

TRANSLANGUAGING WITHIN ENGLISH AS A (MULTI) LINGUA FRANCA Implications for business enterprises in a globalised economy

THOMAS CHRISTIANSEN
UNIVERSITÀ DEL SALENTO

Abstract – English has become the most influential language for international discourse (Weber 1997) because it is spoken right across the globe. It is tempting to consider English as the only future World Language and foresee scenarios where other languages become irrelevant on an international level. Such a simplistic view sees the adoption of English as something universal and uniform with little room for variation, local identity, or other lingua francas. However, data shows that other lingua francas are not inevitably in decline. Diverse languages – e.g. Mandarin Chinese, Spanish, Arabic, Hindi, French – continue to be important regionally or in certain discourse domains (Weber 1997, Ostler 2010, Ronen et al. 2014) and on the internet. By contrast, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) presents a more accurate description of affairs. Non-native (L2) speakers of English outnumber native (L1) speakers (Kachru 1985, Graddol 1998, 2010). It is used predominately for communication between international speakers whose main concern, in the business context, is making themselves understood rather than adhering to a native speaker model of “correct” English. ELF will thus become increasingly endonormative (Seidlhofer 2011). Pronunciation (Jenkins 2000, Christiansen 2011a / 2014) lexis, and even grammar and syntax may be influenced by speakers’ first languages, local languages (Christiansen forthcoming a), regional lingua francas or by the tendency of L2 speakers to bring about structural simplification and to innovate through improvisation (McWhorter 2007, Christiansen 2013). Consequently, ELF will consist not in a single monolith but in a network of variations depending largely on user and use. Another aspect of ELF which has recently come to light is the way that English may be used in conjunction with other contact languages thereby creating a situation of translanguaging (García and Li Wei, 2014) where there is a situation of “Multilingual communication in which English is available as a contact language of choice, but is not necessarily chosen” (Jenkins 2015: 74). This paper will discuss the implications of such a new complex, and fluid, multilinguistic scenario for businesses operating and communicating within the globalised economy.

Key words: ELF; translanguaging; lingua francas; norm-oriented models.

1. Introduction

The apparent dominance of English on an international stage has led many to exaggerate its importance relative to other languages. In fact, many, among the general populace, believe that the world is becoming gradually monolingual with English pushing other languages (e.g. French) off the international stage and contributing to language extinction. Both of these claims are overstated or simplistic (see Weber 1997, Crystal 2003) and a study of the data available regarding language use both in the physical world and on the internet, which, it goes without saying, is becoming an increasingly important medium, shows that while English currently clearly dominates, other languages continue to be important at lower levels in a hierarchy of regional lingua francas much as Weber (1997) described (see Christiansen 2015). Furthermore, in specific discourse contexts (see: Weber 1997, Ostler 2010, Ronen *et al.* 2014), other languages may be more influential than English (e.g. Spanish and Portuguese for Latin music and dance; Chinese and Japanese for martial arts; Sanskrit for yoga; Italian for coffee bars – see Christiansen 2015).

It seems therefore that a globalised world is leading to complex forms of *multi-* or *plurilingualism*.¹ English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) reflects this² as it involves the kind of elaborate code switching and mixing which has come to be called *translanguaging* (García and Li Wei, 2014), and which is a key feature of what Jenkins (2015) advocates as a new evolving re-theorisation of ELF whereby ELF is recognised as a Multilingua Franca – Jenkins 2015:74:

In other words, English as a Multilingua Franca refers to multilingual communicative settings in which English is known to everyone present, and is therefore always potentially ‘in the mix’, regardless of whether or not, and how much, it is actually used.

This means that, because a degree of competence in English is becoming more and more common among people generally in the world and especially those involved in international communication and exchanges (e.g. academia, science, business, trade, tourism, travel, even propaganda for various causes, including extremist ones and terrorism), English will be in the background of most international communication.

An interesting example of this phenomenon is discussed by Christiansen (2015: 138-140), who examines a typical coffee bar chalkboard price list from Warsaw, Poland. On it, can be found a mixture of three languages: Polish; Italian and English. The majority of the terms are in Polish, but there are also two general terms from English, both adjectives, namely: *special* (“ESPRESSO SPECIAL”) and *single* (“ESPRESSO SINGLE”). By contrast, from Italian, there are six, more specialised terms, adjectives and nouns, relating to the specific semantic field of coffee bars: *espresso*, *macchiato*, *americana*³, *cappuccino*, *latte* and *baristę* (conjugated according to the syntax of Polish). There is nothing unusual about this price board and this mix of Italian and the local language with a bit of English could be found in any such establishments, especially in franchises all over the world and it could be argued that in such contexts (coffee bar menus), Italian, effectively serves as the sectorial lingua franca (see Christiansen 2015).

What is most important in the context of English as a Multilingua Franca as described by Jenkins is that, although English comes in third place on the menu itself in terms of quantity of terms, it still plays an important role because, as the global lingua franca, it is often the means by which such terms from other languages are spread around the world into local languages. As Christiansen (2015: 140) states:

English could thus be seen as a carrier for such terms; if a local *barista* in a fashionable coffee bar in Thailand, Peru, Belarus or Senegal is able to understand what a client wants when they order a *macchiato*, they do so not through Italian *per se*, but through English as the vehicle for the spreading of such consumer trends worldwide.

Central to the concept of translanguaging is that as far as a user’s linguistic repertoire is concerned, languages constitute activities⁴ not systems, and should not be treated as separate entities as they usually are in theoretical linguistics. Instead, they are linguistic resources which may be used in conjunction with each other as the speech event demands. In such a context of

¹ The two terms, being so similar, can cause confusion. *Plurilingualism* refers specifically to the ability of the individual speaker to manage communication in different languages, and within different cultural contexts (see Council of Europe 2001: 4-5).

