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Book Review

English as a lingua franca: Perspectives and prospects. Contributions in honour of Barbara Seidlhofer

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This extensive collection of essays provides a comprehensive overview from a broad range of perspectives of the developments that research into English as a lingua franca (ELF) has seen over the last 15 years. The contributors to the volume are all renowned scholars working in different areas in linguistics, who have gathered to honour one of the “founding mothers” of ELF, Barbara Seidlhofer, to whom the volume is dedicated. Both the leading and pioneering role that Seidlhofer has played in researching ELF, contributing to making it an acknowledged and increasingly rich field of study in (applied) linguistics, and her personal and professional charisma clearly transpire throughout the book, whose aim is to “explore the question how ELF relates to other linguistic fields” (p. 1) from a variety of perspectives in linguistics, in a number of domains.

The first section of the volume, “Perspectives on the Study of ELF,” opens with the contributions of two other leading ELF scholars, Jennifer Jenkins and Anna Mauranen. In “Barbara Seidlhofer: Another ‘Mother’s’ Reflection” Jenkins

traces the development of the field through four main cornerstones in Seidlhofer's work: the VOICE Corpus, the connections between ELF and its applications, its reconceptualization in the late 2000s and the creation of the *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*. Mauranen's "ELF Corpora: Design, Difficulties and triumphs" focuses on the development of VOICE and ELFA (and new directions in digital communication), with concurrent reconceptualization of issues such as language communities/users and implications for language usage (and variability), both in ELF and in English as a native language (ENL). Mauranen also discusses the issue of how different corpus methodological approaches have been applied to ELF research, providing examples from findings.

In "ELF, Adaptive Variability and Virtual Language" Henry Widdowson highlights how ELF studies have contributed to questioning the "myth" of Standard English as *the* reference point in defining varieties. ELF cannot any longer be taken as an absolute benchmark since, like other varieties, "it is the exemplification of certain encoding principles, one set of realizations that have become conventionally established within a particular community" (p. 33). Different encodings of the virtual language, Widdowson argues, are at work at all language levels, in ELF in particular, depending on their pragmatic communicative value.

Alessia Cogo's "Visibility and Absence: Ideologies of 'Diversity' in BELF" examines the complexity of ELF communication in two business environments, a multinational banking corporation and a small IT company. While in official, "front-stage" communication languages "need to be kept controlled, separated and employed as a one-language-at-a-time" (p. 46), back-stage everyday communication is characterised by diversity in translanguaging practices, which, together with professional expertise, contribute to effective communication.

The chapter by Maria Grazia Guido, "ELF in Responsible Tourism: Power Relationships in Unequal Migration Encounters," provides a thought-provoking view on how, when used in unequal encounters in immigration contexts, ELF is characterised by transfer processes that are not only typological and pragmatic, but also concern "native socio-cultural schemata" (p. 49), often leading to serious misunderstandings. Conversation analysis applied to interactions between tourists playing the "Robinson Crusoe" role of intercultural mediators for immigrants clearly shows that in such ELF contexts cross-cultural misunderstandings are largely due to the imposition of "western" cultural and experiential schemata.

Beyza Björkman looks at the development of "English-medium Instruction and English as the Lingua Franca in Higher Education in Central and Northern Europe," examining also its perceived impact on local languages. ELF research shows that English in its lingua franca role constitutes an additional, rather than a "killer" language; future research ought to "acknowledge the significance of

sociolinguistic challenges brought on by a globalized higher education and consider the local setting at a finer level" (p. 64).

In "Language Education Policies and Practice in (Mediterranean) Europe: An ELF Perspective" Lucilla Lopriore outlines the developments of European multilingual language education policies in the last two decades, setting them against the changes that have occurred in people's linguistic and cultural profiles in Europe due to migration flows. The author then argues that an ELF-aware perspective in language planning is starting to appear in some European countries' local educational documents, school curricula, textbooks, and in teacher education in particular.

Kumiko Murata's "ELF Research: Its Impact on Language Education in Japan and East Asia" illustrates education language policies for English in East Asia at different educational levels, particularly in higher education with the promotion of internationalization programmes. Despite a general (and political) awareness of English largely acting as a lingua franca, the reference point still remains "the NS-norm-based one" (p. 79), even in the adoption of an adapted version of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR); ELF research could provide a great contribution to English medium instruction "to make students more globally-minded and operative as ELF users" (p. 82).

In "From ELF Communication to Lingua Franca Pedagogy" Kurt Kohn, after outlining how ELF can substantially contribute to developing a communicative orientation in ELT, stresses the importance of ELF-aware teacher education to foster a change in perspective, one that takes account of ELF research findings and promotes a "capability for languaging" within a "social constructivist understanding of language learning" and "reconceptualization of standard English" (p. 90). Telecollaboration projects can provide excellent opportunities for the development of communicative capability and, together with ELF research, "for opening the windows of the foreign language classroom to the breeze of real life communication" (p. 94).

