

# “To ELF or not to ELF?” (English as a Lingua Franca): That’s the question for Applied Linguistics in a globalized world

## “ELF ou não” (Inglês como Língua Franca): Eis a questão para a Linguística Aplicada no mundo globalizado

---

John Robert Schmitz\*  
Universidade Estadual de Campinas  
Campinas – São Paulo / Brazil

The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use.

Chinua Achebe, 1965, p. 30, *apud* D’Souza, 1988.

RESUMO: A existência de mais falantes do inglês não-nativos no mundo do que nativos, com suas próprias variedades nativizadas e institucionalizadas, bem como as próprias competências comunicativas, culturais e pragmáticas, têm contribuído para a reconsideração de práticas atuais no ensino, na formação de professores e na elaboração de livros didáticos. As publicações de autoria de Jenkins (2000, 2003), voltadas para a área de fonologia de inglês e material didático para o ensino do referido idioma como uma língua internacional, além do livro *English as a Língua Franca* (2007), sugerem um desligamento do idioma das normas de falantes nativos anglo-americanos. Essa linha de pesquisa levanta questões espinhosas para a área da Linguística Aplicada e para o Ensino de Língua Inglesa, que implicam mudanças significativas no campo de ensino de inglês no mundo. As eventuais mudanças podem ser benéficas para alguns indivíduos e uma ameaça para outros. Na minha argumentação, neste artigo, faço um apelo para uma postura equilibrada e receptiva com respeito aos temas polêmicos e às mudanças ocorridas neste mundo globalizado hoje em dia.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: língua franca, falante nativo / não nativo, exonormativo, endonormativo, língua padrão.

---

\* john.schmitz@uol.com.br

**ABSTRACT:** The realization that there are today more nonnative speakers than native speakers of English in the world with institutionalized and nativized varieties as well as their own specific communicative, cultural and pragmatic competencies has led to the rethinking of present-day practices in teaching, teacher preparation, and the writing of textbooks. Jenkins' publications (2000, 2003) dealing with the phonology of English and material for teaching English as an international language along with her book *English as a Lingua Franca* (ELF) (2007) call for the disengagement of the language from Anglo-American native speaker norms. This line of research presents serious questions for Applied Linguistics (AL) and English Language Teaching (ELT) that will, if implemented, entail major changes in that endeavor. The winds of change may indeed be beneficial for some and a threat to others. I argue in this paper for an open mindset with respect to the issues and to the new state of affairs in this globalized world today.

**KEYWORDS:** lingua franca, native / non-native speaker, endonormative, exonormative, standard language.

## Putting the threads together

I will deal in this paper with a topic of crucial importance for Applied Linguistics (henceforth, AL) and English Language Teaching (henceforth, ELT). The proponents of English as a Lingua Franca or ELF argue for a divorce of the teaching of English from its marriage to native speaker standards, particularly British and American English(es). Jenkins' (2000) groundbreaking proposal for a specific phonology of English as an International Language (EIL) represents an uncoupling of the language from native speaker pronunciation (British, American, Canadian or Australian Englishes). Gone are the days when all learners of English would unquestionably use David Crystal's scholarly *The English tone of voice: essays in intonation, prosody and paralanguage* (London: Edward Arnold, 1975) or Clifford Prator's *Manual of American English Pronunciation* (Revised edition, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1951 [1957]). The new paradigm in the area of phonology and the teaching of pronunciation in the classroom has, on the one hand, presented an alternative for learners and, on the other, has led to some debate about its feasibility in all classroom situations (DAUER, 2005).

The appearance of Lingua Franca English has contributed to rethinking the role of language assessment and testing (ELDER; DAVIES, 2006) along with reasoned debate (TAYLOR, 2006) with Jenkins (2006a, 2006b). In addition, the field of Second Language Acquisition has also been questioned (FIRTH, 1990, 1996), FIRTH; WAGNER, [1997] 2007) with regard to its dependence on native speaker standards as the measuring rod that determines

successful learning. Finally, House (2003, p. 575) calls for continuing research on ELF in Europe and elsewhere, but concludes that it is “(...) not, for the present time, a threat to multilingualism”.

Indeed exciting ideas for research in AL are available, on the one hand, and some revolt and resistance, on the other, are in the winds, for those who advocate ELF argue for language standards to be negotiated by those who learn English and not those who, by accident, happened to be born into the language.

I organize this article into seven sections, first of all, this introduction (1) followed, in the second part (2), by an overview of the role of English in Kachru's (1985) well known three circles, namely the (i) outer circle, (ii) the expanding circle, and (iii) the inner circle. This overview attempts, first of all, to point to the complexity of the presence of English in the world and, secondly, to set the stage for an analysis of the proposal for the continued implementation of English as a *Lingua Franca*. In the third section (3), I will examine in the specialized literature what ELF entails, its *corpus* and proposed phonology and arguments in favor of the new paradigm. My overall purpose is to provide a fair hearing for ELF in order to encourage a reasoned and open debate in AL and ELT. I will use the fourth part (4) of this article to look at the impact of ELF on AL. In part (5), I will examine the dissenting voices and in section (6), I briefly outline some promising results thanks to the advent of the new proposal. In the last section (7), I will conclude with some implications for language studies.

## **The Changing Equation of English in the World: Kachru's (1985) outer, expanding and inner circles at the present time**

### **The outer circle**

Jenkins (2006a, p. 49) refers to the dramatic changes in the role of English ELT in the world today as a “time of shifting sands”. Her words are indeed appropriate for English has become a global language spoken by millions of people in lands where it was imposed on the populace largely by Britain (India, Nigeria, Kenya, Singapore) and also by the United States (Philippines, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands). English is now part of the daily lives of people who are bilingual or multilingual and are (supposedly) not “natives” of the language, that is, they were not born in the inner circle countries where the language originated (England) and was transported later on by settlers in North America, Australia and New Zealand. This worldliness (PENNYCOOK, 1994, p. 6) of English

boils down to the fact that the language spread throughout the world and that there are now more “nonnative” speakers of English than native ones. Indeed the sands have shifted for those supposedly “nonnatives” consider English to be theirs, to be their own property and no longer the private terrain of native speakers in New York, London or Sydney. English is employed in Calcutta, Lagos and Singapore (to name a few locales) and put to “different kinds of uses” in the words of the renowned Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe cited in the epigraph of this article. Yet the change in the role of English worldwide entails far more than different social and cultural uses of the language.

We are dealing here with outer circle nativized or indigenous varieties (Indian English, Pakistan English, Nigerian English, Singaporean English) with their own standards and writings in the form of newspapers and magazines, on one hand, and novels, poetry, plays as well as scholarship in many fields of endeavor, both in the arts and sciences. Indeed there is nothing “un-native” with regard to Indian literature in English. Mehrotra (1995, p. 101) examines politeness roles in Indian and British English. If one visits India, it would be important to know how to use the word *please* in that variety for usage is different from British or American English. The use of the word in certain contexts in Indian English may not be interpreted as polite.

The different varieties of English in South Asia as well as South East Asia have gone their own way and are not beholden to the “foundational” British English variety, let alone to American or Australian Englishes. In outer circle nations, English is, in many cases, the official tongue employed in government and in business. Even more interesting is the fact that a renowned linguist from an outer circle country (India) (SINGH, 1995, p. 328) argues for the abandonment of the “native”/“nonnative” speaker dichotomy. He would like to see the notion of native ‘speakerism’ “get blown away in the wind” and also urges linguistics to stop “playing the native speaker game or the nonnative game”. With respect to Indian English in comparison with British English, Singh sees no difference between them and argues that “there is no structural feature *a* such that all ‘non-native’ varieties of English have *a* and no ‘native’ variety does.” (SINGH *et al.*, 1995, p. 294). Rajagopalan (1997, p. 229) adds another dimension to the issue by pointing to the underlying racist stance in the use of the term “native” to privileging place of birth, ties of blood, favoring Caucasians born particularly in Britain, USA, Australia. Discrimination still prevails for Bonfiglio (2007, p.1) points to cases in Singapore where Caucasians are preferred for employment over qualified Asian teachers.

Schneider (2003, p. 243) reminds us that the association of outer circle countries (Nigeria, India or Singapore, for example) with the label English as a Second Language (henceforth ESL) is mistaken for there exists an “(...) increasing proportion of indigenous people who grew up speaking some form of English as their mother tongue and fails to do justice to those who consistently use it as a first language.”

In the different outer circle nations, particularly in South Asia, English has not for more than two hundred years been viewed as a foreign tongue; nowadays the language sits alongside of other Asian languages and is “(...) at home by acquiring both range and depth of use” (D’SOUZA, 1988, p. 168).

This changing scenario of English in the world, where (i) nonnative speakers outnumber the native users, (ii) nativized varieties seek equal footing with British and American varieties, has motivated the commissioning of a paper financed by the British Council. In his paper, Graddol (1998, p. 10-63) points to the “decline of the native speaker” and recognizes that “(...) those who speak English as a second or foreign language will determine its world future”. His remarks reveal some apprehension about the changes in the role of English in the world today. Here are his thoughts:

[...] the need to adapt to a changing business environment, or a moral requirement to work within an ethical framework, the ELT industry will have to respond to changing international social values. This would bring a major exporting activity into the same framework which is now expected to regulate trading relations with other countries and would help to ensure that the reputation of Britain, of the British people and their language, is enhanced rather than diminished.

