



The Routledge Handbook of English as a Lingua Franca

Edited by Jennifer Jenkins, Will Baker
and Martin Dewey

The Routledge Handbook of English as a Lingua Franca

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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Introduction

The *Routledge Handbook of English as a Lingua Franca*, or ELF, as it is more often called, begins where it ends: by looking back to ELF's earliest days. The very final chapter of the handbook, 'The future of English as a lingua franca?', starts by outlining ELF's development from its beginnings – including the first time the acronym 'ELF' was actually used in public – to the present day, before gazing into ELF's hypothetical future. Nobody, myself included, had any idea in those early days that ELF research, let alone the acronym that was then so often met with amusement and comments about 'little green men', would grow so rapidly into the vast, widely known and largely accepted research field that it is nowadays and is likely to remain into the foreseeable future.

On its journey, ELF has attracted established scholars from a range of other fields, initially and most notably Barbara Seidlhofer and Anna Mauranen, two of the three 'founding mothers of ELF' (Jenkins being the third), and compilers of the first two ELF corpora (see Mauranen 2003; Seidlhofer 2001), as well as a plethora of newer ELF scholars, many of whom focused on ELF in their doctoral research and subsequently became established ELF researchers themselves – not least my two co-editors of this handbook, Martin Dewey and Will Baker. Meanwhile, scholars in a range of other language-related disciplines, including several contributors to this handbook, have incorporated ELF into their thinking and research into areas such as language assessment (see Harding and McNamara, Chapter 45 this volume), complexity theory (see Larsen-Freeman, Chapter 4 this volume), and literacy practices (see Wingate, Chapter 34 this volume), to name just three.

This is not to suggest that ELF, the phenomenon, did not exist a long time prior to the start of the research that has explored it. As is well-documented (e.g. Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey 2011), English has served as a lingua franca at many times and in many places in its long history, stretching right back to the start of British colonialism in the sixteenth century. Nor is English by any means the only, or even the first, language to serve as a lingua franca, or in other words, a language used for communication among those who do not share a first language (see Morán Panero, Chapter 44 this volume). Various languages have served this purpose over the centuries, including Arabic, French, Greek, Persian, Portuguese, Spanish and Turkish, and several continue to do so. What *is* different about ELF is the extent of its

current reach both geographically and in respect of the domains in which it is used, to which the chapters of this ELF handbook are testimony.

It is also not to suggest that ELF research has been uncritically accepted and gone unchallenged. Any kind of change tends to attract anxieties, and change relating to language often more so than any other. And ELF, because it promotes such radical change in the way we think about English as well as language more broadly, has received perhaps more than its fair share of criticism. In its earlier days, ELF research was most criticised from two more or less opposing positions: World Englishes and ELT. Somewhat confusingly, while World Englishes scholars tended to argue that ELF researchers were promoting a monolithic kind of English, ELT professionals took the opposite view, that ELF was promoting the idea that ‘anything goes’, with no standards whatsoever (see Seidlhofer, Chapter 7 this volume). Both positions were of course wrong, and it is pleasing to note that many of those who promoted them have, to a great extent, reconciled themselves to ELF thinking over the intervening years.

Inevitably, there will always be some who, because ELF does not fit neatly into their own sometimes narrow view of linguistic life, are not able to make the conceptual leap and acknowledge the validity of the ELF paradigm. And there will always be others who simply do not take the trouble to read the ELF literature properly, if at all, before pronouncing on it. To paraphrase the words of the politician, Senator Patrick Moynihan, some of these commentators seem to believe that they are entitled not only to their own opinions, but also to their own facts. Nevertheless, while myths such as ‘ELF excludes native English speakers’ still circulate from time to time, they seem at last to be in decline. Meanwhile, others who have had entirely legitimate concerns about ELF, particularly in its early days when there was talk of ELF ‘varieties’ and ‘codification’, have made substantial contributions to the development of ELF researchers’ thinking. Such scholars have played an important role in reinforcing what was being found in empirical ELF data and contributing to moving ELF research on, for example, to the recognition of variability as a key feature of ELF interactions (see Kimura and Canagarajah, Chapter 24 this volume), and more recently of multilingualism as ELF’s overarching framework rather than one of its characteristics, with translanguaging seen as an intrinsic part of ELF communication. The work of García and Li Wei on translanguaging (e.g. 2014), and research into the multilingual turn, such as the contributions to May (2014), have been particularly influential in these latter respects.

Turning now to the 47 chapters of this first ELF handbook, these are divided into seven sections. Part I, ‘Conceptualising and positioning ELF’, consists of eight chapters in five of which leading ELF researchers and commentators, Mauranen (Chapter 1), Baker (Chapter 2), Ehrenreich (Chapter 3), Seidlhofer (Chapter 7), and Widdowson (Chapter 8), consider ELF from a range of perspectives. Meanwhile scholars from different areas of language and linguistics, Larsen-Freeman (Chapter 4), Leung and Lewkowicz (Chapter 5), and Hall (Chapter 6), explore ELF in relation to their own specialisms. The second section of the handbook turns to the regional spread of ELF. By this, the authors do not mean that ELF communication is defined by its geographical position: it is always the case that who is speaking with whom is what counts most in ELF rather than where in the world the speakers happen to be situated. However, in line with Mauranen’s notion of *similects* (see Chapter 1), it is also evident that speakers of different first (and other) languages are influenced, albeit to a greater or lesser extent, by their language backgrounds. The seven chapters of Part II thus consider how, and how far, ELF is used in the regions on which their chapters focus, along with how it is regarded within their education systems. These chapters range widely, covering Europe (Sherman, Chapter 9), the Gulf States (Alharbi, Chapter 10), the Association of South-East Asian Nations (Kirkpatrick, Chapter 11), China

(Wang, Chapter 12), Japan (D'Angelo, Chapter 13), Brazil (Gimenez, El Kadri and Calvo, Chapter 14), and South Africa (Van der Walt and Evans, Chapter 15).

Part III is concerned with ELF characteristics and processes. It begins with Osimk-Teasdale's chapter on ELF's variability, moves on to explore the role of pronunciation in miscommunication (Gardiner and Deterding, Chapter 18), then turns to the issue of creativity in ELF (Pitzl, Chapter 19), grammar (Ranta, Chapter 20), and morphosyntactic variation (Björkman, Chapter 21). The final two chapters of Part III consider the question of ELF norms (Hynninen and Solin, Chapter 22) and the rarely discussed issue of uncooperative ELF encounters (Jenks, Chapter 23).

We then turn to ELF's domains and functions. Part IV begins with Chapter 24 by Kimura and Canagarajah in which they examine similarities and differences in approaches taken by scholars researching translanguaging practices and ELF across a range of domains. Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (Chapter 25) turn to ELF in the domain of business, or BELF as it has become widely known, and Pietikäinen (Chapter 26) explores ELF in social contexts, focusing specifically on close relationships. The final four chapters of this section relate to humour in ELF (Pullin, Chapter 27), ELF in electronically mediated communication (Sangiamchit, Chapter 28), ELF and multilingualism (Cogo, Chapter 29), and ELF in translation and interpreting (Albl-Mikasa, Chapter 30). Part V is then devoted to one specific domain: ELF in university settings. This section consists of four chapters. First, Smit (Chapter 31) considers academic ELF from the perspective of language policy. Next, in Chapter 32, Murata and Iino consider English medium instruction with a particular focus on Japan. In Chapter 33, Horner tackles the still under-researched area of written academic ELF, and in the final chapter of the section, Wingate (Chapter 34) considers ELF in relation to literacy in higher education.

Part VI, which will be of particular interest to readers involved in ELT, then turns our attention to language pedagogy, starting with ELF in, respectively, teacher education (Dewey and Patsko, Chapter 35), and teacher development (Sifakis and Bayyurt, Chapter 36), while Galloway explores ELF in teaching materials (Chapter 37). Hüttner then focuses on the role of ELF in content and language integrated learning, or CLIL (Chapter 38), and is followed by Chapter 39 by Suzuki, Liu and Yu, which looks at ELT and ELF specifically in three Asian contexts, Japan, China and Taiwan. Part VI ends with two wider-ranging chapters. In the penultimate chapter of the section, Wright and Zheng (Chapter 40) consider the difficulty of introducing ELF into the classroom, while Llurda (Chapter 41) ends Part VI by exploring ELF from the teacher's perspective.

The handbook concludes with six chapters that consider a number of trends and debates, and look into the future of ELF. In Chapter 42, Baird and Baird take a critical look at ELF attitude research and propose new ways of framing ELF attitudes. This is followed by Chapter 43, in which Guido discusses a particularly topical issue: migration, and the role of ELF in (mis)communication in immigrant ELF encounters. The focus is turned by Morán Panero in Chapter 44 to ELF among other global languages/*lingua francas*. We then move on to two chapters that explore in different ways the controversial issue of ELF in respect of language assessment. First, in Chapter 45, Harding and McNamara consider the challenges presented by ELF and suggest possible ways forward, and second, in Chapter 46 Shohamy discusses ELF in respect of critical language testing. Finally, the handbook ends with my own chapter (Chapter 47), in which I take stock of the distance ELF research has travelled since its beginnings, and evaluate a number of predictions about the future of ELF.

With such a rich and wide-ranging collection of chapters written by so many key scholars in ELF and from other related areas, it remains only for me to wish you, on behalf of all

three handbook editors, an enlightening and engrossing read, whether you choose to study the handbook's contents in detail from beginning to end, or simply to dip into those chapters that align most closely with your own interests.

Jennifer Jenkins
January 2017

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Part I

Conceptualising and positioning ELF



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Conceptualising ELF

Anna Mauranen

Introduction

The two remarkable things about English today are that it has spread around the globe like no other language before, and that it is spoken by people for whom it is a second or additional language more than by those for whom it is a first language. Under either of those conditions, let alone both together, one would expect a language to become unusually heterogeneous and variable. This is exactly what we find with English. It is therefore not surprising that we have long been talking about ‘Englishes’ in the plural in English studies (I alone have four books called *World Englishes* in my bookshelf – not to speak of volumes on ‘global’ or ‘international’ Englishes). At the same time, the latest wave of globalisation has meant an enormous growth in the volume and kinds of mobility – and thereby in language contact.

In this, too, English leads the way: it stands out from any other language in having become the global default lingua franca. This has inspired studies of language contact and contact languages in the last few years, with English at the centre (e.g. Schreier and Hundt 2013), or as part of a wider multilingual contact environment (e.g. Siemund, Gogolin, Schultz and Davydova 2013).

The significance of ELF transcends the contact of any particular individual or group with English. ELF is not just a contact language where English is a domestic language or otherwise especially salient in a given community, but a non-local lingua franca, the means of communicating between people from anywhere in the world. Neither is its global weight restricted to elite usages in politics, international business or academia, but it is also employed by tourists, migrant workers, asylum seekers and just anyone in their daily lives over digital media. There is not even need to move around physically to be in contact with English.

The term lingua franca is normally used to mean a contact language, that is, a vehicular language between speakers who do not share a first language. While some lingua francas are pidgins or jargons that have no native speakers but arise in contact situations as a mixture of two separate languages, others are existing natural languages used for vehicular purposes. Pidgins typically arise for restricted purposes, but any broad-purpose natural language can be used as a lingua franca if speakers have access to it, with no restriction on the uses or functions it can be put to. Although the term lingua franca is today commonly used for natural

languages that are particularly widespread, especially, sometimes even exclusively, English, it is worth keeping in mind that any language, however small, can equally well be used as a *lingua franca*. *Lingua francas* need not even be ‘living’ languages: ‘dead’ languages also serve as vehicular languages, usually for a limited range of purposes like religion or learning, as in the cases of classical Arabic or mediaeval Latin.

Two kinds of widespread definitions of ELF circulate in the field of applied linguistics, one that takes it to apply only to people for whom it is not a first language, to the exclusion of native speakers (e.g. Firth 1996; House 1999), and another that accepts native speakers as part of the mix (e.g. Seidlhofer 2004, 2011; Jenkins 2007; Mauranen 2012). The latter view is adopted here, since a categorical division of speakers into native and non-native has been seriously questioned in ELF, as it has been in World Englishes. The more comprehensive definition also reflects the reality of English today: English is spoken in situations with widely varying combinations of participants, including first-language speakers of different varieties. So briefly, I take English as a *lingua franca* to mean a contact language between speakers or speaker groups when at least one of them uses it as a second language. This is a short working definition, and will do for the present. A number of things could be further specified, but I hope this chapter will throw light on some of the remaining issues, as other chapters certainly do in this volume.

