

What Is International English?

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ABSTRACT

The number of people using English for international communication is increasing on an unprecedented scale and the spread of English shows no signs of stopping. There is a growing body of research on the phenomenon of international English, yet international English is defined variously in the literature and what is included in these definitions differs considerably. This review seeks to examine what is meant by the various terms employed in the literature and focuses on the international use of English by people for whom it is not a first or official, institutionalized second language, a population which is rapidly growing in number but whose linguistic behavior is still under-researched. The central questions posed are: (1) Does English used by this population constitute a new kind of English or is it simply an error-marred, simplified performance variety of English as a *native language*? (2) Is it possible that lingua franca English use will affect English as a native language? This paper will review recent empirically-based descriptive studies on international lingua franca English as well as two large-scale corpora currently being compiled in an attempt to shed light on the developing global use of the English language.

INTRODUCTION

Of the 1.2 to 1.5 billion people estimated in 1997 to have near-native command of the English language less than half lived in countries where English was the first language (L1) or official second language (L2) (Crystal, 1997). The spread of English has continued and it has been widely acknowledged that non-L1 English speakers (speakers whose mother tongue is not English) are in the majority (e.g., Jenkins, 2002; Seidlhofer, 2004). An estimated 80% of verbal exchanges in which English is used as a second or foreign language involve no L1 speakers of English (e.g., Beneke, 1991; Gnutzmann, 2000). Does this English being spoken internationally among non-L1 English speakers of different L1 backgrounds have systematic, characteristic linguistic features that might justify calling it a new kind of English, or is it merely an error-marred, simplified performance variety of L1 English? Does a majority of non-L1 speakers necessarily lead to systematic, identifiable changes in L1 English? While it is perhaps too early to discuss a stabilized variety of internationally-used English it seems that the sheer numbers of

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non-L1 English speakers suggest that some kind of effect on the English language is possible if not inevitable.

This paper will review recent and current research describing English used internationally among people for whom English is not a first or official, institutionalized second language. This is a nascent area of research and there is a dearth of empirically-based, descriptive studies focusing solely on this population, due in large part to the tendency of some researchers to include these speakers in a group with speakers for whom English is an L1 or official L2. There has, however, been some research which does make this distinction and this paper will review in detail one study of international English at the level of phonology (Jenkins, 2002) and two studies at the level of pragmatics (Firth, 1996; House, 2000), in addition to two corpora of international English currently being compiled, the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (see Seidlhofer, 2001, 2004) and the Corpus of English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings (see Mauranen, 2003). Before turning to the research, it is first necessary to review three seminal conceptual models (Kachru, 1992; Crystal, 1997; Modiano, 1999a) of the spread and use of English internationally in order to provide a theoretical context for research being conducted and to define the terminology to be used in this paper.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH

Kachru's (1992) Concentric Circles

Kachru (1992) offers a model consisting of three concentric circles as representative of “the types of spread, the patterns of acquisition, and the functional allocation of English in diverse cultural contexts” (p. 356). The center or origin is the Inner Circle (i.e., the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand), the traditional cultural and linguistic bases of English. The Outer Circle, the next largest circle, contains countries using institutionalized, non-L1 varieties of English (e.g., Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Zambia), many of these former colonies of Inner Circle countries. The Expanding Circle (e.g., China, Egypt, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Korea, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, the former USSR and Zimbabwe) includes countries where performance varieties with no official status and of restricted use are spoken in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Crystal (1997) estimates that there are 570 million Inner and Outer Circle English users and anywhere from 100 million to one billion Expanding Circle English users, this figure varying due to differing definitions of competent English use. Kachru's (1992) model is one of the diffusion of English from the traditional center to diverse intranational and international varieties or *Englishes* with “cross-cultural functional range” (p. 355). While Kachru criticizes the lack of recognition of the pluralistic reality of English use and acknowledges the change and growth of English as it spreads, Expanding Circle Englishes are nevertheless seen as far removed from the Inner Circle core and marginalized in this model: “The performance varieties of English have a highly restricted functional range in specific contexts; for example, those of tourism, commerce, and other international transactions” (p. 55). Kachru's concentric circles seem to acknowledge diversity but little commonality across Englishes, describing these varieties as separate and with the Inner Circle clearly established at the top of the hierarchy.

Crystal's (1997) Multi-dialectical Model

Crystal (1995) claims that Kachru's (1992) model does not fully describe the reality of international English use. He suggests that the concentric model can be interpreted as the Inner Circle being norm-producing, the Outer Circle being norm-developing and the Expanding Circle being norm-dependent, claiming, however, that the model is insufficient because reality is often not so clear-cut. Crystal wonders if the Outer Circle looks to Inner Circle norms or if perhaps it creates its own norms, and asks if norms might not be developed in Expanding Circle nations as well. In addition to this, defining an L1 versus an L2 can be problematic: "there are several countries where population movement, language loss, divergent language attitudes, and massive shifts in language use have made it difficult to answer the question 'What is your first language?'" (Crystal, 1995, p. 363). There may also be cases where a child's L1 is English as a Second or Foreign Language (Crystal, 1999).

