stay. Other open questions are inserted in order to recall some episodes in which

misunderstandings, embarrassing situations or particular events worth of notice, involving cultural diversity happened during the vacation.

Finally, the last section deals with the sources of information used by the tourists and the features of travel. Tourists are asked about the number of days spent in Venice, the purpose of their stay, the state of the holiday (just arrived, halfway, or leaving), the persons with whom they are travelling and how they had planned their holiday. A number of questions to identify the sources questioned by the tourists follow this last question. Moreover, the availability of information in Venice and the facility to get around in the city for a foreign tourist are evaluate. It is also given the possibility to make some suggestions about new improvement necessary for the city to enhance the quality of the holiday.

The last question asks an evaluation of the general experience from 'very bad' to 'very good'. The last four questions concern the personal characteristics of the interviewed, his/her nationality, gender, age and level of study. At the end of the survey it is specified that the survey is anonymous and protected by the Italian law 196/2003 and that the data are only for research purposes.

4.3 Samples and Methodology

The sample interviewed consists of the international tourists, both native and non-native speakers of English who came in Venice for vacation or other purposes (namely business, study or other). The interviewer tried to create a sample the more diverse as possible, with a fairly good balance of gender and age.

The survey lasted about 8 minutes for each candidate; it was conducted face-to-face, by interviewing the tourists one by one. By doing so, the interviewer could take note of some personal impressions and non-verbal feedback, especially when the persons interviewed had little knowledge of English and the survey was difficult to carry on. Moreover, if some questions were not clear, the interviewer rephrased the sentence in order to make the question clearer for the interviewee. The interviewer first explained the purpose of the survey and identified herself as a university student, asking tourists to spend a few minutes of their time to evaluate their general experience as tourists in Venice and the intercultural communication taking place in this destination.

The tourists were intercepted in moments of availability, for example while queuing for an attraction (e.g., in Saint Marco Square waiting to enter the Basilica or the bell tower) or mostly in the train station, while waiting to catch a train. In the latter case, the response was more fruitful, both because the tourists were more available to answer the questions and most of them were leaving, consequently they had already completed their holiday. In fact, those who were leaving could answer all the questions of the survey, whereas those who were just arrived could not be interviewed about the overall experience since they had not started it yet.

The results were gathered during the four weekends of May, when a consistent amount of tourists generally visits the city. The survey is included in the Appendix.

4.4   Results and Analysis

4.4.1   Personal Characteristics of the International Tourist

The response of the interviewees has generally been positive. Since many of them were interviewed while waiting for the train, the majority were available and responsive to the questions asked. Only a few persons explicitly refused to be interviewed. The first question assessed the general knowledge of English.
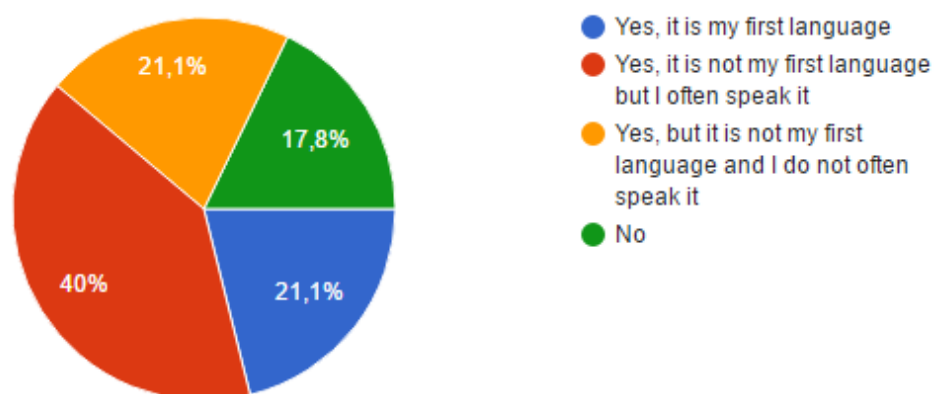

Figure 10: the pie chart shows the number of interviewees who speak (or not) English, dividing them in native and non-native speakers of English.

If the answer was positive the survey was carried on, otherwise it ended immediately. Out of a total amount of 90 surveys, at the question 'Do you speak English?', 16 (around 18%) answered 'no'. This result is partially true, since it was noticed that, in a group or a family, at least one member speaks English but the others may not. However, data includes also people who answered 'no' because they did not want to be bothered.

The remaining 82.2% includes 21.1% of those who speak English as their first language (mostly coming from the USA or Great Britain), as well as 21.1% of those who do not speak English frequently. Nevertheless, the majority of the respondents, nearly half of the results (40%) are not native speakers of English but they often speak English for business or other purposes.

As for the general information about the sample interviewed, out of 74 surveys, which represent the total of surveys successfully distributed in which respondents spoke English and were able to proceed with the next questions, 58.1% of tourists were female and 41.9% male.

The age of the respondents goes from a minimum of 18-years-old to a maximum of 78-years-old, with an average age of 43. Generally, there was a significant percentage of people over 50 (24.3% from 50 to 59, and 18.9% over 60), many of them being also retired. The other significant percentage consists of people from 20 to 29 and from 30 to 39 years old, representing 25.7% and 18.9%, respectively.
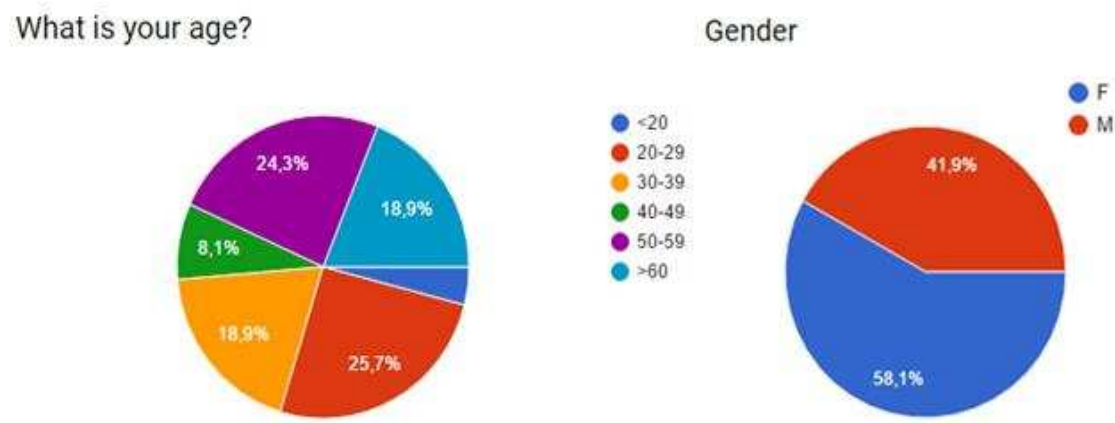

Figure 11: the pie chart shows the age of the respondents divided into age brackets and their gender.

As far as the level of study was concerned, the vast majority of the respondents were graduates (76%), with a 20% who had completed secondary school.

