Signalling cultural identity: the use of L1/Ln in ELF

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For the Americans, the English and some others, the English language is of course the language of identity. But for the rest of mankind, that is to say more than nine-tenth of our contemporaries, it cannot fill that role, and it would be dangerous to try to make it so unless we want to produce hordes of people who are unhinged and disoriented, with personalities that are unbalanced. No one should be forced to become a mental expatriate every time he opens a book, sits down in front of a screen, enters into a discussion or thinks. People ought to be able to make their own modernity instead of always feeling they are borrowing it from others.

Amin Maalouf, On Identity

On the 21st century map of the world English is undeniably the language dominating communication across nations and cultures. Yet it is not the English of the inner circle (Kachru 1986), which has gone ‘international’. Native or inner circle English is a primary language of identification for its various native speakers, be they A(merican), B(ritish), C(anadian) or others. They consequently feel a strong cultural affiliation to their language. Not all users of English, however, feel like members of the ‘ABC’ community. World wide speakers of different linguacultural backgrounds use English as a lingua franca (ELF) to communicate interculturally across and within borders. Hence, the English used globally is sometimes even called a variety in its own right (Knapp & Meierkord 2002). This new variety is a means of communica-

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tion only, which is appropriated by its users and differs from native English (cf. Seidlhofer 2002a; 2002b). I will refer to the ‘community’ using ELF as either ‘lingua franca speakers’, which seems preferable to non-native speakers since it does not imply deficiency but variety, or ‘ELF users’, a term proposed by Seidlhofer (lecture 2004) to shift the focus from ‘learners of English’ (again implying deficiencies) to ‘users of English’ (implying independence from native English). When speaking English, lingua franca speakers create what Meierkord (2002) terms a ‘linguistic masala’ in displaying their individual culture or group membership (be it a temporary or their original one), both being distinct from that of ‘ABC’ English speakers. It would indeed seem out of place if ELF users tried to pretend to be English and to belong to a particular ‘national’ English speaking culture when they obviously do not.

The idea of keeping one’s voice (Kramsch 1999) in a metaphorical but also literal sense will be investigated in this article. A very straightforward way of making their cultural identity (with focus on primary culture) salient in discourse is the use of lingua franca speakers’ ‘original voice’, i.e. their L1. When ELF users integrate or ‘export’ their L1 into ELF, this presents a conscious choice and does not necessarily signal ‘learner’ status but membership of different groups. The use of L1, however, is an option individual speakers can choose rather than a general rule and my own data suggests that it depends on an individual speaker’s preference, the context of a contact situation and its communicative goal. The ELF data presented in this analysis derive from naturally occurring casual conversations among rather fluent ELF users, which were recorded and collected in the Middle East (Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon) in 2002. It is part of a small data corpus comprising 20 hours of recordings, where the participating individuals display diverse backgrounds, professions and proficiency levels in ELF. For the present analysis a small selection of settings was chosen to exemplify specific ways in which lingua franca speakers activate cultural identity (primary culture) through ELF-embedded use of their primary language (L1) or their co-participant’s primary language (Ln).

1. The communication-identification dichotomy

Much has been written about the intrinsic relationship of language and culture, and so it might seem controversial that English as a natural language can serve as a culture-free communicative code. The term ‘culture-free’ would hereby relate to the native culture normally associated with a language (e.g. ABC culture associated with English). I will propose that English in lingua
franca contact situations is used as a ‘native-culture-free’ code. This claim does not assume that conversation occurs in a vacuum, but rather that ELF users have the freedom to either create their own temporary culture, to partly ‘export’ their individual primary culture into ELF or to reinvent their cultural identities by blending into other linguacultural groups (similar to what Rampton (1995) would describe as language crossing). Indeed empirical data (see section 2.) provides evidence to support this view. The culture-free status of ELF can be explained by investigating the dichotomy of language with regard to communication and identification, whereby Hüllen’s (1992: 302ff) distinction of ‘Kommunikationssprache’ (language of communication), and ‘Identifikationssprache’ (language of identification) is essential in this respect. Such a categorisation is based upon the twofold function of linguistic signs, namely the referential function and the expressive one. Consequently, a language selected for communication only expresses a communicative and primarily referential function, i.e. the culture associated with this natural language is not activated by its users.

Kommunikation ist aller Erfahrung nach allerdings auch möglich, ohne daß man sich “seiner” Identifikationssprache bedient. Man benutzt eine Sprache dann als Zeichensystem, das einer speziellen Kultur neutral gegenübersteht. (Hüllen 1992:305)

[Judging from experience communication is also possible without using ‘your’ language of identification. In such a case one uses a language as a system of signs, remaining neutral with regard to a specific culture. my transl, UP]

A language of identification, however, displays a symbolic function (Edwards 1985) by enabling the speaker to identify with a language and through it with a culture to which s/he feels a sense of belonging. The term ‘culture’ here is used to refer to primary culture/s (membership by shared ethnic origin, e.g. Greek or bilingual Arabic/Greek). However it could also refer to situational culture (e.g. special interest groups such as linguists, where membership is based on specific shared knowledge). Wherever linguists or philosophers, for example, meet internationally they identify with their like-minded group through their own terminology and thus create a self-contained culture. Those two concepts of culture (primary and situational) co-exist and are both highly relevant for ELF contexts. In the following, though, I would like to focus exclusively on the primary culture and language of speakers. Generally, speakers use their primary language as a means of identification. However, exceptions to this rule are possible (cf. Hüllen 1992: 303). Alongside Hüllen’s two categories, Rampton’s (1995:339ff) offer a more speaker centred distinc-
tion which he terms ‘expertise’ and ‘allegiance’. Whilst ‘expertise’ refers to language proficiency irrespective of whether this language is used as a primary or secondary language, ‘allegiance’ describes a speaker’s identification with a particular language. Both categories prove extremely useful in analysing ELF and its users.

