

## **Using English as a Lingua Franca in Education in Europe**

# **Language and Social Life**

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Editors

David Britain

Crispin Thurlow

## **Volume 7**

# Using English as a Lingua Franca in Education in Europe

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English in Europe: Volume 4

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*This volume is dedicated to the memory of Professor Cem Alptekin (1942–2014).*



## Series Preface

The biggest language challenge in the world today is English. School children are expected to learn it; and the need to succeed in English is often fired by parental ambition and the requirements for entry into higher education, no matter what the proposed course of study. Once at university or college, students across the globe are increasingly finding that their teaching is delivered through the medium of English, making the learning process more onerous. Universities unquestioningly strive for a greater level of internationalization in teaching and in research, and this is in turn equated with greater use of English by non-native speakers. The need to use English to succeed in business is as much an issue for multinational corporations as it is for small traders in tourist destinations; meanwhile other languages are used and studied less and less. On the other hand, academic publishers get rich on the monolingual norm of the industry, and private language teaching is itself big business. In the market of English there are winners and there are losers.

The picture, however, is more complicated than one simply of winners and losers. What varieties of English are we talking about here, and who are their 'native speakers'? Is there something distinct we can identify as English, or is it merely part of a repertoire of language forms to be called upon as necessary? Is the looming presence of English an idea or a reality, and in any case is it really such a problem, and is it really killing off other languages as some commentators fear? Is the status and role of English the same in all parts of the world, or does it serve different purposes in different contexts? What forms of practical support do those trying to compete in this marketplace need in order to be amongst the winners?

These are all questions addressed by the *English in Europe: Opportunity or Threat?* project, which ran from January 2012 to October 2014. This international research network received generous funding from the Leverhulme Trust in the UK and was a partnership between the universities of Sheffield (UK), Copenhagen (Denmark) and Zaragoza (Spain), Charles University in Prague (Czech Republic) and the South-East European Research Centre in Thessaloniki (Greece). Each of the partners hosted a conference on a different topic and with a particular focus on English in their own region of Europe. During the course of the project 120 papers were presented, reporting on research projects from across Europe and beyond, providing for the first time a properly informed and nuanced picture of the reality of living with and through the medium of English.

The *English in Europe* book series takes the research presented in these conferences as its starting point. In each case, however, papers have been rewritten,

and many of the papers have been specially commissioned to provide a series of coherent and balanced collections, giving a thorough and authoritative picture of the challenges posed by teaching, studying and using English in Europe today.

Professor Andrew Linn  
Director, *English in Europe* project



## Acknowledgements

We would like to wholeheartedly thank the *English in Europe: Opportunity or Threat?* project for the financial support in the organization of the conference which took place in Thessaloniki, on 23–24 November 2013. We would also like to thank all our *English in Europe* partners who participated in the blind peer review process of all chapters of the volume, thus ensuring its academic quality and professional standards. Their contribution to the volume, their help, support and guidance have been invaluable.



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Zoi Tatsioka, Barbara Seidlhofer, Nicos C. Sifakis  
and Gibson Ferguson

## Introduction

Over recent decades English has assumed an increasingly important role in higher education in Europe, where many universities have introduced English medium graduate courses in their drive to internationalise and recruit fee-paying students. However, in these settings the English language used for communication among students and academics of varied national backgrounds is not so much the standard English of the UK or of any other native variety but English as a lingua franca (henceforth ELF), and it is the challenges and opportunities of this use of English that is the main focus of the present volume.

More specifically, the volume examines ELF in European education with a primary focus on South East Europe (Bulgaria, Croatia and Greece), although the educational contexts of Central (Austria and the Czech Republic) and Western Europe (Spain, the UK) are also explored. Thus, the volume investigates a region where English has only recently assumed the role of a common language following the decline of French in the middle of the 20th century, and Russian after the fall of the Iron Curtain in the 1990s. Countries of this geographical area belong to Kachru's (1985) Expanding Circle and thus they are not associated at all with Britain's colonial history, although nativeness is a recurring theme in the volume. Moreover, all the countries whose educational contexts are examined in the following chapters constitute member states of the European Union (EU) and enjoy the benefits of free movement and residence as well as the opportunity to participate in funded educational programmes. All the aforementioned political and social developments have paved the road for the spread of English as a lingua franca in the region. The historical evolution of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) into ELF in different parts of Eastern Europe is discussed below.

