



What, why, and whence English as a Lingua Franca?

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In the beginning Angloschool, 1980s



EFL: teaching vs learning

‘Why don’t learners learn what teachers teach?’

D. Allwright 1984. In D.M. Singleton and D.G. Little (eds.) *The interaction hypothesis in language learning in formal and informal contexts*. Dublin: IRAAL.

Remember him?



“Ich habe drei Augen”



Phase One:

Theorising ELF: 1989-1995/2006

- Language attitudes/ideologies → mutual (non)intelligibility (e.g. Wolff 1959)
- Speech/Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, Coupland, various)
- The early World Englishes literature (Kachru, Smith, various) legitimising NN Englishes

World Englishes ideological position: the 1978 (IA)WE conference/1982 publication

The English-using community in various continents was for the first time viewed in its totality. A number of cross-cultural perspectives were brought to bear upon **our understanding of English in a global context**, of language variation, of language acquisition, **and of the bilinguals' – or multilinguals' – use of English**".

(Kachru, Preface to 1st Edition, *The Other Tongue. English across Cultures*)

"... the whole mystique of native speaker and mother tongue should probably be quietly dropped from the linguists' set of professional myths about language". "Native speakers ... may have confidence that they "know" the language better than others, but the differences from different areas and the **growing importance of non-native norms** will increasingly affect this confidence"

(Ferguson, Foreword to 1st Edition)

ELF phase 1: focus on features

Pronunciation: the Lingua Franca Core

- Not a monolithic model (or any kind of model) or a fixed 'core', but a small number of pronunciation 'repertoire' features available for use as and when needed (e.g. most consonant sounds except voiceless/voiced 'th', vowel length, tonic stress).
- Therefore, phonological/phonetic accommodation skills equally important.
- Many features non-core, i.e. the many native English pronunciation features found not to contribute to intelligibility in ELF communication.

Lexicogrammar

- ❖ uncountable nouns to countable, e.g. *informations, advices, fundings, softwares*
- ❖ zero marking of 3rd person –s in present simple tense e.g. *she think, he suggest*
- ❖ merging of who and which, e.g. *a paper who will be published, it's the content who is important*
- ❖ use of an all-purpose question tag, e.g. *isn't it? is it?*
- ❖ use of greater explicitness, e.g. *black colour, how long time...?*
- ❖ innovative use of morphemes, e.g. *forsify, boringdom, discrimination, levelize*
- ❖ accommodation skills again, e.g. care with use of ENL idioms ("unilateral idiomaticity")

NES accommodation skills

The perils of using slang in the air

Native [English] speakers end up using jargon and slang that non-natives might not understand. Also, they use too many words, which is not helpful in emergency situations. This doesn't happen with non-natives, as this is part of their training.

EL Gazette, May 2017



Phase Two:

Awareness of the fluidity of ELF

- We need to move away from “the fatal attraction of lists” (Seidlhofer 2008).
- There are not only “observed regularities”, but also “inherent fluidity ... in the ad hoc, situated negotiation of meaning” (Seidlhofer 2009)
- We should think of ELF users not in terms of traditional (national) speech communities, but in terms of Communities of Practice (groups from different L1s using English as their lingua franca to engage in shared practices, take part in a joint enterprise, develop/use a shared linguistic repertoire, e.g. Pronsig, Global Issues SIG).

So ELF moves away from WE

Same ideological position about non-native Englishes:

e.g. **fallacies** “that in the Outer and Expanding Circles, English is essentially learned to interact with native speakers”, that NN Englishes are “interlanguages”, and that “the diversity and variation in English is ... an indicator of linguistic decay”

(Kachru 1992 pp. 357-8)

But now a major conceptual difference:

World Englishes: **definable codifiable language varieties**

ELF: transcends language boundaries, so **not varieties, not codifiable.**

Similects replace L1 transfer

“Speakers of Finnish, for example, have no reason to talk to each other in English. The shared features of ‘Finglish’ result from many speakers having the same language combination in their repertoire, and thereby similar transfer from their first language. We cannot simply equate the L1-based lects with dialects, but could speak of them instead as ‘similects’, because **they arise in parallel, not in mutual interaction**” (Mauranen 2012: 29).

