

Closing a conceptual gap: the case for a description of English as a lingua franca

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Despite momentous developments in the sociopolitics of the teaching of English worldwide, targets have generally remained tied to native-speaker norms. This paper argues that although this orientation is often recognized as inappropriate and counter-productive, it persists because discussions about 'global English' on the meta-level have not been accompanied by a necessary reorientation in linguistic research: very little empirical work has so far been done on the most extensive contemporary use of English worldwide, namely English as a lingua franca, largely among 'non-native' speakers. The paper seeks to demonstrate that this lack of a descriptive reality precludes us from conceiving of speakers of lingua franca English as language users in their own right and thus makes it difficult to counteract the reproduction of native English dominance. To remedy this situation, a research agenda is proposed which accords lingua franca English a central place in description alongside English as a native language, and a new corpus project is described which constitutes a first step in this process. The paper concludes with a consideration of the potentially very significant impact that the availability of an alternative model for the teaching of English as a lingua franca would have for pedagogy and teacher education.

Introduction

Fundamental issues to do with the global spread and use of English have, at long last, become an important focus of research in applied linguistics. The debate has been conducted particularly vigorously over the last decade, variously highlighting crucial cultural, ecological, socio-political and psychological issues. The realization that the majority of uses of English occur in contexts

where it serves as a *lingua franca*, far removed from its native speakers' linguacultural norms and identities, has been an important leitmotif in this discussion.¹ And yet, the daily practices of most of the millions of teachers of English worldwide seem to remain untouched by this development: very few teachers 'on the ground' take part in this meta-level discussion, and most classroom language teaching *per se* has changed remarkably little considering how the discourse *about* it has. This is not surprising if we consider that what these teachers of English generally regard, for better or for worse, as their main knowledge base and point of reference, the target language as codified in grammars, dictionaries and textbooks, has not moved with the tide of applied linguistics research. This state of affairs has resulted in a conceptual gap in the discourse of ELT which, although it is giving rise to some misgivings and unease, has not been addressed directly and proactively. This paper attempts to take stock of this unsatisfactory situation and proposes a project that may constitute a radical but promising way forward.

A conceptual gap

Teaching English, which well into the heyday of communicative language teaching seemed a fairly straightforward activity, has become a much more complicated affair. Whereas language teachers used to be mainly educated about and preoccupied with various approaches to the description and instruction of the target language as such, we now find a much wider variety of concerns with the kind of socio-political and other issues referred to above demanding at least as much attention as the language proper. This has led to a broader conception of the profession, and to a discourse of ELT in which notions of 'correctness', 'norms', 'mistakes' and 'authority' seem to have given way to an ethos characterized by 'transformative pedagogy', 'learner-centredness', 'awareness' and '(self-)reflection' (cf. e.g. Pennycook 1999). In the discourse of language planning and education policy, monoculturalism, monolingualism, monomodels and monocentrism have been replaced by multiculturalism, multilingualism, polymodels and pluricentrism (cf. e.g. Bamgboṣe, Banjo & Thomas 1995; Bhatia 1997; Kachru 1992b; McArthur 1998; Smith & Forman 1997). European sociolinguists have expressed their concern about "English only? in Europe" (Ammon, Mattheier & Nelde 1994) and second language acquisition research has taken its first significant steps "beyond the native speaker" (Cook 1999).

The most important consequence of these developments for so-called non-native teachers of English, the majority of teachers of English worldwide, has probably been that the notion of native speakers' "ownership of English" has been radically called into question (Widdowson 1994) and that a discussion has gathered momentum which highlights the potential special expertise 'non-native' teachers have on the grounds that they know the target language as a foreign language, share with their students the experience of what it is like to

try and make it their own, often through the same first language/culture ‘filter’, and can represent relevant role models for learners (cf. e.g. Braine 1999; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy 1999; Kramsch 1998; Medgyes 1994; Rampton 1990; Seidlhofer 1999).²

The whole orientation of TEFL (teaching English as a foreign language), then, seems to have fundamentally shifted: from correctness to appropriateness, from parochial domesticity and exclusive native-speaker norms to global inclusiveness and egalitarian licence to speak in ways that meet diverse local needs.

Or has it?

My contention would be that while pedagogic ideas about teaching and learning on the one hand and sociolinguistic ideas about the sovereignty and prestige of indigenized varieties of English on the other may have changed quite dramatically, while the empire writes back and non-native teachers assert themselves, assumptions about the ‘E’ in TEFL have remained curiously unaffected by these momentous developments. In TEFL, what constitutes a valid target is still determined with virtually exclusive reference to native-speaker norms. True, at least the perception of what constitutes ‘native speakers’ is widening, but a question in urgent need of exploration is just what the ‘English’ is that is being taught and learnt in this emerging global era, how it squares with the socio-political and socioeconomic concerns discussed in the profession, and what its relevance is for the subject taught in classrooms all over the world.

That this issue has not really been on the agenda so far is borne out by the way ‘English’ is talked about in the relevant literature – the default referent, implicitly or explicitly, is ENL (English as a native language):

. . . we suffer from an inferiority complex caused by glaring defects in our knowledge of **English**. We are in constant distress as we realize how little we know about **the language** we are supposed to teach. (Medgyes 1994: 40, emphases added)

I believe in the fundamental value of a common language, as an amazing world resource which presents us with unprecedented possibilities for mutual understanding, and thus enables us to find fresh opportunities for international cooperation. In my ideal world, everyone would have fluent command of a single world language. I am already in the fortunate position of being a fluent user of **the language** which is most in contention for this role, and have cause to reflect every day on the benefits of having it at my disposal. (Crystal 1997: viii, emphasis added)

Consider what Medgyes and Crystal³ are referring to by “English” and “the language”. Of course this depends on what they regard as ‘a language’, and there is, as Pennycook (1994: 26ff) also demonstrates, no definitive answer to this question. But I do take it to be a general consensus that what constitutes a language, and in particular ‘English as a global language’, is necessarily a discursive construct in need of deconstruction. The point I wish to make with reference to the above two extracts, then, is that the fact that these questions simply are not problematized throws readers back on the implicit, default

referent, whether this is the one intended by the author or not. And this is one particular variety of English, namely that used by educated native speakers like Crystal himself. What he is “a fluent speaker” of is English as a native language (ENL), and this variety is then bound to be understood to be “the language in most contention” for the role of “a single world language”. But of course like any natural language, this is full of conventions and markers of in-group membership such as characteristic pronunciations, specialized vocabulary and idiomatic phraseology, and references and allusions to shared experience and cultural background. And this is precisely the reason why educated ‘non-native’ speakers of it (such as Medgyes himself) are so resigned and defeatist about the “glaring defects” in their knowledge of it: they cannot, by definition, be members of that native-speaker community, no matter how hard they try, no matter how long they study.

