



# My Language – My English

## Towards a Lingua Franca Pedagogy

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## The times they are a-changin'

Come gather 'round people wherever you roam  
And admit that the waters around you have grown  
And accept it that soon you'll be drenched to the bone  
If your time to you is worth savin'  
Then you better start swimmin' or you'll sink like a stone,  
For the times, they are a-changin'

Words and Music by Bob Dylan

You sure can add the tune😊





## Quo vadis ELT?

### ➤ ELT regulations and practice

- An **exonormative SE orientation** appears to be natural
- **Communicative EFL** approaches emphasize communicative competence and a greater tolerance for deviations (particularly in CLIL)
- But the overall **orientation is toward SE** and against endonormative processes; any deviations from SE are at best tolerated
  - ELT provides **no “honorable” place** for deviations from SE

### ➤ The ELF communication argument

> quote

- ELF communication is **successful** despite deviations from SE
- “Deviant” phrases and structures emerge naturally through **endonormative processes** of ELF development and should be accepted
- Communicative success [intelligibility!] is ensured by **ELF communication strategies**, e.g. accommodation, meaning negotiation and ‘let it pass’

#### → **Pedagogic implications:**

> quote

Need for reaching out beyond “normativity” (Dewey 2012:166)





## The “ELF communication argument”

ELF communication is “usually characterized by a high degree of linguacultural diversity, routinely resulting in highly variable and creative use of linguistic resources. This is **wholly at odds with the characterization of language in ELT** [...], in which received wisdom maintains that intelligibility is norm driven (thus privileging grammatical accuracy), and that effective communication is best achieved by conforming to the arbitrarily fixed language norms of Standard varieties [...]” (163)

Dewey, M. (2012). Towards a post-normative approach: learning the pedagogy of ELF. *JELF* 1/1, 141-170

This statement has a **strong sub-text**:

- ELF communication is highly creative, productive and effective
- A SE orientation is counter to communicative success
- Once we have liberated ELF speakers and ELF communication from the fetters of SE, everything is fine





## ELF research for ELF pedagogy

“One potential impact of ELF research, therefore, is a **reorientation of thinking about language in the curriculum**, of moving beyond the singularity that typifies current approaches in order to better encapsulate the diversity and plurality of communication.” (163)

“In terms of understanding what an ELF-informed or ELF-oriented pedagogy should look like we need to engage in much **more empirical [ELF] research**.” (165)


“ELF is relevant not so much in terms of identifying alternative sets of norms, but more in terms of enabling us to **move beyond normativity**.” (166)

Dewey, M. (2012). Towards a post-normative approach: learning the pedagogy of ELF. *JELF* 1/1, 141-170





## ELT and ELF: hostile brothers or brothers in arms?

- Many ELT professionals take a negative attitude against the “ELF communication argument”
  - Pedagogic **conservatism**: they hold on to what they are familiar with
  - The criteria by which they judge ELF communication as **successful** are simply different
  - They do not like the “**sub-text**”: your SE orientation is not in sync with ELF reality (= your SE orientation is bad!)
  
- This leads to a **misunderstanding** shared by many teachers
  - “Do you want me to teach incorrect English?” (comment by a German teacher)
  
- Maybe not “hostile” brothers, but certainly brothers who **keep a wary eye** on each other’s preferences and moves
  
- We thus urgently need to **overcome this deadlock** between ELT and ELF – which requires two things:
  - **Empirical research** on **communicative success** under ELF conditions
  - A **re-conceptualization** of a NNS’s **Standard English orientation** 



## Success in ELF communication

### ❖ Evidence from **ELF performance**

- from our **BACKBONE** “natural narrative” interviews

<http://projects.ael.uni-tuebingen.de/backbone>

[> corpus search > English as a lingua franca corpus]

- from our **TELF** “Midwestern” discussions

<http://projects.ael.uni-tuebingen.de/telf> [> TELF database DEMO]

- ELF speakers **creatively stretch and exploit** their language resources
- They engage in **meaning negotiation, accommodation, and ‘let it pass’**
- **BUT does this mean that ELF communication a success story?**

### ❖ Introspective insights from TELF

- More often than not, speakers are **dissatisfied** with their own performance (according to their own individual **requirements of performance**)
- They are usually **more satisfied** with other speakers’ performance

### ❖ Why should we be interested in **speaker satisfaction** at all?

- Because it is a **necessary & sufficient** criterion of communicative success!





## My language – my English

My emphasis on **speaker satisfaction** derives from the constructivist nature of all our knowledge and skills. A speaker's language is his/her own creation.

- I **acquire** a language by developing/constructing/**CREATING** my own **version** of it in my **mind**, my **heart** and my **behavior**
- Oriented toward **my** perception of the target language
- Influenced by my **native language**, my **attitudes & motivation**, my **goals & requirements**, my learning **approach**, the **effort** I invest, and the **people I talk to and want to be with**
- Not in isolation, but in **communicative, social** interaction with others

The English I develop is **my own**. And it is inevitably **different from any target language** toward which it is oriented.