The reason why language has a twofold function can be traced back to essential forces, which Widdowson (1982: 10) identifies and labels as the ‘co-operative imperative’ and the ‘territorial imperative’. The communicative imperative expresses an individual’s need to socialise and to communicate with others irrespective of whether these others belong to his/her own group or not. The territorial imperative is motivated by the individual’s need to preserve his/her identity and promotes self-inclusion versus other-exclusion resulting in in-group (in the most extreme case representing only the individual) and out-group. Speakers use language in both ways, to communicate and to self-assert their group membership or more generally put: to define themselves in relationship to their co-participants.

What has been said about the dichotomy of language proves essential in analysing ELF communication. Lingua franca speakers use a different language than their own primary language as a communicative code in which they display ‘expertise’, whereby they do not activate the culture/s or ‘allegiances’ associated with this code. Using ELF enables them to communicate with co-participants from different lingua-cultural groups. Still the interplay of both forces is displayed: English used as a culture-free code equally allows for a means to express a speaker’s primary culture (territorial imperative), but at the same time it stimulates him/her to co-create a new inter-culture together with his/her co-participants (co-operative imperative). The dynamic aspect of the cultural, spatial or historical independence (no common ethnic origin) that characterises such inter-culture explains why lingua franca speakers tend to create temporary and rather mixed communities (House 2002:259; Hüllen 1982:86; Meierkord 2002:128f). The ELF inter-culture as an expression of membership is created in the communicative event itself, and its shape depends on and is defined by the communicative goal of the interaction. Using English for communication only, the individual lingua franca speaker does not identify with the cultural norms of English as a Native Language. Evidence for this is found in my data but also in studies by Bowers (1999) or Lufty Diab (1996). Bowers reports on English learners from Cyprus, whose motives were to share and express their culture in English rather than to become English. Lufty Diab shows in a case study of English teachers in Beirut.
that some users of English like the intercultural possibilities the language offers, but object to the culture of native speakers.

2. Signalling cultural identity

In the following analysis the focus will be on naturally occurring discourse. The participating individuals bring with them a sense of identity and belonging that is very much shaped by their membership to their primary culture. An interesting notion here is that of ‘loyalty’, which despite its seemingly strong claim appears a helpful tool in interpreting ELF data. Hüllen (1992: 303) refers to an ‘emotional loyalty’ speakers feel towards their primary language and Rampton (1995:342) describes this kind language loyalty as ‘inheritance’, i.e. an integral part of the ‘allegiance’ with a language which is inherited. This loyalty might be an essential motive why individuals do not necessarily change their ‘voice’ (in a Kramschian sense) when they change their language in order to communicate across linguacultures. They can show and confirm their cultural belonging and identity at wish in whatever language they use. A very straightforward signal in this respect is, of course, the conscious use of the L1 embedded in ELF.

Speakers’ and thus also ELF speakers’ identities are never static but they are constructed within interaction (cf. Ochs 1993: 295f) and can involve membership in various groups (e.g. ELF group or primary culture group). These group identities are complex, dynamic and multi-variant, they are formed, negotiated, confirmed or challenged through interaction with others (cf. Collier & Milt 1988:112). This holds especially true for ELF settings, where co-participants can ‘export’, appropriate or re-invent their cultural identities. Within this newly co-created ELF inter-culture they can engage in diverse memberships and/or signal their own. Displaying loyalty to their own group does not necessarily prevent them from forming other memberships.

2.1. Data description

The data selected for this analysis is part of a small corpus of 20 hours which was collected by means of tape recordings lasting between 5 and 90 minutes. The corpus includes a variety of settings (professional, educational and private settings), professional profiles (academics, students, housewives, tourist guides, a merchant and a doctor) and different ELF proficiency levels. The recordings were collected in the Middle East (Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt), Austria and Singapore in spring, summer and autumn 2002. For the majority of recordings (35 out of 40), participant observation was used, where the re-
searcher, being part of the ELF group and as an ELF speaker herself, was always involved in the interactions. In all encounters the individuals recorded display their own, person-based identity, as well as their group-based identity (cf. Ting-Toomey 1999: 25ff). It is exclusively the latter which will be investigated here. The primary cultures of the participating lingua franca speakers are rather diverse and were as follows: Austrian, Egyptian, German, Greek, Italian, Jordanian, Japanese, Lebanese, Spanish and Turkish.

For the present analysis a small selection of data samples was chosen from the corpus, in order to exemplify ways and contexts in which extremely fluent ELF co-participants with diverse lingua-cultural backgrounds straightforwardly display or assign cultural identity (their own or others) through their use of their L1 or an Ln (a co-participant’s L1). The data samples are casual conversations among academics and/or students. The situational identity of participants (the role they play; be it academic, student or other) which creates a culture in itself is naturally always present. For instance they are educated speakers and experts or learners in their various subjects. This role, however, is not always emphasised in the casual conversations chosen and as it is not the focus of this analysis, it will be mostly neglected below.