It seems clear, then, that every time we talk and write about ‘English as a global language’ we quite inevitably bring into play some rather fundamental issues. But the fact that they are fundamental has, so far at least, not meant that they get addressed explicitly. On the contrary, the general picture is one of lack of awareness. That this constitutes a really difficult problem is probably best illustrated with reference to writers whom nobody would suspect of native-speaker ‘tunnel vision’ and disregard for linguistic and cultural diversity. Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1999: 29) make various proposals for “charting and countering Englishisation”. They suggest a number of research questions focusing on the role of English in Denmark, one of which is formulated and commented on like this:

What is the significance of senior Danish politicians, who use **English with moderate proficiency**, inevitably creating false and unintended impressions when talking impromptu to the ‘world’ press?

As an aside to this latter question, it should be mentioned that the four Danish exceptions to the Maastricht Treaty were hammered out at a summit in Edinburgh in 1991, at the close of which the Danish Foreign Minister referred to the ‘so-called Edinburgh agreement’, implying that no real obligation had been entered into. When Salman Rushdie came to Denmark in 1996 to receive an EU literature prize – an event which was postponed because of a security scare – the Danish Prime Minister was asked by Rushdie whether the death threat was real or hypothetical, to which he replied that he did not have the ‘ability’ to answer the question (a revelation that many Danish citizens might agree with, as the whole affair was mishandled). Are both errors due to mother-tongue transfer? (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas 1999: 29f, emphases added)

This passage was rather painful to read for me, a ‘non-native’ user of English and language professional fairly conversant with some ENL varieties but mainly interested in English as a lingua franca (ELF), and coming as it did towards the end of an article which contained much I agreed with, it probably hit me with particular force. To start with, which “English” is it that Danish politicians use with “moderate proficiency”? As I read it, it is the same native speaker “English” which Crystal and Medgyes are referring to, and which is

simply assumed to be relevant in the context described. My contention would be that it is irrelevant. To take the example of *so-called*, it is true of course that ENL corpora and dictionaries based on them indicate that the ‘attitudinally marked’ use of this premodifier referred to by Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas is the more frequently attested one (though the other use is also attested). But native-speaker language use is not particularly relevant here: the Danish Foreign Minister is not a native speaker of English, and he was not speaking on behalf of ENL speakers, nor presumably exclusively to ENL speakers. He was using English as a lingua franca in the way he often has occasion to use it, with interlocutors who use it in the same way. And it is very likely indeed that such interlocutors would understand very well what he (presumably) meant by *so-called*, i.e. ‘the agreement called the Edinburgh agreement’, especially since many European languages have an analogous expression which can be used with the same two meanings (German *sogenannt*, Italian *cosiddetto*, etc.). Similarly, I would claim that *ability* in the second example would be perfectly intelligible to ELF interlocutors and only be perceived as odd if judged against ENL standards. To call these two formulations “errors” is counterproductive at the very least, and evidence that ELF as a use in its own right, and ELF speakers as language users in their own right, have not yet entered peoples’ consciousness, not even in the case of colleagues who have dedicated their working lives to protecting human language rights. Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas are well known as campaigners for linguistic equity and ecology, so we can be confident that what they say here is not due to an attitude of superiority; rather, I suggest it results from a general problem: a *conceptual gap* where English as a lingua franca should have pride of place. Lest my interpretation of Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas’ view of ‘English’ should be perceived as overly critical, I ought to quote the endnote attached to the paragraph cited above:

The Danes are, of course, not alone in having **problems with English**. In the latest communication, in four languages, from the follow-up group preparing the revision of the Draft Universal Declaration on Language Rights, the Catalan secretariat states that this key document is ‘in the way of’ being translated (=in the course of) and that the scientific council is ‘pretending’ to provide a forum for debate (=aiming at). It is unreasonable to expect that Danes, Catalans or other users of English as a second language use **English** supremely well. The dice are loaded against them, the conditions for communication are not symmetrical, and **native speakers often seem to be unaware** of this. (op.cit.: 33 fn 6; emphases added; glosses in parentheses are the authors’)

The point I am trying to make, then, is that it is highly problematic to discuss aspects of global English, however critically, while at the same time passing native speaker judgements as to what is appropriate usage in ELF contexts. The “problems” which Danes, Catalans, etc have “with English” may be problems in the eye of the native speaker beholder, i.e. problems if you take ‘English’ to be ENL. But ‘English’ does not simply transfer intact from one context to another – the ‘E’ in *English as a Native Language* is bound to be

something very different from the 'E' in *English as a Lingua Franca*, and must be acknowledged as such. However, this difference is still waiting to be recognized, explored and acted upon in much applied linguistics, and particularly in mainstream English language teaching. Widdowson (1997) offers a conceptual framework for capturing two modes of thinking about "the spread of English" which makes the fundamental differences between them quite clear:

. . . I would argue that English as an international language is not *distributed*, as a set of established encoded forms, unchanged into different domains of use, but it is *spread* as a virtual language. . . . When we talk about the spread of English, then, it is not that the conventionally coded forms and meanings are transmitted into different environments and different surroundings, and taken up and used by different groups of people. It is not a matter of the actual language being distributed but of the virtual language being spread and in the process being variously actualized. The distribution of the actual language implies adoption and conformity. The spread of the virtual language implies adaptation and nonconformity. The two processes are quite different.

And they are likely to be in conflict. Distribution denies spread. (Widdowson 1997: 139f)

It seems clear, then, that in order to capture the nature of lingua franca English we need to think of it as evolving out of spread, not distribution, and acknowledge the vital role and authority of ELF users as "agents of language change" (Brutt-Griffler 1998: 387). There has as yet, however, been no large-scale, systematic effort to record what happens linguistically in this process. On the contrary, the general picture we get is that there is an established English being described more and more precisely in terms of native-speaker behaviour and then distributed. This not only does not recognize necessary diversity but acts against it: "Distribution denies spread", as Widdowson puts it in the above quotation. This increasing precision in description is said to get closer and closer to the reality of native-speaker language use. But it is important to realize that native-speaker language use is just *one* kind of reality, and one of very doubtful relevance for lingua franca contexts. Moreover, as long as all the descriptive effort is geared to capturing L1 language use, the profession's attention is deflected from the increasingly urgent issues concerning the use of English as a lingua franca, and attitudes are reinforced which are antipathetic to ELF. However, I would argue that now that the right to descriptions in their own terms has finally been recognized for nativized varieties of English, it is high time that we granted the same right to ELF. My contention, then, is that we must overcome the (explicit or implicit) assumption that ELF could possibly be a globally distributed, franchised copy of ENL, and take on board the notion that it is being spread, developed independently, with a great deal of variation but enough stability to be viable for lingua franca communication. This assumption is of course one that has to be investigated empirically, but the point I wish to make here is that the need to do so has not even been acknowledged so far, and accordingly no comprehensive effort in this direction has been undertaken to date.