We can approach ELF from a number of perspectives, but for achieving a holistic notion I suggest a simple division: the macro, the meso and the micro. These perspectives are based on the scale of a social unit, from the largest to the smallest, and like any categorisation, it is an abstraction and inevitably inattentive to much of the rich detail of reality. I nevertheless believe it to be relevant for capturing the big picture.

The division draws on earlier distinctions by scholars dealing with language contact from different traditions. The first is the classic treatise of language contact by Weinreich (1953/1963) who suggested two relevant levels for the occurrence of what he called language transfer: the individual, or the level of speech, and society, or the level of language. A recent psycholinguistic division by Jarvis and Pavlenko (2007) adopts a very similar view, distinguishing the levels of the individual (who shows cross-linguistic influence), and society (where transfer can be observed). In a similar vein, variationist sociolinguists such as Milroy (2002) or Trudgill (1986, 2011) also posit two key levels, the societal and the individual. However, in the sociolinguistic case the individual refers to individuals in interaction, in effect making interaction the other pivotal level. Interaction, that is, the micro-social or meso level is also crucial to many social and linguistic theories: social network theory (Granovetter 1973; Urry 2007) and its applications in language change analysis (Milroy and Milroy 1985; Raumolin-Brunberg 1998); it is also key to language use in conversation analysis, interactional sociology, interactional linguistics and more recently in neurolinguistic approaches (see section ‘ELF from the meso perspective’ below for more detail).

Increasingly in the last decade or so, language has been viewed from Complexity Theoretical perspectives; in these accounts, adaptive, self-organising systems are perceived as emergent at different scales. In these accounts, two levels of language systems are recognised, the individual (idiolects) and the communal language; the crucial relationship between the two is emergence, which results from interactions between speaker idiolects. In brief, then, the present three-perspective approach combines principal elements from previous approaches, and is oriented to variation, change and contact.

In this chapter, I apply the three-pronged approach, and look at the consequences of each on the concept of ELF. At the end, I take up some integrative issues that cut across all three perspectives, which would be awkward to discuss separately at every point.

ELF from the macro perspective

A macro-social perspective on English as a lingua franca involves two central domains: the linguistic and the societal. Let us begin from the linguistic, since language is our main focus. The scale of communication and mobility in the contemporary world, and as I will argue, the complexity of language contact involving English, affect our perceptions of language deeply. The sheer amount of contact is unprecedented, since in principle speakers of any of the roughly 7,000 recognised languages of the world can be in some kind of contact with English. But it is the quality of contact that is even more interesting than the quantity.

ELF bears certain recognisable affinities with dialect contact; both incorporate contact between speakers of mutually intelligible varieties. The term ‘variety’ has been problematised with regard to ELF both from outside, usually arguing it does not fulfil all requisite criteria to pass as a variety, and from the inside (e.g. Seidlhofer 2007; Jenkins 2015) for implying a settled, unified language form, complete with a speech community, that can be reliably described. While I would be inclined to apply the term more loosely, in analogy with its counterpart at lower level analysis, ‘variant’, have settled for the more neutral term ‘lect’. Lect coheres with sociolect, idiolect, etc., and is thus productive in a positive way. It also reflects the likeness of ELF with dialect, which is not insignificant. We can assume that processes discovered in dialect contact research, for example, those leading to dialect levelling, simplification, reallocation and interdialect (e.g. Britain 2013) will also be in evidence in ELF. A number of lects reflecting contact with English have been given jocular nicknames like Swinglish, Czenglish, Manglish or Dunglish. These nicknames reflect the fact that when speakers who share a first language learn a given second language, their idiolects display certain similarities in pronunciation or accent, in syntactic features, lexical choices and so on. These lects, then, with their similarities, which arise from contacts of a particular L1 with English, I would like to call ‘similects’.

Similects arise in parallel, as speakers learn the same L2, but since they already share an L1, they normally use that for communicating with each other. This is also where similects part company with dialects. Dialects arise in local or regional speech communities where people speak to each other, and the specific features that arise in the community result from frequent interactions within that community. By contrast, similects are not lects of any speech community.

Similects are parallel also in that they develop certain similarities even if they are learned in different classrooms, schools and locations, by people of different ages and generations, and at different times. Similects, therefore, remain first-generation hybrids. They do not go through developmental stages in the way community languages do, they do not diversify, change, develop sociolects, varieties or other products of social interaction in a living community. They nevertheless embody language contact.

Clearly, the picture so far is simplified, but it is easier to make the case in a simplified form first, and then add complicating details. Here the important simplification is the abstraction away from multilingualism: many people learning English are bi- or multilingual already, which is why ELF contexts are inherently multilingual, as I have noted elsewhere (e.g. Mauranen 2013), and many users also obviously learn other languages alongside or after English. The similect concept is thus compatible with the notion of English as a multilingua franca that Jenkins (2015) has suggested as an important missing facet in the conceptualisation of ELF. We know from multilingualism studies (e.g. Jarvis and Pavlenko 2007; Pavlenko 2014) that all of a speaker’s languages are present at any time, and that they influence one another constantly. Another simplification is treating

everyone's L1 repertoires as if more or less identical, even though this may not in fact be the case (e.g. De Bot, Lowie and Verspoor 2007). This discussion already veers towards cognition, which will be dealt with more thoroughly below.

To remain a little while still at the individual level, it might well be argued that language contact takes place in language learners, and therefore similects are manifestations of learner language. However, similects do not fit under a general rubric of learner language. We may note occasional formal resemblance to typical L1-specific learner errors (carefully recorded in learner language studies, notably in the ICLE projects www.uclouvain.be/en-cecl-icle.html), but the main difference of learners and users is social. ELF lects are used far beyond any language teaching environment, in authentic second language use (SLU), by speakers in the real world from professionals to tourists and asylum seekers, and in the digital world by anyone anywhere. The sociolinguistic context of a language learning classroom is restricted and specific, with important repercussions to speaker identity and the relationship to language: for a learner, language use is 'practice', instrumental to learning, whereas in SLU language is used in its own right, for co-construction of meaning in interaction. One consequence is that while learners are not in a position to change the language it is their objective to learn, any *user* of a language can initiate changes. Surface similarities of learner errors and non-standard ELF forms thus hide deep incompatibilities (see further Mauranen 2012).

ELF, then, embodies contact between speakers from different similects. Put in another way, speakers who use ELF as their means of communication speak English that is a product of language contact between their other languages and English; a shared first language is the source of similect affinity, and English comes in as they have encountered it in their learning process. ELF, then, means contact between these hybrid, contact-based lects – that is, ELF is a higher-order, or second-order language contact. Therein lies its particular complexity.

A macro-social perspective on ELF needs to address the notion of community. It must be one that fits the nature of a contact language in complex and varied situations, and therefore cannot rest on traditional understandings of a speech community, which is largely local, monolingual, as well as non-mobile. Such 'sedentary' (Sheller and Urry 2006) ideals of communities were widely assumed in traditional dialectology and sociolinguistics, even if also criticised (see, e.g. Chambers 1992; Milroy 2002), just as they have been in social sciences more broadly (Bauman 2000; Sheller and Urry 2006; Urry 2007).

The challenge of conceptualising community for ELF research has been noted by almost all scholars who have theorised ELF, but no quite satisfactory solution has been reached yet, possibly because this has not been perceived as pivotal to understanding ELF, or perhaps in part also because the notion of community for ELF ought to be more complex than models considered so far. Communities where ELF is a dominant means of communication are not necessarily, perhaps not even very often, based on physical proximity between speakers. Neither are they close-knit communities with multiplex internal contacts. These are key characteristics distinguishing ELF from dialect communities and other similar communities as traditionally conceived in dialectology and sociolinguistic research. Clearly, traditional speech communities are on the whole getting rarer with exponential growth in contemporary multiplicity of mobilities (Urry 2007), including developments in the digital age, when contacts across distances and with the rest of the world are ubiquitous.

Digital means of communication add to our experienced reality, with a consequent need for redefining 'community', and the associated mixing of languages and communication patterns. Mobile people change environments often, acquire connections in each, and at the same time maintain contacts with their local communities of origin or earlier residence, their families, relatives and friends. Individuals are simultaneously members of

multifarious communities, and, for example, private and professional contacts need not use the same languages. Mobility, as Skeggs (2004) observes, is a resource not equally distributed among everyone. At present, we can observe an enormous scale of mobility from regions where warfare, poverty and political unrest drive groups of people towards regions that are perceived as safer and offering more opportunities. At the same time very different kinds of mobility pervade the ‘safe’ regions where modern means of transportation and communication are within everyone’s reach, albeit utilised in different ways and to different degrees by different individuals and groups.

On the whole, people are more likely to use different languages, dialects and varieties in their diverse communities than has been the case in more stable and sedentary periods. They are, in other words, mobilising not only themselves but also their multilingual resources on an everyday basis, including varieties of the ‘same’ language. Clearly, we are not living the first period of large-scale mobility in history, but equally clearly we are amid one of those, perhaps one with the widest global reach, with community structures being reshuffled and reinterpreted as a result. The global scale, and the availability of digital means of communication add a specifically contemporary flavour to the mix.

Much communication in ELF is ephemeral, and takes place in transient encounters. For these chance meetings the notion of community is often inappropriate. Jenkins (2015) suggests that Pratt’s (1991) notion of ‘contact zones’ could be a useful point of departure for depicting the temporary meeting and mixing of people from diverse backgrounds. This may indeed help account for the ephemeral end of ELF use, but it does not exhaust the variety in duration and stability that ELF groupings manifest. To gauge the effects of ELF on language change we must take the diversity of social formations on board, from transient like those formed for just one occasion, such as a chance conversation among strangers or an interview; through medium-span, like university courses or task forces; to regular but intermittent, such as conferences, or academic discourse communities; fairly permanent, like international organisations; to married couples who adopt ELF as their family language. If the purpose is to capture ELF as a whole, not just its diverse component communities, we can liken ‘the ELF community’ to a diffuse language community along the lines suggested in LePage and Tabouret-Keller (1985), that is, one where multiple sources of input prevail, which consists of many kinds of speakers with varying language identities and social ties and comparatively little agreement on what is shared in the language or the community.

At a general level ELF groupings and communities are perhaps most like social networks that include more and less dense relations of interaction, or stronger and weaker ties (Granovetter 1973; Milroy and Milroy 1985; Milroy 2002). In this way, the general, diffuse ELF network also accommodates denser, more focused concentrations of communication patterns: some parts of the network develop and maintain closer mutual interactions, accommodate towards shared conventions, while other ties remain more sporadic. A network pattern would allow for a kind of community, then, where weak and strong ties intermingle in the whole, some getting stronger, reinforced by repetition, others remaining weak or weakening and getting lost through lack of renewal. Weak ties probably dominate ELF communication, imbuing ELF communities with what Urry (2007) calls ‘network sociality’, enabling the accumulation of ‘network capital’, a powerful type of social capital in a mobile world.

In diffuse communities, where some parts will be more likely to become ‘focused’ than others, the time dimension is important: both the duration of a community and its frequency of internal communication are likely to support strengthening of ties and the emergence of communal focus – as in the case of discourse communities or communities of practice. An intriguing case is the European Union, which is fundamentally multilingual, but

whose established structures are maintained and reproduced largely in English, despite the official and factual presence of other languages, especially French. EU English use has assumed a few conventions of its own that depart from Standard English. Moreover, EU employees use English as the principal language of communication in their leisure time as well (Kriszán and Erkkilä 2014). How the EU linguistic community in Brussels develops after Brexit will be exciting to follow; it may, for example, start assuming more regulatory practices of its own.

Among ELF communities towards the more focused end, some are like academic discourse communities (Swales 1990), which tend to be professionally oriented, long-lasting, and predominantly international, and where face to face meetings only involve segments of the communities at any given time or place. The intermittent meetings are, nevertheless, strongly binding for the maintenance of the community, along the lines that Urry (2007) posits for network sociality. In many cases ELF communities also bear likeness to Wenger's communities of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991), as noted first by House (2003), followed by Dewey (2007), Jenkins (2007) and Seidlhofer (2007). EU task forces, international research collaborations, international university programmes and military collaborations would all seem to fit the notion of a community of practice, "an aggregate of people coming together around a particular enterprise", as defined by Eckert (2000: 35). A CoP is a real community (in contrast to imagined communities) in that it is based on members' direct interaction with one another; these communities consist of people who know each other. Such comparatively focused communities are likely to develop conventions and norms of their own as members accommodate to each other and converge towards group norms (cf. Hynninen 2016). Linguistically this can be expected to add variation in what is regarded as 'English', but since linguistic preferences also tend to stabilise, we also notice language patterns that are very similar despite emerging from different groupings and situations (e.g. Mauranen 2012; Carey 2013).

