What is ELF: Finding Discursive Focus for English-as-a-Lingua-Franca Debate

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Abstract

This paper critically examines models and understandings of 'English as Lingua Franca (ELF) and some of its competitors, applying Seidlhofer's (2002) frame for an appropriate model. It is found that persistent traditional monolithic views focusing on English or other language form rather than the variable and dynamic lingua franca (LF) aspect are problematic, partly due to inherent historicity. Though these may inform present situations, they are of less use as they present ELF more as a static than dynamic phenomenon. Generic language-evolution process models can better account for variation and dynamism in ELF, but views seeing ELF as pluralithic, are more relevant and usable. In order to pin down what ELF is, it was concluded that dichotomization of a local language community-based lingua-franca English ('Our ELF') may show more, or less, traditional English-ness, and also a generic concept view based in the notion of English as phenomenon ('Phenomenal ELF'). The latter includes the collective of ELF situations, a pluralithicity of ELFs which are recordable as text, thereafter showing identifiable English in use, in no particular medium, which also can be taught or otherwise learned.

Introduction

In a recent book about English as lingua franca in international electronic written media, writer Franca Poppi's first sentence in Chapter 1 quotes Barbara Seidlhofer, who is actually quoting Samarin (1987):

> … English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), to be understood as "any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option" (Samarin 1987 quoted by Seidlhofer 2011: 7 Quoted by Poppi 2012 p 15)

If I had wanted an easy way to know what ELF is, I would need to look no further, except for the obvious issue of reference to 'speakers'. Reference to 'speakers' presumes spoken language as a starting point. This issue confronts Poppi who needs to deal with it immediately (and she does so within the next two sentences, afterwards exercising the concept of Cybergenre situates her field more in the electronic media domain than traditional language communication channels).

However, glib reference to spoken English - and speakers – instead of the more actual dichotomy of spoken and also written language modes, is just one instance of the extent that understandings of ELF become contradictory, muddled, dated and murky. In short understandings are hard to pin down. It is natural then for observers like me to wonder euphemistically, 'Just what in the world is it?'.

Historically ELF has evolved out of discourses of world Englishes, or multiple varieties of English in the world, and the phenomenon of English becoming a language medium for communication for people from different cultures in the world, thereby drawing in aspects of Intercultural Communication. From early on there were theoretical antecedents of ELF as, on the one hand, a kind of standard English in the world with a form in the same way as any other identifiable language; and also as something qualified by the social communication situations requiring a common English-language mode for interactive communication of meaningful discourse. Thus the genesis of ELF as a distinct field of sociolinguistic investigation is unsurprisingly natural. Yet research and debate proceed, concepts evolve and to keep up a relevant working understanding is necessary. This paper attempts to pin down a workable and realistic understanding.

Models Help
The late 1990s and early 2000s were an earlier formative period in ELF discourse. Around this time, Barbara Seidlhofer (2002) suggested that any model of ELF ideally should
-	be endonormatively oriented,
-	have an empirical base,
-	culturally neutral, and
-	be guided by pedagogical as well as linguistic principles
These are fair, utilitarian characteristics for ways to describe a balanced and egalitarian mode for intercultural communication. But how has ELF debate become confused between an international standard English on one hand, and a negotiated or organically evolving language mode for point-of-contact communication inside a language community on the other?

Historicity
There is also an historicity aspect in describing anything that can be observed, such as language text – it needs already to exist. Then the act of describing something that exists, like the corpus or texts of a variety of English, is posto facto, it becomes retrospective. Historicity is discussed further below. Furthermore, in the case of ELF, as a language phenomenon, hypothetically it would obviously always be distinguished as language, as language in context given the sociolinguistic aspect of ELF. The language in question necessarily would be the language used

in ELF events, logically and presumably something identifiable as English.

Alternatives to and Competitors with ELF

As mentioned though, models help. But before any ELF model may be deduced, it needs to be acknowledged how ELF as a concept or a view of English competes with alternatives, such as

- English as an International Language – (EIL)
- English as a Global Language (EGL)
- World Englishes (WE)
- English as a World Language (EWL)
- English as an International Auxiliary Language (Smith 1983, Morizumi 2009)
- English as a Lingua Franca (ELF))
- English as a medium for intercultural communication (EMIC)
- Glocalized English (GlcE) (Park 2006, 2009)

Even the journal *World Englishes* (plural) describes itself as "an international journal committed to theoretical research on methodological and empirical study of *English* in global, social, cultural and linguistic contexts" (Overview. Italics mine) – 'English' singular. More recently, Barbara Seidlhofer (2011 p21) among others posits that "the term 'international English' is usually (sic) not taken to include ELF". More so, Poppi (2012) demonstrates considerable linguistic and discursive variation of English in written, electronic and online media in business and other communities which just coincidentally may also be international but not necessarily. Thus, there is confusion here.

Models are useful: for the maker whose model is an outcome of their attempt to make sense of or to articulate a phenomenon, process or concept; and for others who may find and use a model as a guide, or even something to adapt to their own purposes. In the latter sense ELF/World English models are useful for users of English to help make sense of language they use to communicate with people and also the culture associated with the language. Models are also useful for teachers, to define or guide what they teach (or at least to help learners as English users to be able to make sense of the English which they want to or have to learn and use).

