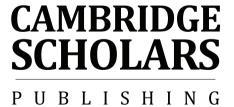# Latest Trends in ELF Research

Latest Trends in ELF Research

Edited by

Alasdair Archibald, Alessia Cogo and Jennifer Jenkins

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INTRODUCTION

ALESSIA COGO, ALASDAIR ARCHIBALD AND JENNIFER JENKINS

Introduction

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) has been a thriving field of research especially for the last twenty years, which have seen, apart from a considerable amount of publications in the subject, the establishment of a number of small and larger scale ELF corpora, among which ACE (the Asian Corpus of English), ELFA (English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings) and VOICE (Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English). In addition to the empirical research and related publications, the most recent years have seen the creation of a dedicated journal (the *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca* published by De Gruyter Mouton), the foundation of an ELF book series with De Gruyter Mouton, and the release of many projects which are currently under way, such as doctoral dissertations in ELF, or about to take shape, such as an international research network on ELF (under the auspices of AILA). And finally, but certainly not less importantly, the field has seen the foundation of an ELF conference series, which, started in 2008, has now reached its fourth meeting and is scheduled to continue yearly.

This book is borne out of one of these international gatherings, that is the Second International ELF conference held in Southampton (UK) in 2009. The conference was attended by about 180 academics who contributed to debates and critically engaged in discussions on a variety of strands in the general field of ELF, subjecting their findings from different contexts to their own analysis and, perhaps most importantly, to the critical lens of the other participants. The fifteen papers included in this volume have been carefully selected among the ones presented at the conference and as representative of the main areas of latest ELF development. They are divided into two parts: the first includes empirical studies of ELF communication, which range from more conceptual papers to more empirical based investigations. The second part addresses issues related to ELT pedagogy and attitudes.

The latest trends in ELF: empirical discourse studies

Research in ELF has been abundant and covered various aspects of the field, especially those related to the main linguistic levels, i.e. pronunciation, lexis, lexicogrammar and pragmatics (see survey articles about ELF research, such as Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey 2011; Seidlhofer 2004; Seidlhofer, Breiteneder & Pitzl 2006). Scholars that place themselves within an ELF research field and do research on these levels, very importantly, base their findings on empirical investigations of predominantly naturally-occurring communication, rather than constructed tasks or elicited talk. All the papers in this collection are based on empirical investigations, which address specific areas of ELF research.

One area of key relevance is the placement of ELF research within a theoretical framework. Ehrenreich discusses the application of a language contact perspective to the study of ELF and, more precisely, of Schneider's (2007) Dynamic Model of language contact to the development of ELF in business communication. She suggests that this approach gives a better framework for understanding the ways in which English is used alongside other languages because it places particular emphasis on speakers' repertoires and their creativity.

When people come together from diverse linguacultural backgrounds there is an expectation that there may be difficulties in communicating. In fact, most empirical studies so far have shown that ELF communication is less problematic than expected (Kaur 2009; Mauranen 2006; Pitzl 2005) as speakers cooperate and use various strategies that ensure communicative success (Cogo 2009; 2010). Studying communication in ELF contexts, therefore, means paying particular attention to processes of accommodation in order to highlight the extent and manner in which ELF interlocutors converge towards each other's speech patterns.

Accommodation is another aspect of key importance in social interactions generally, and particularly in ELF settings. ELF communication has been described as content-oriented and issues of correctness according to NS standards are considered secondary to accommodation processes. Originally, accommodation theory was based on the work of Giles (cf Giles 1973) concerning accent mobility, whereby speakers adapt their linguistic strategies to either gain approval or to show distinctiveness in interactions with their interlocutors. Based on these motivations speakers use strategies of either convergence or divergence which would respectively increase or decrease distance with the interlocutors. Although the beginnings of accommodation theory remain strictly linked to the area of social psychology, accommodation as a whole is a concept encompassing

communication at large (and this is also how it is conceived in some of the contributions in this book). In this extended understanding of accommodation, the concept incorporates pragmatic strategies that show willingness to accept difference and adapt to the interlocutors' linguacultural practices. Accommodation theory, therefore, applies to all levels of linguistic analysis (i.e. lexis, grammar, phonology and pragmatics), and the whole repertoire within a specific community, including multilingual repertoires.

In the interest of accommodation processes and as part of the field of pragmatics more generally, research focused on the strategies ELF speakers use during instances of miscommunication, to solve possible non-understandings and also avoid them from taking place. Negotiation strategies of various kinds have been found to be used in ELF communication, among which signalling strategies in general (cf. Cogo 2010; Pitzl 2005), repetition (Cogo 2009; Kaur 2009; Lichtkoppler 2007) paraphrasing/rephrasing (Kaur 2009; Mauranen 2006), and metadiscourse (Mauranen 2010; Penz *this volume*).