While Crystal (1997) agrees with Kachru (1992) that there is not yet a common, standard worldwide variety of English, he puts forth a more integrated view of international English use where varieties are not separated into distinct circles. Crystal also uses the term Englishes, defining these new varieties of L1 English as intranational dialects on an international scale involving entire countries and regions. In this model "international varieties ... express national identities... and are a way of reducing the conflict between intelligibility and identity" (p. 134). Crystal claims that we are already multi-dialectical and that some form of standard, international spoken English is inevitable as a supplement to the dialects we make use of now: an informal local dialect, a formal intranational dialect and an educated international written dialect. Predicting that speakers of new Englishes would soon be in the majority, Crystal states that these dialects will most likely have some effect on a single standard, worldwide spoken type of English, for example, changing from stress-timed to syllable-timed rhythm, and there is no reason for them not to since non-L1 English is to some extent independent of social control.²

Crystal's (1997) multi-dialectical model may acknowledge the development of innovative variations of English and suggest that the boundaries of Kachru's (1992) concentric circles not be defined in such absolute terms. However, Crystal's model is still oriented towards the Inner Circle. While legitimizing new Englishes, Crystal (1999) nevertheless refers to them in a condescending manner reminiscent of Kachru's views on Expanding Circle performance varieties. In that, he echoes McArthur (1998):

Worldwide communication centres on Standard English, which however radiates out into many kinds of English and many other languages, producing clarity here, confusion there, and novelties and nonsenses everywhere. The result can be - often is - chaotic, but despite the blurred edges, this latter-day Babel manages to work. (p. 14)

Modiano's (1999a) Modified Concentric Circles

Drawing on Kachru's (1992) concentric circle model of English spread and use, Modiano (1999a) offers a model which he refers to as centripetal circles of international English. The

² Only two years earlier, however, Crystal (1995) had dismissed the notion of common, non-standard features of L1 and L2 English forming a *Universal Nonstandard English* as "science-fiction linguistics" (p.362). Although here the focus is on nonstandard features, it does seem to contradict his later acceptance of the role of non-L1 dialects in the development and the legitimization of new varieties of English.

innermost circle includes proficient speakers of English as an International Language (EIL), a general term including all varieties of English which function well in cross-cultural communication and which does not necessarily include L1 English. The emphasis is on functionality and there is no inherent need for consistency; varieties can be mixed and elements interchanged. The next circle includes speakers with native or foreign language proficiency, that is, speakers whose variety of English is far enough removed from standard EIL to require code-switching when speaking internationally. The third circle is comprised of learners of English and the outermost circle includes people who do not know English. In Modiano's (1999a) model, it is not necessarily L1 English speakers who define the language: "Proficient non-native speakers of EIL, rather than the native speakers who are not proficient in EIL, are better equipped to define and develop English as a tool in cross-cultural communication" (p. 25). This legitimization of non-L1 speakers is in direct opposition to Kachru's (1992) model where it is assumed that L1 speakers are proficient and norm production is restricted by geographical location. Modiano argues that English by definition as a globally functioning language can no longer be conceptualized as restricted to any particular place. There is an emphasis on the democratic nature of the use of English worldwide and with the increasing majority of non-L1 speakers, Modiano (1999b) claims that a linguistic feature is correct only if it is used and understood by the majority of proficient speakers of EIL. In this view, L1 speakers with strong regional accents do not speak standard English and idiosyncratic features negotiated into existence by two parties do not qualify as EIL. Although this position may seem to preclude the possibility of distinct varieties of EIL, for example, East Asian or European, Modiano does not specify precisely what is meant by "a particular place" therefore leaving open the possibility of large-scale regional varieties of lingua franca English. The shift in motivation to learn English from integrational to instrumental or utilitarian is also highlighted alongside the importance of functionality and the democratization of English language use.

While this model may be praised for attempting to reflect a more realistic picture of the different ways English is now being used worldwide, it has nevertheless received its share of criticism. Toolan (1999) points out that while the model may emphasize the democratization of language, it is still hierarchical with the innermost circle presented as the ideal. Kaye (1999) questions Modiano's notion that non-L1 speakers are in the best position to define and develop English, asking if it is not axiomatic that L1 speakers play a role in defining a language and its dialects. In response to the emphasis placed on diversity and the lack of a need for consistency, Simo-Bobda (1999) suggests that diversity alone should not be promoted and that some may, for example, need to learn standard American or British English for professional reasons. Consistency may be needed for other reasons as well; it would be hard to imagine the recognition, description and legitimization of a variety of English without some degree of regularity in its features and use.

DEFINING TERMINOLOGY: SHEDDING THE CONCEPTUAL STRAIGHTJACKET

One of the greatest challenges in fully accepting any conceptual model of the spread and use of English is the widespread inconsistency in terms and the confusion the differences in terminology can cause. Seidlhofer (2004) points out that in addition to the pluralization of English to Englishes (Kachru, 1992) and the term *World Englishes* (Crystal, 1997), we often

encounter *English as a(n) x: English as an international language* (e.g., Modiano, 1999a, 1999b; Jenkins, 2000, 2002), *English as a lingua franca* (e.g., Gnutzmann, 2000; Seidlhofer, 2001), *English as a global language* (e.g., Crystal, 1997; Gnutzmann, 1999), *English as a world language* (e.g., Mair, 2003) and *English as a medium for intercultural communication* (e.g., Meierkord, 1996). What is perhaps most misleading about the diverse terminology is that it is unclear exactly which speakers are included in the population being discussed. Are L1 English speakers included? If L1 English speakers are not included, what about L2 English speakers? Are only learners of English as a Foreign Language intended? The problem for many researchers focusing on English used internationally among non-L1 or non-L2 speakers of English is that many of the above categories include speakers from Outer Circle and even Inner Circle nations. The above categories indicate that the type of English spoken is spoken by and among people from different countries but often fails to indicate the status of English in the speakers' native countries. Seidlhofer (2004) emphasizes the importance of distinguishing English use which involves no L1 or L2 speakers of English from that which does and attempts to describe it independently. In defining this kind of English, she chooses the term English as a lingua franca (ELF) and cites Firth's (1996) definition: "[ELF is] a 'contact language' between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen *foreign* language of communication" (p. 211).