Conflicting tendencies

Talking about traditional TEFL aiming at ‘distributing’ English in its “established encoded forms” is not to say, of course, that the description of ‘E’ in TEFL has not moved in the last decade or two – it has moved considerably, but in the other direction as it were, closer and closer to the home base: linguistic descriptions proper have been focusing on English as it is spoken and written as a first language.⁴ Technological developments (allied, of course, with economic interests) have made it possible to sharpen that focus, so that we can now say with precision which speech acts prevail in calls to the British Telecom helpline (McEnery 2000) or which features of spoken English characterize casual conversations among friends and acquaintances in specific parts of the UK (Carter & McCarthy 1997), not to mention the precision with which written and spoken genres can now be profiled (cf. Biber 1988). The British component of the International Corpus of English is now completed; it is a corpus of a million words of spoken and written English, fully grammatically analysed, and its spoken part is “the biggest collection of parsed spoken material anywhere” (ICE-GB website: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/english-usage/ice-gb/index.htm>). Such corpora make it possible to conduct extremely revealing, fine-grained analyses of, say, the rhetorical adverb *simply* in present-day British English (Aarts 1996), of synchronic and diachronic aspects of existential *there* (Breivik 1990) as well as studies of “vague language” (Channell 1994) and “patterns of lexis in text” (Hoey 1991).

The last quarter of the 20th century thus saw momentous developments and indeed a great enrichment of the study of L1 English, and the sheer scale and sophistication of corpus-based descriptions, e.g. drawing on the British National Corpus (cf. Aston & Burnard 1998), the Collins COBUILD Bank of English or the Longman-Lancaster Corpus, have revolutionized our thinking about what constitutes legitimate descriptions of any language. In terms of products for the general public, we now have entirely empirically-based reference works such as the *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*, “Grammar for the 21st century” [flyer] (Biber et al. 1999) or the *Collins COBUILD English Dictionary*, “helping learners with *real* English” [cover]. But the scope of descriptions of “the English language” has also widened dramatically: while until recently the only well-documented varieties of L1 English were British and North American, the International Corpus of English (ICE) encompasses over a dozen regional varieties including, for instance, Australia, East Africa, India, New Zealand and Singapore. ICE is described as “the first large-scale effort to study the development of English as a world language” (ICE website: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/english-usage/ice/index.htm>). But, again, it needs to be pointed out that this world language is defined in terms of speakers for whom English is “either a majority first language . . . or an official additional language” (Greenbaum 1996: 3).⁵ So although it is international and indeed global, it actually does not include a description of the use of English by the majority of its speakers, those who primarily learnt English as a lingua franca for communicating with other lingua franca speakers (cf. Graddol 1997).⁶

This state of affairs is reflected in the literature about teaching: there is a myriad of books and articles in the areas “English as an international language” and “intercultural communication”. Changes in the perception of the role of English in the world have significantly influenced current thinking about approaches to teaching (if not necessarily the teaching itself) and led to an increased socio-political and intercultural awareness (e.g. Abbott & Wingard 1981; Brumfit 1982; Byram & Fleming 1998; Canagarajah 1999; Gnutzmann 1999; Holliday 1994; Kramsch 1993; Kramsch & Sullivan 1996; McKay *forthc.*; Quirk & Widdowson 1985; Smith 1981; Strevens 1980). However, as far as linguistic models as targets for learning are concerned, these usually do not figure as a focal concern, or matter for reflection, at all, and so, whether explicitly or implicitly, native-speaker models have largely remained unquestioned. This means that the *how* is changing, but linked to a *what* that is not. Certainly no linguistically radical proposals have been put forward which would match the thrust of the important innovations which have taken place in pedagogy. In short, no coherent and comprehensive lingua franca model has been proposed so far which does justice to these changes in terms of the actual language taught. This state of affairs allows the economic, social and symbolic power of ‘native speaker English’ to be reproduced (in the sense of Bourdieu & Passeron 1970) throughout ELT institutions and practices worldwide.⁷

The situation that presents itself, then, is oddly contradictory and paradoxical: on the one hand, we have a very lively and prolific field of research producing extralinguistic treatments of how ‘English’ is – depending on the specific researcher’s domain of interest and ideological orientation – being variously spread, used, forced upon, or withheld from the world at large, coupled with assertions of local values and the importance of intercultural communication in pedagogy. On the other hand, the rapid development in computer technology has opened up hitherto undreamt-of possibilities in language description. The main research efforts in this area, however, are not expended on studying how English is actually used worldwide, but instead concentrate very much on English as a native language. We thus have an inverse relationship between perceived significance and relevance of ‘English’ in the world at large and linguistic description focusing on the “ancestral home” of the language (Achebe 1975: 62).

The two contrary developments are interdependent and even reinforce one another: the more global the use of ‘English’ becomes, the greater the motivation, and of course the market, for descriptions of it, which, for historical and socio-economic reasons, are largely provided by the ‘Centre’. The more such products on offer, the more these are regarded, quite rightly, as promoting the dominance of (L1) English, and thus the more forceful the attempts in (or on behalf of) the ‘Periphery’ to resist ‘linguistic imperialism’ (cf. e.g. Canagarajah 1999; Phillipson 1992).