Andy Kirkpatrick's "Standards and Lingua Francas: A Personal Account" is an engaging narrative of experiences in which the author found himself "torn" between multilingual repertoires and settings, and monolingual/cultural native standard benchmarks against which "competence" was judged. ELF research and B. Seidlhofer's work have greatly contributed to showing how (multilingual) ELF speakers communicate successfully in cross-cultural contexts, offering "a rigorously developed framework and way forward to push for a more equitable world" (p. 102).

Part II, "The Study of ELF in a Wider Context," comprises two sections. The first, "Sociolinguistics, Variation and ELF," opens with Edgar W. Schneider's "World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca: Relationships and Interfaces," where the historical and conceptual commonalities and differences between the two research areas—and between ELF and EFL/ESL—are discussed. Recent developments in

both WE and ELF, such as a communities—of—practice framework, a “proce-sual, communicative perspective” and the “‘poststructuralist,’ ‘transnational at-traction’ or ‘sociolinguistic of globalization’” approaches that “emphasise the creative availability of elements of English as a resource” (p. 110), make overlaps between the two areas significant; from this perspective, ELF could be viewed as “a possible precursor to emerging WEs and ESL” (p. 111).

In “ELF and New-dialect Formation” Peter Trudgill reflects on lingua franca phenomena and their linguistic consequences, from Latin and Greek to English spoken in the Bonin Islands, then focusing on Multicultural London English, a “multiethnolect” emerging from “contact between African, Caribbean, and South Asian English, as well as Cockney and Jamaican Creole,” second-language Englishes and other languages (p. 119).

Herbert Schendl’s “Historical Linguistics and ELF” explores language con-tact in triglossic Medieval England from a sociolinguistic perspective, drawing parallels with ELF on the grounds of “creative freedom and independence” (p. 123). After reflecting on similar linguistic processes characterising Latin (and English) as a lingua franca in multilingual contact situations, Schendl points to historical linguistics and ELF’s common interests in “questions of variability, change and in the endeavour of users of language to fully exploit the potentials of language, before, beyond, and outside the norms of standardisation” (p. 126).

In “What’s in a Word? Reflections on Labels Such as ‘ELF’ or ‘English’” Nikolaus Ritt points out how ELF research has provided “fresh sets of data” (p. 131) for issues and fundamental concerns in linguistics as to concepts, theories and methods. The author discusses the problematicity of widely used labels (e.g., a language, a dialect, a variety) and discusses Searle’s (1995) distinction between “brute facts” and “insti-tutional facts” (attitudes and beliefs) with reference to languages and ELF.

In “Complexity Theory and ELF: A Matter of Nonteleology” Diane Larsen-Freeman examines Taylor’s (2012) distinction between “creativity” and “innova-tion,” where the former “remains strictly within the bounds of the language sys-tem,” while the latter flouts it (p. 141); Pitzl’s (2012) definitions of norm-following (synchronic variation) and norm-developing (diachronic perspective of change) cre-ativity in ELF are also set forward. Language use, Larsen-Freeman argues, is an open system, and “comes from continuing dynamic adaptation to a specific present and ever-changing context”; thus, “L1 English speakers, English learners, and ELF users can all contribute towards expanding the semiotic potential of English” (p. 143).

Evelien Keizer’s “(Morpho)syntactic Transparency and ELF” looks at the notion of transparency—“a one-to-one relation between meaning and form” (p. 148)—from a functional discourse grammar (FDG) perspective; FDG can be a useful tool for ELF analysis as shown in the exemplifications from different language areas (third person singular present tense, phrasal agreement, sequence of tenses and raising).

In "Conversation Analysis and ELF" Jagdish Kaur focuses on conversation analysis as an appropriate tool in the study of ELF, since it "affords the researcher the means to uncover the sense making procedures that participants in ELF encounters rely on to communicate" (p. 163). The focus on intersubjectivity, the fine-grained analysis tools and the "view of talk as a practical social accomplishment" (p. 163) make conversation analysis a valuable tool to reveal the strategies used by ELF speakers in cooperative interaction, as shown in ELF literature.

Section B, "Multilingual/-cultural Perspectives and ELF", opens with Hua Zhu's "Intercultural Communication and ELF," where commonalities and points of convergence with ELF research are examined: ELF "delinking the native speaker norm and language use is not only liberating but also conducive in understanding problems in intercultural communication" (p. 173); the study of mutual understanding, rather than non-understanding, in ELF encounters, the complexity of the notions of culture in intercultural ELF communication, and the central role of negotiation constitute areas of mutual concern for the two fields.

In "Multilingual Identity and ELF" Claire Kramersch highlights how being multilingual with ELF today is connected to projections into the "wide world": in her words, "the attraction of wide open spaces – geographical spaces, cyberspaces, the desire to conquer them and to negotiate ways of populating them" (p. 181). Referring to French as a lingua franca, Kramersch shows how "common ways of conceptualizing issues" (p. 184) should be negotiated in order to ensure understanding through a lingua franca in multilingual/cultural settings.