There is no doubt that English Language Teaching for the hegemonic nations is a multi-million dollar enterprise. The questioning of whose standard counts along with the growth of competing varieties are indeed, it would appear, to be a threat to the “ELT industry”. I do not follow Graddol’s words with respect to what the growth and spread of English in the world have to do with the reputation of Britain as a nation or its people. With regard to English, it is no longer solely *their* language, but belongs to all those who use it in the four corners of the world. It is not clear to me “whose ethical framework” is being referred to in the author’s remarks. Who determines what is considered “ethical”?

I want to turn now to examine the role of English in the expanding circle.

## The expanding circle

We encounter in the world millions of speakers of English who came to learn the language formally in schools or informally acquired in natural contexts, at work or on the streets. This vast army of learners is part of the expanding circle (Europe, Mexico, Brazil, Chile etc.) where English is a foreign language.

An interesting case indeed is Continental Europe – a major block of nations where, as Seidlhofer, Breiteneder and Pitzl (2006, p. 3) observe, “English is everywhere, and we cannot avoid it”. These authors go on to state that English in Europe is “(...) top-down by fulfilling functions in various professional domains, and simultaneously bottom-up by being encountered and used by speakers from all levels of society in practically all walks of life”. This pervasiveness of English in the lives of people in Europe has contributed to their shaping of the language to meet their own needs, that is, in the words once again of Chinua Achebe, “to carry the weight of their experience”. English, in a multilingual Europe, has surprisingly, and no doubt ironically, become *the* (sole?) candidate as the common language or *lingua franca* of the area, providing it with a sense of community. Hüllen<sup>1</sup> (2003, *apud* SEIDLHOFER; BREITENEDER; PITZL, 2006), states that English is “desired but feared”. It would appear, however, that the desire for English is stronger than the fear of it because many, many Europeans subscribe to either British or American English, favoring a standard from outside; in other words, an exonormative one, yet an increasing number of other Europeans are content to mold the language to suit their own communicative and pragmatic needs, preferring a norm negotiated within Europe, that is, an endormative standard. The members of first group prefer the *status quo* with respect to native speaker varieties, particularly British or American English, while the members of the second are content with the English that they have on hand and are not all subservient to the two leading “prestige” varieties.

Seidlhofer *et al.* (2006, p. 3) observes that in Europe, English “impinges on everybody’s life” for people there encounter commercial slogans such as “The real thing!” and “I’m lovin’ it!”. Hip hoppers as well as bank executives use English in their (very different) everyday activities”. She observes (p. 4) that

---

<sup>1</sup> In this article I will identify in footnotes those sources that I did not read but were cited by the author I actually consulted in my reading. I do this to facilitate location of the sources for my readers: HÜLLEN, W. Global English: desired and dreaded. In: Ahrens, R..(Ed.) *Europäische Sprachenpolitik. European / Language Policy.* (p. 115-120). Heidelberg Universitätsverlag, 2003.

English enters Europe, for example, “(...) bottom-up through popular music, dance, sports or computers.” This contact can come from the outer or inner circles with L1 speakers and L2 speakers.

The fact that “English is all pervasive” in Europe (SEIDLHOFER *et al.* 2006, p. 6) with the large number of people who speak (and write) the language has set the stage for the appearance of a Euro-English, on the one hand, influenced by native speaker varieties (exocentric standards) or English as a Lingua Franca (henceforth, ELF), on the other, that function independently being based on norms from within (endonormative standards).

In addition to Europe, English is gaining ground as time passes, for more and more people are motivated to study the language in China, Japan, Mexico and Brazil and elsewhere. Many have invested heavily in the attempt to approximate a native speaker standard and may be considered “near natives” or “native-like”; many have lived and studied in countries where English is an L1; others visit frequently the USA, Canada or Australia on business or for pleasure and have contact with native speakers both within and outside of their own countries. Yet there are other users who remain in their home countries, but use their English as a bridge to deal with the many visitors from the four corners of the world. A good number of these people may be content with their level of proficiency while others may feel insecure or have been led to feel that they are “failed natives”.<sup>2</sup>

## The inner circle

For Schneider (2003, p. 237) the three overlapping circles proposed by Kachru (1985) “(...) largely correspond to the ENL / ESL / EFL distinction”. But Kachru gives far more importance to the outer and expanding circles and it is clear that underlying his consideration of the workings of English in the world is his view that “English belongs to all who use it” and that “norms and standards should no longer be determined by Inner Circle / ENL contexts” (SCHNEIDER, 2003, p. 237). The three circles conceal more than they reveal. The problem with the notion “inner core” suggests that it is central, that is, in the “center” whereas the other circles are outside or peripheral. The notions of being “in” and “out” are indeed subjective. While the inner circle

---

<sup>2</sup> Prodromou (2008, p. xx) points out that specialists in the area of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) refer to “non-native speakers” as “(...) failed native speakers rather than users of English in their own right”.

harbors “native speakers” or, as Bonfiglio (2010)<sup>3</sup> prefers, L1 users of English, the ENL (English as a native language) tag, according to Schneider “(...) ignores the situation, experience, and language varieties of minorities like Native Americans, Hispanic Americans” in the US or the presence of Aborigines in Australia or Maoris in New Zealand (SCHNEIDER, 2003, p. 237). In the USA, Kurath in his *Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada* refers to some twenty-four dialects or varieties (HENDRICKSON, 1986, p. 194). So, the notion “native speaker” is far from being uniform.

The inner circle nations are far from being homogeneous due to the large number of temporary or permanent resident immigrants who interact with the L1 users (and with one another) in social situations and study English as a second or foreign language. Inner circle cities are, in many cases, multilingual. Menken (2011, p. 121) cites Garcia and Fishman and remarks that “(...) the familiar nickname ‘[T]he Big Apple’ was rechristened as “The Multilingual Apple” by Garcia and Fishman<sup>4</sup> (2002, p. 4) who aptly note that English has never been, and cannot be considered today, New York’s vernacular.” Many other cities such as London, Liverpool and Toronto are multilingual worlds. In the USA (as well as in Britain, Australia or Canada) there are large groups of L1 speakers of languages other than English. One example is Monterrey Park, California, where one finds large numbers of Chinese residents and that city is “a major center of Chinese commerce and culture in Southern California” (DICKER, 2000, p. 58). Another is Miami Dade County, Florida, where “(...) [o]ver half the population is Hispanic, and Cuban Americans hold many of the top positions in government and education (CLARY,<sup>5</sup> 1997, *apud* DICKER, 2000, p. 58). The point here is that one finds in the inner circle people whose L1 is not English but who employ the language to interact with L1 English speakers as well as fellow residents in the USA who are L1 speakers of languages other than English. It

---

<sup>3</sup> In his lucid book *Mother Tongues and nations*, Bonfiglio (2010) deconstructs the notions “native speaker” and “mother tongue” and points to the fusion of race and language in 19th century linguistics that lead to nationalism, racial (=white superiority, language purity and the rampant discrimination of others).

<sup>4</sup> GARCIA, O.; FISHMAN, J. (Ed.) *The Multilingual Apple: Languages in New York City*. 2nd. ed. Berlin: Germany: Mouton de Gruyter, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> CLARY, M. Finding a muy friquiano way of speaking. *Los Angeles Times*, A 5, August 28, 1997. Clary is referring to language mixing or Spanglish in the USA.



would appear that many of those people are ELF speakers and may not have access for many reasons to standard American English and may not feel motivated to attempt to approximate that standard.<sup>6</sup>

A word must be said about the L1 or native speakers in the inner circle. They are by no means a uniform group for not all speak (or write) standard academic English. Many speak a regional or social variety and others are perfectly content to *not* speak standard English. It would be interesting to speculate on how deeply non-standard Englishes be they American, British or Australian penetrate in a bottom-up fashion into learner English in the expanding circle or in the outer circle. Even in the presence in the USA and in Britain of language mavens or shamans (PINKER, (1994 [2007, p. 385]) who insist on “standards” and chide those who speak non-standard language, popular, informal, regional and social varieties survive in spite of the pressures to conform to the dictates of the prescriptivists. It would seem to me that not only standard English but also informal, popular and possibly regional forms (of the mosaic of different varieties found in the inner circle) are part of the many voices of English in the world. The flow may be from the inner circle to the expanding and outer circles, but the direction(s) may indeed change owing to the globalization of the language.

The presence of English in the three circles with its impressive number of speakers should not blind us to the fact, on one hand, that “(...) well over half of humanity and speakers of most of the world’s languages are blissfully unable to function in English...” (PHILLIPSON, 2006, p. 13) and, on the other, that lead us down a road of celebratory discourses with regard to the language. I agree with Phillipson that “[t]he visibility of English should not delude us into thinking we know what it represents” (p. 5). Those who seek to learn English but are excluded based on socio-economic reasons may indeed not be in state of bliss. But that is another issue.