The global ELF-using 'community' is thus an umbrella community, a mesh of networks, which, apart from being largely diffuse, shares the feature with Anderson's (1991) imagined communities (see Wang, Chapter 12 this volume) that the members may never meet each other in person, but maintain a general awareness of belonging to the community. The belonging may be perceived in the case of ELF perhaps above all as a category of speakers. An ELF identity is not as binding or strong as the national communities Anderson talks about, and it can be self-contradictory in comprising both positive and negative elements, as many studies of language ideologies show (Jenkins 2007; Wang 2012; Pilkinton-Pihko 2013). Speakers nevertheless seem to have an awareness of themselves as users of ELF, which for many is a central ingredient of their language identity.

In short, ELF communities are diffuse, network-based multilingual communities where English is a dominant lingua franca. ELF as a whole is not a focused variety or language, but as Laitinen (in press) points out, in this respect ELF is not unlike the English language for the best part of its history, in which focused varieties only arose as standardised varieties in the modern period. This did not prevent change or evolution in its lexicogrammatical structures before that period. Neither did it prevent people from describing it.

ELF from the meso perspective

The meso, or micro-social, view on ELF is concerned with language use in social interaction. Far from being just the necessary interface between the societal and the cognitive, the interactional aspect is pivotal to language. Interaction has been given

pride of place in conversation analysis, and more recently in interactional linguistics (e.g. Selting and Couper-Kuhlen 2001); moreover, it has been perceived as vital from evolutionary (Lee, Miksell, Joaquin, Mates and Schumann 2009) and neurolinguistic (e.g. Bråten 2007) viewpoints, and it is a central ingredient in linguistic models emanating from complexity theory (e.g. De Bot *et al.* 2007; Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008; The ‘Five Graces Group’ 2009). Interactional sociology, in turn, following on Goffman’s work, posits interaction as an autonomous ‘interaction order’ (Goffman 1983), which is to be treated as a substantive domain in its own right.

Interaction is deeply intertwined with both the social and individual. Innovations do not diffuse in society without individuals, while at the same time, individual cognition is crucially shaped in interaction with its social environment (e.g. Bråten 2007; Hari, Sams and Nummenmaa 2016). Secondary socialisation, typically in education, is imparted and absorbed through interaction. This does not preclude seeing interaction as autonomous in the Goffmanian sense, differentiated from both large-scale social institutions and individual actors (De Jaegher, Peräkylä and Stevanovic 2016), because in this interpretation we can view it as a self-organising system, which engages in exchanges with its adjacent systems at different scales (see also section ‘ELF from the micro perspective’).

Macro-social accounts of language change tend to postulate mechanisms like accommodation for explaining the diffusion of features from one language group to another, for instance in dialect contact (Trudgill 1986; Britain 2013). In this perspective, accommodation functions as Croft (2000) describes it, as a response to speakers from outside one’s own community. Speakers accommodate to each other to compensate for the lack of common ground by adjusting their speech by means like elaborating content or simplifying grammar (Giles and Smith 1979). Although assumptions of this kind have usually proceeded from research on native speakers of a given language, accommodation would seem to be at least equally relevant to explaining what happens in successful ELF communication, as shown in Jenkins (2000) for phonology. Some examples of morphological and phraseological accommodation in on-going interaction are also discussed in Mauranen (2012).

An important interactional process for establishing common ground is enhanced explicitness, or what in Translation Studies has become known as explicitation (Blum-Kulka 1986). Explicitation is prominent when differences in interlocutors’ backgrounds are perceived or anticipated, and it is one of the most strongly supported universals of translation (e.g. Mauranen 2007a). In conversation it can take the form of frequent paraphrasing, rephrasing and repetition, or syntactic strategies like fronting or tails. Explicitation is roughly equivalent to what Giles and Smith (1979) regard as accommodation by ‘elaborating the content’.

However, this is not all there is to it: discourse adaptations of this kind can also become drivers of grammar. Usage-based models of grammar (e.g. Du Bois 2003; Ford *et al.* 2003) or acquisition (MacWhinney 2005) posit that linguistic structures reflect the demands of communication, not the other way round, with communication shaped by available linguistic structures. In line with this, we can assume that ELF is like any other domain of language use and therefore discourse, actual linguistic interaction, drives the development of its grammar. Tendencies of enhanced explicitness have been observed in ELF (Seidlhofer 2004; Cogo and Dewey 2006; Mauranen 2007b, 2012). In the long term, we can expect structural changes to follow from continued large-scale ELF interaction.

These changes in English structures can perhaps above all be expected to alter preferences in the first instance, so that certain kinds of structures become proportionally more common, or preferred, while others get rarer. We can already see such processes going on in syntax, where certain preferences are either stronger or weaker in ELF compared to

equivalent L1 English discourse (Ranta 2013). Some kind of ‘communicative fitness’ in an element is likely to help it spread into common use and become preferred. Speakers tend to prefer structures that are easier to produce, and to avoid those that are hard to understand. These may also be communicatively advantageous by being more salient than their alternatives, as Ranta (2006) argues in the case of the notable preference for the progressive form in ELF. It is thus quite conceivable that the explicitation tendency in ELF drives grammar towards renewed preference patterns.

As noted above, from a macro perspective one well-established expectation is that language contact results in structural simplification. In interactional terms, this could be understood as emanating from speakers’ search for the least common denominator and widely shared features as the likely ingredients of communicative success. Speakers of different similects will probably try out features that foster successful communication over features that do not (or are ‘ornamental’ cf. Szmresanyi and Kortmann 2009). These may be especially salient or particularly learnable features of a given language, and reflect ‘subjective simplicity’ (to adapt Miestamo’s (2009) notion of user-oriented or ‘subjective complexity’). It is an empirical question whether this reflects a parallelism between ELF and creoles, which according to McWhorter (2001) display relatively little overall grammatical complexity on account of their pidgin origins and therefore have little that is unnecessary to communication. Clearly, ELF does not originate in pidgins, nor is it functionally reduced; it is used for everything languages are normally used for. Structural simplification is nevertheless quite possible given the complex, ever-present multilingual contact in ELF. Processes such as morphological regularisation and a preference for the most frequent vocabulary are clearly indications of simplification, and likely to be enhanced in social interaction. However, simplification can be of many kinds, and possible trade-offs between those are hard to demonstrate (Nichols 2009), so an overall measure of simplicity may not be feasible. Simplification in some features is also quite compatible with simultaneous complexification in others, and certain interactional processes probably favour complex structures, like those that boost explicitation.

ELF interaction manifests a large number of non-standard expressions, which usually present no major obstacles to communication. Since we can assume a certain fuzziness in processing language forms that are less well entrenched (see section ‘ELF from the micro perspective’), it is a reasonable assumption that ELF interaction leads to the strengthening of approximate forms in production. Many items in a listener’s repertoire may be comparatively weakly entrenched: if a hearer does not have a strong and well-defined notion of the standard form, he or she is not likely to find an approximation disturbing as long as it bears enough resemblance to a target to enable meaning construction. Thus approximate forms that are sufficiently recognisable probably result in communicative success. The interactional success in turn is apt to support the speaker’s acceptance of the approximation. The feedback loop that arises in spontaneous interaction is a crucial link in reinforcing and spreading expressions that might otherwise pass as random idiosyncracies (or even, in language pedagogical contexts, as lack of success, or errors).

Frequency also plays a part here: the most frequent items of a language are on the whole most strongly entrenched. Clearly this must hold for L1 and L2 speakers alike, since these are the items they all are most likely to hear and use most often. Therefore, when speakers look for the least common denominator that would support interactional fluency, it is likely that the best guesses would be those that are the most widely shared. High-frequency items in the lingua franca are good candidates: they have the best chances of being known to both. Indeed, a distinct preference for the most frequent vocabulary has been attested in ELF

(Mauranen 2012; Gilner 2016). We may therefore anticipate that very frequent items beyond lexis are also well represented in ELF discourse.

It has commonly been assumed that ELF speakers do not share much, or even any, cultural background. This is very much an open question, which we have little research evidence on, but clearly, some shared cultural background comes with aspects of the language held in common. English language teaching materials tend to promote not only a given ‘code’, but certain information, clichés and beliefs about British and North American culture that speakers will be familiar with to a greater or lesser extent. Global entertainment industry and news services are probably even more influential in furnishing people with common information wherever they are. Other shared concepts and terms can be historical (*Midas touch*, *Pyrrhic victory*, *holocaust*, *ostpolitik*) or contemporary (*tsunami*, *pizza*, *manga*, *Brexit*) or embedded in different languages (*chicken and egg*, *Dark Ages*), which can be exploited successfully in interaction.

In addition to the possibly underestimated common background, the more interactionally pertinent question is what we deem as relevantly shared in the on-going interaction. The Firthian notion on ‘context of situation’ offers a good basis for sorting out shared determinants of the setting – whether an airport, souvenir shop, immigration office, or research centre – that provides interactants with common assumptions. Historical and situational elements constitute a priori sharedness (even though their being identically ‘given’ to participants can be questioned), whereas the interaction itself generates its own shared domain as it moves on. Thus we should make a distinction between stored and dynamic sharedness. Actual verbal interaction makes use of multimodal as well as multilingual resources. It progresses dynamically along the temporal dimension, incrementing shared knowledge as it develops in participants’ joint activity (Sinclair and Mauranen 2006). Much of what is shared is thus generated in the interaction itself. What ELF throws into sharp relief is that this also concerns the linguistic resources; as Jenkins (2015: 64) points out, “We are often talking not of a priori ‘resources’, but of resources that are discovered as they emerge during the interaction”. As Jenkins observes, what gets shared may not be shared from the start, and interlocutors may not even know what they might have in common in the beginning. Altogether, the notion of jointly generating shared resources, such as language and knowledge, by participants in interaction, is crucial to understanding grammar in a usage-based or emergent manner.

Usage-based models of language-in-interaction, or in alternative terms, models of languaging (Becker 1995), emphasise the nature of language as being continually created in social interaction, or, in short, language as emergent. On this point ELF is no different from language in general – it is basically a question of perceptions of language having shifted from static, focused and monolingual, towards appreciating dynamic notions of languaging and multilingualism. In line with Jenkins (2015), it is high time to take these conceptual developments on board in re-thinking ELF. A notable proportion of empirical ELF research hitherto has engaged with ELF in interaction. This may be a good choice, given the centrality of interaction in detecting processes of languaging, and also in detecting incipient and ongoing change.

ELF from the micro perspective

The cognitive and the interactional are closely intertwined. Individual cognition is strikingly attuned to intersubjectivity; consciousness develops along with dialogical competence, as has been shown in research into early language development (e.g. Tomasello 2003, 2009)

or into mirror neuron systems (e.g. Bråten and Trevarthen 2007) and their more abstract and higher-order counterparts, alignment and coupling systems (Hassen and Frith 2016). A fair proportion of contemporary brain research is directed to observing people in social interaction, because as Hari (2007) puts it, other people constitute the primary environment for humans. Interaction, in effect, shapes our brains from the start. Cognition is thus attuned to its social environment, but if interaction is viewed as an autonomous system in Goffman's (1983) sense and in subsequent interactional sociology (cf. the previous section), what role does an individual's cognition play? Goffman does not grant it any role, but research strands like enactivism seek to reconcile the individual with social interaction as autonomous, dynamic systems (De Jaegher, Peräkylä and Stevanovic 2016), while also recognising a tension between the autonomy of interaction and the autonomy of the individual.

Even though dynamic, autonomous systems are self-organising, their processes are also connected to processes external to the system, and conditions external to the system may also be necessary for system-internal processes. Since language as a complex adaptive system is generally seen as operating both in the individual, as an idiolect, and in interaction, as communal language (e.g. The Five Graces Group 2009), it would seem that the enactivist view captures the distinction as well as the connection appreciably well. What we have, then, are self-organising systems at different scales, which are open, and although autonomous, at the same time interrelated.