Models of ELF and its competitors are numerous and are various – best seen as a spectrum in that they all try to articulate things within the same domain. Figure 1 is one attempt to do so.

On the left side are the traditional, Anglo-American, "triumphalist" (Graddol 1997 p 3) views and models, native-speaker norm-referenced views of English extending from left covering several diagrammatic models situating themselves in present time. They are characterized by their

geographical orientation, a common first reference point for language culture, which provides their utility. In so doing they, characterize variation in English as corresponding to increasing distance away from an inner English native-speaking center. Braj Kachru's (1985, 1992) Three Circles Model (6th from left) epitomizes this to the extent that it is rightly or wrongly the conveniently crucial reference point in the ELF-World Englishes domain. Models from the left across the center also presume English to be static as opposed to a dynamic cultural phenomenon. They also all view English as an entity, as "monolithic" (Canagarajah 2007, Pennycook 2009, Jenkins 2009). To do so incurs inherent disadvantages:

- English language as cultural phenomenon loses its necessary dynamic quality;
- aspects of language as process and mode for communication – its use - are downplayed.

On the right side in Figure 1 there is a clutch of models considering variation as a natural characteristic of language, ostensibly English, according to user, context, purpose. Also, they do not specify location in the world, and models on the far right do not even specify English. These are examined critically in more detail later.

The spectrum in Figure 1 shows further categorizations of ELF/World English models, by whether static or dynamic, and whether models have a geographically-defined basis or not. These are shown in Figures 2 and 3. In these two diagrams, Circular models predominate on the left sides, and inspired by Kachru (1985, 1992) they have references to world regions and countries. The reason for this presumably is the easy built-in schema for referring country when describing culture and therefore source of language. The exception among circular models is Graddol's (2006) with a singular zone of decreasing proficiency moving away form the center. This is more flexible as it implicitly allows for variance among potential English skill levels.

It is inflexibility of geography-based models that effectively deny the essential social activity or social practice aspect of English as a language-communication medium. Contrarily ELF presumes this aspect. Equally it is the traditional historical view of English (best reflected in Streven's (1992) world map model) that reinforces the geography-based view, with the added dimension of varieties of English originally spreading from the native-speaking Anglo-North American axis. ELF by definition cannot be characterized by this traditional nativism of, say, British Received Pronunciation (RP) or American Standard English (ASE). Nativist tendencies in an ELF community may develop independently over time only if the ELF community and its culture endure long enough.
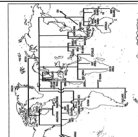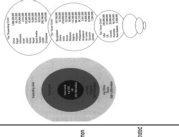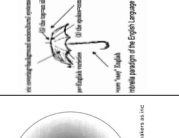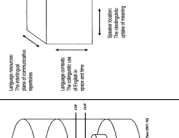
	Static	Dynamic	Not LF-specific
	Situated in a given present time	Evolutionary process	Non-English specific
Historical Narrative of English	- English as identifiable phenomenon - Geographic zones, normally defined by nation/culture/state	English as) communication process or practice	
	Emphasis on language: varietal forms, systems	Identity	Generic evolution process
	English as monolithicity	Context, purpose, ecology focus	

Historical Narrative of English	English as monolithicity (Static)	Context, purpose, ecology focus (Dynamic)	Evolutionary process (Dynamic)	Non-English specific (Not LF-specific)
Wessex-> Midlands-> England-> British Isles-> Empire-> Anglo-American Culture-> World Language	**Strevens's (1992) world map of English** — Popular historical view; Progressive march of English across regions of the world	**Yano (2009) Three-dimensional model for English use** — Proficiency and specific cultures, contexts, and purposes of use; geography not prime variable	**Schneider's (2007) Dynamic model for evolution of post-colonial Englishes** i. Foundation ii. Exonormative stabilization iii. Nativization iv. Endonormative stabilization v. Differentiation Specifically post-colonial Englishes only; resembles creole development -> not specifically ELF	**Mufwene (1997) complimentary view; Muhlhausler (1997) more prescriptionist, form-focused view** — Basilectalization/ Creolization as part of LF as contact language development; Ostensibly distinct field from LF
	McCarthur's (1998) Circle of World English — Circle whose sectors represent international regional varieties around a standard English center	**Pennycook (2009) 3D transtextual model of English use** — 3D: 1). incorporates Yano(s (2009) model; 2). language context (eg. genre, pragmatics); 3). speaker location (take up of meaning)		
	Goerlach's (1988) circle model of English — Around a world standard English center; proximity of world varieties depend on form-based language distance			
	Modiano (1999) English as an International Language — Trying to account for variation from an international English standard at the same time as regional variation			
	Khachru (1985, 1992) Three Circles of English model — Concentric zones around native Englis(es) center; commonly assumed view; common starting point for discussion			
	Graddol (2006) The community of English speakers as including a wide range of proficiencies — International community of English including potentially all varieties having a quality of functional nativeness but also including varieties at a more standard (or more native?) core			
	Yoneoka (2002) The Umbrella paradigm of the English Language System			