Seidlhofer (2004) refers to a conceptual gap in suggesting that ELF does not have a place alongside established, traditional notions of L1 or even L2 English: "There is virtually no awareness that English as a lingua franca might be what House (1999) calls *sui generis*, a linguistic phenomenon in its own right" (p. 213). The lack of awareness made apparent by vague terminology makes empirically-based, descriptive work on ELF extremely difficult and frustrating for researchers attempting to study the developing spread and use of English away from its traditional centers. Seidlhofer (2004) laments that:

what this nomenclature would seem to indicate is just how deeply ingrained the notion of nativeness is in any considerations of language theorizing, description, and therefore teaching, and hence how urgent, and how difficult, it is to shed the conceptual straightjacket of English as a native language when tackling the task of working out appropriate frameworks for ELF. (p. 212)

She urges the distinction of ELF from English use involving L1 or L2 speakers and the legitimization of ELF users as agents in the development and spread of the English language.

As we have seen, one of the major points of disagreement in the discussion of the international use of English lies in determining the forces driving the spread of the language. Is it the Inner Circle? The Outer Circle? The Expanding Circle? A combination of all three? Perhaps, discussing an agent is irrelevant. Widdowson (1997) points out the ergative nature of the verb *spread*, that is, that there may be an agent involved but it is not required. He also discusses that while the verb *spread* has the meaning *to transmit*, it is not so with language, as language naturally changes and adapts as it travels through space and time. Perhaps, in the case of English, then, it would be more appropriate to talk about the use and adaptation of the language rather than its use and spread.

Let us now turn to the research on English used by speakers for whom English is not an L1 or official L2 (the Expanding Circle) in order to determine if it is possible to identify any systematic, stable linguistic adaptations. Henceforth, English spoken by this population will be referred to as English as a lingua franca, the term being chosen not simply because it indicates a

lack of native speakers (Seidlhofer, 2004) - this aspect potentially losing relevance in the years to come as there may be children whose first language is ELF - but due more to the fact that it is a Latin, not English, term. As Jenkins (2000) points out in the spirit of the democratization of English, due to Latin's status as a dead language the term *lingua franca* belongs to no one and therefore everyone.

ELF RESEARCH

Seidlhofer (2004) emphasizes the importance of descriptive work in legitimizing ELF: "description is... important because establishing a linguistic reality, named and captured in reference works alongside ENL [English as a Native Language] and Outer Circle *Englishes*, is a precondition for acceptance" (p. 215). There has of yet been little such descriptive research but interest in ELF is increasing and there promises to be more in the coming years. To date most ELF research has involved spoken data in an attempt to focus on language removed from the standardizing influence of writing as well as to capture aspects of negotiation of meaning and mutual intelligibility crucial to understanding ELF.

Major categories of research have focused on language level, speakers' linguacultural backgrounds and language domain (Seidlhofer, 2004). The first comprehensive study at the level of phonology was Jenkins' (2000, 2002) work on the Lingua Franca Core which attempts to identify phonological features essential for ELF mutual intelligibility. There has been more work at the level of pragmatics with studies by Firth (1996), House (1999, 2000), Lesznyak (2002, 2003, 2004), Meierkord (1996, 2002) and Wagner and Firth (1997), examining telephone calls to and from international businesses based in Denmark, classroom discussions in Germany, an international students' meeting in the Netherlands, dinner conversations in the United Kingdom and further telephone calls to and from international businesses based in Denmark respectively. While most of the results indicate that ELF talk is robust, consensus-centered, and unlikely to contain frequent misunderstandings, there have been some contradictory findings and Seidlhofer (2004) suggests results may be skewed by the tendency of the violation of pragmatics norms not to lead to unintelligibility. Seidlhofer also mentions the possibility that research findings are a function of the type and purpose of the given interaction. This paper will focus primarily on Firth's (1996) study, one of the few studies conducted which takes place in a non-classroom type setting and in an Expanding Circle country, potentially lessening the level of artificiality and the influence of L1 English norms. The least amount of ELF research has been done at the level of lexicogrammar, where it is perhaps most urgently needed due to the need for extensive corpora required by research at this particular level of language. However, there are two large-scale ELF corpora currently in progress, the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (see Seidlhofer, 2001, 2004) and the Corpus of English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings (see Mauranen, 2003). Other studies have focused on ELF used by speakers of particular linguacultural backgrounds such as Asia/Southeast Asia (e.g., Kirkpatrick, 2002) or Europe (e.g., Jenkins, Modiano, & Seidlhofer, 2001). Research involving particular domains has involved international business (e.g., Firth, 1996) and academic settings (see Mauranen, 2003). While recognition of ELF and empirical interest seem to be gaining momentum there is a clear need for larger databases gathered over time in order to provide the opportunity for more conclusive identification of stable linguistic adaptations (if any) produced by ELF interactions.

ELF Research at the Level of Phonology

The introduction to Jenkins' (2002) study displays a clear pedagogical perspective driving her research. She claims that it is often assumed that ELF talk (she uses the term EIL to refer to the same phenomenon) is like L1 English talk and that the resulting pedagogical goals, methods and materials do not meet the needs of most students learning English internationally today. Jenkins suggests that non-L1 Englishes differ most at the phonological level and, therefore, there exists an urgent need to intervene in order to preserve mutual intelligibility as English spreads. The form of intervention she suggests is a relevant, realistic pronunciation syllabus for ELF speakers which stresses difference not deficit vis-à-vis L1 English norms. In her study she aims to identify phonological features essential for ELF mutual intelligibility to be included in this syllabus.

The subjects of Jenkins' study were upper-intermediate to low-advanced students of English who are described as reasonably competent speakers but not yet fully bilingual. Three sets of data were collected and analyzed.

The first data set is comprised of five instances of communication breakdown taken from a variety of classroom and social settings over a period of three years to determine to what extent miscommunication was pronunciation-based. Jenkins' findings indicate that pronunciation-related problems were clearly the most frequent and difficult to resolve. Particularly problematic areas included consonant sounds, tonic stress, vowel length and non-permissible simplification of consonant clusters.