With regard to the origins of the interviewees, the results reflect partially the official statistic reported in paragraph 4.1.
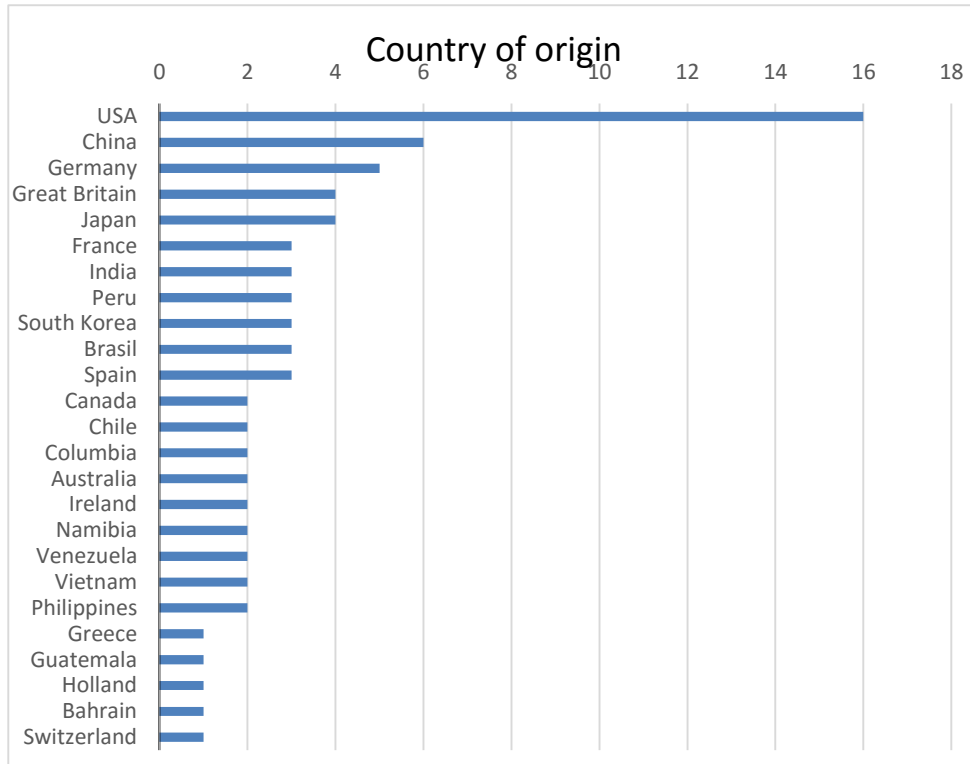

Figure 12: chart of the countries of origin of the respondents.

Ranking first, with 16 answers (21.6%), there are tourists coming from the United States, followed by 6 Chinese, 5 Germans, 4 British and 4 Japanese. There were only 3 French respondents (whereas France in the regional statistic ranks third for tourists who visit Venice every year). Among those who did not speak English some of them had a recognizable French accent, consequently being this survey conceived only for English speakers, the results are not intended to be representative of the actual tourist's presence in Venice.

Moreover, among the tourists coming from the United States, many of them were not born there, but they were immigrants who had moved from other countries.

Out of 16 respondents, 2 came from Mexico, 2 from Colombia, 2 from the Philippines and 1 from Iran.

4.4.2 About Language and Communication

The first part concerned the questions about the knowledge of English of the interviewees; 19 respondents were native speakers of English. At first, the survey was conceived only for those who did not speak English as their first language; however, since the aim was also to assess the general level of English of the tourist staff working in Venice, these respondents were questioned about problems of communication during their holiday experience as well as the non-native speakers of English.

The other consistent number of respondents (14) were speakers of Spanish, followed by 7 Chinese speakers and 6 German speakers. The other tourists' first languages were Japanese, Tagalog, French, Korean, Portuguese, Afrikaans, Marathi, Greek, Arabic, Dutch, Filipino, Telugu and Farsi.

The majority of people (55.4%) do not speak other languages in their country besides their mother tongue, however 44.6% do. Among this group of people, 24 tourists claimed to speak English in other circumstances (as a second language, at work or in other contexts), but also French, Spanish, German and other local languages.

As for English, 44.6% speak it usually at home and in their everyday lives, 21.6% speak it mainly at work and 24.3% use it as a Lingua Franca only when travelling, to speak with the tourist staff at destination and with other tourists.

At the question "which language do you usually speak when you travel abroad?", 100% answered "English" as their first choice, followed by some of them who also speak Spanish and French. This result shows how English has definitely become the vehicular language par excellence, surpassing any other language used as the lingua franca in the past.

When and where do you speak English most frequently or preferably?

- At home and in my everyday life
- At work, for business purpose
- During my English lessons at school
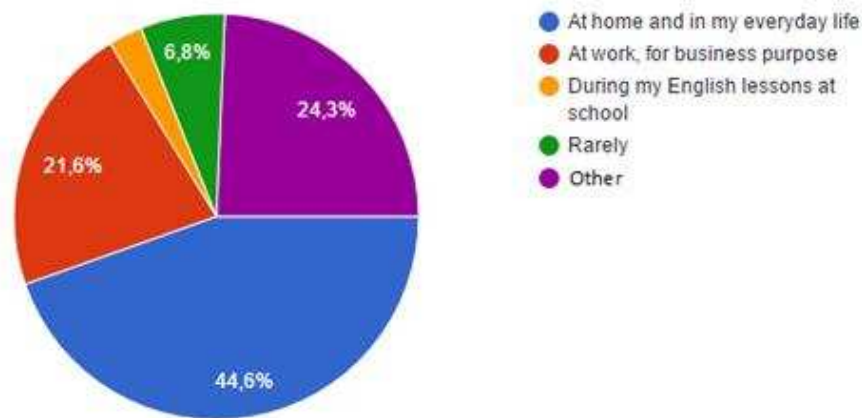- Rarely
- Other

6,8%
24,3%
21,6%
44,6%

Figure 13: the pie chart illustrates the circumstances in which the respondents speak English most frequently.

An interesting question about how people feel about their accent has been included in the last part of this section. Excluding those who were native speakers of English and were not questioned about it, the majority of respondents did not have a real opinion and looked a little surprised about the question. However, out of 23 answers, 30.4% said that they did not care at all about their accent, as long as the other understand them. The majority of respondents (52%) were aware about their accent but they were fine with it and conscious about the fact that, being non-native speaker of English they do have a foreign accent when speaking it. They said that they are "ok with it", they think "it is normal to have an accent because we are foreigners" and they know they have it and that it is recognizable. Only one person admitted to feel a little embarrassed because of it, on the contrary three respondents reported that they are happy about their accent. One also specified that people say to him that he has a nice accent and the other two persons replied that they like their accent because it is a sign of their origins and it shows that we are not all the same.

Being aware of our accent is important in order to communicate effectively in an intercultural context, especially when the accent appears to be the prominent cause of misunderstanding during intercultural communication, as the results analysed in the following paragraph will show. Getting used to other people different

pronunciation but also knowing what may cause problems of understanding in our pronunciation is a useful tool that allows us to understand the other and being understood. This brings to the findings analysed by Jenkins (2000:24) in the "Lingua Franca Core": NNSs should be aware of the features of pronunciation that may cause misunderstanding when communicating with persons of different nationalities. People should learn from the beginning how to enhance intelligibility and how to accommodate to their interlocutors. Moreover, results do not show a particular attachment of NNSs to the NS pronunciation. This is a positive attitude that show a general overcoming of the idea that NNSs should imitate British or American accent; on the contrary, tourists seem conscious of their diversity and value it.

4.4.3   About the Linguistic Experience

This section analyses the interaction between local people and tourists, lingering more extensively on the problems of communication in English that exist between the two subjects.

The first question quantifies the tourists' preference for interaction during their stay in Venice, in order to analyse with whom tourists usually interact to ask information or for other purposes. Only tourists who were concluding their holiday experience, or were halfway through it, could be asked those questions, whereas those who had just arrived skipped to the final section.

Restaurants and other places for refreshment represent the most preferred venue of interaction. 89.9% of people claimed they interacted with staff at the restaurant, followed by staff of the hotels (85.7%) and the staff in the attractions (71.4%). Interestingly, 61.4% spoke with other tourists of different countries and 58.6% with tourists of the same country, in order to exchange information. The least voted has been the staff at the information point, since many respondents noticed that they could not even find an information point in Venice.

Sources of interaction	Yes	No
Staff at the restaurant	89.9%	10.1%
Hotel (or camping) staff	85.7%	14.3%
Staff at the attractions (e.g. museums, churches, theatre) and local tour guides	71.4%	28.6%
Tourists of the different countries	61.4%	38.6%
Inhabitants	58.6%	41.4%
Tourists of the same country	54.3%	45.7%
Service workers (at the hospital, airport, bus/train station)	52.9%	47.1%
Staff at the information point	40%	60%

Figure 14: percentage of tourists who spoke or did not speak with each source of interaction during their stay.

More than a half, 58.6%, interacted with inhabitants. Among the service workers, questioned by 52.9% of respondents, police officers were often mentioned as sources of information.

Respondents were then asked about general problems of communication they encountered during their holiday in Venice. Out of 70 answers, the majority (i.e. 67.1%) did not have any problem in communicating with the reported sources. On the other hand, 32.9% experienced some problems in communicating during their stay. If the answer was positive, they tried to recall one or more episodes in which they had trouble in communicating. One person identified in general a difficulty in communicating with the staff in the shops for buying things; other situations concerned ordering food in restaurants or in the hotel, where their meal was mistaken or the staff did not understand at all. One couple who rent an apartment had trouble in speaking with the Italian owner because she spoke only Italian. One interviewee explicitly stated that he had trouble in understanding the Italian accent.