² Indeed, Jenkins (2015: 74) argues that ELF could be reconceived as *English as a Multilingua Franca* although she stops short of calling for a change in terminology.

³ In Italian proper, usually masculine (*americano*), not ostensibly feminine as here. However, the form *caffè all’americana* (i.e. *caffè alla maniera americana*: “coffee, the American way”) also exists.

⁴ Whereby cognitive input becomes linguistic output, hence *linguaging* (Swain 2006)

linguistic fluidity, where languages co-exist and alternate, sometimes mixing, a plurilingual user (as Jenkins 2015 notes)⁵ has clear advantages over a monolingual one.⁶

When speaking about ELF, it is important to recognise that it is, by its nature, an inherently fluid concept and cannot be considered as rigid variety. Seidlhofer (2011) argues that ELF must be seen as a set of context-specific variations because meaning does not emerge from a pre-established catalogue of features, but is negotiated by means of general communication strategies, such as accommodation, which pertain not so much to the individual speaker's origins and background, but to those of all the participants engaged in a discourse, as well as their goals in that discourse.

2. Different perspectives on English as an International Language

In this section, we will look at different aspects of international English – English used in international contexts principally as a means of communication when at least some of the participants, perhaps even all, are non-native speakers. We will examine how different perspectives on the status and reason for using English affect the form that it may take: something approaching a native-speaker standard or simply a ready means of communication; something serving as a token of internationalism or as something intended to impart information in a communicatively efficacious manner.

2.1 Competence and English as an International Language

An issue related to the widespread use of English around the world is that of level of competence. Kachru (2005: 12) revisits his widely cited Three Circles of Model of English (1985), which divided the English speaking world into three concentric circles: the inner (L1 countries, e.g. the UK or USA); the outer (L2, e.g. India or Nigeria) and the expanding (countries where English is a foreign language: e.g. China or Brazil), adding that the circles can be seen as increasing levels of proficiency, highest in the centre (inner), lower towards the circumference (expanding). In this way, inner circle speakers can be conceived not as L1 speakers as such (as they were in the original model, Kachru 1985), whose place in the inner circle is a birth right almost, but as a group of highly proficient speakers who have *functional nativeness* regardless of whether they acquired English as a first or second language.

This is a significant development of the earlier, better-known, model as the role of the native speaker at the centre of the system is now challenged by non-native speakers who have acquired a required level of proficiency. However, this model still sees international varieties or variations of English as essentially exonormative, looking to native speaker varieties (typically some standard) as a source of legitimacy. In Kachru's 2005 model, it is difficult to see where a highly communicative user of an ELF variation would fit in as their ability could hardly be classed as functional nativeness, as it may involve accommodation, improvisation and translanguaging, all phenomena which result in a performance which does not take native speaker English as a model.

⁵ Although she prefers the term *multilingual* to *plurilingual*.

⁶ To the extent that the most significant parameter in ELF is not between native and non-native speakers of English but between “ELF using multilinguals / Multilingual EFL users” and “ELF using monolinguals / Monolingual ELF users” (Jenkins 2015: 74).

Competence, of whatever kind, whether it is based on: imitation of a native speaker ability or of a freer more communicative type, is important not only because it determines a speaker's performance: the range and kinds of things that they can accomplish using the language as well as how well they can do each of them. Degree and type of competence (whether modelled on native speaker or geared towards communicative efficacy in an ELF context) also affect the way that the user is perceived by other members of the speech community: a highly competent user of a more orthodox kind (someone approaching functional nativeness) may be viewed more favourably than one at a much lower level, or than one with competence of a more unorthodox ELF kind. Hence the former may, rightly or wrongly, be accorded more prestige or respect.

In most cultures and societies, the same thing is valid generally for speakers of so-called standard and non-standard varieties, with speakers of the former typically – but not inevitably⁷ – being seen as socially more prestigious. It is reasonable therefore to assume that the same thing will be true of English internationally, with more orthodoxly-proficient, inner circle users enjoying the advantage of prestige over less orthodoxly-proficient, outer and expanding circle speakers.

However, as we have outlined, ELF is by its very nature fluid and thus non-standard / unorthodox, and it is thus difficult to see how concerns of linguistic prestige will manifest themselves beyond the simple terms of being able to communicate with diverse people from diverse lingua-cultural backgrounds. Standard varieties of English such as RP in Britain or General American in the USA, together with others which have also emerged in traditionally English-speaking countries such as Australia or Canada, may continue to enjoy prestige among certain sections of the global community, especially those with the resources to invest in pursuing a native-like proficiency.⁸

However, for many more people, we would venture, English will be merely a convenient lingua franca with which to communicate with others who do not share their L1. The concern in such contexts will not be to show how much like some idealised native speaker of English one can sound (and, in its extreme forms, such an endeavour can seem like conspicuous consumption of the kind that Veblen wryly observed), but rather actually *to language* (or even *to translanguaging*) in order to negotiate some desirable outcome.

These two opposing attitudes to English, the one seeing it as an object of desire or a status symbol (an end in itself), the other viewing it merely as a tool (a means to an end), present special but different challenges to businesses operating in a globalised economy.

⁷ Of course, among some social groups or sub-cultures, it may be some non-standard variety which is preferred over the standard (e.g. AAVE among rappers), because, among other things, it identifies the user as a member of that group which wishes to distinguish itself from those using the standard or other varieties and constitutes what Labov (2006) calls *covert prestige*.