## 1 EFL and ELF in Eastern Europe

English has been taught as a foreign language in the countries of Eastern Europe for a number of decades without having been granted any official status, as all of the countries belong within the Expanding Circle. Although in the past it had to compete with other dominant foreign languages, predominantly French, it has now assumed the role of 'first foreign language' in the region and it is certainly the most widely learnt language followed by French and German (EACEA/Eurydice 2012).

Starting with the USSR, the most powerful state of the 20th century in Eastern Europe, foreign language learning boomed only after the end of World War II. According to Lewis (1962), English language lessons were offered even in pre-school education during that period and Special Foreign Language Medium High Schools were established in six major cities. In Moscow alone in 1962 there were 500 kindergartens where English was taught. In Russia, Ukraine and Georgia in particular, English language teaching was highly promoted by pedagogical institutes. Contrary to the picture Lewis paints, Ustinova (2005) claims that there was a delay in the expansion of English in the USSR due to the dominant role of Russian as a lingua franca in Eastern European countries, the popularity of French as a foreign language in the 20th century and the limited contacts with the Western world until the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991.

In other countries of East Europe such as Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria, which were not part of the USSR but acted as satellite states, English became the first foreign language only after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, when the focus shifted to the Western world (Simigné Fenyő 2003). In the 2000s English became the medium of instruction in various universities and since then it has gradually replaced Russian as a lingua franca in this part of Europe. In Bulgaria, a country examined in the volume, English has been viewed positively especially after the collapse of the USSR when it started being perceived as the language of civil rights, freedom, democracy and economic progress (Georgieva 2011 in Slavova this volume). English language teaching in Bulgaria starts in the first grade and has mostly been influenced by British and American English (O'Reilly 1998).

In the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, French was the first foreign language taught in schools followed by German until the late 1950s, when English and Russian became particularly popular due to the socio-political context of the state. The French government of that period reacted instantly to this change by providing schools with teachers who were native speakers of French in an effort to intensify French language learning. After the breakup of Yugoslavia, English became a compulsory foreign language from the first grade of primary school in Serbia in 2005, while second foreign language learning starts in the fifth grade (Filipović, Vučo and Djurić 2008). Similarly, in Croatia foreign language learning is promoted at all levels of education with a primary focus on English. English is taught from the first grade of primary school and it is native-speaker-oriented (Drljača Margić and Vodopija-Krstanović this volume).

Following the Greek War of Independence (1821–1832), foreign language learning was introduced in public secondary education in Greece with French as the compulsory foreign language. However, due to the influence of the Anglophone world, English gained an equal status with French in 1945, and in 1989 it became a compulsory foreign language in primary schools too (Papaeftymiou-Lytra 2012).

In 2010 English as a Foreign Language was introduced in the first and second grades of 1,000 primary schools (Dendrinos, Zouganeli and Karavas 2013) and as of 2016 it is taught in all grades of primary and secondary education throughout Greece. Sifakis (2007) and Sifakis and Bayyurt (2015) strongly argue for the endorsement of the teaching of English as a lingua franca and the integration of an ELF curriculum at schools stressing at the same time the emerging need for ELF-aware teacher education programmes. It is also noteworthy that a large part of English language teaching in Greece takes place in private language schools whose primary learning objectives are exam-oriented. Finally, English has quite recently been perceived as a lingua franca in higher education with a small number of university programmes offered in English.

As mentioned earlier, all the countries whose ELF educational contexts are examined in this volume constitute member states of the European Union. Most South and Central East European countries joined the EU in the 2000s (i.e. Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia in 2004; Bulgaria and Romania in 2007) with the exception of Greece, which has been a member state since 1981, Austria which became a member state in 1995 and Croatia, which joined the EU in 2013 (EU Commission 2017). Applicant countries include Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey, and their admission is expected to strengthen the role of ELF in South East Europe and the Balkans. One of the EU's core values is the promotion of linguistic diversity and multilingualism; however, since its foundation, the EU has also contributed to the development of ELF around Europe. In particular, the establishment of freedom of movement and residence for EU citizens as well as the operation and expansion of language programmes such as the recent Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) until 2013 and ERASMUS+ from 2014–2020 have been pivotal in solidifying the role of English in Europe.