Since the lingua franca speakers I recorded are perceived as individuals I do not list them as mere numbers in the data samples. Instead of marking their conversational contributions by “S1”, “S2”, “S3”, etc., the individual speakers are given historical pseudonyms which reflect their cultural origin. Sisi, Berta and Zita, for example are Austrian lingua franca speakers, whereas Naruhito Masako and Suiko are named after Japanese royals to denote ‘Japaneseness’. A list of participating speakers is provided below (Table 1). Apart from listing their L1, their knowledge of other Lns used in the conversations is also provided.

Table 1. List of individual participants in alphabetical order:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>name</th>
<th>L1</th>
<th>profession</th>
<th>♂/♀</th>
<th>age</th>
<th>Ln knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attila</td>
<td>TURKISH</td>
<td>lecturer in TURKISH</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>ARABIC (basic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berta</td>
<td>AUSTRIAN</td>
<td>lecturer in GERMAN</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>ARABIC (1 semester)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diogenes</td>
<td>GREEK</td>
<td>lecturer in GREEK</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>ARABIC (4 semesters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Rushd</td>
<td>ARABIC</td>
<td>student of GERMAN</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>GERMAN (5 semesters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleopatra</td>
<td>ARABIC</td>
<td>student of GREEK</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>GREEK (5 semesters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masako</td>
<td>JAPANESE</td>
<td>lecturer in JAPANESE</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>ARABIC (5 semesters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naruhito</td>
<td>JAPANESE</td>
<td>Judo instructor</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>ARABIC (3 semesters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuredin</td>
<td>ARABIC</td>
<td>lecturer in ENGLISH</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>FRENCH (M.A. degree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramses</td>
<td>ARABIC</td>
<td>lecturer in MEDICINE</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>50+</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharazade</td>
<td>ARABIC</td>
<td>student of GERMAN</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>GERMAN (5 semesters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suiko</td>
<td>JAPANESE</td>
<td>lecturer in JAPANESE</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>30+</td>
<td>ARABIC (5 semesters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisi</td>
<td>AUSTRIAN</td>
<td>student of ELF</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>30+</td>
<td>ARABIC/JAPANESE (3 semesters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tristan</td>
<td>GERMAN</td>
<td>lecturer in GERMAN</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>30+</td>
<td>ARABIC (M.A. degree, fluent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zenobia</td>
<td>ARABIC</td>
<td>student of GERMAN</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>GERMAN (5 semesters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zita</td>
<td>AUSTRIAN</td>
<td>pensioner</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the data examples selected, the utterances reflecting cultural membership are written in bold letters for better emphasis. In the setting description of each example contextual information and further participant profiles will be provided for a fuller understanding of the conversational exchange. For a conceptualisation of the recorded conversations the VOICE transcription conventions were used and are briefly listed at the end of the paper.

### 2.2. Data analysis: L1/Ln usage in ELF

When lingua franca speakers use their L1 embedded in ELF, code-switching or borrowing, especially creative borrowing (Dulay et al 1982: 114), are involved. Whilst borrowing refers to the process of incorporating words of one language into another (e.g. in order to express specific cultural concepts), code-switching traditionally describes the socially significant use of different languages within the same conversation or even utterance (Myers-Scotton 1993, Milroy & Muysken 1995). Much of the research is done in and actually refers to bilingual speech communities. In an ELF context, however, it cannot be assumed that there is extensive language contact between the languages involved or that users of ELF are highly and equally bilingual. It might prove
useful, therefore, to add and explore new perspectives in order to investigate
the ‘linguistic masala’ (Meierkord 2002) created in ELF. For the present
analysis it is assumed that the lingua franca speakers are bilinguals. Their
competence in ELF may vary, but they are able to communicate in two lan-
guages (L1 and ELF). In ELF contact situations more than two languages are
present and individual co-participants can also use an Ln (a co-participant’s
L1) if they feel it is desirable or necessary. Lingua franca speakers’ compe-
tence in an Ln, however, might range from non-existent through basic to Ln-
competent. Hence, code-switching and borrowing can occur between ELF, L1
and possibly an Ln. It is difficult at times to distinguish clearly between intra-
sentential borrowing and code-switching considering context, co-participants
and language proficiencies involved. What will mostly be referred to as use of
L1/Ln implies the following range of possibilities:

(a) in the case of L1 and ELF - lingua franca speakers code-switch be-
tween their L1 and ELF in particular socially significant situations which can
denote group membership, when they merely ‘export’ certain L1 concepts
into ELF (to share them with the ELF community but not to assert their own
group membership) this is considered creative borrowing.

