

1.1.3 The English as a Lingua Franca Discourse

Transcript

Slide 1

In this section of your course, we will be taking a look at one of the most important aspects of ELF and that is its discourse. To understand how English came to be a lingua franca, it is important to understand the spoken and written communication that is used in the ELF context.

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We will be examining ELF discourse in four sections. The first one is variability in ELF, where we will be looking at how ELF discourse exhibits differences from standard English or in the way native speakers use it. The second will be pragmatics in ELF, where we will talk about the pragmatic aspects of language in the ELF context. The third one is pronunciation in ELF, where we will study how problems in pronunciation in the ELF context can be dealt with, and the last one is misunderstandings in ELF, where we will tackle the issue of misunderstandings in ELF discourse, a rather popular topic in the ELF community.

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Since ELF discourse mainly means the English used among non-native speakers, we can assume that certain variabilities will emerge, this is a natural outcome, also an outcome that is embraced. According to Seidlhofer is characterized by “hybridity and dynamism, fluidity and flexibility... heightened by **variability** and a premium on mutual accommodation....so, variability is actually a characteristic of ELF. But what does it mean? It is using the forms It is using the forms and functions in language that are not in line with standard language or NS use of English...In other words, language features used among non-native speakers that are different from the standard use of English.

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Even when we look at any language, we will see certain variabilities emerging. It is actually a prerequisite when used as a means of interaction. Variability exists in any language. But, in ELF, it is especially recognizable. WHY? Because, when speakers from different communities need to bridge certain language and culture related gaps, there is a specific linguistic flexibility required. In other

words, sometimes, when there are cultural barriers, we need to bend some rules in the language to be able to communicate with speakers of other communities.

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And that's why, according to Seidlhofer, English gets continually **appropriated** and **refashioned** by its speakers. For the refashioning of English in ELF, the speakers need to use linguistic resources different from English and adapt these for their communicative needs.

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Hülmbauer states that ELF interactions are temporary relationships with groups of speakers that are being connected and reconnected freshly for each emerging interaction.

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Variability can occur on many **linguistic levels**: Phonology, Lexis, Morphosyntax, Pragmatics. These could be in Zero-realization of third-person singular, Word coinages, Chunks, idioms, and Phrasal verbs. For example, the Zero-realization of third-person singular, which might result in not using any third person singular -s, like, "She drive to school every day" instead of "she drives". Word coinages, for example a type of transportation used in Istanbul has been coined "metrobus", a term that is probably only used in Istanbul. Changing formulaic chunks like "that is out of the questions" to "that is out of a question",

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Let's look at our first Activity in this section. Look at the **linguistic forms** in the previous slide and discuss whether Are there any **examples** that you can give from your ELF interactions where such variability occurred? Did they occur just for one time? If yes, why? Do they happen all the time? **How** and **why** do you think those variabilities happened?

Stop the lecture now and click the link under the video to provide your answers for this Activity.

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Our second aspect of discourse in ELF is related to pragmatics. Let's start this section with an activity. Watch the video with David Chrystal talking about pragmatics and continue with the questions in the following slide.

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First of all, according to David Crystal, **what is pragmatics?** What is the most important question to be asked when studying pragmatics? What *aspects of the language* will the answer to this question reveal? How are all of the above **related to ELF?** Can you **give examples from your own context?**

Stop the lecture now and click the link under the video to provide your answers for this activity.

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In this part of our course, we will examine ELF pragmatics in three sections: first of all, we will talk about how meaning is negotiated, secondly we will take a look at the use of interactional elements and finally we will study how multilingual resources are used.

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How do ELF speakers negotiate meaning in natural talk. Here are some strategies used when meaning cannot be constructed: Pre-emption signals. What does pre-empting mean?

Pre-empting is taking action in order to prevent an anticipated event. These signals draw attention to a specific point in the conversation before any obvious non-understanding happens. These are strategies used to prevent comprehension problems.

Strategies such as repetition, both self-repetition and other-repetition, and rephrasing are widely used for interactional monitoring in intercultural communication. A variety of repetitions, ranging from word-by-word repetition to rephrasing are used for various functions. Repetition, for example, can be used both to draw attention to a possible non-understanding and to solve a communication problem afterwards

Another pre-emptive strategy of meaning negotiation is self-initiated repair. When recognizing a source of potential trouble, speakers often try to “repair” their own talk.

Another strategy of meaning negotiation in ELF interactions is the co-construction of utterances by participants. This strategy acts as a solidarity and consensus booster.

Participants’ attempts to negotiate what one of them wants to say may lead to a feeling of community and group identity. ELF seems to be used here as an egalitarian tool (cf. “We’re all in the same boat” in Cogo 2010: 303). Speakers

often negotiate their meanings and routinely support each other, even paying each other compliments.

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In this activity, we will watch an excerpt from Monty Python's Holy Grail, a comedy movie from the well-known British comedy group. Try to locate the strategies used to negotiate meaning. Stop the lecture now and click the link under the video to provide your answers for this activity.

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Another aspect of ELF pragmatics is the use of interactional elements. the management of the interaction consists of using discourse markers and back-channeling signals, which aim at managing successful discourse.

Discourse markers, like other interaction managing items, express meanings of information management and also mark interpersonal relations between interlocutors. They range from very short, fixed expressions to longer units of more or less variable sequence.