From the individual's cognitive viewpoint we could expect English as a speaker's additional language to be more weakly entrenched than the first (see also Hall, Chapter 6 this volume). The individual's accumulated experience must be different for languages that are acquired from infancy (whether one or more) and those learned later. Entrenchment is one of the two central processes postulated in usage-based accounts of language representation in an individual's cognitive makeup (see e.g. Dabrowska 2004; MacWhinney 2005). The other is abstraction; both rest on a speaker's aggregate linguistic experience. Speakers normally have much less exposure to their later languages than their earliest, and this is likely to be reflected in less deeply entrenched memory representations.

Production and reception in less entrenched representations may impose a greater strain on working memory, slow down memory retrieval and schema accessibility and make heavier demands on adaptive strategies. Psycholinguistic research has also consistently shown considerable frequency effects in language acquisition and use (e.g. Ellis 2002). It has been well established that frequent language elements behave differently from infrequent ones (see e.g. Bybee and Hopper 2001), and survive longest in language even over very long periods of time (Pagel, Atkinson and Meade 2007). The cognitive correlate of this is stronger entrenchment of the most frequent items, which in ELF means that these are on the whole well represented; the interactional consequence of this would show in accommodation, especially in speakers' likelihood of finding common ground for fluent communication (see previous section).

Does ELF processing have much effect on English grammar? This is where the other process postulated in usage-based models, abstraction, is relevant. Cognitive processes play a fundamental role in shaping grammars; as a speaker's aggregate lifetime experience accumulates it gets categorised, and gradually the abstractness of the categorisation rises. At high levels of abstraction, categories eventually become fixed in grammar (Bybee 2006; Croft 2000; Tomasello 2003). Speakers' language repertoires are dynamic in the sense that they undergo constant change during their whole lifetime. Most people's repertoires comprise elements from more than one language, and it is reasonable to expect similar processes of abstraction for their entire multilingual repertoires even at post-childhood stages. It is

also possible that speakers' knowledge about their language(s) may be less abstract than is commonly believed (Dabrowska 2004). If this is the case, it would seem to have important implications for language learning models, above all in questioning rule-based assumptions. However, it should not differentiate between an individual's languages: exposure and abstraction are the central building blocks in early and later acquired languages.

In a traditional view, imperfect learning is implicated in language contact situations (Thomason 2001), assumed to cause structural or phonological rather than lexical changes in the target language. More often than not this presumably leads to simplification rather than complication of the target language structure. While 'imperfect learning' is not a useful concept for ELF (see, e.g. Brutt-Griffler 2002; Mauraen 2012), post-childhood language learning has often been implicated in structural simplification. As relatively late learning is the typical case for ELF, it would lead us to predict that ELF displays structural simplification but probably not lexical changes.

Unlike structural simplification, lexical simplification has not been of much interest for language contact, and has been predicted to happen much less if at all. It would seem that since lexis changes and travels fast, it could just add to the lexical stores of both languages. However, a cognitive viewpoint reveals a somewhat different picture. Lexical simplification has been observed in learner language (e.g. Altenberg and Granger 2002; Granger, Hung and Petch-Tyson, *et al.* 2002) as well as in translations (e.g. Laviosa-Braithwaite 1996; Nevalainen 2005) in addition to ELF (Mauraen 2012; Gilner 2016). The prevalence of very frequent lexis in learner language is usually attributed to gaps in learning and to interference from the first language. By contrast, since translations are generally carried out into the translator's first language, interference from the target language is the customary explanation (and learning difficulties never implicated). I would argue, as I have done before (e.g. Mauraen 2010), that the common, more general basis for these shared lexical processes in each situation is language contact.

As language contact is activated in an individual who is either translating from one language to another or speaking a somewhat weakly entrenched language, it invites reliance on the most frequent vocabulary. If two competing systems are simultaneously active in a speaker's repertoire (cf. Jarvis and Pavlenko 2007; Riionheimo 2009), we can hypothesise that the best-entrenched parts of each are likely to become proportionally more salient. As a corollary, unique features of the languages are likely to get suppressed (as in translations: Tirkkonen-Condit 2004); in ELF this might concern things like Seidlhofer's (e.g. 2011) 'unilateral idiomaticity'. In productive cognitive terms, then, we might assume that one of the consequences of language contact is the relative overrepresentation of the most frequent lexis of the language that is currently being used. And this is precisely what we find in ELF. It must be noted, though, that this does not entail an overall 'impoverished' vocabulary: we observe a difference in ELF and ENL vocabulary among the 200 most frequent words (still very common words), but in lower frequencies the difference disappears (Mauraen 2012; Gilner 2016).

It would seem reasonable to expect non-first language use to manifest fuzzier processing than first language processing. Not only do later languages provide less exposure, but their acquisition begins at a later stage of brain maturation, which also contributes to weaker entrenchment. Even if we allow for the simplifications involved in talking about an individual's first and later languages (many people are bi- or multilingual from the start, their later languages may have become stronger, etc.), in large numbers the processing of a less strongly entrenched language should be fuzzier and manifest more approximation in cognitive processing.

I would like to suggest that the most important cognitive processing phenomenon in ELF is approximation. By approximating intended expressions well enough, speakers can achieve communicative success. Approximation is advantageous because cognitive processing is generally fuzzy, not only speech. Precision in memory is higher when items are firmly entrenched in long-term declarative memory, but with less deep entrenchment connections can remain less stable. It is reasonable to postulate that cognitive approximation is involuntary and results from realities of perception, memory and access. Access routes may be more precarious in a less entrenched language and for less frequent items. Yet it is possible that approximation works because a speaker's output provides enough for the interlocutor to go on, and they can manage with less accurate detail than if standard written language was taken as the benchmark.

We must also assume that conversationalists in an ELF encounter engage in fuzzy processing in both the speaker and the hearer roles. Weak entrenchment is equally relevant to the hearer position as it is to the speaker position: an approximate form, for example, may not be harder to understand than a precise form, because a typical hearer is not very precisely attuned to Standard English (or any particular variety of English), but is likely to rely on fairly fuzzy processing in making sense of the interlocutor's speech. These matching cognitive processes in turn have interactional consequences (see section 'ELF from the meso perspective' above): acceptance of approximate forms in interaction. When approximation works as a communicative strategy, the positive feedback from the hearer strengthens the items for speaker. A complex environment like ELF would seem to require widening tolerance for fuzziness, and speakers seem to adapt to this, as shown by research that finds less miscommunication in ELF than expected at the outset (House 2002; Kaur 2009; Mauranen 2006).

Memory for sense overrides memory for form, thus a very small proportion of language is remembered verbatim. Approximations can retain the meaning but only part of the conventional expression, as in *how people interact with each other, where they live how they go around for their business* (cf. native English *go about their business*) or *the main impediment in front of the gender movement* (cf. *impediment to*). The longer the unit, the easier it seems to accept that mental representations are partial and oriented to meaning rather than form, so for instance we do not expect to remember books or even their chapters verbatim, but sentences, utterances, or phrases can sometimes become bones of contention ('that's not what I said').

Some items are more salient than others, and presumably better remembered. An effective approximation is a matter of shared ground between interlocutors, be it based on stored or contextual matter. For example, a noun like *risk* is a good candidate for being salient; it is frequent, specific, and has cognates in many languages. In ELF we find it used much in the same sense as in Standard English, but its collocations can sometimes be unusual: *but there is the risk available all the time and they are trying to avoid them*. Although we may not usually speak about risks being 'available', the sense of them being present is clear here.

Working memory has limited capacity; it consists of the information the speaker attends to at a given moment (around seven units at a time) and includes the effort expended on fast on-line retrieval from long-term memory. Its constraints drive speakers towards economising on their efforts and preferring subjective simplicity (section 'ELF from the meso perspective' above) to complicated expression. Lingua franca use carries notable processing pressure, as speakers operate under conditions of limited resources and multi-source competition.

The same constraints also favour settling on certain preferred expressions for given meanings, or 'fixing', as Vetchinnikova (2014) calls the process. Vetchinnikova (2014) noted fixing in individuals who repeatedly employed certain expressions for a given meaning.

These expressions were roughly identical to what they had acquired from their previous experience of English, which was often salient and recent. Fixing follows the one-meaning-one-form principle or isomorphism recognised in language learning research (e.g. Winford 2003). But as a counterpart to approximation, it is more widely relevant to understanding the role of ELF in language change.

If we extend the term from cognitive to the meso and macro levels, we can appreciate the wider consequences of approximation and fixing. In interaction (meso level) accommodation seems to lead to convergence, and at communal (macro) level, it has been attested in identical or near-identical expressions across interactions (Mauranen 2012). Altogether, approximation leads to increasing linguistic variability, and fixing leads towards reducing it. Their interplay helps foster and perceive language change through ELF processes. Cognitive processes like approximation and fixing, then, have repercussions for macro-level communal language, via interactional accommodation and adaptation.

Conclusion

This chapter has approached ELF from three perspectives, from the macro through meso down to the micro level. A few recurrent themes have appeared throughout the discussion bringing to light an integrated view of ELF, as the different perspectives come together. One is the social nature of language at all levels, also incorporating individual cognition. ELF is fundamentally a matter of language contact, which in the macro-social view manifests itself as complex, second-order contact between similects. Similects, parallel idiolects of speakers with similar language backgrounds, meet and mingle in interaction between speakers. Thus in the notion of ELF as complex similect contact all three perspectives are intertwined in the dynamic process of languaging in ELF.

When we talk about communal (macro) level languages, we can see that they are made up of languaging, as languaging processes in the interactions of individuals sustain the social facts that languages are. All levels of language are in constant motion, since in principle all the individual interactions that make up languages are involved in maintaining them and altering them at every moment. However, alterations brought about in interaction do not work in unison or in the same direction. Tensions remain in languages as a permanent feature, and so do the dynamisms of growing or diminishing variability. Natural languages do not reach stable states of equilibrium, and ELF cannot be expected to reach any such state either. ELF, furthermore, lacks the regulatory mechanisms characteristic of languages with a communal status, such as nation-state languages or recognised minority languages. While regulation that seeks to maintain standard languages may not be as successful as is generally believed, it imposes norms that are more or less explicit, and above all sustains notions of distinct, norm-driven languages that ‘belong’ to communities of people (cf. Widdowson 1994). Such languages are therefore adopted as building blocks and reference points of identities, and in short, become powerful social facts.

Complex language contact foregrounds a multilingual view of ELF. At macro level multilinguality is perceptible as contact between English and an appreciable proportion of the world’s other languages: as speakers (often multilingual to begin with) of these other languages use ELF, the complexity of the mix is striking. The co-presence of several languages in any ELF exchange is available for interactional needs as interlocutors continuously and mutually adapt to one another. Individuals thus cooperatively engage in languaging, connecting the interactional and the cognitive. Participants in ELF interactions are at least bilingual, apart from possibly monolingual speakers of English, which shows how the smallest site of

language contact is that which takes place in the multilingual speaker's mind. Multilingual proficiency is dynamic, and if we view language as a system, it is perhaps best seen as a complex system, sharing many features with other complex systems (see Larsen-Freeman, Chapter 4 this volume). Language systems influence each other in multilingual cognition, and beyond that, like other complex systems they interact with their environment. For language systems at any scale, the crucial environments are social. Relating complexity to the three perspectives in this chapter, the individual's language can be seen as a complex adaptive system at the micro level, as can communal languages at macro level. Interactions occupy the meso level, and as was discussed above, they can be perceived as autonomous dynamic systems of their own, with vital connections to the cognitive and the communal.

The concept of similect-based contact is compatible with the notion of English as a *Multilingua Franca* that Jenkins (2015) put forward as a new opening in the conceptualisation of ELF. As multilingualism studies indicate, a speaker's languages are all present at any time, exerting mutual influence on each other. It follows that cognitive processing maintains a multilingual undercurrent even if speakers are using only one of their languages. This may mean competing repertoires, but also easy switching and crossing between repertoires. In interactional terms, ELF multilingualism implies that other languages can be drawn on if necessary. Conversely, if English is not chosen as the *lingua franca* in a multilingual encounter (a possibility Jenkins suggests), it is still highly likely to have a latent presence.

We are soon going to move from the first generation of global ELF, which I have previously suggested to have started around 1995, with the worldwide access to the internet, to the next generation (around 2020–2025). One of the intriguing questions that has not been addressed relates to 'ELF couples' (e.g. Pietikäinen 2014) and the new generations of their children. There will probably be a growing number of people whose first language is ELF – or English – learned from parents who have ELF as their couple language. This is hardly going to be a large or influential group, perhaps not even a 'group' but a number of individuals who are similar in this respect. ELF as a first language is nevertheless an interesting topic of research for child language development as it is for ELF.