⁸ Indeed, the market for teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) around the world, especially certificates issued by boards such as Cambridge Assessment, the Education Testing System or the International Testing System, represent multi-million pound businesses. As Jenkins notes (2015:79), the claims of some boards to be “truly international” are rather suspect in that in reality they promote and certificate the standard as found in a few of the many English-speaking countries. There is also a clear trend for those parents around the world who can afford it to invest heavily in English medium instruction (EMI) for their children both locally and in English-speaking countries. One of the motives for this is most probably the hope that the children will be as proficient as possible in English. According to the International School Consultancy (cited in *The Economist* 20/12/14: “International Schools: The New Local”) there were approximately 3.75 million students in so-called international, EMI schools worldwide in the 2013-14 academic year, with 22 countries having each more than 100 such schools (the leaders being the UAE with 478, and China with 445). The ISC predicts that in 2024 there will be approximately 8.9 million students in 14,400 EMI schools.

2.2. Types of English as an International Language

Aside from concerns of competence, another factor to be taken into account is what kind of message the English in international contexts is meant to convey. At the one extreme, one has finely detailed and complex messages that require a high degree of competency on the part of both addressor and addressee; at the other, one has messages penned by someone with a very low level of competence, with the aid perhaps of some sort of machine translation. Examples of the latter are texts such as: “Fresh men’s sale”; “I feel basically you should sports for yourself”, “Refined flash: it seems volcano”.⁹ To be fair, such random or ill-formed groupings of words from other languages (especially those that use unfamiliar and exotic writing systems) can also be seen in all languages. From the character Del Boy’s habitual toast to fellow drinkers “Bonnet de douche” (shower cap in French) in the popular British comedy TV series *Only Fools and Horses*, to the slogans of the British clothing company Super Dry which features Japanese characters prominently on its clothes, which, however, cause perplexity among Japanese because they translate literally into such as things like “Extremely Dry Do!”¹⁰ Such a phenomenon also explains the early imports from English into some European languages such as *smoking* in French or Italian for dinner jacket / tuxedo (perhaps from *smoking jacket*, a different article of clothing altogether).

Dougill (1987) dubs the examples that he discusses from Asia *decorative, ornamental or atmosphere English* because they are often found on consumer products such as items of clothing and seem to function primarily as part of the overall design and do not encode linguistic messages as such. Often such messages, though only superficially English or whatever language they are supposed to resemble, do communicate on a more semiotic level, by which we mean that their message is conveyed less through linguistic coding but rather more generally through inference (see Sperber and Wilson 1987 for a distinction). In the case of decorative English, linguistically, such texts may be meaningless or at least incoherent but semiotically at least they declare the intention to be seen as international and as part of the global community, or according to McArthur (1998: 281) as a “token of modernity”. In the specific context of Japan where Dougill conducted his original study, his conclusion is that English is in reality treated as an “alien language” and the trend for decorative English in effect constitutes a mere façade of Internationalism:

It seems to me on reflection that it is possible to link decorative English with Japan’s monoculturalism, for it is basically an attempt to look international while remaining insular. A letter to the *Japan Times* by an American turned away from a bar, highlights the point. ‘Sorry, no foreigners’, he was told perfectly politely (there is no law against discrimination in Japan). The name of the bar? Manhattan. It even had a Stars and Stripes in the window. (Dougill 2008: 22)

Notwithstanding this, linguistic incoherence is a matter of degree and subjectivity, depending largely on the different perspectives of the addressor and addressee (see Christiansen 2011b). Furthermore, the act of being incoherent or at least of shunning “correct English” can in itself be used to signal something through inference. No matter how ill-formed, even surreal and absurd, that some examples may appear to be, one can sometimes detect a degree of creativity if not a note of irony on the part of the addressor. Indeed, we are led to doubt that some of the more imaginative offerings are merely the product of incompetence; in fact quite the opposite may be the case.

⁹ From Japan, the first two given by Dougill (1987), the last by Dougill (2008)

¹⁰ See: www.quora.com/What-is-the-story-behind-the-strange-Japanese-slogan-for-Superdry-極度乾燥しなさい

To cite one example, on a wall in the old town of Lecce, Italy, for much of the 2000s, there was a piece of graffiti which read “Don’t Happy / Be Worry” accompanied by what looked like a black, possibly anarchist, flag (Figure 1 below). This could be seen as merely the product of a failed attempt to turn the banal popular slogan of the time (“Don’t Worry / Be Happy”) around into something more sinister. It is possible, however, that it was instead a clever piece of wordplay that resulted in something that better mimicked the saying it was trying to subvert than the more standard “Don’t be Happy / Worry” while remaining fully intelligible even if displaying unorthodox English syntax. In such a case, we would argue that, rather than being merely *superficial*, it represents more of a *manipulated* English, where the addressee deliberately customises it for stylistic effect in a way that will appeal to the target audience: local L1 Italian speakers.



Figure 1.
“Don’t Happy. Be Worry”: a possible example of *manipulated English*

Realisation that different types of English (as opposed to varieties in a linguistic sense) exist on an international level allows one to distinguish between cases where English is used only superficially with no clear object other than to appear international or modern and cases where it is used to communicate more detailed, precise linguistically-encoded messages. As we note in Section 2.1 regarding competence, texts produced by speakers with limited competence in a traditional sense can still be adequately communicative to other speakers (both L1 and L2 speakers). Within ELF, such texts are the norm and ELF is accounting for a larger and larger proportion of English used as an International Language.

Bearing in mind that, as a series of context dependent variations rather than as a distinct variety, it is difficult to generalise about ELF as a whole, ELF usage typically constitutes a middle degree of English between the superficial and the deeper strata of the native variety. That this distinction exists in practice as well as theory is shown by the policy regarding translation by such institutions as the European Commission, which, due to the fact that it is not always possible (because of a lack of resources or time) to commission translations from professional native speaker or bilingual translators¹¹, distinguishes between five types of translations, reproduced below as Table 1:

¹¹ According to the so-called native-speaker principle, which is dominant especially in English-speaking countries at least, translators should only translate into their own native language.