Figure 1: *Spectrum of Models and Views Relevant to ELF and World Englishes*

Static	Dynamic

Strevens (1992)   McCarthur (1998)   Goerlach (1988)

Yano (2009)   Pennycook (2009)

Popular historical view

Khachru (1985,1992)   Graddol (2006)   Yoneoka (2002)

Schneider's (2007) **Dynamic model** for evolution of post-colonial Englishes

Basilectalization / Creolization as part of LF as contact language development

Modiano (1999)
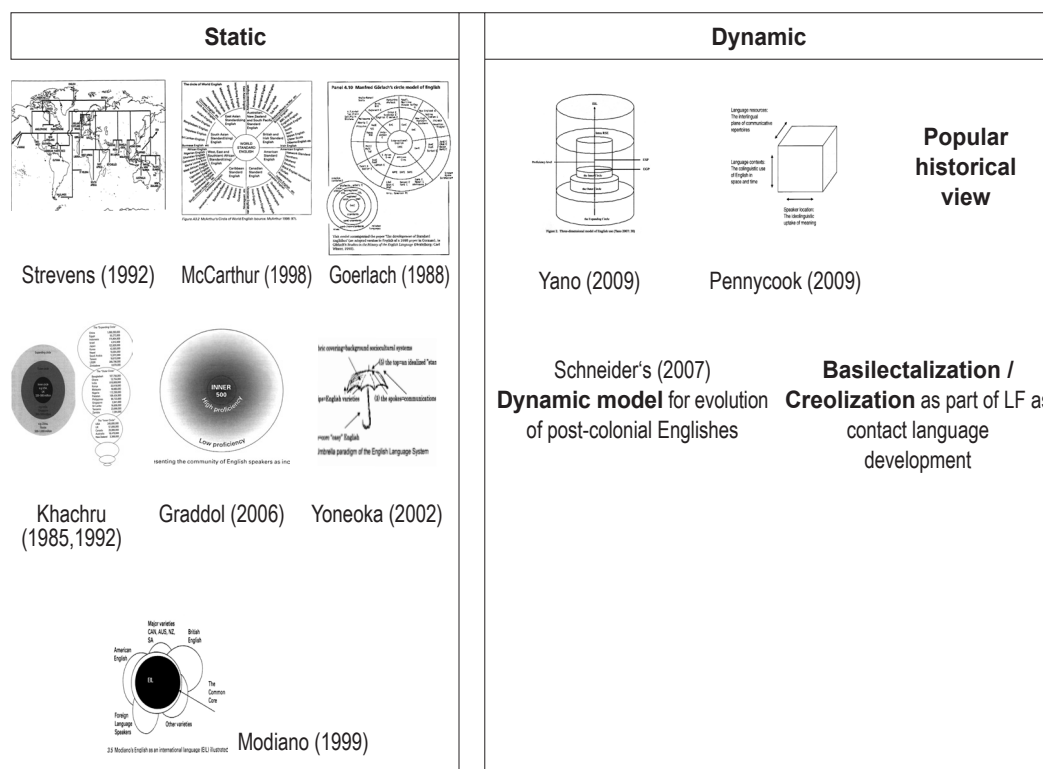
Figure 2: *Static and Dynamic ELF/World English models*

Geography-defined English/es	Non-geographic

Popular historical view

Strevens (1992)

Schneider's (2007) **Basilectalization / Creolization**

Dynamic model for evolution of as part of LF as contact language

post-colonial Englishes   development

Goerlach (1988) Khachru (1985,1992) Modiano (1999)

Graddol (2006)   Yoneoka (2002)   Yano (2009)   Pennycook (2009)

McCarthur (1998)

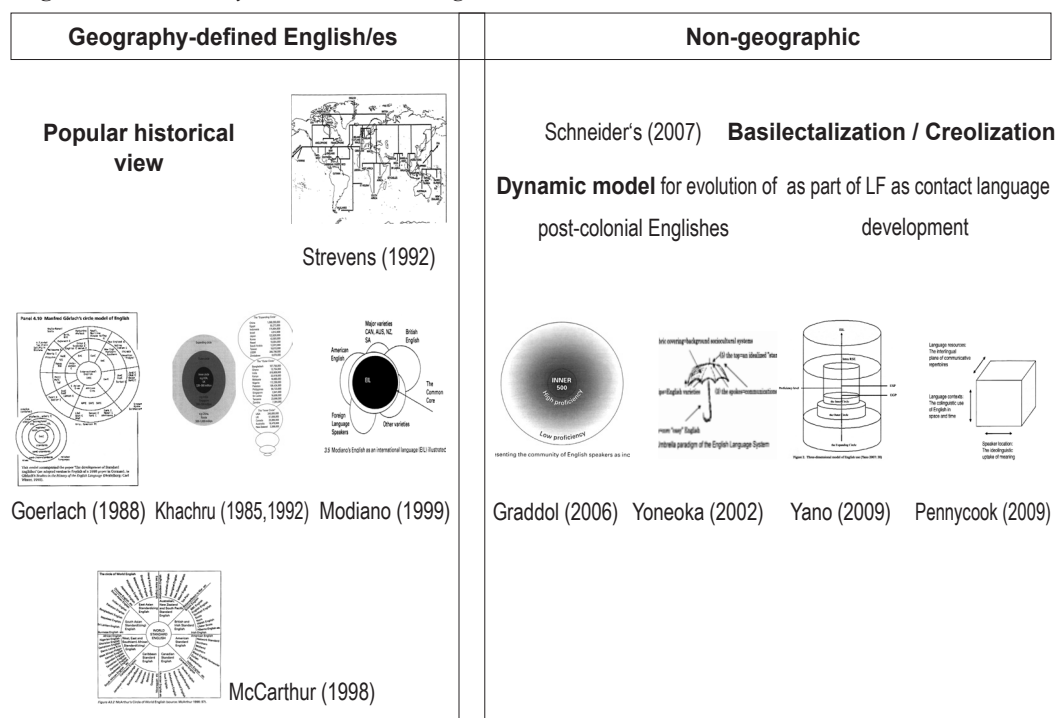**Figure 3:** *Geography and Non-Geography Defined ELF/World English models*