An important consideration for ELF research and conceptualisation to take on board is the question of different time scales. These were touched on above in the connection of communities: some ELF encounters, we noticed, were transient and not easily captured in a notion of 'community', but nevertheless we can appreciate the fact that these are repeated, frequent event types that construct and maintain an important type of languaging in the contemporary world. Other ELF event types were more compliant with group formation and permanence or regularity of encounters between the same individuals, and finally there was a third kind of community, such as the EU, or international companies, off-shore university branches, or on a smaller scale, couples and families, where stability and permanence characterise the frame of existence. These social formations entail different time scales, and consequently different roles in, say, norm-development and regulation of ELF use. Clearly, the more stable the community at hand, the more likely regulatory practices are to set in: some usages become the norm within the community, even if external standards imposed by prestigious bodies of language regulation (dictionaries, grammars, educational institutions) should differ from these. However, all interactions self-regulate in one way or another, and the accumulative effects of masses of transitory encounters on languaging are not very well known or studied.

Relative stability at the macro level works towards reliable communication, thereby helping make languages useful. Likewise, interactions are successful if they reproduce familiar practices and patterns and in this way achieve communication. There are thus interests in maintaining and reproducing shared practices, and therefore centripetal forces exert pressure

both at macro and meso levels. The macro level can be expected to be particularly slow to change: global networks drive the maintenance of ELF as a mutually comprehensible resource even amid variability and change. At the same time, centrifugal forces are at work in on-going interactions where the immediate interest is to make particular, specific, unfolding communication events successful by any means available.

On the smaller scale, cognition, processes are fastest; we talk about milliseconds. Still, for individual cognition the moment-to-moment processing also relies on stored resources that have accumulated as aggregate lifetime experiences of languaging. The experience keeps accumulating, thus also continually changing, albeit not very fast, because while each new experience brings something new it also repeats, draws on and reinforces earlier resources as well as the affordances of the on-going interaction.

In all, time scales in ELF are multiplex, and at each level we have to account for counteracting forces within those time scales. To understand them better, we need to pose good questions for empirical research as well. ELF altogether is a complex phenomenon, which has not only stirred up a considerable amount of controversy, but already challenged many firmly held traditional notions of language – and paved the way for new questions.

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English as a lingua franca and intercultural communication

Will Baker

Introduction

English as a lingua franca (ELF) is deeply intercultural both as a means of communication and as a research field. However, until recently there has been surprisingly little crossover between the fields of ELF research and intercultural communication research. Given that English used as a lingua franca is presently likely to be the most common medium of intercultural communication, it is a concern that there has been so little uptake of ELF research in intercultural communication literature, and that where it has been discussed it has often been marginalised and misrepresented. The use of English as the predominant global language makes it a prime site for both empirical and theoretical investigations of intercultural issues. Furthermore, language choices are not trivial in intercultural communication and the extensive use of English needs proper scholarly attention.

In this chapter I will argue that ELF research has taken a similar perspective to much contemporary intercultural communication research in viewing communication from a post-structuralist perspective where categories of language, identity, community and culture are seen as constructed, negotiable and contested. Furthermore, currently both ELF and intercultural communication research are concerned with notions of culture and community, identity and intercultural communicative competence/awareness. These three themes, I believe, offer potentially fruitful points of convergence where both research fields can inform one another.

Intercultural communication research

While a history of intercultural communication research is not the purpose of this chapter, it is helpful to begin with distinctions between traditional ‘cross-cultural’ accounts of intercultural communication, more contemporary intercultural perspectives (Scollon and Scollon, 2001) and most recently transcultural approaches (Baker, 2016). Cross-cultural communication research typically focused on national level accounts of culture, homogeneity in cultural groupings and the study of the communicative practices of distinct cultural groups independent from intercultural interaction (e.g. Chinese communicative practices), which were then compared to the communicative practices of other distinct national groups (e.g. Chinese

compared with French communicative practices). Such research has been criticised for its essentialist approach to cultural groupings (e.g. Holliday, 2011) in assuming that individuals are synonymous with national characterisations of culture and that there are clear boundaries between different cultures. Most problematic in such research has been the assumption that individuals in intercultural interactions behave in the same manner as they do in intracultural communication (communication within cultural groupings).

In contrast to cross-cultural perspectives, intercultural communication research focuses on the communicative practices of distinct cultural, or other groups, in interaction with each other (e.g. Italian linguists communicating with English linguists) (Scollon and Scollon, 2001, p. 539). Cultures are not characterised as bounded entities within national borders, but fluid and dynamic with blurred boundaries. Furthermore, cultures are viewed as heterogeneous, containing a great deal of variety among members. This is not to deny the role of national cultures, which are still a powerful cultural grouping, but they are one of many cultures and communities that can be drawn upon in communication, alongside others such as gender, generation, profession and ethnicity. Most significantly in intercultural communication research we should not make *a priori* assumptions about the cultural groupings and identities that will be drawn on in interaction. Instead we need to ask, “[w]ho has introduced culture as a relevant category, for what purposes, and with what consequences?” (Scollon and Scollon, 2001, p. 545; see also Piller, 2011; Zhu, 2014).

Most recently, given the dynamic and flexible characterisations of language, communication, identity and culture found in ELF research, it can be argued that intercultural communication is no longer an appropriate term in all instances, since it may not always be clear what cultures participants are in-between or ‘inter’ in intercultural communication. Indeed, I think ‘trans’, as in ‘transcultural communication’, provides a better metaphor with its association of across and through rather than between and the suggestion of *transgressing* borders (Pennycook, 2007; Baker, 2016). However, given that much of the literature and research referred to in this chapter makes use of the term intercultural communication, for consistency and continuity it is easier to keep the traditional terminology, but with the caveats and limitations noted here.

Adopting this critical view of intercultural or transcultural communication, in which many different groupings and communities are drawn on, opens up the question of what is distinctive about intercultural communication as opposed to other kinds of communication. Indeed, Scollon, Scollon and Jones (2012) recommend abandoning the concept of culture and intercultural as too large, unwieldy, ill-defined and essentialist. However, I would argue that any alternative is equally problematic. Concepts such as identity, discourse and community are no less complex, open to essentialism or multiply defined. Furthermore, the notion of culture and the intercultural is made use of extensively in social life at many levels from media and political discourses to individual interactions. If we are to take subjective positions on social interactions and relationships seriously, then we need to account for culture and the intercultural and not simply dismiss it as ill-informed folk theory. Moreover, as Zhu points out in relation to culture in intercultural communication, we “need to take care not to confuse the need to problematize the notion of culture at the conceptual level with the need for a working definition of culture for those disciplines and studies which investigate group variation” (Zhu, 2014, p. 199).

Zhu provides a definition of intercultural communication, which like Scollon and Scollon’s (2001) definition takes interaction and negotiation as fundamental, but also recognises the importance of participants’ perceptions of cultural and linguistic differences as essential in any characterisation of communication as intercultural. Furthermore, in

research it is necessary to make a distinction between participant or lay ‘categories of practice’ and ‘categories of analysis’ that researchers make use of (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000). Therefore, in addition to participant perceptions, if the researcher regards cultural and linguistic differences as relevant, the interaction may also be treated as intercultural, “with the caveat that there must be empirical or theoretical justifications for making use of such categories” (Baker, 2015, p. 23). In sum, we can regard communication as intercultural when participants and/or researchers regard linguacultural (linguistic and cultural) differences as significant in the interaction; however, such differences should be approached critically and not assumed *a priori*.

ELF and intercultural communication research

Following the characterisation of intercultural communication above, “ELF is by definition intercultural in nature since ELF communication is typically defined as involving speakers from different linguacultures” (Baker, 2015, p. 43). Similar points have been made by other ELF researchers, for example, Jenkins states that “ELF is about intercultural communication in the broadest sense . . . intercultural communication skills and strategies are paramount” (2014, p. 26). Likewise, Cogo and Dewey claim that “the type of research we undertake is intercultural in nature (or maybe better still, transcultural), in that it concerns communication that takes place among speakers from various linguacultural backgrounds” (2012, p. 26). Mauranen also observes that “[a]s ELF gains ground in international communication, the intercultural perspective comes increasingly to the fore” (2012, p. 43). ELF research also shares many similarities with contemporary intercultural communication research in adopting a post-structuralist perspective on communication, identity and culture in which they are viewed as constructed, negotiable and adaptable. In keeping with this critical, poststructuralist approach, ELF research has also been concerned with issues of hybridity and questions of power, ideology and resistance. This has particularly centred around standard language ideology and power imbalances related to ‘native speakerism’ and characterisations of an Anglophone ‘centre’ and periphery ‘others’ (e.g. Jenkins, 2007; Jenks, 2013).

Two important points need to be addressed in relation to this characterisation of ELF as a form of intercultural communication. First, and most obviously, this entails that ELF is not culturally or identity ‘neutral’, as has been suggested by some ELF researchers (e.g. House, 2014). To claim that there is such a thing as neutral communication is to misunderstand the nature of communication as a social practice. All communication, intercultural or otherwise, involves participants whose identities will be present in the interaction in one way or another. Furthermore, communication is a form of cultural practice and so will necessarily involve drawing on, constructing and negotiating culturally based frames of reference and communicative practices. This is not to claim that any particular cultural identities or practices are present *a priori*, or that they are necessarily significant in understanding the interaction; but whether judged important or not, culture and identity are always present. Second, there is no implication in this characterisation of ELF that it is a unique form of intercultural communication (as for example Firth, 2009 argues), so the communication strategies, pragmatic strategies, linguistic awareness and intercultural awareness observed in ELF communication are likely to be present in other forms of multilingual intercultural communication.

Indeed, it is because ELF is not a unique form of intercultural communication that research into ELF has the potential to be highly useful for intercultural communication research in general. Given the extensive use of ELF in intercultural communication globally, ELF research is likely to provide valuable insights into multilingual intercultural communication and the

complex relationships between languages, communicative practices, identities, communities and cultures. However, ELF research has frequently been misunderstood, ignored or marginalised in intercultural communication literature. For example, the 600-page *Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication* (Jackson, 2012) does not contain a single reference to ELF. Of course we would not expect intercultural communication research to only focus on English and ELF but given its extensive global use for intercultural communication it would seem perverse to ignore it. Of most concern is that where English is dealt with in intercultural communication studies there is frequently no awareness of ELF research, even when dealing with issues addressed extensively in the ELF literature (see for example Piller, 2011). Without including ELF research there is often a lack of understanding of how issues such as identity and culture play out in contexts with few fixed connections between a language (English) and national identities and cultures. In the rest of this chapter I will outline three areas that I believe have the greatest potential for cross-fertilisation between intercultural communication and ELF research: culture, identity and intercultural communicative competence/awareness.

Culture and intercultural communication through ELF

Culture has understandably been the subject of much discussion and theorisation in intercultural communication research. However, it has been of less concern in ELF research. Nonetheless, a number of studies have looked specifically at the notion of culture in relation to ELF communication. Meierkord (2002) offers an early example of this demonstrating how interactants make use of English to construct and negotiate a range of cultural practices in what she terms a ‘masala’, but also suggests that ELF can be ‘stripped’ of culture, which is problematic as outlined above. Pölzl and Seidlhofer (2006) investigate the way in which English is used in ELF interactions to represent local cultural references and practices. The focus of this study was on a setting where there was a clearly identifiable L1 linguacultural connection and how ELF communication related to this L1 culture. While important, in much ELF interaction there may be no clearly distinguishable L1 culture that participants identify with or refer to. In a more recent study Xu and Dinh (2013) adopt a dynamic perspective in their examination of language and culture in ELF. They explore the multiple meanings that their study participants attribute to a number of key words that move between local and more flexible global cultural references.

One perspective on issues of community and culture that has been of interest to ELF researchers is the notion of community of practice (CoP) (e.g. Jenkins, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2007). Much of this discussion has been at the theoretical level, although empirical studies are beginning to emerge (e.g. Ehrenreich, 2009; Kalocsai, 2014; Vettorel, 2014). In order to account for the fluid communities in which ELF is typically found the CoP framework has had to be employed in a substantially modified and more flexible manner than originally conceived (Wenger, 1998). However, there has been little in-depth consideration of how such localised CoPs relate to other scales of community and especially wider ideas of culture and cultural identities (although see Kalocsai, 2014; Vettorel, 2014). Another significant limitation is that CoPs are typically instrumental in their goals whereas cultural communities and identities are more nebulous. Thus, while ELF studies that look at CoPs have contributed to our understanding of the role of ELF in constructing and maintaining communities, they typically do this on a single instrumental scale, with many other types of community and links between them still unaccounted for.