Now that I have set out the roles of the different speakers of English in Kachru’s three circles for the purpose of coming to grips with the (possible)

---

<sup>6</sup> In the USA (an inner circle nation), Suarez (2007, p. 2) reports that the presence of “limited English-proficient children due to “(...) racial and ethnic segregation” and owing to the existence of “poor, minority, immigrant-serving public schools”, lead me to think that the USA is far from being a homogeneous monolingual society for that country has its share of speakers of ELF who interact with other speakers who L1 is likewise not English.

changes of direction in the near or distant future in the field of ELT based on the proposal for the implementation of ELF, I turn in the third part (3) of the article to examine the different discourses of those practitioners in the field who have published widely on the topic at hand.

## **A new landscape for World Englishes: English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and its implications for AL and language teaching**

### **Planting the seeds of ELF: Some Precursory Thoughts**

ELF did not appear on the scene in one fell swoop; rather, it gained momentum thanks to the work of Jenkins and Seidlhofer but earlier on there were scholars who planted the seeds that slowly contributed to paving the way for new thinking about English and its many users in the world. One example is Fishman's<sup>7</sup> (1975, p. 335-36) remarks on English, a language "(...) turned increasingly toward massification and technological modernization"; for him, the presence of English as a lingua franca has brought about "(...) the official recognition or protection of local varieties". Fishman's point made over thirty years ago is that speakers of English in India, Nigeria, Singapore and elsewhere "(...) are straining for further recognition". Here are some of Fishman's words that, to my mind, contribute to sowing the seeds of ELF:

Thus it becomes all the more crucial not only whether native speakers of English can hold on to their technological superiority but also whether they can really meet the "others" halfway in the crucial socio-psychological arena of mutual acceptance.

Fishman, with great foresight, pointed to the *realpolitik* of English in the world. The fact is that the "others" = so-called nonnative users speak the language, mold it to suit their purposes and consider it their property. At the time when the author published his paper, the "technological superiority" of the native speaker varieties (British and American English) was intact, but in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, technology along with economic power has shifted to other English using nations where there are now stock markets, silicon

---

<sup>7</sup> FISHMAN, J. English in the Context of International Societal Bilingualism. In: FISHMAN, J.; COOPER, R.; CONRAD, A. (Ed.). *The Spread of English*. Rowley, Mass., USA: Newbury House, 1975. Chapter 14.

valleys, publishing houses and heavy industry. Fishman's early call for "mutual acceptance" on the part of all users of English, it would appear, has not yet materialized based on the resistance, on the one hand, to different accents and to ELF itself, on the other (I will examine that resistance in the fifth section of this paper).

While the field of SLA emphasizes the presence of native speakerism as the goal in language learning, two specialists in the field of SLA (VARONIS; GASS, 1983, p. 87) deserve mention for they examined over thirty years ago specifically nonnative /nonnative interactions. This is what they have to say:

[w]e suggest that the discourse resulting from NNS-NNS interactions serve an important function for non-native speakers. First, it allows them a non-threatening forum within which to practice developing language skills. Second, it provides them with an opportunity to receive input which they have made comprehensible through negotiation. In fact, we propose that this type of interaction facilitates the second language acquisition process, agreeing with Schwartz<sup>8</sup> (1980) who claims that 'second language learners of English can learn more from one another than they think they can.

The authors anticipate some of the ideas espoused today by researchers in ELF, for example, "a non-threatening forum" devoid of *unsupportive* native speakers (my emphasis) and the opportunity for "negotiation". Schwartz' (1980) remark also questions the central role of native speakers in language learning.

Another example of earlier thinking about the presence of English is Kachru's thoughts (1985, 2003) that bears directly on ELF. First of all, Kachru (2003, p. 28) states that the learning of English "(...) to communicate with native speakers "(...) is only partially true". For him, English is "(...) the main vehicle for interaction among its non-native users (...) with Nigerians, Japanese, Sri Lankans, Germans with Singaporeans, and so on". Another seed regarding ELF is planted in Kachru's (2003, p. 30) pointed question: "(...) can international codification be applied to a language that has over 700 million users across the globe?"

In the next section, I will examine the proposal for the codification to which Kachru refers.

---

<sup>8</sup> SCHWARTZ, J. The negotiation for meaning: repair in conversations between second language learners of English. In Larsen-Freeman, D. (Ed.). *Discourse Analysis in Second Language Research*. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1980.

## What is ELF really (English as a Lingua Franca)?

### ELF: A corpus of its own

Jenkins (2007, p. 2), who is one the main proponents of ELF, considers it to be “(...) an emerging language that exists *in its own right* and is being described *in its own terms* (her emphasis). It is crucial to understand the word *emerging*. ELF is not a finished product; it is being developed and there exists an ELF *corpus* called VOICE (Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English <[http://www.univie.ac.at/voice/voice.php?page=what\\_is\\_voice](http://www.univie.ac.at/voice/voice.php?page=what_is_voice)>). Jenkins’ use of the expressions “in its own right” and “in its own terms” means that ELF is a “contact” language, as Jenkins contends, not dependent on native speaker norms (British or American English) and is molded by its many speakers in the world who are multilingual and whose L1s are *not* English (my emphasis). There is a danger that new ideas may be resisted. Indeed ELF presents a challenge to the traditional view of language teaching and testing grounded in the stance that learners *have to* (my emphasis) strive for native competence and many never reach their goal and are often deemed “failed natives” who are viewed as having “(...) shortcomings, errors, problems and difficulties” (PRODRUMOU, 2008, p. xx).

ELF is for communication between and among speakers of different L1s; it does not censure the mixing of languages in interactions or the retaining of influences from the different L1s that make up ELF (accent, vocabulary and syntax) for they are not “inherently wrong” (JENKINS, 2000, p. 11). In short, ELF is not primarily a vehicle for the thousands and thousands of multilinguals in the world, particularly in the expanding circle, to *communicate with the “native others” in the inner circle* (my emphasis). Rather, it is a language for communion with “one another” in the expanding circle. It is not an interlanguage and its speakers are not viewed as having a deficit with regard to the standard of native speaker varieties. Jenkins<sup>9</sup> (2007, p. 17-18) words reflect this new view of the role of English in the world at the present time:

---

<sup>9</sup> The sources cited by Jenkins (2007, p. 17-18) are the following: CRYSTAL, D. *English as a Global Language*. (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003; GÖRLACH, M. *Studies in the History of the English Language*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1990; MCARTHUR, T. *The English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

[...] I believe that it is important to point out that ELF is not only an entirely natural development and thus worthy of recognition as a legitimate branch of modern English, but that also sits more comfortably within a World Englishes framework than the alternatives, such as World Standard Spoken English (CRYSTAL, 2003), International English (GÖRLACH, 1990), and World Standard English (MCARTHUR, 1998). The problem with all these is that they promote a unitary and essentially monolithic model based on idealized norms, with little scope for either local NNS variation or NNS-led innovation [...]

Her reference to “NNS-led innovation” is felicitous for the presence of ELF may very well function somewhat like Esperanto for it is not generally the L1 of any of its speakers<sup>10</sup> and is not attached to a specific national culture as are both British and American English. ELF is simply the product of all those who use it in their daily interactions.

One of the drawbacks of ELF is that there is a need for more data, both spoken and written by its many, many users in the world. However, at the present time VOICE consists of “(...) I million words of spoken ELF interactions from professional, educational and leisure domains” (site accessed on October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011). The organizers envisage *a large scale and in-depth description* (their emphases) of English that will probably influence the definition of objectives for teaching the language in different parts of the world.

My reading of the literature dealing with ELF, particularly the criticisms leveled at it, on the part of Kuo (2006), Taylor (2006) lead me to ask if those writers actually listened to the corpus material which is available *on-line* free of charge for researchers. I listened to an interaction entitled “Working group discussion about organizing a joint consultancy project” on the part of six participants who do not share English as a native language. Let me first present an excerpt [1] of the written transcription of the conversation of the group of students followed by my own remarks (I have removed most of the mark-up conventions used to indicate “contextual events” that occur during the speech events as pouring coffee or writing something on a blackboard but have

---

<sup>10</sup> I use the adverb *generally* for there are children in the world who learn Esperanto “(...) as a mother tongue together with one or two national languages”. See CORSETTI, M. A. Pinto; TOLOMEO, M.T. Regularizing the regular: The phenomenon of over regularization in Esperanto-speaking children. *Language Problems and Language Planning*, v. 28, n. 3, p. 261-282.

included “speaking modes” for example “fast” refers to rapid speech and “speaker noises” as coughing and laughing = @.] For readers interested in a full presentation of the material, see “Voice Transcription Conventions” Vienna Oxford International Voice Conventions at <[http://www.univie.ac.at/voice/page/corpus\\_description](http://www.univie.ac.at/voice/page/corpus_description)>.):

---

Excerpt [1] of a group discussion of non-L1 users of English: Amsterdam, 15/11/2006  
Vienna Voice, version 1.1, EDwdg497 (transcript with audio), <http://voice.univie.ac.at>

---

S4: to S2 i said are you writing down. mister secretary.

S2: e::r no but it's in there i can copy it. i'll make the minutes at the end of the meeting

S1: yeah if you can: remember?

S4: <clears throat> and for what time. he's gonna finish that.

S1: e:r i try to do it tonight so i am gonna done it f- by tonight

S2: is it's better if we WORK on it now?

S1: er it doesn't matter because today is only wednesday so we can done it tonight.