The findings evidence the supportive and cooperative nature of interactions in ELF where meaning negotiation takes place at different levels. Speakers in ELF pay more attention to content than form, but the latter is addressed especially for what concerns pronunciation, and less so grammar and lexis, when there appears to be a problem with understanding. Kaur (*this volume*) shows that speakers pay attention to both form and meaning in the interest of successful communication. Kalocsai (*this volume*) also explores the co-operative and supportive practices that speakers adopt to foster interpersonal involvement. Among those, like Kaur, Kalocsai singles out utterance completions and code-switching as some of the most salient strategies to show involvement and build rapport. Wolfartsberger (*this volume*) addresses the issue of simultaneous speech in ELF when used not only for collaborative but also for competitive functions. ELF is usually generalised as a collaborative and consensus-oriented medium of communication, with studies emphasising the change of topic or avoidance of face-threatening issues. The author points out that the competitive aspect of simultaneous speech in ELF is very interesting and worth of investigation.

Following the recent shift of emphasis in ELF research from product to process, scholars working in ELF pronunciation have begun prioritising accommodation over pronunciation features in their conceptual frameworks (Jenkins 2000). This is evident in Pickering and Litzenberg's paper (*this volume*) who find that some, but not all, aspects of intonation in ELF are common to intonation in NS interaction, but one key function of NS intonation is not exploited in ELF, that is the 'socially integrative' use of

tone choice. In other words, they point out that in social, more identity related contexts, NS intonation does not provide an appropriate resource of ELF communication.

Another area of particular interest and development in ELF research concerns aspects of identity. It has been suggested that ELF is somehow an impoverished language, which is culturally neutral and not appropriated by its speakers to express identity. Some ELF empirical work has already contributed to exploring the position of culture and identity in ELF and important findings have shown that ELF cannot be seen as a culturally reduced or identity neutral medium of communication (see, for instance, Cogo 2010; Jenkins 2007; Pitzl 2009; Pölzl and Seidlhofer 2006). Various papers in this book also support a view of ELF as part of speakers' and users' identities and cultural backgrounds (see especially Baker; Hülmbauer; Kalocsai). Baker (*this volume*) suggests that culture and identity are relevant categories in characterising ELF communication. His study demonstrates that his informants use English to construct and represent local, national and global cultural contexts and that ELF also appears to form an important source of individual identification and as such constitutes an integral part of many of the participants' identities. Evison and White (*this volume*) show how ELF is used creatively and flexibly in the media, also manipulated and commercialised for specific purposes, among which that of creating a celebrity identity.

The growing body of empirical ELF research shows just how important it is to focus not only on features but on accommodation processes and how these emphasise and put to the fore aspects of identity. In fact, accommodation processes play a key role in creating a common repertoire of dynamic resources in ELF, as users continually engage in a dynamic co-construction of resources by adding to them and modifying them according to the communicative situations and different ELF settings. While accommodative moves have proven to be crucial in ELF contexts and largely used by competent speakers, the role played by accommodation is still largely underestimated in discussions of ELT practices (Dewey *this volume*). And it is to ELT pedagogy and teachers' attitudes to ELF that we now turn.

The latest trends in ELF: pedagogy and attitudes

Findings concerning ELF empirical research are particularly important for ELF users' understanding and acceptance of their communication, and implications for their own communicative practices. Awareness of ELF findings is also especially relevant for taking decision in people's everyday

and working lives and in language teaching contexts. In ELT especially, there is still considerable disparity between the way in which teachers perceive language and communication and the way in which language is actually put to use in ELF interactions. For one, the concept of English in teacher education, and in particular the focus on structure rather than on successful communication, is in need of substantial rethinking (Cogo and Dewey *in press*; Dewey *this volume*; Mimatsu *this volume*, Seidlhofer 2011).

In fact, studies of attitudes towards ELF have shown how complex this area of research is and how it interplays with overt beliefs about language, the context in which it is used and the identity of its speakers (cf. Jenkins 2007). They highlight how attitudes are strictly linked to perceptions of social differentiation and national identity. For instance, Sherman and Sieglová (*this volume*) show that while native/ standard English is a representation of educational and economic success for the Czech students, ELF, on the other hand, is associated with vocational, non-academic education.

Studies in this volume show the importance of teachers' awareness and understanding of both the theoretical discussion and the empirical findings in ELF research. Pedrazzini and Nava point to the usefulness of transcripts of ELF naturally occurring communication for teacher training and raising awareness of ELF. Sifakis and Fay suggest that teachers in Greece should engage with and enrich their teaching practices through the adoption of an ELF orientation. Horner addresses the issue of ELF writing and writing pedagogy. He argues that the emphasis on strategies of accommodation and meaning negotiation found in ELF discourse should also be applied to writing. He calls for a pedagogy that puts negotiation of meaning and an exploratory approach at the centre of writing ELF.