**– The social-constructivist “My English” condition –**

**Not an option, but part of the human condition  
of knowledge and learning**







## A non-native speaker's SE orientation

***Strong version of a SE orientation***



Learners are required to comply with the SE (teaching) **norms** – the closer they get, the better

An understanding of language learning as a behaviorist copying process lurks in the background

***Weak version of a SE orientation***



Learners take SE as a **model for orientation** – they create their own version of it

An understanding of language learning as a social-constructivist process of cognitive & emotional creation





## Beyond the divide between ELT and ELF

The **strong version of a SE orientation** tends to **alienate** learners from their own creativity, often resulting in frustration, anxiety, even fear.

- In ELT, there is thus an **urgent need** for a **social-constructivist re-conceptualization** of language learning & teaching ("**My English**") and the adoption of a "**weak**" **SE orientation**.

A **social-constructivist understanding** of language learning teaching is fully compatible with the **ELF appropriation claim** as recently formulated by Seidlhofer (2011:198).

**quote**

And what is more, **social-constructivism** provides a theoretical foundation for the **reconciliation** of two seemingly incompatible "desires":

- Learners' **appropriation of English** to fit their **communicative reality**
- Learners' **orientation toward Standard English**





## Appropriating English to the learner's communicative reality

“I am not advocating that descriptions of ELF should directly and uniquely determine what language is taught in the language classroom [...] So it would , in my view, be pedagogically as pointless to prescribe a set of ELF forms as a set of ENL forms in dissociation from their function. **What really matters is that the language should engage the learners' reality and activate the learning process. Any kind of language that is taught in order to achieve this effect is appropriate, and this will always be a local decision.** So what is crucial is not so much what language is presented as input but what learners make of it, and how they make use of it to develop the capability of languaging.”

[Barbara Seidlhofer (2011). *Understanding English as a Lingua Franca*. OUP, p.198]





## ELF in the **foreign language classroom**

Focus on **raising awareness** for LF manifestations of English

- to increase tolerance for others and for oneself

Focus on **developing** ELF-specific **comprehension** skills

- to get accustomed to NNS accents and “messy” performance

Focus on **developing** ELF-specific **production** skills

- to improve pragmatic fluency and strategic skills for accommodation and collaborative negotiation of meaning in intercultural ELF situations

Focus on **developing** the learners’ sense of **ownership** (“agency”)

- to ensure speaker satisfaction and self-confidence [Albl-Mikasa 2009]

➔ **Exposure** to a wide variety of ELF speakers

➔ **Focus on form** within communicative tasks  
(with a weak SE orientation)

➔ Communicative **participation** in an **authentic speech fellowship**  
or community of practice





## Liberation through communicative participation

How can **“liberating” conditions** be successfully implemented in the English classroom?

- **CLIL** - Practice Enterprise - Creative Writing
- “Pushed output processing” / **“languaging”** (Swain 2006) - with increased speaker satisfaction as a target (instead of better compliance with an external norm)
- Authentic & autonomous **web-based communication & collaboration**
- Always with the aim to help learners’ **explore and extend their own creativity** (→ Vygotsky’s **zone of proximal development**)

The overall principle is to acknowledge that NNS/learners of English are **speakers of English** and not merely people learning English





## The potential of e-learning

An e-learning platform like **Moodle**,

- enhanced with **web2 tools** (e.g. forum chat, Skype, wiki, blog),
- and combined with **online CLIL resources**

provides a great potential for **autonomous, authentic and collaborative language learning**:

- Flexible **practice activities** (reading, writing, listening, speaking) with texts, images, sound and video
- Real (online) **communication & interaction**
  - for content and language integrated learning
  - with new possibilities for “incidental” language learning

**Blended Language Learning  
to enhance face-to-face classroom activities**

(→ Kohn 2009, 2012b)





## Examples from our European projects

- **BACKBONE**: *Pedagogic Corpora for Content and Language Integrated Learning*

<http://projects.ael.uni-tuebingen.de/backbone/moodle>

<http://purl.org/backbone/searchtool>

- **PELLIC**: *Practice Enterprise for Language Learning and Intercultural Communication*

<http://projects.ael.uni-tuebingen.de/pellic>

- **icEurope**: *Intercultural Foreign Language Communication and Learning*

<http://projects.ael.uni-tuebingen.de/iceurope/moodle>

- **TELF**: *Tübingen English as a Lingua Franca Corpus*

<http://projects.ael.uni-tuebingen.de/telf>

**TILA:**  
*Tele-*  
*collaboration*  
*for*  
*Intercultural*  
*Language*  
*Learning*

[starting  
Jan 2013]





## Conclusion

A **weak version of a SE orientation** enables teachers

- to see learners of English as **speakers of English** and not merely as people learning English
- to accept the learners' **"own" English**, guided by their "own" **SE orientation**, pushed by their "own" communicative **needs** and **identification** purposes, fuelled by their "own" **creativity**







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- Also see Kohn, K. (2012a). "My English: Second Language Learning as Individual and Social Construction" [<http://youtu.be/yCfpD49YhSq>]**





# Thank you