S3: <fast> you can't work because you have to stay here till FIVE right </fast>

S1: write it tomorrow?

S2: yeah that's the thing

S4: are you also gonna do the layout?

S2: @ <@> yeah if you don't mind </@>

---

The students, in the excerpt and throughout the complete exchange that lasted for 32 minutes use English and work together to achieve a specific task. None of the participants are concerned with the grammatical or syntactic form of the language used. It is important to note that the speakers use informal speech in some instances, like “gonna”. I was impressed with their fluency in the language and their efficiency in working together to set up a project for a university course. The students met in a study booth at a library in the Netherlands (Amsterdam); in spite of the background noise of other groups talking, I found the English to be intelligible. The students (=S) are engaged in typing material on a computer, inserting e-mails and freely engaging in their task. At certain points in the interchange there is an instance of rapid speech that the transcribers have duly marked as “fast”. The Vienna Voice participants are quite different from those learners in classrooms I have observed who are painfully struggling with the morphology, syntax and vocabulary of the language. I chose to listen first to the audio part of the interaction and later

on I looked at the transcript; I felt that I was in fact an eavesdropper where the participants were intent on using their English to accomplish a task. None of the participants stopped to think of language forms and the members did not “correct” one another. For me, the working session was an instance of language in real use and I enjoyed listening to the group members and observing their involvement with the planning of the project.

### **ELF: a new area of research for Conversation Analysis (CA)**

Firth (1996, p.237) sets out to apply conversation analysis (hereafter, CA) to the study of the interactions of non-native speakers of English who use that language in their day-to-day telephone and face-to-face conversations in their work as managers of business enterprises in different non-English speaking countries. The author (p. 239) reports that non-native conversations share the following features: (i) “unidiomatic, non-collocating lexical selections”, (ii) “syntactic, morphological, and phonological anomalies and infelicities”. While such features indeed diverge from native speaker usages, Firth states that it is not his attention to pass judgment on the data from the viewpoint of standard native speaker English. He also adds that he is not suggesting that *all* (my emphasis) non-native speaker talk is “characterizable” as in (i)-(ii). Quite rightly, Firth recognizes that many interactions on non-native speakers of English “(...) may be hardly distinguishable from ‘ordinary’ native speaker interactions in terms of observable linguistic and conversational competence” (p. 239-40). This is an important point. Firth’s interests lie in the study of individuals who do not share the same native language and a common culture. What is important here is that Firth is probably a precursor in the use of CA to look at the interactions of non-native speakers; in spite of the “infelicities and abnormalities”, the participants’ talking together reveals characteristics similar to those that occur in native speaker interactions, namely, (i) turn-taking, (ii) order and purpose to reach a goal to solve a problem. While the author’s objective is not concerned with language teaching, it is interesting that the actors in the conversation about business affairs succeed in understanding one another and are able to solve work-related problems in spite of divergence from native speaker grammatical and lexical norms. These findings are important and need to be examined carefully and unbiasedly by those who work in the area of language teaching methodology and AL. For Firth, the data shows “(...) compelling evidence of people’s often extraordinary ability to make sense *in situ*, as part and parcel of the local demands of talking

to one another” (p. 256). What I find of particular interest in ELF interactions is the fact that when the participants fail to understand one another, they, as Firth observes “let it pass” and attempt to negotiate meaning in a different way. In addition, it would appear that the different interlocutors do not correct one another or monitor the usage of one another. This is quite different in some native speaker *cum* native speaker conversations in which some individuals enjoy correcting grammar, pronunciation or use of words and dislike those who do not adhere to the “standard”. A good example of this attitude is observed in J. D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye* (London: Penguin Books, [1945], 1994, when Holden Caulfield’s teacher Mr. Antolini refers to the role of education: “(...) you may pick up just enough education to hate people who say, “It’s a secret between he and I”<sup>11</sup> (p. 168).

Now that I have provided an outline of the research work dealing with the English used by non-native speakers in different parts of world, I turn in the next section of this paper to look at the proposals for a program of pronunciation for use by speakers of English as a Lingua Franca.

### **ELF and the phonology of English as an International Language (EIL)**

English as a Lingua Franca, I believe, would be far less important if it were not for the fact that there exists a seminal book written by JENKINS (2000) as well as an important article (also, JENKINS, 1998) that outline a proposal for a “core” phonology of English that takes into consideration the problems that learners of the language face. She is aware of the difficulty, on the one hand, “(...) to harmonize pronunciation among L2 varieties of English”, and on the other, “to preserve international intelligibility” (1998, p. 120). The sheer number of nonnative speakers of English in the world motivates “(...) the social and psychological need to respect the norms of the language of the largest group of users of English, i.e. non-natives.” (p. 120). I agree that people’s linguistic rights should be respected because in this case we are dealing with *a majority* in the world (my emphasis). What is new in Jenkins’ model of EIL pronunciation is the shift in focus from “intelligibility for the native” to that of the “non-native receiver” (p. 121).

---

<sup>11</sup> Salinger is criticizing people in the USA who use language as a weapon or instrument of power to humiliate, silence and discriminate and actually hate those who do not speak the standard form.



## Suggested pronunciation norms for English as an International Language

So that English can be intelligible internationally for the multitude of nonnative speakers, Jenkins (2000, p. 23-24) presents what she calls the “ELF target Lingua Franca Core”. For readers interested in a detailed description of the ELF core, I refer them to the sources cited (JENKINS, 1998, 2007). Keys and Walker (2002, p. 299) argue that Jenkins’ approach to ELF phonology has “the multiple advantages of being relatively small in number, attainable, and based on a clear awareness of the crucial difference between what is teachable, e.g. nuclear stress placement, and what is only learnable, e.g some pitch changes.” Let us look at six of Jenkins’ recommendations (2000, p. 24) for the Lingua Franca Core: (i) vowel quality, (ii) weak forms, (iii) features of connected speech, (iv) stress-timed rhythm, (v) word stress, and (vi) pitch movement.

### Vowel quality

Jenkins argues (2000, p. 144) that vowel quality varies in the different dialects of English, for it is “not reasonably stable”. For example, RP speakers pronounce “dog” as /dɒg/ while, for the most part, in General American “dog” is pronounced /dag/. Vowel quality variation creates a learning burden for nonnative learners and to insure intelligibility and to avoid non-comprehension in their interaction with one another “L2 consistent regional varieties” are preferred. This means that *corpus* data from the Vienna Voice can provide a consistent pronunciation of words like “dog”, “bed”, “bird”, “bun” among speakers of ELF.

### Weak forms

Attempting to teach students to distinguish between weak and strong forms is time-consuming; for example, in sentence (1a) the demonstrative *that* receives strong stress while in (1b) the conjunction *that* has weak stress in British and American English:

- (1)(a) I like *that* tie you are wearing. [*that*] =strong  
(b) I am glad *that* you liked the show. [*that*] = weak

Similarly, in sentence (2a) the pronoun *them* receives strong stress; in (2b) the pronoun *them* has weak stress and is written ‘em’ to represent an informal spoken register:

- (2)(a) Have you seen John and Mary? No, I haven't seen *them*. [*them*] = strong  
(b) Have you seen John and Mary? No, I haven't seen 'em. [*em*] = weak

Insisting on having nonnative students learn weak forms does not guarantee that their oral production will be intelligible in dealings with other nonnative interlocutors. I find Jenkins' argument against teaching weak forms to be indeed compelling. Here are her words:

[i]ndeed it is quite clearly the case in both RP and GA that speakers regularly and dramatically decrease their use of weak forms in situation where they are taking extra care to be understood, for example, in television interviews and conference presentations (JENKINS, 2000, p. 147).

Weak forms are used particularly in informal (and rapid) speech among native speakers and they do not contribute to intelligibility (Jenkins' main point) and often lead to non-comprehension. Classroom time had best be devoted to the EFL core which is not all a simplified or reductionist as many practitioners believe (PRODROMOU, 2008, p. xi; DZIUBALSKA-KOLACZYK, 2005).

## Features of connected speech

Traditional ELT pronunciation courses consider all features of connected speech (elision, assimilation and linking) important in order to achieve a native-like accent. Jenkins (1998, p. 123; 2007, p. 24) argues that the emphasis on teaching connected speech is "inconsequential and may be unhelpful". This view will, no doubt, be controversial, but one must remember that the Lingua Franca Core (hereafter, LFC) is not written for communication with native speakers who elide /t/ and /d/ in spoken (informal) interactions as in 3 (a, b):

- 3 (a) I don't know. /aɪdəʊnəʊ/  
3 (b) Next please! /nekspli:z/

Elision is natural to native speakers, but this is not always the case with L2 speakers. To be fair to Jenkins, her claim is that teaching connected speech "may be unhelpful"; she did not say it *is* unhelpful (emphases mine). Personally, I would need to observe classes with nonnative students to be convinced that teaching connected speech is actually "inconsequential".

## Stress-timed rhythm

Jenkins (2000) minces no words in claiming that teaching stress-timed rhythm is “unnecessary” and is therefore not a part of LFC. She argues that stress-timing has “no basis in reality” (p. 149). To defend her claim, she cites Roach<sup>12</sup> (1991) who argues that stress-timing “occurs in very regular, formal speech, if it occurs at all”. Jenkins also cites Cauldwell<sup>13</sup> (1996, p. 33) who considers stress-timed rhythm as a “myth” based on “(...) short stretches of speech, usually nursery rhymes.” In lieu of spending valuable class time on stress timing, the author concludes that the “(...) lengthening of stressed (nuclear syllables) seem to be crucial to intelligible English pronunciation.”

