Specialised Languages in the Global Village

Specialised Languages in the Global Village: A Multi-Perspective Approach

Edited by

Carmen Pérez-Llantada and Maida Watson

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INTRODUCTION

SPECIALISED LANGUAGES AND GLOBALISATION

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The status of LSP (Languages for Specialised Purposes) in the global expansion of social activities with the aim of operating internationally has been one ongoing central issue of scholarly debate for the past decade. It has raised concern on multiple theoretical and practical aspects related to LSP, namely, modes of communication practice in different professional and institutional domains, acquisition and mastery of communicative competence in foreign languages, development of both linguistic and cultural awareness, and responsiveness to international and cross-cultural communication. *Specialised languages in the global village. A multi-perspective approach* is a collection of essays that assesses how the phenomenon of globalisation has problematised and will certainly keep on problematising intercultural communication within specialised communities of practice. Unquestionably, modern languages play a prominent role in this scenario, with English being, to date, the established lingua franca for international communication worldwide.

The multi-perspective approach to the topic of this volume is grounded on the tenets of applied linguistics in the 21st century as it basically reflects the emergent, though already crucial, sociocultural flows—increasing interdisciplinarity, plurality, and diversity:

> (…) challenges to the notion of unitary disciplines illuminate the character of applied linguistics, marked as it is by diversity, plurality and lack of an overarching single theory and set of procedures. Applied linguistics occupies essentially that pluricentrist position characteristic of the

> postmodern intellectual condition. It is this which best makes applied linguistics adaptive to change, resilient, and accommodative of contradiction, and positions it to address the challenges of new issues and problems in language and its use. (Candlin 1999, 79)

As a well-established branch of applied linguistics, LSP addresses from both research and pedagogical perspectives the four strategic areas already envisaged by Candlin at the turn of the third millennium: i) multilingualism, ii) pragmatics and communication, iii) learning styles, and iv) language assessment. In seeking to contribute to these areas of enquiry, the volume captures a range of perspectives on the way the use of languages for specialised communication is affected by the globalisation phenomenon. It examines the evolving nature of modern languages for specialised purposes in a social context characterised by increasing multilingualism and cross-cultural values. It also provides documented and challenging claims on the way languages, particularly English, are being used in the second decade of the 21st century in specialised knowledge-domains. Further, it raises concern towards cultural differences and the way these emerge in the spoken and written practices of different professional communities.

The edition of the volume draws substantial inspiration from the ongoing applied linguistic research conducted by the InterLAE research group at the University of Zaragoza within the national research project "Generic integrity in academic and professional communication: An analysis of genres and their correlation with the discourse practices and disciplinary cultures of different professional communities", funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation (project code FFI2009-09792). This edition is a contribution to this project. Like the project, the edition nurtures from the principles of genre theory and applied discourse analysis (Swales 1990, Bhatia 1993, 2002) in order to address the theme of LSP and globalisation taking the three perspectives proposed by Bhatia (2004, xv) to understand the 'real world of written discourse': the 'world of reality', the 'world of analysis', and the 'world of applications'.

In an attempt to capture the 'world of reality', Part I of the volume, THE SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION ON SPECIALISED LANGUAGES, tackles the complex, changing, and often problematic dynamics of the world of reality. **Gibson R. Ferguson**'s opening chapter illustrates the standardisation of communication practices in a particular professional context, that of transnational business corporations. In doing so, he discusses the effects of multiculturalism on the communication practices of this professional setting. His documented discussion on the notions of standardness and correctness norms paves the way to offering

both constructive guidelines for teaching business English to non-native English speakers and insightful suggestions for research in English Lingua Franca (EFL) in the business context. In Chapter 2, **Annie Abbott** describes the unprecedented challenges and opportunities for language problems as a result of the global economic crisis. Specifically, Abbot explains how teaching social entrepreneurship content with community service learning pedagogy (CSL) can be one part of a language programme's response to the current social demands. In Chapter 3, **Laura Muresan** approaches the way educational exigencies concerned with quality learning are affecting the domain of specialised languages in the present times. Muresan delves into the socio-cultural impact of language education in the globalisation era, and describes current interests in fulfilling governments' exigencies for quality assurance in language programmes.

