

English as a lingua franca (ELF) in international conferences

Current and future developments in interpreting studies

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The global spread of English as a lingua franca (ELF) has major implications for the interpreting profession. Not only is English the main conference language, but source speeches are increasingly produced by non-native English speakers. Research into ELF has

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concentrated on the description of ELF as a legitimate use of English in its own right and as an asset to achieve communicative goals in international contexts (Seidlhofer, 2011). Interpreting studies, by contrast, address the critical stance of professional conference interpreters towards ELF developments and seek to explore the challenges ELF presents to their profession and to successful communication.

Empirical evidence regarding ELF and interpreting is still scarce and not very robust. The paper brings together the results produced so far. Major problems identified on the part of ELF speaker source text production are lack of express-ability, varying proficiency levels, register shifts, and massive L1 transfer on the part of ELF speakers (Albl-Mikasa, 2010, 2013a, 2013c), but also difficulties arising from the specific nature of interpreter-mediated working conditions (Reithofer, 2010, 2013). The paper concludes by outlining the new research questions these challenges put to the study of interpreting.

Key words: Conference interpreting, English as a lingua franca, ITSELF (Interpreting, Translation and English as a lingua franca), L1 transfer, Re-branding of interpreting profession

1. Introduction

From the outset, the academic discussion of English as a lingua franca (ELF) has been controversial, as epitomized by the Quirk-Kachru debate which analyzes ELF in a supposedly deficit linguistics vs. liberation linguistics framework (Seidlhofer, 2003). However, most of the work of the young research discipline of ELF (institutionalized by the introduction of annual ELF conferences since 2008, and the establishment of the de Gruyter Journal of English as a Lingua Franca in 2012) has focused on liberating ELF speakers from “an outdated prescriptive English native norm” (House, 2013:286) by providing corpus-based evidence of effective ELF communication. The

most well-known corpora are ELFA (Helsinki corpus of spoken academic lingua franca English, www.helsinki.fi/elfa); VOICE (Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English, www.univie.ac.at/voice/index.php); and ACE (Hong Kong Asian Corpus of English, no website).

This line of research has taken up the interface between translation and ELF as an object of study only very recently (Cook, 2012; Mauranen, 2012:239-243; House, 2013). Here again, it takes a rather positive stance and sees translation and ELF as complementary rather than opposing approaches to multilingual contexts. Cook (2012) emphasizes common ground and common interests between the two, and House (2013) elaborates on how ELF does not pose a threat to translation and multilingualism. A more critical stance is taken by analysts in translation studies (Gazzola and Grin, 2013; Hewson, 2009, 2013; Snell-Hornby, 2010) and in interpreting studies (Donovan, 2009; Albl-Mikasa, 2010, 2013a; Reithofer, 2010, 2013). At this stage, however, the sub-discipline that could be called ITELf (interpreting, translation and English as a lingua franca)¹⁾ is of a very recent nature and has, therefore, not yet produced robust empirical data in a comprehensive fashion. Thus, on one hand, House is right in pointing out that, in her plea for translation rather than ELF, Snell-Hornby's "claim that ELF speakers' written and oral contributions to journals and conferences are 'exceedingly difficult' to follow is not based on empirical research" (House, 2013:286). On the other hand, it needs to be noted that House's conclusion "that ELF is not a defective, but a fully functional means of communication" (2013:286) is overwhelmingly based on results from conversation protocol data (e.g., from the ELF corpora mentioned above) that do not reflect the level of terminological and special subject complexity typical of technical conferences, but emerge from small-scale face-to-face discussions,

negotiations, and meetings. Therefore, the question as to whether or not communication by ELF speakers in conference settings is actually successful, or that ELF speakers' contributions to conferences are not "exceedingly difficult", equally awaits empirical research.

This question is, in fact, central to interpreting studies research, which proceeds from the rather pessimistic or skeptical attitude taken by conference interpreting practitioners on the basis of their everyday working experience. Interpreters are highly critical of the widespread use of ELF at conferences (Donovan, 2009; Reithofer, 2010). They maintain that the rapidly increasing number of non-native English speakers not only adversely affects their work on the macro-level of market developments and working conditions, but also at the micro-level of actual comprehension, transfer, and production processes (Albl-Mikasa, 2010, 2013c). As a consequence, interpreters do not speak of ELF, but of "Globish", "BSE" (bad simple English), "Desesperanto", and "brain stoppers". Interpreting studies analysts have started to look into the reported problems. So far, apart from a number of earlier studies with a somewhat narrow focus on the impact of foreign accents on the interpreters' task (e.g., Sabatini, 2000; McAllister, 2000; Cheung, 2003; Kurz, 2008), only a small number of studies in interpreting-related ELF research have been conducted that explore the wider impact of ELF on interpreting and interpreter-mediated communication and provide primary data of the interpretation of ELF speeches.