## Word stress

Word stress is viewed as “critical” in traditional ELT programs that strive to have students reach native competence. In ELF, according to Jenkins, word stress “(...) is so complex as to be unteachable” Once again, the author cites Roach (1991) who makes that claim.

## Pitch movement

A cursory comparison of Jenkins’ proposal with the traditional approach to EFL phonology might lead students and teachers, and even scholars in AL (as I will indicate later on) to consider the author’s approach to be watered-down and simplistic.

Much time, no doubt, has been wasted in the effort to teach pitch movement that, for Jenkins, is “unnecessary and unteachable”. In my view, acquiring “adequate” pitch movement to express pragmatic meanings in context can only be learned by prolonged residence and immersion in places where English is used, that is in any one of the three circles. For example, to discern the difference between “Did John set the table? No, he didn’t, I did”, is not at all easy to “pick up” in classroom settings, no matter how life-like the pedagogical practices and activities may be.

---

<sup>12</sup> ROACH, R. *English Phonetics and Phonology*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

<sup>13</sup> CAULDWELL, R. Stress-timing observation, beliefs and evidence. *Eger Journal of English Studies*, v. 1, p. 33-34, 1996.

Jenkins' approach to the teaching of phonology as an international language will encourage those in charge of teacher preparation to bring the teaching of pronunciation to "centre-stage rather than in the wings" (JENKINS, 1998, p. 126). In fact, teachers will have to be prepared to teach not only ELF phonology but also to deal with those students who would prefer to "achieve more or less native-like proficiency" (*Ibid.*, p. 124-125). Teachers who work with this new framework have to be knowledgeable of international English phonology as outlined by Jenkins (1998, 2007), speakers of a variety of ELF or users who choose to approximate a native standard. One can see that the presence of ELF will no doubt demand more of teachers of English and not less.

It is also clear to me that the presence of ELF in the world does not imply the death knell of the teaching of native speaker standard pronunciation(s). Jenkins' stance is indeed straightforward for she concludes that it would be politically incorrect to tell learners what their goals should or not be. If students wish to "sound like native speakers" (*Ibid.*, p. 125) that wish should be respected.

ELF is designed for the millions and millions of individuals in the world who need to learn English but who feel put off by having to acquire an accent which reflects the badge of identity of "others" with whom they will most likely have little or no contact. It is far easier for some ELF users to understand one another than native speakers, particularly monolinguals, who have little patience with those who are not able to conform (or simply refuse to conform) to native speaker norms. Why should Europeans, Africans, Orientals or Latin Americans be made to feel that they are not real speakers of English unless they speak with a British or American accent and conform to grammar rules that even educated native speakers tend not to obey? Not all speakers of English in the world are seeking "full replication"<sup>14</sup> in a standard variety with respect to pronunciation or grammar. The main point is that they are successful in the negotiation of meaning in spite of the fact that they do not have a standard native speaker accent or obey *all* (my emphasis) the grammatical rules of the educated prestige varieties.

---

<sup>14</sup> Priesler (In: ALFENDRAS *et al.*, 1995) states he learned English as a foreign language in Denmark and as a University professor of English in that country he shares "(...) relatively stable well-formedness judgments with the general community of educated speakers of American English..." and has achieved "full replication of the English system". Those who have invested heavily in acquiring a native variety may not be receptive to ELF.

## The impact of ELF on AL

### Language Testing

The impressive number of nonnative speakers in the world point to the need for changes in the preparation of language tests that traditionally reflect British and American native speaker norms. Lowenberg (2000, p. 68) reports that in India there are 60 million speakers of English, representing the third largest number of English users, after the USA and Britain. What is important for Lowenberg (*Ibid.*, p. 81) is that the differences observed in nonnative varieties come about “(...) from the same linguistic processes which also produce differences between native-speaker varieties.” Testing can indeed be a tyranny for nonnative users of English from both the outer and expanding circles are not always evaluated fairly and, in some cases, may very well be required to enroll in remedial courses when they are quite proficient *in their own variety* (my emphasis). Look at three test questions (4)-(5) given by Primary School Leaving Examination in Singapore cited by Lowenberg (*Ibid.*, p. 75-76):

- (4) “The highest mark \_\_\_\_\_ the Mathematics test was 76 out of 100.  
(a) on; (b) at; (c) in; (d) for”
- (5) “Is you sister still angry \_\_\_\_\_ me?  
(a) with; (b) to; (c) at; (d) by”

In question (4) the “correct” answer in British English is (c) *in*. An American taking the test would be marked wrong for the norm in American English is (a) *on*. In question (5) the “correct” answer is (a) “with”, but American English permits “with” or “at”. Lowenberg’s point is that norms are relative and to test items where usage is different does not evaluate students’ proficiency in speaking or in writing.

With respect to the subject of language testing, Elder and Davies (2006, p. 297) question whether ELF is “(...) stronger on politics than applied linguistic realities”. I would think that the “realities” of AL are intimately connected to politics. Some applied linguists may view AL as being apolitical, but this is not the case for language teaching and language testing are political issues with social, economic and cultural implications in a globalized world. For a discipline to show preference or reverence for inner circle English and to be beholden to the political interests and governmental policies of hegemonic

powers, it has to place AL as a subservient field. While Elder and Davies (2006, p. 296) question the role of ELF in the world, they recognize that the use of the norms of ELF in testing

[...] would offer more valid representations of target language use domains, and have positive impact on test takers resulting in a reduction in anxiety on the part of ELF users, who would no longer feel pressured to adhere the norms of SE (=standard English). Tests such as these would also have positive washback on teaching in that the syllabus would be designed around their likely communicative needs rather than unattainable native speaker norms [...]

Yet on the same page Elder and Davies (p. 296) appear to be concerned about the day when ELF is in full operation in teaching and particularly in testing that there might be danger in that the new testing paradigm “(...) would have the same power to demoralize, oppress, and disenfranchise nonstandard or nonproficient of ELF as current tests of SE.” It is quite courageous on the part of the authors to admit that traditional ELT tests “demoralize, oppress and disenfranchise”. I do not think it follows that the same state of affairs would occur with assessment in the case of ELF if putative ELF testing programs are transparent and fair in their construction.

Jenkins (1998, p. 124) presents an important distinction between the terms “norm” and “model”. With respect to teaching British English or American English, if we look at those varieties “as a norm”, they are linked to the notion of correctness and in her words “[t]he norm is invariable and has to be imitated independently of any consideration of language use” (p. 124). In Jenkins’ way of thinking, if we look at native varieties as models (and not norms!), they are used in teaching “(...) as points of reference and models for guidance. We decide to approximate them more or less according to the demands of a specific situation.” (p. 124). It is clear to me that Jenkins is not suggesting a “free for all” type of English where one can simply do what one wishes. Taylor (2006, p. 52), a specialist in language testing and measurement in the United Kingdom in a reasoned rebuttal of Jenkins’ remarks that we should not take it for granted that students, who actually prefer to strive for “a near-native variety,” are a minority in the world. Taylor, who has direct experience in writing and evaluating the Cambridge ESOL tests, states that the views of both students and teachers whose proficiency is “(...) based upon exposure to a particular NS model” should indeed be respected. She points out that English language tests have actually changed over the years and no doubt

in the coming years “(...) other English varieties will take their place alongside the traditional NS Englishes in international as well as local tests” (p. 59). In conclusion, she remarks that test constructors are facing “testing times” (2006, p. 59). This is indeed a thorny issue for AL in the world today; it would behoove applied linguists and language teachers who hold opposing viewpoints on whose variety of English should be employed in testing to listen to one-another and to listen to what their students have to say.

## Rethinking Second Language Acquisition

The development of ELF in the world has contributed to questioning Second Language Acquisition (henceforth, SLA), a discipline that examines the learning or acquisition of foreign languages (English, Spanish, and German, for example) on the part of students whose first language is not one of the aforementioned tongues. The word *Second* in the title of the discipline may be ambiguous for there are two senses. It is employed in SLA to refer to learning or acquiring language *x* after the first or L1; in the second sense, the word refers to those people born in multilingual environments where they live and function with an L1 and an additional language that is nativized or institutionalized as is the case of speakers of Indian English, Nigerian English or Filipino English.

Firth and Wagner ([1997] 2007, p. 763-64) spell out the underlying problems of SLA research as it stands at the present time. Space limitations do not allow me examine in great detail the seven (7) problems that the authors identify in SLA research.

The first problem (i) lies with the “omniscient” representation of the native speaker by SLA researchers; (ii) the prefix *non* in the term nonnative points to a lack of something; (iii) the view (or bias) that all native speaker / nonnative interactions are defective replete with misunderstanding(s), the fault being with the nonnative user; (iv) the generalization that the nonnative are subservient with regard to the native who plays the role of King or Queen (MEY, 1981);<sup>15</sup> (v) the claim that only one identity underlies respectively the notions *native* and *nonnative*; (vi) the disregard of the rich multilingual status on (the many) nonnatives in the world in comparison with monolingual

---

<sup>15</sup> MEY, J. Right or wrong my native speaker: Estant les régestes du noble souverain de l'empire Linguistic avec um renvoy au mesme roy; In: COULTHARD, F. (Ed.). *A Festschrift for native speaker*. The Hague: The Netherlands: Mouton, 1981.

native speakers with their limited linguistic awareness, (vii) nonnative / nonnative interactions are measured in terms of “baseline” native / natives ones.

