

Abstract

Breiteneder, Angelika. 2005. *Exploiting redundancy in English as a European lingua franca: the case of the 'third person -s'*. MA thesis, University of Vienna.

This thesis seeks to make a contribution to the linguistic description of the most common use of English in present-day Europe, i.e. English as a European lingua franca (EELF). It is based on the assumption that language change is an entirely natural consequence of language spread, and accordingly conceives of EELF as a legitimate use of English appropriated by linguistically diverse European citizens for their daily communicative needs. EELF is therefore taken to be not a 'learner language' ('interlanguage') but a 'user language' like any other.

Within this broad theoretical context, this study focuses on a description of lexicogrammatical features of EELF. For this purpose, a sample of EELF data was compiled in a small-scale corpus. The data comprise four working group discussions between highly proficient EELF speakers debating the creation of a common European higher education area.

The study considers the marked resemblance between the extra-linguistic circumstances associated with the data obtained and those under which post-colonial New Englishes have emerged. Extra-linguistic causes and linguistic consequences are correlated and a comparison is made between these data and New Englishes on a linguistic, more specifically, on a lexicogrammatical level. In particular, the tendency "not to mark the verb for third person singular in its present-tense form" (Platt, Weber & Lian 1984: 85), as attested in various New Englishes, was taken as the starting point for the present case study.

The analysis of the data reveals that EELF indeed shows affinities with New Englishes as far as the 'third person -s' marking is concerned. It also illustrates that the intermittent absence of the 'third person -s' as well as its superfluous use constitute natural characteristics of contact situations and are additionally motivated by the highly irregular nature of the present tense verb morphology of Standard English.