Finally, since this is a book about ELF, a field that investigates and celebrates the use of English for communication in a global context, it would be hypocritical of us to insist that contributors adhere to a narrow local version of English. The scope of this study is global and the contributions are from scholars around the world. We, in line with editors of similar collections (e.g. Carli & Ammon 2007, Mauranen & Ranta 2009, Murata & Jenkins 2009), have therefore edited the contributions on the basis of their international communicative effectiveness and not according to their adherence to native English grammatical norms.

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PART I:

LATEST TRENDS IN ELF DISCOURSE

THE DYNAMICS OF ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS: A LANGUAGE CONTACT PERSPECTIVE

SUSANNE EHRENREICH

The global village speaks English.[1] However, not every villager speaks the same English; different Englishes are spoken in the various corners of the village, among highly diverse constellations of speakers, and with varying degrees of frequency. The variability in terms of constellations and frequency is, of course, due to the fact that, for most speakers, English is just one of the languages in their overall linguistic repertoires, a situation which had been predicted by Graddol as early as ten years ago: "in future [English] will be a language used mainly in multilingual contexts as a second language and for communication between non-native speakers" (Graddol 1999, 57). The task of identifying and describing the different Englishes spoken world-wide is therefore constantly becoming more challenging, and is keeping linguists busy. More precisely, any context-sensitive analysis of language use in the global village, in fact, requires us to address, in a slightly adapted form, Fishman's celebrated question: "Who speaks what language(s), and in the case of English, which English, to whom and when?" (cf. Fishman 1965).

I have chosen the metaphor of the English-speaking global village because of its emphasis on unity in the face of diversity. This emphasis on a unifying association corresponds nicely with the idea of a comprehensive framework for the study of English(es), which I would like to explore in this paper. It is contact linguistics that could, in my opinion, help forge productive links between English as a lingua franca (ELF) research and related fields within English Studies, as well as within the field of linguistics in general.

In the following, I will discuss the potential links that could be created for ELF within English Studies by adopting a language contact perspective and also present a draft model of English-medium communication in the global village. Then I will provide a brief overview of contact linguistics as a field highlighting its points of contact with ELF research. In the second part of the paper, the applicability of the language contact framework

to my own my research into ELF in two Germany-based multinational companies will be examined. Finally, I would like to conclude by discussing a tentative analysis of the dynamics of ELF use in the domain of international business, using Schneider's model of the evolution of Postcolonial English (Schneider 2007).

Building links for English as a lingua franca within the discipline

Adopting a language contact perspective for the study of English(es)

Considerable progress has been made in ELF research in only a few years, both with respect to empirical investigations and with respect to the clarification of conceptual issues. More than ten years ago, Seidlhofer paved the way for empirical research activity into ELF with her seminal paper (Seidlhofer 2001), in which she argued cogently for a conceptual distinction between English as a lingua franca (ELF) and English as a native language (ENL). ELF merited being described "in its own right". At the time, it was clearly necessary to liberate ELF from the tight grip of ELT with its rigid ENL-based norm orientation, and to stake out an independent position for ELF in the field of English Studies, which had practically ignored it as just a deviant form of English. Several ELF researchers have since made a point of emphasizing the independence of ELF from existing approaches to the study of the English language, something that is not at all unusual for a newly emerging field of academic inquiry. The exceptional nature of ELF as *sui generis* has thus frequently been emphasised. Quite naturally, many of its features are indeed unprecedented in many ways, such as, for example, the pace at which E(LF) as *the* international contact language has been spreading throughout the world, the number of its speakers, and the quality of the "speech communities" they form. Nevertheless, a crucial and potentially very instructive question to ask is whether the communicative processes at work and the resulting linguistic products are, in fact, as entirely novel as is sometimes assumed. In particular, the potential parallels with the developmental processes of World Englishes (or Postcolonial Englishes) have been identified as worth exploring, first and foremost by Jenkins (2007, 17) and Seidlhofer (2009) (see also Breiteneder 2009). And suggestions of this kind could be expanded even further.

Drawing on my own research history in ELF (see part 2) and the insights gained from my search for an adequate theoretical "tool kit" to

analyze my set of ethnographic data, I would like to propose contact linguistics as a framework for the study and analysis of ELF. The field of contact linguistics, or language contact and change, looks at how two or more languages, via their speakers, influence each other (e.g. Hickey 2010, Thomason 2001, Winford 2003). It is a promising candidate for offering a comprehensive theory that would accommodate the various ways in which English is used, more often than not alongside other languages, in the global village. Such a theoretical framework could, I believe, facilitate a conceptually more refined assessment of the similarities and the differences among the various uses of English in the world and their concomitant structural manifestations.