Regarding the use of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in South East Europe, only a small proportion of higher education institutions offer English-taught programmes (ETPs). Cyprus has the highest proportion (47.8%), but percentages drop significantly in the case of Greece (19%), Romania (16.9%), Bulgaria (16.3%) and Croatia (6.9%). In terms of the proportion of programmes provided in English measured against the overall number of programmes offered in each country, the highest percentages can be found in Cyprus (25.5%) and Turkey (19%) (Wächter and Maiworm 2014). In Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece and Romania the proportion ranges only from 1–2%. As far as Central East Europe is concerned, the highest proportion can be found in Slovenia and the Czech Republic (9.9% and 6.3% respectively) (Wächter and Maiworm 2014). Percentages are significantly higher in Central West Europe (6–30%) and in the Nordic countries (3–38%) but equally low in South West Europe (2–3%), showing that internationalisation is

mostly seen as a priority in Northern Europe. It is for this reason that the volume focuses on ELF in European education in the Eastern part of the continent.

## 2 Structure and outline of the volume

In addition to some invited chapters, the volume comprises papers presented at the conference held in Thessaloniki, Greece in 2013 under the auspices of the *English in Europe: Opportunity or Threat?* project 2012–2014 funded by the Leverhulme Trust. Central to the project was a series of five conferences in different European countries (UK, Spain, Denmark, Greece, Czech Republic) dedicated to exploring the contemporary role and status of English in Europe, as well as attitudes to the language, across a range of domains – e.g. higher education, academic research, business and commerce. The fourth conference in Thessaloniki, entitled ‘Responses to the lingua franca role of English’, focused in particular on English in education in South-Eastern Europe and the Balkans with the aim of generating a better understanding of English in this region relative to other regions of the continent. Thus, the reader will find papers from Austria (1), Croatia (1), the Czech Republic (1), Bulgaria (1), Greece (2), as well from Spain (3) and the UK (1).

The volume divides into three main parts, moving from the general to the more specific. In the first part two papers explore, first, English as a source of potential empowerment of teachers and academics, and, second, questions of linguistic justice in relation to the increasing influence of English in Europe and the EU. The first part consists of the following chapters:

In his chapter “ELF as an opportunity for foreign language use, learning and instruction in Greece and beyond”, Nicos C. Sifakis examines the challenges and opportunities ELF poses and offers in Greece, where English has no statutory or historical role, but is taught as a foreign language (EFL). The author argues that ELF research can be used to inform EFL contexts, empower non-native speakers of English and contribute to teacher development. Sifakis also discusses the four possibilities for teaching and learning English in countries of the Expanding Circle: (i) the “foreign language” possibility with a focus on accuracy, fluency and native speaker varieties; (ii) the “exam-oriented” possibility which has as its main objective the sitting and passing of language exams and which similarly to the EFL possibility is native-speaker-oriented; (iii) the “international” possibility which aims at preparing learners for future interactions with non-native speakers and emphasizes the development of a set of strategies that will help learners communicate effectively; (iv) the “multicultural” possibility, which shares



many similarities with the “international” possibility but focuses on interactions between non-native speakers of English which take place in increasingly multi-cultural contexts.

Gibson Ferguson’s chapter, “European language policy and English as a lingua franca: a critique of Van Parijs’s ‘linguistic justice’” examines language policies, practices and ideologies through a critical evaluation of Van Parijs’s work (2011) on linguistic justice in a European context. The author questions the empirical premises and assumptions regarding language, language use and acquisition and proposes alternative measures for the redress of linguistic injustice. In more detail, Ferguson discusses the commitment of the European Union (EU) to the protection of multilingualism and diversity, but also stresses the fact that English is the most widely used language in the EU. He emphasizes this mismatch between EU principles and practices which is primarily due to the increasing power of English as the former language of colonial domination and global capitalism as well as to the number of speakers in the Expanding Circle. He critiques Van Parijs’s proposal for the accelerated spread of English as the EU’s sole lingua franca by foregrounding the complexities involved in ELF, the lack of competence of the European population and the real challenges of a transnational demos.

The second part of the volume comprises three chapters examining attitudes toward ELF in education, and emphasizing the need, among other things, to problematise and re-evaluate the notion of the native speaker in the field of education. The three chapters concur that it is time to accept the new role of English as a facilitator of intercultural communication and integrate ELF in language education. The chapters also explore issues of teacher training in different teaching contexts. This second part of the volume consists of the following chapters:

In “English language education in Croatia: Elitist purism or paradigmatic shift?” Branka Drljača Margić and Irena Vodopija-Krstanović examine the attitudes of 114 English language teachers in Croatia towards the potential integration of ELF into language education following a mixed-method approach, namely using questionnaires and interviews. The results demonstrate that for the majority of participants the ultimate objective of language learners ought to be the achievement of native-like competence in English. Similarly, most informants argue that it is pivotal for teachers who are non-native speakers of English to have a native-like pronunciation. In the same vein only a small percentage agree that communicative competence is important regardless of accuracy. On the other hand, the vast majority argue that it is important for students and teachers to be introduced to ELF, but they claim that ELF can strongly impact the teaching of vocabulary and grammar as well as of speaking, listening, writing and reading. Significantly, the findings suggest that although most of the participants

acknowledge the usefulness of raising student awareness of the different uses of English, only a few are willing to implement ELF practices in the classroom.

