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Introduction: Doing English as a Lingua Franca Research

The English language has been identified as an Indo-European West Germanic language that originated on the island of Great Britain. Throughout its history, English has been influenced by languages such as Latin, Old Norse, Greek, and French. Although English originated in Great Britain, it has spread globally and has become one of the most used languages around the world.

If you wanted to understand some basic facts about the global spread of the English language you might, as many people do these days, choose to start with an internet search using a term such as “English around the world.” This search would lead you to a variety of sites telling you about the number of people who speak English, the different countries around the world where English is used, and various factors that have contributed to the spread of English to different places. For example, when the authors of this book used that search term, we found one site (<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/english-speaking-countries>) that identifies English as the third most spoken language in the world (after Mandarin Chinese and Spanish). This site also identifies the top English-speaking countries, provides a short history of the English language, and includes a list of the different places around the world that speak recognized varieties of English (e.g., Singaporean English, Australian English) and continents where English is spoken (e.g., English speakers in Asia, English speakers in Europe). The site also notes how English is used in

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different contexts and includes statements such as “English is crucial in business, diplomacy, and science, serving as an official language at the UN and the most widely taught foreign language.” As you can see, a general search for information on how English is used will easily and readily provide a good deal of facts about English, including its origins, the places where it has spread around the world, and various contexts in which it is used.

One topic that may not be as frequently discussed in these general information sites is how English is used between people whose first language is not English. It is safe to say that when people who speak different first languages come into contact with each other in today’s world, there is a decent chance that they will communicate in English. This does not mean that other shared languages are never used, but English frequently serves as a common language between those who do not have the same first language. We call the use of a common language among speakers of various language backgrounds a *lingua franca*, which can be broadly defined as a shared language that facilitates communication between speakers who do not share a first language. Because English is so widespread around the world, it just so happens that in these situations of contact some knowledge of English is likely, making English as a *lingua franca* (also called ELF) a frequent occurrence. Sometimes the contact happens between those who speak English as a first language (L1) and those who speak English as an additional language (LX), but it is more common to have language contact situations where there are no L1 English speakers involved. This is because there are more people who use ELF than there are people who use English as their first language.

In situations where speakers from different language backgrounds communicate in English, a question arises; namely, what forms of English are used when multilingual speakers communicate in English? Different varieties of English are used around the world, and users in different contexts can develop various forms of English that are specific to these contexts and may vary widely from the English used in other contexts. Teachers in the classroom may teach and enforce certain forms of English and those who speak only English may see themselves as authorities on English language use, but, as previously noted, there are far more people who use ELF than there are English language teachers or L1 speakers of English. Who really has the authority on “proper” or “correct” English use? Multilingual English speakers around the world often use English in ways that diverge from the textbooks and

the speech patterns of L1 English speakers, but they communicate successfully. As a result, a subject that is of interest to ELF researchers is how communication is managed when multilingual English language speakers communicate.

Understanding ELF interaction is complex. The way English is used in ELF interactions depends on the speakers, contexts, and purposes of communication. On the one hand, it is very likely the case that communication between multilingual users of English is largely successful and that in cases where it is not successful, both speakers use strategies to ensure communicative effectiveness. Effective communication happens frequently without the direct intervention of teachers or L1 speakers. On the other hand, opinions about how these speakers *should* communicate and the assumed threat that they pose to the English language are common concerns among some groups of people, including many L1 English speakers who are not proficient in another language (i.e., monolingual) as well as English teachers who believe in the importance of speaking English in a specific way. But strong opinions about how people should communicate in English do not just come from these groups. Many multilingual English speakers may also devalue their own knowledge and use of English. Understanding ELF involves knowing about the different perspectives on the spread of English and being aware of different opinions about whether the use of English in these contexts is seen as a good or a bad thing. Understanding ELF also involves identifying and valuing what actually happens in successful ELF interactions so that we can comprehend how such mutual understanding is accomplished. It is our belief that informed perspectives on ELF require an acknowledgment of both the sociopolitical factors of English language use as well as linguistic descriptions of communication in ELF contexts.