In English Studies, contact linguistics has been applied most productively to the study of Postcolonial Englishes (e.g. Schneider 2007). Only relatively recently has its importance been reassessed with respect to the (contact) history of British English (Hickey 2010, 4), and it also supplies a useful instrument for analysing the multilingual make-up characteristic of contemporary society in many countries in which English is traditionally spoken as a native language (e.g. Clyne 2003). Finally, not only would contact linguistics provide an overarching roof, under which ELF could develop a place for itself in English Studies alongside its much older native and postcolonial siblings, more importantly, contact linguistics, with its conceptual tools, as well as its overall perception of language, is particularly apt for the analysis of English as an international contact language because it acknowledges language contact effects as "testaments to the creativity of humans faced with the need to break down language barriers and create a common medium of communication" (Winford 2003, 1f.).

Some of these links have been discussed in previous ELF research. Although there is a general awareness in the ELF literature of its status as a contact language, empirical and conceptual explorations of how its "by nature" multilingual and multicultural environment shapes patterns of ELF interaction are nevertheless still in their initial phase. Promising beginnings can be found, for example, in studies on code-switching (Cogo 2009; Klimpfinger 2009), on morphology (Breiteneder 2009), on metaphorical creativity (Pitzl 2009), on the language-and-culture link in ELF (e.g. Pölzl & Seidlhofer 2006), and in statements emphasizing the potential facilitative communicative effects of multilingualism, such as cross-linguistic conceptual transfer (Hülmbauer 2007, see also Hülmbauer 2009, 326f.; Canagarajah 2007, 925). Despite these notable beginnings, Klimpfinger's observation is still an accurate reflection of the current situation: "So far little has been

said about the use and role of other languages in ELF." (Klimpfinger 2009, 348).

ELF, and the many factors, unprecedented in number and scale, which are shaping it, is, of course, a phenomenon "in its own right" and deserves to be described as such. Yet, if in the process of claiming its uniqueness and independence from its older siblings, the insights gained in ENL and Postcolonial English research were to be neglected, this would mean throwing the baby out with the bathwater. It is my conviction that, under the auspices of language contact theory, ELF research and analysis could benefit immensely from drawing, wisely, on the impressive knowledge bases accumulated in English Studies, especially those involving relevant aspects of development, use and system, including issues of variability and stability, of the two groups of Englishes, the one as spoken in the countries of the Inner Circle, and the other, Postcolonial Englishes.

In the following I would like to explore how, in a general language contact perspective, English-medium communication in the global village could be depicted in a model (see figure 1 "The global village speaks English"). Some of the well-known concepts put forward by Kachru (1985) and McArthur (1998) will be adopted, but the main focus is on the various contact settings.

In this model, speakers are classified primarily according to their linguistic repertoires; the Englishes they speak are subdivided into English as a native language (ENL), English as a second language (ESL, or nativized English, Postcolonial English, etc.), and, adopting a term suggested by Fishman (1977), English as an additional language (EAL). Speaker origin in geographical terms is a secondary concept, as major allowances have to be made for migration and global mobility. Contact setting is the key category, with the remaining categories resulting from this key category. The two types of language models refer to, on the one hand, norm-oriented language use and, on the other hand, language use that is geared towards effective international communication tolerant of contact effects (cf. Oksaar 2003, 160f.).

Such a model, in which English is positioned in the speaker's overall linguistic repertoire along with its predominant functional use, would be able to account for several aspects which have so far not been given enough prominence. It makes visible the fact that in most speakers' repertoires, English is just one of several communicative resources, and it also accounts for the different types of lingua-cultural contact settings in which English is used. These range from virtually no language contact for some ENL speakers (although, of course, inter-variety contact in terms of regional and social differences is likely in these settings, as is contact with

Speaker origin	Linguistic repertoire	English-medium contact setting	involving:	Speech community	Which English?	Model
Inner Circle (also Outer Circle, expatriates)	English as a native language (ENL) + additional language(s)	ENL intranational	ENL speakers (ENL variety contact, ESL contact)	national	ENL	normative model
		ENL international	ENL speakers (different national varieties, e.g. AmE, BrE)	international	ENL	competition btw normative models?
		E as an international contact language	ESL speakers, EAL speakers	international	ELF	rational model
Outer Circle (also speakers in Inner Circle)	First language(s) + English as a second language (ESL) + additional language(s)	ESL intranational (often across different L1s; also Pidgins and Creoles)	ESL speakers	national	ESL	normative model
		E as an international contact language	ENL speakers, ESL speakers, EAL speakers	international	**ELF**	rational model
Expanding Circle (e.g. Germany, China)	First language(s) + E as an additional language (EAL) + additional language(s)	(for minority of speakers) EFL (E as a foreign language)	ENL speakers	international	ENL	normative model
		(for majority of speakers) **E as an international contact language**	ENL speakers (1), ESL speakers, EAL speakers	international	**ELF**	rational model

