Global Interactions in English as a Lingua Franca. How Written Communication is Changing under the Influence of Electronic Media and New Contexts of Use

Franca Poppi.
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English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), that is, the communicative medium of choice by speakers of different languages (Seidlhofer, 2011), is currently being used on the Internet as a contact language. In this sense, Franca Poppi tries to give us a better understanding of how written interactions in ELF take place in our globalized world. Her central thesis is that non-native speakers of English should no longer be recognized as language learners but as language users of a common code, which is adapted and adopted by each community of practice.

After an introduction on the use of English for international communication, the decisive role of the Internet and the spread of English around the world in accordance with Kachru's (1992) classification of "Englishes" into concentric circles, the book reports several case studies which are gathered into two parts.

Part one groups several corpus analyses of online media. The first chapter on transcribed interviews and group discussions recorded from two international channels concludes that the classical distinction between native speakers of English and non-natives should be overcome; instead, we should refer to internationally competent and efficient interactants. The second example processes a corpus of texts taken from an Indian online newspaper to explore how the English language is modified and shaped in accordance with the communicative needs of the users. Then, the case of the Baltic Times, which tries to identify instances of localized and globalized usages of the language, shows that users employ and accommodate their linguistic resources as a result of internal negotiation. Finally, the study of a Chinese newspaper also presents examples of

localized creative expressions under the influence of culturally-shaped schemata.

Part two focuses on Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF), a term coined by Louhiala-Salminen, Charles and Kankaanranta in 2005 – see also Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta (2013) for the development of the concept. BELF is the ELF used in the business world by speakers of different mother tongues with the sole purpose of carrying out successful communication. This part includes studies on the written language of corporate websites of international companies and email communication exchanged within this environment. The first case analyzes intercultural business interactions and concludes that a company may create its own lingua franca which reflects the company's identity and is intended for its own community of practice. Next, the chapter dedicated to the language of corporate websites illustrates that the companies studied adapt BELF to create an emphatic operational relationship with their audiences and that they value accuracy of content more than language accuracy. The last two case studies deal with emails and how BELF is used as a global connecting tool among people with different national languages; the author describes how email users, while communicating in ELF, are highly influenced by their own cultural characteristics and try to adopt some common strategies in their written interactions, such as Solidarity enforcement and Conflict avoidance.

The general conclusions of the monograph posit that due to the influence of the Internet, and despite the fact that ELF is adapted and adopted in international interactions by the many communities of practice, "there is no fear that English might fragment into many unintelligible forms" (page 223) as the need to communicate is stronger than local influences.

To conclude I would like to comment on some issues that the reader may miss in the book. On the one hand, Professor Poppi, echoing Shepherd and Watters (1998), wisely introduces a fascinating and ambitious topic in computer-mediated communication (CMC): the classification of web genres. This is a challenging task since web genres are evolving constantly and their boundaries are fuzzy. Surprisingly, it is disappointing to find no reference to this in part one in relation to online newspapers and their comparison to traditional newspapers on paper, for example. Indeed, it is only at the beginning of part two when this issue is approached. Another objection I would pose to this monograph is that, sometimes, the reader fails to see the relevance of each piece of research, its purpose and its connection to the

other chapters. It seems as if the author had gathered several articles or papers published about ELF and had put them together to form this book. On the whole, despite these drawbacks, I think this monograph provides a well-documented approach to the current status of ELF that could appeal to researchers and postgraduate students.

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