My own research has looked extensively at the construction, adaptation and negotiation of culture in intercultural communication through ELF and how we might theorise this (Baker, 2009, 2011, 2015). In doing so I make use of the ideas of linguistic and cultural flows, hybridity, third places and complexity theory. While a detailed explanation of all these concepts is beyond the scope of this chapter (see Baker, 2015 for a full discussion), a number of central notions need outlining. In particular a perspective on culture is taken in which it is viewed metaphorically as a complex adaptive system (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron, 2008) in which cultural characterisations emerge from a conglomeration of multiple individual interactions but are not reducible to those individual interactions. Crucially, this entails that while cultural characterisations may influence individuals they cannot be read directly back to those individuals. In other words, a British person may be influenced by the notion of ‘British culture’ (to take a national cultural characterisation) and in turn their interactions may contribute to a characterisation of British culture, but their actions, beliefs and values are not synonymous with British culture. Such a dynamic view of culture means that any cultural characterisation is in a constant state of emergence but never finalised with continuous change and adaptation. Therefore, no definitive or final characterisation of culture can ever be provided. This is easily observed in the multitude of different interpretations of cultures and the struggles and tensions around who defines culture and how. Moreover, individuals are simultaneously members of many different cultural groupings at a range of levels or scales from local/regional, to national and global. Each of these groupings can again be viewed as dynamically interacting complex systems that influence each other and with boundaries between them blurred.

It is important at this point to clarify the relationship between language and culture in intercultural communication through ELF interactions. Following Risager (2006), a distinction is made regarding the relationship between language and culture in the generic and differential sense. In the generic sense language is never culturally neutral since language is always linked to cultural practices and is itself a form of cultural practice. However, in a differential sense particular named languages (e.g. English) are not linked to particular named cultures (e.g. American). This provides a refutation to the strongest interpretations of linguistic relativity in which language and culture are synonymous and also more contemporary versions of this where the structure of a language is viewed as containing unique cultural elements (e.g. Wierzbicka, 2006). Thus, there is nothing that inexorably links the English language to Anglophone cultures and this has been clearly demonstrated in the research cited above. Indeed, it is the ability of language and culture to come together in novel ways that enables a language such as English to function as a global *lingua franca*. The notion of flows provides a metaphor to envisage how this relationship works, with linguistic and cultural flows converging in a particular communicative event to create meaning (Risager, 2006; Pennycook, 2007). Crucially, how linguistic and cultural flows converge is always an empirical question and cannot be determined in advance. In this way we can see how a language such as English operating as a *lingua franca* on a global scale is part of the construction and negotiation of a multitude of communicative and other cultural practices and in turn becomes part of a diverse range of cultural practices in itself.

Data from my own studies (Baker, 2009, 2011, 2015) within a higher education setting in Thailand (although not confined to that setting), have illustrated the way that various linguistic and cultural flows converged in particular interactions to create meaning. An analysis of a number of different communicative events shows ELF users drawing on multiple cultural frames of reference in the same conversation, and moving between and

across local, national and global contexts in dynamic ways. Crucially, the data highlight new cultural products, practices and interpretations emerging from ELF communication. Furthermore, the importance of adaptation, negotiation and co-construction is clearly demonstrated. For example, participants are seen negotiating different interpretations of the word ‘petanque’ with multiple meanings and references recognised rather than a single fixed one (Baker, 2009, pp. 581–582). Other participants are seen playfully negotiating the conventions for finishing a conversation consciously moving between different frames of reference related to ‘traditional’ cultural conventions, more contemporary approaches and linking this to a multitude of discourse communities and practice related to culture, gender and generation (Baker, 2009, pp. 577–578).

In sum, current approaches to culture in ELF research complement much contemporary research in intercultural communication that also considers cultures as complex and fluid sets of beliefs, ideologies and practices that are always transitory, partial and in a constant state of emergence (Holliday, 2011; Piller, 2011; Zhu, 2014). ELF research has a particularly valuable contribution to make in exploring English, as the most extensively used language of intercultural communication, and how this is connected to constructions of culture and cultural identity. ELF research demonstrates how problematic it is to posit an inexorable link between particular languages and cultures, especially at the national level (e.g. English and Anglophone cultures) in intercultural communication. This is not to refute the power of national languages and cultures, but it does underscore the need to look at other scales and not to make a priori assumptions about this relationship for English, or any other language, that is part of intercultural communicative practices.

Identity and intercultural communication through ELF

Closely linked to the notion of culture is that of identity and this has been a fundamental part of both intercultural communication and ELF research. As with culture, identity is most commonly viewed from a post-structuralist perspective as multiple, emergent, dynamic and at times contradictory. Individuals simultaneously orientate towards and construct many different identities in communication such as gender, ethnic, generational, professional, cultural, national, regional and religious identities. Given the focus on process in this perspective a more accurate term might be identification, since identity construction can be viewed as the process of identification with a network of social groups and social relations that we take part in and orientate towards. It is also important to note that identity is not only identification with those groups we choose but also allocation by others to particular social groups and hence negotiation and struggle are a significant feature of identity construction (Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004; Holliday, 2011; Zhu, 2014). Language is a key aspect in the construction and negotiation of identity, as Zhu notes, “we have come to the view that language practices and identity are mutually dependent and interconnected. Language practices index and symbolise identities, which in turn impact on and feedback into language practices” (2014, p. 218). Due to the multilingual and multicultural nature of intercultural communication this makes issues of identity and language particularly complex with notions of hybridity, liminality and third spaces frequently drawn on to account for the new spaces opened up for identity construction in intercultural communication (e.g. Rampton, 1995; Pennycook, 2007; Kramsch, 2009). However, there are also dangers of essentialising and othering participants in intercultural communication, especially if stereotypical nationally based notions of identity are prevalent (Holliday, 2011).

Of particular relevance to intercultural communication research is cultural identity. Traditional intercultural communication research has quite rightly been criticised for an over reliance on essentialised notions of cultural identity in which individuals are viewed as synonymous with national cultures and national cultural identity is the sole focus of analysis (see Piller, 2011; Holliday, 2011 for critiques). Instead we need to be clear that individuals can identify with a great many social groups including, potentially, multiple cultural groups. So, for example, an individual may identify with some of the cultural practices, beliefs and values associated with Chinese culture, but this does not determine their whole identity; it is only one aspect of it. Thus, the relationship between culture and identity is as complex and dynamic as any of the other aspects of intercultural communication discussed here. Current research into cultural identity in intercultural communication has looked at the manner in which nation, ethnicity and race contribute to the construction of cultural identity and the ways in which this may be accepted, negotiated, resisted or ascribed in interactions (e.g. Kumaravadivelu, 2008; Holliday, 2011; Zhu, 2014). Especially relevant to intercultural communication research have been studies that explore the new spaces that globalisation opens up for the construction of cultural identities (e.g. Pennycook, 2007; Canagarajah, 2013).

A growing number of ELF studies have also demonstrated the different ways in which a range of identities are performed through ELF. Participants in ELF studies have reported and been observed using English to create and index multiple identities moving between local L1 identities and more global orientations (e.g. Phan, 2008; Pözl and Seidlhofer, 2006; Pitzl, 2012). Other research has demonstrated the construction of shared multilingual and multicultural identities in ELF interactions (Klimpfinger, 2009; Cogo and Dewey, 2012). Studies have also shown the role of ELF in identification with dynamic, ad hoc communities of practice and virtual communities (Kalocsai, 2014; Vettorel, 2014). Alongside this, my research has illustrated the third-place identities intercultural communication through ELF gives rise to with participants embracing being ‘in-between’ and mediating between cultures or other groupings (Baker, 2009, 2011). At other times participants have reported the use of ELF as a medium through which they can construct freer, liminal and fluid identities that are not indexed to or ‘between’ any particular cultures or cultural identifications, while on other occasions participants may report being comfortable adopting multiple cultural identities apparently without contradiction (Baker, 2009, 2011, 2015). Zhu (2015) and Baker (2015) both focus on issues of cultural identity in ELF and highlight the way in which such identities are constructed and negotiated within the interactions and warn against the danger of a priori ascriptions of cultural identity. Issues of power and ideology in identity construction have also been of interest to ELF researchers especially in relation to the pull of ‘native speaker ideologies’ in the discourse of ELT, which associates the use of English with Anglophone nations and cultures (Jenkins, 2007). Furthermore, Jenks (2013) and Baird, Baker and Kitazawa (2014) caution that while we need to be aware of the potential power imbalances native and non-native identities can give rise to, we need to carefully examine how they are constructed in interactions and not make pre-determined assumptions. In sum, ELF studies focus on the liminal, dynamic and multiple aspects of cultural identity construction, while also recognising potential power imbalances, especially in relation to native speaker ideology in English.

Intercultural competence/awareness and intercultural communication through ELF

Both intercultural communication and ELF research have underscored the complexity and fluidity of intercultural interactions at multiple levels from linguistic features to communicative

and pragmatic strategies and culture and identity construction. Likewise, both fields have been interested in understanding how this complexity is managed in communication. There has been shared criticism of the limitations of communicative competence, particularly as conceived in applied linguistics, with its predominant focus on linguistic competence underpinned by grammatical competence. Successful communication, as demonstrated by both intercultural communication and ELF research, depends on much more than competence in a bounded set of syntax, lexis and phonology. Indeed, Hymes' (1972) original conception of communicative competence placed greater emphasis on wider social aspects of communication but this was typically in relation to defined speech communities of native speakers – a very different scenario to most intercultural communication and ELF interaction.

Within intercultural communication research the alternative notion of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) has been very influential (e.g. Byram, 1997). This represents an attempt to widen communicative competence in recognising the intercultural dimension to communicating in multilingual and multicultural settings. Alongside linguistic competence and communicative strategies, ICC adds features such as: knowledge about one's own and other cultures and communities and how communication is influenced by this; a willingness to explore and accept differences in communication; the ability to relativise values and practices; the ability to mediate between different cultural groups and communicative practices; and a critical approach to cultural and communicative characterisations (Byram, 1997, 2008). Although, ICC has been drawn on extensively in intercultural communication literature, especially in relation to education (Risager, 2007), it has also been criticised for its strong orientation to national levels of culture, its *a priori* assumptions of cultural divides and differences and a lack of engagement with the current role of English as a global lingua franca outside of Anglophone settings (Holliday, 2011; Baker, 2011, 2015). A number of alternatives to communicative competence and ICC have been proposed and Kramsch's (2009, 2011) notion of symbolic competence is particularly salient. Symbolic competence does not reject communicative or intercultural communicative competence, but rather incorporates a reflexive perspective that addresses the ideological, historic and aesthetic aspects of intercultural communication (Kramsch, 2009, 2011). Importantly, Kramsch assumes a more critical view of culture to the nationally orientated perspectives in ICC. Symbolic competence is about more than understanding a cultural other and one's own culture; it is also about understanding the fluidity of numerous 'discourse worlds' (Kramsch, 2011, p. 356) and the ability to navigate the complexity of change, multiple meanings and diverse interpretations in intercultural communication. Symbolic competence is thus a process and a "dynamic, flexible and locally contingent competence" (Kramsch 2009, p. 200). Nonetheless, Kramsch does not explore the relevance of this concept to lingua franca communication and the focus is on multilingual immigrant communities where native speakers exert a strong influence. Canagarajah's (2013) performative competence is also of relevance with its emphasis on the processes of multilingual/translingual intercultural communication. Particularly important is Canagarajah's highlighting of the central role of communicative strategies, but also recognition that even these strategies need to be approached flexibly.