The second set of data is composed of two recorded information exchange tasks in the classroom which involved describing pictures to a partner, the goal being to determine to what extent ELF speakers make use of contextual clues. The findings indicate that the hearer tends to adjust the context to bring meaning in line with the acoustic information and not vice-versa. This overreliance on the acoustic signal in addition to the findings of the first data set indicating the high frequency of pronunciation-related miscommunication in general strengthen the case for the need for a more effective, focused ELF pronunciation syllabus.

The final set of data concerns accommodation skills exhibited in ELF talk where communication is critical and consists of three recorded information exchanges in the classroom and one recorded social exchange. In the same-L1 pair, a Swiss-German student described a geometric pattern for his Swiss-German partner to draw. L1 transfer tended to occur on key content words, especially nouns. In the different-L1 pair, the first Swiss-German student described a picture which his Japanese partner had to identify from a group of six. L1 transfer tended *not* to occur on key content words important to the meaning. Where transfer did occur, particularly on lexical items, the speaker seemed to make an effort to converge on a target-like L1 norm, not on the interlocutor's speech. Adjustments were made frequently on consonants, corroborating the findings of the first data set regarding the potential difficulty caused by consonant sounds. Transfer was observed involving the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ in articles but this did not appear to affect intelligibility. In a post-task interview, the non-L1 pair students said they were consciously trying to converge on target-like L1 norms for the sake of intelligibility.

The third data set was also analyzed from the perspective of task type. The third information exchange task, describing a picture for the interlocutor to draw, and the social interaction task, a discussion of one's home country, involved a Taiwanese student and a Korean student. In the information exchange task, where there was a measurable outcome, the speakers made great efforts to converge on L1 norms where meaning was crucial. Half of the transfer in

this task involved substituting /θ/ for /ð/ and using /ʊ/ for [ɹ], causing no intelligibility problems. (According to Jenkins these substitutions are also observed in L1 English interactions.) There was also considerably less transfer leading to consonant deletion in this task as there was in the social interaction task. However, Jenkins warns that these are not reliable accommodation behaviors as they occur only when intelligibility is crucial or non-comprehension is indicated.

Jenkins uses this empirical data to form the foundations of her Lingua Franca Core (LFC), a phonological syllabus designed specifically for learners of English to be spoken by and with non-L1 English speakers and which includes phonological features crucial for ELF mutual intelligibility (see Appendix A for a summary of the main core items). She also outlines a series of more general pronunciation targets for ELF speakers which highlight the differences between L1 and non-L1 English speaker goals (see Appendix B). Jenkins claims that the L1 pronunciation core is not learnable for non-L1 English speakers but that students should nevertheless be trained in receptiveness and be aware of how their pronunciation differs from L1 norms. While she does outline very specific pronunciation targets Jenkins emphasizes that, in addition to being able to manipulate all of the sounds in the LFC, ELF speakers must above all be flexible and have accommodation skills because ELF speakers display such a range of linguacultural backgrounds and levels of linguistic competence

Jenkins admits that her plan of action based on her LFC findings is controversial, mentioning Andreasson's (1994) remark that a Spanish person may be insulted to hear that he or she speaks Spanish English. In promoting her LFC, Jenkins makes clear that it is not her intention to patronize non-L1 speakers of English seeking to emulate L1 pronunciation norms. Indeed, the results of Timmis' (2002) study indicate precisely the value placed by many students on attaining L1-like pronunciation. Two thirds of students of English surveyed in 45 countries with regard to attitudes on conforming to native speaker norms viewed native-like pronunciation as a benchmark of success. Interestingly, the majority of teachers surveyed valued accented intelligibility over native-like pronunciation. While Jenkins' research is valuable in that it isolates and describes the phenomenon of ELF speech, it is unlikely that her findings will lead to any major shift in pedagogy in the near future due to the highly sensitive nature of the issues of accent and pronunciation. She states that "pronunciation ... [is] the area of greatest prejudice and preconception, and the one most resistant to change on all sides" (Jenkins, 2000, p. 4).

ELF Research at the Level of Pragmatics

Firth (1996) prefaces his study by highlighting the assumption in conversation analysis that interlocutors have a shared, stable level of linguistic competence and claiming that this assumption does not reasonably apply when the data collected are from subjects for whom English is used as a lingua franca, "a 'contact language' between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen *foreign* language of communication" (p. 240). The purpose of the study is to examine the nature of conversational competence and to determine if the assumptions and findings of conversational analysis are applicable in ELF talk as they are in monolingual L1 English talk.

The data is comprised of a corpus of recorded business telephone calls involving the managers of two Danish international trading companies and their international clients. Firth is careful to avoid using the terms *foreigner talk* or *interlanguage talk*, conceptualizing his subjects as English users rather than deficient learners lacking native-like competence. Analysis of the data indicates several consensus-oriented linguistic behaviors. Firstly, there is evidence of the

“let it pass” phenomenon, whereby an unclear item is allowed to pass in conversation as it assumed it will become clear or irrelevant later on. This phenomenon is not exclusive to ELF talk but it is a very common feature of ELF interaction. One problem with evidence of this behavior is that it is sometimes difficult to determine if the hearer did in fact let it pass or simply did not catch the problem. Secondly, there is evidence of the hearer drawing attention away from the interlocutor’s incorrect forms: “Faced with the other party’s marked lexical selections and unidiomatic phrasings, the hearer behaves in such a way as to divert attention from the linguistically infelicitous *form* of the other’s talk. This commonly precludes . . . doing ‘other-repair and ‘candidate completions’” (p. 245). Lastly, similar to monolingual talk where one’s interlocutor’s wordings and grammatical constructions are often incorporated into one’s own talk, the subjects sometimes incorporated their interlocutor’s unidiomatic and marked usage into their own turns. Firth concludes that ELF speakers “can learn and use known (and also nonstandard) resources *as they become known-in-common* during the talk itself” (p. 247; see Appendix C for an excerpt highlighting this phenomenon). However, the amount of anomalous, marked usage tolerable is dependent on the inherent robustness of the activity and context, that is, the spelling of names is not a robust activity and there is, therefore, a low tolerance for marked usage in this particular type of interaction.