Similects and ELF interactions

“... ELF takes shape in speaker interaction; interactants come together with their **own hybrid variants [ie similects]**, that resemble those of people who share their background (that is, who speak their similect) but are **different from those used by the people with whom they speak**. ELF groups consist of speakers with hybrid repertoires where each individual may represent a different hybrid. Linguistic complexity in ELF communities and groupings is enhanced by the **wider environments where ELF is spoken, which are usually multilingual**” ... All this makes the communities linguistically heterogenous, and ELF a site of an unusually complex contact. Therefore ELF might be termed **‘second-order language contact’: a contact between hybrids.**” (ibid.).

To sum up:
we could describe ELF as ‘triple variable’

1. Individual speakers’ **similects** (quality – which features, how ‘strong’? / quantity – how many, how often?)
2. The nature of the **second order contact** (who is involved in any particular ELF interaction?)
3. What is the **specific locality** of the interaction (country/region and which language(s) are spoken there?).

In other words, ELF communication is a highly complex, highly variable phenomenon that can’t be captured in simple ‘rules’.

Definitions of ELF in the 2nd phase

“... English as it is used as a contact language among speakers from different first languages”

(Jenkins J. 2009 *World Englishes* /2015 *Global Englishes*, Routledge)

“any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option”

(Seidlhofer 2011, *Understanding English as a Lingua Franca*, OUP)

“The use of English in a lingua franca language scenario”

(Mortensen 2013, Notes on English as a subject of study. *JELF* 2/1).

Note: nothing in the definitions suggests that NESs are excluded from the definition despite the frequency with which critics continue to make this claim.

ELF research developments still ignored ...

Here, we refer to the project centred on the work of Jennifer Jenkins (2000) and Barbara Seidlhofer (2004), which **aims to identify core linguistic features that facilitate intelligibility** in ELF communication so that a counterhegemonic curriculum of English language teaching may be developed. While the ELF research project has been highly influential, its tenets have also triggered much debate. Critics are concerned that **such efforts to establish an ELF core has the danger of reintroducing a monolithic model of English that the notion of ELF is meant to contest.**

Park & Wee **2014**, English as a Lingua Franca: Lessons for language and mobility. *Multilingual Margins* 2/1: 53-73 (similar recent claims by others).

Need for continual (re)theorisation of ELF

... it is important for ELF scholars to acknowledge the necessity of continual theorisation and reflection, particularly regarding the complexity of the subject matter. Only by engaging with wider theory and considering the subject matter of the field can we adequately account for “ELF” as a field of enquiry, a phenomenon, and/or a use of language....

Baird, Baker & Kitazawa 2014. The complexity of ELF. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca* 3/1: 171-196.

And so to the third phase of ELF: Main reason for moving on again

In our age of increasing **global mobility** and resulting linguistic **superdiversity**, a growing unease among some researchers about ELF's emphasis on English vs other languages, when ELF should be leading the move away from negative orientations to multilingualism.

Over 30 years ago, Pattanayak (1984) argued:

“In the developed world ... two languages are considered a nuisance, three languages uneconomic and many languages absurd. In multilingual countries, many languages are facts of life; any restriction in the choice of language is a nuisance; and one language is not only uneconomic, it is absurd”

This is still true of the Anglophone 'developed world'

- **US** English Only/No Child Left Behind (cf. Phillipson)
- **UK** negative approach to languages other than English
- **“the monolingual bias”** of much SLA research, according to which “the learning and use of only one language is taken to be the most natural default for human communication” (Ortega 2014: 48), and that one language is usually English.
- **Even ELF research’s focus “on the ‘E’** of ELF communication rather than on developing the relationship between English and other languages in respect of the multilingualism of most ELF users and the “multi-competence of the community”” (Jenkins 2015: 59).

‘Just speaking English won’t get us very far’ (even if it’s ELF-aware)

“... All the evidence shows clearly that speaking English is not enough in the contemporary world. The concept “global English” [sic] is based on the very high numbers of people internationally who have learned English as a second language and who are therefore, by definition, bilingual or multilingual, benefiting from all the well-attested advantages – cognitive and other – of speaking more than one language...”