During your stay, have you ever had problems in communicating in English with those people? (e.g. you could not understand the explanations/directions or not being understood by others)
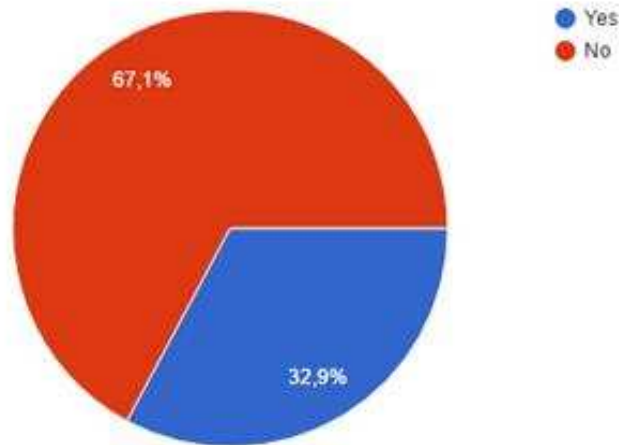
Yes
No

67,1%

32,9%

Figure 15: the pie chart highlights in blue the percentage of respondents who encountered some problems in communicating with the people they have interacted with during their stay.

The respondents had to identify whether their difficulties were mainly related to understanding the interlocutors or being understood by them. Both cases were reported: five interviewees expressed some troubles in understanding tourist staff, nine were not entirely capable of making them understood by their interlocutors and 11 had problems in both cases.

Your difficulties were related to :

Understanding —5 (20,8%)

Being understood —9 (37,5%)

Both a and b 11 (45,8%)

I do not know —0 (0%)

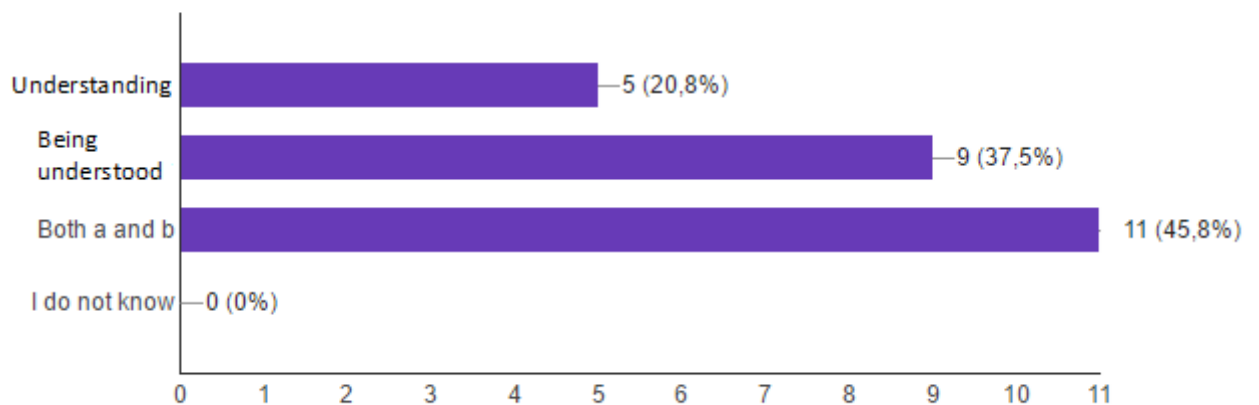0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

Figure 16: out of 32.9%, the chart highlights whether the tourists had more problems in understanding, being understood or both the first and second answer.

For each case, the causes of the misunderstanding were then analysed. If the problem was about not understanding the interlocutors, most of the tourists ascribed the cause to a different pronunciation of the hosts (40%). Some of them admitted that their difficulties were due to their lack of general knowledge of English grammar (33.3%), having an elementary or basic level that was not sufficient to communicate effectively. However, 13.3% felt that local people did not speak English very well and this is why sometimes they could not understand them. The strategies employed to overcome these difficulties were:

- asking for repetition (80%);
- asking to speak slower (33.3%),
- asking for clarification (20%);
- guessing intelligently (20%);
- avoiding communication (20%);
- expressing non-understanding (13.3%);
- asking other people's help (6.7%).

On the other hand, when the difficulties were in being understood, respondents blamed equally the different pronunciation they had when speaking English (38.9%) and the local's lack of general knowledge of English (38.9%). Someone said that these problems were related to his/her lack of knowledge of English (27.8%) or to a different usage of words and expressions (16.7%).

In this case, the most effective strategy to make themselves understood was to point at an object and mime, strategy employed by 78.9% of the respondents. Another successful strategy, used by the speakers of Spanish, was to switch to their native language; since Spanish and Italian are similar, it was easier for them to communicate in Spanish than in English, consequently 26.3% employed this strategy. Finally, 21.1% tried to rephrase the sentence in a more comprehensible way, and 10.5% asked for help to other people in their group, in particular those who speak English more fluently. There was also two respondents who admitted that in one case they did not succeed in make themselves understood and they preferred to drop the conversation or avoid it.

Nevertheless, the general opinion about the level of English of the people working in the tourism field in Venice is good.

How do you judge the general level of English of the people you have interacted with during your stay?
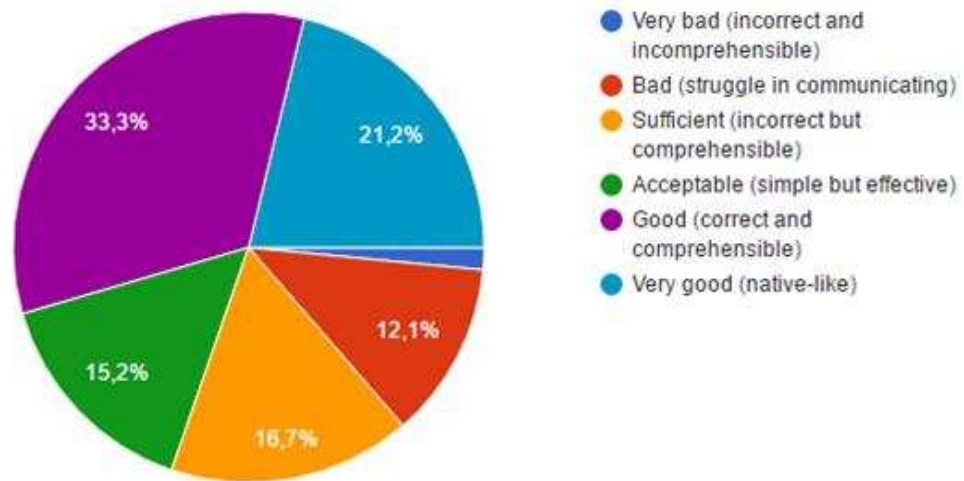

Figure 17: the pie chart shows how tourists judge the level of English in Venice.

Only one person judged it very bad and 12.1% bad. On the contrary, 15.2% respondents agreed that people in Venice speak an acceptable and comprehensible English, 33.3% stated that they speak it correctly or very good (21.2%).

4.4.4   About the Cultural Experience

The third part of the survey aimed to assess any incomprehension occurred because of cultural differences. At first, tourists were asked to evaluate the people they had encountered and express their opinion about them. The respondents chose among some adjectives equally divided into positive and negative, and they also had the possibility to add other adjectives if they wanted.

