Karolina Kalocsai
Communities of Practice and English as a Lingua Franca

Developments in English as a Lingua Franca

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A Study of Erasmus Students
in a Central European Context

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Chapter 1
Introduction

The present study describes the complexities of English as a lingua franca (ELF)[1] as used by a group of Erasmus exchange students engaged in social practice. The Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE) website states that ELF "serves as a common means of communication for speakers of different first languages" (www.univie.ac.at/voice). From another perspective, ELF is a "bridging language" by speakers who are bi- or multilingual in English, and whose diverse linguistic repertoires overlap in English (Smit 2010: 17). My goal is to give fresh insights into how ELF and languages in general can be conceived of by bringing the social into the linguistic. In the perspective I take, language is understood as a "living social practice" (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992: 462). That is, it is a "regular or routine [...] activity that has some progressively established social or cultural value" (Coupland and Jaworski 2009: 9). As such, it is seen as rooted in the everyday social activities of local communities, and is considered inseparable from the other aspects of life salient to the individual or the group. Accordingly, in this endeavor, my focus is not primarily on language use, but on the social practices which are instantiated through linguistic means. I start my description of ELF from the social, that is, the activities, interests and views Erasmus exchange students shared, and consider language insofar as it was interwoven with the characteristics of the group. My goal is to illuminate the ways in which Erasmus exchange students, as purposeful active agents, exploit the resources of ELF (in combination with other languages) to construct local social meanings.

The practice approach described above implies a close and complex relationship between language, culture and identity. My approach to ELF draws, first and foremost, on Risager's (2006, 2007) idea that language does not represent a fixed culture. Quite the opposite, in each instance of communication, speakers dynamically create the forms of culture they wish their language use to represent. Risager's (2006, 2007) ideas have important implications for ELF research. That is, ELF speakers need not self-identify with the native English speakers (NS) and their culture, but may create their own cultures through language and other social means.

In the context of the present book, the examined ELF culture is conceptualized by two notions. Firstly, the notions of "space", and more specifically, those

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[1] When the acronym "ELF" does not seem to convey the meaning properly, the notion "English as a lingua franca" is used instead.

of "third-cultures or third spaces" (Kramsch 1993a, 1993b; Jenkins 2006), high-light the fluid and emergent nature of cultures, to which other notions of "space", namely those of the local and global (Canagarajah 2005; Pennycook 2007) and "scales" (Blommaert 2007) add tension and power. Language is at the same time a one-time, richly contextualized local phenomenon, as well as a collective, stable, and decontextualized global phenomenon, the tension caused by the need for fixity, on the one hand, and the need for fluidity, on the other (Pennycook 2007). With regard to power, the local and global represent different scale-levels in a stratified, power-invested space (Blommaert 2007). It may well be that skills which are empowering at one level are disempowering at another level, and people with different linguistic resources and competencies have unequal access to the different scale-levels. The relevance of this for the present study is that the forces of globalization, which is particularly true for English, reduce the presupposability of linguistic resources, and create "blind spots", where "linguistic baggage has very unclear value" (Blommaert 2007: 16).

Secondly, the present study draws on the concept of communities of practice (Wenger 1998), which fits in well with the notions of "space". Before my fieldwork, and until very recently, we knew next to nothing about how the use of ELF intersects with the speakers' activities, views and values within locally based communities. Since 2006, after leading ELF researchers argued convincingly for more "qualitative studies with a strong ethnographic element" (Seidlhofer, Breiteneder, and Pitzl 2006: 21), qualitative research has been increasingly envisaged along exploratory lines. Qualitatively oriented studies are now becoming "ELF mainstream", but quite regrettably, the focus (still) remains on language use defined in terms of linguistic data only. Besides this, as Smit (2010: 80) points out, due to the cross-sectional nature of current ELF research, researchers continue to concentrate on once-off encounters, and offer ELF "snapshots" only.

To build explanatory power into the discussions of ELF, Seidlhofer (2007a) considers the notion of communities of practice as an alternative to that of speech communities. Following Seidlhofer (2007a), many ELF researchers now opt for the community of practice theory; however, very few of them consider the analytical value of the notion. The few exceptions are Ehrenreich (2009) and Smit (2009, 2010), who articulate a research goal, and follow a research path away from the mainstream. They both view ELF as social practice, and place the ELF community, rather than the code, at the center of the stage. They work within the community of practice model, and follow a richly contextualized, long-term, ethnographic approach. Moreover, to better account for the dynamic and long-time development of discourse in context, Smit (2010) adopts

a longitudinal approach. This points to at least two gaps in current ELF theory and research.

