

ROUTLEDGE ENGLISH LANGUAGE INTRODUCTIONS



# Global Englishes

A RESOURCE BOOK FOR STUDENTS



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3rd Edition

previously  
published as  
**WORLD  
ENGLISHES**



example, it does not take into account the sociolinguistic realities of creole-acquiring children, who are likely to learn the language of one or both parents in addition to acquiring a creole. They thus grow up bilingual, with their two or more languages affecting each other as they acquire them simultaneously (see Sebba 1997: 176–182).

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## ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LINGUA FRANCA

A6

### Growth of interest in English as a Lingua Franca

In unit A5, we looked at the origin and development of pidgin languages. We turn now to lingua francas, and specifically to English. Although the origin and development of lingua francas are not the same as those of pidgin languages, both serve the purpose of providing a means of communication among people who do not share a first language. Thus, at various times over past centuries, languages such as Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Arabic, and Portuguese have served as lingua francas, and in the case of Arabic and Portuguese still do so today. Meanwhile not only has English itself existed previously as a lingua franca in various parts of the world at different points in its history, but over the past few decades it has become the world's primary lingua franca to an extent that is and has been unprecedented among the others.

Of all the themes covered in this book, English as a Lingua Franca, or ELF, has seen the most dramatic developments in the years following the writing of its first and second editions. For over the past decade or so, there has been an increasing amount of research into ELF, the establishment of an international ELF conference series held in venues around the world, the launch of the *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca* and book series, *Developments in English as a Lingua Franca* (both published by De Gruyter Mouton), a massive number of publications on ELF, as well as a fast growing number of PhD theses (e.g. Baker (2009), Cogo (2007), Dewey (2007a), Hynninen (2013), Kalocsai (2011), Kaur (2008), Kitazawa (2013), Pitzl (2011), Pölzl (2005)). In addition, there have been major developments in ELF corpora, in particular, the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English, or VOICE (see Seidlhofer 2002), the corpus of English in Academic Settings, or ELFA, (see Mauranen 2003), and the Asian Corpus of ELF or ACE (see Kirkpatrick 2010b). Corpora of this kind have made it possible for researchers around the world to explore the ELF phenomenon at all linguistic levels, in different geographical regions (e.g. Seidlhofer, Breiteneder and Pitzl 2006 on ELF in Europe, Deterding 2013 on ELF in South and East Asia), in a wide range of domains, both professional and social, and in respect of intercultural awareness (e.g. Baker 2012).

While research into communication in which English is used as the common language, or lingua franca, had been conducted since the 1990s (see e.g. Firth 1996, James 2000, Meierkord 1996), the focus of that research was on how, *despite its deficiencies* (when compared with 'correct' English, i.e. ENL), this communication was often successful. ELF research proper is of a different nature. It takes as its starting point a position similar to that held by researchers of Outer Circle Englishes: that just

because a language item differs from the way it is produced by Inner Circle speakers, it cannot be assumed to be an error but may be an example of contingent creativity and adaptation, or even of language contact and change in progress.

In a seminal article published in late 2001, Seidlhofer pointed out that despite the fact that “ELF is the most extensive contemporary use of English worldwide . . . what constitutes a target is still determined with virtually exclusive reference to native-speaker norms”. Thus, there was, she noted, “a conceptual gap” which could only be remedied by according ELF “a central place in description alongside English as a native language” (pp. 133–135). Hence the urgent need for ELF corpora to be collected in addition to corpora of ENL. Although ELF research based on this same premise had already been published (e.g. Jenkins 2000), it was Seidlhofer’s article that acted as a clarion call and from which widespread interest in ELF can be dated.