English as a lingua franca: the need for description

The intellectual battles which are being fought over issues rooted in ideological positions, commercial interests, ecological concerns and social identities go largely

unnoticed by the largest group of users of ‘English’: those to whom ‘English’ serves on a daily basis as a lingua franca for conducting their affairs, more often than not entirely among so-called ‘non-native’ speakers of the language, with no native speakers present at all. These are people who have learned ‘English’ as an additional language, and to whom it serves as the most useful instrument (for reasons variously interrogated, lamented or celebrated in applied linguistics) for communication that cannot be conducted in the mother tongue, be it in business, casual conversation, science or politics – in conversation, in print, on television, or on the internet. Wherever such interactions take place and whatever the specific motivations and uses of English as an international lingua franca, the mismatch sketched in the last two paragraphs is quite striking: ELF speakers are usually not particularly preoccupied with the two prevailing research foci described above, viz. ‘corpus-based description of native English’ and ‘linguistic imperialism’. They are not primarily concerned with emulating the way native speakers use their mother tongue within their own communities, nor with socio-psychological and ideological meta-level discussions. Instead, the central concerns for this domain are efficiency, relevance and economy in language learning and language use. In Kachru’s words, “the hunger for learning the language – with whatever degree of competence – is simply insatiable” (Kachru 1997: 69) This is one reason why fighting the (ab)use of ‘English’ for exerting power and domination via mainstream ELT is such an enormous task: people need and want to acquire the instrument ‘English’ whatever the ideological baggage that comes with it – a fact acknowledged, at least implicitly, even in Canagarajah’s *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in English Teaching* (e.g. 1999: 180f). Another reason of course is that it is not in the interest of those who are, for want of a feasible alternative, still widely perceived as the ‘source’ or ‘owners’ of the commodity ‘English’ to encourage a discussion about ethical questions and the suitability of the goods they have to offer. And as long as ‘English’ is kept in the conceptual straightjacket of ENL, it is difficult to see how change can be pursued proactively.

However, despite the fact that discussions of ethical issues are now available in the public domain, freely accessible and there to be taken up by anyone who chooses to, and although some scholars have been insisting for a long time that “the unprecedented functional range and social penetration globally acquired by English demands fresh theoretical and descriptive perspectives” (Kachru 1996: 906), the suitability of the descriptive and pedagogic models we are operating with for the teaching and use of ELF has hardly been investigated at all. In what follows, I shall argue that it is both necessary and feasible to enquire into a suitable model for ELF, and offer suggestions as to how this might be done and what implications such an enquiry might have.

It would seem, then, that there is considerable scope, and hope, for large-scale, systematic research into how English is actually used as a lingua franca. However, the work actually published in this field is still extremely scarce, and very little descriptive research has been done that could serve as a potential basis for formulating a curriculum for the teaching of ELF. Having said this, a

description of the phonology of English as an international language (Jenkins 2000) is now available, and important work on the pragmatics of ‘non-native–non-native’ communication in English has been, and is being, conducted (e.g. Firth 1996; Meierkord 1996; House 1999; Lesznyak *forthc.*). James (2000) offers a rich conceptual discussion of the place of English in bi/multilingualism and makes reference to a project, currently in its pilot phase, entitled “English as a *lingua franca* in the Alpine-Adriatic region”. He also sets out hypotheses as to what findings the future analysis of this use of English by speakers of German, Italian, Slovene and Friulian might yield. However, the shift in perspective from treating, in Kasper’s words, “non-nativeness as problem” to viewing “non-nativeness as a resource” or “non-nativeness as unattended” [because irrelevant] (Kasper 1997: 356f) is a recent one in both phonology and pragmatics, and certainly not subscribed to by a majority of scholars in these fields.

It would be beyond the scope of this article to try and summarize the intriguing findings of these studies, so some examples of the kinds of insight offered by them will have to suffice. Jenkins’ work (e.g. 1998, 2000) centres around “a pedagogical core of phonological intelligibility for speakers of EIL” (2000: 123) which she was able to propose after establishing which pronunciation features impeded mutual intelligibility in her empirical studies of what she terms ‘interlanguage talk’ among ‘non-native’ speakers of English. This procedure provided an empirical basis for her suggestion “to scale down the phonological task for the majority of learners by . . . focusing pedagogic attention on those items which are essential in terms of intelligible pronunciation” (*ibid.*) and to prioritize features which constitute more relevant and more realistic learning targets for EIL speakers. These features constitute Jenkins’ *Lingua Franca Core*. What I should like to emphasize in the present context is that Jenkins’ *Lingua Franca Core* does not include, for instance, some sounds which are regarded, and taught, as ‘particularly English’ (and also as particularly difficult) ones by most learners and teachers, such as the phonemes /θ/ and /ð/ and the ‘dark l’ allophone, [ɫ]. That is to say that mastery of these sounds proved not to be crucial for mutual intelligibility and so various substitutions, such as /f, v/ or /s, z/ or /t, d/ for /θ, ð/ are permissible, and indeed also found in some native-speaker varieties.

While phonology is a fairly ‘closed system’ (although it does have fuzzy edges), pragmatics is a more open-ended affair, and accordingly findings in this area as regards ELF communication are different in nature and probably should not be expected to be ‘conclusive’ in the same way. As House indicates, the volume of research in ELF pragmatics undertaken so far is minimal: “studies of intercultural communication in the scientific community have practically ignored ELF interactions” (1999: 74). But the findings which are beginning to emerge make it clear that there is a vast, complex and absolutely crucial area here waiting to be explored and exploited for ELF communication. Interestingly, while Jenkins emphasizes the feasibility of successful communication by means of a scaled-down phonological/phonetic repertoire, House takes a much more sceptical stance, as reflected in the subtitle of her (1999) paper⁸

“Interactions in English as lingua franca and the *myth* of mutual intelligibility” (emphasis added). Again, I can only give a glimpse of findings here, and further questions are raised by analyses carried out to date. At the most general level, an observation which has been made repeatedly is that ELF interactions often are consensus-oriented, cooperative and mutually supportive. For instance, a tendency has been noted to adopt a ‘Let-it-Pass’ principle, that is to say, interactants tend to gloss over utterances which cause difficulty rather than trying to sort them out explicitly, a phenomenon Firth (1996) terms “the discursive accomplishment of normality” (cf. also Meierkord 1996; Wagner & Firth 1997). On the other hand, and this is what House is getting at in her subtitle, this ‘let-it-pass’ behaviour can also be interpreted as an indicator of interactants’ mutual dis-attention, a “palpable lack of mutual orientation”, thus denying each other “the most basic social alignment between speaker and hearer” (House 1999: 82). Interactants in the data analysed by her are shown to often act as initiators only, rather than as initiators and responsive recipients, and to lack “pragmatic fluency” characterized by such features as smooth management of turn-taking and topic-changes as well as appropriate use of pragmatic routines such as gambits (in the sense of Edmondson & House 1981). It has to be pointed out, however, that only a limited repertoire of interaction, notably casual conversations and group discussions, has been analysed in this respect so far, so that it is conceivable that further research might show the present findings to be a function of the type and purpose of the interactions investigated. Indeed, the differences in the analyses available to date would seem to underline the need for a large corpus and a ‘thick description’ of the same data from various angles. At all events, whatever ways speakers use to interact by means of a lingua franca and how far they compensate for native-like conversational behaviour is a matter for further empirical enquiry.