Part II of the volume, THE RHETORICAL VIEW OF SPECIALISED LANGUAGES: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN INTERCULTURAL CONTEXTS, is devoted to the 'world of analysis' and brings new insights into the adoption of culturally oriented perspectives in LSP communication. The underlying conception of the three chapters of Part II is the rhetorical view of genres as social actions (see Miller 1984). In Chapter 4 **Maurizio Gotti** describes the challenges faced by communities of practice in the field of legal English—more specifically, that of international commercial arbitration. The author discusses how cross-cultural communication calls for the need for harmonising procedures in order to achieve common understanding in transnational communication. Relying on discourse and genre analysis his chapter explains the specific adaptations carried out in the 'localisation' process of the above mentioned harmonisation procedures. In Chapter 5, **Miguel Ruiz-Garrido** and **Ana Mª Saorín-Iborra** take the case of computer mediated communication (CMC) in the domain of tourism to explore different aspects of genre construction. Using a corpus of emails from corporate companies the authors examine the pragmatics of intercultural communication and discuss implications for the teaching of the written/spoken features of hybrid genres such as emails. Chapter 6, by **Lieve Vangehuchten, Willy Van Parys**, and **Alison Noble**, provide a clear-cut picture of multilingualism in the global village, with a particular focus on the sociolinguistic realities of English for maritime purposes. The chapter enquires into the linguistic and intercultural features of maritime communication that hinder or aid the quality of work onboard a merchant ship. In examining the factors that characterise (un)successful communication, the authors bring to the fore the importance of intercultural communication involving the use of a standard phraseology

—in the case of the maritime sector, the use of SMCP (Standard Marine Communication Phrases).

Parts III and IV endorse Bhatia's conception of the 'world of applications'. Part III, DISCOURSE PRACTICES, DISCIPLINARY COMMUNITIES AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES, offers comprehensive linguistic insights into the discourse of professional, domain-specific communities and hence, into the communication practices and procedures operating in those communities. In Chapter 7, **Maida Watson** examines different possibilities for creating start ups related to foreign languages in order to contend that their existence and growth during the last twenty years is a reflection of the globalisation of many aspects of industry, commerce and education. Her examination neatly illustrates how foreign language entrepreneurs do meet the growing demands of a globalised market and help professionals communicate across different countries and cultures overcoming the language barriers.

In Chapter 8, **Christine Uber Grosse** addresses the not uncommon dilemma faced by LSP instructors, that is, they are expected to become familiarised with both the domain-specific knowledge of the specialised field and the particular professional identity their LSP instruction targets at. In an attempt to bridge the academic and specialised worlds, as she puts it, Grosse recommends that instructors get to know the discourse practices and community procedures of the professional field. For a gained understanding of the profession, the author proposes ways to build relationships between LSP instructors and faculty so as to understand each other's culture, develop self-confidence and continue learning as they build relationships of mutual benefit. Instantiating ways to build such relationships, **Mary E. Risner**'s contribution also emphasises the importance of establishing ties between the study of language, culture, and business. She describes an interesting professional development model for a Community of Practice (CoP) intended to encourage collaboration between business and foreign language faculty through the use of emerging technologies. In foregrounding the value of situated learning —focused real-world preparation of 'globally competent' students—this cooperative model is described as a suitable way to provide educators with sustainable, long-term resources and tools as well as first-hand knowledge of the professional culture.

The contributors to Part IV, THE IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION ON LANGUAGES FOR SPECIAL PURPOSES: REFLECTIONS ON LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION AND LANGUAGE POLICY SUGGESTIONS, argue for the interdisciplinary applicability of LSP (i.e. Bhatia's 'world of applications'), and for the intellectual challenges that both aspects pose to foreign

language educators in general and LSP instructors in particular. In Chapter 10, **Sonsoles Sánchez-Reyes** addresses current trends in foreign and LSP language teaching and learning approaches, and lays emphasis on multicultural awareness and the variegating cultural contexts where the teaching/learning of languages for specialised purposes takes place. Sánchez-Reyes examines current classroom trends and methodologies in LSP today as a response to the shifting demands in the social and discourse practices of different professional contexts. In stressing the relationship between language learning and culture—since the former cannot be taught in a vacuum without reference to the culture it is ascribed to—this author discusses the pedagogical dilemmas resulting from the inevitable crossing of boundaries across local, national and international cultures in the global context.

Putting emphasis on the task-based methodology reported in Sánchez-Reyes' chapter, in Chapter 11 **Christine B. Feak** addresses an often disregarded view of materials development for LSP. Drawing on her extensive experience as a materials writer, Feak offers a minute account of the process of planning, developing, piloting, and eventually validating tailor-made materials for the learning of English in domain-specific fields. Essentially, she tackles the kind of decisions and considerations that lie beneath the design of LSP materials.