Indeed, until that point, remarkably little consideration had been given to the implications of ELF, with the few scholars working on it tending to be seen as part of the **World Englishes paradigm**. And to an extent this was true. For both paradigms explore the spread of English beyond its original mother tongue settings, and both are interested in the ways in which the resulting Englishes develop in their own right as expressions of their new users’ identities and do not regard the resulting use of English as deficient by definition. However, World Englishes scholars, regardless of whether their focus is on the postcolonial Englishes (as it mostly is), or on the Englishes of the other two circles, are concerned with relatively fixed “linguistically identifiable, geographically definable” varieties of English (Kachru 1992a: 67). This is not so for ELF researchers, whose concern is with the far more fluid and flexible kinds of English use that transcend geographical boundaries.

A better approach to ELF than the traditional ‘varieties of English’ approach is, therefore, the notion of **similects** (Mauranen 2012: 28–29). As Mauranen points out, in the non-postcolonial (Expanding Circle) countries, speakers normally use their L1 rather than English to communicate with each other, and reserve English for communication with people from different L1s than their own. So although speakers of, say, Finnish, transfer features from their L1 into their English in broadly similar ways (in other words, Finnish people share a similect), there is no traditional community of Finnish English speakers. Instead, their English develops *in parallel* with each other through communication with people from different similects (e.g. Japanese, Spanish), rather than in interaction among themselves. This, in turn, accounts both for what is shared among ELF users from the same L1 such as Finnish, and for what is shared among many ELF users from different L1s such as Finnish, Japanese, and Spanish speakers of English. It also demonstrates how ELF, in common with other lingua francas, is essentially hybrid and plurilingual in nature. We will take this up again in B6 when we look at the nature of ELF. But before we go on to do so, it will be helpful to consider the reasons why English became, and still remains, the world’s primary lingua franca.

### **Why is English the world’s primary lingua franca?**

Crystal (2003b: 107) provides the following reasons. The first two relate more to Outer than Expanding Circle settings, although even this is changing in some respects as English fulfils an increasing number of new functions such as education (see C6) in the Expanding Circle.



As you read through the following reasons, consider these two points:

- Which reasons are the most relevant to the setting in which you live?
- Are the scenarios that Crystal outlines still the same as they were in 2003 when his list was published, or are you aware of any changing circumstances in relation to your own and/or other countries?

### **Historical reasons**

Because of the legacy of British or American imperialism, the country's main institutions may carry out their proceedings in English. These include the governing body (e.g. parliament), government agencies, the civil service (at least at senior levels), the law courts, national religious bodies, the schools, and higher educational institutions, along with their related publications (textbooks, proceedings, records, etc.). [As regards historical reasons, see also the reading text in D8, where Pennycook (2010) discusses how a different outcome of the Second World War would have led to a very different global linguistic landscape.]

### **Internal political reasons**

Whether a country has imperial antecedents or not, English may have a role in providing a neutral means of communication between its different ethnic groups as it does, for example, in India. A distinctive local variety of English may also become a symbol of national unity or emerging nationhood. The use of English in newspapers, on radio, or on television, adds a further dimension.

### **External economic reasons**

The USA's dominant economic position acts as a magnet for international business and trade, and organisations wishing to develop international markets are thus under considerable pressure to work with English. The tourist and advertising industries are particularly English-dependent, but any multinational business will wish to establish offices in the major English-speaking countries.

### **Practical reasons**

English is the language of international air traffic control, and is currently developing its role in international maritime, policing, and emergency services. It is the chief language of international business and academic conferences, and the leading language of international tourism.

### **Intellectual reasons**

Most of the scientific, technological, and academic information in the world is expressed in English, and over 80 per cent of all the information stored in electronic retrieval systems is in English (but see A8 for more recent

figures). Closely related to this is the concern to have access to the philosophical, cultural, religious, and literary history of Western Europe, either directly or through the medium of an English translation. In most parts of the world, the only way most people have access to such authors as Goethe or Dante is through English. Latin performed a similar role in Western Europe for over a thousand years.

### Entertainment reasons

English is the main language of popular music (particularly hip hop), and permeates popular culture and its associated advertising. It is also the main language of satellite broadcasting, home computers, and video games, as well as of such international illegal activities as pornography and drugs. [To this can be added that recently English has become the lingua franca of the performing arts (Nicoline Vanharskamp, personal communication).]