There is also one large-scale project focusing on the written English produced by learners of ‘English’ coming from a great variety of first language backgrounds. This is the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE for short; see e.g. the contributions to Granger 1998; Granger, Hung & Petch-Tyson *forthc.*; Altenberg & Granger *forthc.*; de Haan 1998; Petch-Tyson *forthc.*, and more extensive studies based on this corpus, e.g. Lorenz 1999). However, the main thrust of this research enterprise is to identify characteristics of learner English from different L1 backgrounds, with the intention to facilitate comparisons between these foreign-language productions and native-speaker writing, and so to highlight the difficulties specific L1 groups have with native English in order to make it easier for those learners to conform to ENL if they so wish – hence the designation “*Learner English*”. There are also other, smaller and less structured *learner* corpora, notably those compiled by publishers big in ELT, such as the Cambridge Learners’ Corpus and the Longman Learners’ Corpus. While such projects are undoubtedly innovative and very useful in their own terms, they are obviously quite different from my own present concern. The main difference lies in the researchers’ orientation towards the data and the purposes they intend the corpora to serve, namely as a sophisticated tool for

analysing learner language so as to support them in their attempts to approximate to native (-like) English. However, it is conceivable that some of the data in learner corpora could also contribute to a better understanding of English as a lingua franca. For instance, what is frequently reported as ‘overuse’ or ‘underuse’ of certain expressions in learner language as compared to ENL (e.g. Chen 1998; Lorenz 1998) could also be regarded as a feature characterizing successful ELF use, or the ‘deviations’ from ENL norms reported in learner corpora research could be investigated to establish whether they can serve as pointers, or sensitizing devices, in the process of trying to profile ELF as a viable variety.

The difference in perspective between learner corpus research and my own is an important one, and essential for the main point I am trying to make in this paper. This difference can best be captured with reference to the notions of *learning strategies* vs. *communication strategies* (Bialystok 1990; Corder 1981: ch. 11; Faerch & Kasper 1983).⁹ The students providing data for a learner corpus have been asked, usually in an instructional setting, to produce, say, an essay in ‘English’. In the subsequent analysis, any observations about their language use are made in comparison with what native speakers would normally write (as reflected in an ENL reference corpus), for instance in terms of simplifying, replacing, overusing, underusing or avoiding certain features. Any ‘deviations’ from a native speaker norm are, then, to be seen as products of learning strategies: a constructive way of making do with the limited linguistic resources available at a particular stage of interlanguage. The important point to note is that the very same utterances can be regarded as communication strategies: evidence not of a linguistic deficit, but, if intelligible, of successful communication. In principle, then, the same data could be conceptualized as entirely different kinds of evidence. However, learner corpora were not devised with this objective in mind, and their suitability for contributing to a description of ELF would have to be examined with care.

Towards an ELF Corpus

So far I have been addressing what I see as an urgent (extralinguistic) need for a conceptualisation of ELF. Clearly, however, more needs to be said about the (linguistic) feasibility of such an enquiry as well as its fit with current research paradigms. Of course, there have been various attempts in the past to do this, either as conceptually devised models of a reduced inventory as a first step, lightening the learning load as it were, from Ogden’s Basic English, which was extremely influential in its time (e.g. Ogden 1930; see also Seidlhofer *forthc.*) to Quirk’s Nuclear English (1982) or as empirically derived suggestions based on manual vocabulary counts, the most famous of these being West’s General Service List (1953).¹⁰ None of these, however, fulfilled the combination of criteria that need to be met for a viable alternative to ENL in its own right, of which a very broad and substantial empirical base and a truly fresh approach

in terms of independence from the dictates of ENL would seem to be the most important ones. The big opportunity which offers itself now is that it has become possible to take into account the considerable amount of conceptual work undertaken in the past and present while at the same time basing investigations on a large empirical foundation.

The feasibility of such a project is basically a question of methods and consequently has much to do with technology. But, as John Sinclair, the pioneer of corpus-based language description, so vividly demonstrates in his work, computational research on language has revolutionized language observation, analysis and description, in short, the whole research paradigm. And it is this, I would argue, which is waiting to be extended to research into ELF – needless to say, to complement ENL, not to replace it.

Let me suggest what it might mean to genuinely carry both the spirit and the technology of recent developments of language description over into the realm of ELF, to follow them through into a truly global view of English. Here is an extract from Sinclair's introduction to his book *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation* (1991), in which he writes about new ways of approaching language description with reference to native English. Readers are invited to engage in a thought experiment: simply imagine that what is being talked about is not native English, but English as a Lingua Franca:

This book charts the emergence of a new view of language, and the technology associated with it. Over the last ten years, computers have been through several generations, and the analysis of language has developed out of all recognition.

The big difference has been the availability of data. The tradition of linguistics has been limited to what a single individual could experience and remember . . . Starved of adequate data, linguistics languished – indeed it became almost totally introverted. It became fashionable to look inwards to the mind rather than outwards to society. Intuition was the key, and the similarity of language structure to various formal models was emphasised. The communicative role of language was hardly referred to. (Sinclair 1991: 1)

Taking the liberty to utilize this extract as an aid for reflection about, and from, an ELF perspective, it is fairly easy to see how “the availability of data” would make “the big difference” and allow us to focus on the “communicative role” of ELF. When Sinclair talks about changing from looking “inwards” to looking “outwards” he is of course referring to introspection vs. observation, but assuming this point is well taken, an advocate of ELF might be forgiven for extending this extract to an analogy: this is that “starved of adequate [ELF] data” the description of English “became almost totally introverted”, i.e. focusing on the use of native English only, and that it “became fashionable to look inwards” into L1 English “rather than outwards to society”, for whom, seen on a global scale, ‘English’ means ‘English as a Lingua Franca’.