In the closing chapter of this volume, Chapter 12, **Stefanie Stadler** brings to the fore attested shortcomings in the educational context of foreign languages, particularly those concerning cultural communicative norms, a prerequisite to successful foreign language use. Stadler offers a panoramic view of foreign language education as well as future directions and language policy suggestions to suitably teach/train non-native English students in both linguistic and cultural competences. Extensively documented on theoretical work in linguistic pragmatics, this author advocates a reconciliation of cultures that may yield a more integrated view of languages and cultures for effective intercultural communication in the current global era.

In sum, this multi-perspective collection of essays provides new insights into the way foreign languages and, in particular, English as a lingua franca, eventually make cross-cultural communication a complex and multi-faceted topic for scholarly exploration. The edition seeks to target researchers in languages for specialised purposes, specialists in the fields of discourse analysis, sociolinguistics and scholars in the area of rhetoric and composition. It also targets at language professionals (professional translators, language editors and language advisors) in the fields of specialised academic/professional communication. LSP instructors

and foreign language teachers as well as teachers of languages for specific purposes will find informed guidelines and useful suggestions for their everyday classroom activities. We therefore hope that the volume brings to its readers insightful scholarly views on a wide range of applied linguistic and educational topics related to the LSP field.

Considered holistically, the contributions of this edited volume reflect in various different ways the effects, challenges and courses of action resulting from discourse variability in frames of social action, from the construction of professional identities across cultural contexts and, taking a broader perspective, from the evolving nature of foreign languages in tune with the signs of the times. As one of the contributors to this volume notes, on a worldwide level English is perceived as having the highest utility and exchange values (Coulmas 1991). Like English, other foreign languages adapt and evolve in response to the current transnational communicative demands. Indeed, nobody would deny that the utility and exchange value of foreign languages in the contemporary global scene open up many avenues for further theoretical and experimental research in LSP.

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PART I.

THE SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION ON SPECIALISED LANGUAGES

CHAPTER ONE

ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA OF BUSINESS: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract. This chapter opens with a review of what we know about the extent of the use of English in the international business world and then considers the strategies adopted to facilitate communication within transnational business corporations. These range from the formal adoption of English as a corporate language, a not unproblematic solution, to more informal ad hoc coping strategies. This leads into a discussion of the notion of English as lingua franca in business communication and the norms that might be adopted in teaching business English, if not those of L1 standard English. The chapter concludes with some suggestions for teaching English as a lingua franca in business contexts.

1. Introduction: English as an international language of business

A wealth of data attests to the fact that English has become a dominant lingua franca in the world of business playing a key role not just in the internal corporate communication of transnational corporations but in external communication with customers and shareholders. Crystal (2003), for example, claims that over 90% of European companies use English as a working language, while Erling and Walton (2007, 39) in a survey of 7 Berlin-based subsidiaries of multinational corporations found that English was widely used alongside German in a variety of functions and had become 'a necessary basic qualification' not just for top management as previously but also for lower levels of the corporate hierarchy. Kingsley (2009), meanwhile, reports how two international banks in Luxembourg, who have adopted English as corporate working language, now require English language skills in new recruits. In similar fashion Louhiala-

Salminen et al. (2005) observe that pan-Nordic corporations like PaperGiant and Skandibank,[1] increasingly use English as corporate language in place of what they call 'Scandinavian' despite a largely Swedish or Finnish workforce. From Malaysia Nair-Venugopal (2001, 47) describes how local varieties of English are commonly used in private sector businesses and thereby reminds us that the variety of English used in many international business contexts is often rather different from the standard British or US English modelled in business English instructional materials. Among the multinational companies (MNCs) known or reported to have adopted English as a corporate language are such well-known names as Olivetti, Siemens, Daimler-Chrysler, Avensis,[2] EADS, Kone, Deutsche Bank, Stora Enso, and Nissan-Renault.

It is important, however, to qualify this picture of a seemingly ubiquitous English if only because the complexity of the business world makes it necessary to distinguish between local, national and international companies, between company internal and external communication with their different addressees, and between formal written and the more informal spoken genres of business communication, all of which variables influence the degree to which English is used with whom.