In general, the data indicate the presence of the basic mechanisms of conversation, for example, turn-taking and topic management, but, in contrast with monolingual L1 English talk, there appears to be less attention paid to instances of non-standard form, that is, errors in the traditional sense, and much effort is put into making the talk appear normal and ordinary even if it is not through local interpretive and linguistic work. Firth describes the aims of the linguistic behavior observed in this study: “First, to pursue, through talk, substantive institutional goals (e.g., to agree upon conditions of economic exchange); second, to furnish the talk with a ‘normal’ and ‘ordinary’ appearance in the face of sometimes ‘abnormal’ and ‘extraordinary’ linguistic behavior” (p. 242). Despite the potential for the frequent use of marked or incorrect forms and the possible difference in the interlocutors’ levels of linguistic competence, the findings indicate that ELF talk is robust and consensus-oriented, resulting consistently in successful communication. One final difference of note between ELF talk and monolingual L1 English talk is that ELF speakers tend to display awareness of their lack of shared, stable linguistic competence. Their perceived or actual lack of competence is often made relevant in talk implicitly, for example, by laughing at one’s own nonstandard marked usage, or explicitly, for instance, by asking “How do you say in English. . .?”

As noted earlier (Seidlhofer, 2004), the findings of ELF research at the level of pragmatics may be influenced by type and purpose of the given interaction and perhaps specifically in the case of international business, findings may be affected by the increased frequency and salience of pragmatic features characteristic of business transactions, such as the heightened importance of face-saving strategies. Let us now briefly turn to a study (House, 2000) in a classroom setting to demonstrate how interaction type and purpose may or may not affect results of research at the level of pragmatics.

Contradictory Findings

A different take on the findings that ELF talk is robust and consensus-oriented is presented by House (2000) as she analyzes the preliminary results of part of a long-term study of ELF talk among university students in Germany involving a variety of real-life and simulated

interactions. The subjects in one of these interactions were a German female, a Korean female, a Chinese male and an Indonesian male, all between the ages of 25 and 30. They were asked to read a short text on the role of English as a lingua franca and the following 30-minute discussion was taped and transcribed. Students were interviewed two weeks later to obtain introspective feedback and metapragmatic assessments. The first major trend observed by House is overarching, self-centered behavior. Students engaged in parallel monologues and exhibited no fine-tuning of moves to fit their interlocutors' needs; questions were ignored, there was a lack of prefacing or mitigating of dissimilative action, and new topics were started without preparation or initiation. The second, apparently contradictory, trend is that of local, co-constructive behavior demonstrating consensus-orientation and feelings of solidarity. House theorizes that the subjects may be expressing solidarity as ELF speakers and suggests that this is crucial because their common identity as speakers of ELF "needs to be created afresh from scratch with each new ELF event because ELF is felt to be an instrumentally opportune medium of communication, not a cultural symbol to identify with in an affective and integrative way" (p. 263). House offers another interpretation that the consensus and solidarity displayed may be superficial and masking deeper misunderstandings and cultural differences. In the context of a classroom discussion there is no need for real consensus as was seen in Firth's (1996) study, where exact conditions of economic exchange had to be agreed upon; it is perhaps easier in the classroom for the illusion of agreement to prevail. Indeed, in the post-task interview the Korean student pointed out that consensus-orientation is a token of politeness in Asia and may have given the discussion an appearance of consensus without true agreement.

To some extent House's study corroborates Firth's (1996) findings that despite ELF speakers' potential lack of pragmatic competence, effort is made toward making talk appear normal; House (2000) notes in her subjects an "attempt to jointly construe the illusion of having a 'proper discussion'" (p. 266). However, she warns that the illusion may lead to frustration in the long run, mentioning that in the post-task interview the German student pointed out that many of her questions directed to the group were left unanswered. In this study, the desire for the illusion of consensus seems to have led to the behavior of parallel monologues which, in turn, gave the impression that the subjects were not listening to one another.

As we have seen from these two differing perspectives on the consensus-orientation aspect generally found to be a central feature of ELF talk, it seems that the context and activity of the particular interaction can affect the interpretation of the data and may affect the data itself as well. Firth (1996) focused on international business interactions with the goal of buying and selling commodities, while House (2000) looked at a quasi-artificial classroom discussion on a pre-set topic; it seems, in this case, that the very practical goals of the interaction type of the former study might have given the false impression that ELF talk is consensus-oriented. In the area of research on ELF at the level of pragmatics, there is a clear need to create a larger pool of data to begin to move toward making more conclusive claims about the nature of ELF interaction which hold true across various contexts and activities.

ELF Research at the Level of Lexicogrammar

Initial Corpus-Based Research on English/es

Since the early 1960s several large-scale corpora of English have been compiled but most of these have focused on either American English or British English, the majority looking at the

latter variety. Most of the corpora have included only written not spoken data; there is as of yet no major corpus of spoken American English (see Crystal, 1995). With the spread of English and increased numbers of English speakers worldwide came an interest in creating corpora reflecting this new reality, and in the early 1990s the International Corpus of English (ICE) and the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE) were begun (e.g., Greenbaum, 1996; Greenbaum & Nelson, 1996).

The ICE was begun in 1990 at the University College of London and focuses on English used in countries where it is a majority first language or an official additional language. It is composed of 18 sub-corpora to be studied comparatively or independently representing the following nations and regions: Australia, Cameroon, Canada, the Caribbean (Jamaica), East Africa (Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania), Fiji, Ghana, Great Britain, Ireland (The Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland), Hong Kong, India, New Zealand, Nigeria, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa and the USA. The sub-corpora were compiled between 1990 and 1994 and each contains one million words. Both written and spoken language is included with a focus on standard, educated English. These sub-corpora are being grammatically annotated, but the project leaders themselves admit that there is not yet technology capable of processing non-standard structures not described by grammar. A major aim of the ICE is to offer “the first systematic collections for many national varieties of English” (Greenbaum, 1996, p. 10). It is also suggested that the ICE might also be used in sociolinguistic or pedagogical research, or for international test design.