(b) In the case of an Ln and ELF - there are various possibilities with re-
gard to the lingua franca speaker’s Ln competence. Fully competent Ln
speakers code-switch and borrow in the same way as described for (a). Lingua
franca speakers who do not know the Ln at all but adopt Ln expressions in
relevant settings clearly borrow. However, a third and problematic group are
those who are learners of the Ln. This is particularly relevant for Lns sur-
rounding the ELF setting as in my data where lecturers from diverse countries
were working for a limited period in an Arabic country. They needed to ac-
quire at least basic language skills in order to interact in daily life, thus most
of them took courses in Arabic. Consequently, in cases where Ln learners use
Ln utterances during an ELF conversation they are thought of as borrowing
and code-switching similarly to fully competent speakers, see (a). This dis-
tinction might be too rudimentary and controversial but it appears quite prac-
tical for the present analysis considering the varying degrees of language
competence and the Lns involved.

Focusing on the L1 in ELF settings first, there is a variety of possibilities
when and where lingua franca speakers might use their native code. With this
code created by means of code-switching or borrowing whole cultural con-
cepts are being exported into the ELF community. In the following I will dis-
cuss examples such as terms of address, activity-based expressions (e.g.
toasts), greetings, speech acts, performed with a pragmatic accent (e.g. thank-
ing someone in the form of a religious saying in Arabic) or culture laden labels (expressions which are none of the above but label activities or concepts of a particular culture). Motives for using the L1 can range from language loyalty to a perceived need or wish to act politely, whereby the latter is achieved by acting according to those norms which lingua franca speakers know best, namely their own. When L1 expressions and concepts are exported into ELF, these concepts can also be temporarily adopted or borrowed as Ln expressions by other ELF users involved.

2.2.1. Terms of address and honorific titles

In a contact situation lingua franca speakers have a variety of choices when it comes to terms of address. They can use English expressions or if they feel that those are not expressive enough, they can use their L1 terms of address or they can even use their co-participants’ L1-terms (the Ln’s involved). As is demonstrated in the data, lingua franca speakers do not exclusively use L1 terms of address with their primary cultural in-group (e.g. two Turkish ELF users conversing in English within a larger group of co-participants), but also with ELF co-participants who are at first unfamiliar with these expressions.

(1) and (2)

Setting: Amman/Jordan. The three lecturers Attila (Turkish), Tristan (German) and Diogenes (Greek) are involved in a discussion about current issues in Jordan with three students (all from Jordan), of whom only Cleopatra is featured in extract (2). The discussion takes place in Diogenes’ office at the University of Jordan. Since the department of Modern Languages is rather small the students are known to all lecturers, but take classes only with the Greek lecturer. The data constitute one of the rare examples of non-participant observation in my corpus (5 conversations out of 40).

(1)
1 Attila: (...) since tristan <L1=TURKISH> bey <L1=TURKISH> started this weather thing (.)
2 it reminded me of something that i had a (.) long time ago (.) when i used to work in
3 NATO all my commanders complain about the weather of TURKEY (2) they say (.)
4 attila <L1=TURKISH> bey <L1=TURKISH> ? (1) what’s this weather (.) it’s very
5 it’s very unpredictable it changes half an hour like a woman (1) i say sir this is my
6 weather i don’t have a dir- your WOMAN changes at every half hour or not but i mean
7 you know real woman do not changes uh quite that often as you say (1) <L1=TURKISH>
8 efendon <L1=TURKISH> yes really uh tristan <L1=TURKISH> bey <L1=TURKISH>
9 we’re enjoying the last days of the forlighting (.) person will have perhaps uh rain coming
10 up again like it did last weekend (.) <L1=TURKISH> EFENDI <L1=TURKISH> i thank
11 diogenes <L1=TURKISH> bay <L1=TURKISH> for uh his kind INVITATION for this
12 MORNING it was all surprise to me OF COURSE

(2)
1 Diogenes: uh: yeah (1) so (1) yeah i mean that uh: (2) PEOPLE in greece are not- in
2 ATHENS in ATHENS where the problem is are not so conscious of this
3 problem and they realise that SOMETHING uh happens when we are close
4 to: (2) a to uh ph how to say to: <1> uhm a </1> deadlock yeah uhm (1) now uh
5 Attila: <1> deadlock </1>
6 Diogenes: about jordan and how women treat uh: WATER here (. ) or the situation
7 the water here in jordan (2) cleopatra (1) <2> Cleopatra will </2>
8 Attila: <2> cleopatra <L1=TURKISH> hanim </L1=TURKISH> </2> will tell
9 about her </3> view about water
10 Tristan: <3> cleopatra <Ln=TURKISH> hanim </Ln=TURKISH> say yes </3>
11 Attila: conservation
12 Juju: ok (1) uhm=
13 Attila: = i think
14 Juju: i <@> think </@> @@@

The Turkish lecturer, Attila, displays his culture by using Turkish politeness conventions when addressing his co-participants, which he does in a very formal way. He does not merely translate his terms of address into English, but he code-switches into his L1 (I would suggest code-switching here since equivalent expressions exist in English and Attila clearly wants to state his ‘Turkishness’). Thus in example (1) ‘bey’ instead of its English equivalent ‘Mr.’ is used to address and refer to his colleagues, ‘tristan bey’ and ‘diogenes bey’. Consequently, Attila also refers to himself as ‘attila bey’ when telling his anecdote and imitating the commanders in line 4. In example (2) line 8 he uses ‘hanim’ to replace ‘Ms’ in ‘cleopatra hanim’ when addressing one of the female students and here he is even jokingly imitated by Tristan, his German colleague, who borrows and applies ‘hanim’. The terms ‘bey’ and ‘hanim’ are honorific titles which take the position after proper names (cf. Dogancay-Aktuna & Kamisli 2001: 226), whereby they are used with first names rather than with full names. The Turkish expressions ‘efendi’ or ‘efendim’ used in lines 8 and 10 are another instance of L1 politeness. The honorific title means ‘my lord’ and also denotes respect (Tannen & Öztok 1981: 41-42) to the person addressed or referred to.