Legislation	Translation in accordance with in-house rules for legislative documents
Basic understanding	Rough translation, usually for one person, to permit understanding of content. Will not be published.
For information	Accurate translation for internal information purposes. Will not be published.
For publication	High-quality translation to be published and/or distributed to specialists or the general public (requester should specify which).
For EU image	High-quality polished translation that is important for the Commission’s image.

Table 1
Types of translations at European Commission (adapted from Pérez González 2003: 98)

With the exception of the first, *legislation*, there is a natural progression from *basic understanding* to *for EU image*. This progression is analogous, we argue, to that in types of English as an international language. Firstly, there is Superficial English where the degree of competence is largely irrelevant as a concept because its aim is to provide only a semblance of English. At the next level, there are examples of ELF variations, where as we outline in 2.1, communicativeness takes precedence over adherence to some model or standard (usually but not necessarily the native speaker). Finally, there is English which is not only fully communicative but also adheres to some standard (again not necessarily the native speaker, e.g. in some contexts such as in European Union institutions, administrative language and context-specific technical terms may constitute a norm) and where the language itself becomes an object of concern with adherence to a norm constituting a status symbol – Table 2:

Basic superficiality (Decorative English)	The semblance of English: no real linguistic coding of message. English is used only because it attracts attention and gives a certain impression (e.g. internationalism, or modernity).
For communication (ELF variation)	Focus on communication of message itself and therefore on intelligibility for other participants in the discourse. Language is functional and adherence to an external model is not a priority. Strategies such as accommodation and translanguaging may be employed.
For addressor’s image (Norm-oriented English)	Focus on adherence to a model (usually, but not necessarily a native speaker standard). Allowance made for needs of other participants only insofar as this does not cause deviation from the model being imitated (e.g. paraphrase). Reproducing the norm contributes to affording prestige in the eyes of the target addressees.

Table 2
Types of English as an International Language: an analogy with types of translation at the European Commission.

The fact that one can view these three types as part of a progression does not necessarily mean that they represent different degrees of competence with a user typically working their way down the scale (as it is represented on Table 2) as they become more competent. Rather, for a more competent user, they may constitute different stylistic choices (although obviously a user with a low level of competence would have only limited freedom to choose) in the same way that the types of translation in Table 1 are alternative strategies which a translator (or team of said) may employ. However, the prestige accorded in both instances to *For EU image* and *For Addressor’s Image* must come at least in part from the high level of competence required to fulfil the requirements of the category in question. That said, the *objectives* of the categories of

For information and *For communication* are each in their own way equally challenging, but rightly or wrongly, are afforded less prestige, at least at present. Image is also a concern for *Basic superficiality* but, as the name suggests, the image created is only a façade, and all too often – despite perhaps the intentions of the addressor – it fails to create a favourable impression with the addressee (at least with those who have a degree of competence in the language themselves).

3. Types of English as an International Language and their implications for business discourse

The realisation that different types of English as an International Language exists is important to businesses operating in a global economy as it means that they may choose which to use according to circumstances, and what goal they are trying to achieve by the act of communicating.

Aiming for norm-oriented English may not always be possible due to lack of resources and it may in any case be better to aim for an ELF variation which puts a premium on communication if the intended addressees do not have adequate linguistic competence to deal with norm-oriented discourse. Furthermore, in many contexts, much-maligned superficial English may be sufficient. In the following three sections we will look at examples from business discourse of each kind.

3.1 Superficial English

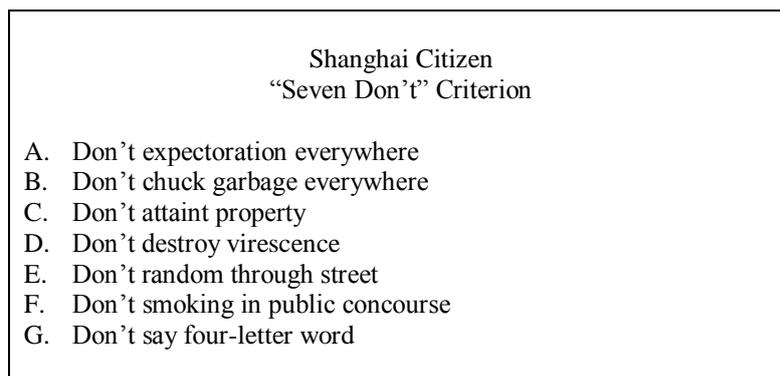
Superficial English is frequently used in names of products, businesses, sundry signs and advertising slogans. This kind of English is associated mainly with small businesses with limited resources and is presumably intended for local consumers whose command of English, ELF or norm-oriented, is limited and who will be impressed merely by the sight of something that looks like English. Among the almost infinite number of examples that we could cite, are names of businesses such as “To look for the clean” (the name of a firm of cleaners in Brindisi, Italy in the 2000s) or “Dog burger” (an independent fast food outlet in Seville, Spain, in the 1980s). Typically among those of higher competence, such cases are the object of derision,¹² showing how superficial English often comes at the opposite end of the prestige spectrum to norm-oriented English. Sometimes superficial English (coupled with code mixing as an element of translanguaging) is lampooned in slogans such as “two gust is megl che one” (“Two flavours are better than one” the Italian Maxibon Motta advertisement in the 2000s), which, as an example of creative construction, constitutes another example of manipulated English (see 2.2).