Firstly, there is a need for more research into ELF as a community-based social practice, and into ELF interactions whose interlocutors are engaged with one another over a sustained period and on a long-term basis. Secondly, there is a need for more research which does not only "use" the notion of communities of practice as a theoretical background with no empirically-grounded evidence, but instead "applies" the concept as an analytical tool. The present study fills these very gaps. Defined as an ethnography grounded in the community of practice framework, it engages in an emic, richly contextualized, long-term, qualitative investigation of ELF with a particular emphasis on the elements of practice that are interwoven with the social, non-linguistic characteristics of the group. As set in Hungray, the present study enhances our understanding of the cultural and social significance of ELF in a Central European context.

Against this backdrop, I view identity as the practice of dynamically exploiting a co-created set of linguistic and other social behaviors, views, beliefs and attitudes, on the basis of which the speakers may be recognized as members of a dynamically changing fluid "space" or community of practice. While ELF "space" and the emerging ELF identities may be both local and global, in line with recent ELF research (Phan 2008, 2009; Baker 2011a), ELF identities are seen to complement rather than compromise the participants' more stable L1 identities. The purpose of the present study is to describe how multiple, emergent and dynamic identities are created in and through ELF.

Furthermore, as the present study provides an ethnographic account of the out-of-class language use and identity construction of a group of students studying temporarily in Hungary, it contributes to the relatively narrow line of research on study abroad stays. Language learning as a lived experience outside of class has always existed, but it was not until the recent forces of globalization and the vast number of internationally mobile students and workforce (see Urry and Sheller 2006) that it received more scholarly attention. Results show that study abroad students tend to "live in isolation, on the margins of the society in which they reside" (Byram and Feng 2006: 1–2), and that they lack in the type of "intercultural competence" or "intercultural sensitivity" that is needed for successful intercultural communication (Bennet and Bennet 2004; Jackson 2008).[2] Recently, study abroad stays in lingua franca communities have become

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2 For further study abroad experiences, see second language socialization research results in Section 2.1.1; for a more appropriate conceptualization of "intercultural competence" as "intercultural awareness" (Baker 2009, 2011b, 2012), see Section 2.4.2.

increasingly common, which has created the need for a new line of research, such as the work by Phan (2009) and Pitkänen et al. (2011). The present study is a step forward in these directions as well. By examining students on a study abroad stay in Central Europe, it helps unlock the mysteries surrounding the status and role of ELF in the internationalization of universities. The findings suggest several courses of action for policy makers, curriculum designers and educationalists alike.

The present study follows a data-driven approach design. My research was begun while working with the Languages in a Network of European Excellence (LINEE) project.[3] In the first phase of the research, I had the opportunity to investigate the relation of English and multilingualism in the education sector at the European level. With the team I worked most closely,[4] we sought out two groups of participants: local secondary school students in Szeged and Prague, and Erasmus exchange students who studied temporarily at the University of Szeged or at the Charles University in Prague. Our aim was to find out how experiences with ELF in international contexts changed the students' perceptions of English and its speakers, the nature of communication in English, and the relationship of English and other languages. Our methods of data collection involved semi-structured interviews, and two casual observations of the Szeged Erasmus students at their weekly gatherings in the university pub.

During the fieldwork, the Erasmus students, both in Szeged and Prague, painted a highly varied and multiplex picture of their social situations. Their emic views allowed three major observations (for a more detailed analysis, see Kalocsai 2009). First, the students demonstrated a strong sense of belonging to the other Erasmus students in town. They saw themselves as forming one big group, which, as they described, was linguistically very diverse. Second, given the diversity of the group, they used a variety of languages for a variety of purposes, within which ELF was a key resource. They were struck by the differences between their local uses of English, and their earlier experiences with the English language. They talked about the specificities of their English with ease, and also with much pride. To mark its distinctiveness, they volunteered names such as "Erasmus English", "English as a code", "European English", "MTV English" or "world English". Finally, the Erasmus community was a shelter, or

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3 LINEE (Languages in a Network of European Excellence) was a linguistic project funded by the European Commission's 6th Framework Programme (FP6 – contract number 028388). The project started in November 2006 with the participation of nine institutions across Europe. It was divided into three phases. The first two phases lasted for 18 months each, and the third for six months.

4 Other participants of the Szeged team were Don Peckham and Emőke Kovács.

perhaps *the* safe place for many of the visiting students. They contrasted the good atmosphere within their ELF-resourced Erasmus community with the negative experiences outside of it. They can be said to have occupied their own "space" between the local (Hungarian or Czech) students' social networks and that of the native English speakers, a "third-culture" (Kramsch 1993a) or a "third-place" (Kramsch 1993b).

What I found particularly interesting about the above observations is that the Erasmus students were all very positive about their emerging ELF practices. They used ELF for negotiating meaning *and* relations. In their case, ELF emerged in social practice and was a way of life for the social players involved. It did not much matter whether their English practices were "right" or "wrong" by NS standards; much more important was that they negotiated meaning and successfully built a community through such practices. In achieving their goals, the students did not look outside for norms of speaking, but created their own norms. Hence, the specific names (see above) to describe the kind of English they spoke. As these observations were all interview-based, my attention turned to collecting linguistic data and observational data to get a more in-depth understanding of the linguistic practices of identity construction among students temporarily engaged in English medium instruction in Central Europe. In other words, I was intent to examine how linguistic and interactional phenomena in ELF tied with the speakers' other social, non-linguistic activities, views, beliefs and attitudes.