Turning first to the issue of company size, it is quite apparent that in many companies of lesser size than the typical MNC English is still relatively little used. Vandermeeren's (1999, 280) study of written corporate communication, for example, reveals that French and German companies tend not to correspond in English, with German companies preferring to use German in communication with Dutch companies. A further example comes from Loos's (2007, 49) study of a Dutch company operating holiday centers in Germany, where a combination of Dutch and German was used on a pragmatic basis depending on the nationality of the customer, the customer's language preference and the plurilingual language skills of the relevant company employees. It is quite likely, then, that language choices in corporate contexts are in a substantial proportion of cases locally negotiated on a pragmatic basis with regard paid to the language skills of the particular interactants.

Moving on to the internal/external communication distinction, one can identify the company annual report as a key written genre addressed to an external audience, and one where the language used is a significant indicator of how the company wishes to position itself in the corporate world. Of particular interest in this connection is Jeanjean et al.'s (2008)

[1] These, of course, are pseudonyms.
[2] In a few of these MNCs English is a joint rather than sole corporate language.

large-scale survey of the use of English in external financial reporting. Surveying 3,994 firms in 27 non-Anglophone countries, they found that 50.8% of the sample issued an English language version of the annual report, and that company size, degree of internationalisation of sales, diffusion of ownership were among the factors predictive of English language publication—with ownership concentration, the size of the local capital market, language distance between English and the local language being negatively related. Here again, we find limits to the penetration of English with the size of the company and the degree of internationalisation being particularly predictive of greater use of the language.

Finally, even in MNCs that have adopted English as a corporate language one will not necessarily find that English is in widespread use at all levels of the corporate hierarchy and in all genres for the simple reason that MNCs—with their subsidiaries stretching across the world—are *de facto* multilingual organisations containing personnel with a variety of language skills, not all of whom are proficient in English. Thus, more often than not, English is confined to particular interactions, genres and individuals. This is illustrated in Kingsley's (2009) study of banks in Luxembourg, which shows that English is common in written reports and emails, while other languages—French, German, Swedish—are more frequently utilised alongside English in spoken communication (e.g. meetings and telephone calls) and especially in informal talk. Nickerson's (1999, 48) case study of the emails of six managers in the Dutch division of a MNC shows, meanwhile, that email communication outside the division tends to be in English as required by corporate policy but in Dutch within the division except where a non-Dutch speaker required access to information or where the purpose was to report officially. Here one can again see a differentiation between internal communication within one's division and external communication with other divisions of the company.

Nekvapil and Nekula's (2006, 320) study of a Siemens subsidiary in the Czech Republic also makes clear that, while English is the official corporate language, a variety of languages is used within the subsidiary: Czech among the blue-collar workers, German or English between white collar Czech workers and foreign employees, and between subsidiary and headquarters. A possible generalisation here is that English is more frequently used in formal communications, in writing, and at top management levels while other languages have greater use in informal spoken interactions and further down the corporate hierarchy. Further empirical studies would be needed to confirm this hypothesis, however.

2. Language management in companies

Multilingualism within MNCs, combined with the often limited plurilingual skills of employees, can give rise to what is perceived as a 'language barrier', remedies for which are often discussed in the business management literature (see e.g. Marschan-Piekkari et al. 1999a, 1999b, Charles and Marschan-Piekkari 2002, Feely and Harzing 2003, Fredriksson et al. 2006, Harzing and Feely 2007, Harzing et al. 2010). Of these, one of the more interesting is Harzing et al. (2010), who, drawing on a study of 8 German and Japanese corporate headquarters and subsidiaries, document as many as 12 language management strategies. These cover a spectrum from informal, ad hoc, individual coping strategies (e.g. switching away from telephone to email communication, code-switching, adopting a more comprehensible communicative style with plentiful repetition, summary and exemplification) to more structured solutions usually involving the selection of a single corporate language, typically English, to build a corporate identity and facilitate formal reporting. This, however, as several observers note (e.g. Charles and Marschan-Piekkari 2002, 17), is far from a complete solution since many employees lack the necessary English skills and not uncommonly have difficulties understanding each others' Englishes—native speakers' included. To address such problems many companies (e.g. Kone, Siemens) invest substantially in language training combining this with recruitment processes that emphasise language skills, particularly English.