2. ELF-interpreting-related primary data studies

Two PhD, one MA, and one BA thesis studies have so far produced

primary data on ELF and interpretation beyond the question of the impact of foreign and unfamiliar accents. Basel (2002) finds in her PhD study (including 6 professional and 12 student interpreters) that ELF speech production may result in considerable loss of information in interpretations and that knowing the ELF speaker's mother tongue (L1) greatly facilitates the interpreters' task. In the second PhD study, Reithofer (2010, 2013) uses comprehension testing as a means of measuring communicative effect in an audience of 58 listeners and provides evidence that the understanding of source speeches in conference settings can be significantly higher among conference participants listening to the interpretation into their mother tongue than those listening to the non-native English original, even when they share the same technical background as the non-native English speaker. In addition, a recent study based on an MA thesis (Guggisberg and Talirz, 2013) and involving one ELF speaker and one native English speaker (NES) as well as 6 professional conference interpreters concludes that there are clear differences in the way a NES and an ELF speaker verbalize technical conference input (on the basis of the same PowerPoint slides) with measurable impact on the interpreters (Abl-Mikasa, Guggisberg and Talirz, in preparation). While the NES's speech rate was clearly faster (as is typical of native speakers) than that of the ELF speaker (187 words per minute, compared with 128 words per minute), the information density of the ELF speaker remained at a constantly high level throughout the speech, whereas that of the NES speaker fluctuated, including redundant or meta-discursive and rapport-building stretches that gave the interpreters a break and some relief on cognitive load. In fact, a facilitating aspect of NES speech was the ongoing use of extratextual deixis, metadiscourse markers, and illustrating phrases all aimed at rapport-building or at involving the listener, while the ELF speaker

solely concentrated on the informational content of his presentation. Moreover, while both used logical connectives and sequencers, NES textual organization was more amenable to the interpreters' task because the ELF speaker developed the presentational structure as he was going along, while the NES prefaced content development by explicitly introducing and explaining the superstructure of his argument. Finally, support for the interpreters was the competent use of certainty markers by the NES, compared with the tendency of the ELF speaker to use similar markers in an unconventional way.

These findings can be taken to explain why 69% of informants in a questionnaire survey (N = 32 professional conference interpreters) preferred to interpret input by NESs because the reasons given for this preference are in line with the abovementioned results: the interpreters made it explicit that it was NESs' word flow; clearer, more logical, and more differentiated argumentation; deliberate and purposeful use of concepts and terms; more natural way of putting things; or ability to get their message across that made it easier for them to follow what speakers were getting at and allowed for fundamental interpreting processes such as anticipation and inferencing (Albl-Mikasa, 2010:135). Thus, what seems to make it harder for interpreters is the lack of "express-ability" on the part of ELF speakers (Albl-Mikasa, 2013a and see below).

Finally, a small-scale study based on a BA thesis (Dschulnigg and Hansen, 2011), involving three ELF speakers and a student interpreter and retrospective interviews of both the ELF speakers and the interpreter suggest that ELF speech input may impede retrieval of automatized transfer routines and well-established translation equivalents, in that non-standard input does not match encoded items. According to the Principle of Encoding Specificity, such activation depends on a match of incoming items (from the speaker) with

previously encoded items (by the listener, here the interpreter) (van Dijk and Kintsch, 1983:334). When the input is creatively appropriated, non-standard and, therefore, unpredictable English usage, which is typical of ELF (see section 3 below), there is a mismatch, which can undermine activation of automatized processes (Abl-Mikasa, 2013c). This helps explain why interpreters experience ELF speech as “brain stoppers” (as related by José Iturri in his presentation on “Interpreting and ELF in the EU institutions” at the 2013 7th Conference of the European Society of Translation (EST), <http://www.fb06.uni-mainz.de/est/index.php>).

