

Conference on Bi- and Multilingual Universities- challenges and future prospects
University of Helsinki, 1-3 September 2005
Session 5A, Saturday 3 September, 11.30 – 13.00 “Multilingualism in practice - challenges”

Ecological niches, emergent genres or emergent communities of practice? English as an academic lingua franca at the French-German bilingual University of Fribourg-Freiburg

1) Introduction

2) Plan of presentation:

- Define the concept of English as a Lingua Franca , mention ELF research
- Describe local setting of the Psychology Department & Lunchtime Seminars
- Look at phases and embedding, discuss reasons for and functions of using ELF (choices and strategies, communities of practice, neutral ground)
- Conclusion

3) English as a Lingua Franca ELF

”... most interactions in English take place among ‘non-native’ speakers of the language who share neither a common first language nor a common culture, and who use English as a lingua franca (ELF) as their chosen language of communication.”
(*Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, 7th edition, p. R92)

Emerging regularities which do not seem to hinder successful ELF communication:

Same form in all persons in singular present tense, relative pronouns *who* and *which* used interchangeably, omitting or inserting definite and indefinite articles, pluralized nouns: *informations, knowledges, advices*, demonstrative *this* for singular and plural, multi-purpose ‘general’ verbs (e.g. *make a discussion, make sport*), uniform tags *isn’t it?* or *no?*, increased clarity (e.g. *discuss about something, phone to somebody*).

ELF Corpora being compiled:

- **VOICE Vienna Oxford International Corpus of English, University of Vienna, Austria, under the direction of Prof. Barbara Seidlhofer**
<http://www.univie.ac.at/Anglistik/voice/>
”The most wide-spread use of English throughout the world is that of a lingua franca, i.e. the means of communication regarded as the most convenient one by speakers from different first language backgrounds.” , “The focus is on unscripted, largely face-to-face communication among competent speakers from a wide range of first language backgrounds whose primary and secondary education and socialization did not take place in English”
- **ELFA English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings Corpus, University of Tampere, Finland, under the direction of Prof. Anna Mauranen**
<http://www.uta.fi/laitokset/kielet/engf/research/elfa/>
ELF “a contact language spoken by people who do not share a native language”, “a vehicular language”, “Its speakers come from highly diverse linguistic backgrounds, and consequently its features are not limited to the contact between two languages, as usually is the case. Moreover, its speakers have usually received formal instruction in English- in the case of academic communication in particular.” However, speakers “are not construed as learners as if they were on the way toward the (unattainable) goal of nativeness” (Mauranen 2003: 514)

- **ELF as Medium of Learning in a Hotel Management Educational Program project**
Smit 2003 http://www.univie.ac.at/Anglistik/ang_new/online_papers/views/archive.htm
Lecturers and students from various L1 backgrounds coming together in a non-EL1 environment, using English as their only shared medium of communication; classroom discourse in an ELF setup.

My own project

- Ø **English as an academic lingua franca at Fribourg-Freiburg University ELFFRA:**
Ph.D. project, carried out at Fribourg-Freiburg University, supervised by Prof. Barbara Seidlhofer at Vienna University
ELF in an institutionally bilingual (F/G) academic setting, often as a third or 4th language, embedded in plurilingual practices, (semi-)scripted and unscripted spoken data produced by plurilingual speakers who may share other languages.

Not infrequent ‘invisible’/‘covert’ features of academic ELF: (self-)imposed NS ‘polishing’ through editing, rephrasing, proof-reading; sometimes translation, memorization from a recorded oral model, rehearsal, etc. involving NS. **Monologic ELF speech in academic contexts: ‘talks’** will be based on preparation, may be more or less scripted (written notes, word-by-word manuscript), may be visually supported, accompanied by (PowerPoint) slides, handout, transparencies etc.

4) **Local setting**

The Psychology Department: two sections (one teaches through German, the other teaches through French) in shared physical space; five Chairs: Organisational & Work Psychology (shared, both German), General Psychology (German), Clinical Psychology German Section, Clinical Psychology French Section, General and Educational Psychology (French), plus three (research) institutes with their own staff; almost fully parallel programmes of study for French and for German speakers (except occupational psychology), plus ‘bilingual degree’ option. “Guest” events (block courses, research colloquia, guest lectures) also in English.