In view of all this, it seemed desirable and timely to embark on the compilation of a corpus of English as a Lingua Franca. For the purposes of this corpus

the term ‘lingua franca’ (cf. also Knapp & Meierkord *forthc.*) is understood in the strict sense of the word, i.e. an additionally acquired language system that serves as a means of communication between speakers of different first languages, or a language by means of which the members of different speech communities can communicate with each other but which is not the native language of either – a language which has no native speakers. Malmkjær (1991) explains the term *lingua franca* in terms of pidginization:

. . . if the members of two or more cultures which do not use the same language come into regular contact with each other over a prolonged period . . . it is probable that the resultant language contact will lead to the development of a pidgin language by means of which the members of the cultures can communicate with each other but which is not the native language of either speech community. A pidgin language is thus a *lingua franca* which has no native speakers, which is often influenced by languages spoken by people who travelled and colonized extensively . . . and by the languages of the people with whom they interacted repeatedly. (Malmkjær 1991: 81)

The point to be made, however, is that while “a pidgin language is . . . a *lingua franca*”, a *lingua franca* does not need to be reduced to a pidgin language, restricted in social role and linguistic resources, such as limited vocabulary and stylistic range, elaborated only through creolization when used as a mother tongue. Elaboration does not necessarily have to be tied to native speaker use. ELF is often used in what House (1999: 74) calls “influential networks, i.e. global business, politics, science, technology and media discourse”, and it is likely that an empirical investigation of ELF will show that a sophisticated and versatile form of language can develop which is *not* a native language.

The compilation of an ELF corpus is now in progress at the University of Vienna. In the current initial phase, this project is supported by Oxford University Press (and so called the *Vienna–Oxford ELF Corpus*). Since the intention is to capture a wide range of variation, a corpus of spoken ELF is the first target, at one remove from the stabilizing and standardizing influence of writing. Another important reason for concentrating on the spoken medium is that spoken interaction is overtly reciprocal, which means that not only production but also reception are captured, thus allowing for observations regarding the intelligibility of what interlocutors say. For the time being, the focus is on unscripted (though partly pre-structured), largely face-to-face communication among fairly fluent adult speakers from a wide range of first language backgrounds whose primary and secondary education and socialization did not take place in English. The speech events being captured include private and public dialogues, private and public group discussions and casual conversations, and one-to-one interviews. Ideally, speakers will be making use of ELF in a largely unselfconscious, instrumental (as opposed to identificatory) way – compare Hüllen’s (1992) distinction between *Identifikationssprache* (‘language of identification’) and *Kommunikationssprache* (‘language for communication’). At least for the first phase, it was decided to operate with a narrow definition of ELF talk. That is to say, an attempt is made to meet the following additional

criteria: no native speakers should be involved in the interaction, and the interaction should not take place in an environment where the predominant language is 'English', such as an 'Inner Circle', ENL country. The size aimed for at the first stage is approximately half a million words (i.e. similar to the spoken part of ICE-GB), transcribed and annotated in a number of ways.¹¹

It will thus become possible to take stock of how the speakers providing the data actually communicate through ELF, and to begin to build a characterization of how they use, or rather co-construct, 'English' to do so. As a first research focus, it seems desirable to complement the work already done on ELF phonology and pragmatics by concentrating on lexico-grammar and discourse, in an investigation of what (if anything), notwithstanding all the diversity, might emerge as common features of ELF use, irrespective of speakers' first languages and levels of proficiency. Questions investigated will include the following: What seem to be the most relied-upon and successfully employed grammatical constructions and lexical choices? Are there aspects which contribute especially to smooth communication? What are the factors which tend to lead to 'ripples' on the pragmatic surface, misunderstandings or even communication breakdown? Is the degree of approximation to a variety of L1 English always proportional to communicative success? Or are there commonly used constructions, lexical items and sound patterns which are ungrammatical in Standard L1 English but generally unproblematic in ELF communication? If so, can hypotheses be set up and tested concerning simplifications of L1 English which could constitute systematic features of ELF? The objective here, then, would be to establish something like an index of communicative redundancy, in the sense that many of the niceties of social behaviour associated with native-speaker models and identities might not be operable and certain native-speaker norms might be seen to be in suspense. Indeed, it may well be that situations occur in which 'unilateral' approximation to native speaker norms and expectations not shared in ELF interaction leads to communication problems, and that mutual accommodation¹² is found to have greater importance for communicative effectiveness than 'correctness' or idiomaticity in ENL terms. In conducting these investigations, the large body of work already available on (native) language variation and change, nativized varieties, pidginization and creolization as well as on simplification in language pedagogy will be invaluable.

Of course, it is early days yet and all these questions will have to be formulated and addressed with care and circumspection. Nevertheless, I should like to offer a brief example of the kind of enquiry I have in mind. Below is a dialogue between L1 speakers of German and French respectively. They have been asked to choose one picture out of several options which will best serve for a campaign for a charity:

Reto (L1 German) & Stephanie (L1 French)

- 1 R: I think on the front xx on the front page should be a picture who-which
- 2 only makes p-people to er spend money, to the charity
- 3 S: yes

- 4 R: and I think er yeah maybe
 5 S: I think a picture with child
 6 R: Yeah, child are always good to
 7 S: Yes
 8 -R: to trap people spend money
 9 S: Yes. I think, erm, let me see, erm . . .
 10 R: I don't know . . . but maybe we should er choose a picture who gives the
 11 impression that this child needs needs the money or
 12 S: So I think, then that's my, this one, no
 13 R: Yeah it's quite happy
 14 S: Yeah, she's happy er .. Maybe this one
 15 R: Yeah.
 16 S: He look very sad . . . and he has to carry heavier vase
 17 R: Mm, that's right.
 18 S: Too heavy for him, or . . .
 19 R: Hm hm
 20 S: But also this one, even if he's smiling
 21 R: Yeah, that's right . . . And maybe this one can show that the that the
 22 chari-er charity can really help
 23 S: Uh huh
 24 R: and that the charity can er make a smile on a on a chil -on on a child's
 25 face
 26 S: Yes
 27 R: Yeah I think this one would be
 28 S: A good one
 29 R: It would be good

. . . *long pause*
 - *self-correction*
 -R *continuation*
 xx *unintelligible*

(Data including transcription provided by Jennifer Jenkins)¹³

It is obvious that the interactants are satisfied with their discussion: they agree on their criteria and negotiate a consensus, so in that sense we can regard this exchange as successful communication. The conversation also has a constructive, collaborative feel to it: in contrast to the data discussed in House (1999, see above), there is ample evidence of the interactants acting as responsive recipients as well as initiators: the *yes*'s and *yeah*'s tend to be genuine expressions of agreement, backchannelling is provided in the form of *Hm hm* and *Uh huh*, and there is even one instance of one speaker completing an utterance for her interlocutor (lines 27–28). But the point to be noted is that this communicative success comes about despite the fact that there is hardly a turn which is 'correct' or idiomatic by ENL standards. We find a wide range of oddities in terms of 'deviation' from ENL: the unintentionally comical phrase *a picture with child* in line 5 (though of course only comical for someone familiar

with the ENL meaning of *with child*), idiosyncrasies such as *makes people to spend money* (line 2), *to trap people spend money* (line 8) and *make a smile on a child's face* (lines 24–25) and what would traditionally be called ‘serious grammatical mistakes’, such as missing third person *-s* in *He look very sad* (line 16), wrong relative pronoun in *a picture who gives the impression . . .* (lines 10–11), missing indefinite article and unwarranted comparative in *he has to carry heavier vase* (line 16) as well as wrong preposition (or wrong verb) in *to spend money to the charity* (line 2).