(Table 1. Summary of recent empirical primary data studies on ELF and interpreting)

<i>study/author</i>	<i>study design</i>	<i>results</i>
Basel, 2002 (PhD), Kurz/Basel, 2009	6 professional, 12 student interpreters; comparison of source texts and interpretations	information loss in interpretations; advantage of ELF speaker's L1 as part of interpreters' working languages
Reithofer, 2010, 2013 (PhD)	1 professional interpreter; comprehension tests on audience of 58 listeners	understanding of ELF source speech greater when listening to interpretation than to ELF original
Abl-Mikasa, (2013c) (BA Dschulnigg / Hansen, 2011)	1 student interpreter, 3 ELF speakers; transcript of interpretations and of retrospective interviews	ELF speech input impedes retrieval of transfer routines and translation equivalents
Abl-Mikasa / Guggisberg / Talirz (in preparation) (MA Guggisberg / Talirz, 2013)	6 professional interpreters, 1 ELF speaker, 1 NES; verbalization of same PowerPoint slides and interpretation of presentations	interpreting-relevant differences in ELF and native English speaker verbalization: information density, rapport building, text organization

3. ELF-interpreting-related introspective data studies

Apart from the abovementioned studies, introspective evidence on ELF and interpreting has been gathered from a questionnaire and an in-depth interview study (with a corpus of 100,000 words) (Albl-Mikasa 2010, 2012b). Although perceptual and attitudinal in nature, the findings regarding the implications of ELF for conference interpreters are revealing, in that they are reported by long-standing and highly experienced interpreters with a working experience of 15 to 40 years. They may, therefore, serve as pointers for future empirical research. The following is an overview of the professional interpreters participating in these studies:

[Table 2. Participants of introspective questionnaire and interview studies]

	<i>Questionnaire study</i>	<i>Interview study</i>
<i>Total of interviewees / respondents</i>	32	11
<i>AIIC members</i>	88 % (28)	82 % (9)
<i>German as A language</i>	84 % (27)	82 % (9)
<i>English as working language</i>		
A		18 % (2)
B (active) or C (passive)	100 % (32)	82 % (9)
<i>Working environment</i>		
Private market	72 % (23)	64 % (7)
EU	9 % (3)	9 % (1)
EU & private market	19 % (6)	27 % (3)
<i>Gender</i>		
female	66 % (21)	46 % (5)
male	34 % (11)	54 % (6)

The questionnaire contained 11 open-ended questions on the implications of Global English on the interpreting activity as well as

the interpreters' attitudes towards possible changes to their profession. The individual questions, quantitative breakdown, and comprehensive qualitative analysis are detailed in Albl-Mikasa (2010). The focus of the 11 semi-structured interviews (coded and referenced as I-1 to I-11) was on interpreter competence, competence development, and the impact of the increasing number of ELF speakers on interpreting. The results concerning interpreter competence were analyzed in detail in Albl-Mikasa (2012b).

In an era of globalization, when there are now five non-native speakers for each native speaker (David Crystal, author of "English as a Global Language", 2003, in a lecture at Bangor University in 2012), and the main conference language is English (Neff, 2007; Donovan, 2009), it comes as no surprise that 88% of respondents in the questionnaire survey said that they were increasingly faced with a majority of non-native English source speech producers and with difficult accents (81%), and that the global spread of ELF had noticeable effects on their work (81%) (Albl-Mikasa, 2010).

With a view to professional markets, the effects included fiercer competition for jobs and potentially fewer assignments due to an increase in English-only events; a cut in language booths formerly provided to cover a wider range of languages and reliance instead on English and one national language only; an increasing level of complexity of the average interpreting assignment because the "nice and easy events" are mostly done in English; constant strain to deliver high quality and demonstrate outstanding professionalism; pressure to prove the added value an interpreter can provide and to justify monetary investment for interpreting services; energy expended to fight against the general trend of conference participants overestimating their command of English; responsibility for successful conference communication under more difficult conditions; etc. (Albl-Mikasa,

2010).

As a result, respondents reported a decline in job satisfaction. 50% found that interpreting had become more strenuous and tiring (Albl-Mikasa, 2010:142). In particular, they made it clear that this was a result of their resources being additionally taxed in the actual process of interpreting, that is, in comprehension, transfer, and production. In a more general sense, this is due to more and less far-reaching deviations from the standard, which can make it hard for the interpreter to remain in control (Albl-Mikasa, 2013b). In fact, the immensely variable, heterogeneous, and indeterminable features of ELF have been found in ELF research to be one of the defining characteristics of this global phenomenon.