However an historical view of language presumes language change over time, and that is certainly what has been happening in England over the last 1,500 years. It is quite observable in other world locations too. Consequently, the 'Popular Historical View' of English finds itself in the dynamic model category in Figure 2. Yet there is more: an historical view of language must end in the present – now. As much as knowledge of English or textual records of Englishes past and present may inform and guide teachers, curriculum and syllabus planners and institutional language planners, this is only truly reliable now or in the short-term future at best. This is the necessary historicity aspect of English – or any language. The historicity aspect of English of course does not discount the worth of just-mentioned language teaching and planning, as established core language forms do not shift so quickly nor completely.

For purposes of this paper, attempting to pin down understanding of what ELF actually is, any model which incorporates the fourth-dimension variable – extent of time or durability and its attendant language change processes – is more reflective of language evolution reality than models that do not. In the next section of this paper, constant, continuing and consistent English language varieties and concepts-views as candidates for ELF are discussed, even though it is the view here that they may not be appropriate models for ELF English form is locked into a particular time and geographic location.

Other Views
i.   Reduced or Planned Languages: prescribed ELF

Reduced, planned, prescribed. As these qualitative adjectives suggest, some action is taken to affect a language code prior to its use. In other words, some institution or other either prescribes or provides language forms to be used for communicative purposes (not necessarily just for speaking). They are intended to frame and facilitate communication with a lingua franca, with English, or English as lingua franca and therein contain a well-intentioned culturally neutral ethos. However there are rarely any planned nor presumed contexts for use for these varieties besides institutional protocols to facilitate clear and efficient communication. Further, though, as pre-planned language systems there is hardly any scope for language adaptation or change.

Often-cited examples include: Basic English (Ogden nd) Nuclear English (Stein 1979, Quirk 1981), Threshold Level English (van Ek & Alexander 1980), Globish, Basic Global English (Grzega 2006), field-specific Englishes (eg. international maritime, aviation and electronic online protocols), and specified core elements of English form (eg. Jenkins 2000).

Core English

Jenkins' principle is that people should be able to produce or recognize forms or at least core

sounds common to English in order potentially to comprehend or to be understood by other people. Jenkins' English core relates primarily to phonological clarity (ie. pronunciation of a few forms which are essential for English to be recognized by other English-competent people). She also points to hybridization and certain regularizations of English grammar and morphology (eg 3rd-person singular 's'. See Jenkins 2008 for a gloss of types of examples). Generally speaking core forms and features of English (like most languages) develop over time in a bottom up sense, from people's general consistent use of them, until such time that core language forms are encoded and codified later on. Up to this point an English core can be endonormative within the language culture. However, from this point core features may be imposed from the top down, by governments, schools, corporations or other community or cultural institutions. This is the historicity aspect again – they draw core English features from prior usage in order to proscribe them for the future.

It is easy for an English core to be defined by institutions in native, home English language cultures, for English users outside of them (hence the circular models in the tables above). The other three Prescribed ELF examples discussed below are very much top-down, usually with an orthography decided before their real or intended use. Yet they actually are not necessarily sourced in native English language cultures. Either way, the English core view has it that people need to have competence with these core forms or they will not be able to use English, or certainly be able to use it less than they would need.

Thus there is some controversy over who determines what core English forms there should be, so-called native speakers, institutions, tacitly by members of the language community however large or small the community is or somehow subliminally by participants in language events incorporating English. Yet this is not the point. To extend Jenkins' English core idea in a common sense way, people may either use English in an understandable way or not, though it is more likely that there is a large grey area along a continuum between the two polarities.

A limitation to this idea is that it does not allow for rhetorical, interpersonal or interactional pragmatic strategies, such as cultural and contextual reference, soliciting and providing clarification and face-saving linguistic resources. Further, it does not allow for people to switch from one variety to another, or modulate their language according to context (a point discussed later regarding Three-Dimensional ELF models). As well, if multiple culture-specific core language forms ever developed (eg. rhotic /r/ frequently found in North America and non-rhotic far more common in Britain) then this may represent actual diaspora among Englishes to the extent that the label 'English' would seem just a relic of the past – use of the term 'English' would require an adjective or some other qualification. Actually two of the following three

examples incorporate adjectives in this way (Basic English and Aviation English). This has implications (discussed later) that there can me multiple 'ELFs' in the world rather than there being just ELF (ie. 'An' ELF, or 'The' ELF).