The term Superficial English may also be used to include those examples where English words are inserted into texts in the local language not because the language in question lacks terms to refer to the concepts in question but rather to lend an air of internationalism or modernity, for example, to the text. In this way *payer comptant*, in French for instance, becomes *payer cash*, or *Geselligkeit* in German becomes *socialising*. Often such terms are at once irresistible in the speech community in question but frowned upon and dismissed as such things as “Franglais” or “Denglish”. Ironically, they are often examples of the kind of translanguaging which has historically usually been tolerated in English with myriad borrowings such as *à chambre*, or *schadenfreude*, the use of which may well be seen as a sign of sophistication and of having received a good education.

¹² See features like “Sign Language” in the Daily Telegraph or www.english.com cited by Dougill (2008).

Within the category of Superficial English, one could also place examples of translations, typically found in instruction manuals (especially when Asian companies were first making inroads into Western markets in the 1970s and 1980s and still from some Chinese companies today) or various warnings or safety regulations, which are largely incomprehensible or incoherent. Typically, these seem to have been produced only to comply with some law or at least to satisfy expectation that they should be there, but, one suspects, may not be intended to be actually read by anyone (in English at least). For instance, Example 1 (taken from the website [English.com](http://www.english.com)):¹³

1)



Of course, like some of the examples discussed above, this text is not completely uninformative on an ideational level and cannot be considered totally superficial; points B, F and G as well as the title are comprehensible especially with a little “effort after meaning” (Barlett 1932). The meanings of rules A, C, D and E are largely obscured. The wider point however is that the notice, going by its title at least, is directed at Shanghai citizens, very few of whom, one would expect, would need to read the English version. Rather than informing non-Chinese speakers about what constitutes unacceptable behaviour in Shanghai (from those parts of the text that we can understand, the forbidden activities seem to be the same kinds of thing that would be frowned upon in most places around the world), the primary object of the English text is perhaps part of a psychological *nudge*¹⁴ strategy: the existence of an English translation serving as a reminder that uncouth behaviour on the part of locals will have a negative effect on the way outsiders see them and their city. In cases like example 1, whether the English text is informative or not is not the issue for the people behind the notice; the mere fact it exists fulfils the requirement that there be something in English accompanying the Chinese text.

In such cases of what we could call superficial translations, the commissioners would seem to have either given the task to somebody with very little expertise in translation or of the target language, or relied solely on computer assisted translation. Even the best of such systems require a qualified human operator to refine both input (the source text) and output (the target text). Indeed, that examples of such superficial translations are appearing to become rarer is probably testimony to the fact that, as international markets become more important, businesses are learning the importance of communicating effectively with customers as well as becoming more aware of the damage to their brand image that such superficial English may cause, smacking as it does of incompetence. Undoubtedly, contributory factors are that CAT tools are getting

¹³ <http://www.english.com/category/instructions/page/4/>

¹⁴ On so-called Nudge Theory in general see Thaler and Sunstein (2008).

better, and that proficiency in English is rising among the general population so the basic linguistic competence of even amateur or novice translators is improving.

3.2 ELF Variation

Whereas Superficial English occurs mainly in contexts where internationalisation has not really come about yet and where the intended addressee is not an English speaker (whether native speaker or not) as such, but rather a speaker of another language, who will be suitably impressed by the sight of something which looks like English, English as a Lingua Franca variation fits those contexts where the addressee is an non-native English speaker, which must account for most international communication today in English. Such cases are accounting for an increasingly large proportion of business contexts, both within companies, and between businesses and their target clients or customers. Non-native users of English are by definition plurilingual and may come from lingua-cultural backgrounds that are quite different to those of a typical native speaker. For this reason, as we say in Section 2.1, ELF must concern itself first and foremost with the communicative needs of the participants actually involved in the specific speech event rather than with adherence to a native speaker model.

It may follow that there are contexts where the competence level of some of the participants is low and there is a need for accommodation or translanguaging on the part of the others. It is likely in such contexts that the ELF variation that emerges in is seen as something defective and derided as “Broken English” and considered a low-prestige form of English. Example 2 below is a case in point: what looks to be an impromptu speech by Li Jun (LJ in the transcript), the young and charismatic founder and CEO of Xiaomi, the Chinese telecommunications giant, at a promotional event in India: ¹⁵

2)

[Dramatic upbeat music]
 LJ: Hello
 Audience [various replies of “Hello, Hi”]
 LJ: How are you?
 Audience [various replies of “fine thanks”, etc.]
 LJ: India Mi fans ... I’m very happy to be in China ... to be in INDIA! [laughs]
 Audience [laugh]
 LJ: Do you like Mi ... 4i?
 Audience [yes]
 LJ: Do you like Mi ... band?
 Audience [yes]
 LJ. OK. We have a ... GIFT ... for everyone
 Audience [whoops of joy]
 LJ: We will ... OK ... OK ...
 Audience [whooping and whistling]
 LJ: We will give er ... everyone ... a free Mi band
 Audience [cheers and whooping]
 LJ: [pauses to acknowledge audience, bows] are you OK? ARE YOU OK?
 Audience [yes]
 LJ: Thank you. Thank you. We will give everyone ... a free Mi band. AND ... ONE COLOUR FREE STRAP.
 Audience [whoops]
 LJ: COLOUR strap. DO YOU LIKE?
 Audience [yes]
 LJ: Thank you. Thank you.

¹⁵ Video footage of this speech can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8jD8HscEabc>. The transcription is ours.

This speech was much derided on social media,¹⁶ especially in his native China, mainly for Li Jun's perceived inability to speak "good" (presumably norm-oriented) English. However, looking at it objectively, it can be seen that, apart from the pauses and repetition, the ideational content of the message, simple as it is, is conveyed effectively. To contrast it with example 1 above, there is no ambiguity and no incoherence or incomprehensibility whatsoever. Furthermore, the effect on the audience (admittedly well-disposed towards the speaker before he even starts) is positive.