Sometime after our interview-based study within the LINEE project, I conducted a second study, this time for the purposes of this study. In keeping with my goal to provide a more complete linguistic description of the Erasmus students' language in Szeged on the basis of a careful examination of the social, I conducted a new set of interviews, and further expanded my data sources. My goal was to gain a more thorough understanding of emic views, and to combine emic views with interactional data. The present study draws exclusively on data collected in the second round of data collection.

My project can be defined as an ethnographic study inspired by what is sometimes referred to as grounded theory. That is, I engaged in an ethnographic study in which my interest and questions were outlined in advance, but the findings emerged iteratively over time through participation in fieldwork. More specifically, first, while working under the auspices of the LINEE project, my goal was to gain insight into the Erasmus students' perceptions of English and other languages, and into how these perceptions changed (or did not change) as a result of their study abroad experience. Then, I became determined to gain a more complete understanding of the students' linguistic situation in their temporary communities in Central Europe. On the basis of my initial work within the LINEE project, I determined that the method I needed was ethnographic

and that the analytic focus had to be on language use in its social context. It soon became evident that the current ELF perspective, which assigns a primary status to language use, does not in itself provide an appropriate analytical framework.[5] Thus, I looked for theoretical and methodological tools elsewhere. My understanding of the community of practice literature in language and gender research and second language socialization research,[6] drew my attention to the great theoretical and analytical value of the community of practice model (Wenger 1996). It seemed that the community of practice approach had great potential for the field of ELF as well. Thus, I applied it to design my study for both data collection and analysis from the start.

On the theoretical level, a major asset of the community of practice framework is its practice component (Wenger 1998). Practices include linguistic and non-linguistic social activities, views, beliefs and attitudes, which the individual members adopt (or resist) as a way of coordinating (or not coordinating) their actions and aims with those they want (or do not want) to be seen as forming one community. Within them, linguistic practices and language related views, beliefs and attitudes are considered important but they are not prioritized. They are seen as both a resource in creating a group, and as an indicator of belonging to a group. This implies a dynamic process: practices emerge to achieve a common goal (a joint enterprise), and get solidified in practice, a process which simultaneously sustains the enterprise. Participation in shared practices requires learning and results in the production of a set of shared resources, which are part of the indications that new identities and a new community of practice have been formed.

On the analytical level, as shown by language and gender research and language socialization research, the community of practice model relies quite specifically on ethnographic techniques for collecting data, qualitative methods for analyzing social practices, and discourse analytic techniques for analyzing linguistic practices. In line with previous research, I collected emic data as well as interactional data. In an extended process of engagement with the participants, I carried out participant observation, conducted three different kinds of interviews, elicited the participants' *post hoc* comments of social, interactional and linguistic practices, sent prompt e-mails to the students, recorded naturally occurring conversations, and collected naturally occurring written materials such as the students' Facebook posts and circular e-mails.

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5 For exceptions on ELF research that looks at identity, see Jenkins (2007), Phan (2009), and Baker (2011a).

6 For language and gender research, see McConnell-Ginet (1992), Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003); for language socialization research, see Duff (1995, 2004), Harklau (1999, 2000), Kobayashi (2004), Morita (2004), and Talmy (2008a, 2008b, 2009).

The practical steps of analysis can be formulated as follows: The emic data are used as a source to provide an ethnographic account of the community and to analyze the participants' views on their own interactional practices. The naturally occurring conversations in turn serve as a source to analyze the interactional phenomena that are typical in the data, and that are interwoven with the characteristics of the community. The analysis of the data consists basically of two layers: Firstly, the characteristics of the Erasmus community are described on the basis of social practices. Secondly, and more importantly, the related linguistic and interactional practices are explicated. Throughout the analysis the elicited views of the participants about the investigated issues are presented and built into the discussion. A special virtue of the present study is that it combines – along with other discourse analytic methods – Conversation Analysis (CA) with the community of practice approach. CA serves to illuminate the interactional characteristics of the emerging linguistic practices, and discourse analytic methods are used to analyze the linguistic features.

1.1 Background

Erasmus is the European Commission's Education and Training Programme, which spans more than 4,000 higher education institutions in 33 European countries. According to the official website of the Programme,[7] it enables more than 200,000 students to study and work abroad each year, with a total of 2,2 million students since its start in 1987. In addition to mobility actions, the Programme supports "higher education institutions to work together through intensive programmes, networks, and multilateral projects". The rationale under the Programme is that "a period spent abroad not only enriches students' lives in the academic field but also in the acquisition of intercultural skills and self-reliance". Its actions target students studying abroad, students doing traineeships abroad and students doing linguistic preparation in the Erasmus Intensive Language Course (EILC). The students studying abroad, in particular, are given support to "benefit educationally, linguistically and culturally from the experience of learning in other European countries".[8] EILC is a step forward in this direction. It is a language preparatory course offered to the Erasmus exchange

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[7] See http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme.