(1) ENL (Inner Circle) speaker presence/dominance exerting a normative influence on other speakers (cf. Multinationals with US Headquarters)

Figure 1: The global village speaks English

ESL speakers residing in the respective countries) to intranational contact settings for ESL speakers in Outer Circle countries in which English is used as a contact language for bridging different first languages. For some speakers originating from Expanding Circle countries, English may be used in contact settings involving ENL speakers, with the aim of approximating ENL norms and blending in culturally. However, this group probably constitutes only a minority today (cf. Seidlhofer 2001, 2007). The model is particularly useful in that it shows how, in international settings involving a mix of ENL, ESL and EAL speakers,[2] the contact language for everybody involved is ELF, regardless of the status and place of English in the individual speakers' linguistic repertoires. The aim is effective communication across first languages, building to a large extent on processes of negotiation and accommodation. ENL discourse rules and pragmatics are practically irrelevant, ENL norms of correctness play a subordinate role.

To anticipate some of my findings, the following can be said about communicative behaviours in and attitudes towards English as an international contact language (i.e. ELF). In groups consisting of EAL speakers only, ELF is used and accepted relatively readily, at least in some domains. Empirical evidence suggests, however, that even if ELF, i.e. a rational language model, has long been embraced by most interactants, ENL speaker presence (and even more distinctively in the face of their numerical dominance) is felt to exert a push towards ENL normative language use (indicated by the arrow in figure 1). Consequently, the third option shown in the figure for ENL speakers (in grey letters), i.e. adapting to the communicative requirements of international contact settings, so far remains, to a great degree, more a theoretical projection than a reality.[3]

The field of contact linguistics

As indicated above in the quote by Winford, what is central in contact linguistics is the linguistic creativity people develop when confronted with the challenge of overcoming communicative barriers produced by the fact that they speak different languages. E(LF) is just such a creative device. A closer look at the field may thus be helpful.[4] The following overview will show that contact linguistic theory does in fact offer the tools as well as the overall framework necessary for analyzing the various ways in which E(LF) is employed by its multilingual speakers in diverse international contact settings, and for examining the ways in which individual parameters concerning settings, speakers and types of communication leave their imprints on the English language.

In more general terms, contact linguistics seeks to study in detail, on the one hand, the contexts in which languages (via their speakers) interact and, on the other hand, the linguistic outcomes that are shaped by the interaction of language-internal and language-external factors. These outcomes can range from instances of occasional linguistic mixing, such as borrowing or code-switching, via adaptation and restructuring on different linguistic levels, to, in extreme cases, the creation of new languages.

Language-internal, i.e. linguistic factors, that need to be considered include the typological (dis-)similarity of the languages in contact, possible linguistic constraints and more general strategies such as simplification strategies. A close description of the socio-cultural contexts in which language contact occurs needs to take account of, inter alia, the following language-external, i.e. socio-cultural and psychological factors: the nature of the relationship between the groups in contact in terms of length and intensity of contact, as well as power and prestige relations, the groups' demographics, the patterns and functions of their interactions and, finally, their attitudes towards the languages involved and their motivations to use one or the other. A basic tenet put forward by one of the founding fathers of modern contact linguistics,[5] Uriel Weinreich, concerned the pivotal role extra-linguistic factors played in determining the linguistic outcome of contact-induced change (Weinreich 1953, 3). In the context of structuralism, the all-pervasive linguistic school at the time, this was quite a revolutionary proposition — probably not less revolutionary than some of the claims ELF research is making today.

In language contact theory, the following types of "contact situations" are distinguished, each with its characteristic linguistic manifestations. In situations of "language maintenance" some borrowing, mostly lexical, occurs (e.g. *chalet*, *garage*). In stable multilingual societies code-switching is a frequent phenomenon, and in diglossic constellations, code choice is often habitually tied to specific domains. Replacing one language by another, either gradually or in a situation of abrupt change, is called "language shift". Language shift can be both a social or an individual phenomenon. One of its principal linguistic manifestations is restructuring, triggered by the source language and affecting the recipient language, predominantly on the levels of phonology and morphosyntax. A well-known example is the development, i.e. indigenization or nativization, of Postcolonial Englishes, which has been caused by, in traditional terminology, substratum influence. The third type of contact situation, "language mixing", involves cases of extreme restructuring resulting in the creation of new, mixed languages.