BASIC English

Yet pre-planned Englishes have been prototypical attempts to implement lingua franca solutions incorporating English. Charles Ogden's Basic English (Ogden nd), 'Basic' as it became known, is actually BASIC. BASIC is an initialization of five adjectives - *British American Scientific International Commercial* – that are at once suggestive of the kinds of world contexts where modern ELF contexts figure. Developed in the late 1920s and 1930s, Basic was an 850-word corpus based on a limited range of words with necessary syntactic function items (ie. auxiliary words like parts of verb to be, prepositions etc.) and basic lexical items. Lexis included semantically fundamental conceptual and visual words, which could be linked semantically and syntactically to express more complex or contextually-specific meanings. There was also accommodation of what Ogden called "international words are (sic) ready to hand" (Ogden 1935 quoted by Seidlhofer 2011 p 291) also occurring outside of English. Basic could be considered a core corpus made up of basic semantic units. An identifiable English core is similarly referred to in other models in Figure 1 (eg. Yoneoka 2002, Graddol 2006). Seidlhofer (2002, 2011 p 164) shows how Ogden's Basic is in effect a core corpus for learners to build on. This has greater pedagogical utility than any corpus or system based on lexical item use-frequency, which is always context-specific therefore variable and being of less use outside of contexts in which original frequency was detected.

However Basic on its own admittedly exists as a static system which also cannot enable sophisticated discourse without significant manipulation, adjustment or supplement. This had been a criticism in the early 20th Century (mentioned by Howatt & Widdowson 2004 p 285; Seidlhofer 2011 p 177 acknowledges this adding how Basic can lead to users developing an "'ampler' English" (Richards 1943, quoted by Seidlhofer 2002 p 282)) but it is relevant also now. One other weakness is lack of attention to phonology.

Although Basic English seems like a nice utilitarian idea, pragmatics-wise it could never achieve communicative aims in, say, an aviation context. Then, aviation register bears very little in common with the Basic corpus. Globish though posits itself as something else again.

Globish

Similar to Ogden's Basic is Globish, which also deserves attention. With a larger, 1,500-word corpus dismissed by Seidlhofer as "an impressionistic selection of those (items) that seem

most frequently used" (2011 p 162) plus uncomplicated grammar rules developed by Jean-Paul Nerriere and two Quebecois linguists (www.globish.com), Globish significantly segregates itself from English in its name. How this works is evident on the fairly usable website functions in which chunks of text can be translated from Japanese, German, Spanish and other languages into Globish corresponding text. But so can English text. However there is markedly less distinction between the English and Globish form in respective text versions, raising the question of just how far Globish has departed from core English language forms. Despite a nobly intended politico-cultural independence and neutrality Globish suffers from a questionable linguistic foundation, discussed by Grezba (2006), who also takes issue with pragmatics bound by a rigid, static language system. Further, like other reduced languages, use is problematic especially at more sophisticated discourse levels, and in any case the construct is based on language forms for potential and not actual use. In this sense, Globish cannot become a lingua franca until it is actually used. Contexts would matter and so would people's natural, normal recourse to use it.

International Civil Aviation Organization Language Policy

In 2008 the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) strengthened its language skill requirements trying to ensure proficiency and standardization. Its Standard and Recommended Practices document (ICAO Docs. 9832 and 9835, cited on www.relta.org) states

> ICAO standardized phraseology shall be used in all situations for which has been specified. Only when standardized phraseology cannot serve an intended transmission, plain language shall be used.

> The air-ground radiotelephony communications shall be conducted in the language normally used by the station on the ground or in the English language

> The English language shall be available, on request from any aircraft station, at all stations on the ground serving designated airports and routes used by international air services

Pilots and air traffic controllers need to be assessed for listening and speaking skills (including pronunciation) at a level band of 4 (Operational) out of 6 (Expert) to be accredited, though people deemed English native speakers are free of this requirement. Though there is a set aviation English lexicon for the industry, Prinzo & Thompson (2009 pp1 - 2) note some crucial differences between British and United States protocols, while Korean airline pilots flying to the US complained of US air traffic controllers ignoring these protocols for their preferred American expressions (Kim & Elder 2009). For example, one of their informants reported,

> If the pilot had expressed it as 'ICAO phonetic alphabet' rather than 'spelling', the controller could have understood right away, of course. But if I say 'ICAO phonetic alphabet' to American controllers, they wouldn't understand me (p 12)

Kim & Elder conclude that "interactional competence" (p 14) using a range of communication resources, rather than mastery of English, is critical, and that native English speaker aviation

radio telephony practitioners need to "lift their game here" (p 15). Here the point is that using English for coherent communication in context is more important for air safety despite strict rules for correct English designed for the same purpose.