ELF is negotiated ad hoc, varying according to context, speaker constellation and communicative purpose. It is thus individually shaped by its users. While clearly based on English, ELF tends to be amenable to considerable interlingual and intercultural adaptations, such that it typically contains elements from many different linguacultures [...]. (House, 2013:281)

Against this background, the following major difficulties have been identified that interpreters have to face up to in the comprehension phase: ELF speakers' a) lack of express-ability, b) greatly varying proficiency levels and register shifts, and c) massive L1 transfer (Albl-Mikasa, 2013a).

ELF speakers' *restricted power of expression* and at times limited capacity to present their line of argument in a logical, coherent, and targeted manner results in interpreters having to make an extra effort to recover intended speaker meaning. They report having to think outside the box or "around two corners" (I-6) in order "to be able to discern what the speaker would have said, had he spoken proper

English” (I-5). Such extra effort clearly depends on the ELF speaker’s *proficiency level*: “Speaking of non-native English speakers as trouble spots, we are thinking, of course, not of those who speak very good English, but those whose deviating pronunciation, grammar, or lexical choices affect comprehension” (I-1). Low proficiency levels come to bear especially when ELF speakers engage in unprepared discussion rather than prepared presentation modes, which at times leads to almost rudimentary use of English, i.e., reduced phrases instead of a full sentence, such as “commission proposal”, that do not give away the intended meaning (i.e., whether the proposal had been submitted, adopted, discussed, or postponed). At the same time, low English language competence levels are often compensated for by ELF speakers reading out prefabricated manuscripts at great speed because, being aware of their expression-related problems, “they get very nervous” (I-2).

Where ELF speakers have to speak freely, an additional difficulty often emerges in the form of *shifts in register*. In the abovementioned BA case study (Dschulnigg and Hansen, 2011), all three ELF speakers made it explicitly clear that they had not been up to the appropriate register because their English was of a more colloquial nature. The student interpreter, in turn, reported being irritated by the fact that low-register speeches were interspersed with highly technical terms (which ELF speakers typically look up for conference meetings). A need was felt, on the part of the interpreter, to level out the discrepancy in the target text, so as to make it appear more homogeneous and neutral (Dschulnigg and Hansen, 2011:20). Similarly, one reason for the professional interpreters in the questionnaire survey preferring native English source speakers was their “higher register” (Albl-Mikasa, 2010:135). At the same time, even when ELF speakers’ English is very good, as in the case of many Danish or Dutch speakers, progressive

forms (*asked* vs. *was asking for the floor*, I-2) or the interchangeable use of *if* and *when* can lead to “the person at the other end getting a completely wrong message” (I-11) and to the interpreter being unsure about what the speaker is getting at.

Finally, a major difficulty identified in the interviews is *cross-linguistic L1 influence* or the literal transcoding of L1 expressions into English. Interpreters are confronted with phrases such as “regulatory outreach” (I-6), where the interpreter in command of the speaker’s native tongue (which was German in this example), may figure out that this comes from German *Reichweite*, but can only speculate that the speaker may have intended to refer to the ‘scope’ and ‘impact’ of an item concerned (see also the examples in table 2 below). Interpreters agree that they find major support from what I called the “shared languages benefit” (Albl-Mikasa, 2013a:105), namely, that knowing the non-native English speaker’s mother tongue or, more precisely, having it as one of one’s working languages, greatly facilitates their task (as is confirmed in studies by Taylor, 1989; Basel, 2002; Kurz and Basel, 2009). However, confronted with L1 influence from a wide range of unknown mother tongues in today’s globalized gatherings, this benefit is of limited use. Interpreters are now confronted with a wide range of speakers of all backgrounds, nationalities, and native tongues, so that the cross-linguistic influences are extremely difficult to control and manage. Thus, the very precondition for the use of *lingua franca* (people not sharing a language) leads to L1 transfer becoming a considerable problem. In other words, what has been described as ELF speakers’ creative and resourceful communication management (e.g., Seidlhofer, 2011) may have to be viewed with rather more skepticism. For example, transfer of highly idiomatic expressions, such as “don’t praise the day yet” (Pitzl, 2012:45) from German *man soll den Tag nicht vor dem Abend*

loben (which means ‘don’t count your chickens before they are hatched’) can not only seriously derail interpreter processes, but can be an irritating factor for ELF speakers as well. For interpreters, it is often the *combination* of transfer phenomena on different linguistic levels that renders their task particularly difficult. An unfamiliar accent is reported (I-6) to come along with the irregular usage of concepts and unconventional lexical expressions and even unorthodox sentence structure (Albl-Mikasa, 2012b:77).