The ICLE, designed as a complement to the ICE, was begun in 1990 at the Catholic University in Louvain, Belgium. In creating the ICE, the researchers were aware that “it... [left] out a sizeable - arguably the largest - group of non-native users of English in the world, i.e. foreign learners of English” (Greenbaum, 1996, p. 13). The ICLE contains two million words and is comprised of non-technical, argumentative essays from university-level advanced learners of English primarily from European, Expanding Circle-type countries. As Greenbaum puts it, the two main goals are “to uncover the factors of non-nativeness or foreign-soundingness in advanced learner writing... in areas of syntax, lexis, and discourse” (p. 17) and to distinguish L1-dependent features from crosslinguistic invariants. Greenbaum emphasizes the potential use of the ICLE as a pedagogic tool:

It is likely that the vast numbers of non-native speakers of English who now use English as a language of communication will have some effect upon the evolution of the language. Nevertheless, there are ways of countering this spread of unidiomatic English If ... [the ICLE] findings are translated into new learning materials, better adapted to the learner’s needs, maybe we will be able to make the pendulum swing back the other way! (p. 23)

As far as Greenbaum and Nelson (1996) are concerned, the ICE and the ICLE together cover English speakers in all three of Kachru’s (1992) concentric circles. Seidlhofer (2004), however, points out that “although the ... [ICE] is indeed international and captures *Englishes* across the globe, it ... actually excludes the use of English by the worldwide majority of English speakers, namely those for whom it mainly functions as an international lingua franca, most of whom are non-native speakers of English” (p. 224). She criticizes researchers for focusing on the traditional Inner Circle origins of English when they are ostensibly attempting to describe international English use: “We ... have an inverse relationship between perceived significance

and relevance of ‘English’ in the world at large and linguistic description focusing on the ‘ancestral home’³ of the language” (Seidlhofer, 2001, p. 140). One of the main problems in descriptions of ELF is an overabundance of subjective, superficial impressions because we can have no native speaker intuitions since there are by definition no native speakers of ELF (Seidlhofer, 2001). This unprecedented circumstance necessitates a drastically new research approach: “Whereas the question usually asked about ... [English as a Native Language] by learners and teachers is ‘*can* one say that in English as a mother tongue?’, ... the only really useful analogous question about ELF would have to be ... ‘*has this been* said and understood in English as a lingua franca?’” (Seidlhofer, 2001, p. 149).

The Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English

The Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE) (see Seidlhofer, 2001), currently being compiled at the University of Vienna under the direction of Barbara Seidlhofer, is attempting to answer precisely this question. The first stage aims to record half a million words, including only spoken ELF at this stage, in order to capture the full range of variation as well as intelligibility issues raised by the reciprocal nature of spoken communication. The speakers are nearly fluent adult ELF users of different L1 backgrounds whose education and upbringing were not conducted in English. Speech situations are mainly face-to-face and unscripted but sometimes partly pre-structured. Both public and private speech is being recorded in a variety of settings, functions, and participants’ roles and relationships. The overriding feature of the data is that they represent unselfconscious, instrumental (as opposed to identificatory) English use. Two fundamental criteria are that no L1 English speakers are to be involved in recorded interactions, and the place of interaction must be a non-Inner Circle country, that is, where English is not the predominant language.

A major aim of the VOICE is to find salient common features of ELF (if any) despite the range of speakers’ L1 and L2 backgrounds and ELF proficiency levels. Other research questions include determining if there are ungrammatical features (with respect to L1 English) which cause no communication problems, and if simplifications of L1 features are standard in ELF. A final essential question is whether mutual accommodation is more important in ELF than correctness or idiomaticity.

Although it is too early to present VOICE data and analysis, Seidlhofer (2001) does present a transcribed ELF speech sample and an example enquiry in the manner that will be used to interpret VOICE data in the near future. In the excerpt, an L1 French speaker and an L1 German speaker are discussing which picture to select for an advertising campaign for a charity. Seidlhofer characterizes the interaction as successful as consensus is reached and both speakers act as initiators and recipients despite many deviations from standard L1 English. The presence of comical phrases (e.g., *a picture with child*), idiosyncrasies (e.g., *makes people to spend money*), and traditionally serious grammatical errors (e.g., *he look very sad*) do not hinder the ultimate success of the interaction. Seidlhofer states that many of her investigations have confirmed that a large amount of ELF communication takes place at the relatively low level of the two speakers in this excerpt and that “quite often it is features which are regarded as ‘the most typically English,’ such as 3rd person –s, tags, phrasal verbs and idioms, which turn out to be non-essential for mutual understanding” (p. 149). In a subsequent publication, Seidlhofer (2004) reiterates that it is still too early to report results-based qualitative investigations of

³ “Ancestral home” is a term originally used by Achebe (1975).

VOICE data, but that there are some regularities which have led to the hypothesis that certain traditionally serious errors do not hinder successful ELF communication. According to Seidlhofer, these typical errors include:

- dropping the third person present tense –s
- confusing the relative pronouns *who* and *which*
- omitting definite and indefinite articles where they are obligatory in ENL, and inserting them where they do not occur in ENL
- failing to use correct forms in tag questions (e.g., *isn't it?* or *no?* instead of *shouldn't they?*)
- inserting redundant prepositions, as in *We have to study about...*
- overusing certain verbs of high semantic generality, such as *do, have, make, put, take*
- replacing infinitive-constructions with *that*-clauses, as in *I want that*
- overdoing explicitness (e.g., *black color* rather than just *black*) (p. 220)

While these common errors do not seem to impede communication, there is evidence that what often leads to problems is lack of familiarity with vocabulary, especially in conjunction with poor paraphrasing skills, and *unilateral idiomaticity*, that is, when expressions such as metaphors, idioms and phrasal verbs used by one speaker are not known to his or her interlocutor (Seidlhofer, 2004). Although it is too soon to make any conclusive claims, the data seem to indicate that there are some common features of ELF despite the range of L1 and L2 backgrounds and ELF proficiency levels and that there are 'ungrammatical' features which cause no communication problems. Whether or not there are simplifications of L1 features which are standard in ELF remains to be further investigated in addition to the issue of whether the relative balance of mutual accommodation and correctness or idiomaticity is different for ELF than it is for non-ELF.