How do you generally value the people you have encountered during your stay (e.g. hotel personnel, local people, staff service)?
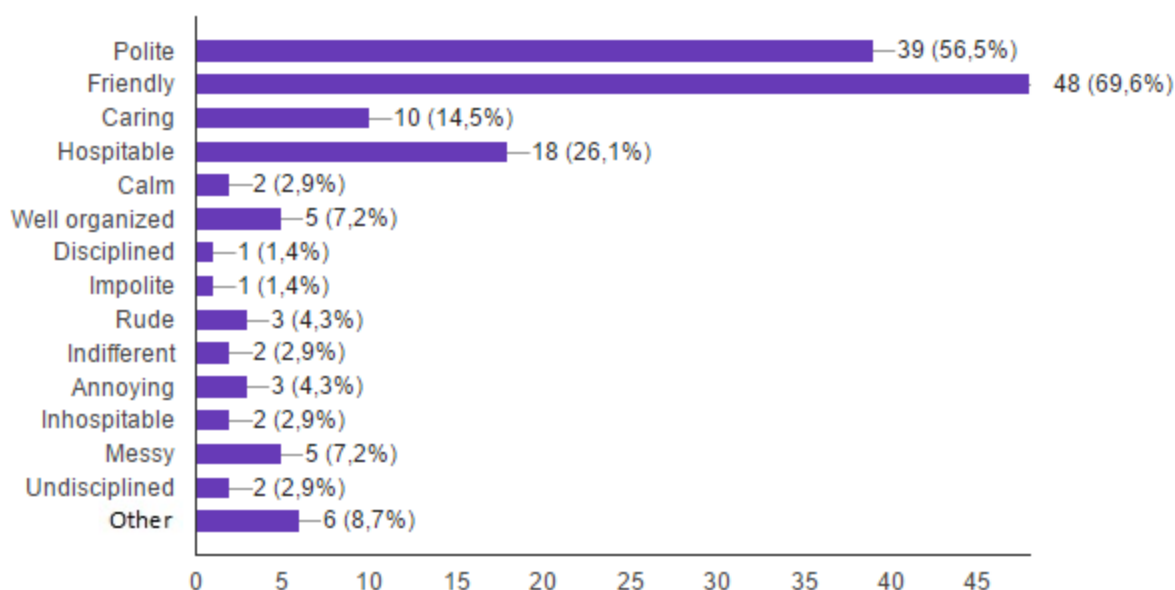

Figure 18: the chart is divided into 7 adjectives positive and 7 negative. Tourists indicated their preference or preferences.

The majority of the respondents expressed a positive feedback. Nearly everyone chose only a negative adjective, but some of them distinguished the people in opposite pair of adjectives. Some interviewees specified that they encountered inhospitable and rude people in particular in restaurants, since they are places where tourists more frequently go. Someone also indicated that service workers on the waterbuses and on the bus were quite rude. Other recurrent adjectives were "not friendly", "not well organized", "hot tempered" for negative impressions, and "very expressive" for positive impressions.

Anyway, the majority of the interviewees (more than 80%) did not recall negative experiences due to cultural differences during their visit of Venice. However, 10% to 14% reported some uncomfortable situations. Five questions followed in order to assess the kind of difficulties experienced by the tourists.

The first question analysed the misunderstandings due to verbal or non-verbal communication occurred between hosts and guests. Since the question was quite general, some respondents interpreted it as if it referred to misunderstanding in

communication. Most of them said that their order of food was often mistaken; some of them did not understand the directions given to find a place; others had hard time in buying some tickets for the waterbuses because the communication with the ticket collector was difficult.

One respondent reported a misunderstanding between her friend and the porter. Since her friend did not speak English very well, she did not fully understand the cost of the service, and the porter did not specify well that he charged 5 euros for every piece of luggage. In the end she paid far more that she expected, and she was not happy about it.

Another episode concerned a tourist who did not know about the rules of recycling in Venice. She was using a private garbage that she thought it was public, and because of that she was rebuked. However, she acknowledged that it was her fault.

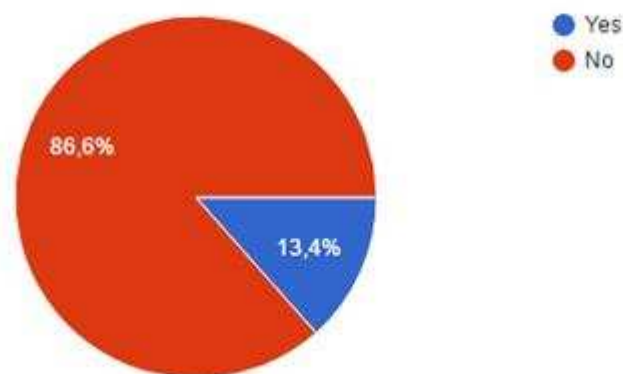Have you ever been misunderstood for something you have said or done?

Figure 19: in blue are the respondents who have been misunderstood for something said or done during their holiday experience.

The second question was about situations in which the respondents felt offended, for example because of a gesture, a comment or the indifference of their interlocutor. 10.3% reported some situations of resentment, mostly due to a rude comment of the interlocutor or a general indifference during the service at the restaurant. One

respondent reported a peculiar reaction of a seller when she asked for a bottle of water. He obviously did not understand what she meant and replied in a rude manner "Aaaah? Whaaat?" making her feeling hurt.

Also on the bus, a tourist was offended by the behaviour of the driver who showed no patience at all. When she asked him for information he replied "no, no, no" in a rude way and without helping her. One tourist even said that at the ticket office there was a man who was not patient at all and she thought he insulted her in Italian.

A tourist told that since she is allergic to the sun, she usually carries with her an umbrella as protection; one day, while she was strolling in a Venetian street, an old Italian man shout at her and said some Italian words that resembled to an insult. She commented that he was very rude and she did not understand why he had this reaction.

Three respondents highlighted the fact that some people, especially the waiters, were indifferent and did not care much about the tourists. They generally felt ignored. Also in the hotel, the staff was quite inhospitable and did not pay much attention to them.

Have you ever been offended by a gesture, a rude comment, indifference?
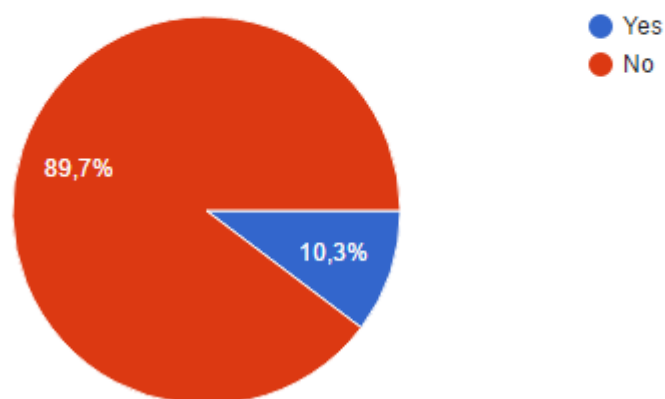

Figure 20: in blue are the respondents who have been offended by a particular behaviour or reaction of the people they met during their stay.

These situations, although fortunately being only limited cases compared to the positive feedback that the majority of respondents reported, are quite astonishing since we are referring to a tourist destination. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and kindness, especially if s/he is a tourist visiting a new place for the first time. A negative experience may influence the rest of the vacation and also the image the tourist has of the place and the people living here. Although rude comments were expressed in Italian, tourists interpreted verbal and non-verbal behaviours correctly, confirming the importance of the information conveyed through our body. Furthermore, as far as the indifference reported by some tourists is concerned, staff at the restaurant and service workers should learn to understand the importance of their service and pay attention to the customers' needs. Effective listening and effective reaction (Ceylan et al., 2012:1101) are fundamental in the service industry, as well as being aware of the cultural differences of the customers. In the specific case, those who complain about the service in the restaurant were especially Americans, who are usually accustomed to a very persistent kind of service. Since they belong to a high-masculine society, they may evaluate the service more negatively and be less indulgent about it (Crotts & Erdmann, 2000: 410); the results of the survey are in support of this argument, and people of low-masculine society appear to be more satisfied about the general service in Venice.

The following question was similar to the previous one but asked more generally the tourists about situations of embarrassment or harshness found during the holiday experience.

Even in this case, only 13.2% answered positively. Some of the situations reported concerned a difficulty in understanding or finding directions that caused an uncomfortable feeling in the tourist.