In ELF research the notion of communicative competence has received much attention (e.g. Seidlhofer, 2011; Widdowson, 2012). In particular, it has been criticised for its static view of linguistic competence, reliance on native-like competence, and failure to recognise the importance of flexibility in the employment of linguistic resources in intercultural communication. However, arguably more significant in ELF research has been an interest in communicative and pragmatic strategies. Early ELF research such as Jenkins (2000) identified the importance of accommodation in ELF communication. Indeed, Seidlhofer and

Widdowson argue that “it may turn out that what is distinctive about ELF lies in the communicative strategies that its speakers use” (2009, p. 37); although, I would add the caveat that this is not necessarily distinctive to ELF but rather a central feature of intercultural communication in general. Alongside accommodation, communicative and pragmatic strategies such as pre-empting misunderstanding, repetition, explicitness and code-switching have frequently been noted in ELF studies (see Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey, 2011 for an overview). Importantly, these strategies are not seen as ‘compensating’ for communicative deficiencies but rather as displays of pragmatic competence by successful multilingual and multicultural intercultural communicators. To date, ELF research has provided detailed information about the micro-discourse features of intercultural communication through ELF and what competence in this might entail. Nonetheless, together with this analysis of micro level features, we need explorations of macro-level aspects of intercultural communication related to identity and culture, such as those identified in ICC, and a means of linking the two levels.

Intercultural awareness (ICA) represents an attempt to draw research together from both ELF and intercultural communication studies in a conception of the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed for successful (however we might choose to define that) intercultural communication through ELF (Baker, 2011, 2015). ICA builds on many of ICC’s notions of the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed in intercultural communication. However, unlike ICC, the focus is not predominantly on national conceptions of culture and language, although they are present, but instead ICA incorporates an understanding of the fluid, complex and emergent nature of the relationship between language and culture in intercultural communication through ELF. There is also an emphasis on intercultural communication as a process and the need to employ any intercultural awareness in a flexible and situationally relevant manner. This means that detailed features of ICA cannot be specified in advance but only broad areas. These broad areas include different levels of awareness moving from a general or basic awareness of communication as a cultural practice, to a more critical awareness of varied intercultural communicative practices and finally an advanced level of intercultural awareness where flexibility, dynamism and complexity are the norm (Baker, 2011, 2015). It is this final level of the model with its emphasis on fluidity that is particularly relevant for intercultural communication through ELF. However, it is important to recognise that this model of ICA, or any other model, should not be read as a set of prescriptive features for intercultural communication. A critical approach to intercultural communication entails an understanding that there can be no one set of communicative practices, intercultural or otherwise, that are more effective or successful than any other in all situations. Just as questions of language, culture and identity are always open empirical questions, so too are notions of successful ‘competent’ intercultural communication, which can only ever be judged in relation to individual instances of interaction.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that there is much potential for productive cross-fertilisation between intercultural communication and ELF research. First, ELF is by definition a form of intercultural communication and so offers valuable data for intercultural research. Contemporary approaches in both fields typically adopt post-structuralist perspectives to a number of central concepts such as language, identity, community and culture. Furthermore, both fields are concerned with understanding and documenting multilingual and multicultural communication in which diversity, complexity and fluidity are the norm. ELF research can draw on much of the theoretical and empirical work in intercultural communication for

expanded views of identity, culture, community and intercultural competence and awareness. At the same time intercultural communication research can benefit from the extensive empirical and growing theoretical work in ELF studies documenting the relationships between languages, communicative practices, identity, community and culture in the super-diverse and complex scenarios that are typical of intercultural communication through ELF.

Related chapters in this handbook

- 3 Ehrenreich, Communities of practice and English as a lingua franca
- 24 Kimura and Canagarajah, Translingual practice and ELF
- 28 Sangiamchit, ELF in electronically mediated intercultural communication
- 47 Jenkins, The future of English as a lingua franca?

Further reading

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Communities of practice and English as a lingua franca

Susanne Ehrenreich

Introduction

A community of practice is a group of people who regularly interact with each other by means of a shared communicative repertoire in order to accomplish a common task. In the process, a great deal of informal learning is taking place. Old-timers show newcomers the ropes, newcomers may inspire longer-term members to rethink and innovate established practices. In today's globalized world, such purpose-oriented endeavours increasingly bring together people from diverse linguistic backgrounds who use and develop, among other resources, English as a lingua franca as part of their communicative repertoire.

The term “community of practice”, coined by Lave and Wenger (1991: 97–98), was developed by Wenger (1998) as the essence of his social theory of learning. In its 1998 incarnation, the concept has developed an enormous impact, both as a heuristic notion and as an educational model, and has been applied in a wide range of disciplines (Squires and van de Vanter 2013). While celebrated and applied as a knowledge management tool in organizational and business studies (e.g. Wenger *et al.* 2002), it has also been applied, mostly in its analytical capacity, in fields such as education and sociolinguistics (e.g. Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999; Barton and Tusting 2005a; Hughes *et al.* 2007), accompanied by insightful critical debates.

With regard to ELF theorizing, the potential relevance of the concept of community of practice was first discussed by House (2003).¹ In an attempt to find an adequate notion to conceptualize the sociolinguistic realities of multilingual ELF speakers globally, it was initially considered a possible alternative to the established concept of the speech community. However, as is argued in Ehrenreich (2009: 130), as a “midlevel category” (Wenger 1998: 124) the concept of community of practice generally describes smaller and more cohesive group configurations and is therefore not a suitable candidate for such re-conceptualization efforts (see also Jenkins 2015: 64–66).

With regard to empirical ELF research, however, it is a very different story. Although utilized as a framework in only a handful of studies so far – Ehrenreich (2009, 2010, 2011a) and Alharbi (2015) in the domain of international business, and Smit (2010), Cogo and

Dewey (2012) and Kalocsai (2014) in the domain of higher education – the concept has been shown to be a powerful analytical tool. If applied to suitable contexts, it enables socially situated explorations and analyses of ELF; analyses that help to (re-)direct the focus in ELF research to the social embeddedness of ELF in use.

In this chapter, I will provide an overview of the potential and the limitations of applying the concept of community of practice to empirical research into ELF. After briefly tracing the origins of the concept and its first applications in sociolinguistics, the three criterial dimensions of a community of practice – mutual engagement, its joint enterprise and a shared repertoire – will be described, including a discussion of critical issues that have been raised in relation to them. For each dimension, it will be shown, on the basis of existing research, how these have been realized in ELF-based communities of practice. After a brief consideration of research methodological implications, empirically derived insights into the socially embedded and dynamic nature of ELF-based shared repertoires will be summarized and discussed with regard to four exemplary facets of ELF communication (strategies, multilingualism, sociopragmatic hybridity and ELF speakers' identities). I conclude by reviewing the concept of community of practice in its capacities as an analytical tool, as a theoretical notion and as an educational model.

Communities of practice as an analytical research tool: origin and applications

Lave and Wenger (1991: 97–98) introduced the concept “community of practice” as part of their theory of situated learning, in which apprenticeship-like types of learning are conceptualized as “legitimate peripheral participation”, but did not specify the term in detail. Its analytical potential for sociolinguistic research was recognized and explored by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992), who introduced it to language and gender research with the following, now classic definition:

A community of practice is an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations—in short, practices—emerge in the course of this mutual endeavor. As a social construct, a community of practice is different from the traditional community, primarily because it is defined simultaneously by its membership and by the practice in which that membership engages.

(Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992: 464)

The prominence Eckert and McConnell-Ginet give in their definition to emerging “ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations” as these aggregates' shared “practices”, will be shown to prove particularly helpful in analysing the use of ELF as norm-driven,² social behaviour in group-based social contexts. Adopting a “midlevel category” (Wenger 1998: 124) such as the community of practice – as opposed to analytical categories describing larger and less cohesive configurations of speakers – to examine ELF in its social contexts helps to identify and describe group-internal social parameters and how these govern its members' linguistic and communicative behaviour.

Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999: 174) translate the idea of social learning into a sociolinguistic perspective:

The process of becoming a member of a CofP – as when we join a new workplace, a book group, or a new family [...] – involves learning. We learn to perform appropriately in a CofP as befits our membership status: initially as a ‘peripheral member’, later perhaps as a ‘core member’ [...]. In other words, a CofP inevitably involves the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence.

Wenger, in his 1998 book, sets out to explore the concept of community of practice “more systematically” in order “to make it more useful as a thinking tool” (Wenger 1998: 7). Starting out from the fact that communities of practice are a familiar experience to everyone since “[w]e all belong to communities of practice. At home, at work, at school, in our hobbies” (Wenger 1998: 7) and from his observation that “the learning that is most personally transformative turns out to be the learning that involves membership in these communities of practice”, he aims to exploit this familiarity to further elaborate his conception of learning as “social participation” (Wenger 1998: 4). Crucially, participation to him is both “a kind of action and a form of belonging” (Wenger 1998: 6).

To him, the concept of community of practice serves as a “point of entry” into his more encompassing theory of social learning (Wenger 1998: 8). A concise definition of the concept itself is not offered. Instead, three criterial dimensions of such communities are described: mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire (Wenger 1998: 72–85, 124–126). It is these criterial dimensions that help to specify what a community of practice is, in contrast to other non-practice based communities (or non-community forming types of practices).

Criterial dimensions of communities of practice

Communities of practice exist regardless of externally applied analytical categories. In other words, a group configuration is either a community of practice, or it is not. Two implications arise from this observation. First, configurations that do not ontologically represent a community of practice according to Wenger’s criteria cannot be transformed into such merely for research purposes. This is a lesson that can be learnt from previous research in sociolinguistics, where, as Meyerhoff (2005: 597) notes, enthusiasm for Wenger’s concept has gone slightly overboard in the past. “[S]imply jumping on a bandwagon and picking up a trendy new term [...] for analysing data it is not equipped to handle”, she argues (Meyerhoff 2005: 597), is a rather unwise thing to do. Second, empirical work that does not explicitly apply the community of practice framework may nevertheless offer *de facto* portrayals of exactly such communities, their members and their shared repertoires. So, for instance, the work by Kankaanranta and her colleagues (e.g. Kankaanranta and Planken 2010) and Räisänen’s longitudinal study (2013) represent examples of what could be categorized as conceptually ‘covert’ analyses of international business communities of practice or selected aspects thereof.

Mutual engagement

For a community of practice to evolve as a coherent group, its members need to interact on a regular basis. Importantly, while pursuing their tasks (or what they interpret these tasks to be) such interactions have to be made possible in the first place. The primary channel for such exchanges is direct face-to-face interaction, however, these days most likely complemented

by electronically mediated communication. Just how much face-to-face contact between members is necessary for a community of practice to establish meaningful and rich relationships and to sustain itself as a community, is a highly controversial matter, and needs to be assessed carefully for each individual configuration. As a result of the participants' mutual engagement various kinds of relationships evolve, with the community's members being "included in what matters" (Wenger 1998: 74), albeit to varying degrees depending on the members' status as "core" or "peripheral" members (Wenger 1998: 7). Establishing such group coherence requires considerable investment on the part of its members (cf. Wenger 1998: 74). Most importantly, however, right from the outset, Wenger (1998: 77) argues against a romanticized view of communities of practice, making it quite clear that these are not places free of conflict and power issues. This is a point on which he has been criticized, wrongly, I would maintain, on several occasions (see e.g. Barton and Tusting 2005a; Hughes *et al.* 2007). The people who are brought together in different types of communities of practice can be very different in all kinds of ways including the ways in which they respond to whatever their 'joint enterprises' are: "The resulting relations reflect the full complexity of doing things together" (Wenger 1998: 77).

Therefore, interactions among members of a community of practice can be both "harmonious or conflictual" (Wenger 1998: 125). ELF-resourced communities of practice are no exception. It is this observation about the full range of possible interpersonal configurations that makes the concept a particularly valuable one for ELF research. It allows a contextually and situationally informed analysis of language use, reminding ELF scholars of the fact that ELF talk is not per se 'cooperative' in the sense of 'conflict-free'. In this regard, the community of practice framework, which requires an ethnographic and multi-dimensional research methodology, facilitates detailed sociolinguistic and sociopragmatic analyses of *when* and *how* ELF speakers in a given interactional sequence decide to co-operate or not to co-operate with each other.