A different type of language management strategy mentioned by Harzing et al. (2010) is the use of 'bridge individuals', that is individuals with the right level of language skills who become 'language nodes' through which communication between subsidiaries and with headquarters is channelled. A difficulty here, however, is that power tends to concentrate in the hands of such linking persons to a degree not warranted by the formal corporate status, and in extreme cases the outcome may be a 'shadow structure' that subverts the formal corporate hierarchy. Individuals with limited English skills may also start to feel marginalised and disempowered. Other strategies reported include the hire of external interpreters/translators, the main disadvantage of which, other than the expense, is their lack of specialised content knowledge, and/or the use of machine translation though this was reported by most of Harzing et al.'s (2010) respondents to be of extremely limited use.

To conclude, there seems to be no easy or complete solution to the 'language barrier' cited in the literature. The adoption of a corporate language, even when accompanied by language training, seems to rarely

be a fully effective solution and is thus often supplemented by micro-level practices in which individuals carefully modulate their communication so as to accomplish the task in hand.

3. Business English research and teaching

Despite the qualifications that we have had to make above, English remains the most dominant single language of business, and one largely used as a lingua franca between non-native users. Given this dominance, the economic importance of the business sector, and the number of individuals involved, it is hardly surprising that business English has emerged as one of the most important branches of English for Specific Purposes, well served by a flourishing market of textbooks, materials and innumerable courses. Writing in 1996, St. John argues that business English teaching is primarily materials rather than research-driven. But the picture has changed somewhat since then. Research has gathered pace and there is now a substantial empirical literature on business communication in English, very largely based, it has to be said, on discourse and genre approaches but also informed, though perhaps to a lesser degree, by pragmatic and intercultural frameworks. The written genres most commonly investigated are company emails (e.g. Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005, Kankaaranta 2006); business letters (e.g. Bhatia 2004, Zhu 2004, Gillaerts and Gotti 2005), and promotional genres such as advertisements (e.g. Gerritsen et al. 2007). Turning to speaking, where there has been a noticeable heightening of interest over recent years, the genres particularly well-investigated include business meetings (e.g. Poncini 2002, Harris and Bargiela-Chiappini 2003, Rogerson-Revell 2007, 2008) and business negotiations (e.g. Planken 2005). Meanwhile, there has also been a growth of interest in intercultural aspects of business communication though culture in this literature is sometimes rather narrowly and simplistically conceived in terms of reified national cultures that are then held to influence communication strategies and patterns.

Alongside this body of research on business communication, there is also increased reference to English as a lingua franca in business contexts (or BELF, Business English as a Lingua Franca: see e.g. Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005) but thus far there seems to have been relatively little impact of either on business English teaching materials, and relatively little further research on the lexico-grammatical or phonological features of BELF. However, because most use of English in business contexts is between second language users (e.g. Korean and German executives are very likely to speak English with each other), and because English is, if

anything, increasing its dominance in international business communication, a discussion of the full ramifications of the emergence of English as a pre-eminent lingua franca of business communication cannot be long be deferred. Accordingly, the remainder of this chapter focuses on this issue.

4. English as a Lingua Franca in business: conceptual and teaching implications

The fact that by any reckoning a large proportion of the use of English is between bilingual second language users rather than so-called 'native' and 'non-native' users has quite rightly led to a questioning of the dominance of L1 British or American standard norms in teaching. And, while the debate has thus far mainly focused on general communication, it is of equal, if not greater, relevance to business communication given the importance of non-Anglophone economies (e.g. China, Japan, Korea, Germany, France) in world business and the inherently multilingual/ multicultural character of contemporary transnational business corporations.

The principal arguments, as developed by leading English Lingua Franca (ELF) scholars such as Seidlhofer (2001, 2004, 2006) and Jenkins (2000, 2006a, 2006b, 2007), for giving recognition to a legitimate, deanglicised, lingua franca variety of English (ELF) substantially independent of L1 standard norms are that (a) English cannot qualify as a truly international language if native speaker varieties (i.e. standard British or American English) remain the exclusive norms of authoritative usage, and (b) that bilingual users deserve to be identified not as deficient users of a British or American standard English but as competent authoritative users of their own self-sufficient variety. Applied to the field of teaching business English, these ideas immediately prompt questions regarding what model of English business English teachers should teach, and whether they should adopt a much more relaxed stance as to what is 'correct' and allowable. This, in turn requires, consideration of further issues, central among which is whether ELF—or BELF—is an emerging variety of English (a code) or a particular use or function of English, or both.