Clearly, ELF-induced difficulties are, in considerable part, related to specific bilingual interpreter-mediated processing conditions and requirements and, thus, specific to the interpreters’ task. Interpreters in monologic conference settings cannot rely on co-constructive meaning negotiation typical of face-to-face interaction (Reithofer, 2010:149). Moreover, interpreting depends on fast and automatic activation of established links between source and target language items, as well as retrieval of ready-to-use translation equivalents and settled transfer routines, which can be undermined when interpreting ELF speeches (as outlined in the BA study in section 2 above and also observed by an interpreter in the questionnaire study, Albl-Mikasa, 2010:137).

While ELF predominantly weighs on the comprehension process, it also makes for additional cognitive load in the *production* phase. When the audience is primarily composed of non-native English speakers, interpreters feel the need to make an accommodation effort and adapt to the addressees’ perceived proficiency levels by avoiding idiomatic expressions or phrasal verbs and simplifying their speech for them (Albl-Mikasa, 2010).

However, while a number of problems arise from the specific bilingual and mediated working conditions of simultaneous interpreting, interpreters maintain that a considerable number of these problems are just as much a matter of concern in

non-interpreter-mediated ELF communication. In their experience, in the kind of complex settings they work in, ELF communication is far from successful between the participants, and would be even less so if interpreters were not to compensate for major shortcomings. In the interviews they report that they “watch people [...] misunderstanding each other” and “understanding different things” (I-11). The following examples given by I-6 illustrate that ELF speech may be difficult to process not only for the interpreters but also for those listening to the ELF speaker original and may confront interpreters and conference participants alike with comprehension problems:

[Table 3. Examples of ELF-induced comprehension difficulties facing conference interpreters and conference participants alike, taken from Albl-Mikasa, 2014]

<i>authentic ELF speaker output</i>	<i>underlying (German) L1 structure</i>	<i>possible native speaker version</i>
escaped profits	entgangene Gewinne	loss in profit/lost profits
offer the suitable achievement extents furthermore	entsprechende Leistungsumfänge weiterhin anbieten	still offer the services they need
possibility of deselected of the achievements to whose performance the provider would be ordinarily obliged on account of the contract	der Anbieter kann Leistungen abwählen, zu deren Erbringung er laut Vertrag eigentlich verpflichtet wäre	provider has the option to give up certain services that must normally be provided under the contract

In summary, the abovementioned studies provide initial clues to the underlying reasons for the critical attitude of conference interpreters and why this attitude may be plausible. They also indicate a need for empirical research regarding the effectiveness of ELF communication in interpreter-mediated and non-mediated conference settings.

4. Suggestions for future research

Given the explorative stage of ELF-related interpreting research and the highly topical nature of the issue, it is hoped that efforts will pick up markedly. At this point, three avenues for future interpreting research suggest themselves, namely, re-consideration of the effectiveness of ELF communication in settings other than informal or semi-formal dialogic interactions, especially in conference settings; re-conceptualization of interpreter training courses; and re-branding of the interpreters' professional status as multilingual communication experts, including the re-definition of their role and self-image as service providers.

First, as outlined above, exploration of how effective and successful ELF communication actually is in settings such as conferences is what interpreters would expect from interpreting studies research, especially since it seems plausible to expect that the optimistic ELF accounts from interactive conversational encounters may not hold in such contexts (Albl-Mikasa, 2014). Such research is, in fact, highly relevant because conference settings cover a wide and important array of ELF scenarios:

The term [conference] will be used here as generally accepted by interpreters, i.e. as referring to a wide range of encounters - bilateral meetings between politicians, business seminars, press conferences, scientific or academic symposia, general meetings of shareholders to name but a few. Participation may be regional rather than international. [...] These conferences are the intellectual, legal and political spaces for the exchange of knowledge and information and for the negotiation of power. Finally, conferences, as understood here, are rarely discrete, isolated events, but rather a regular, indeed often mandatory, manifestation of some organization or structure, such as an

international organization, a trade association, a national authority, a body of academics. (Donovan, 2009:53-54)