The study of ELF raises a number of issues that have been of interest to linguists for years and introduces new perspectives that are directly related to an understanding of multilingualism and intercultural communication. These issues include language contact (what happens when speakers of different languages come into contact with each other?), language variation (how does language vary across different places and in different contexts while still being seen as a single language?), language description (how can we reliably describe the ways language is used rather than prescribing the ways language should be used?), and language attitudes and policies (how do people feel about different forms of language? What factors contribute to perspectives

on how language should be used? How does this impact rules and regulations related to language use?). This book is intended to help you explore how these issues and questions can be understood and investigated in order to provide you with some basic tools to conduct research. We hope that your participation in ELF research results in the sharing of informed perspectives and opinions about ELF and its role as a common language across speakers and contexts. Investigations of ELF not only relate to intercultural communication by promoting inclusive perspectives on language diversity but also help to identify the potential biases that people may have about English and the way it should be used.

Although this book is about applied linguistics (the study of language structures and language use as they relate to real-world issues), we have written it to be accessible to readers who may have little (or no) training in linguistics. In each chapter we have provided definitions, explanations, examples, and other relevant information when discussing linguistic concepts and theories, as well as a glossary to help readers quickly find and review the meaning of important terms. We have structured the book in two parts. The first part (Understanding English as a Lingua Franca) defines ELF, discusses developments in ELF research, describes linguistic characteristics of ELF, and explores ELF in relation to language policies and language attitudes. All chapters in Part 1 include reflective questions as well as activities to extend and apply your learning. These activities are intended to guide you to a deeper understanding of various concepts and to help you think about your own beliefs and experiences in relation to the material presented in the chapter. The second part of the book (Doing English as a Lingua Franca Research) begins with descriptions of various methods used in ELF research and reflective questions, followed by chapters that guide you through the steps of selecting a research topic, conducting a study, and producing a research paper, oral presentation, or poster presentation to share your findings.

Overview and Purpose of the Book ---

ELF is characterized as communication between speakers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds who contribute to the dynamic, co-constructed, and variable nature of that communication (Mauranen, 2018). The contexts of ELF use are limited only by the

boundaries of human activity and can be found in a wide range of domains such as politics, healthcare, tourism, academia, business, aviation, and social media. English is currently the most commonly used lingua franca in the world due to its global reach and adoption in this wide range of domains (Jenkins et al., 2018). Despite the prevalence of English in global communication, many ELF users may be stigmatized and marginalized as deficient English users. These views of deficiency can be related to the practice of using idealized monolingual English speaker norms as a yardstick to measure communicative success, as opposed to recognizing ELF communication practices as legitimate and complex. Such practices are found not only in the attitudes and perspectives of monolingual English speakers but also in multilingual speakers who share a normative view of English. There are, of course, cases where some types of norms may be needed to support effective communication, but the process for establishing and enforcing these context-specific norms should reflect the perspectives of a wider range of English users than have generally been considered. In fact, the authors of this book believe that such context-dependent norms should reflect the needs and speech patterns of speakers in all the contexts in which ELF users participate.

Discussions on the growing importance of multilingualism for applied linguistics research and the impacts of power differentials between researchers, practitioners, and language users have challenged the traditional approaches to conceptualizing, teaching, and conducting applied linguistic research (Ortega, 2019; Pennycook, 2022). While it is imperative that language students, researchers, and teachers acknowledge the existence of these power structures, it is also important to empower students to conduct research and present views on language that question or illustrate such power structures. A systematic study of ELF as a field provides a clear path toward this goal by promoting harmonious, mutually intelligible communication practices that reflect real-world language use. Encouraging more people to consider these issues, whether they are or become researchers, teachers, or professionals in other areas, can promote inclusive views of language variation by encouraging a deeper understanding of the relationship between language use and the people who use language for various purposes and in various contexts.