5) **Psychology Lunchtime Seminars**

Second such regular event held in English at Uni FR, start: 2003/04, a new type of event, possibly an emergent genre at Uni FR, modelled on “brown-bag” seminars, (semi-)formal lunch-hour sessions for which one brings one’s lunch and an invited speaker gives a brown-bag talk on recent research. So far very few people have actually dared to bring food to the Lunchtime Seminars. “All are welcome”: open to anyone interested, usually attended by staff and students in Psychology and Education, announced on the departmental website; members of staff in Psychology and Education receive an email invitation for the individual events.

”**Language of presentation:** English (although some presentations may be given in German and some in French)”

Some local accommodation (“habitat factor” Pölzl & Seidlhofer forthcoming) can be expected in this setting, but may be counter-balanced by international ‘referee-design’ (Bell 2001), i.e. the psychological setting may be wider than the local setup, speakers may be associating themselves with an international reference group with which they identify. (divergence-convergence balance, cf. Brutt-Griffler 2002)

Organizers: two young members of staff, O1 (L1 French, L2? English, L3? German), O2 (L1 AGerman, L2 English, L3 French), each speaks his respective L1 with the other

Presenters 2004/05: “external and internal”:

P1 = O1 (L1 French, L2? English, L3? German) Uni FR, lecturer

P2 (L1 GGerman, L2 French, L3 English) FU Berlin, professor

P3 (L1 BrE, L2 French) University of Sussex , professor

P4 cancelled

P5 (L1 AGerman, L2 English) University of Zurich, professor

P6 (L1 GGerman, L2 English, L3 French, L4 Spanish), Uni FR, associate professor

P7 (L1 French, “forgotten German”, L2 English) University of Geneva, professor

P8 (L1 AmE) Ecole Polytechnique Federal Lausanne, associate professor

Topics: e.g. understanding emotions during reading, neurocognitive studies of lexical access, reading and comprehension skill in primary school, sense of humour as a personality characteristic, stress and performance in complex human-machine systems, file change semantics for preschoolers etc.

6) Phases, embedding, framing: first approximations of “the complete speech event”

Phase 1: Previous occupants leave, arrival of ELF researcher, arrival of organizer(s)

Phase 2: Arrival of presenter, chair, first members of staff, students; greetings

Phase 3: Setting up equipment, waiting for rest of the audience; checking e. and chatting

Phase 4: Official welcome by organizer; inviting chair to take the floor

Phase 5: Chair introduces the presenter; invites presenter to take the floor

Phase 6: Presenter thanks, introduces and gives presentation (PowerPoint)

Phase 7: Discussion

Phase 8: Chair may invite last question, then thanks the presenter

Phase 9: Audience clap or rap, start filing out of the lecture theatre

Phase 10: Individual members of the audience approach the presenter, also to ask further questions, but usually to shake hands, congratulate, introduce themselves and socialize

Phase 11: multiple simultaneous conversations in the vicinity of the presenter

Phase 12: thanking, leave-taking, packing up, chatting

Only the phases in bold (4-8) take place exclusively in English. English seems to be the embedded language, required by the genre (at the same time a choice and a strategy), indexical of the professional situation.

7) Reasons for using English in spite of the Bilingual Imperative: (overt arguments) global academic language, language of the discipline/field, international conference language, language of publications, need for English in academic communication and research, publish-in-English-or-perish, necessity and economy in internationally composed local research teams, (preparation for) internationalisation

“Doing the Lunchtime Seminars in English made it easier to get the German side on board” (S1, 241105)

”wegen der Zweisprachigkeit [because of bilingualism]” (S2toP2, 161204)

8) Working assumptions on the functions of and motivation for using English:

Strategy of integration and appropriation

Community of practice (Wenger 1998, Eckert 2000, House 2003)

Relational work across the language divide, neutral ground

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