[8] A recent study called "2008 Study on the Impact of Erasmus on European Higher Education: Quality, Openness and Internationalisation" has shown that the Programme has positive impact on the students. It develops "stronger person skills" and "better articulated job aspirations", and increases their chances of employability. However, as Phillipson (2010) notes, language education and the language of instruction were not on the agenda of the research team.

students whose aim is to study abroad in a country with a lesser used and taught language.

The mobility opportunities of higher education students have been coupled with vocational mobility, volunteer and youth exchange schemes, staff mobility, a growing market in international students and graduate employability. The European Commission has actively promoted these to strengthen European integration, and more recently, in the framework of the Bologna Process, to create a European Higher Education Area. As stated in the Bologna Declaration of 1999, the underlying common goal is to "enhance the employability and mobility of citizens and to increase the international competitiveness of European higher education."[9] The Declaration further articulates the need to proceed by "taking full respect of the diversity of cultures, languages, [and] national education systems",[10] a point which some fear is not fully met. Some have raised the concern that internationalization under the label "Bologna Process" increasingly means "Englishization", that is, a gradual move to English-medium teaching in European higher education (see Phillipson 2003, 2006, 2009b and Coleman 2006). Phillipson (2009b), in particular, calls for a more explicit language policy to create a healthier balance of English and other languages in higher education.

The participants of the present study were study abroad students in Szeged, which is a thriving university town in the southeastern part of Hungary. The University of Szeged has been participating in the Erasmus Programme since 1998. In the first year, the number of incoming students was 8, the number of outgoing students was 41, and the number of partner universities was 29. The number of incoming students, and that of partner institutions has been on the rise ever since then. In the past few years, the number of incoming students has been over 100, the number of outgoing students over 300, and the number of partner institutions around 300. In the particular academic year when the present research was conducted, the University of Szeged received roughly 120 students from 16 different countries.

1.2 Research questions

A general aim of the present study is to describe ELF in the context of the Szeged Erasmus community's social practices. More specifically, I seek to show how the use of ELF intersects with the speakers' activities, views, beliefs and attitudes within a locally based community. To that end, I approach ELF through

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9 See http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna.pdf.
10 See http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna.pdf.

a community of practice lens, which I combine with the CA method. ELF research and the CA method require interactional data, whereas the community of practice approach necessitates richly contextualized, ethnographically inspired data. The ethnographic method brings into view the social meanings with which the student participants invest their linguistic and other social practices; the CA method, on the other hand, illuminates the interactional characteristics of the relevant ELF practices. The research is guided by one major research question as set out in three sub-questions:

– How do the Szeged Erasmus students define themselves as a group? In other words, from the community of practice perspective, how does the examination of the Szeged Erasmus students' jointly negotiated enterprises, repertoires and resources contribute to a better understanding of linguistic practices and communities of practice in ELF?

   a) What tools and resources do they bring to bear to engage in their jointly negotiated practices reflecting a shared goal?

   b) What does a closer examination of linguistic practices in the community tell us about ELF? That is, what does it mean to be a competent ELF speaker within the community?

   c) What effects do the different linguistic resources that the students bring to the community have on the overall practices of the group? That is, how do the different linguistic resources intersect with identities demonstrating membership in the group?

These questions have emerged, on the one hand, on the basis of fieldwork and the examination of the data. On the other hand, they have been formed by the theory of community of practice combined with insights from current ELF research. The overall question aims at describing the practices – both linguistic and social – that identify the Szeged Erasmus community of practice, and can thus be utilized to create a specific ELF "space". In other words, it aims at an inventory of the richly contextualized linguistic and non-linguistic social practices which the participants purposefully adopt as a way of obtaining and securing membership in the group of the Szeged Erasmus students. The question why the students, in the first place, want such membership is to be addressed as well.

The first sub-question through which the main question is to be answered seeks to describe the activities, interests and views which the students adopt to create a shared repertoire, in fact, a shared resource of evolving practices. Such a repertoire is worthy of examination as, in the context of a community of practice, it functions as an indicator of the Szeged Erasmus community of practice and of the members' dynamically developing membership in it (e.g., Eckert 2000).

In the second sub-question, the aim is to focus on the linguistic practices tied to group membership with an even more particular focus on ELF practices. In other words, this question sets the goal of describing, in detail, what counts as "ELF competence" within the group. In keeping with the community of practice theory, in the context of the present study, gaining communicative competence is understood as gaining control of the linguistic practices which are appropriate to the shared goal.