Quite clearly, and in many ways parallel to Postcolonial English, ELF falls under the rubric of language shift. As a result of globalization and of social macroacquisition of English (Brutt-Griffler 1998), in many Expanding Circle countries, code choice in several domains has been shifting, at least partially, away from people's first languages to English (cf. House 2003, 561). There is an acute awareness in the field of ELF that this shift has not left the language unaffected. However, research still has a long way to go before the full picture can be put together in terms of what exactly is happening linguistically. Interestingly, the focus on domains as significant centres of language contact activity, complementing the concept of geographical proximity, is fully in line with what has been observed as a recent trend in contemporary sociolinguistics, "in which emphasis on geographic boundary areas has shifted and expanded to include [the] study of domains of social contact as productive foci for the study of language contact." (McGroarty 2003, viii).

While we are not yet in a position to pin down the overall linguistic outcome of ELF contact in terms of degrees of convergence or divergence, in-depth analyses of individual context settings are possible with the help of the set of factors identified by the language contact framework. The concept of "speech community" lies at the heart of this framework, as the central unit of analysis. However, unlike in some branches of linguistics, the concept is used in a very generic sense, focusing neither on *a priori* group qualities nor on social characteristics. Rather fittingly for ELF as a field which is still in the process of exploring the nature of the communities involved, the focus lies on "the fact that its members share certain linguistic repertoires and rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech" (Winford 2003, 26).

In ELF research it is only after a close examination of individual ELF-using groups that we will be able to come up with "grounded", i.e. data-based (cf. Glaser & Strauss 1967) conceptualizations of what constitutes ELF speech communities, and to what extent much debated established criteria such as cohesiveness, are still valid in the context of the global village. The following quotation illustrates once again the high degree of compatibility between the two fields — contact linguistics and ELF research:

"Essentially, it is social interaction within and across speech communities that leads to diffusion of linguistic and other cultural practices. So, in order to understand the products of language contact, we have to understand the speech economies of the communities in contact, and the dynamics of their patterns of interaction." (Winford 2003, 26)

It is of crucial importance to bear in mind that any interest in *speech* community naturally reflects the linguist's perspective. From an emic, i.e. community-internal perspective, it is of course the members' shared interests and the goals they wish to accomplish, which bring them together in the first place not the fact that they all know some kind of English. (cf. Canagarajah 2007, 935ff., Ehrenreich 2009) These goals and interests, the community's "practices" are what motivates and shapes the "speech economies" and "patterns of interaction", which ELF researchers are trying to describe. To summarize, it is precisely because of the fact that contact linguistics aims to study language contact *in its social setting* that it promises to be a particularly useful framework to adopt for the study of ELF.

Applying a language contact perspective to the study of English as a business lingua franca

In the course of globalization, English has been and still is being "relocated" in an ever-growing number of, mostly non-territorial, spaces. We have seen that, in a contact language framework, we need to examine the nature of these contact spaces first before we can identify and explain the resulting language contact effects. One such contact space will be explored in this part of the paper, which will look at how English has been positioned, as an international contact language, in the domain of international business. The observations are based on my own ethnographic research into the use of and attitudes towards ELF in the top and middle management of two Germany-based multinationals,[6] although concrete reference will be made to TechComp, my main research site, only. My observations are presented here as a data-based starting point for discussion, with the hope of inviting further substantiation by similar studies in the same or in other domains.

English as a contact language in international business: a case study

In the business domain, several types of different *contact scenarios* can be identified which determine, to a significant extent, the relative power and prestige of the groups and languages involved. Unlike in colonial settings, where English was, by historical default, inextricably linked to the politically powerful, the language-power relation in the domain of international business is much less straightforward and uniform. Although English is indispensable as a tool in many contexts of contact, its place in

the language hierarchy and, by implication, the relative status of its native speakers, is ultimately determined by the corporate structure of an organisation as well as by other business-related aspects: who the major players within the organisation are and what the organisation's external international links are. Whether its headquarters is in a (non-)English-speaking country and to what degree and in which positions native speakers of English are involved, if at all. Not unimportantly, the history of an organisation's "going international" also affects participants' identities and their attitudes.

Language-external factors: Socio-cultural and social-psychological factors

The company, TechComp, a supplier of train systems, has grown over the past 25 years, through a gradual process of acquisitions and new foundations, from a medium-sized enterprise into a maximally globalized multinational with a current workforce of 14,000 in 60 locations in 25 countries on all continents. The *groups and participants* involved in this language contact setting are managers and employees in different positions at TechComp, as well as representatives of their suppliers and customers. The power relations between individuals or groups of individuals are not absolute, but relative and multidimensional. The degree of power and prestige assigned to individuals or groups of individuals is not just defined by company-internal hierarchies, but is, in addition to these, determined quite substantially by the nature and quality of external business relations.