Letter to *The Guardian* newspaper, 29 August 2017 from five university professors (Cambridge, Belfast, Liverpool, Manchester, Oxford)

This is well supported by research into Multilingualism

- Translanguaging (e.g. Garcia 2009, Garcia & Li Wei 2014)
- Flexible bilingual pedagogy (e.g. Creese & Blackledge 2010, 2015)
- Translingual practices (e.g. Canagarajah 2011, 2013)
- Polylinguaging (e.g. Jørgensen 2008, Jørgensen et al. 2011)
- Mobile resources (e.g. Blommaert 2010)
- The multilingual turn in applied linguistics (e.g. May 2014)

Translanguaging

Translanguaging is **not simply going from one language code to another**. The notion of code-switching assumes that the two languages of bilinguals are two separate monolingual codes that could be used without reference to each other. Instead, **translanguaging posits that bilinguals have one linguistic repertoire from which they select features strategically to communicate effectively**. That is, translanguaging takes as its starting point the **language practices of bilingual people as the norm** , and not the language of monolinguals, as described by traditional usage books and grammars (García, 2011, p. 1; her italics, and see García & Li Wei 2014).

Problems with ELF2's thinking in respect of multilingualism's role in ELF

- Focuses far too heavily on the English of ELF users – on **English as 'superordinate'** and the use of “multilingual resources” as **one** of several characteristics of ELF – as if ELF is primary and multilingualism is secondary – whereas **ELF could not exist without multilingualism**.
- There is a problem with the **notion of ELF CoPs**: ELF users are often not 'communities' engaging in shared practices, but **strangers engaging in transient encounters** in which any shared repertoire emerges or develops during the interaction, and may not be known from the start.
- Current commonly-used definitions of ELF don't allow for situations where English **isn't used but is known to all present, so is potentially available**.

A reminder of current definitions of ELF

ELF refers to:

“... **English as it is used** as a contact language among speakers from different first languages” (Jenkins 2009)

“**any use of English** among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option” (Seidlhofer 2011)

“**The use of English** in a lingua franca scenario”(Mortensen 2013)

And a recap of ELF phases 1 and 2

The first phase, 'ELF 1', focused on forms, and envisaged the possibility of identifying and maybe codifying ELF varieties.

The second phase, 'ELF 2', shifted the focus to ELF's variability, saw this as ELF's defining feature, with ELF communication transcending L1 boundaries, which meant that varieties couldn't be identified, and codification would not be possible.



And so to ELF's third eye

A shift in thinking from **ELF as the overarching framework with multilingualism as one of its features**, to **multilingualism as the overarching framework, and ELF within its framework** alongside other languages, although still (currently) the primary global lingua franca, and the only language **always in the potential mix** in ELF interactions.

A new definition: English as a Multilingua Franca (EMF)

“Multilingual communication in which English is available as a contact language of choice, but is not necessarily chosen”.

That is, multilingual communicative settings in which English is known to all present, whether or not they use it – possibly the most common kind of English interaction globally.

So we can talk of: [Multilingual ELF user/Monolingual ELF user](#)

Key features of 'ELF 3'

- **Multilingualism, not English, is the 'superordinate'**. ELF seen as part of multilingualism vs multilingualism as part of ELF, reducing the importance of 'English' in ELF, focusing more on the multilingualism of most ELF users.
- **But English is always in the 'mix'**, potentially, even if not necessarily used.
- **Likewise the other languages of everyone present**. This applies even if languages other than English aren't used as there will be some 'permeation' from their other languages into their English.
- **L1 English is also in the mix on the (rare) occasions NESs are present**.
- **'Contact zones'** ("social spaces where cultures meet ...", Pratt 1991) rather than 'CoPs' to explain transient encounters between speakers from different lingua-cultural backgrounds, where the key focus needs to be on the nature of the **contact, not on practices** (but CoPs still accounting for communication in more established ELF groupings).

Some theoretical implications of reframing ELF as EMF

- The crucial distinction for competence (i.e. ‘intercultural communicative competence’) is not NES/NNES but **multilingual/monolingual**. In SLA terms, it is monolingual ELF users whose language is ‘marked’ (abnormal) and multilingual ELF users whose language is ‘unmarked’ (normal).
- **Monolingual English speakers are disadvantaged** vis-à-vis multilinguals.
- For English language assessment: we **need to test skills in multilingualism-with-English**, **not English only**, and **not penalise features of the L1** in candidates’ English (similects), or instances where they adjust their language, not only making ‘mistakes’ in English, but also switching into other languages, where either enhances the communication.
- **ELT** needs to incorporate all this into teaching methodology.
- Educational institutions such as universities, that claim to be ‘international’, **need to operate multilingually**, not in ‘English-only’.