Finally, the third sub-question aims at illuminating the link between the inherent variation underlying the Erasmus community and the different identities the students take on to demonstrate their membership. This question has in part been motivated by the perspective that participation in a community of practice involves changing participation and identity transformation (Wenger 1998: 4). In the community of practice literature, identity is typically defined in terms of central versus peripheral membership, or expert versus novice members. Here the focus is both on the linguistic and non-linguistic, social identities the participants dynamically construct to situate themselves socially in relation to others. The participants of the present study are students from different countries, with different linguistic resources. Thus, the third sub-question is geared at examining what linguistic resources they bring to bear to express their multiple and dynamically changing identities in the host country.

In conclusion, the present study seeks to add explanatory power to our understanding of ELF as a tool for social interaction. More specifically, it aims to provide fresh insights into how ELF takes on the particular forms it does by focusing on the elements of practice that the members of a specific community with ELF as a key feature imbue with meaning and importance. To that end, it illuminates the shared and evolving practices through which the Szeged Erasmus community achieves its goals from its early formation until its break-up. As the community of practice as an analytical tool is relatively new in the field of ELF (but see Smit 2009, 2010; Ehrenreich 2009), the present study has looked to language and gender studies, on the one hand, and L2 socialization studies, on the other, for impetus on the use of the communities of practice approach in linguistic research.

Next, I will present the theoretical framework of the study. I will start with the discussion of the community of practice model, which will be followed by major issues involved in ELF, and a review of the relevant literature in the field (chapter 2). The literature review section will set the relevant ELF research findings in juxtaposition with CA research findings, and will briefly outline the basic CA tenets, which will inform the analysis of the interactional data. An important difference between the community of practice model, ELF and CA is that the present study was designed to apply the community of practice model only;

ELF and CA were adopted later when the findings started to emerge in the iterative process of analysis and interpretation.

The theoretical framework will be followed by the description of the research site and context, the data collection method, and the data analysis procedures complementing the CA method (chapter 3). Then, I will present findings that emerged from my data, and where appropriate, I will compare my findings with that of other studies (chapters 4–7). Finally, I will summarize and evaluate my results, and place them into a larger context of earlier research (chapter 8). Here the practical applications of this study and its implications for future research will be given consideration, too.

Chapter 2
Theoretical framework

This work combines the community of practice approach with current perspectives on English as a lingua franca (ELF) on the one hand, and the community of practice approach with the Conversation Analytic (CA) method on the other, both of which are methodological innovations of the present study. As this study is rooted in the communities of practice framework, this chapter will start with the discussion of the community of practice model. I will briefly discuss the context formed by similar studies in the field of linguistics, more specifically, in language and gender research and language socialization research. I will start by presenting the key components of the model. To that end, I will turn to the field of education, where the concept of communities of practice emerged for the first time.

Given that in the iterative process of data analysis and interpretation ELF emerged as important (see the Introduction to Chapter 1), the second part of this chapter will be dedicated to the discussion of ELF. Firstly, I will briefly summarize the sociolinguistic realities of the spread of English; secondly, I will clarify the methodological and ontological positioning of ELF; then, I will present a detailed description of the issues involved in ELF research and theorizing; finally, I will provide details of previous findings. The first and second parts are an introduction to the field of ELF, and lead to the discussion of my specific methodology in the following chapter. The third part defines ELF for the purposes of the present study. The fourth part presents ELF research findings and also offers a brief review of how the same phenomena have been analysed in other fields, mainly in CA.

To the question why CA results are prioritized over other results, I have two answers. Firstly, most of the features ELF researchers currently look at were first identified by CA researchers; secondly, CA has proved to be one of the key methods of the present study. Thus, to provide a backdrop for the CA and ELF research findings, and to provide a basis for the methodological considerations outlined in the next chapter, the literature review section details the basic CA tenets as well. The literature review section below informs the analysis of the data collected in the study but it does not attempt to give an overview of recent empirical work (for an overview, see, for instance, Knapp and Meierkord 2002; Seidlhofer 2004; Seidlhofer at al. 2006; Seidlhofer and Berns 2009; Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey 2011).

2.1 The community of practice model

The concept of communities of practice arose as a result of Lave'e ethnographic work among Vai tailors in Liberia (Lave and Wenger 1991). While studying apprenticeship as a learning theory, they noted that the learning of tailoring was more than the learning of a set of isolated or abstracted tailoring skills. It was a lived experience in the group of apprentices and masters. More specifically, the learning of tailoring skills was tied to the interactional and other social contexts within which the apprentices engaged with each other and their masters. Lave and Wenger coined the term "community of practice" to better describe the kind of learning that underlies apprenticeship. However, it was not long before they realized that communities of practice are everywhere. In general, they used the term "community of practice" to describe a group whose members are 1) mutually involved in the realization of some 2) jointly negotiated enterprise with the help of 3) a shared repertoire of negotiable resources (Lave and Wenger 1991, Wenger 1998).