ii.   ELF as "Pre-Given Language": retrospecivity informing ELF

This expression by Pennycook (2009 p 202) steps on an underlying issue affecting all English taught if not also used: that English is based on prior forms which also would have existed prior in text. As text, English could and can be codified, classified and mapped, described and analyzed and on this basis later prescribed by significant individuals or institutions. The clearest illustration is the loads of books on English language systems, or about English on private, school and library bookshelves in the past and in the present. Regarding ELF, Nicholas Ostler's (2010) *The Last Lingua Franca* punctuates the historicity of English as lingua franca by considering lingua franca history, including past and present world languages' rises and demises. He eventually makes his own prediction about future English in the world (demise due to redundancy or alternative electronic communication modes being more convenient, retreat to traditional home cultures bringing de facto loss of world LF status). Though Ostler objectifies use of English, like many applied linguists, English language teaching commentators and others, his working concept of English is as an entity, as something with "*thing*ness" (Kohn 2012. Italics mine). As with the Reduced Language view, English form is the key to understanding what ELF is in a Pre-Given Language view.

However, Ostler and others base their views on *English that was or* at least *has been* (hence the static categorization of models on the left side of Figures 1 & 2) and not what it is or will be. Such retrospectivity is informative though, and therefore helpful for predicting (like Ostler) or for planning of English or ELF in the future: a future starting now.

iii.   Generic Process or Cycle Models

Generic language models are characterized by not being English-specific. Though not bound to any language form, these models tend to presume that language form evolves, processes which predominantly are explained sociolinguistically. In essence then these models presume language (thus ELF) as something dynamic. Further, the languages concerned could not be sustained unless they are taught or at least picked up by people through contact with or their use in cultures and communities in which they occur. Therefore an endonormative quality would develop naturally as the language cultures mature. Though mainly theoretical in concept, these models' points of reference tend to be geographic which begins to denude their cultural neutrality.

Schneider's Dynamic Model

Schneider (2007) analyses the state of English in several African and Asian domains according to his Dynamic model of the evolution of postcolonial Englishes. His model works across five phases (which resemble Khun's (1962) influential *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* cycles of paradigm shift). In each phase he incorporates analysis of Socio-Political Background, Identity Constructions, Sociolinguistic Conditions and Linguistic Effects. While there is no attention to actual language forms, the Dynamic model actually can account for English and other LF development as well as evolution outside of zones without a colonial past. In short, LF development is necessarily dynamic as it is an historical process, incorporating socio-cultural influences from within and from outside.

Creolization Models

More generic are creolization models. Creolization and lingua franca rarely occur in the same discussion/debate field surprisingly, as both are identified as contact language phenomena or processes. Similarly to the Dynamic model, creole models incur developmental processes of Basilectalization (Basilects being language of a language community's so-called lower, *substrate* of the society in which the creole forms, especially its syntactic structure) and Acrolectization (from *superstrate* as a source of lexis). Further, these models include Pidginization, a simpler process of language development for a narrower range of communicative functions usually but not exclusively spoken, than Creoles which are more complex and sophisticated across a broad communication function range often including both spoken and written language forms. Thus, within micro-language cultures and communities, pidgin language formation hypothetically also resembles lingua franca development as contact language. The place and source of the English though is less clear-cut – a prestige acrolectal language variety of, say, a colonial superstrate, or a new variety of English springing from some localized basilectal formation (ie. English as acrolect and something else as basilect).

ELF as pidgin/creole sees ELF as perpetually formative, therefore dynamic and therefore difficult for pinning down constant ELF language forms. This feature is problematic for those who prefer a prescriptive or descriptive understanding of ELF. However an ELF-as-pidgin/creole model certainly becomes more endonormative as it evolves into a more distinct language variety as well as having a culture springing up around it as it matures.

A strength of ELF as generic process or cycle models is that, rather than on the language form, they are more dependent on language formation processes which become relevant chiefly to demonstrate how they change. This makes these models naturally endonormative. Yet here also lies a weakness as a defining characteristic of English as LF: creoles and contact languages need

not be English-specific, except if English features from the outset.

For purposes of understanding what in the world ELF is, key creolist Salikoko Mufwene (2009) advises that creoles cannot be understood without considering the sociological, advice that extends to other language modes in interactive or communicative scenarios which would include ELF.

iv.   ELF simply as LF

If ELF development reflects patterns within certain generic and cycle language evolution models, removing the English 'E' from 'ELF' can also be considered. Ostler (2010) did this for historical comparison for which ELF became just 'a' lingua franca. However to do so broadens the field of discussion at the same time as once again removing any special English shine from ELF.

An alternative adjustment is to remove 'LF' from the back and place it on the front of the 'English' – 'LF' becomes an adjective qualifying English making 'Lingua Franca English' ('LFE': so 'ELF' gets new grammar). There are implications in this new grammatical order:
-    'English AS LF' suggests a mode or a guise of English, even a functional role, but English still is perceived as a phenomenon;
-    'Lingua-Franca English' suggests a type or variety of English, like Singaporean English, or native-speaker English or aviation English or women's English, but still appears as a phenomenon.