English “available but not necessarily chosen”: An example from Richard Cauldwell’s blog

In the 1980s I worked at 神戸大学 (Kobe University, Japan) as a teacher of English. Towards the end of my time there, I was invited to a university party hosted by the president of the university. It was for the international students who were about to return home after varying periods of study – usually a year, sometimes more. I was amazed at how many there were (they weren’t there to learn English, so I hadn’t come across any of them) and at the range of countries they were from. I walked up to a group, and we did introductions all around in English. They were from Brazil, Hungary and France. They then – probably assuming that I could manage linguistically – resumed their conversation in Japanese – their lingua-franca of choice. I was amazed. It was wonderful, surprising, but electrifying experience for me to witness a language other than English being used as a lingua franca. It was obvious from the introductions that they were all good at English, but it was not the language that they relaxed into. Quite naturally, after a year or more in Japan, Japanese was their go-to language.

Some general implications for ELT: Teaching *for* ELF vs Teaching ELF

- *ELF-aware / ELF-effective / ELF-informed* teaching and teacher-training (not 'ELF teaching/teacher-training').
- This includes *familiarising* learners with the (entirely legitimate) L1 influences on other NNEs' English (i.e. their similects), and helping learners to *develop their accommodation skills* in terms of both *adjusting their English* for the benefit of their conversation partners (regardless of whether the result would be 'correct' in ENL), and *translanguaging* appropriately into other languages than English.
- Good sources for more specific advice: Bayyurt, Llurda, Sifakis, Vettorel (on teaching), Dewey (on teacher-training).
- Good sources on pron: Patsko and Simpson/Walker.

Seidlhofer & Widdowson forthcoming,
'ELF for EFL: A change of subject?'

The reality is that in a globalized world the predominant use of English is as international lingua franca and this needs to be taken into pedagogic account if English is to be made a reality for learners. The global learning of English needs to be based on its global use. What this means, we have suggested, is that, instead of persisting with unsuccessful attempts to get learners to conform to NS norms, we need to change the subject and recognize that it is the use of English as a lingua franca that corresponds more closely to what is real for learners, and is a more realistic objective for them to achieve.

In other words, the answer to 'Why don't learners learn what teachers teach?' is: it's unreal and unrealistic!

ELF: future possibilities

1. **Convergence:** we will all speak American English – or “American” as Sarah Palin, supporter of President Elect Donald J. Trump, called it during the 2016 US elections.
2. **Divergence:** the ‘Latin’ syndrome – English will develop into many mutually incomprehensible varieties.
3. **No future:** another language or languages will take over.
4. **A Chinese future:** influence from the largest number of English speakers in the world – Chinese English.
5. **English as a multilingua franca,** with translanguaging and increasing influence from other languages as the norm.

And a couple less suggestions mentioned less often

Leaving Trump aside, what about Brexit?

1. Will the EU drop English as its primary working lingua franca?
2. If so, will that lead to a drop in English (ELF) use in Europe and then beyond?
3. If not, will the kind of ELF used in the EU, in the absence of most of its former native English members, become (even) less influenced by native English?
4. If so, will this lead to a further decrease in NES influence around the rest of the world, and perhaps a growing influence from Chinese ELF users' English?
5. And if *native* English loses its global influence, will multilingualism-with-English/ translanguaging become the global norm for English?
6. My guess: yes to questions 3, 4 and 5. If this is right, the implications for ELT and testing – and for organisations such as IATEFL – are immense.

Or to put it another way ...

English will keep changing as it has done throughout its history, with **second-language users as an increasingly important influence in the thoroughly globalised contemporary world**. It is unlikely to supplant local languages in its function as a lingua franca, but to complement the linguistic diversity that lives on locally and regionally... At present, we are really talking about the first global generation of ELF, if we date it back to roughly the adoption of the Internet. **The one thing we can predict with certainty is that English will keep changing.**

Mauranen 2015, cited in ...

Thanks for listening!

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'This is a landmark publication, led by a formidable team of editors, on a topic that has established itself as core to English and applied language studies. It is more than a state-of-the-art survey. It advances the field to a new level. It is an essential reference for students and scholars world-wide.'

Li Wei, *Chair of Applied Linguistics, University College London, UK*

The Routledge Handbook of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) provides an accessible, authoritative and comprehensive introduction to the main theories, concepts, contexts and applications of this rapidly developing field of study.

Including 47 state-of-the-art chapters from leading international scholars, the handbook covers key concepts, regional spread, linguistic features and communication processes, domains and functions, ELF in academia, ELF and pedagogy, and future trends.

This handbook is key reading for all those engaged in the study and research of English as a lingua franca and world/global Englishes within English language, applied linguistics and education.

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