As mentioned in the section’s introduction, lingua franca speakers can adopt expressions in the L1 of their co-participant/s and use them within ELF as an Ln either by code-switching or borrowing. Underlying motives might
again be to comply with politeness conventions of a particular group or to blend in with a majority group, as can be seen in example (3).

(3)

**Setting:** Cairo/Egypt. The participants are Masako and Suiko, two Japanese lecturers who work at different universities in Cairo. Zita and Sisi are two Austrians (a pensioner and a student) visiting Masako. They all have Japanese dinner at Suiko’s house. Masako and Sisi are close friends and know each other quite well. Zita is a friend of Sisi’s and Suiko is a colleague of Masako’s. Sisi tries to explain to Zita that Masako borrowed a blanket from Suiko especially for them.

```
1 Sisi:  <to Zita> you know that we have the nice warm blanket from suiko san <\Ln=JAPANESE>?  
2 Suiko: any time  
4 Sisi: the blue one is suiko san's blanket (.)  
5 Zita: ah mhm (. ) mhmhm mhmhm=  
6 Suiko: =so next time in my bed  
8 Zita: @@  
9 Sisi: and you will move to masako?  
10 Suiko: it's no problem  
11 Masako: @  
12 Sisi: or masako will move to your place?  
13 Masako: @@@@  
15 Suiko: @@ when it's uh masako san blanket <\Ln=JAPANESE>  
16 she comes yeah  
18 Sisi: @@@@@@@@  
18 Suiko: @@@@@ yeah
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The Austrian student, Sisi, refers to Suiko as ‘suiko san’ using the Japanese polite formula, which, having taken lessons in Japanese, she is familiar with. However, Sisi does not use the polite term of address with her friend Masako whom she knows best and longest from this group. The host of the dinner, Suiko, on the other hand refers to her colleague in the correct Japanese way as ‘masako san’ when co-constructing the joke about moving house for visitors. When referring and addressing her own cultural group the Japanese lingua franca speaker, Suiko, automatically code-switches to her cultural conventions. In this particular case she can do so since she knows that the Austrian lingua franca speaker understands the term and underlying convention used. It is exactly those to which Sisi tries to blend in during this Japanese dominated ELF setting. Sisi and Suiko expand ELF and import expressions in order to comply to an etiquette that might be expected.
2.2.2. Activity based expressions

In addition certain typical activities like having meals or a drink together might stimulate the use of the L1 or Ln, especially if the majority of ELF users belong to the same cultural group.

(4)

Setting: Cairo/Egypt. Masako and Suiko are colleagues working as university lecturers, Sisi (Austrian, student) is Masako’s visiting friend and Narhuito is a judo instructor working in Jordan and acquainted to Masako. They all are having dinner together at Masako’s house. Suiko and Sisi have met previously, but both of them meet Naruhito for the first time.

(4)
1 Masako: <L1=JAPANESE> kanpai </L1=JAPANESE>
2 Naruhito: ah <lifting his glass>
3 Suiko: <L1=JAPANESE> kanpai </L1=JAPANESE>
4 Sisi: oh <1> sorry <1> just a second <getting her glass>
5 Masako: <1> mhm </1>
6 Sisi: shall we first=
7 Masako: =yes=
8 Sisi: =toast?
9 Suiko: <L1=JAPANESE> kanpai </L1=JAPANESE>
10 Masako: <Ln=GERMAN> prost </Ln=GERMAN>
11 Naruhito: post?
12 Sisi: <Ln=GERMAN> prost prost </Ln=GERMAN>
13 Naruhito: post office
14 Sisi: <Ln=JAPANESE> kanpai </Ln=JAPANESE>
15 Masako: <Ln=JAPANESE> kanpai </Ln=JAPANESE> kanpai @@ nice
16 Sisi: <2> @@ </2>
17 Naruhito: yeah yeah
18 Sisi: (xxx)
19 Masako: mhm? (3)
20 Sisi: mhm <L1=JAPANESE> oishii </L1=JAPANESE> <tasting wine>
21 Naruhito: mhm oh yeah
22 Suiko: <L1=JAPANESE> oishii</L1=JAPANESE>
23 Naruhito: wine yeah really good mhm
24 Sisi: <L1=JAPANESE> itadakimasu </L1=JAPANESE>
25 Masako: <L1=JAPANESE> douzo </L1=JAPANESE> <offering food to all>
26 Naruhito: <L1=JAPANESE> itadakimasu </L1=JAPANESE> oh
27 Sisi: <L1=JAPANESE> douzo </L1=JAPANESE> <offering food to all>
28 Sisi: <Ln=JAPANESE> itadakimasu </Ln=JAPANESE>

When the co-participants toast, they code-switch, whereby they first use the Japanese expression ‘kanpai’ with the host, Masako, starting and Suiko re-
sponding, while Naruhito raises his glass and utters an agreeing ‘ah’. Sisi, who seems to be a bit confused provides her Ln ‘kanpai’ only in line 14. But Japanese is not the only way in which to toast during an ELF dinner, Masako and Suiko also borrow (none of them is a learner of the language) the German equivalent ‘prost’ to include Sisi, their co-participant, who is Austrian. Naruhito who conceives the meaning but does not know the expression supplies a surprised ‘post?’ in line 11, which sounds similar to ‘prost’ and is more familiar to him. When Sisi code-switches to reply in her L1 before doing so in the Ln, he blends in jokingly with ‘post office’ in line 13. A joke which is acknowledged in line 14 by Sisi’s ‘nice’. Masako’s, Suiko’s and Sisi’s laughter show that his joke is well received, though Naruhito is never given the correct wording of the German toast. When the co-participants start their Japanese meal, another typical expression for such activity is used, first by the Japanese as their L1 and then by the Austrian as her Ln, namely ‘itadakimasu’ which is a polite way to say that you are going to eat. The L1 expression ‘douzo’ which both Masako and Suiko use, translates into ‘please help yourself’. Since Sisi is a learner of Japanese it is assumed that ALL co-participants understand its meaning.