Back-channeling signals are brief verbal and non-verbal signals given to speaker to show that s/he can continue speaking

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According to House, ELF speakers do not only use different discourse markers but they also give them different functions
For example, let's consider the use of «*you know*». In ELF discourse, it is not used for interpersonal reasons or expressing common knowledge but for self-reference when emphasizing formulation difficulties and coherence matters in the speaker's own turns

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Another use for «*you know*» in ELF speech is as a relational phrase for indicating addition, contrast, opposition, concession and cause without using *and*, *but*, or *because*

It is also used when the speaker is "incoherent", searches for the correct form, and tries to correct her mistake using '*you know*' as a signal to show problems in planning

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As for back-channeling signals, these examples can be given:

According to Baumgarten and House (2010a), there is a difference between *Yes* as an Agreement marker) and *Yeah* as a presentation marker. For example *is* might be used as a Face-keeping device to display attentiveness and save time or as positive final emphasis

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The last aspect of pragmatics in ELF is using multi-lingual resources. ELF discourse does not only include English but might also entail items from the speaker's native languages. Why and when does this happen? It happens when interlocutors share L1 and routinized parts especially during Small talk, opening and closing phrases, topic boundaries

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The reason why these multi-lingual strategies are used are to share of a sense of non-nativeness, collaboratively construct meaning and to create a sense of intercultural community- membership or identity, something that is very common among speakers who come from the same L1 background and are involved in ELF contexts.

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The third section of our lecture is concerned with ELF pronunciation, which is a controversial and hotly debated subject among the ELF community. When we consider written English, then pretty much all over the World, Standard English is taught but how about pronunciation? Almost in every English teaching context, this matter is debated: Which English should be taught? British or American English? However, what happens when the learners do not WANT to or cannot learn any of these two accents?

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Jenifer Jenkins offered a solution to this debate in 2000 when she introduced the Lingua Franca Core. According to her, teacher training courses reflect a "**native-speaker bias**" (p. 1) in promoting **unnecessary and unrealistic pronunciation targets for learners**. Jenkins' LFC is a list of more teachable and learnable pronunciation points and is based on her intelligibility research on errors among NNSs.

This means that she studied the errors non-native speakers of English made and tried to figure out which errors did not cause problems in understanding the language, hence, intelligibility.

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Jenkins issued some guidelines when teaching (or learning) the pronunciation of English. This guide includes points of pronunciation mistakes that can be accepted and the ones that cannot. She divided these points into 4 parts: Consonants, consonant cluster simplification, vowel length and sentence stress. As for consonants, she says that all English consonants need to be produced accurately except the *think* and the *th* in *then*. ELF speakers also need to correctly produce the *p*, *t*, and *k* sounds at the beginning of stressed syllables like '*pin*', '*ten*' and '*kind*'

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Regarding **Consonant Cluster Simplification**, **ELF speakers'** intelligibility is compromised when a consonant from a cluster at the beginning of a word is deleted—for example, deleting */s/* from '*Spairt*' will produce '*pairt*' or deleting *t* from *train* will result in *rain*.

For vowel length, ELF speakers need to establish different vowel lengths—they also need to shorten the vowels when they are followed by a voiceless consonant like in '*ice*' and '*eyes*'

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The last one is sentence stress. When we speak, we speak in small block of words which are called '*thought groups*'—it is important to stress the one word in this thought group because listeners pay special attention to this word

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Now, watch this video entitled **How to teach pronunciation for English as a Lingua Franca Use**" by Marek Kiczowski summarizing the previously mentioned points and answer the following questions:

What **examples** for each item of the LFC does Marek give? Which **aspects of English pronunciation** do not pose **intelligibility** problems? How would you **teach** these in your classes?

Stop the lecture now and click the link under the video to provide your answers for this activity.

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The last aspect discourse in ELF we are going to examine is misunderstandings in ELF. Since ELF is characterized by the communication between non-native speakers or non-native speakers and native speakers, the incident of

misunderstandings is inevitable. How does ELF deal with these misunderstandings?

According to Oxford Dictionary, misunderstanding is the 'failure to understand something correctly' BUT, whose fault is it? Is it the speakers fault or the listeners?

Both are possible: There might be instances where the speaker was unsuccessful in communicating what s/he wanted to say or it is also possible that context or situation may have caused the hearer to misunderstand.

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According to Varonis and Gas (1985), NNSs and NSs have serious problems in communicating with each other. Likewise, Beldad and Steehouder (2012) believe that communication problems among them is unavoidable.

However, ELF speakers when communicating among themselves, use **cooperative accommodation strategies** to establish a **shared ground and understanding**

ELF speakers give great importance to understanding since their main aim is to communicate and therefore, they work hard to achieve this goal.

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To avoid misunderstandings, ELF speakers try to detect **potential problem sources** in their speech as they are about to happen and increase 'their efforts at keeping mutual understanding (Kaur, 2010) by **being as explicit as possible**.

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In addition, ELF speakers try to be **creative** in coming up with original expressions to deal with possible problems in communication.

According to Bayyurt, misunderstandings may occur for reasons that are beyond pronunciation during ELF interactions. Especially intelligibility issues in ELF contexts need to be taken into consideration in relation to cultural factors as well as linguistic factors.

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Of course, in spite all of the mentioned factors, misunderstandings do happen. In ELF interaction, the main reasons for misunderstandings are based on 1) **lexical features like insufficient vocabulary and pronunciation issues**

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Other factors are Interlocutors speaking 'past each other'

- a lack of pragmatic competence
- Speakers using the 'let is pass' strategy

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We can list **Items that cause misunderstanding** according to Gardiner & Deterding (2017) in order of frequency:

Pronunciation mistakes are the most frequent ones. Then comes Lexis related items followed by grammatically based misunderstandings. The last ones are code-switching and other miscellaneous items.

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We have to keep in mind that in misunderstandings Pronunciation is a key factor. For example: Simplifications in initial consonant clusters

- while omitting /r/ in '*brunei*' or '*from*' is not a problem
- omitting /r/ in '*process*' or /l/ in '*plastic*' might cause misunderstandings.