One respondent said that when he arrived at the hotel with his family, he discovered that the room he has booked was cancelled, and he felt quite uncomfortable in that situation. One tourist was annoyed by the harassment of certain sellers who wanted to sell staff at all costs. Another tourist, instead, felt slightly uncomfortable because he was used to the American custom of tipping whereas in Venice he saw that people do not usually tip. In the end, he always gave a tip anyway

because he was used to that. Three persons said that they had been robbed in Venice and this had partially ruined their holiday.
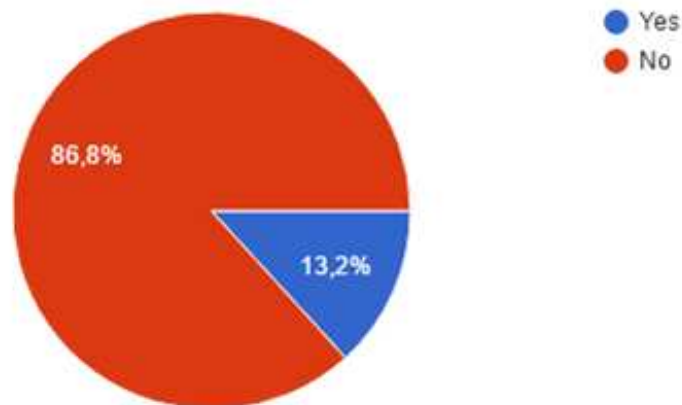

Figure 21: in blue are the respondents who felt embarrassed or uncomfortable at least once during their holiday in Venice.

The fourth question investigating cultural differences was about some behaviour, gestures, or situations that tourists could not explain because belonging to a different culture. 14.7% stated that they had difficulties in understanding some behaviours or habits of the people in Venice.

One interviewee did not understand the gesture of a man, stating that "he raised his arms up and down. It was probably very annoyed but I could not entirely understand the meaning of this gesture". Another tourist could not understand why, in some Italian cafés, customers have to pay the ticket first and then they can order food exclaiming "it does not make sense!".

Another episode concerned a tourist who went to the restaurant with her friend who needed to eat. She had already eaten but the waiter did not let her sit down without ordering anything. She also reported that the waiter was tired (it was 10 pm) and he gesticulated a lot. She did not get why she had to order anyway and could not just sit there with her friend.

Again, related to the restaurant service, a tourist reported: "I do not know why here in Venice waitress leave us alone and are quite indifferent…in the States they are pressing you every time...anyway, I prefer the Italian way".

Another tourist bumped into a Bachelor party, but she thought it was a graduation party. At first, she did not understand when she went to the bathroom and saw a group of men with one of them dressed in a strange way. "They were pushing him towards the female's toilets… I imagined it was a graduation party", she said. Finally, two respondents talked about the exuberance of Italians, who speak very loudly.

Has it ever occurred to you not to understand a particular behaviour (e.g. a gesture, the look on someone's face, a dress, a smile)?
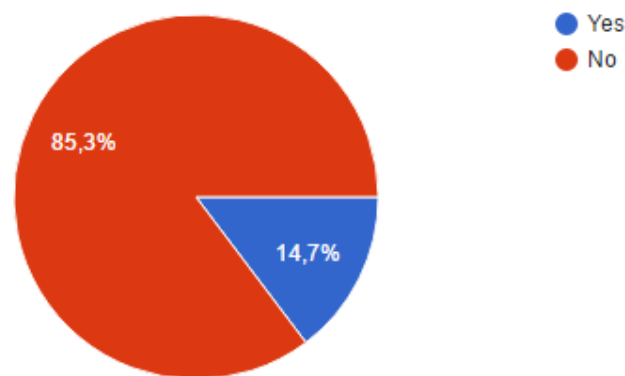

Figure 22: the pie chart shows in blue the tourists who could not explain some behaviours of the destination visited.

The final question about cultural diversity dealt with stereotypes and discrimination. Fortunately, only a little number of people felt judged because of their origins and it seems that discrimination is not very common in Venice.

The answers seem to report a general feeling that accompany the tourists in their trips more than a context-specific situation. For example, an Indian tourist answered that he is aware of the fact that people can tell he is Indian from the colour of his skin and his accent.

Some American respondents asserted that they feel judged when people say "ah, you are American..." like they were annoyed or accustomed to deal with a specific kind of people. One interviewee said that he usually tries to keep a low profile since he knows that "Americans are pigs", probably meaning that they are usually seen as messy and ill mannered. He also stated that he comes from Wisconsin, which has a Swedish heritage and it is influenced by the Swedish culture. He explained that they are very quiet persons, totally different from Italians who, on the contrary, are very "friendly and exuberant".

Another tourist said: "People usually assume that because I look Chinese, I do not speak English but only Chinese, whereas I've being living in the USA for a long time".

Another respondent told that because she has Iranian origins, every time she goes at the airport she is stopped and questioned by the officers. Also in the Venice airport, the police officers at the check-in desk stopped her for questioning. "It is frustrating but I am kind of used to that", she said.

Many of these answers are the result of prejudices that some persons have to deal with every day, not only when travelling. From the survey only a small number of respondents felt judged and fortunately no one was discriminated because of his/her origin; this strengthen the idea that "pre-existing positive attitudes towards cultural diversity may incline some individuals to form and sustain intercultural friendship" (Barker & Härtel, 2004: 5). Since tourist personnel is accustomed to deal every day with international tourists, it would not make sense for them to leave room for prejudices. However, everyone must be aware that prejudices still exist and may ruin the life of people affected by them. A popular example, confirmed by the results, is the tendency of categorizing all Asian-looking people as speakers of Chinese or Japanese. Tourist staff must be careful in addressing them in Chinese or Japanese thinking that they do not speak English at all, and this could be even offensive for the non-Asian tourists. One interviewed commented that: "I know that I look Japanese so everyone think I am Japanese", confirming that even in a globalized world like ours, prejudices are hard to die.

Has it ever occurred to you not to understand a particular behaviour (e.g. a gesture, the look on someone's face, a dress, a smile)?
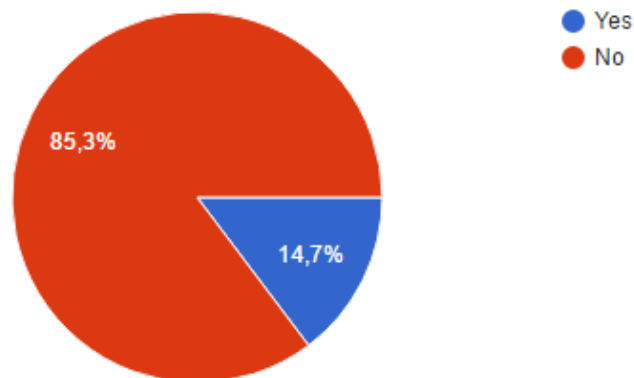

Figure 23: in blue are the respondents who felt somehow judged because of their origins.

The last question of this topic analyses the difference perceived between the Venetian (or more generally Italian) culture and the tourists' culture of origin. 41.8% found that, compared to their culture, the Italian culture has some things similar but some others are different. For 31.3% the Italian culture is totally different and for 26.9% it is very similar.

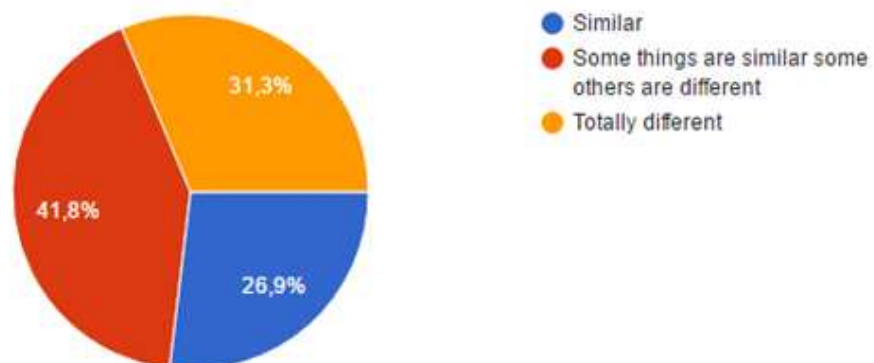## Compared to the Venetian (or generally Italian) culture, do you feel that your culture is:

Figure 24: the pie chart shows how tourists feel about Italian culture compared to their own culture.