The Corpus of English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings

The other large-scale ELF corpus currently underway, the Corpus of English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings (ELFA) (see Mauranen 2003), is pertinent both to the study of ELF lexicogrammar and the domain of ELF in academic settings. The research angle is that a standard international variety of English is both an unrealistic and undesirable goal, and that it would be much more realistic to develop standards by level of language (e.g., phonology), function (e.g., academic or business English) or region (e.g., Europe). (Indeed, Widdowson (1997) argues that all internationally-used English is, in fact, English for Specific Purposes.) The goal of the ELFA is to describe and legitimize a sub-variety of ELF where the aim is efficient and adequate communication, and whose speakers "manage important parts of their lives using ELF fluently [and] are not construed as learners as if they were on the way toward the (unattainable) goal of nativeness" (Mauranen, 2003, p. 514).

The data are being collected primarily in international degree programs and other programs conducted in English at the University of Tampere in Finland but also at the Tampere Technological University and at international conferences. The goal is to record half a million words of spoken ELF in academic settings, the spoken mode being chosen due to the fact that until now it is almost exclusively written academic English which has been studied. Speech events are naturally occurring and involve no L1 English speakers, although when this does occur it is noted. Sampling criteria include genre/event type (e.g., workshops or lectures) and

disciplinary domain (e.g., social science or technology). Selection criteria for genres are based on (a) prototypicality, (b) influence (number of participants affected), and (c) prestige (status within discourse community). Speech samples are coded monologic or dialogic as well as scripted, partially-scripted, or unscripted.

Initial predictions were of contact-induced changes to standard L1 English including the use of universally unmarked features and frequent simplification (Mauranen, 2003). It was also hypothesized that self-regulative patterning and the creation of new formulae within ELF by ELF speakers might be occurring. Preliminary data have indicated that academic ELF is like academic L1 English in that hedges are frequent and salient, but that academic ELF is more like general ELF in that there is a large amount of evidence of self-repairs but little other-repair with regard to instances of grammatically non-standard forms with respect to L1 English.

The researchers predict some problems detecting certain linguistic phenomena using a corpus as a research tool, stating that typically corpora fail at the pragmatic and phonological levels (Mauranen, 2003). They suggest that the pragmatic phenomenon of misunderstanding may not be made apparent through concordancing as concordancing does not capture repetition, a common indicator of misunderstanding. It is also mentioned that the likelihood of nonstandard forms may make necessary time-consuming work with the recorded soundtrack (as opposed to the computerized database) and there is also the risk that mispronunciations will be approximated or normalized and, therefore, lost as they are entered into the corpus. Other limitations of corpora-based research (Crystal, 1995) which apply just as much to the VOICE as to the ELFA include difficulties with copyright law, especially with spoken data where often many people are involved and there are few set precedents. Untagged corpora do not indicate word class, a necessary piece of information for lexicogrammar research. Standardizing texts of different formats and modes (e.g., spoken vs. written) into a machine-readable format can be problematic: how should paragraph divisions in written samples or stress in spoken samples be included? Despite all of these limitations, there are significant advantages to conducting research using corpora: they can offer information about the frequency, distribution, and typicality of a wide array of linguistic features including words, collocations, spellings, pronunciations, and grammatical constructions (Crystal, 1995). Indeed, this type of information which can only be provided by an extremely large pool of data is essential in answering our original question as to whether it is possible to identify common, systematic features of English spoken internationally as a lingua franca.

CONCLUSION

Despite the limited amount of empirically-based descriptive research on ELF, there are two common threads in many of the research findings to date. Firstly, there seems to be evidence that L1 English norms and standards are not relevant to successful ELF communication and many major errors (with respect to L1 English norms) do not hinder ELF communication. Secondly, due to ELF speakers' lack of a shared, stable level of linguistic competence (Firth, 1996), there is some evidence that accommodation behaviors and consensus orientation are highly salient and essential elements of ELF. However, the question remains as to whether these are positively defined characteristics of ELF or rather merely negatively defined characteristics of ELF which reflect deficiencies vis-à-vis L1 English.

There is not yet enough data to begin to answer this question, largely due to the lack of research attempting to determine if ELF is a distinct dialect of English, or indeed, even an entirely different variety altogether. It is the lack of recognition and a clear definition of ELF that has perhaps contributed most to the dearth of studies. A crucial issue, addressed neither fully nor consistently in the literature, is that of what existing conditions a linguist, a dialectologist, or a cognitive psychologist would be prepared to accept in order to call something a language as opposed to a dialect, a pidgin, or a creole. The legitimacy of ELF has been clouded by its image of functionality and its lack of L1 speakers with their accompanying intuitions. Due to this (arguable) lack of L1 ELF speakers, ELF is sometimes viewed as an incomplete, developing form of L1 English, like a kind of pidgin English with all the negative connotations. Perhaps to a limited extent ELF could be seen as a type of pidgin English in that functionality is the end goal. Due to its lack of native speakers, there is no further goal; it is fully formed in its lack of a fixed form. However, ELF is used on such a large scale it seems that it deserves to be investigated further before assigning it to this category. Indeed, it is possible that in the future it will develop and stabilize into a more fixed variety as English is used more widely and the majority of non-L1 English speakers grows. There is a need for research across language functions, regions, and domains over time in order to gain a fuller picture of the nature of ELF and move away from its strong associations with unsystematic functionality.