At least the more fundamental implication is that English is can be pluralithic and not just monolithic. Pennycook (2009 p 202 drawing on Canagarajah (2007)) sees the distinction in another way: that the

> distinction between English as a lingua franca and lingua franca English is important since the former tends towards an understanding of a pre-given language that is then used by different speakers, while the latter suggests that LFE emerges from its contexts of use

In other words, the essence of 'lingua franca' is in situational contact; and the 'English' in question is English used therein.

So, English is something used, at many times and places, in many ways, by many different people, for many different reasons, which all work to define its contexts of use.

v.   'Use' as Variable: three-dimensional models

The label 'Three-dimensional' invites different variables for analysis purposes. However, mathematical X-, Y- and Z-axes operate only to place language events in particular times and locations – contexts – if the variables are appropriate. Regarding what ELF is, a more

generic understanding which can stand a fourth dimension of variable time is better. This has been alluded to before. Even so, three-dimensional models by nature focus on contexts and variations within them. This contextual basis underlines what is done with the language, what may happen while a language event is going on, not to mention language and other cultural baggage brought to the context by the people there in the first place. Be it one conversation or one set of email correspondence or making and reading an internet webpage, there is a context. Also in theory potentially there can be a language culture existing around each event or series of events. Moreover, one context will never be the same as any other, given variability in purpose, participants, location and cultural environment. However these models can elucidate more than other models so far which seem more two-dimensional in comparison.

Yano's Three Dimensional Cylindrical Model of English Use.

Constructed on a Khachurian Three-Circles-of-English base, Yano (2009) identifies English proficiency as a variable which works like a vertical Y-axis: how proficiently a person uses English. This means that in ELF situations, people use different levels of English, partly to accommodate people with different levels of competence with English. The Accommodation factor is a major part of the adaptive aspect of people's behaviour in lingua franca situations – people do not all speak the same, let alone like a proto-typical (RP) native English speaker. Native speakers of a language don't all speak – or write – the same either. More significantly, people routinely change how they speak or write, their language use behavior, in different contexts, with different interlocutors, for different purposes, in different cultures. People routinely adjust their language and other communication in different contexts, and can and do even take this into account in interactive situations. This is part of necessary accommodation. In addition, accommodation is not limited just to use of English let alone English as lingua franca.

Yet Yano's model cannot account for how people's language use varies in other ways besides proficiency level. In other words, people may have or know a particular variety of English, and use it at different levels, but they do not need to (or plainly do not) use that variety all the time. In this sense, Yano's model of ELF is endonormative, but gaps remain in regarding other types of variability which are not accounted for.

Pennycook's Transtextual Model of English Use

Pennycook removes what he calls "nation-based models" (p 202) of English out of the mix and develops Yano's notion of individuals' proficiency of English and calls it Repertoire, or the range of knowledge and communication skills which people bring with them to language (or communication) events. Pennycook's model looks box-like, truly three-dimensional with three axes:

i.　　the interconnected range "of *all* uses of English" (Pennycook 2009 p 204);

ii.   actual language – or register – of the context including English mixed with other things as appropriate; and

iii.   a more contentious notion of what a speakers (or users!) bring to a language event, in terms of communicative resources, for which considering just their English is rather limited

Interestingly, points 'i' and 'iii' may incur other language modes beyond spoken: written and hybrid (eg. electronic chat).

Two features of Pennycook's model are its fundamental local character: its focus on <u>use</u> of English, and on <u>contexts</u> to which people bring their communicative resources. This quality makes it seem like an applicable general sociolinguistic model for language in use, not just ELF. This leads onto a second feature, its inclusion of all uses of English, like a quasi-English pantheon including a proportion of items with less English-'ness' than others, to the extent that something being essentially English or not is a redundant issue. Pennycook labels this a Pluralithicity: multiple languages or multiple varieties of English depending on culture or context even in a given nation-based cultural zone.

It works quite well like this, as an endonormative dynamic model for general communicative language use in context, more than for something specific like ELF though. But to answer the question, just what in the world is ELF, Pennycook's Transtextual model is not an easy solution. It is a hard road for people looking for pure English, or at least just one variety of it.

Discussion

Taking all this model baggage alongside Seidlhofer's (2002) list presented earlier can inform how ELF appears:

-    Endonormative orientation - an ELF (or ELFs), like any language system, evolves over time with changing contexts, reference, users and form. In so doing ELF is naturally dynamic, perhaps organic.

-    Having an empirical base - at least if the language is researched, it needs to be recorded as text. Then, as text it can be described, analyzed, systemized and taught. This, though, attracts an essential historicity, which is problematic for projecting future ELF.

-    Cultural neutrality - in its language culture 'an/the ELF' logically cannot be neutral, despite best intentions. In any case, it depends on cultural and other politics, what people do with the language or use it for.

-    Being guided by pedagogical as well as linguistic principles - implying that ELF requires teaching or learning, in institutionalized or in uninstitutionalized ways or both. If institutionalized, then it is probably codified or systemized on linguistic principles to assist teaching/learning. Further, though, if the English is not learned, or nor simply even picked

up in an uninstitutionalized way through contact and use, of course it is never going to be the LF

The last point can dispel the notion of ELF as 'pre-given language' (such as Basic and Globish). But what of items which are not sourced from any English corpus? If non-English items are used, and are also understood in context and maintained, they also naturally can become part of the lingua franca. In this sense, the lingua franca may lose some of its English-'ness' affecting the notion of an essential English core.