Taking a look at research into ELF-based communities of practice available to date, what are the ways in which mutual engagement in such communities is enacted? Ehrenreich (2009, 2010, 2011a), Kankaanranta and Planken (2010), and Alharbi (2015) have identified the following forms of mutual engagement in the global workplace among business professionals, who, by the way, are always simultaneously members in several communities of practice: face-to-face encounters in offices, in meeting rooms, in hallways or at the coffee machine, over lunch and during business dinners. The encounters take place at home and abroad, with colleagues in subsidiaries or with clients. Naturally, mutual engagement among business professionals also involves phone calls, phone or video conferences (or net conferences) as well as e-mail. Group sizes and speaker configurations may vary considerably from one encounter to the next. In the domain of higher education, interactions and relationship building in a community of practice of Erasmus students occur in shared activities such as partying and travelling (Kalocsai 2014: 85–89), and in an international hotel management programme, inside and outside the classroom in various subgroups (Smit 2010). Crucially, the examples in all studies underline the fact that the concept of community of practice is not a synonym for externally defined groups or configurations of people (i.e. a classroom, a team, or a unit; see Wenger 1998: 74). A community of practice only evolves as a result of the relationships its members establish through their mutual engagement. The studies available so far also demonstrate that for some ELF speakers the communicative contexts in which they find themselves are relatively stable and fixed for the time of their community's existence, as is the case with the group of Erasmus students, and even more so with the students in the international hotel management programme. Yet, in other contexts, as can be

seen in the international business communities of practice (Ehrenreich 2009, 2010, 2011a; Alharbi 2015), the ELF speakers involved are simultaneously members, often in different roles (i.e. as core or peripheral members), of several parallel communities of practice, communities that might themselves be in a state of flux to a greater or lesser extent, forming and dissolving, acquiring new members and losing others.

Joint enterprise

The second criterial dimension of a community's shared practice is the negotiation of a joint enterprise. While this is a fairly intuitive notion in contexts such as Wenger's original research setting in an insurance company, in other domains this dimension may be more difficult to pin down. It is no surprise, then, that as a conceptual category, the notion of a joint enterprise seems to pose a considerable challenge when applied to sociolinguistic and ELF research. Two of the crucial questions in this regard are: First, is 'language' part of a given community's joint enterprise or not? (see Ehrenreich 2009) And, second, how specific does a community's joint enterprise have to be in order to be analytically meaningful? (see e.g. Meyerhoff 2002; Prior 2003; Davies 2005; and for Business English as a lingua franca ((B)ELF), see Ehrenreich 2009).

According to Wenger, a joint enterprise is the goal or purpose that motivates the participants' interrelated actions, as "their negotiated response to their situation" (Wenger 1998: 77). As a result, "relations of mutual accountability" are created, which serve as community-specific guidelines as to "what matters and what does not" (Wenger 1998: 81). Consequently, a negotiated joint enterprise is never a direct reflection of an official or external goal, but is transformed by the participants themselves in and through their practices to suit their own purposes as much as is possible in a given setting.

As indicated above, in the domain of business identifying the joint enterprise of a community of practice is a fairly straightforward issue. Companies are 'profit-making organizations', it is their goal to develop and sell whatever product or service they have specialized in. In their organizational structures, the respective departments (e.g. research and development, production, sales, IT) as well as the units and teams contribute to this aim. Within the departments and across them, company-internally and externally, with colleagues and with customers, members of management and employees form communities of practice, who jointly negotiate how this ultimate goal of 'profit-making' defines their everyday practices. Generally, 'language' or 'speaking a language' are not normally part of such joint enterprises (with the exception of, for example, communication departments and translating agencies). At the same time, this does not mean that language is not playing an important part in such non-language focussed communities' practices. Quite the contrary, the participants' mutual engagement and the negotiation of their respective joint enterprises are realized via language – in all its social and stylistic functions – and would, quite clearly, not be possible without it. However, for heuristic reasons, it is important not to conflate what is symptomatic of fundamental differences in the respective 'relevance systems', i.e. a community's set of priorities, of different professional or interest groups (for a brief discussion of the sociological construct of relevance systems and its implications for ELF research, see Ehrenreich 2009: 128–129).

As discussed in Ehrenreich (2009), language plays a pivotal role in the 'relevance systems' of 'language-focussed' people or professional groups such as linguists, language teachers and language students (Ehrenreich 2009: 128–129). For these groups, language, or more

specifically, in the case of English language specialists, English, is part and parcel of the joint enterprise of whatever professional community of practice (or related ‘constellations of practice’) they are a member of. With regard to ‘content-focussed’ people or professional groups, language only plays a secondary role. Content comes first, and language serves the purpose of conveying content (Ehrenreich 2009, 2010, 2011a). This conceptual distinction between language-focussed vs content-focussed speakers is helpful in more than one way. Most importantly, it helps to explain the markedly different attitudes towards ELF between different professional groups (Ehrenreich 2009).³ Second, it helps to uncover a heuristic confusion in early attempts to apply the community of practice framework to ELF speakers generally. For example, it was suggested with regard to applying the community of practice framework to ELF that negotiation not only “on the content plane”, but also “on the level of linguistic (English) forms” was part of the “‘enterprise’ in ELF talk” (House 2003: 572). Such a perspective may be justified in ELF-based communities of practice that carry a strong language focus such as EMI classes (for an example, see Smit 2010). Yet, in all other cases, English (as a lingua franca) is most probably part of a community’s ‘shared repertoire’, not part of their ‘joint enterprise’. Ultimately, however, whether and to what degree this conceptual distinction – language, or ELF, being part of a community’s joint enterprise vs not being part of their shared enterprise – holds true for any given ELF-based community of practice needs to be examined carefully by the researcher. It is the researcher’s task to reconstruct the participants’ *emic* views on what they themselves consider to be or not to be components of their joint enterprises, and how these components relate to their shared repertoires.

The second challenge inherent in the notion of a community’s ‘joint enterprise’ concerns its specificity. ELF scholars are well-advised to take note of the critical voices that have been raised in sociolinguistic research. For example, Meyerhoff (2002: 528) emphasizes that “[i]t is important that [the] shared enterprise be reasonably specific and not very general or abstract”. And, extending her argument, that

[i]t ought to contribute something meaningful to an understanding of the dynamics of the group involved. Sociolinguists who wish to use the notion of CoFP in their analyses have to exercise caution and ensure that as researchers they are not attempting to constitute ‘CofPs’ for which a shared enterprise is explanatorily vacant.

(Meyerhoff 2002: 528)

To illustrate her point from a sociolinguist’s perspective, Meyerhoff presents an example taken from her own research that cannot be explained productively using the community of practice framework, simply because, as she states, “it was impossible to specify what kind of enterprise all the women who were observed using *sore* [a Vanuatu apology routine; SE] to express empathy might share” (Meyerhoff 2002: 530). Translating these words of caution into ELF research, this means that, hypothetically speaking, ‘communicating via ELF’ with no further defined shared goal would in most domains fall into the category of an ‘explanatorily vacant’ enterprise.

Specificity of a joint enterprise in the business domain is not a problem, and the same potentially holds for classrooms of various kinds and related programme activities. Yet, to what extent externally defined groups such as classrooms actually transform into communities of practice is a matter of the participants’ actual mutual engagement. In other contexts, particularly with regard to “self-constituted groups” (Davies 2005: 562), it might be more difficult, in general, to uncover and define the possible joint enterprise of a given group configuration. For example, online communities or student groups do not automatically

constitute communities of practice. This is the case only if they have as a group negotiated a shared enterprise, at least for a given time span (see Davies 2005: 562).

Returning to the questions stated at the beginning of this section regarding ‘language’ as part of a community’s joint enterprise and the specificity of such enterprises, how have these issues been dealt with in community-of-practice-based empirical ELF research to date? In my own study of two Germany-based multinational corporations in the technology sector, the members’ enterprises arise from and revolve around the individuals’ responsibilities, for example, in engineering or in sales, or around their organizations’ structures, as well as, importantly, the fact that several years ago their jobs had taken on a global dimension (Ehrenreich 2009, 2010, 2011a). Their joint enterprises concern business issues. (B)ELF, from an emic view, is part of the communities’ shared repertoires. As such it is, without any doubt, inextricably linked to business matters in that it serves the purpose of doing business, just like any other language or semiotic tool. In Alharbi’s study in a British-owned health insurance company in Saudi Arabia, the employees’ focus is on how to get their jobs in the multicultural teams of the company’s IT department done in a meaningful way (Alharbi 2015). Despite the obvious contextual differences, her findings are very similar to mine, with the exception that in particular configurations and only for some members, in Alharbi’s study, ‘English’ temporarily seems to surface as part of the members’ ‘enterprise’. In the educational domain, the situation seems to be slightly different. The group of Erasmus students in Kalocsai’s (2014) study adapted the official rationale of the Erasmus programme in a dynamic manner, a gradual process resulting in the overall joint enterprise of building an Erasmus network of friends; an enterprise, which for some members at least, was associated with the language-related goal of improving their English (Kalocsai 2014: 77–85). In Smit’s (2010: 106, 131, 135) analysis of an English-medium vocational programme, the students harmonized three components as their jointly negotiated enterprise: first, the educational goal; second, building relationships among themselves; and finally, improving their English language proficiency. Yet, in the overall account of the study, ‘English as a classroom language’ is on several occasions portrayed not only as the researcher’s main focus, but also as the sole component of the community’s enterprise, a view that may not be entirely compatible, and emically justified, with the students’ nor the teachers’ perspectives. There is content matter, too, and there are relational goals.

Shared repertoire

The third dimension of practice that contributes to creating coherence in a community is the development of a shared repertoire for negotiating meaning among its members (Wenger 1998: 82). The individual elements of this repertoire can be very heterogeneous in nature and comprise both linguistic and non-linguistic elements. Diverse as they may seem to outsiders, they are not random, but are unified by and a reflection of the members’ joint enterprise:

The repertoire of a community of practice includes routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres [...], actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice [...] It includes the discourse by which members create meaningful statements about the world, as well as the styles by which they express their forms of membership and their identities as members.

(Wenger 1998: 83)

When a community of practice evolves, its members bring with them a diverse set of communicative resources, which are then “imported, adopted, and adapted for their own purpose – if only the language(s) they speak” (Wenger 1998: 126). With regard to their analyses, ELF scholars need to be careful to acknowledge the fact that the shared repertoire of any ELF-based community of practice is always much more than ‘just’ ELF. From a community of practice perspective, ELF in its varied manifestations is part of and at the same time embedded as only one of many other elements in a multi-layered communicative repertoire; a repertoire that is itself inextricably linked with the community members’ mutual engagement and their joint enterprise (Ehrenreich 2009; Kalocsai 2014: 95–98). Crucially, it is the community’s joint enterprise, not any community-external criterion, which serves as the ultimate benchmark for appropriateness (Ehrenreich 2009). Moreover, such shared repertoires are not fixed at any given point in time, but mutable and adaptive (Wenger 1998: 83).⁴ As evidenced in Ehrenreich (2009), Räisänen (2013), Alharbi (2015) and others, in business communities these repertoires comprise, in addition to English, several other languages as well as documents such as drawings, charts, power point presentations or websites, also often models of different parts of technical products, and, on a more abstract level, certain “ways of doing things” (Wenger 1998: 83). In Kalocsai’s (2014) Erasmus student community the repertoire includes, in addition to languages, collaboratively built ‘schemata’ for partying and travelling, conversational frames, humour and communicational support. The focus in Smit’s (2010) analysis of an EMI setting is on classroom interaction via ELF as the hotel management students’ and their teachers’ shared repertoire.

Wenger also points out two additional implications of such repertoires being dynamic and interactive, which provide instructive analytical clues for any socially situated research into ELF:

Agreement in the sense of literally shared meaning is not a precondition for mutual engagement in practice, nor is it its outcome. Indeed, mismatched interpretations or misunderstandings need to be addressed and resolved directly only when they interfere with mutual engagement [or the joint enterprise; SE]. Even then, they are not merely problems to resolve, but occasions for the production of new meanings.

(Wenger 1998: 84)

Without doubt, ambiguity, in terms of linguacultural ambiguity, potentially extending to every aspect of ELF communication, is one of its key characteristics. In ELF-based communities of practice, tolerance for ambiguity is needed, assessed against the requirements of mutual engagement and the joint enterprise.

Wenger’s characterization of the shared repertoire of a community of practice, is, indeed, relatively brief, as has been noted by several sociolinguists (e.g. Tusting 2005). Yet, given the overall goal of his book, this is not necessarily a major conceptual weakness of his theory per se. Concise as his outline of the characteristics of a shared repertoire may be, seen in conjunction with the other two dimensions, mutual engagement and joint enterprise, it provides sufficient orientation for sociolinguists, including ELF scholars, to develop and utilize the notion to support their research in terms of socially situated analyses of language, or ELF, in use.

Summing up: features of a community of practice and methodological implications

Aware of the challenge the expository nature of his characterization of the concept of community of practice poses – with no concise definition included (see Barton and