It will be interesting to see if increasing use of the Internet worldwide will promote the development and stabilization of distinct linguistic features of ELF since the Internet combines written and spoken modes of communication. The written nature of text on a screen is a stabilizing force while the more spoken nature of e-mail, chat rooms, newsgroups, voice-conferencing, and so forth, lends itself easily to linguistic innovation (Crystal, 2001). Crystal (2001) makes the claim that new technology has immediate linguistic consequences and that “the readiness with which people do adapt language to meet the needs of new situations, which is at the heart of linguistic evolution ... is going to be fully exploited in the next few decades, with the emergence of yet more sophisticated forms of digitally mediated communication” (p. 224). Perhaps ELF will evolve into such a distinct variety that it will no longer be sufficient for L1 English speakers to be aware of its existence (see Kubota, 2001; Hassall, 1996) but rather it will become necessary to learn how to speak ELF in order to communicate internationally (Jenkins, 2002; Seidlhofer, 2004). Whatever direction ELF takes, the apparently increasing numbers of ELF speakers dictate that L1 English speakers will be forced to make linguistic accommodations in some way as members of a minority language community in order to survive in this age of global communication. The nature of these accommodations remains to be seen.

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APPENDIX A

Summary of main items of Jenkins' (2002) Lingua Franca Core

1. *The consonant inventory with the following provisos:*

- some substitutions of /θ/ and /ð/ are acceptable (because they are intelligible in ELF);
- rhotic 'r' rather than non-rhotic varieties of 'r';
- British English /t/ between vowels in words such as 'latter,' 'water' rather than American English flapped [ɾ];
- allophonic variation within phonemes permissible as long as the pronunciation does not overlap onto another phoneme, for example Spanish pronunciation of /v/ as [β] leads in word-initial positions to its being heard as /b/ (so 'vowels' is heard as 'bowels' etc.).

2. *Additional phonetic requirements*

- aspiration following word-initial voiceless stops /p/ /t/ and /k/ e.g. in [p^hɪn] ('pin') as compared with /spɪn/ ('spin'), otherwise these stops sound like their voiced counterparts /b/ /d/ and /g/;
- shortening of vowel sounds before fortis (voiceless) consonants and maintenance of length before lenis (voiced) consonants, for example the shorter /æ/ in 'sat' as contrasted with the longer /æ/ in 'sad', or the /i:/ in 'seat' as contrasted with that in 'seed'.

3. *Consonant clusters*

- no omission of sounds in word-initial clusters, e.g. in promise, string;
- omission in middle and final clusters only permissible according to L1 English rules of syllabic structure, e.g. 'factsheet' can be pronounced 'facsheet' but not 'fatsheet' or 'facteet';
- /nt/ between vowels as in British English 'winter' pronounced /wɪntə/ rather than American English where, by deletion of /t/, it becomes /wɪnə/;
- addition is acceptable, for example 'product' pronounced [pɹɪ'ɒdʌktɔ] was intelligible to NNS interlocutors, whereas omission was not, for example 'product' pronounced /'pɒdʌk/.

4. *Vowel sounds*

- maintenance of contrast between long and short vowels for example, between 'live' and 'leave';
- L2 regional qualities accepted if they are consistent, except substitutions for the sound /ɜ:/ as in 'bird,' which regularly cause problems.

5. *Production and placement of tonic (nuclear) stress*

- appropriate use of contrastive stress to signal meaning. For example the difference in meaning in the utterances 'I came by TAXI' and 'I CAME by taxi' in which nuclear stress is shown in upper case. The former is a neutral statement of fact, whereas the latter includes an additional meaning such as 'but I'm going home by bus'.

APPENDIX B

Jenkins' (2002) NS and EIL pronunciation targets

	NS target	EIL target
1. The consonantal inventory	all sounds	all sounds except /θ/, /ð/ and [ɹ]
	RP non-rhotic /r/ GA rhotic /r/	rhotic /r/ only
	RP intervocalic [t] GA intervocalic [ɾ]	intervocalic [t] only
2. Phonetic requirements	rarely specified	aspiration after /p/ /t/ and /k/ appropriate vowel length before fortis/ lenis consonants
3. Consonant clusters	all word positions	word initially, word medially
4. Vowel quantity	long-short contrast	long-short contrast
5. Vowel quality	close to RP or GA	L2 (consistent) regional qualities
6. Weak forms	essential	unhelpful to intelligibility
7. Features of connected speech	all	inconsequential or unhelpful
8. Stress-timed rhythm	important	does not exist
9. Word stress	critical	unteachable/can reduce flexibility
10. Pitch movement	essential for indicating attitudes and grammar	unteachable/incorrectly linked to NS attitudes/grammar
11. Nuclear (tonic) stress	important	critical

Note: Jenkins' *NS* and *EIL* are equivalent to *L1 English speaker* and *ELF*, respectively, as defined in this paper.

APPENDIX C

Firth's (1996) telephone call excerpt containing example of an ELF speaker incorporating his interlocutor's nonstandard usage into his own speech

- 1 B and u::h the problem is the quality after being uh released from the customs
2 two weeks later .hh (0.2) they started with this problem
3 (0.7)
4 H → their::: yes their::: u:h (0.2) their cartons- k- their bricks get u::h (.) blowing
5 uh [like the balloons]
6 B → [yah that's it] yeah the bricks g- get blowing and uh they had
7 suffering=they have a very bad reputation (.) very very:..... ((2.8
8 sec. sound stretch)) (.) worse name.hh commercial name in the market

Note: Speakers are discussing shipments of cheese which had been fermenting and going bad ('blowing') during customs delays.