4.1. The status of ELF—or BELF—as a variety

It is widely recognised, of course, that there are many varieties of English —hence the term 'new Englishes', or 'outer circle Englishes' following Kachru's (1985) distinction between inner, outer and expanding circles of English. There are, however, significant differences between the post-

colonial, outer circle Englishes (e.g. Malaysian English) and ELF. For example, whereas the new Englishes mentioned above are the products of colonisation and have emerged in former British colonies, ELF is a more recent formation of globalisation and not confined to any particular territory. Again, while the new post-colonial Englishes are spoken by relatively stable, national communities of users, this is less clearly true of ELF whose users are highly heterogeneous in national background, L1, purpose and proficiency. Moreover, unlike the new Englishes, ELF does not appear to elicit strong emotional attachments: it is, as House (2006, 88) remarks, "a language for communication rather than identification". On the structural plane, meanwhile, ELF does not exhibit the stability and regularity of outer circle Englishes. For example, in a study comprising 21 ELF speakers Breiteneder (2005) found that in no less than 80% of instances the 3rd person singular present tense 's' morpheme was supplied in conformity with standard British English. Meierkord (2004, 128-9) remarks, meanwhile, that ELF is "a syntactically heterogeneous form of English" and that "it may well be that ELF never achieves a stable or even standardised form".

Thus, if we take a) subjective identification and b) a degree of structural consistency and stability as criteria for identifying a new variety, it may be too early to assert the existence of an independent, discrete, stable, systematic ELF code. But caution is needed here. None of the above means that an ELF variety will not emerge in the future. Most varieties start from small variations and it may be that we are still in the early stages of the formation of a variety. Relevant here also is the fact that ELF research, drawing on the VOICE corpus,[3] has already identified a number of recurring lexico-grammatical commonalities in ELF discourse, features that pose no difficulties in communication even while ungrammatical in standard English. These would include:

- variable use of third person present tense 's' morpheme

e.g. *He work in Siemens*

- levelling of distinction between 'who' and 'which'

e.g. *The manager which resigned....*

[3] VOICE stands for the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English.

- use of invariant question tags

e.g. *He knows they haven't paid yet, isnt'it?*

- levelling of distinction between mass and count nouns

e.g. *They ordered new furnitures*

- divergent use of prepositions

e.g. *They discussed about the matter ….*

Similar progress has been made in the pronunciation domain, where Jenkins (2000) has identified what she calls the Lingua Franca Core (LFC), a set of features which diverge from British pronunciation models yet have been found empirically to be internationally intelligible. Excluded from the core because they are unnecessary for international intelligibility are such traditionally taught features as:

- the (British) dental fricatives /θ / and /ð/
- weak forms (i.e. 'the use of schwa instead of full vowel sounds in, say, '*to*', '*from*', '*was*')
- stress-timed rhythm

Thus, if there is as yet no delimited ELF variety, there is at least a measure of agreement regarding a cluster of features commonly found in ELF discourse which present no difficulties in communication even though divergent from L1 standard Englishes. A potential pedagogical implication is that these features should at least not be proscribed and perhaps even taught as allowable variants in contexts of ELF interaction. But here there arises the further question as to whether recurring features considered typical of ELF discourse should be treated as errors or variants.

4.2. Features of ELF usage: errors or variants?

Utterances such as the following are not uncommon in ELF interactions in the business world:

- *and if I may give you **an advice,** I suggest that you should be much more concerned with the solving of the real problems of the European community….*

- *'They **didn't interest in** my work.*

- ***I am working*** *here since 1989.*

But are these, or other similar, utterances to be treated pedagogically as erroneous? Measured against British standard English, they are certainly deviant and might be taken to signal incomplete acquisition, in which case they could be regarded as erroneous. Matters are not so simple, however, for precisely at stake is whether there is, or should be, any orientation to British or American standard English in ELF interactions, interactions where speakers are beginning to remake English according to their own purposes and audiences independent of native speaker overview/control. We also need to reconsider the very notion of correctness and its domain of application, and ask what we mean in saying an utterance is correct or incorrect.

Here the notion of standardness is crucial, for correctness is conventionally defined by reference to standard English. But this itself is as much an ideological as an empirical concept, with various commentators such as Crowley (2003) disputing the existence of a standard spoken English given the well-known and significant differences between the lexico-grammar of spoken and written English (see e.g. McCarthy and Carter 2002, 70). There is, by contrast, much greater agreement regarding the less variable written language, where the notion of standardness, particularly of morpho-syntax, has greater purchase and clarity. From this it follows that is much easier to determine what is non-standard, and hence possibly erroneous, in relation to written than to spoken English.