It is positive to evaluate that although only 26.9% come from a similar culture, there were not many misunderstanding due to cultural differences. This question has two limits however. The first one is that, since the period spent in Venice by the tourists was generally limited to 2 or 3 days at the most, it was quite difficult for them make a thoughtful evaluation of the culture of Venice. They may have experienced only the "symbols" of the culture (Hofstede, 2010:8). Only one tourist made a comparison between the Italian culture and her own, stating that "Italian are hot tempered, whereas Korean people usually hide their feelings and are more calm". However, she also added that this was her 5th time in Italy, so she had had the possibility to fully understand the Italian culture.

Moreover, one tourist made a right comment about this question, who was also observed in other tourists' answers. Many respondents, especially those coming from the USA, did have some difficulties in responding to this question because they were born in a different country from the one where they live now, consequently they do not really feel like belonging to a specific culture as compared to those who were born and raised in the same culture.

4.4.5   Information Search and General Questions About the Stay

Generally, tourists stayed in Venice from a minimum of 1 day to a maximum of 6 days, with an average of 2.4 days of permanence. The majority of surveys were taken in the train station, consequently the respondents had almost finished their holiday and were leaving the destination (87.8%). 8.1% was halfway through the vacation and 4.1% had just arrived.

In agreement with the official statistics (ConfCommercio, 2015), the majority of tourists (93.1%) stayed in Venice for holiday purposes, only 2.8% for business purpose and 4.2% for other reasons (e.g., to attend a wedding or on honeymoon).

As for the composition of travel, more than half of respondents (55.4%) were travelling as a couple, including both married couples and friends. 20.3% was travelling with the family, whereas 14.9% stayed with a group of friends and 9.5% was alone.
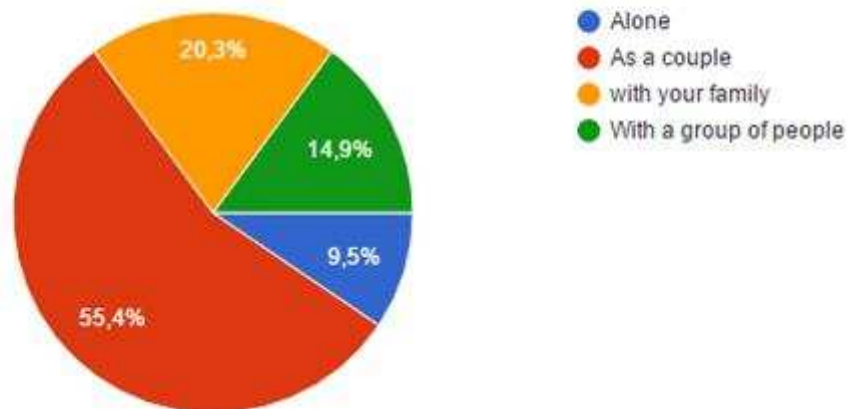
Are you traveling:

Figure 25: the pie chart shows the composition of travel of the respondents.

In order to identify the sources of information tourists consulted, the respondents were asked to what extent they had planned their holiday. 52.8% planned their holiday almost totally in advance, whereas 33.3% booked only some parts of the holiday in advance (e.g., the hotel, airplane tickets, etcetera). In addition, 13.9% did not book anything at all.

Depending on the planning of the holiday, the interviewees selected the sources of information questioned before and during the holiday. Those who had planned the holiday almost totally or partially in advanced, reported that they searched for information:

- on the Internet (80.3%), citing some well-known tourist portals such as TripAdvisor, Expedia, Cheapoair and Booking;
- in travel agencies (18.2%);
- through friends and family (13.6%)
- in brochures (3%).

It does not seem to exist a correlation between the nationality and the sources of information used for planning the vacation. The only data worth noticing is that those who came from distant countries or went for a special occasion (e.g., on honeymoon) relied on a travel agency to book their holiday.

As for the sources of information questioned during the holiday, the most utilized still remains the Internet with 41.3% of answers (which includes the applications of Google Maps, TripAdvisor and others), followed by the hotel reception (36.5%), the Tourist Information Centre (25.4%), local people (14.3%), the bus or train station (6.3%) and also the Ticket Office and the guide books. As for the latter, one tourist affirmed that his guidebook was really helpful and thanks to it he did not get lost.

For both questions, the prominent answer is the Internet, which at this point has become the most powerful source of information, used by both youngers and elderly people. In general, these sources provided tourists with all the information they were searching for, except for one case in which the hotel reception did not have any maps left to handle.

As for the information in the city of Venice, only 17.6% reported some troubles in finding what they were looking for. Some respondents complained about the fact that they could not find the Information Centre anywhere. In addition, they highlighted a general lack of panels, maps and information in the streets. One tourist suggested that "there should be more signs to the Ferrovia, we could not find the way back from S. Marco's square".

One interviewee complained about poor information given at the museums. She said that "paintings are not well explained, the plate indicates only the name of the artist and the date of creation" and that they "should have taken the audio guide for more info".

Also toilets are quite hard to find and many people had to ask the police officers or other service workers for indications. The other question summarized both the language and the indication problems, asking whether it was easy or not to find information in English and get around in the city.

In your opinion, is it easy to find information in English and get around in this city (e.g. Panels translated, brochures in English, English-speaking staff)?
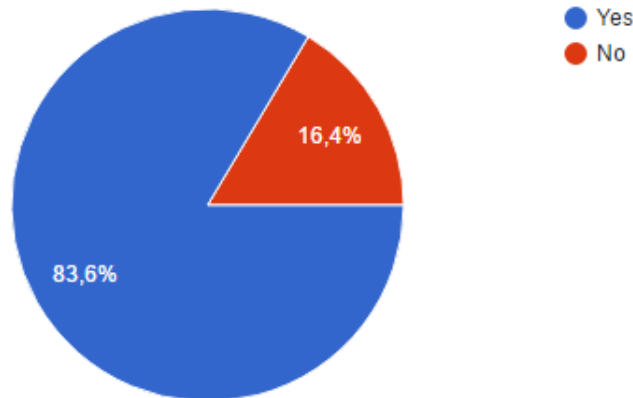
- Yes
- No

16,4%

83,6%

Figure 26: the red part in the pie chart corresponds to the respondents who had troubles in finding information and get around in Venice.

Most of the respondents (83.6%) did not have problems in visiting the city and find the information they need in English. As far as the language is concerned, someone said that it was easier to get around knowing some words of Italian (because they were Spanish).

As for the information, 16.4% responded "no" and explained that they had problems in finding the directions and got lost several times. One respondent replied that "if you do not ask, you cannot find what you are searching for". Someone had hard time in understanding the right waterbus to catch because they did not understand the board.

One of the final questions asked to give some suggestions to improve the holiday experience and find a solution to the abovementioned problems. It was an open question and 31% gave some suggestions to improve the quality of the holiday for the future tourists.

In general, the answers turned around the topic of information and indications. Those who were not happy about the indications and information given in Venice suggested that, since it is a tourist destination, there should be more signs and indication in the streets. Highlighting more clearly the names of the calli could be one solution, and adding more indications to find some recurrent place such as the

train station. Moreover, a bigger and better Tourist Information Centre should be advisable, since many tourists did not even find it. Moreover, someone suggested the creation of a clearer board of the waterbuses with also an explanation of how to swipe the ticket of the boat and a clearer way to explain how to catch the coach from the airport. One tourist also proposed to change the train board at the train station, which only indicates the last destination and it is not easy to understand.

In general, some people complained about the fact that Venice is very expensive and too crowded, consequently they could not catch the boat or the queue to the museum was too long, and this is something that needs to be taken into consideration. However, they were also aware of the fact that Venice is a popular tourist destination and they did not provide a real solution.

Another suggestion concerned some supports to carry the luggage across the bridges, since there are many bridges in the city and it is difficult to go up and down with heavy luggage. Moreover, some respondents suggested that all the menus at the restaurant should be written also in English and the staff should be more hospitable and caring.