In terms of absolute workforce *numbers*, German employees constitute the largest group, closely followed by the Americans, the French, Brazilians and Chinese. The fact that TechComp's headquarters is in Germany puts German representatives in a relatively powerful position within the company. The *length and intensity* of contact between individuals and groups vary greatly, however, some constellations, internally and externally, develop into highly integrated, though in most cases non-permanent, "communities of practice" (Ehrenreich 2009; Wenger 1998). For a German manager this may mean that after a couple of months of particularly close interaction with, for example, Chinese and Italians, a spell of increased cooperation with French, American and Russian partners is on the agenda. The high degree of fluidity of these international encounters is an intrinsic feature of many ELF contact settings and one of its "unprecedented" qualities, which poses a huge challenge not only to ELF researchers, but first and foremost to those operating in these settings.

As regards the *languages involved and their respective status* then we see that at TechComp, English enjoys the undisputed status of being *the* international contact language and is used by TechComp's top and middle management up to fifty percent of the time (and up to one hundred percent of the time on business trips). English proficiency is without a doubt a "must" for practically all employees and managers. Nevertheless, as the headquarters' language, German is still the most powerful language and ranks first in the overall internal language hierarchy, which is also reflected by several contact effects (see below). However, the language hierarchy is not a fixed one, since, for example, in external contact situations with customers, the customer's native language enjoys maximum prestige and is used whenever possible. In the case of TechComp, the contact scenario is thus an extremely complex one and, for individuals on the operational level, also a highly variable one.

With respect to contact linguistic terminology, instead of using the established terms of "superstratum language" for English and "adstratum language" for the other languages involved, opting for the more neutral terms of "recipient language" and "source language" seems a better choice (Winford 2003). It also has to be kept in mind that the processes involved are multidimensional and that these terms do not represent absolute, but context-relative categories.

The *communicative events*, for which English is used as a contact language, include spoken face-to-face communication, in different locations, phone calls, and phone or net conferences as well as communication via email, etc. Quite naturally, these events are governed by business goals, but they do comprise both transactional as well as interactional communication, including, for example, a great deal of small talk, humour, etc.

In terms of *social-psychological factors* such as identities and general attitudes, it can be said that the majority of managers I interviewed and observed enjoyed their international work environment despite the challenges this brings with it, and they identified strongly with TechComp's multinational corporate structure, Not a single interviewee wanted to return to a German-language-only workplace again. More specifically, their *attitudes towards foreign languages* were either positive or neutral, and the wish to improve one's personal language skills or expand one's linguistic repertoire was often expressed. Curiously, English seems somewhat exempt from the category of foreign languages. This can be explained by its status as a vital part of the "workplace kit", just like the mobiles or laptops. The following quote illustrates this quite succinctly.

> "Speaking English is as normal a thing as switching on my computer everyday. ... Yes, I would say that I do like English, it's just that it is, well, the same as eating with a knife and a fork (both interviewee and interviewer are laughing) ... - as you can see, I am a very practically minded person."
> („Genauso alltäglich, genauso normal wie ich einen Computer anschalte, genauso spreche ich auch Englisch. ...Doch, ich würde sagen, ich mag Englisch schon, aber das ist irgendwie, ja, so wie ich mit Messer und Gabel esse (beide lachen), ...- da bin ich dann schon sehr - ... funktional." 4.508.574ff.)

Naturally, tools are evaluated in terms of their practicality and efficiency, not normally in terms of aesthetics or emotions, as can be seen in this quote:

> "(Long pause) I like Japanese. English is okay as an aid and as a tool for communication, and it is simply available because everybody has a reasonable command of it. ... And I hate French. ... English is a means to an end."
> („(Lange Pause) - Ich mag Japanisch. Englisch ist in Ordnung als Hilfsmittel und als Tool zur Kommunikation und es ist einfach da, weil man es halbwegs beherrscht. ... Und ich hasse Französisch. ... Englisch ist Mittel zum Zweck." 8.851.857)

With respect to language use, English has simply become second nature to the representatives of top- and middle-management at TechComp. As a consequence, this observation requires linguistic studies to come up with more creative and flexible labels than the established binary ones, such as "utilitarian vs. solidarity purposes", "instrumental vs. integrative motivation", or "overt vs. covert prestige", to describe more adequately this kind of globalized language use and the attitudes involved. Such a call for conceptual re-orientation is further corroborated by the fact that among TechComp's managers there is a remarkable sense of identification with the way they use English, i.e. English as an international contact language – "our English", as one manager put it. This attitude includes an awareness that native speakers of English sometimes act as communication spoilsports, not playing by the rules required by the international contact setting. In the interviews, somewhat emotionally loaded categorical statements alternate with more fine-tuned assessments that point out the high degree of context-specificity of this issue.

> "The English do not adapt their speech. Either you understand what they are saying or it is tough luck for you."