Here the underlying motive can once more be traced back to politeness, in that a culture specific norm is transferred into ELF and adopted as a sign of convergence into a specific temporary group within the inter-culture. Burt’s (1992) concept of compliance could be used to describe the reaction of the Austrian lingua franca speaker, Sisi, since she chooses to ‘basically’ (though as a learner partially) use the same code as her interlocutors and thus complies. It also shows that ELF is flexible enough for a temporary subgroup (as Japanese here) to be created within ELF for certain activities, i.e. speakers can confirm or reinvent their identity and temporarily act Japanese or German but they will sooner or later blend into ELF again.

2.2.3. Greetings

Another area in which the L1/Ln is preferred used are greetings. However, L1 greetings seem to be dependent on context, co-participants and very much on locus. The following ELF conversation is set in an Arab country.
Setting: Amman/Jordan. Attila (Turkish), Berta (Austrian) and Diogenes (Greek) are colleagues from university, Sisi (Austrian) is a former colleague and is now a student doing her research there. All meet in Diogenes’ apartment for tea and extensive causal talk. Suddenly Ramses (Arabic), Diogenes’ neighbour, joins them. None of the group knows Ramses apart from Diogenes. The former originally knocks on the door to borrow matches from the latter, but when invited to join the group he immediately and willingly accepts.

(5)
1   <door bell rings and diogenes gets up and opens the door>
2 Attila:  we we deal in dollars (2)
3 Berta:  we’re too loud (2)
4 Attila:  no we weren’t (3)
5 Ramses: hello
6 Diogenes: hello hello how are you?
7 Ramses: fine (.) do you have a match?
8 Diogenes: do you need to to to to light yeah yeah yeah i don’t have matches but
9   i have uh i have uh this uh (1) <going to kitchen and back>
10 Berta: lighter
11 Diogenes: lighter yeah (2) (...)
12 Attila:  diogenes <L1=TURKISH> bey <L1=TURKISH> i have a match if he wants
13 Diogenes: you can keep it it’s ok i have one uh i have another (2) you can keep (2)
14   would you like to come? to drink a tea with us? do you have time or not?
15 Ramses:  <L1=ARABIC> assalamu aleikum <L1=ARABIC> <entering the apartment>
16 Attila:  <Ln=ARABIC> walaikum assalam <Ln=ARABIC>
17 Sisi:  <Ln=ARABIC> walaikum assalam <Ln=ARABIC>
18 Berta:  <Ln=ARABIC> marhaban <Ln=ARABIC>
19 Diogenes: uh: all colleagues here
20 Attila:  attila
21 Ramses: yes yes
22 Diogenes: berta teaches german attila teaches turkish uh sisi uh=
23 Attila:  =german=
24 Diogenes:  =german (1) and me (2) just greek

In lines 5 and 6 Ramses and Diogenes greet each other at first in English. Berta and Attila try to assist in the ‘match-problem’ and once it is solved, Diogenes invites his neighbour in, since until then the latter had been standing at the door. Ramses who does not know any of the others code-switches and greets them in Arabic – identifying with his own cultural and also the surrounding local norms. The other ELF users have some knowledge of Arabic and thus comply by answering politely in Ramses’ L1. The Arabic greeting ‘assalamu aleikum’ translates into ‘peace be upon you’ and its correct reply ‘walaikum assalam’ translates into ‘and peace be upon you’. It is a typical Islamic greeting commonly and mainly used among Muslims, but also other
Arabic confessions. The other Arabic greeting ‘marhaban’ originally means ‘welcome’ and is used as an equivalent to English ‘hello’.

As with terms of address or activity based expressions, L1 usage in greetings seems to have a lot to do with acting politely, and code-switching here can signal a situation-specific complex of mutual rights and obligations (Myers-Scotton 1993:58). Since ELF always occurs in a particular context, and here the surrounding culture of the setting is Arabic, the lingua franca speakers can and actually do opt to temporarily adopt Arabic conventions as introduced by Ramses, who at the same time seizes the right to define and represent himself in relation to the others. He introduces himself as being an Arab and his new co-participants respond accordingly.

2.2.4. Speech acts with an ‘accent’

Speech acts are a fourth distinct area, where primary cultural concepts can be shared with other ELF users. These can either be translated or performed in the original. Taking Arabic as an example, religious sayings - for which there is no equivalent in English - can perform a variety of functions (thanking, apologising, condoling). Arabic lingua franca speakers, when using ELF, can opt to introduce their conventions to a ‘wider’ audience and at the same time adhere to their L1 norms.

(6)
Setting: Amman/Jordan: the colleagues, Diogenes (Greek) and Nuredin (Arabic) are having tea in their office at university. Sisi (Austrian) used to be a colleague but is now a student and familiar to both of them. Diogenes serves tea to Nuredin who reacts with the situation adequate blessing ‘god bless your hands’. Nuredin, who is fluent in ELF since also a lecturer in English at the university, is well aware of his linguistic choices.