The three core dimensions of communities of practice need some elaboration. "Mutual engagement" means regular interactions (Langman 2003: 188) and requires the discovering of how to engage in the community, the developing of dense relationships (whether positive or negative), the defining of identities, and the establishing of who is who, who is good at what, and who knows what (Wenger 1998: 95). The "joint enterprise" is the members' shared goal and the practice involved in achieving it (Langman 2003: 188). This emerges as the members' collectively negotiated response to what they understand to be their situation (Wenger 1998: 78) and involves the members struggling to define their enterprise, their aligning their engagement with the enterprise, and their learning to become accountable and to hold each other accountable to the enterprise (p. 95). Finally, the "shared repertoire of negotiable resources" includes linguistic routines, specialized terminology, ways of doing things, ways of talking, stories, jokes, concepts, physical artifacts, instruments, and costumes (p. 83). They require the participants to renegotiate the meaning of various elements, produce, adopt, adapt, and import new language, and create as well as break routines (p. 95). Within communities of practice, then, the shared goals, the shared repertoire of practices, and even the forms of mutual engagement, are under constant negotiation, meaning they are being "defined" and "redefined" in practice by the members. The process in which the members coordinate their actions and views with those of the other members necessarily involves learning.

The community of practice, as one component of a social theory of learning, offers a different view of learning than the traditional models of learning (Wenger 1998). Within communities of practice, learning has four key aspects.

It occurs in *practice*, meaning it is a form of doing; it takes place in the context of *communities* to which one belongs, or wants to belong, meaning it is a form of belonging; furthermore, learning involves the construction of *identities* in relation to the group, meaning it is a form of becoming; and finally, learning involves the construction and internalization of *meaning*, which implies that it is a form of experiencing. Lave and Wenger (1991, Wenger 1998) describe learning within communities of practice in terms of "legitimate peripheral participation". The notion is meant to imply a gradual shift along the four key aspects of learning: from the "periphery" of the community to the "core" (community), from the status of a "novice" or newcomer to that of an "expert" member (identity), and from lack of appropriate competencies and expertise to high levels of competence and expertise (practice and meaning). Learning in communities of practice may therefore be summarized as "changing participation and identity transformation" through a joint enterprise and mutual engagement by the participants (Wenger 1998: 11).

2.1.1 Previous approaches to the community of practice model

The first use of the community of practice concept in linguistic research came from Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992, 1995). They argued, very convincingly, for the need to examine the analytical potential of the community of practice for the field of language and gender research. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, several sociolinguists adopted and successfully applied the notion as an analytical tool (for an overview, see Meyerhoff 2002). Of particular relevance to this study is Holmes and Meyerhoff's (1999: 175) observation that the notion's great asset is in offering a "framework of definitions within which to examine the ways in which becoming a member of a CofP [community of practice] interacts with the processes of gaining control of the discourse appropriate to it". For Bucholtz (1999: 207–210), the community of practice has a greater value for sociolinguistic work than its alternative, that is, the speech community. Firstly, it allows for greater flexibility in the type of (social) practices around which a community is built; secondly, it allows for the examination of difference, conflict, and individual variation within the community; thirdly, it acknowledges the internal heterogeneity of community members; fourthly, it opens up the way for examining individual variation and agency; fifthly, it allows the active construction, or rejection, of identities and various other social meanings in the ongoing process of practice; and finally, it gives preference to local interpretations based on emic perspectives. According to Bucholtz (1999: 204), against this theoretical background, sociolinguists may well reverse the direction of analyses. Instead of

asking how social information accounts for linguistic phenomena, they may ask how linguistic data illuminate the social world. In other words, instead of asking how identities are reflected in language, they may now ask how identities are created in and through language and other social practices. In my case, the community of practice opens up the way for examining how ELF is used to create particular linguistic and non-linguistic, social identities.

Gender and language research taking a community of practice approach culminated in Eckert's (2000) ethnographic work in a suburban high school in the Detroit area. As a result of her two year engagement in the field, she analyzed linguistic data that, as Milroy and Gordon (2003: 69) note, are difficult to match both in terms of quantity and quality. She spent her time outside of the classroom, in public areas, in the library, and in the cafeteria, observing and casually interacting with the students. Once she had gained the trust of her participants, she engaged them in interviews. Her insider perspective gave her access to the students' speech as well as to the social meaning of their behavior. She observed a range of students, and later analytically defined two groups: "Jocks" representing middle class cultures, and "Burnouts" representing working class cultures. In identifying the two categories, she did not rely on a priori values, but rather considered the practices in which the students engaged, and which were meaningful to them. These practices involved styles of movement, dress, smoking, school orientations, gang orientations and family relations, to mention just a few. The study revealed that the categories of Jocks and Burnouts did not exist independently of the above practices, but rather the students created these categories and they filled them with meaning in and through their day-to-day activities. The above practices (e.g., hangout places) were thus resources on which the students drew to express their membership in one or the other group.