Any accommodation, in fact, seems to be on the part of the addressees: the audience, who, as young "tech-savvy" Indians (or presumably mostly so), can be assumed to use English as a second language. They seem to appreciate not only the promotional gifts but the fact that Li Juan makes the effort to address them, without visible notes or teleprompter, in English even though he obviously has difficulty doing so. They even forgive his *faux pas* when he confuses China with India. There is then a strong element of the interpersonal metafunction of language here, with part of the message being not only to impart information but also to establish a relationship between addressor and addressee. Had Li Jun opted instead to speak in his native language and to be interpreted simultaneously to the audience in standard, norm-oriented English, or had he been coached to deliver a prepared speech in a standard or other type of English of his choosing (such as something appealing to his target audience) written especially by a professional speech writer, there is every chance that, while perhaps being more effective on an ideational level, it would have not been so successful on the interpersonal level.

The interpersonal dimension is an aspect of English as a Lingua Franca which is often overlooked especially by those who see non-native speakers essentially as language learners¹⁷ and therefore view everything they do from the perspective of linguistic competence, rather than as language users and of what they are trying to achieve in their languaging. As Kachru (1996: 910) points out:

English as a lingua franca, however we define the term, has become a communicative tool of immense political, ideological, and economic power.

This aspect of ELF can be seen in examples 3-5, taken from China Central Television (CCTV) News footage of Li Keqiang (LK), Premier of the State Council (i.e. Prime Minister) of the People's Republic of China at the World Economic Forum in Davos 2015 mingling and socialising with other participants between talks and seminars.¹⁸

3)

LK: [courtesy] and er ... er ... innovation. YA! er... er... and supplied better public [goods] and [the] services [yeah maybe]... sometimes sometimes by the market.

Man 1: So which way is it? five and a half or si-seven, [inaudible]?

Other participants: [laugh]

LK: [inaudible] er ... achieved ... [smiles, laughter from other participants] will be er. er.. [head to the] middle. to ... high ... speed ... and rates er ... Chinese ... economic structure to middle to high level. we will make the two angles . er ... maybe you er ... I can say two agents two er ... [middle] to high. SO this is er ... chinese. economy ... future.

Woman: your english is excellent

Other participants [laugh]

LK: [laughing and pointing] your english has. Is much better [than] my chinese!

¹⁶ <http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-32510814>

¹⁷ The similarity of the initialism ELF with EFL (English as a Foreign Language) may add to this confusion one suspects.

¹⁸ Video footage of these, and two more other (largely inaudible) short dialogues, is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9TI5ozFUGw>. The transcription is ours.

Man 2: her chinese is much worse than yours!
[laughter]

4)

Man 1: great
Man 2: good luck to you and er... we hope that you can succeed because the world is [inaudible]
[Laughter from another group in the background]
LK: thank you, thank you [inaudible]
Man 2: thank you . thank you [shaking LK's hand] . good bye.
LK: By the way er. Chinese [community] w-wor. wor-welcomes er foreign investment in china.
we will er make sure protect er. your er. lawful rights and er... interests er... including er. idea. ya
Woman: [audible] because [inaudible] high [inaudible]
LK: ya ya [laughing] [inaudible] if you do, you know?
Woman: Oh I've heard a LOT about it [laughing]
LK: [turning to another participant]
Man 3: I hope that in [inaudible] you will present [us with some opportunities.]
LK: – you er. you are er. treated equal as the er. as CHINESE company. ya. all of the .company.
are treated equal in china. OK
Unidentified Man: good!
Participants [applause, various comments]
LK: How to see again? In this [self] room?
Unidentified participants: [yes, right]
LK: you will attend opening ceremony?
Man 5: yes [sure]
LK: OK, ya, see you, see you again
Woman 2: thank you very much
LK: HI [pointing to someone]

5)

LK: how are you a member of the dele – delegation here?
Man: yes. I'm with hilton ... [the the]. hilton ... the hotels
LK: [looks at man's name tag] yes!
Man. yes. Yes.
LK: What's the big[gest] hotel?
Man. yes yes.
LK: OK. ya. the BIG BOSS
Man: [laughs] YOU'RE the big boss!
[laughter]

Examples 3-5 have a lot in common with Example 2 in that, in these too, the English is far from norm-oriented and is focussed mainly on being communicative and seems to require a degree of accommodation on the part of the other participants. It is interesting that, in contrast to Li Jun's efforts in Example 2, the ability of Li Keqiang to communicate spontaneously in English without a prepared script or an official interpreter (which is undoubtedly how he would be expected to communicate in more formal settings) is considered something worthy of merit, not derision (indeed in Example 3, he is complimented on his English). Revealingly, CCTV News aired the footage (nearly four minutes of it in all) without commentary presumably to show off his high level of linguistic competence and evident ability to charm an international audience in English, albeit of a distinctly ELF rather than a norm-oriented kind.

This is interesting as it shows that the use of ELF variation, especially in those contexts where native speakers are present, does not necessarily have to lead to power asymmetries in favour of the latter (see Guido 2008). If nothing else, comparison of the reception of Li Jun's and Li Keqiang's respective uses of ELF variation shows that criticism levelled at an individual's use of language, whether their own L1 or other, is often grounded on criteria which are not strictly linguistic at all. Instead, attacks on the way a person expresses him or herself is used as an indirect way of attacking that individual as a person, or the group that they are

perceived to represent. In this light, the more powerful or useful a person is, the more acceptable their language is seen to be.