(6)
1 Nuredin: (...) no sugar please (2) have this thank you a lot thanks a lot
2 Diogenes: uh: @
3 Nuredin: <L1=ARABIC> ma </L1=ARABIC> in arabic we use the (1)
4 expression may god (3) save your (1) hands
5 Sisi: what do you say in arabic?
6 Nuredin: may god save your hands <L1=ARABIC> isalim deyek wahli
7 isalim deyek </L1=ARABIC> right? because you do things
8 with your hands all right?
9 Diogenes: i can <1> say it </1>
10 Nuredin: <1> so you </1> beg for god to keep them save (.) <2> all right? @@@
11 Diogenes: <2> <Ln=ARABIC> isalim deyek </Ln=ARABIC> </2>
12 Sisi: <2> @@ nice </2>

[</2>
It is interesting to observe that Nuredin first translates his gratefulness into English using ‘thank you’ or ‘thanks a lot’. And he also translates his adequate Arabic reaction in line 4 into English since he assumes his interlocutors, who are learners of Arabic and know the basics, are not fluent enough to understand the Arabic original. However, he willingly provides the latter when he realises that they are interested in knowing the original expression. Looking at the co-participants for a moment, we can see different reactions. Whilst Diogenes in line 13 and 15 code-switches into Arabic to react Ln appropriately by using ‘shukran’ the equivalent to ‘thank you’, Sisi wants to know the exact reply to the blessing in order to apply it. In the following Nuredin, further signalling his Arabness, not only gives the correct reply, ‘wa deyek’, but also explains that with blessings you reply by wishing the same for the ‘blesser’. Diogenes then abandons the all-purpose ‘shukran’ and practices the correct reply. In the specific context of example (6) lingua franca speakers take up another co-participant’s L1 expressions and ‘enrich’ ELF without threatening intelligibility. This certainly depends on the co-participants, but context is also vital here since the conversation takes place in an Arabic country. Nuredin is a mediator in bringing the surrounding culture of this setting closer to its visitors in using ELF and as a complementation his L1.

2.2.5. Culture-laden labels

Naturally, all L1 expressions discussed earlier convey the cultural concepts of their users, thus the blessing in example (5) which was used to express thanks, could also be defined as culture laden since it reflects the religious tradition of Arabic cultures. The category of culture specific labels, however, subsumes expressions which describe typical actions or concepts associated with a particular culture (expressions other than terms of address, greetings, activity
based expressions or speech acts), which if delivered in the L1 or Ln usually result in borrowings. These labels can refer to essential words in the primary culture, but need not necessarily be key words as Wierzbicka (1997) would define them. Lingua franca speakers can either borrow from their L1 (if the expression originates from their own linguaculture) or an Ln (in case the expression originates from another linguaculture) or they translate these labels into English, where they commonly lack exact equivalents. For this reason, culture-laden labels which are translated into English might have different connotations in different cultures and might even cause misunderstandings, as can be seen with the concept of ‘prayer’ in the following example.

(7)

**Setting:** same setting as in (5) but prior to Ramses’ appearance. Here, Attila has problems opening the bottle of whisky he brought and after unsuccessfully trying to do so, Sisi jokingly alludes to the fact that in Islam drinking alcohol is not exactly a virtue.

(7)
1 Sisi: you drink (.) red label whisky not black label whisky <1> attila </1>?  
2 Attila: <1> i </1> cannot afford <L1=TURKISH> efendom </L1=TURKISH> that's  
3 forty three dinars and this is (.) uh <2> twenty twenty one twenty one dinars </2>  
4 Sisi: <2> only forty three dinars but you could drink </2> a semester (.) for forty three  
5 Attila: semester? no way (.) no way i have to <3> take my medicine after jogging </3>  
6 Sisi: <3> small sips attila </3>  
7 Attila: <L1=TURKISH> efendom </L1=TURKISH> (.) after (.)  
8 Sisi: attila can i show you how you do this? <tries to open bottle>  
9 Attila: uh damage (.) i mean (.) ok (.) smart cookies (3)  
10 Sisi: @@@ (2) <tries unsuccessfully >  
11 Attila: bullshit  
12 Sisi: attila hold it <4> like this like </4> this  
13 Attila: <4> let me do it </4> let me do it uh military way  
14 Berta: @@@@=  
15 Sisi: =it's closed <5> attila </5>  
16 Berta: <5> the military way </5> is breaking bottle <6> right? </6>  
17 Attila: <6> no it's </6> no dear (.) hitting the bottom@ (1) uh (2)  
18 (...)  
19 Sisi: maybe it's a sign (.) allah is showing you <6> something (.) attila </6>  
20 Attila: <6> that but <L1=TURKISH> tamam </L1=TURKISH> </6>  
21 Sisi: skip <7> drinking whisky </7>  
22 Attila: <7> <L1=TURKISH> tamam </L1=TURKISH> I did my <7> prayer </L1=TURKISH>  
23 tamam </L1=TURKISH> my prayer was finished <8> about half an hour ago </8>  
24 Sisi: <8> you do your whisky prayer </8> as well?  
25 Attila: there - is there a whisky prayer?  
26 Sisi: =yes=
