

ELF 5

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A Pedagogic Space for ELF in the English Classroom

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EFL and ELF: diverging perspectives

Teaching & learning in EFL contexts

- an **exonormative SE orientation** appears to be natural, any deviations from the SE role model are at best tolerated
- **Communicative EFL** approaches emphasize communicative competence and a greater tolerance for deviations (particularly in CLIL classrooms) but the overall **orientation is toward SE** and against endonormative processes
- **Educational regulations** for ELT institutions (in Europe) continue to be based on an **exonormative SE role model**

Empirical evidence from ELF research

- **Successful ELF communication** despite deviations from SE
- **Communication strategies** are used for ensuring communicative success (e.g. accommodation, meaning negotiation and 'let it pass')
- "Deviant" phrases and structures can be shown to emerge through **endonormative processes** of ELF development

→ **The "ELF communication argument"**



The “ELF communication argument” and the EFL teacher

- How can EFL teachers be convinced of the need and possibility to incorporate an ELF-informed pedagogic measures?
- The “ELF communication argument”, i.e. reference to the rich diversity of **successful ELF communication** seems to be the obvious line of argumentation
- For many teachers, however, the “**ELF com argument**” doesn’t seem to work
 - **low acceptance** (e.g. my own teacher students)
 - frequent **misunderstandings**
 (“Do you want me to teach incorrect English?”)
- Why is the “**ELF com argument**” often only poorly accepted by teachers?
 - **Focus** on the diversity, plurality and success of ELF communication **quote**
 - But a (perceived) **sub-text**: your SE orientation is not in sync with reality (= your SE orientation is bad!)
 - **Deadlock**: for teachers (with a SE orientation) the SE part of the “ELF com argument” sticks out and makes them reject the entire argument

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Example of 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)

“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 order to better understand what an EF-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

back



From deadlock to solution

What do I do if teachers don't like my "ELF communication argument"?

I use the magic of Tai Chi:

"A force of four ounces deflects a thousand pounds"

Shift from the **"ELF communication argument"**
(often misunderstood by teachers as a critique of their SE orientation)
to a constructivist **"language acquisition argument"**

Teachers who better understand
how languages are acquired
also better understand the pedagogic implications of
ELF communication



Acquiring English

- I **acquire** it by developing/constructing/**CREATING** **my own version** of it in my **mind**, my **heart** and my **behavior**
- In **communicative**, **social interaction** with others
- Influenced by my **target language** model, my **native language**, my **attitudes** & **motivation**, my **goals** & **requirements**, my learning **approach**, the **effort** I invest, and last but not least the **people I talk to**

It is in this social constructivist sense that the English I develop is my own

And it is inevitably different from any TL model toward which it is oriented

– **The “My English” condition** – [See Kohn 2011]

Not as an option, rather as part of the human condition



Standard English as a target model for learning

*Strong version of a
SE orientation*



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

Understanding 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

Understanding language learning
as a constructivist process of cognitive and emotional creation



My Standard English orientation

Imagine Mid-Atlantic Standard English (MASE) as my learning target –
What kind of MASE would that be?

- **Linguistic descriptions** of MASE on the basis of solid empirical research?
- My **own** simplified, sketchy, uncertain, even “wrong” **cognitive-emotional perception** (i.e. construction & internal representation) **of MASE** shaped by
 - my linguacultural **preferences**
 - my **exposure** to the language of the people I believe to be speakers of MASE and whom I like and like to talk to
 - **information** I have available about MASE
 - **linguistic descriptions** of MASE in so far as they feed into my construction processes (and which are constructions themselves)

**The “my English” construction process begins with
my perception and construction of the target language**



A constructivist resolution of the ELT/ELF divide

The **weak version of a SE orientation** is fully compatible with an endonormative conceptualization of ELF development.

Challenges for ELF research & pedagogy

- Extension of the endonormative view to **include a “weak” SE orientation**
- A **promising turn in ELF research** (Seidlhofer 2011): teaching ELF is about the **process of developing** the kind of English users/learners are able to make authentic for themselves – including SE **quote**

Challenges for ELT

- Because of the strong (exonormative) version of a SE orientation, learners tend to stay **alienated** from their own creativity resulting in frustration, anxiety and even fear
- **Urgent need** for an endonormative conceptualization of language learning & teaching (**“My English”**) and acceptance of a constructivist, **“weak” SE orientation**

continue



ELF pedagogy: authenticating one's English

“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]

[back](#)



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 learner’s sense of **ownership** (“agency”)

- to ensure speaker satisfaction and self-confidence [Abl-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 self-satisfaction as a target (instead of better compliance with an external norm)
- Authentic & autonomous **web-based communication & collaboration**
- All with the aim to explore and extend one’s 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, 2012)



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>



Conclusion

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

- to see learners of English as **speakers of English** and not merely as pupils 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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Thank you