Finally, the last question of the survey evaluated the general experience of the international tourists in Venice.
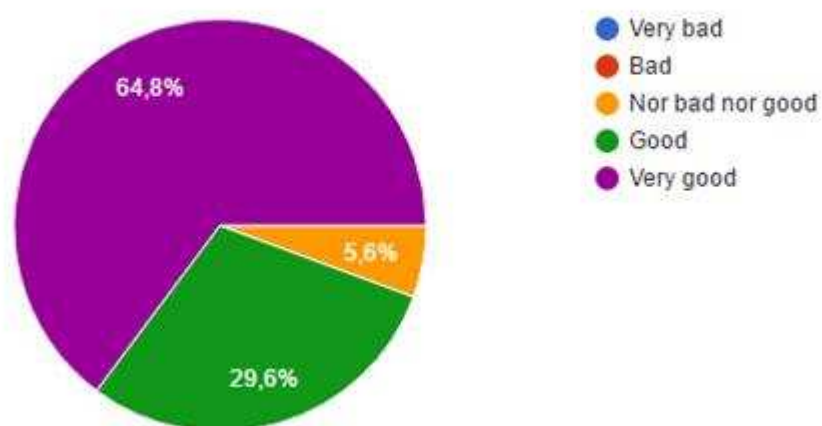

Figure 27: the pie chart shows how the respondents evaluated the general experience in Venice.

Besides some negative evaluation of the English spoken by the tourist staff and some negative experience of cultural diversity, out of 71 answers, no one evaluated negatively the holiday experience in Venice. Only 5.6% judged it 'nor bad nor good', but the remaining part generally evaluated it as 'good' (29.6%) and 'very good' (64.8%).

4.5   Discussion and Limits of the Research

Communication in English as a Lingua Franca seems to be quite effective, as a matter of fact the majority of respondents did not have major problems in communicating (both understanding and being understood) during their holiday.

Venice seems to be a well prepared destination to welcome international tourists. Staff mostly speaks English and seems to understand the tourists' needs. However, improvement could be done as regards the level of English spoken, which was partially judged good and acceptable, meaning that it was generally correct and comprehensible, but less than 30% of the interviewed tourists thought that it was not very good and even bad. Inhabitants, especially the elders, can be justified, but those working in the tourist industry must be prepared and speak an acceptable English.

In general, linguistic problems were easier to evaluate than cultural problems, since in the short term they were more recognizable, whereas cultural problems may at first not be even noticed.

The respondents who had problems in communication indicated as the main reason the different pronunciation and accent of the people speaking English in Venice. This is some interesting data to analyse, since it shows how pronunciation is one of the things that mostly affects intercultural communication. Perhaps, English should be taught differently, letting people adjust to different kinds of pronunciation and also teach them how to pronounce correctly what Jenkins (2000:24) calls the "Lingua Franca Core". Hotel staff, restaurant staff and staff at the tourist attractions are the most exposed to communication with tourists and must be prepared to communicate effectively with them. One thing to point out is also the fact that many respondents did not have an opinion about their accent. Being aware of one's accent

is important because it makes people realize that it may represent an obstacle to intercultural communication.

As far as cultural diversity is concerned, nothing critical is worth noticing. However, tourists' holidays are always shorter. Two days is a too limited period to evaluate and experience many cultural differences, as more than one respondent also pointed out. Most of the considerations were about the Italian "hot temper" and the usual characterization of the Italian personality (they are friendly, they speak loud and gesticulate a lot) which are perhaps just superficial stereotypes.

From the data, some intercultural differences arose as far as the service is concerned, especially between Americans and Italians, demonstrating how culture influences the perception of the service and its final evaluation. Americans are usually accustomed to tipping and to a more dedicated and caring kind of service, especially in restaurants. In Italy, people do not have the habit of tipping. However, it was surprising to acknowledge that in Venice many restaurants did not care much about their customers. Certainly, this bad habit must be changed, because it contributes to influence negatively the tourist experience. Every year, Venice hosts thousands and thousands of tourists, and restaurants do not need to search for clients. However, they should be less carried by economic profits and more by the interest to keep a positive image of the city. Furthermore, "[l]imited prior contact presupposes limited psychological interaction, which in turn elevates the role of observable cues to ascribed stereotypes" (Barker & Härtel, 2004:4). This means that, being the interaction between tourists and hosts very limited, nothing should be underestimated, especially in the case of the hospitality industry, in which services are of prominent importance. Service providers (and their behaviours) are fundamental in determining the customers' level of satisfaction of the service but also of the overall experience. Bad first impressions are negative for everyone, also because they may then relapse into a general stereotype of the people living in Venice.

A correspondence between problems of coexistence and the general evaluation of the holiday has been observed in the survey's results. People who affirmed to have been treated poorly or have felt uncomfortable in some situations, judge more

negatively the overall holiday compared with those who did not encounter any problem.

As for the information search, Internet is certainly the most powerful source of information, with websites available in many languages that reach everyone directly at home. However, since some tourists complain about the fact that they could not find a tourist information centre, and being aware of the huge number of tourists visiting Venice every day, the creation of a bigger and much improved centre for tourist information should be advisable, with the right and clearly indicated directions to reach it. Models from Australia might be reproduced, since there are big and helpful centres built only for the purpose of information (Hobbin, 1999: 387). On the contrary, in Venice many tourists ask for information at the ticket office, which may deliver some information but does not have the right equipment (brochures, leaflets, maps) to satisfy all the tourists' requests. Furthermore, information on the streets should be increased, with more maps and indications along the way of the most recurrent paths.

The only limit of this research worth noticing was the language. For those who did not speak English at all was impossible to continue with the questions. Also those who had a basic knowledge of the English, found some questions difficult to understand, although being put as simply as possible and repeated or sometimes even showed written on the paper. A more complete thorough evaluation should be carried on in the language of the interviewees. Nevertheless, this survey was also a way for testing the tourists' level of English.

Moreover, if tourists were just arrived, it was not possible to proceed with some of the questions about their communication and cultural problems during the holiday, since they had not experienced it yet.

This research was an exploratory study; more research is desirable, for example, in order to assess the service provided by the tourist industry in Venice in a more direct way, questioning the tourist staff at the hotels, restaurants and attractions. The research was based on the tourists' point of view, but it would be interesting to analyse the point of view of the persons working in the tourism and compare the results in order to see whether they interpret some situations or behaviours

differently. It should be interest also to assess the level of English of the staff and compare it with the opinion given by the tourists during their stay.

CONCLUSIONS

Language and culture have been the central themes of this dissertation. Although tourism may represent a superficial context to analyse these topics, it is also the context where intercultural communication happens more frequently.

Communication is a complex process, which becomes even more complex when it involves intercultural aspects. Values, rules and social behaviours affect the way in which people relate to one another. Interpersonal exchanges may be disastrous if the communicator does not pay attention to the characteristics of his/her interlocutors. Verbal and non-verbal stimuli cause a certain reaction in the interlocutor, especially if the s/he comes from a different cultural background. They may produce feelings of embarrassment, astonishment and even offend or provoke him/her.

Fortunately, the results of the research done in Venice do not highlight critical situations of serious misunderstanding occurred between tourists and the tourist staff. Perhaps, the tourism industry in Venice, after many years of development, has become prepared to welcome tourists from all over the world and provide them with a positive experience. Moreover, this fact can also be related to the process of globalization; in fact, technologies make possible to connect people from distant places. Thanks to the Internet and websites, TV programs and other sources of information, people are more aware of the existence of different cultures and habits in the world. No sign of culture shock has been observed nor mentioned by the interviewees; two days are probably too a short period to experience profound feelings of shock and estrangement, but maybe people are also more prepared of what they are going to visit and experience.

Internet is the privileged source of information in which everyone can find everything. In fact, also the tourism industry relies on this source of information. Potential tourists have the possibility to book in advance their hotel and they flight online, to decide what places they want to visit and what activities they can do in the destination. They can also express and share their opinion about the destinations visited with other tourists. This is why for the tourist destination it is so important to

give the tourists the most positive experience, otherwise the Web will be instantly informed about the bad treatment and negative aspects encountered by the tourists and repercussions will affect the entire destination.

What seems more relevant in the tourist experience as emerged from the survey is the verbal communication aspect. Indeed, people working in Venice, restaurant staff in particular, need improvement in the knowledge of English. The development of English as a Lingua Franca is going to be an interesting topic of discussion for the next decades. English is the language that almost everyone nowadays speaks or at least knows. However, the answers of the tourists show a 30% who was not happy about the level of English spoken by the tourist staff. Pronunciation is what makes the communication more difficult among non-native speakers. Speakers of English should be aware of what causes misunderstanding and incomprehension starting from the school. Learners should drop the idea of achieving a native-like accent, almost impossible for someone who is not fully surrounded by native speakers and for a long period of time. What is important is to start considering learning the English language from a different perspective, detached from to the imitation of the British or American English accents, and more interest in mutual intelligibility. People should be more interested in keeping their cultural and linguistic differences but at the same time privileging mutual comprehension. In a globalized world like ours, the problem of one's identity is at stake. Cultural differences are not an obstacle to communication but a point of strength.