Juliane House's "ELF and Translation" discusses the growing importance of translation in the global economy for business, legislation, the international press, tourism and advertising, as well as Internet-based communication. Despite translations into English being increasingly carried out by ELF users, the widespread assumption is that "translators should adhere to the expectations of native-English readers, rather than those of readers using ELF" (pp. 191-192). Further research, as well as pedagogic actions in the field, could help legitimize ELF translation practices.

In "Multi, Pluri, Trans. . . and ELF: Lingualisms, Linguaging and the Current Lingua Franca Concept" Cornelia Hülmbauer explores how ELF, allowing communication at an international level, and the increasing presence of different languages in superdiversity, are not in contradiction with each other. As ELF research has shown, "what links ELF to multilingualism is not only shared communicative contexts, but also structural patterns and strategic processes that find parallels in both phenomena" (p. 197), whereby speakers draw on their multilingual repertoires in (trans)linguaging processes.

Section C, "Policy, Pedagogy and ELF" opens with Guy Cook's "Cosmopolitan Combat: Politics, Teaching and Interpreting." Starting with reflections on current reactionary positions on diversity and "otherness" across Europe, Cook draws a thought-provoking parallel with the monolingual orientation characterising ELT, despite the fact that "the presence of more than one language is inherent in the language classroom" (p. 210). Cook argues that translation practices and bilingual activities should find a place in language teaching, in line with the reality of ELF as "a moral and political as well as an academic concept" (p. 214).

In "Learner Language in ELF and SLA" Elaine Tarone sets the focus on communicative competence, forcibly arguing that the priority given to accuracy in language pedagogy "has been damaging to second-language learners' development of communicative competence in general and strategic competence in particular" (p. 218). Through the analysis of oral tasks by two ESL language learners Tarone calls for a reconsideration of accuracy as "the sole criterion for success" in pedagogic practices and materials.

In "Language Testing and ELF: Making the Connection" Tim McNamara and Elana Shohamy critically examine the challenges that ELF—and "real" language use—raise for assessment and testing, highlighting several questions that need to be addressed, such as ELF and translanguaging/bi- and multi-lingual/multi-modal communication, competences, ELF and the overt use of communication strategies, as well as the impact these issues and ELF can have on testing practices.

In "Content and Language Integrated Learning and ELF" Christiane Dalton-Puffer and Ute Smit explore the implementation of CLIL-based programmes over the last two decades, focusing particularly on content and English integrated learning (CEIL) in Austria. Four concerns are then discussed: conceptual relations between ELF, EFL and ESP, functions of English in CEIL from an etic perspective, relevance of English for students from an emic perspective and consequences for educational language policies. The authors conclude that the dominance of English in CLIL/CEIL reflects its role as a lingua franca, also in out-of-school contexts, and should thus be treated in its unicity, differently from other foreign languages.

The chapter "Closing the Gender Gap: The Role of English" by Janina Brutt-Griffler and Sumi Kim discusses how English, in its "macroacquisition" dimension (Brutt-Griffler, 2002), can create spaces "to break away from gender conventions and shape different subjectivity and new symbolic possibilities" (p. 245) for Asian female students. Their findings show that learning English can create new and more egalitarian perspectives, particularly for female students, as to their societal roles in family, work and education.

Joseph Lo Bianco in "The Seidlhofer Effect: Gaining Traction for ELF in Language Planning and Educational Change" discusses the implications that ELF research, and Seidlhofer's pioneering work, can have for language policy. ELF studies

have largely shown that, rather than a deficient realization by non-native language learners, ELF constitutes a “meaning-making resource for polyglot individuals in multilingual settings which bolsters communication” (p. 266), “an additive resource used by multilinguals to expand their communication possibilities” (p. 269). It would be essential to push the “Seidlhofer effect” even further, so that key ideas and challenges that ELF poses for conceptualizations of language(s) can impact on public policy formulation.

In the “Afterword: Expanding Frontiers: Prospects on the Creativity of ELF” Marie-Luise Pitzl key-points the many issues explored in the volume, such as creativity in ELF, language variation, multilingualism, and implications for language pedagogy. Most importantly, following Seidlhofer’s outstanding work in the field, this volume shows how “ELF research has expanded (and continues to expand) conceptual frontiers in that it prompts us to go beyond ‘normal’ and established categories in linguistics” (p. 276). The bibliography of Barbara Seidlhofer’s works that closes the volume further testifies to her dedication to the exploration of ELF over almost two decades, which has paved the way for research all over the world. The volume, with the variety of views it provides, thus represents a valuable tool both in the comprehensive overview of the significant developments of ELF research, and in the new perspectives it offers for researchers and students wishing to approach this vibrant research area.

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