Sisi, herself a Christian, assigns cultural membership to Attila, a Muslim, by using the expression ‘Allah’, which is an important concept of his primary culture. She could also have used a different expression, like ‘your God’ or ‘the God of Muslims’, but firstly she is addressing a Muslim and it makes sense to use his terminology, and secondly the religious term ‘Allah’ is a profoundly widespread borrowing (e.g. the Cambridge International Dictionary of English defines Allah as ‘The Islamic name for God’). With due respect but in a joking manner, Sisi not only categorises Attila as a Muslim but also refers to the cultural tradition that Muslims do or should not normally enjoy alcohol – it is a taboo (handled differently in different Muslim countries; Attila comes from a secular Muslim country). Attila wants to justify drinking alcohol by stating that he finished his prayer (Islamic five o clock prayer), which in his interpretation might make up for drinking whisky. In doing so he confirms his membership of the assigned cultural group. Because ELF cannot be as exact as one’s native code with regard to cultural concepts, the word ‘prayer’, can be translated into both cultural groups varying in meaning. Whilst a Muslim prays five times to Mecca when the azan, the call to prayer, is inviting him to do so, Christian praying times are more flexible and voluntary. When the Christian lingua franca speaker jokingly refers to the whisky prayer we find the Muslim participant puzzled, considering his and Sisi’s culture, and thus he asks in confusion, ‘Is there a whisky prayer?’, meaning – there isn’t one in mine but is there one in yours? Used skilfully in ELF settings culture-laden labels are an additional linguistic tool available for lingua franca speakers to designate, display, confirm or characterise membership to specific cultural groups.

3. Conclusion

When using English, the fluent lingua franca speakers in this data sample de-activate the ‘native’ symbolic function of the language (the inherited ‘allegiance’) and merely adopt the communicative one (their expertise). ELF is flexible enough to allow its users to signal not only their ELF group membership, but also their individual cultural identity which is part of the ELF inter-culture. One way to achieve this is by the use of their L1 within ELF. This code option is profoundly linked to ELF users’ basic need to identify with what they consider their language, and this is in most cases - as with the individual speakers in this data - their primary language. Hüllen (1992:303) describes the primary language as a speaker’s first, thus dominating, mostly
used and mostly loved language. A speaker’s loyalty towards his/her language can function as a motivational force for embedding the L1 into ELF. This concept of code choice in ELF differs greatly from a supposed lack in language proficiency, which has often been attributed to ELF users when they were considered ‘mere language learners’. Apart from their wish to display their cultural membership, lingua franca speakers (particularly in casual conversations) want to act politely and co-operatively. Cultural identification and politeness can be found in all categories, be it terms of address, activity based expressions, greetings, speech acts or even culture laden labels. Not only do lingua franca speakers have the option of using their L1 in ELF, they can also take up their co-participants’ L1 as their Ln during conversation. In using an Ln the speaker wants to act politely according to his co-participants’ norms (if known), s/he wants to comply and thus to temporarily blend in and extend the range of ELF membership or even to reinvent himself/herself. The flexibility that ELF offers its users with regard to signalling or denoting cultural identity (in their L1/Ln) to an extent that the conversation remains intelligible (which is of course context dependent) makes ELF not only a fascinating ‘linguistic masala’ to use Meierkord’s term, but indeed a feasible alternative to Native English which in comparison might appear ‘voice resistant’. In ELF, lingua franca speakers can truly keep their voice when communicating interculturally.

**Transcription conventions**

Names  historical pseudonymms are given to individual speakers to replace the VOICE typical ‘S1’, ‘S2’ labels
?
rising intonation as at the end of interrogative sentence
<>  contextual information
()  pause counted in seconds, whereby (.) short pause
(xxx)  unintelligible speech

\(<L1=X> text </L1=X>\)

speaker’s L1; the L1 expression is is written Roman alphabet and in italics, e.g. \(<L1=ARABIC> ma </L1=ARABIC>\)

\(<Ln=X> text </Ln=X>\)

a co-participant’s L1 used by the speaker; the Ln expression is written in Roman alphabet and in italics, e.g. \(<Ln=JAPANESE> kanpai </Ln=JAPANESE>\)

@  laughter, \(<@> text </@>\) utterance spoken laughingly

**S1:** \(<1> text </1>\)
S2: <1> text </1> simultaneous speech

= B’s utterance occurs without a noticeable pause after A’s utterance

: lengthened vowels or hesitation markers, e.g. uh:

dir- a hyphen marks the self-interruption of a speaker

PEOPLE words or syllables spoken with emphatic stress are written in capital letters

(...) some parts of conversation are left out

References


