English as a Lingua Franca

Course: Global English

Presenters: Henrike Nahrwold,
Julia Kallass

Table of Contents

- Definitions of ELF
- ELF lexico-grammar
- Standard English in the context of ELF
- Attitudes towards ELF
- The role of ELF in the classroom

Definitions

What is a Lingua Franca?

- primarily a local or contact language between national groups
- working language or bridging language

What is ELF?

- a language of the outer circle
- English is the Lingua Franca of international business, science, technology, aviation, the European Union, mass media, the internet and advertising
- Firth:"*ELF is a contact language between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication.*"

ELF – Business English

- area of ESP
- the language used is neither as rich in vocabulary and expression, nor as culture-bound, as that used by native speakers, but will be based on the core of the most useful and basic structures and vocabulary

ELF lexico-grammar

- view of language in terms of both structure (*grammar*) and words (*lexis*)
- search for a grammatical common core for contexts in which English is used as an international Lingua Franca

ELF lexico-grammar

- use of 3rd person singular zero marking, e.g. *She look very sad*
- extension of *which* to serve functions previously served only by *who* and vice versa, e.g. *the person which, the book who*
- omission of articles/ shift in article use
- use of invariant question tags, e.g. *they should arrive soon, isn‘t it?*
- increased explicitness, e.g. *How long time…?, black colour*

ELF lexico-grammar

- countable use of uncountable nouns, e.g. *advices, informations*
- shift in preposition use, e.g. *to discuss about*

- examples of a common core listed by Jenkins and Seidlhofer
- *a code which all users of ELF have to follow*
- problem: *diversity among users and multiplicity of uses*

Standard English in the context of ELF

Standard English

- Definition:

"Standard English is a variety of English that is held by many to be 'correct' in the sense that it shows none of the regional or other variations that are considered by some to be ungrammatical, or non-standard English.

RP is the way Standard English is spoken; without regional variations. Standard English and RP are widely used in the media and by public figures, so it has prestige status and is regarded by many as the most desirable form of the language." (www.usingenglish.com)

Standard English in the context of ELF

- Difficult to justify in the context of ELF
- StE is associated with native-speakers
- StE is treated as a unitary, indivisible quality of "nativeness"
  - but: English is no longer property of native-speakers
  - Many core elements are part of WE (World English) and EIL (English as an International Language)

- Grammatical core is norm for native-speakers and for L2 users
- Grammatical core = lexico-grammatical system minus native-speaker accents, lexical items that are distinctive in various ways, idioms

- StE includes idiomaticity and collocations
- Idioms are particularly hard for L2 users to learn

- Idioms are tied to culture, grammar is not
- => StE cannot be equated with native-speaker norms

Attitudes towards ELF

Attitudes toward ELF accents

- German English accent
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RxElAqVmJ2M

German English accent

- Inferior aesthetic qualities
- Harsh (anger), hard, robust, strong, not pleasant to listen to, funny
- /w/ as /v/ (vat? for what)
- Problems pronouncing ‘th‘
- Produced in the throat (“guttural”)
- Prosodic features: wrong rhythm, wrong pitch, lacks melody
- Cold, stiff, strict, distant, precise

- Positively: correctness
  - Clear, therefore easy to understand
- Has much in common with the British English accent

Spanish English Accent

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fRCp8lId2k8&feature=related

Spanish English accent

- Tone/intonation: melodious
- Speed of delivery: fast, quick, speedy
- Positive intelligibility: easy to understand, clear
- Spanishness: incorrectness (not precise),
  - wrong vowels
  - wrong pitch
  - ‘r’ very distinct

Attitudes towards ELF
Two positions

- 1st position: ELF is non-controversial
- 2nd position: ELF is monolithic and monocentric

1st Position

- Positive position
- Taken for granted by many professionals working internationally
- Position is not often talked about

2nd Position

- Negative position
- “Monomodel“
- EFL lacks any standards
- ELF and EFL are the same
- interlanguages rather than varieties of English
- ELF means errors and “anything goes“

Attitudes towards ELF

- Sobkowiak (2005: 141) describes an ELF approach to pronunciation as one that will 'bring the ideal [that is, Received Pronunciation] down into the gutter with no checkpoint along the way'.
- Prodromou describes ELF as 'a broken weapon' and its speakers as 'stuttering onto the world stage'

- Antipathy towards ELF forms among supporters of ENL
- This has influence on expanding circle English teachers and their learners
- Attitude: attachment to ‘standard’ Inner Circle native speaker models
- But: English is not primarily learnt to communicate with native speakers

- Project their own local identity in their English
- Share a common identity with other ELF speakers
- Pressure to learn American or British English
- ELF has communicative value

ELF in the classroom

- ‘insistence on “correct” grammar’ in examinations and in classrooms
- Combat linguicism -> teachers should begin exposing ‘less proficient learners’ to a range of ELF varieties (Jenkins)
- ELF varieties: ‘unproblematic’ forms (lexico-grammar)

-> characteristic of their own variety of English (Jenkins)

-> adequate resource for meeting their communicative needs in globalized communities

- Gnutzmann: *Most learners would probably…object to being taught by English language teachers who deliberately distance themselves from the native-speaker model.*

Correction strategies

- Are unproblematic forms legitimate in informal speech?
- Does the teacher have to train students to avoid them in formal writing?
- Is the unproblematic form equally unproblematic in speech and writing?

- students can’t be insulated from the core grammar of Standard English
- contact (media, internet, …)

Bibliography

Jenkins, J. (2007). *English as a Lingua Franca: Attitude and Identity.* Oxford: University Press.

Jenkins, J. (2009). English as a lingua franca: interpretations and attitudes. *World Englishes*, 28 (2), 200-207.

Prodromou, L. (2007). Is ELF a variety of English?. *English Today 90*, 23 (2). Cambridge: University Press.