Emilia Slavova's chapter "Attitudes to English as a lingua franca and language teaching in a Bulgarian academic context" explores the applicability of the concept of ELF in a Bulgarian academic context through the attitudes of Bulgarian students to their own and others' native and non-native English accents. More specifically, the author investigated the attitudes of first year students at the Department of English and American Studies at the University of Sofia towards different native and non-native accents of English as well as towards their own competence and nativeness in English. According to the findings, native accents are viewed more positively and there is a clear preference for British over American accents, although only some students claim that they would like to acquire a native accent. Non-native accents are generally acceptable unless they impede understanding. It is also noteworthy that most participants acknowledge the role of English as an international language, although they lack familiarity with the term ELF. Finally, the author claims that ELF should no longer be perceived as a variety requiring description and standardization, but as a concept leading to a shift in attitudes, greater tolerance to differences and a heightened awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity.

Olga Dontcheva-Navratilova's study "English language teacher education in the Czech Republic: Attitudes to ELF" investigates the attitudes of teachers and teacher trainees in the Czech Republic towards the issue of (in)appropriateness of native-speaker standard English norms in English language teaching. The findings reveal that participants express ambivalent attitudes towards the teaching and learning of English, abiding by a native-speaker English ideology concerning their own language use, while they are also fully aware of the predominance of ELF outside university classrooms. In more detail, current and future teachers of English acknowledge the role of English as an international language but teachers-to-be prioritize effective communication as the main learning objective while their lecturers seem to also take into account the native-like level of language proficiency to a significant extent. The solution the author proposes is to approach English language teaching from the learner's rather than the teacher's perspective.

The third part of the volume includes five papers examining the role of ELF in different academic contexts: in academic blogs, intercultural student teamwork in a business University, English medium lectures, curriculum design for graduate students at a Spanish University, and intercultural communication for military students. All contributions discuss the challenges students and academics face in a globalised world where English is used for intercultural communication. They also stress the need for new teaching materials and training opportunities

to meet the changing needs of teachers and learners. This last part of the volume comprises the following chapters:

In “English as a lingua franca in academic blogs: its co-existence and interaction with other languages” María José Luzón examines the use of English as a lingua franca in academic blogs and its co-existence and interaction with other languages aiming to identify the ways in which non-native speakers deploy their linguistic resources and the factors that influence language choice and language mixing in academic blogs. To this end, the author analysed 32 academic blogs by non-native English bloggers, all affiliated to non-Anglophone institutions and collected 12 online questionnaires completed by bloggers. According to the findings, some blogs were solely written in English. In other cases, English and another language interact as follows: (i) some posts make use of ELF throughout and other posts are written in another language (or in other languages); (ii) the same blogger writes two blogs: one using ELF and the other in his/her L1; (iii) the post using ELF includes its translation in the blogger’s L1; (iv) code-switching in posts. Moreover, the analysis shows that language choice in academic blogs is affected by situational and pragmatic factors, expected audience and topic, and identity construction.

In her chapter, “Multilingual ELF interaction in multicultural student teamwork at Europe’s largest business university”, Miya Komori-Glatz investigates the use of ELF in multicultural student teamwork in an English-medium master’s programme at an Austrian university. The author focuses on examples of multilingualism in negotiating meaning, building rapport and creating humour to examine the use of ELF in more interactional and less formal settings. In more detail, Komori-Glatz analyses transcriptions of audio and video recordings of a team of four postgraduate students, all non-native speakers of English working on a project. The results reveal that even though the students use predominantly English as a medium of communication, they often switch to other repertoires especially during the social phases of the discussions, confirming in this way the inherently multilingual and multicultural nature of the interaction. Unsurprisingly, German as the local language, is the second most frequently used language.