Firth and Wagner ([1997] 2007, p. 757) argue that SLA is concerned with the “cognitive and mentalist orientations” of those who are in the process of learning a foreign language and whose L1 contributes to interference and often fossilization. The authors state that the field ignores “(...) the social and contextual orientations to language”. This state of affairs places the learner as being deficient while viewing the native speaker as “the ruler of the roost”.

I agree with Firth and Wagner ([1997] 2007, p. 768) that “[l]anguage is not only a cognitive phenomenon, the product of the individual’s brain; it is also used interactively, in a variety of contexts for myriad practical purposes”. To be sure, many of the ELF speakers do just that – they use their English to interact and to negotiate with their colleagues. In other words, they employ the English they have with another and are not intimidated by the presence of native speakers who correct form and expression. It would seem to me that Firth and Wagner’s call for the reconceptualization may very indeed contribute to SLA becoming “(...) a theoretically and methodologically richer, more robust enterprise, better able to explicate the processes of second or foreign language (S / FL=second / foreign language) acquisition and, better situated to engage with and contribute to research commonly perceived to reside outside its boundaries.” (p. 768). I do not believe that it would be possible for Firth and Wagner to suggest changes in SLA methodology, if it were not for the advent of ELF in the world.

I do not interpret Firth and Wagner’s call for “a reconceptualized SLA” (p. 768) as implying that the “cognitive and mentalistic” orientation of the field is of no interest. I do not think they are writing off cognition in language acquisition and learning. But there are some of their remarks about SLA may not always apply in all situations. The authors state that SLA theory considers that “(...) users of an L2 are deemed to be in a phase of transition, in terms of language” and that those learners’ language skills and competence are seen to be underdeveloped” (p. 764). I prevail upon my readers to permit me to reflect on my own learning of Italian as a foreign language that I began quite some time ago, dropped it for some time, started my study again, abandoned the language once more and only recently have I re-initiated my contact with that language. I am solely responsible for the results for I am indeed in a “phase of transition” and my “language skills and competence are underdeveloped”. I observe also that my oral production in Italian contains a great deal of



interference from both Spanish and Portuguese. In sum, I agree with Firth and Wagner that the “social and contextual” are essential in language learning, but I would not want to rule out the “cognitive and mentalistic” component in language learning and acquisition. In my reading, the authors are not ruling out the cognitive, but other readers might believe that they are proposing that. No matter whether one intends to learn a particular standard form of a specific language or a regional or social dialect of that language, one comes in contact with a set of rules or parameters that differ from one’s L1. Whatever variety of Russian a student learns, she has to “know what is going on” with regard to the notion of verbal aspect in that language, that is, she has to know if a particular action is punctual or frequentative. If L1 speakers of American English decide to study Black English, Jamaican Creole or Quebecois, they, in the course of their contact with those languages, need to receive massive input in addition to some knowledge about their respective structures, “cores” or “systems”.

With respect to SLA and particularly AL, Leung (2005, p. 119) raises a challenging question for both fields. She contends that the original notion of communicative competence (CC) proposed by Hymes (1972) that characterizes all those who use English *in any form* (my emphasis) “(...) in specific social and cultural contexts” (p. 127) was narrowed down to refer only to the competence of native speakers from the inner circle. For this author, the transference of CC as a research paradigm to language teaching pedagogy has isolated ESL from “real-world social, cultural and language developments” (p. 119).

## **ELF and its dissenting voices, some reasoned and others not so**

### **Discourse markers in native speaker discourse: essential for nonnative interaction?**

Prodromou (2008, p. x) defends himself from a bit of criticism on the part of Jenkins (2007, p. 203) who accuses him of holding “an antipathy towards ELF forms”. He responds to this by claiming that he is on record for respecting the rights of users of English “(...) to appropriate and refashion standard forms of the language in the accomplishment of successful communication and the articulation of self”. But later on in his book, he asks, first of all, if ELF variations exist and, secondly, he wonders if they can be a basis for testing and teaching. It would seem that Prodromou’s answer would be “no”. He goes on to state that he has no qualms about ELF as a “linguistic description”, but fears that “(...) a linguistic description has a habit of sliding

into pedagogic prescription” (p. xi). The problem here, I feel, is that Prodromou’s own proposal for English as an International Language is based on a *corpus* of native speaker English in which idiomatic structures as *you know, you see, I mean and sort of* are “prescribed” and his work amounts to a “pedagogic description” based on structures taken from a *corpus* of native speakers of English.

Doubting the existence of ELF is equivalent to overlooking the books that deal with this contact language. The very book that Prodromou cites (Jenkins’ text on the phonology of ELF) along with the Vienna VOICE as well as the burgeoning research on it (see the third section above) leave no doubt in my mind that it exists. To characterize ELF “(...) as a handful of language forms with a putative non-native speaker identity but also with the emergence of an endonormative ELF variety is off the mark for we are dealing with on-going corpus data that is increasing as times goes by. ELF interactions occur every day in the world with nonnative speakers and not with Prodromou’s “putative non-native speaker” but with millions of flesh and blood nonnative users. I do not follow Prodromou’s thoughts when he claims that “(...) ELF is not a reality before its existence as been empirically established”. Once again, one cannot avoid hearing in this globalized world numerous instances of nonnative to nonnative interactions. The empirical data is there for the asking. What other “reality” can one wish for?

Prodromou’s references to L2 speakers “(...) who are stuttering onto the world stage of ELF” (p. xiii) and his description of ELF as a “broken weapon with reduced linguistic capital” (p. 250) are infelicitous. Stuttering is basically an emotional problem that can be corrected by speech therapist and can affect native and nonnative in any language. None of the participants in the Vienna VOICE *corpus* is a stutterer. Quite telling is the word “weapon”. Language has been for far too long a “loaded weapon” (BOLINGER, 1981<sup>16</sup>), employed to humiliate and ostracize individuals who do not use, or want to use, standard forms of the language. Shouldn’t we look at the existing ELF *corpus* carefully before we cast judgment and write the users off as speakers of “broken English”?<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> BOLINGER, D. *Language as a loaded weapon*. New York: Longman, 1980.

<sup>17</sup> LINDEMANN, S. Who speaks “broken English” US undergraduates’ perception of non-native English. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*. v. 15, n. 2, p. 187-212, 2003. This paper points to linguistic prejudice on the part of many of the students interviewed. Many of those interviewed were monolingual L1 speakers of English with little or no idea of what learning an L2 entails.

It would appear that Prodromou's successful users of English or SUES, as he calls them, are a different lot from ELF users for he views the former as having "a positive capability (command of core grammar, a rich vocabulary and a reasonably clear accent for L1 and L2 learners, p. 251.) It is fair to ask, I think, if ELF speakers in the Vienna VOICE and in the academic English *corpus* in Tampere, Finland (<[www.uta.fi/laitokset/kielet/engf](http://www.uta.fi/laitokset/kielet/engf)>) couldn't be characterized in the same way. To qualify as SUES, Prodromou's users would have to incorporate in their speech a set of discourse markers taken from native speaker *corpora* (the British National Corpus)<sup>18</sup> such as "sort of", "you know", "I mean", and "you see". I wonder if it is possible to teach and have students learn, for example, all the 31 pragmatic uses of *sort of* (see PRODROMOU, 2008, TAB. 9.1, p. 126-127). How would a teacher inform students that *sort of* is employed in British English and General American "to avoid seeming technical" (use 18), "to accompany a literary expression" (use 22) or "to introduce a vague expression" (use 29)? The trouble with the *corpus* data is that it was taken from a large number of native speakers. Is all this material teachable and learnable in the classroom? Do *all* (my emphasis) of the informants consistently use *sort of* in their interactions? Wouldn't there be many speakers who might not use *sort of* at all in any of the numerous pragmatic users reported in the author's data? In addition, there are indeed some speakers who overuse "you see", "you know" and "I mean" and such repetitive usage can also distract potential listeners.

### **Should native speaker pronunciation be the goal for all learners?**

Jenkins' proposal for a set of pronunciation features for the LFC have been dismissed by Dziubalska-Kolaczyk (2005, p. 4) who insists on teaching "native English" to the extent that she recommends "(...) broadcast speech (e.g. BBC) English and the speech of the professionals which does not evoke negative emotions". The proponents of ELF in the view of this author are "(...) spreading non-native artificial models". Dziubalska-Kolaczyk concludes that "(...) if hundreds of millions of people learned English without LFC" and then goes on to ask her readers just what is the problem. The point here once again is the belief that the native speaker "is an authority on his / her native

---

<sup>18</sup> ASTON, G.; BURNARD, L. *The BNC Handbook*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998.

language”. There are, no doubt, many others in the field of language studies who hold similar views with respect to ELF. Indeed people who have invested time, money and effort to achieve a native standard in pronunciation and in the reproduction of the grammatical system may resist the changes in teaching (HABERLAND, 2011, p. 948).<sup>19</sup> Not all of these observers have examined carefully the arguments in favor of ELF. In the case of Sir Randolph Quirk, who has devoted his whole life to the description of English,<sup>20</sup> his defense of standard English and his characterization of any deviation from the norm as “being half-based quackery” (p. 17) is quite understandable (SEIDLHOFER, 2003).