A final consideration about Venice as a popular tourist destination needs to be done. One consequence of the enormous turnout of tourists in Venice is the decrease of customer care in the provision of tourist services. Staff risks to become accustomed to the tourists' presence and treat the guests only and exclusively like a source of money. The indifference and rudeness of many service workers and waiters reported by the interviews show a general carelessness for the tourists' feelings. The hospitality industry should be characterized by for the satisfaction of the tourists' needs and requests.

On the other hand, also tourists must behave with respect in the place that they are visiting and this respect comes from the understanding of the culture and the people that live in this place.

After all, tourism is one of the best ways to know new places, discover new habits and adjust to different lifestyles. In order to communicate effectively, no misunderstandings nor resentment should come in the way in the first place. Thus, starting from the people working in the tourism industry, tourist staff has to do his/her part in learning to interact with international customers.

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Appendix

Text of the Survey

Hello,
I am a graduating student from the University of Venice. I am doing a research about intercultural communication in the tourist destination and I would like to ask you some questions about your experience in Venice. It will only takes a few minutes to answer to my questions. Thanks in advance for your help.

ABOUT YOUR LANGUAGE:

1. Do you speak English?
   a) Yes, it is my first language
   b) Yes, it is not my first language but I often speak it
   c) Yes, but it is not my first language and I do not often speak it
   d) No (→ the survey is finished)

2. Where do you come from?
   Country………………………………………………………

3. What is your mother tongue?
   …………………………………………………………

4. Do you speak other languages in your country?
   a) Yes, specify which ones:
      …………………………………………………………
   b) No

5. When and where do you speak English most frequently or preferably?
   (You can tick more than one answer)
   a) At home and in my everyday life
   b) At work, for business purpose
   c) During my English lessons at school
   d) Rarely (specify in which occasion:………………….…)
   e) Other: …………………………………………………….

6. Which language do you usually speak when you travel abroad?
   a) English
   b) French
   c) Spanish
   d) Other: ……………………………………………………

7. How do you feel about your accent when speaking in English? Describe it in one word. …………………………………………………….

ABOUT YOUR LINGUISTIC EXPERIENCE IN VENICE

8. During your stay, have you ever talked to:
   Very often = more than 20 times per day

   a. Hotel (or camping) staff   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

   b. Staff at the restaurant   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

   c. Staff at the attractions (e.g. museums, churches, theatre) and local tour guides   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

   d. Staff at the information point   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

   e. Service workers (hospital, airport, bus/train station…)   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

   f. Inhabitants   ☐ Yes   ☐ No
   g. Other tourists of the same country   ☐ Yes   ☐ No
   h. Other tourists of different countries   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

9. During your stay, have you ever had problems in communicating in English with those people? (e.g. you could not understand the explanations/directions or not being understood by others)
   a) Yes, (specify if you recall a particular episode: …………………….)
   b) No (→ skip to question n°14)

10. Your difficulties were related to :
    a) Understanding your interlocutors (→ skip questions n°12 and n° 13)
    b) Being understood by your interlocutors (→ skip to question n°12)
    c) Both a and b
    d) I do not know

11. Do you think your difficulties in **understanding your interlocutors** were related to:
     a) Your lack of general knowledge of English grammar
     b) Local people's lack of general knowledge of English grammar
     c) Both a and b
     d) Different pronunciation and accent
     e) Different usage of words or expressions
     f) The tone of your voice
     g) Other: …………………………………………..

12. When you had trouble in understanding, did you:
    (You can tick more than one answer)
     a) Ask for repetition
     b) Ask for clarification
     c) Ask to speak slower
     d) Guess intelligently
     e) Ask other people's help
     f) Avoid communication
     g) Express non-understanding
     h) Other: …………………………………………..

13. Do you think your difficulties in **being understood** were related to:
     a) Your lack of general knowledge of English
     b) Local people's lack of general knowledge of English
     c) Both a and b
     d) Different pronunciation and accent
     e) Different usage of words or expressions
     f) The tone of your voice
     g) Other: …………………………………………..

14. When you had trouble in speaking and making you understand, did you:
    (You can tick more than one answer)
     a) Invent new words or translate from your language
     b) Point at an object or mimed
     c) Ask other people's help
     d) Rephrase your sentence
     e) Switch to your native language
     f) Avoid communication
     g) Other: …………………………………………..

15. How do you judge the general level of English of the people you have interacted with during your stay?
     a) Very bad (incorrect and incomprehensible)

b) Bad (struggle in communicating)
c) Sufficient (incorrect but comprehensible)
d) Acceptable (simple but effective)
e) Good (correct and comprehensible)
f) Very good (native-like)

ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE IN VENICE

16. How do you generally value the people you have encountered during your stay (e.g. hotel personnel, local people, staff service)?

a) Polite	e) Calm	h) Impolite	l) Inhospitable
b) Friendly	f) Well organized	i) Rude	m) Messy
c) caring	g) Disciplined	j) Indifferent	n) Undisciplined
d) hospitable		k) Annoying	o) Other

17. Have you ever been misunderstood for something you have said or done?
    a) Yes (specify when: …………………………………………)
    b) No

18. Have you ever been offended by a gesture, a rude comment, indifference?
    a) Yes (specify when: …………………………………………..)
    b) No

19. Have you ever felt embarrassed/uncomfortable?
    a) Yes (specify when: …………………………………………..)
    b) No

20. Has it ever occurred to you not to understand a particular behaviour (e.g. a gesture, the look on someone's face, a dress, a smile)?
    a) Yes (specify when: ……..………………………………………)
    b) No

21. Have you ever felt judged (because of your origins, your attitude or some stereotypes about your country)?
    a) Yes (specify when: …………………………………………..)
    b) No

22. Compared to the Venetian (or generally Italian) culture, do you feel that your culture is:
   a) Similar
   b) Some things are similar some others are different
   c) Totally different

GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR STAY:

23. How long are you planning to stay/visit Venice?
   ………………………… days

24. At what point of the holiday are you?
   a) Just arrived (→ skip to question n° 34)
   b) Halfway
   c) Leaving

25. Purpose of your stay:
   a) Holiday
   b) Business
   c) Study
   d) Other

26. Are you traveling:
   a) Alone
   b) As a couple
   c) With your family
   d) With a group of people

27. Have you planned your holiday:
   a) Almost totally in advance
   b) 50% in advance
   c) not at all (→ skip to question n° 29)

28. Before your arrival, where did you find the information on what to see, where to stay and what to do:
    a) Travel agencies and Tour Operators

b) Friends and relatives

c) The Internet

d) Brochures

e) Travel guides

f) Other: ………………………………………………..

29. Where did you search for information once arrived?

    a) At the airport (TIC)

    b) At the Tourist Information Center of the city

    c) In the hotel's reception

    d) At the bus/train station

    e) You asked local people

    f) On the Internet (on your smartphone, personal device, on the hotel's computer)

    g) Other: …………………………………………………………

30. During your stay, have you ever had hard time in finding some information?

    a) Yes (specify when: ………………………………………….)

    b) No

31. In your opinion, is it easy to find information in English and get around in this city (e.g. Panels translated, brochures in English, English-speaking staff)?

    a) Yes

    b) No

32. What would you change? Do you have any suggestions to improve the holiday experience of the next foreign tourists in Venice?

33. Until now, how do you evaluate your general experience in Venice?

    a) Very bad

    b) Bad

    c) Nor bad or good

    d) Good

    e) Very good

GENERAL INFORMATION:

34. Nationality: ………………………………

35. Gender:
     a) F
     b) M
     c) Other

36. What is your age?

37. Level of study:
     a) Primary/Elementary school
     b) Secondary/High school
     c) College/University
     d) Other: ………………………….

Thank you for your helpfulness and your kindness. The survey is anonymous and protected by the Italian law 196/2003. The data are only for research purposes.