Despite the global impact and widespread use of ELF, the dynamic nature of ELF practices is not often comprehensively addressed for

students who are learning about applied linguistics research. This book seeks to introduce the linguistic and social components of various types of ELF communication and to provide a framework for carrying out research projects on ELF that reflect the contexts in which ELF is used, including the specific educational contexts in which the book may be utilized. This book is intended to be a valuable resource for students and novice researchers in the fields of linguistics, applied linguistics, educational linguistics, and TESL/ TESOL (teaching English as a second language/teaching English to speakers of other languages).

The book has two overarching aims. First, it is intended to promote ELF knowledge among readers by raising awareness of ELF use and users around the world, as well as providing a linguistic and sociohistorical overview of this research area. Moreover, the book also intends to promote ELF-focused research by presenting descriptive and methodological perspectives on ELF research and guiding readers through the research process. By encouraging readers to participate in ELF research, we seek to contribute to a better understanding of ELF by stimulating new research. Next we describe the two parts of the book in more detail.

Part 1: Understanding English as a Lingua Franca

Chapter 2 describes ELF as a type of language contact that promotes multilingualism and intercultural communication. This chapter locates ELF in relation to various perspectives on Global Englishes and distinguishes the goal of describing how people use language from describing how language *should* be used.

Chapter 3 introduces the concept of language variation and discusses it in relation to concepts of standardized languages and ELF. This chapter describes the history of ELF research in three phases and also discusses the concept of ELF awareness in English language teaching.

Chapter 4 focuses on the linguistic characteristics of ELF by reference to phonetics/phonology (sounds), morphology (meaningful word parts), lexis (words), syntax/grammar (phrasal/clausal structure), and pragmatics (appropriate language use in a given context).

Chapter 5 discusses ELF in relation to overt or covert language policies. This includes understanding how English is used in different contexts as well as identifying who makes the policies and for what reasons these policies may (overtly or covertly) exist. The chapter also examines language policies from the perspectives of globalization and internationalization, as well as the impacts of language attitudes on language policies.

Part 2: Doing English as a Lingua Franca Research

Chapter 6 surveys ELF research and the research methods used to investigate different aspects of ELF. The chapter explains the differences between quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research and gives examples of studies that use different research approaches to learn about different facets of ELF communication. The chapter also includes reflective questions to aid in the understanding of different research methods and their purpose, as well as two tables that summarize the various ways to collect and analyze data, which are presented in more detail throughout the chapter. This chapter can be used as a resource during your research project planning.

Chapter 7 offers strategies to identify and motivate a research topic and takes you through the steps of planning a research project. The chapter contains a summary of all the reflective questions and activities from Part 1 of the book to help you narrow down your interests and identify a manageable and relevant research project. The chapter also provides some potential topics and then guides you through the steps of stating a research goal, incorporating previous work related to your topic, selecting an appropriate method for your study, and positioning yourself in relation to your research. This chapter includes a checklist to help take you through the identification and motivation of your project. This checklist can also be helpful in keeping track of the progress you are making and can serve as a guide to remind you of your overall goal as you work toward completion of your project.

Chapter 8 helps you decide how you will share your project. This chapter describes the different parts of an academic study and illustrates the differences between research papers, oral presentations, and poster presentations.

Chapter 9 discusses some potential future directions of ELF research to encourage you to continue to explore ELF topics. The chapter also provides guidance on how the ELF phenomenon under investigation might be shared with the general public or with more specific research communities. Because ELF stresses intercultural communication and mutual understanding, the various ways people use ELF to communicate can be acknowledged and promoted in classrooms, workplaces, and public spaces (virtual or in-person) around the world.

We hope that the two parts of this book will introduce you to the concept of ELF, lead you to select a topic to research, and guide you through the steps of doing research. This means that you not only learn about ELF, you also learn about the research process and contribute to the collective knowledge about ELF. It is our belief that having informed opinions about a topic not only involves knowing topic content but also includes knowing how to conduct and present research. Understanding and doing ELF research in this way can help you to appreciate multiple perspectives on and approaches to research, encouraging you to be receptive to alternative views and ways of thinking. Being open and responsive to differences is, after all, at the heart of the very idea of ELF.