As “interpreters are first-hand witnesses to actual language use”, “observing numerous different communication settings from a unique viewpoint – both involved in the messages transmitted and outsiders to the interests at stake” (Donovan, 2009:62, 66), interpreting settings are a potential testing ground for empirical investigations into quantifying the success or effectiveness of ELF communication (Albi-Mikasa, 2014). More specifically, these investigations would look into both *ELF-specific communication problems* of parts of the audience that listen to the original ELF speaker, and *ELF-induced problems for the interpreters*. Such research needs to determine the exact nature of the problems as opposed to subjective impressions of language-purist interpreters. Why do 69% of respondents in my survey prefer to interpret native speakers, when these are known to be highly challenging themselves (on account of dialects, highly idiomatic expressions or fast-paced speech)? What properties turn an ELF speaker into a stressor for the interpreter? Is it the “insecure communicators, causing more or less visible communicative problems of various kinds” (Ehrenreich, 2009:145), or the ELF speakers that are unaware of “the cost [...] in terms of subtlety of communication” of choosing to speak English rather than relying on an interpreter or is it the ELF conference participants who tend to switch back and forth from and to interpretation because “their understanding or expression skills are not [...] robust” enough to cater to all occasions (Donovan 2009:66)? It would be interesting, in this context, to find out more about ELF speaker profiles or ELF-specific correlations between proficiency levels, speaker types, speech rates, and cross-linguistic influences.

This ELF communication-oriented line of research should also cover interpreters' (current, changing, and eligible) *attitudes and perceptions* with regard to ELF as well as motivational issues. For instance, it is intriguing to see that, on one hand, the ELF-related phenomena reported in my studies in the German-speaking context (e.g., the shared languages benefit, the fact that ELF-induced interpreter difficulties arise from a combination of factors, etc., Albl-Mikasa, 2012b, 2014) are found in very similar ways in the interview study by Chang and Wu (2014) among 10 freelance professional interpreters in the Taiwanese market, while, on the other hand, there are differences in the overall attitude, which is much more positive in Taiwan:

[...] even though almost every interpreter can recount horror stories about interpreting for non-native English speakers, most claim that interpreting such speakers tends on the whole not to create enormous problems for them. (Chang and Wu, 2009:180)

By contrast, in an AIIC survey, "the rise of Global English" was called a "top dissatisfaction factor [...] that leaves many interpreters frustrated" (cited in Donovan, 2009:67). In this context, it will be interesting to determine which ELF-related factors actually add to frustration, stress, and job dissatisfaction in order to devise alleviating measures for interpreters to take. It will also be interesting to see which factors weigh more heavily, those identified on the micro-level (see the "brain stoppers" above) or rather those of the macro-level (e.g., diminishing professional standing in times of global English, diminishing sense of usefulness among interpreters, longer periods of sitting idle in the English booth, etc., Donovan, 2009)?

Second, since interpreters are still overwhelmingly trained for contexts in which native speakers communicate with native speakers of different languages, a major challenge for future didactic research is to

devise modules for an *ELF pedagogy* aimed to prepare students for changing working conditions and new requirements (Albl-Mikasa, 2013b). In the face of the enormous variation and variability in the use of ELF and *unpredictable* changes in international Englishes (Crystal, 2003:142), taking preparatory measures and training for all eventualities is an almost impossible task for interpreters. In an attempt to raise students' awareness of the new diversity and help them to build up coping strategies for various world Englishes, a pioneering mock ELF conference unit has been introduced into interpreter training at ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences. In the third consecutive term, the interpretations of the interpreter students of authentic video-recorded interviews with African ELF speakers on a variety of topics of general interest (data collected as part of a PhD project at the Applied English Linguistics chair of the University of Tübingen) were recorded and transcribed. In addition, the students filled in questionnaires regarding the ELF-specific problems they encountered and possible coping strategies they devised. The results were discussed in class and are now being analyzed. Work is still in progress so that, at this point, all that can be said is that a clear majority of the students involved found the mock ELF conference to be a very useful and recommendable exercise. This pilot project is a preliminary step that should be followed up by research exploring ELF-related learning targets, teaching methods, and course materials. Interpreter students will have to be acquainted not only with World Englishes that have emerged, but also with the facts and developments of a globalizing world and implications for their comprehension (e.g., language-specific transfer phenomena), transfer (e.g., resource management under more difficult processing conditions), and production (e.g., levelling out of register shifts, accommodating to a non-native audience) processes (Albl-Mikasa, 2013b).