“Is everything clear so far? Lecturing in English as a lingua franca”, written by Marina Tzoannopoulou, explores lecture comprehension in an English-medium programme in Greece, where English is used as a lingua franca, focusing on both students’ perception of lectures and their comprehension as well as on lecturers’ views on the use of questions as a device that facilitates comprehension. The author states that although the number of English-medium programmes has increased in Southern Europe, it still remains relatively small with Greece lagging behind most Mediterranean countries. A mixed-method approach was used for the data collection, which involved both questionnaires completed by Erasmus

students from various European countries and interviews with lecturers and students. The findings show that lectures delivered in an ELF setting do not seem to have an adverse effect on lecture comprehension and that teachers use questions in order to ensure comprehensibility of content.

In “ELF and linguistic diversity in EAP writing pedagogy: academic biliteracy in doctoral education” Carmen Pérez-Llantada draws on the outcomes of the implementation of a biliteracy approach in a postgraduate academic writing course offered by a Spanish research university PhD programme and argues that the instruction of English for Academic Purposes should be recognized within the scope of ELF in present academic and research communication. The course methodology involved corpus- and genre-based instruction which engaged students in the analysis and critique of academic texts in English as a Native Language (ENL) and ELF in parallel with texts written in Spanish as a Native Language (SNL). According to the findings, the overwhelming majority of participants stated that they benefitted from the course which satisfied their academic language needs and they highly valued the approach used.

By means of a questionnaire-based survey, Concepción Orna-Montesinos examines military students’ perceptions of the reasons and challenges involved in the acquisition of intercultural communication competence in the language classroom in “Perceptions towards intercultural communication: Military students in a higher education context”. Furthermore, the author discusses the pedagogical implications for the training of expert professionals who are required to work in multicultural and multilingual contexts. Findings demonstrate the informants’ awareness of the role of English as the main language of personal, professional and academic communication as well as their growing interest in participating in international activities. Moreover, survey results reveal that the cadets interviewed perceive enhanced linguistic competence to be not only the cause but also the effect of internationalization and consider the acquisition of communicative competence to be of fundamental importance.

Responding to the need expressed by various scholars (Ferguson 2009; Jenkins 2015; Seidlhofer 2009) to reconceptualize ELF, the ten chapters of this volume evaluate the notion of ELF, taking into consideration the values and objectives of 21st century European education of the Expanding Circle. Through examining the uses and practices of English as a lingua franca in South East/Central Europe in particular, the volume contributes to a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding ELF in European education and sheds light on some of the most prominent debates and discussions in the field. The volume foregrounds themes such as the emerging need to reassess the status of nativeness and provide extensive teacher training in ELF education, the challenges of internationalization in higher education, and the complex shift from traditional EFL

classrooms to realistic modern-day pedagogy which takes ELF into account. In so doing, this volume seeks to raise the reader's awareness of the benefits, challenges and complexities concerning the role of English in multicultural and multilingual education not only in the linguistically and ethnically diverse region of South East Europe but in the continent as a whole.

It needs to be noted that this volume was compiled at a time when Britain was still a member of the European Union. What effect Brexit might have on the role of English in Europe in the future, what different benefits, challenges and complexities it might give rise to have already been the subject of speculation in a recent issue of *World Englishes* which publishes an article by Marko Modiano entitled *English in a post Brexit European Union*, together with reactions from a number of scholars. Whatever change there might be, however, it will necessarily involve the kind of issues that have been discussed in this book and lend a timely relevance to its publication.

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**Part I: English in Europe: complexities  
and possibilities**





Nicos C. Sifakis

# ELF as an opportunity for foreign language use, learning and instruction in Greece and beyond

**Abstract:** The chapter focuses on the challenges and opportunities raised by the growing awareness of the role that English as a lingua franca (ELF) can play in Expanding Circle contexts, namely, contexts where English does not have a historical or statutory role of any kind. The context under review is Greece, where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL). I present an account of the English language teaching, learning and use situation in Greece and reflect on the impact ELF can have for domains like language instruction, materials design, selection and evaluation and teacher education. I argue that ELF research can inform EFL contexts in a number of ways: It can be used to empower non-native speakers of English by broadening their perspective of communicating on a global scale in the 21st century. It can also be used as a means of teacher development. The essential element that underpins this perspective is that, for Expanding Circle contexts like the Greek one, English is not a foreign language (in the way that other major languages like French and German are), but a language with which learners have some degree of familiarity.

**Keywords:** English as a Lingua Franca, English as a foreign language, teacher education, teacher development, non-native speakers of English, Expanding Circle, Greece

## 1 Introduction

The ongoing debate about the function and importance of successful communication in English involving so-called non-native speakers of English on a global scale is crucial in that it has shed light on a series of “deep fundamentals” in the area of English language teaching and learning to speakers of other languages (ESOL). My aim in this chapter is to address the ways in which these fundamentals have been challenged. As a case in point, I focus on the context of Greece, a country of the so-called Expanding Circle (Kachru 1985).