A more reasoned position with respect to changes in the ELF proposal for teaching pronunciation is Dauer (2005, p. 548) who, while she disagrees with Jenkins’ (2000) statement that word stress is unteachable, concedes that “(...) certain students may not want to sound American, Australian or English” and would feel “less frustrated” if teachers would admit in their methodology some nonnative speech patterns to make their students’ speech “more intelligible” instead of obliging them to emulate native speaker varieties. Timmis (2002, p. 249) sums up the problem nicely with the following words: “[w]hile it is clearly inappropriate to foist native-speaker norms on students who neither want nor need them, it is scarcely more appropriate to offer students a target which manifestly does not meet their aspirations.”

### **A problem for AL: reverence for the native speaker?**

It would appear that those who advocate the presence of native speaker norms in language teaching are either native speaker teachers, on the one hand, or nonnatives, on the other, who have invested heavily in time, effort and money to be viewed as native or near native speakers. A good number of these individuals may be disgruntled about the questioning of the sacred position of the native in our area of interest. Some natives may feel threatened by the possible loss of power and prestige for native speakerism and all its “exports”

---

<sup>19</sup> Haberland (2011, p. 948) agrees that nonnative users should be considered legitimate speakers of English and not second-class US speakers. Those who have invested in a standard (native variety) may object to what they view as “deviations” or “distortions”, especially in written English.

<sup>20</sup> One of his seminal texts in *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* co-authored with Sidney Greembaum, Geoffrey Leach and Janm Svartic. Lonondo: Longman, 1973.

produced in the inner circle and sent to the periphery in the form of language teaching methods, textbooks, dictionaries function as “interested knowledge” (PENNYCOOK, 1989)<sup>21</sup> that are received, in many instances, without questioning in the expanding circle countries and even in outer circle nations.

This preference for the native speaker is apparent in Kuo (2006, p. 220) who states that the native speaker in language teaching “(...) serves as a complete and convenient starting point, particularly with its socio-cultural richness...”. For Kuo, the native speaker functions as “model” while for Jenkins it functions as a norm, as I pointed out above. It is ELF that is the model that does not interfere with students’ identity for it does not oblige them to sound like people born in London or Chicago. This thinking is observed in Barcelos (2005, p.19) who contends that some Brazilians learners might be “more comfortable with their accents”. She also points to the “(...) link between accent and identity.”

## Research on ELF and some promising results

I want to set out what has been accomplished with respect to the study of ELF in order to present an informed view of ELF for critical analysis.

- There exist a number of studies that will, without doubt, lead to additional research on the use of ELF by speakers in different contexts and in different parts of the world. I refer here to two studies on Lingua Franca (among the many cited by Seidlhofer *et al.*, 2006) undertaken in Austria and Finland: (i) Brkinjaè, T. *Humour in English as a lingua franca*. Unpublished MA thesis, University of Vienna, 2005.; and (ii) Ahvenainen, T. *Problem solving mechanisms in information exchange dialogues with English as a lingua franca*. Unpublished MA thesis, University of Jyväskylä, 2005.
- There is in place a set of pedagogical materials for exploring the role of English as a World Language (World Englishes, World English). The material would be useful to offset the notion held by many that English is *only* associated with Britain, the USA, Canada and Australia (c.f. JENKINS, J. *World Englishes: resource book for students*. London: Routledge, 2003.).

---

<sup>21</sup> PENNYCOOK, A. The concept of method, interested knowledge, and the politics of language teaching. *TESOLQuarterly*, v. 23, n. 4, p. 589-618, (December), 1989.

- Research in ELF is supported substantially thanks to a detailed proposal for a revision of the teaching of pronunciation for students of English as I have tried to show in my remarks on J. Jenkins, *The phonology of English as an International Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Essential reading with regard to the study of Lingua Francas -in particular is an entire issue of the *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, -v. 26, 2006 devoted to the study of *Lingua Francas* in the world.
- Yoshikawa (2005, p. 351, p. 360) reports on the work of a program of studies organized by Chukyo University in Japan where students of English in the Department of World Englishes take a lecture class “Introduction to World Englishes” and spend their first year in Singapore. This innovative course of studies introduces different varieties of English and encourages students to think about the possibility of (i) acceptance of Japanese English, (ii) acceptance of Japanese teachers of English and not native speakers from Britain or the USA and (iii) the avoidance of the overuse of idiomatic expressions that occur in native varieties. The Chukyo University program prepares students to *think* (my emphasis) about new approaches to teaching English in this changing world.
- Among the many positive features that open promising work for ELF in the near future, one can cite an ELF-orientated pronunciation textbook, *Streaming Speech* by Cauldwell (2002)<sup>22</sup> as well as a CD-ROM which includes both ELF and EIL voices. Another change in approach, specifically in the area of lexicography is a paper by Hung (2001)<sup>23</sup> who argues for the inclusion of phonetic transcription in dictionaries of Hong Kong English pronunciation of words to aid and not that of native speakers (JENKINS, 2007, p. 250-251).

## Summing up: ELF and AL

In the course of this article, I have attempted to describe what ELF entails and have also presented arguments in favor and against this change of direction in AL. With respect to innovations or changes in the way of doing things, I feel it is essential not to be fearful of what is new. A willingness to

---

<sup>22</sup> CAULDWELL, R. T. *Streaming Speech*. Birmingham: Speech in action. 2002: R. T. Cauldwell, ELF/ERIL Voices, <[http://speechinaction. Net/SPARC\\_ELF.htm](http://speechinaction.Net/SPARC_ELF.htm)>.

<sup>23</sup> HUNG, T. “New English” words in international English dictionaries. *English Today*, v. 18, n.4, p. 29-34, 2002.

examine all the issues involved is academically sound. A closed mind takes us nowhere.

One underlying fear that I detect in the specialized literature that needs to be dispelled is the belief that ELF will contribute to the disintegration of English, particularly the native speaker varieties. Linguists have debunked over the years arguments on the part of purists (language mavens or shamans) that a specific language is deteriorating due to errors in speech and writing on the part of its users. The “Why-Johnny-can’t-read” argument is specious for there are always those who read critically and write well in standard and non-standard varieties. All languages have their cultivators (journalists and writers, researchers, to name a few) and their shamans (often self-appointed defenders of English or other languages). For Canagarajah (2006, p. 211) ELF presents “significant challenges for Applied Linguistics” for the days when a homogeneous view of language prevailed are over and today we all “(...) have to reconcile ourselves to the reality of English as a heterogeneous language with a plural grammatical system and norms...” (p. 211).

The presence of ELF in the world may very well contribute to increasing the already large number of speakers of English. Those who opt for ELF are not tied down by problems of identity with exocentric norms and are free of linguistic and cultural imposition from outside and may be more motivated to learn the language.

ELF offers AL, I would suggest, a way out of another very serious problem. Can the discipline continue to support the hegemonic inner circle varieties subscribing to course books and methods produced in the center that do not always meet the needs of the majority of users of English in the other two circles? Whose interests does AL actually serve? In addition to the ties of AL to native speakerism, another problem for the discipline is its association, according to Bisong (1995, p. 122), with Western ideology and the “Anglo-Saxon Judaeo-Christian culture” that was imposed on many nations via English. In the case of Nigeria, Bisong (1995, p. 131) reports that his country “(...) is a multicultural society, the Euro-Christian culture embodied in the English language is only one of a number of cultures that function to shape the consciousness of the Nigerian people.” It is important for practitioners particularly in the West (particularly Europe and the Americas) to be aware that English is indeed pervasive; in the first section, I cited House’s fear about the language might be “a threat to multilingualism” (p. 575). Phillipson (2006) appears to be even more concerned about the threat to multilingualism in

Europe and other parts of the world. The Anglo-centric orientation of AL in some quarters does not auger well for the discipline for there are those who argue that to be a citizen of the world the passport for that citizenship is to be a speaker of English. People who opt to study and cultivate other languages are indeed world citizens. I would not want to live in a world with one language. It is possible that I am misreading a remark by Phillipson (2006, p. 5) with respect to Höglin (2002) whose paper Phillipson considers “(...) a rather flawed English resumé”. Are we dealing with a case of linguisticism and an anti-ELF stance on Phillipson’s part?<sup>24</sup>

Based on my reading of Jenkins’ text on phonology, I venture to say that her work will very likely stimulate more interest in the area of phonology, phonetics and pronunciation. Jenkins’ herself states that teachers will have to be competent in the phonology of ELF and in another standard, be it Indian English or Australian English.