Eckert's (2000) study also illuminates the role of language in the mosaic of social practices. Language was part of the symbolic resource which the students strategically employed to situate themselves socially in relation to others in the high school. The Jocks were found to use more of the supra-local (standard) features, whereas the Burnouts more of the local features. The linguistic features the students adopted had further social meaning outside the school, of which the students were aware. They chose to use linguistic features whose social meanings they considered most useful for their own purposes. Thus, with the use of the standard features, the Jocks expressed, among other things, their career aspirations and motivations to enter a university; by contrast, the Burnouts, with their use of the local features, displayed their rebelliousness, toughness, and orientation towards the urban job market. The longstanding patterns, that is, the combination of features that each group used came to characterize that particular group. In other words, they became their group style. In this

sense, then, the Jocks had their own speech style, and the Burnouts had their own. By adopting one speech style or the other, the students were strategically expressing with which group they identified themselves, and from which group they distanced themselves.

Furthermore, Eckert's (2000) study points to difference and variation within communities of practice. Despite the inter-group distinctiveness that character-ized the Jocks and the Burnouts, their practices were oriented towards the goal of being "cool". In this sense, then, the Jocks and Burnouts formed one com-munity of practice, whose members were oriented to the same goal but not in the same way. In addition to the inter-group variation, in the group of Burnouts there was some intra-group variation as well. The so called "Burned-Out Burn-out girls" participated in the Northern Cities Vowel Shift at a greater rate than did the rest of the group. They were more extreme than the others and defined for the entire community what it meant to be a "real" Burnout. They were in the role of innovators leading linguistic change. To sum up, then, Eckert's (2000) study is particularly useful in illustrating how the notion of communities of practice may be fruitfully applied to the examination of linguistic variation across speakers who are at the same time speakers *and* social players, and indi-viduals *and* members of groups.

The community of practice approach has proved valuable for language socialization researchers as well, but for different reasons. Socialization is the process whereby a newcomer to a group develops the ability to participate as a competent member through repeated engagement in and experience with the practices of the target group (Hall 1993). Language socialization is the same pro-cess with the additional gain of learning language and developing linguistic competence (e.g Schieffelin and Ochs 1986; Ochs and Schieffelin 2008). In the process of language socialization, therefore, language is both the *means* and the *goal* of learning "culture". For language socialization researchers, and par-ticularly for L2 socialization researchers, a fundamental question to ask is how novices to a particular "culture" acquire the types of knowledge that will make them communicatively as well as culturally competent (Duff 2008a, 2008b). The communities of practice model, commonly used in education research (e.g., Duff 1995, 2004; Harklau 1999, 2000; Kobayashi 2004; Morita 2004; Talmy 2008a, 2008b, 2009), has drawn the L2 socialization researchers' attention to the impor-tance of studying access, negotiation and renegotiation, and roles in L2 learners' movement from beginner to advanced L2 speaker status. Duff (2007: 315) sum-marizes the most frequently raised research questions in studies employing a communities of practice framework as follows: "How do newcomers to an academic culture learn how to participate successfully in the oral and written

discourse?" "What effect does socialization have on the learners' evolving identities?" "How does interaction with peers and teachers facilitate the process of gaining full membership?" and finally "How do the practices and norms evolve over time?" As the above questions indicate, this line of research foregrounds themes such as the L2 learners' agency (e.g., Morita 2004), identity (e.g., Talmy 2008a, 2008b, 2009; Toohey 2000), investment (e.g., McKay and Wong 1996; Norton 2000), access (Duff 2007), and power relations (Willet 1995).

Of particular relevance to the present undertaking is Duff's (2006, 2007) study, which applies the notion of communities of practice to a group of exchange students. This interview-based study of the 45 Korean exchange students at a Canadian university reveals that their socialization is complicated by issues such as access, multidirectionality and hybrid identities. Upon arrival in Canada, the Korean students' biggest hope is that they will successfully integrate themselves into the local Anglo-Canadian peers' English-medium social networks. Over the course of time, however, they realize that such a goal is neither feasible, nor desirable. This is so because, first, they have no or limited meaningful access to the Anglo-Canadian students' groups; second, they have little in common with those students; and third, differences in linguistic backgrounds often bring about a feeling of anxiety or discomfort between them and the NSs of the language. This realization makes them redirect their energies from the Anglo-American student groups to the Korean exchange students' and the non-Korean-Asian students' social groups. By doing so, they establish themselves as members of two separate communities of practice, each with its own norms, values and stances. In sum, their language socialization is oriented toward multiple communities of practice, involves the construction of multiple identities, and takes place in a kind of "third space" created by and for the participants.