At the same time historicity plays a part – by projecting ELF use in the future presumes the chance of moving away from the traditional historical and cultural domains of English, thereby losing integrity as Anglo-cultural artifact and potentially gaining something more local in its place. This localized-use situation of ELF notions serves to make redundant concepts of ELF as monolithic, traditional 'pre-given' English.

However, if ELF rightly or wrongly is situated just in local contexts, it is understandable that confusion over if not hostility towards the ELF concept occurs on this point. ELF can have less English-ness, which begs a conservative or traditional nativist reaction if the idea of localized-context ELFs is perceived as a new prevailing orthodoxy. The source of confusion might actually be misplaced: ELF as something local as opposed to something global. In theory then, ELF is not singular. Rather the world is full of Englishes as lingua franca, or lingua franca Englishes, and all of them can have varying amounts of Englishness.

Yet, this is not the point because discussion becomes pointed away and towards the language, the form, *la lingua*, away from situations, communication and other uses of the language in those situations. The qualifying feature of situations relevant to English discussed in this paper rather is Lingua Franca (ie. in a lingua franca situation), and this therefore describes the English. Lingua Franca is actually a situational construct. Given this situational angle with multiple English-use situations, perhaps ELF is better thought of as English in Lingua Franca situations ('ELFS'!).

A limitation of Seidlhofer's (2002) earlier ELF-model template is the soft preconception of ELF as a language, a mode or a variety in itself. For instance, regarding ELF model design being guided by pedagogical principles, she prefaces the idea in this way,

> Since ELF is, by definition, not the native *language* of its users, an ELF model for learners should accordingly not be dictated by any native-speaker language use, (Seidlhofer 2002. Italics mine)

As quickly recognized and appropriated by Poppi (as quoted at the start of this paper), Samarin's (1987) definition used by Seidlhofer's in her later book (2011 p 7), refers to "*any use* of

English …" (italics mine). Interestingly in Samarin's mid-1980s register, there is no reference to native/non-native speaker-ism: "… among *speakers of different first languages* for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option" (Samarin 1987 quoted by Seidlhofer 2011, quoted by Poppi 2012 p15. Italics mine). In this sense, the following all partly lend nuance to whatever ELF is:

-       ELF as language communication mode,
-       (an) ELF as communication-participant choice,
-       (an) ELF as communication behavior or practice.

These underline the notion of 'Use' of English. But this idea also needs elaboration. And not the first point is to qualify traditional - even archaic – generic reference to 'speaker' of English, better actualized as User of English.

Conclusions

Through inquiry after an answer to my question about what ELF is, I conclude with perceptions rather than definitions:

'Our' ELF

One is local, individual, personal, in as far as use of English with people around me (as English user) occurs, and with some of those people some kind of English is the only common language mode for communication. Ownership and possession are immaterial here, however our proximity and recourse to such English language communication mode can make it *Our*s. In this sense, *Our* ELF acts to define linguistically our own community and the culture which evolves around it. As well, I belong to numerous communities – in my lessons, at home, in a bar, writing this paper with you reading it, talking to my mother on Skype, interacting with my ELF Conference network in different situations and locations around the globe. These communities may be highly transitory (we encounter each other just once) or ongoing (then our social relationships develop). It is highly proximal. So just what makes 'Our ELF'? It is coming from what English a person knows; plus what English other people use when dealing with this person; plus all the linguistic and socio-cultural baggage that people bring with them to the English-language, or ELF, event.

Phenomenal ELF

In this paper I conclude that through natural language dynamism, historical and cultural circumstance, English let alone ELF is essentially variable even to the extent of having more or less English-ness. Still, rhetorically, the register incurs an essential paradox of needing consistently to refer solely to 'English'. English *per* se then has variable nuance and semantic significance. English is not simply English, rather a multi-faceted and variable socio-cultural-literary-linguistic phenomenon. ELF discourse therefore evolves with various complementary

and frequently contradictory and conflicting assumptions. Assumptions notwithstanding, ELF becomes general, more global, the perception more likely to be what people talk about when discoursing on ELF. So, what in the world are they talking about? It is varying language form, used with culturally specific or other pragmatic strategies, forming different people's differing repertoire; it is initially intelligible, later discernable (identified and labeled) as 'English' and thereafter recognized as something commonplace in the world. It can be processed as text, linguistically systemized, encoded and as such taught.

It is a phenomenon that people refer to and talk about. This static nuance at once shares tension with the necessarily amorphous, dynamic, evolving, shifting quality – over time and from culture to culture. In the world context moreover then, ELF can only be actualized as the collective of ELF events, all of Our ELFs.

Realistically this makes ELF plural, as EnglishES – as Englishes of the collective of ELF situations (ELFS), a pluralithicity of LFEs (lingua-franca Englishes). That is what in the world ELF is. Ironically, the world seems to have less to do with it than we would think.

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