A second aspect of correctness is that it is a notion of relevance and applicability principally in formal language teaching contexts where the focus is on form. Outside these contexts in everyday situations, or indeed in business communication, what matters is intelligibility, clarity, getting the task in hand accomplished rather than formal correctness. Finally, the conventional SLA concept of error, that which is incorrect, may be appropriate applied to the speech of individuals, speech that is punctuated by individual idiosyncrasies, but is problematic applied to features that are frequent and widely distributed in a language community.

Bearing all these considerations in mind, we would have to say that whether the utterances cited above are erroneous or not is substantially a matter of context. In particular, it depends on:

a) whether we are dealing with speech or writing. Much greater latitude is accorded to spoken utterances.
b) whether the grammatical features in question (e.g. use of the present progressive in place of present perfect) are frequent and

widespread in ELF interactions. This, of course, is an empirical question.

c) whether the relevant interaction is taking place in a ELF context between second language users or is located, say, in Manchester and is taking place between a native speaker and second language user. In the former case the norms of L1 standard English can more comfortably be regarded as in suspension.
d) whether the features in question are acceptable to ELF expert users.

One of the difficulties with this last criterion is that—given that 'not anything goes' in ELF (Jenkins 2006b)—we are not yet sure what is acceptable in ELF terms and what is not. Nor do we have the means as yet to distinguish reliably between the expert and the non-expert ELF user without implicitly or explicitly having recourse to native L1 standards. Further empirical investigation may help here but at present the situation remains somewhat ambiguous: the norms of L1 standard English no longer seem especially relevant, especially in the case of the spoken language but on the other hand alternative ELF norms have yet to stabilise and become widely accepted.

Such a conclusion unfortunately is of limited practical use to the hard pressed teacher who has to make immediate judgements on acceptability. Thus, returning to the example utterances above I would be inclined in a classroom context to let them pass as acceptable ELF variants but to comment that they would probably not be acceptable in writing or in sociolinguistic contexts where L1 standard norms were in focus.

4.3. ELF and codification

One of the ways in which it might be possible to establish what is or is not allowable in ELF would be to codify a set of ELF norms through the provision of authoritative descriptions and guides. This has potential for legitimising and making feasible the teaching of an alternative variety, distinct from the L1 standard form of the language, thus affording bilingual second language users the opportunity to participate in international business and scientific communication on a more equal basis.

There are, however, significant risks and disadvantages. The effect of codification is to 'fix' or stabilise a variety, providing for uniformity. But ELF is still an emergent, inchoate variety, and to codify prematurely might be to remove the fluidity, the openness as communicative practice that is one of its more attractive features. It might short-circuit longer term processes of sedimentation and stabilisation and put in place an artificial

construct that does not engage the loyalty of users. Codification of itself does not confer prestige nor win widespread acceptance. The history of linguistics/language planning is replete with standardisations and codifications that have withered through failing to gain the acceptance of those they are designed to serve. To flourish a newly codified variety needs the support of political authority and the relevant community of language users but, as attitudinal data suggest (see Timmis 2002; Jenkins 2007), this remains uncertain in the case of ELF. Moreover, intra-language hierarchies are a persistent feature of language ideology, and it might be that, far from conferring legitimacy, codification would encourage unfavourable comparisons to be made between ELF and the L1 standard form, with ELF regarded, misleadingly, as an inferior, 'reduced' variety. A final risk (see Elder and Davies 2006) is that in codifying an ELF variety one may be constructing an alternative set of norms, but ones with the same potential to exclude, even stigmatise, non-standard ELF users in ways not very dissimilar to how L1 standard English has at times served to exclude and stigmatise the non-standard speaker.

Codification may in the end be necessary if ELF is to be taught formally as a code in addition to functioning as a *de facto* form of communicative practice, as languaging. But, as we have argued, this does not seem likely in the foreseeable future and should in any case be approached circumspectly with due regard to the potential drawbacks. This does not mean, however, that we can afford to set aside the whole notion of ELF as impractical, unproven and premature. The sociolinguistic reality of ELF, the frequency with which bilingual second languages users utilise English as an international lingua franca is such that it compels attention to the possible teaching implications, and it is to this that we turn in conclusion.