To the above points made by Crystal we could add *personal advantage/prestige* since, in many cultures, the ability to speak English is perceived as conferring higher status on the speaker.

Crystal also adds a final section ‘Some wrong reasons’. These concern beliefs that English is “inherently a more logical or beautiful language than others, easier to pronounce, simpler in grammatical structure, or larger in vocabulary” (see also the reading in D6 as regards the myth that English has a larger vocabulary than other languages). As Crystal points out, “this kind of reasoning is the consequence of unthinking chauvinism or naïve linguistic thinking”, and it is impossible to compare languages objectively in such ways. English, for example, may have few inflectional endings, but also has very complex syntax, and this has not prevented it from being learned and used around the world. So a third question for you to consider is:

- ❑ Why do you think beliefs about the intrinsic linguistic superiority of English persist?

### Defining ELF

We begin by considering how to define ELF. In the second edition of this book (p. 143), I defined it as “English as it is used as a contact language among speakers from different first languages”. A later and fuller working definition is that of Seidlhofer, according to whom ELF is “*any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option*” (2011: 7; her italics).

In the early days of ELF research, some scholars argued that ELF communication by definition did not include NESs. However, the majority do nowadays include NESs in their definitions of ELF, arguing simply that when NESs participate in ELF interactions, they should not be seen as experts because their expertise is in ENL rather than ELF communication. Having said that, because of the sheer numbers involved, it is likely that the majority of ELF interactions do in fact take place with no NESs present.

We have already considered the similarities and differences between ELF and World Englishes. Another term that requires distinguishing from ELF, although one entirely lacking in the scholarship that underpins World Englishes, is so-called **Globish**. Whereas ELF is empirically researched, Globish is an arbitrarily simplified version of English based on intuition (see, e.g., Nèrrière and Hon, 2009), and not worthy of serious consideration. However, its catchy name means that it has inevitably caught the interest of some in the media (see e.g. McCrum 2010).

Finally, we need to clarify the differences between ELF and **traditional EFL** (English as a Foreign Language). In essence, these differences arise from one basic factor: that EFL communication assumes that NNEs learn English in order to use it with NESs, whereas ELF communication assumes that NNEs learn English in order to use it so as to communicate successfully in **intercultural communication** which may, but often does not, include NESs. Thus, for EFL, native English provides the yardstick against which NNEs' use is measured, and wherever it differs from native use, it is considered to be deficient, the result of L1 'interference' and 'fossilization'. On the other hand, for ELF, successful intercultural communication is the goal, and differences from native English that achieve this are regarded not as deficiencies but as evidence of linguistic adaptability and creativity. In fact, **communication skills** such as the ability to accommodate (see B6) are considered far more relevant to successful ELF communication than the ability to mimic NESs. In this respect, research suggests that it is more often NESs than NNEs who lack such skills in intercultural communication (see C8).

## ENGLISH IN ASIA AND EUROPE

A7

### Asia and Europe: similarities and differences

In this unit, attention is focused on two large non-Inner Circle regions in which English is spoken: Asia and continental Europe (henceforth 'Europe'). In Expanding Circle Europe, increasing numbers of people are learning and using English, particularly in educational and professional contexts. At the start of the twenty-first century, a number of researchers believed this was causing English in Expanding Circle Europe to develop in the same way as it had previously developed in Outer Circle countries such as India. Some even thought a pan European English variety, **Euro-English**, might be emerging. However, the notion that the use of ELF would lead to sufficient stability for it eventually to be codified has more recently been dismissed in light of subsequent empirical findings of ELF's fluidity and contingent nature (see B6). The search for 'features' of a pan European English, or even of individual European English 'varieties', has therefore largely been abandoned in respect of Europe, and the notion of similects (see A6) is considered more helpful.

The same is also true, though to a far lesser extent, of the Asian Expanding Circle. Researchers such as Wang (2013, and see D6) now talk of 'Chinese ELF' or 'ELF with Chinese characteristics' rather than Chinese (or China) English. By contrast,