("Die Engländer passen sich nicht an. Entweder versteht man das, was sie sagen oder man hat Pech." 6.182)

"Well, I would say that within our company, of course, they [the native speakers] show consideration. As long as the atmosphere is friendly and there is no dispute. However, as soon as you get into an argument, they immediately use their linguistic advantage against us. This is something we observe above all, of course, in negotiations with the opposing side; everybody remains friendly as long as the general atmosphere is friendly. When things get less friendly, their linguistic behaviour becomes more sophisticated, and ... then, if you do not use language skillfully you will find yourself at a considerable disadvantage. This is a difficult issue."
("Also ich sage mal, bei uns im Unternehmen nehmen die natürlich Rücksicht. Solange es freundlich ist und es eben keinen Disput gibt. Allerdings, sobald man in eine Auseinandersetzung gerät, wird dieser sprachliche Vorteil immer auch ausgespielt. Den erleben wir vor allem natürlich auch bei Verhandlungen mit der Gegenseite, das bleibt freundlich, solange es freundlich ist. Wenn es dann nicht mehr so freundlich wird, dann wird die sprachliche Komponente auch sehr ausgeweitet, und ... wenn man da sprachlich nicht gewandt ist, ist man sehr schnell im Hintertreffen. Das ist schwierig." 22.390)

To summarize, TechComp finds itself in a contact situation of *partial language shift*, not only in Germany, but in practically all of its non-English-speaking countries, which results in a company-internal polyglossia, with an increasing number of business interactions currently being conducted in English. In this speech community, communicative effectiveness via English, not the linguistic correctness of English, is the goal; a goal which also defines the required "level of competence" of a global manager, as the following quotes illustrate:

"A manager must speak English, it's not a matter of how well or badly, he must simply *speak*."
("Ein Manager muss sprechen, nicht gut oder schlecht, er muss *sprechen*." 6.489).

"I must say I'm confronted with so many levels of correctness that I don't actually care whether something is correct or incorrect. As long as the meaning is not distorted."
("Ich bin mit so vielen Levels von Korrektheit konfrontiert, dass ich mir da eigentlich nichts daraus mache, ob das jetzt richtig oder falsch ist, muss ich sagen. Wenn es nicht sinnentstellend ist." 18.187)

British or American English are clearly not the desired target models and neither is "acculturation" (Schneider 2007, 42 with reference to

Schumann 1978) to British or American culture an aim. Instead, a new kind of acculturation is essential, an acculturation to the nature and mechanisms of ELF talk. Many interviewees described several strategic skills which are required in using English successfully as an international contact language and how they developed these skills over time. The first two of the following three examples illustrate how two German managers found ways of coping better with the challenges of English-based German-Chinese interactions, the first focuses on phone calls, the second on meetings.

"Well, what I notice again and again ... the better I get to know my [Chinese] colleague, the better I know how long he is normally silent between questions or when I tell him something, or does he clear his throat or do I notice a "mhm", as a sign of confirmation, or something of this kind, or do I not (with emphasis) notice anything in my interactions with him. Well, ... in that case I know that this is something my colleague usually does or does not do .... the better I get to know him, the easier it is for me to find out whether or not he has actually understood what I just said to him. ... And I realize that there has been a considerable learning curve in the course of time - in terms of developing a certain sensitivity as to whether or not he has understood me."

(„Also ich merke das immer wieder … insbesondere auch je besser ich meinen [chinesischen] Kollegen kenne, desto mehr weiß ich, wie lange schweigt er normalerweise zwischen Fragen oder wenn ich was erzähle, oder räuspert er sich oder merkt man ein bestätigendes „mhm" oder so etwas oder merke ich dieses bei dem Kollegen nicht (betont). Also … da weiß ich, das macht der Kollege oder er macht es nicht, je nachdem … je besser ich ihn kennen lerne, weiß ich auch, hat er es verstanden oder hat er es nicht verstanden. ... Also ich merke, dort ist auch eine deutliche Lernkurve im Laufe der Zeit entstanden - sensibel zu werden, hat er mich verstanden oder hat er mich nicht verstanden." 4. 97ff.)

"... and after a while I got into the habit of just sitting there relaxed ... and paying less attention to where we are in terms of the agenda, but more to the reactions of the other side in order to figure out whether they have actually understood [the relevant item on the agenda] or not. And, can we now proceed with the agenda or do I have to say: "No, this would be pointless, they have not got it yet ..."

(„ ... und ich habe mir dann angewöhnt, eher entspannt dazusitzen und … weniger stark auf die Tagesordnung zu achten als darauf, wie die Reaktionen der anderen Seite ist, um einschätzen zu können, ist das verstanden oder nicht verstanden. Können wir jetzt da weitermachen an dem Punkt oder sage ich „Nee, das hat jetzt keinen Wert, das ist nicht kapiert ..." 14. 29)