Seen from the perspective of current mainstream ELT, this conversation contains many ‘errors’ which most teachers would certainly consider in need of correction and remediation. Despite all these, however, the exchange between Reto and Stephanie can be regarded as an instance of successful ELF communication. Of course this type of interaction relies heavily on shared context and has a limited potential for misunderstanding and conflict, and in many situations in which ELF is used such favourable conditions will not apply. But this caveat does not invalidate the observation that for the purpose at hand, the kind of English that is employed works, it serves the participants quite adequately for doing the job they have to do. The investigations I have carried out so far have confirmed that a great deal of ELF communication is conducted at roughly the level of Reto and Stephanie’s proficiency, and that quite often it is features which are regarded as ‘the most typically English’, such as 3rd person *-s*, tags, phrasal verbs and idioms, which turn out to be non-essential for mutual understanding. This observation thus closely parallels Jenkins’ finding that mastery of the sounds often perceived as ‘particularly English’, i.e. /θ/ and /ð/, is not crucial for ELF communication.

Of course, to most people who have experienced the use of English as a lingua franca all this might seem rather obvious: we all know intuitively that this is how it works. But this is exactly the point I wish to make: while we (wrongly) *think* we have (reliable) intuitions (the fallacy so effectively exposed by recent corpus linguistics), the problem is aggravated in the case of ELF because, by definition, there cannot even be any native speaker intuitions about ELF. So what we really have is *impressions* of ELF rather than *intuitions*. It would seem that this makes a broad empirical base on which to substantiate or indeed contradict these impressions particularly necessary.

In the teaching of English before the advent of computer-aided corpus linguistics, native speakers intuitively ‘knew’, but what they really said and wrote was not captured on a large scale, and hence was not accessible for description and close investigation and thus difficult to explain to learners, especially for teachers who had not grown up as speakers of the language they were teaching and thus could not even fall back on their native-speaker intuitions as the ultimate yardstick. In the case of ELF, nobody has grown up as a speaker of it. One could argue that this makes the need for an empirically based description even more urgent than in the case of ENL, where at least there are native speakers who can serve as informants, with all their limitations. So whereas the question usually asked about ENL by learners and teachers is “*can* one say that

in English as a mother tongue?”, it would not make sense to ask the same question about ELF. Rather, the only really useful analogous question about ELF would have to be an empirical one, namely “*has this been said and understood in English as a lingua franca?*” The Vienna-Oxford ELF corpus is intended as a first step towards addressing this question.

Conclusion

I would agree, then, with Sinclair’s observation that “the categories and methods we use to describe English are not appropriate to the new material. We shall need to overhaul our descriptive systems” (1985: 251). I would like to add, however, that this needs also to apply to ELF if we want to describe it: precisely the same arguments that Sinclair is making for the description of native-speaker language, for establishing the ‘real English of native speakers’, apply to the requirement of establishing the ‘real English of ELF speakers’. However, the vast new technological apparatus now available has not been used for ELF, and the reality of ELF thus not been taken into account so far.

An important difference, of course, between corpus descriptions of ENL as opposed to ELF is that in the case of the former, corpus linguistics has been revising and indeed revolutionizing existing descriptions, and thus impacting significantly on reference materials such as dictionaries and grammars. In the case of ELF, however, the lack of a description has also meant that codification has been impossible to date. And here again an opportunity arises to build on the pioneering work which has been done on indigenized varieties of English, led by Braj Kachru (e.g. 1986, 1992a). Bamgboṣe (1998) argues very forcefully for codification of ‘non-native varieties’ as one of “five internal factors . . . deciding on the status of an innovation” (p. 3):

I use codification in the restricted sense of putting the innovation into a written form in a grammar, a lexical or pronouncing dictionary, course books or any other type of reference manual. . . . The importance of codification is too obvious to be belaboured. . . . one of the major factors militating against the emergence of endonormative standards in non-native Englishes is precisely the dearth of codification. Obviously, once a usage or innovation enters the dictionary as correct and acceptable usage, its status as a regular form is assured. (p. 4)

What I propose, then, is to consider extending Bamgboṣe’s claim to ELF and to explore the possibility of a codification of ELF with a conceivable ultimate objective of making it a feasible, acceptable and respected alternative to ENL in appropriate contexts of use. This is, of course, a long-term project and a huge and laborious task – an undertaking which must be carried out with extreme care, and which should not give rise to exaggerated expectations, let alone reckless premature commercial exploitation.

Once available, a description and codification of ELF use would constitute a new resource for the design of English instruction. The extent to which this

resource is used would, of course, depend on a consideration of social, cultural and educational factors which necessarily bear upon language pedagogy. Even though its particular realisation is at the moment impossible to predict, it is easy to imagine the potentially huge implications this resource would carry for teacher education, curriculum design, textbooks and for how 'English' might be taught for lingua franca purposes where this is deemed desirable. For instance, as Jenkins so aptly puts it:

There is really no justification for doggedly persisting in referring to an item as 'an error' if the vast majority of the world's L2 English speakers produce and understand it. Instead, it is for L1 speakers to move their own receptive goal posts and adjust their own expectations as far as *international* (but not *intranational*) uses of English are concerned. . . . [This] also drastically simplifies the pedagogic task by removing from the syllabus many time-consuming items which are either unteachable or irrelevant for EIL. (Jenkins 2000: 160)

But as I have said, what exactly the relevance of such a description might be will have to be decided with reference to locally established pedagogic criteria: I would obviously not wish to claim that just because a description is available it should determine what is taught in specific settings or for specific purposes. But it does seem likely that the conceptualisation of ELF as an alternative to ENL would open up an additional repertoire of options for appropriating 'English', of teaching the 'virtual language' (in the sense of Widdowson 1997 quoted above) or of using ELF as a possible first step for learners in building up a basis from which they can then pursue their own learning in directions (ELF or ENL) which it may be impossible, and unwise, to determine from the outset. In fact, uncoupling the language from its native speakers and probing into the nature of ELF for pedagogical purposes holds the exciting, if uncomfortable, prospect of bringing up for reappraisal just about *every* issue and tenet in language teaching which the profession has been traditionally concerned with.¹⁴

So how far any new findings will, or should, be acted upon is of course an open question. To be realistic, a linguistic innovation which goes against the grain of many people's tradition and etiquette is likely to meet with a great deal of resistance due to prejudice, market forces, vested interests, cultural sensibilities, aesthetic arguments and practical questions. But positive perspectives immediately arise as well: if recent important developments in applied linguistics on the meta-level are matched with an empirical basis for looking at the linguistic manifestations of ELF, this would help close the 'conceptual gap' I have discussed and provide us with a way of 'naming' ELF and making clear terminological distinctions.