5. Conclusion: Pedagogic implications for BELF

The following points are offered not as prescriptions but as suggestions as to how one might proceed pedagogically to take account of the very prevalent use of English as a lingua franca in business contexts.

First, in teaching BELF, we could recognise that different linguistic norms apply in different sociolinguistic contexts and in different modalities of use. Thus, in formal writing, where there is comparatively little variation, we could accept the applicability of the norms of L1 standard English, as described, for example, in Huddleston and Pullum's (2002) grammar. Speaking, however, is very different. In informal speech, standardisation is less powerful, less viable, and what counts most is

intelligibility to the relevant interlocutors (usually second language ELF users) rather than formal correctness. Thus, such features as the omission of third person singular, present tense 's' or the pluralisation of mass nouns (e.g. '*advices'*) could be treated as recurrent, unremarkable variants rather than as errors.

For most BELF interactions it no longer seems useful or appropriate to seek to instill L1 British or American pronunciation norms. More sociolinguistically sensitive, as well as pedagogically manageable, would be to aim at international intelligibility using Jenkins's 2000 LFC (Lingua Franca Core) as a starting point for the design of a pronunciation syllabus.

In teaching business English we cannot entirely neglect formal accuracy, which requires some attention to lexico-grammar. However, assuming that most business English learners have already developed a basic lexico-grammatical competence from their previous studies, it may be preferable to give more attention to effective communication strategies, intercultural competence, genre knowledge and to language skills—e.g. listening. Teaching BELF may thus involve some reordering of traditional teaching priorities with greater attention falling on effective communication and somewhat less on lexico-grammatical conformity and correctness.

As far as listening is concerned, there is an obvious case for providing exposure to a variety of L2 accents that are likely to be more frequently encountered than British or American ones. Similarly, in business English materials it would be appropriate to incorporate many more examples of successful interaction between bilingual second language users in international lingua franca contexts (see also Feak's chapter this volume). Representations of native speakers interacting with the second language speakers should not, of course, be excluded, but their frequency reduced in line with the sociolinguistic realities of ELF.

In teaching spoken communication skills—or skills of interaction—one would again advise a greater emphasis on skills of accommodation and flexibility and rather less attention to form. There are implications here, for both ELF second language users and native speakers. The latter, for example, could be encouraged to speak with fewer colloquialisms and to avoid what Seidlhofer (2001) has referred to as 'unilateral idiomaticity' in production, that is, the use of idioms that are culture specific or peculiar to the UK or USA. The idiomaticity of the following, for example, could very well present comprehension difficulties in an international business meeting:

"you may be creating a rod for the actuaries' backs…"

"we'll have a second bite at the cherry..."

Meanwhile, both native and second language users would be well advised—as part of developing skills of accommodation—to listen carefully and 'tune in' gradually to speakers with different English accents. To a degree, of course, this may already be happening, for research (see e.g. Poncini 2002, Rogerson-Revell 2008) suggests that international business meetings generally tend to be orderly and effective with participants displaying tolerance for each other's linguistic idiosyncrasies. Nonetheless, there is no harm in, and potentially much to be gained from, classroom practice in 'tuning in' to unfamiliar accents.

Teacher education for business English may also need to change in response to the sociolinguistics of English as a lingua franca. In particular, in drawing attention to the sociolinguistic complexities of the use of English worldwide, teacher educators might find it useful to raise awareness that different norms may apply in different situations and that conformity to the norms of L1 standard English may not always be appropriate for all business English learners.

That said, teaching ELF or BELF is not, as Seidlhofer (2006) has remarked, a matter of imposing a new set of ELF norms. Rather, once adequately informed, learners can be left to decide for themselves whether they wish, or need, to be taught a variety that conforms to traditional L1 standard norms or alternatively forms and ways of communicating in ELF contexts, or possibly both. The merit of EFL or BELF as a notion is that it does not restrict. Instead it offers a new window on variation within English in a globalising world, variation that is especially relevant in an international business context, and it suggests, but does not command, new avenues for pedagogic innovation.

A final point concerns research. As previously remarked, research in business discourse has expanded considerably in recent years though the impact on teaching materials is as yet somewhat uncertain. A good proportion of this research has focused on particular business genres (e.g. letters, emails, company reports, meetings, negotiations) and their discursive features. This leaves room for further complementary research, perhaps using corpus data, on the more formal lexico-grammatical features of spoken interaction in business English contexts, research that would certainly enrich our understanding of BELF.

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