Last but not least, the presence of ELF can contribute to reducing (or hopefully, eliminating) linguistic arrogance and chauvinism on the part of native speakers, particularly monolingual ones. In the new order of things, they will have to abandon their monolingual isolation and remove from their mindsets practices of “linguicism” (PHILLIPSON, 1992, p. 47) where the “native” views those who do not have the “proper” accent are written off as speakers of “broken English”. It is not an easy matter to have people reflect on their views and to suggest changes. A positive step forward is Fishman’s (1975, p. 335-6) recommendation (whom I want to quote once more) that native speakers should attempt “(...) to meet others halfway in the crucial socio-psychological arena of mutual acceptance”. While ELF presents a number of challenges, it can contribute to a greater visibility and acceptance of AL and its practitioners in this complex world in which we all have to strive to understand one another and live peacefully together.

---

<sup>24</sup> I have not been able to locate Höglin’s review, but I find it surprising for Phillipson to call attention to problems in editing. Many TESOLERS in the outer and expanding circles do not share the same opportunities as those who work in the inner circle, L1 speakers and post-colonials as well.



## References

- ALFENDRAS, E. A.; MILLAR, S.; MAC AOGÁIN; BAMBOSE, A.; KACHRU, Y.; SALEEMI, A.P.; PREISLER, B.; TRUDGILL, P.; COULMAS, F.; DASGUTA, P. On 'new / non-native' Englishes: A gamelan. *Journal of Pragmatics*, v. 24, p. 295-321, 1995.
- BARCELOS, A. M. What is wrong with a Brazilian accent? *Horizontes de Linguística Aplicada*, v. 2, n. 1, p. 7-21, 2005.
- BISONG, J. Language choice and cultural imperialism. *ELT Journal*, v. 49, n. 2, p. 122-132, 1995.
- BONFIGLIO, T. P. Language, racism and ethnicity. In: HELLINGER, M.; PAUWELS, A. (Ed.). *Handbook of Language and Communication: diversity and change*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007. p. 619-50.
- BONFIGLIO, T. P. *Mother tongues and nations*. Paris: De Gruyter Mouton, 2010.
- CANAGARAJAH, A. S. Negotiating the local in English as a Lingua Franca. In: ELDER, C.; DAVIES, A. (Ed.). *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, v. 26, p. 197-218, 2006.
- DAUER, R. M. The Lingua Franca Core: A New Model for Pronunciation Instruction? *TESOL Quarterly*, v. 39, n. 3 (September), p. 543-550, 2005.
- DICKER, S.J. Official English and bilingual education: The controversy over language pluralism in U.S. Society. In: HALL, J. K.; EGGINGTON, W. G. (Ed.) *The sociopolitics of English Language Teaching*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2000.
- D'SOUZA J. Interactional strategies in South Asian languages: their implications for teaching English internationally. *World Englishes*, v. 7, n. 2, p. 159-171, 1988.
- DZIUBALSKA-KOLACZYK, K. Native or non-native? This is the question: Which English to teach in the globalizing world?, *PTLC*, p. 1-4, 2005.
- ELDER, C.; DAVIES, A. Assessing English as a Lingua Franca. In: ELDER, C.; DAVIES, A. (Ed.). *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, v. 26, p. 282- 301, 2006.
- FIRTH, A. 'Lingua Franca' Negotiation: towards an interactional approach. *World Englishes*, v. 9, n. 3, p. 269-280, 1990.
- FIRTH, A. The discursive accomplishment of normativity: On 'lingua franca' English and conversation analysis. *Journal of Pragmatics*, v. 26, p. 237-259, 1996.
- FIRTH, A.; WAGNER, J. On Discourse, communication, and (some) fundamental concepts in SLA Research. *The Modern Language Journal*, v. 81, p. 285-300, 1997. (Republication from the Modern Language Journal, v. 91 (Supplement) s.1, p. 757-772, 2007.)

FISHMAN, J.; COOPER, R.; CONRAD, A. *The Spread of English*. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House Publishers, 1975.

GRADDOL, D. *The future of English*. A guide to forecasting the popularity of English in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. London: The British Council, 1998.

HABERLAND, H. Ownership and maintenance of a language in transnational use: Should we leave our *lingua franca* alone? *Journal of Pragmatics*, v. 43, n. 4, p. 837-949, 2011.

HENDRICKSON, R. *American Talk: The Words and Ways of American Dialects*. New York: Penguin Books, 1986.

HOUSE, J. English as a Lingua Franca: A Threat to Multilingualism? *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, v. 7, n. 4, p. 556-578, 2003.

HYMES, D. On communicative competence. In: PRIDE, J. B.; HOLMES, J. (Ed.). *Sociolinguistics*. London: Penguin, 1972.

JENKINS, J. Which pronunciation norms and models for English as an International Language? *ELT Journal*, v. 53, n. 2, p. 119-126, 1998.

JENKINS, J. *The Phonology of English as an International Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

JENKINS, J. *World Englishes: A Resource Book for Students*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

JENKINS, J. The spread of EIL: a testing time for testers. *ELT Journal*, v. 60, n. 1, p. 42-50, 2006a.

JENKINS, J. The times they are (very slowly) a-changin'. *ELT Journal*, v. 60, n. 1, p. 60-61, 2006b.

JENKINS, J. *English as a Lingua Franca*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

KACHRU, B. Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: the English language in the outer circle. In: QUIRK, R.; WIDDOWSON, H. G. (Ed.). *English in the World: Teaching and Learning the Language and Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

KACHRU, B. Liberation Linguistics and the Quirk Concern. In: SEIDLHOFER, B. (Ed.) *Controversies in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. p. 19-33.

KEYS, K.; WALKER, R. Ten questions on the phonology of English as an International Language. *ELT Journal*, v. 56, n. 3 (July), 2002.

KUO, I-C. Addressing the issue of teaching English as a lingua franca. *ELT Journal*, v. 60, n. 3, p. 219-221, (July), 2006.

- LEUNG, C., Convivial communication: recontextualizing communicative competence. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, v. 15, n. 2, p. 120-144, 2005.
- LOWENBERG, P. H. Non-native varieties and the sociopolitics of English proficiency assessment. In: HALL, J. K.; EGGINGTON, W. G. (Ed.). *The Sociolinguistics of English Language Teaching*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2000. p. 67-85.
- MEHROTRA, R. R. How to be polite in Indian English. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, v. 116, p. 99-110, 1995.
- MENKEN, K. Editorial. From Policy to Practice in the Multilingual Apple: Bilingual Education in New York City. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, v. 14, n. 1, p. 121-131, 2011.
- PENNYCOOK, A. *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language*. London: Longman, 1994.
- PHILLIPSON, R. *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- PHILLIPSON, R. English, a cuckoo in the European higher education nest of languages? *European Journal of English Studies*, v. 10, n. 1, p. 13-32, 2006.
- PINKER, S. *The Language Instinct: How the Mind Creates Language*. New York: Harper Perennial, [1994] 2007.
- PRODROMOU, L. *English as a Lingua Franca: a corpus-based analysis*. London: Continuum, 2008.
- QUIRK, R. Language varieties and standard language. In: SEIDLHOFER, B. (Ed.). *Controversies in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. p. 9-19.
- RAJAGOPALAN, K. Linguistics and the myth of nativity: Comments on the controversy over 'new / non-native Englishes', *Journal of Pragmatics*, v. 27, p. 225-231, 1997.
- RAJAGOPALAN, K. The concept of 'World English' and its implication for ELT. *ELT Journal*, v. 58. n. 2, p. 111- 117, 2004.
- RAJAGOPALAN, K. The soft ideological underbelly of the notion of intelligibility in discussion about "World Englishes". *Applied Linguistics. Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, v. 31. n. 2, p. 465-470 (July), 2010.
- SCHNEIDER, E. E. The Dynamics of New Englishes: From Identity Construction to Dialect Birth. *Language*, v. 79, n. 1, p. 233-281, 2003.

- SEIDLHOFER, B. Closing a conceptual gap: the case for a description of English as a lingua franca. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, v. 11, n. 2, p. 133-157, 2001.
- SEIDLHOFER, B.; BREITENEDER, A.; PITZL, M-L. English as a Lingua Franca in Europe: Challenges for Applied Linguistics. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, v. 26, p. 3-34, 2006.
- SINGH, R. New / nonnative Englishes revisited: a reply to my colleagues. *Journal of Pragmatics*, v. 24, p. 323-333, 1995.
- SINGH, R.; D'SOUZA, J.; MOHANAN, K. P.; PRABHU, N.S. On new / non-native Englishes: a quartet. *Journal of Pragmatics*, v. 24, p. 283-294, 1995.
- SUAREZ, D. Second and third generation heritage language speakers: HL scholarship's relevance to the Research Needs and Future Directions of TESOL. *Heritage Language Journal*, v. 5, n. 1, 2007.
- TAYLOR, L. The Changing Landscape of English: implications for language assessment. *ELT Journal*, v. 60, n. 1, p. 51-59, 2006.
- TIMMIS, I. Native-speaker norms and International English: a classroom view. *ELT Journal*, v. 56, n. 3 (July), 2002.
- VARONIS, E. M.; GASS, S. Non-native / non-native conversation: a model for negotiation of meaning. *Applied Linguistics*, v. 6, n. 1, p. 71-90, 1983.
- YOSHIKAWA, H. Recognition of world Englishes: changes in Chukyo University students' attitudes. *World Englishes*, v. 34, n. 3, p. 351-360, 2005.

Recebido em 29/12/2011. Aprovado em 20/1/2012.