There are also important advantages for ENL, and ENL speakers, in this: English as used by its native speakers has hitherto been faced with the impossible expectation that it should be 'all things to all people' and the inevitable failure in this has led to it (and its speakers) being subjected to accusations including those of contextual inappropriacy, cultural insensitivity and political imposition. At the same time, many native speakers of English feel that 'their language' is

being abused and distorted through the diversity of its uses and users. If it becomes possible to call an instance of English use ‘English as a lingua franca’, analogous to, say, ‘Nigerian English’ and ‘English English’, this acts as a powerful signal that they are different ‘territories’ deserving mutual respect, and with their own ‘legislation’. This would open up the possibility of engaging in ‘code-switching’ or at least ‘concept-switching’, and of an uninhibited acceptance of each use of ‘English’ in its own right – notably the appreciation of aesthetic and emotional aspects of literature, language play, rhetorical finesse, etc. Obviously, ENL would also remain intact as a target for learning in those circumstances where it is deemed appropriate. Most importantly perhaps, if ELF is conceptualised and accepted as a distinct manifestation of ‘English’ not tied to its native speakers, this opens up entirely new options for the way the world’s majority of English teachers can perceive and define themselves: instead of being ‘non-native’ speakers and perennial learners of ENL, they can be competent and authoritative users of ELF. The ‘native speaker teacher–non-native speaker teacher’ dichotomy could then finally become obsolete in ELF settings, with the prospect of abolishing a counterproductive and divisive terminology which hinges on a negative particle, and which has bedevilled the profession for too long.

Notes

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1. Cf. Gnutzmann 2000: 357: “It has been estimated that about 80 per cent of verbal exchanges in which English is used as a second or foreign language do not involve native speakers of English (Beneke 1991)”. Crystal (1997: 54) gives the following estimates for speakers of English in terms of Kachru’s ‘concentric circles’: Inner Circle [i.e. first language, e.g. USA, UK] 320–380 million, Outer Circle [i.e. additional language, e.g. India, Singapore] 150–300 million, Expanding Circle [i.e. foreign language, e.g. China, Russia] 100–1000 million.
2. For those who find it hard to believe that these developments are indeed quite recent, it might be interesting to have a look at papers which document interactions about the ‘native–non-native’ question, such as Akoha et al. (1991), which clearly show how new and strange challenges to ‘native-speakerism’ were only a decade ago, even to some applied linguists.
3. I hope it is clear that I am trying to make a general point here, not suggesting any conspiratorial intent on the part of Peter Medgyes and David Crystal – I picked the two quotations from hundreds which would have made exactly the same point. This was because their books are also thematically particularly appropriate for my concerns here, and declare it as their aim to contribute to open access and equity in this area.
4. But see below for corpora of ‘learner English’.
5. “Its [ICE’s] principal aim is to provide the resources for comparative studies of the English used in countries where it is either a majority first language . . . or an official additional language. In both language situations, English serves as a means

- of communication between those who live in these countries” (Greenbaum 1996: 3). “Excluded from ICE is the English used in countries where it is not a medium for communication between natives of the country” (p. 4).
6. See also Kachru’s criticism of the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* for using the term ‘international’ for referring to “America, Britain and Australia” (1997: 70f.). The term “international English” is usually not taken to include ‘Expanding Circle’ English (cf. e.g. Todd & Hancock 1986; Trudgill & Hannah 1995).
 7. In an attempt to counteract this mechanism of (unwitting) reproduction, I will use inverted commas for any mention of ‘English’ when co- and context do not indicate which variety is being talked about (such as ENL, ELF or an indigenized ‘Outer Circle’ variety), as a reminder that any general reference to the denomination ‘English’ has to be regarded as provisional.
 8. I focus on House (1999) here because this paper summarizes and discusses the state of the art in the pragmatics of ELF.
 9. It has to be pointed out that the terminology in the literature about ‘strategies’ is far from unified, cf. the overview in Bialystok (1990).
 10. Crystal (e.g. 1997: 136ff.) foresees the emergence of “a new form of English – let us think of it as ‘World Standard Spoken English’ (WSSE).” He adds, though, that “WSSE is still in its infancy. Indeed, it has hardly been born” and that it seems likely that the variety which will be “most influential in the development of WSSE” is US English.
 11. The texts are being transcribed orthographically and marked for speaker turns, pauses and overlaps, and provided with contextual notes and notes about paralinguistic features such as laughter. Part-of-speech tagging and syntactic parsing are to be added. A fairly basic system for marking for prosody is being worked out and piloted. It is currently not planned to provide a phonetic transcription of these texts, but it is hoped that sound files can be made available in the longer term.
 12. Accommodation (in the sense of Giles & Coupland 1991) was found to be an important factor in Jenkins’ (2000) study, and lack of it may have contributed to the impression of “mutual dis-attention” House (1999: 82) got in the analysis of her data.
 13. All the features of ELF interaction highlighted here have also been found in my own data, but I do not have any interactions as yet which entirely consist of such short turns as the present example, and therefore decided on the above extract as the most compact illustration available.
 14. Kramsch (1999: 142) sounds a timely note of caution against a premature and naïve euphoria about ‘global access’: “Global access to English, like global access to the Internet, facilitates communication, it does not necessarily facilitate understanding. In fact, it requires an additional effort in discursive reflexivity and linguistic circumspection to overcome the illusion of sameness created by the use of a common language. A pedagogy of English as a global language can capitalize on the outsidership of the local, non-native speaker to foster an understanding based not only on orate uses of language but on a critical reflection that can only be acquired through literacy.”

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