This simple fact shows that ELF variation in general, or at least specific types of variations, which, if they become more stabilised, may evolve into varieties (perhaps eventually into norms or standards), may become more acceptable and prestigious in international and business discourse if key global figures can be seen to use them.¹⁹ Indeed, it is not inconceivable that in some contexts of international discourse, native speaker norm-oriented varieties, which often by their highly idiomatic nature and difficult pronunciation are less efficient communicatively (see Jenkins 2000), may fall out of favour.

This is to say that, as traditionally non-English speaking countries like China play a larger role in global affairs and the world economy and seem to be content to continue to accept English as an international language, the foreseeable future of English seems secure with no single language in a position to replace it on a worldwide level, rejecting also Ostler's predictions (2010) that technology will eventually remove the need for lingua francas altogether (see Christiansen 2015). However, there is no guarantee that speakers from the outer and expanding circles will promote a native speaker norm-oriented model and it seems more likely that they will favour ELF variation or "functional English", or whatever they decide to call it. ELF variation, rather than norm-oriented English, will have the added advantage of facilitating translanguaging in such a way that ELF will become more of a Multilingua Franca as Jenkins (2015) predicts, perhaps with English remaining the central core but with other major global languages (among the most obvious candidates at present, being Chinese, Spanish, Arabic, or French) contributing an increasing number of features (e.g. pronunciation, lexis, syntax even morphology).

An illustration of such translanguaging as found in ELF variation is seen in Example 6 taken from an internet forum for landlords and students looking for accommodation in Italy²⁰ in a post from a student in Poland:

6)

ciao tutti !!

me and my bf (both students) are going to milano at the end od august so we're looking for a cheap room for 2-4 night... can u recommend us something or maybe u have actually some room to rent in that period? i prefer e-mail contact so write me on: [email address] and i'll respond all the questions
grazie!!

Here can be found a mixture of English and Italian (the local language given the discourse context) with Italian providing the greeting and the salutation and also the name of the city itself (the norm-oriented English version for which would be *Milan*). This is not code mixing or code switching²¹ of the kind traditionally associated with lack of competence, whereby the speaker confuses two codes. Rather it is obviously a stylistic choice whereby the addressor (presumably an L1 Polish speaker) draws deliberately on both their repertoire of English and Italian to enhance their message. Revealingly, there is some colloquial language in both Italian and English indicating a degree of familiarity with both codes (*ciao tutti!!* as an opener; *bf* for

¹⁹ And Pope Francis is another highly influential figure given to using English spontaneously in public, producing a variation which is distinctly ELF rather than NS norm-oriented (see Guido 2014:114).

²⁰ Studentsville.com (<http://www.studentsville.eu/italyforum/forums/default.asp>) – see Christiansen (forthcoming a).

²¹ The former entails hybridisation or merging of codes, the latter, movement from one language to another (See Romaine and Kachru 1998: 228-229).

boyfriend; *u* for *you* and the use of lower case throughout – *od* for *of* being either a typographical error or a transfer from Polish, where the preposition *od* can in some contexts be equivalent to *of* or *from*).

As Christiansen (forthcoming) notes, this constitutes in part a localisation of the ELF variation in question, with the Italian linguacultural context being more relevant to the discourse than a native speaker English one. Consequently, Italian terms, in particular phatics (phrases, expressions and formula that have an interpersonal function) proper nouns or other landmarks of the locality and technical terms relating to Italian universities occur especially when participants in the discourse are neither native speaker English nor native speaker Italian – the reason being that locals would seem to want to assimilate themselves with the ELF-using community by avoiding Italian while most, but not all, native speakers would seem to remain attached to their native-speaker norm-oriented form.

4. Conclusions

On an international stage, English is evolving at a rapid rate (as it has often before in its colourful and complex history where linguistic purity has never been a dominant feature²²). Global businesses will be at the centre of this process and one would do well to stay abreast of linguistic developments in order to gain most benefit from the rapidly changing situation. Linguistic complacency or conservatism may not be wise strategies and the assumption that native-speaker norm-oriented forms of English will continue to dominate internationally may turn out to be untrue sooner than its adherents expect.

Businesses operating in a global market need to ask themselves which type of English is most suitable for their particular business goals.

Within the company itself, one should look at the status of other languages: local, regional or of lingua francas relevant to the discourse context (e.g. Italian in coffee bars). Next, businesses should consider which level of competence in English is necessary for internal uses between members of staff. In a company based in one country, the local language may well suffice, but with the opportunity to expand abroad or to employ more and more talent from overseas, the adoption of English, especially in some kind of ELF variation, may prove a sound long term strategy. Staff in the company will have to be consulted, and their attitudes both to the use of English, and the type of English used (ELF variation or norm-oriented) should obviously be taken into account.

A traditional view that insists on native-speaker functionality may be detrimental to the company and its employees' long term interests in that talented employees may be side-lined purely for linguistic reasons with the result that both the business and the individual in question ultimately suffer. Beyond questions of communicative efficacy, the management has to make sure that they foster a working environment where plurilingualism is encouraged and where all employees are taught to be linguistically tolerant and to learn those skills typical of translanguaging and intrinsic to ELF variation. In short, it is in everybody's interest that businesses become more concerned with *what* members of staff are saying, not *how* "well" they are saying it.

When dealing with those outside the business, in particular customers and clients, similar concerns hold. Emphasis must be put on the target audience's language expectations and what its attitudes are to languages other than English and how tolerant they are of ELF variation and non-standardness in general. The negative reaction on the part of many Koreans to the

²² An aspect of English alluded to in the title of McWhorter's work on the History of English (2008): *Our Magnificent Bastard Tongue*.

recent unveiling of the new “I.Seoul.U” slogan for Seoul in Korea (another example of the growing phenomenon of manipulated English – see 2.2), chosen by a panel of experts but dismissed as “Konglish” (Korean English) by many, is a case in point.²³

In particular, when looking at advertising campaigns and brand image, ELF variation may be more appropriate for customer service and after sales or for the promotion of less prestigious products in a lower price range, while native speaker-norm oriented English may be more suitable for higher priced products associated with traditionally English speaking countries that constitute status symbols.