The community of practice notion has been particularly helpful for L2 socialization researchers in dismantling the "idyllic" picture that the cross-cultural studies of L1 socialization painted about the processes and outcomes of language socialization. Based on her insights into the Korean exchange students' language socialization at the Canadian university described above, Duff (2007) highlights several differences between L1 and L2 socialization. One of the major differences between the two types of socialization is that the latter involves dealing with children or adults who have gone through, at least, one process of socialization already, and possess a repertoire of linguistic, discursive, and cultural traditions and community affiliations. Another difference is that L2 learners may not experience the same degrees of access, acceptance, or accommodation within the new communities as their L1 counterparts do.

Besides, regardless of the target community's attitudes towards them, learners, that is, novices, may not be fully invested in becoming socialized into the target community. This is especially true if their future trajectories do not require them to be (fully) committed to the target language and culture. L2 socialization thus leads to "other outcomes" (Duff 2007: 311), such as, (1) hybrid practices, identities and values; (2) behaviors, attitudes and identities contingent on others in the community; (3) multiple identities; (4) incomplete or partial approximation of the target community; (5) rejection of the target norms and practices; and (6) ambivalence about becoming (fuller) members (Duff 2007: 311).

Furthermore, the community of practice model has helped L2 socialization researchers reveal that L2 learners may not always readily accept the target community's behaviors, views and values. Quite the opposite, L2 learners (as novices) may attempt to change the target community's (that is, the expert members') practices so that they would better satisfy their own needs. An example from Li's (2000) study is Ming, a Chinese immigrant woman, who in her new community of practice does not, as a passive recipient, "pick up" the L2 requesting behavior made available for her, but rather engages in a negotiation process with the more expert members. In addition, the community of practice approach has been useful in demonstrating that not all communities of practice have novices and experts as members, meaning not all (L2) learning is with the participation of members who are seen as experts and members who are considered as lacking in expertise. An example comes from Potts (2005: 155). The online community he analyzed emerged "out of the interactions of class members with each other and their personal investment in this mode of learning", rather than out of some experts guiding novices in the direction of some readily defined target competence. Finally, the community of practice approach has pointed to the need for a critical analysis to be undertaken in L2 socialization research. An example of a critical perspective is Morita (2004) who sheds light on the meanings of silence in the classroom, or Willett (1995) who illuminates how gendered ideologies dominating the classroom practice may seriously disadvantage some learners.

2.2 The sociolinguistic realities of the spread of English

Researchers started turning their attention to ELF in the late 1990s and early 2000s as a result of the global spread of English. The changing function of English around the world has been well documented (e.g., Crystal 2003; Graddol 2006). Already a decade ago it was noted that the non-native speakers of

English (NNSs) outnumbered the native speakers of English (NS)[11] in a ratio of 5:1 (Kachru 1996: 241). The number of NNSs has been growing quickly ever since (Crystal 2003), and the spread of English has reached a point where the majority of the interactions in English world-wide are between NNSs without the presence of NSs. The sociolinguistic realities of the spread of English may be described in terms of Kachru's (1992) three-circle model, which has its limitations, but is arguably the most useful point of departure here (for an overview of the alternative models, see Jenkins 2009: 17–24). English is increasingly used in the Outer Circle countries, that is, the postcolonial states where English has a special status, and in the Expanding Circle countries, that is, the countries where English is learnt and spoken although it does not serve institutional purposes. In the Outer Circle, English is for the most part used for intra-national purposes within national groups, whereas in the Expanding Circle, it is used for inter-national purposes across different national groups.

The type of English mainly used in the Outer Circle is understood as English as a second language (ESL), whereas the type of English mainly used in the Expanding Circle is understood as English as a foreign language (EFL) or English as a lingua franca (ELF). In the case of EFL, English is taken to be taught for communication with the NSs of the language; whereas in the case of ELF, English is used as a convenient means of communication (Seidlhofer 2005: 156), which may, in its literal sense, be *used* with other NNSs, rather than *learnt* through interactions with NSs. However, this does not mean that NSs are excluded from ELF communication. As ELF can be thought of as "any use of English among speakers of different first languages" (Seidlhofer 2011: 7), it is not native to the NSs, either; they too will need to develop the skills to communicate effectively (Jenkins 2011). In this sense, then, in ELF interactions NNSs participate on an equal footing with the NSs. ELF, which therefore includes both NNSs and NSs, is pervasive from casual small talk to business negotiation, from face-to-face interactions to virtual communication, from interpersonal exchanges to large group meetings in the great many countries of the Expanding Circle.

The increased use of ESL and ELF has had a major consequence on the development of the English language. Crystal (2004: 40) characterizes the situation as "unprecedented, with more people using English in more places than at any time in the language's history. Building on Crystal (2004: 40), Seidlhofer (2007a) notes that the norms of the English language have been diversifying and changing at an unprecedented pace, to an unparalleled extent. Language

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11 Here I resort to the most practical labeling, but see Section 2.4.1 for its limitations and for alternatives.