Third, globalization entails growing superdiversity and pluralization in a world, where people with very different backgrounds, resources, and communicative scripts come together. According to Blommaert and Rampton (2011:6), this introduces limits to negotiability, mutual understanding, and shared conventions. Regarding the interpreters' profession, this raises the question as to whether such developments will confront them with even more and increasingly unsurmountable challenges or whether they may perhaps even turn out to be an opportunity. Given their communication expertise, multilingual and intercultural competence, and in-depth faculty for receptive processing, meaning recovery, and coherence building, interpreters might be ideally placed to go beyond traditional improvement of source texts, which they typically do when interpreting ELF speakers (Reithofer, 2010:151). Rather than simply touching up and enhancing ELF source speech and straightening out ELF speaker source text production problems or accommodating to ELF listeners in their delivery, they may takeover (re)construction of meaning and act not only as a neutral voice, but as a clarifier for interlocutors who might be increasingly less capable of coming to grips with diversity-shaped speech output.

A similar point has been made by Mauranen. Interpreters may no longer find satisfaction in exploiting their multilingual repertoires to the full (Albl-Mikasa, 2012a), but in becoming a "good communicator of the future, a plurilingual, adaptive, effective speaker" (Mauranen, 2012:240) who knows how to mediate between the 'imperfect multilinguals' that have replaced the perfect monolinguals of the past (Albl-Mikasa, 2012a:271). This lends a new dimension to the *directionality* issue (Godijns and Hinderdael, 2005; Beeby Longsdale, 2009), in that English B interpreters (in their capacity as non-native English speakers) may be more apt to cater for the needs of a globalized client type. In this context, it will be interesting to observe

developments regarding an increase in the demand for interpreting into English B (as is the case in Taiwan, Chang and Wu, 2014:186) and the growing use of English as a relay (bridging) language. In the European Parliament, for instance, there is a tendency of countries such as Finland, Estonia, or Latvia to speak English only and take the relay from the English booth (I-4). What can be said at this point is that changes in interpreters' preferential patterns are underway. As it is the interpreters' comprehension phase that is most affected by ELF source speech producers (see above), they increasingly prefer interpreting into English B because this helps to avoid the pitfalls of the ELF > A direction.

Overall, interpreters will be required to build up a much clearer understanding of multilingual communication needs in times of ELF and superdiversity. This includes taking a more proactive role in developing *entrepreneurial and deontological skills* (which they notoriously lack, as emphasized by Linda Fitchett, President of AIIC, at the annual Geneva-based CIUTI Forum - Conférence Internationale Permanente d'Instituts Universitaires de Traducteurs et Interprètes - on 17th January, 2013). Discontent with the lower status of the profession and with constant attempts at cutting interpreting costs should give way to a rethinking of the interpreter's role and self-concept. When the combination of the spread of ELF and financial constraints means that potential customers are no longer prepared to contract interpreter services at any cost, and when interpreter recruitment is outsourced to service suppliers whose criterion is low cost rather than quality, interpreters may want to gain visibility not as service providers, but as professional multilingual experts for the management of communicative practices shaped by superdiversity. Above and beyond justifying their case for good working conditions and bringing forward arguments for the added value they provide, they

might find it rewarding to cross over from language expert to multilingual communications adviser, consulting clients with regard to the management of superdiverse practices and appropriate and effective communication modes (e.g., in what settings should interpreting be the first choice and when should it be ELF). Further investigations should aim to establish whether changing market needs require the professional conference interpreter to meet new demands on interpreting quality, in terms of doing a more professional job or to actually expand their traditional set of skills towards *re-branding as a multilingual communication expert*.

In conclusion, it needs to be stressed once again that there is, as yet, very little research, let alone robust evidence from rigidly applied methodology, regarding ELF-related interpreting research. This is why I had to rely, to a substantial degree, on my own work in the description of current developments and in drawing up future research questions. This does not make the issue less topical or fascinating, but it makes the call to colleagues from ELF research and interpreting studies more urgent to join in the effort and find ways of empirical data collection, preferably from authentic conference settings.

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1) For the first time, a colloquium at the September 2014 ELF7 Conference in Athens will bring together scholars from ELF research, translation studies, and interpreting studies. (<http://www.erasmus.gr/microsites/1014/colloquia>)