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I begin by addressing a number of ESOL fundamentals, drawn from the work of Hans Stern. I attempt to show how the current debate in the area of English as a lingua franca (ELF) can significantly impact these fundamentals. My focus then shifts to the Greek context. I discuss the different uses of English in this context, in the state and private domains, and briefly review the curricular situation of the state sector, together with perspectives of teachers and learners regarding the teaching, learning, assessment and use of English. I also review research related to the uses of English by young people in Greece outside school. What I aim to show is that both the uses of English and the perspectives of the users of English in a country like Greece are changing rapidly as a result of the spread of English as an international language of communication. I conclude the chapter with implications for teaching and curriculum designing.

## **2 ELF research and the fundamentals of English language teaching and learning**

This section explores ways in which the current use of English on a global scale can impact the fundamentals of English language teaching and learning to speakers of other languages (ESOL). My concern here is to pose questions that spring from an awareness of the global character of English and its link to and implications for ESOL pedagogy. These questions draw on Hans Stern's "basic building blocks of all language teaching" (Stern 1983, 1992). Drawing from his experience of researching the teaching and learning of French in predominantly English-speaking regions in Canada, Stern posits that these building blocks (or fundamentals) are "language", "learning", "teaching" and "context". Essentially, all language teaching involves a concept of the nature of language ("what" is taught), a perspective of the learner ("who" is involved), an all-round awareness of the processes involved in language learning (which corresponds to the "how" of teaching) and a comprehensive appreciation of the characteristics of the immediate and broader environments in which the language is learned and used (if at all).

According to Stern, it is essential for teachers to know as much as possible about the learners of their particular context, instead of unquestionably endorsing the profiling of their proficiency levels put forward by the broader curricular and textbook specifications. This means that, in certain cases, it might be perfectly possible for learners to follow one particular curricular and courseware orientation at school and have a completely autonomous life using English, through gaming, texting, Skyping, etc., outside school (see below).

It is therefore crucial that these different pathways are explored and taken advantage of by teachers.

On the other hand, it is equally important that teachers gather information about another dimension of language learning, namely, the reasons learners have for attending their classes – the “why”. While the target situation of most teaching contexts is more or less specified (e.g. sitting a particular exam, going from one proficiency level to a higher one or even becoming more skillful in a particular skill, micro-skill, or combination of skills), individual learners may have different practical reasons for attending (Ghenghesh and Nakhla 2011). The process of researching the “why” in language teaching further involves looking into other stakeholders’ perspectives (e.g. parents or sponsoring institutions), which can significantly shape all aspects of curriculum designing and implementation, namely, content (what students should know, be able to do and be committed to), assessment (a measurement of what learners are doing at each time and how well they are doing) and context (how the education system is organized).

How does the global spread of English affect the “basic building blocks”, or fundamentals, of ESOL teaching laid out above? It is established that English is successfully used by more non-native than native users in contexts that are extremely varied (Crystal 2003). Successful, intelligible usage depends on parameters that are user- and context-specific, such as the proficiency levels of the interlocutors and the extent to which they can accommodate their discourse to each other’s needs, other languages that may be shared between them, etc. (Deterding 2012). Research on ELF shows that communication involving non-native users of English (Cogo and Dewey 2012; Seidlhofer 2011) can significantly deviate from descriptions of the so-called standard varieties in ways that demonstrate interlocutors’ creativity in the areas of pragmatics, phonology or syntax. This is clearly demonstrated in numerous studies on ELF-related corpora such as the ELFA corpus of academic ELF ([www.eng.helsinki.fi/elfa](http://www.eng.helsinki.fi/elfa)) and the VOICE corpus ([www.univie.ac.at/voice](http://www.univie.ac.at/voice)). These studies, and others, show that, when involved in ELF communications, non-native speakers from different professional and lingua-cultural backgrounds co-create a transnational space, where they are prompted to negotiate meaning across mother-tongue boundaries and professional and discipline-specific practices. This results in their forming distinct communities of practice that are informed and co-developed by their shared background and identities (see Ehrenreich 2009; Seidlhofer 2007). These communities of practice are particularly salient in online communicative contexts (e.g. Hanson-Smith 2013), where multicultural communication is the norm and the need to adapt to the discursual demands of online applications (e.g. Skype, Facebook and the like) and gaming platforms (through their chat-rooms) results in ELF interactions.