In essence, businesses should look carefully at the linguistic context in which they operate and not just assume that they face a simple choice of which language(s) or varieties to adopt. Rather, they ought to explore the possibility of using more functional ELF variation, together with other important languages and varieties, especially other significant ones in the geographical area or discourse field. All the indications are that international communication in the future will be linguistically more Eclectic than monolingual. English is not becoming *the* future world language but, in its ELF variations, it will, for the foreseeable future, be the major component of world lingua francas in general.

²³ Chosen over such alternatives as “Seouling” and “Seoulmate”, see “South Korea: New Seoul slogan sparks 'Konglish' debate” (<http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-news-from-elsewhere-34667315>)

References

- Barlett F.C. 1932, *Remembering*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Christiansen T. 2011a, *Pronunciation and Intelligibility in ELF: A Case Study*, in “Lingue e Linguaggi” 6, pp. 21-38.
- Christiansen T. 2011b, *Cohesion: a Discourse Perspective*, Peter Lang, Bern.
- Christiansen T. 2013, *Cohesion as Interaction in ELF Spoken Discourse: An Analysis of Question-Answer Sessions in University Contexts*, in Bayyurt Y. and Akean S. (eds), *ELF5 Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference of English as a Lingua Franca*, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, pp. 273-282.
- Christiansen T. 2014, *Putting the accent on intelligibility: What constitutes “good” pronunciation in the context of English as a lingua franca? A case study of learners of different L1s*, in “Textus” XXVII [1], Language Issue, *Perspectives on English as a Lingua Franca*, pp. 35-51.
- Christiansen T. 2015, *The Rise of English as the Global Lingua Franca: Is the world heading towards greater monolingualism or new forms of plurilingualism?*, in “Lingue e Linguaggi” 15, pp. 129-154.
- Christiansen T. forthcoming, *The localisation of ELF. Code mixing and switching between ELF and Italian in Italian internet accommodation forums for international students*, in *ELF7 Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of English as a Lingua Franca, DERE- The American College of Greece, Athens, Greece*.
- Council of Europe 2001, *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Crystal D. 2003, *English as a Global Language*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Dougill J. 1987, *English as a decorative language*, in “English Today” 12, pp. 33-35.
- Dougill J. 2008, *Japan and English as an alien language*, in “English Today” 93 [24/1], pp.18-22.
- García O., Li Wei 2014, *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education*, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills, Basingstoke.
- Graddol D. 1998, *The Future of English*, The British Council, London.
- Graddol D. 2010, *English Next*, The British Council, London.
- Guido M.G. 2008, *English as a Lingua Franca in Cross-cultural Immigration Domains*, Peter Lang, Bern.
- Guido M.G. 2014, *New-evangelization discourse in ELF immigration encounters: a case study*, in “Lingue e Linguaggi” 12, pp. 112-126.
- Halliday M.A.K. 1978, *Language as social semiotic*, Edward Arnold, London.
- Jenkins J. 2000, *The Phonology of English as an International Language*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Jenkins J. 2015, *Repositioning English and multilingualism in English as a Lingua Franca*, in “Englishes in Practice” 2 [3], pp. 49-85.
- Kachru B.B. 1985, *Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: the English language in the outer circle*, in Quirk R. and Widdowson H.G. (eds.), *English in the World: Teaching and Learning the Language and Literatures*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 11-30.
- Kachru B.B. 1996, *English as lingua franca*, In Goebel H., Nelde P.H., Starý Z. and Wölck W. (eds.), *Kontaktlinguistik. Contact Linguistics. Linguistique de Contact*, Vol 1, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin , pp. 906-13.
- Kachru B.B. (2005) *Asian Englishes: Beyond the Canon*. Honk Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Labov W. (2006). *The Social Stratification of English in New York*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press
- McArthur T. 1998, *Decorative English*, in McArthur T. (ed), *The Oxford Companion to the English Language*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 281.
- McWhorter J. 2007, *Language Interrupted: Signs of Non-Native Acquisition in Standard Language Grammars*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- McWhorter J. 2008, *Our Magnificent Bastard Tongue: The Untold History of English*, Gotham Books, New York.
- Ostler N. 2010, *The Last Lingua Franca: English until the Return of Babel*, Penguin, London.
- Pérez González L. 2003, *Speaking in Tongues: Language Across Contexts and Users*, Universitat de València, Valencia.
- Romaine S. and Kachru B.B. 1998, *Code-mixing and code-switching*, in McArthur T. (ed.), *Concise Oxford Companion to the English Language*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 228-229
- Ronen S., Gonçalves B., Hu K.Z., Vespignani A, Pinker S. and Hidalgo C. 2014, *Links that speak: The global language network and its association with global fame*, in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, December 2014.
- Seidlhofer B. 2011, *Understanding English as a Lingua Franca: A Complete Introduction to the Theoretical Nature and Practical Implications of English used as a Lingua Franca*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Swain M. 2006, *Languaging, Agency and Collaboration in Advanced Second Language Proficiency*, in Byrnes, H. (ed), *Advanced Language Learning: The Contribution of Halliday and Vygotsky*, Continuum, London pp. 95-108.

Thaler R. and Sunstein C. 2008, *Nudge*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth.

Weber G. 1997, *Top Languages: the World's Ten Most Influential Languages*, in "Language Monthly" 3, pp. 12-18. Reprinted in AATF "National Bulletin", 24 [3] (January 1999), pp. 22-28.