Beyond communicative language teaching

❖ *New sociolinguistic realities*

❖ *New challenges*

❖ *New opportunities*

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Overview

➢ Setting the scene: a non-native speaker's ownership of English

➢ Language learning and communication

➢ From English as a foreign language (EFL)
to English as a lingua franca (ELF) ?

➢ ELF ownership and Standard English preference

➢ Teaching ELF: what it isn't and what it is

➢ The EU project TILA:
"Telecollaboration for Intercultural Language Acquisition"

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Setting the scene
– A non-native speaker's ownership of English –

At my first ELF conference, some 10 years ago, a native speaker presenter strongly argued against a NS/SE orientation for non-native speakers – which he claimed was fundamentally wrong and impossible to pursue with any hope for success.

The wall too high to climb - the fruit too sweet and out of reach anyway – just not my sociolinguistic reality. I found myself excluded from the enchanted garden.

But here I was, a Faustian creature with two souls: a non-native speaker with a desire for a native speaker's Standard English orientation – a desire I was now told was unrealistic – a desire, however, that was part of my English self.

This was when my quest into the nature of non-native speakers' ownership of English began – both as a researcher and as a non-native speaker myself.

I found my answer in a social constructivist understanding of NNS ownership, i.e. the conceptualization of language learning as the cognitive, emotional and behavioral creation of "my English".

Language Learning

and

Communication

Communicative language teaching (CLT)

Communicative language teaching (CLT)

- ➢ Communication as the goal and objective of learning
- ➢ Communication as (part of) the methodological approach
  - ▪ Backwash of communicative practice on achievement
  - ▪ Successful language learning requires rich opportunities for communication

Guiding principles

- ➢ learner autonomy
- ➢ authenticity – authentication
- ➢ collaboration

Methodological approaches

- ➢ task-based learning
- ➢ project-based learning
- ➢ content and language integrated learning (CLIL)

Interdependence
between communication and language learning

❖ Language learning is naturally geared towards communication

❖ Natural language learning is (only) possible through communication

  ➢ Look at how children acquire their first language

  ➢ Look at adults in natural L2 acquisition

❖ Pedagogical principles & approaches

  ▪ communication first: –> task-based learning approaches – > CLIL

  ▪ lexis over grammar: –> the lexical approach [Lewis 1983]

From

English as a foreign language (EFL)

to
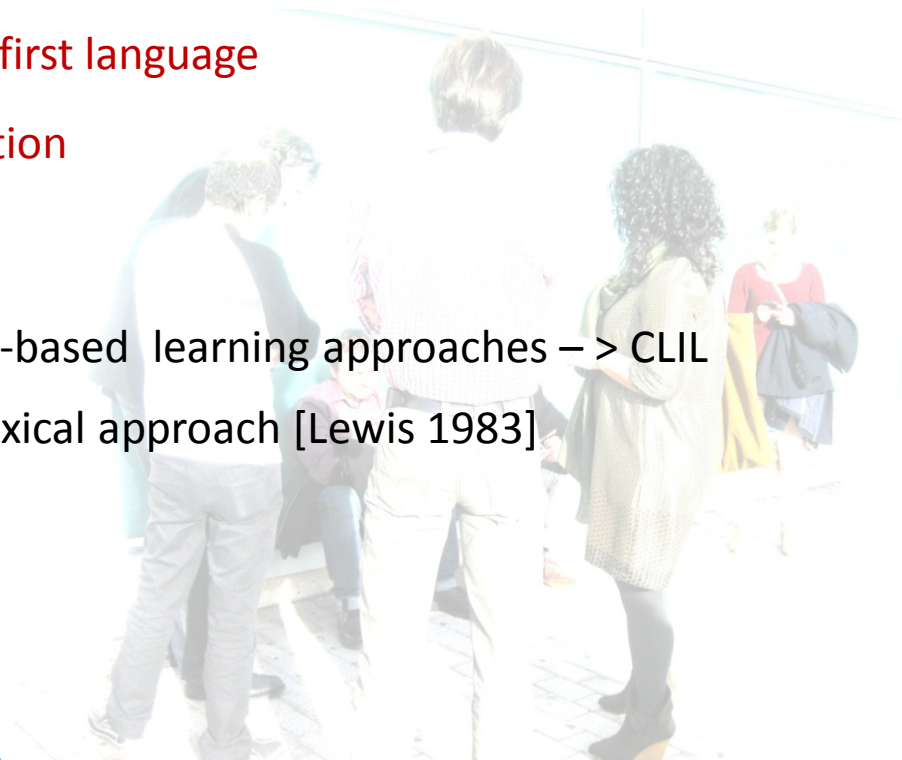
English as a lingua franca (ELF)?

The EFL nature of CLT

❖ Communicative language teaching (CLT)

  ➢ emphasizes communicative competence and a greater tolerance for deviations (particularly in CLIL classrooms)

  ➢ but with an overall orientation toward NS/SE

  ➢ any deviations from the SE role model are at best tolerated

   (see the pedagogical model of communicative competence by Canale & Swain 1980 and Canale 1983; BUT: Leung 2005)
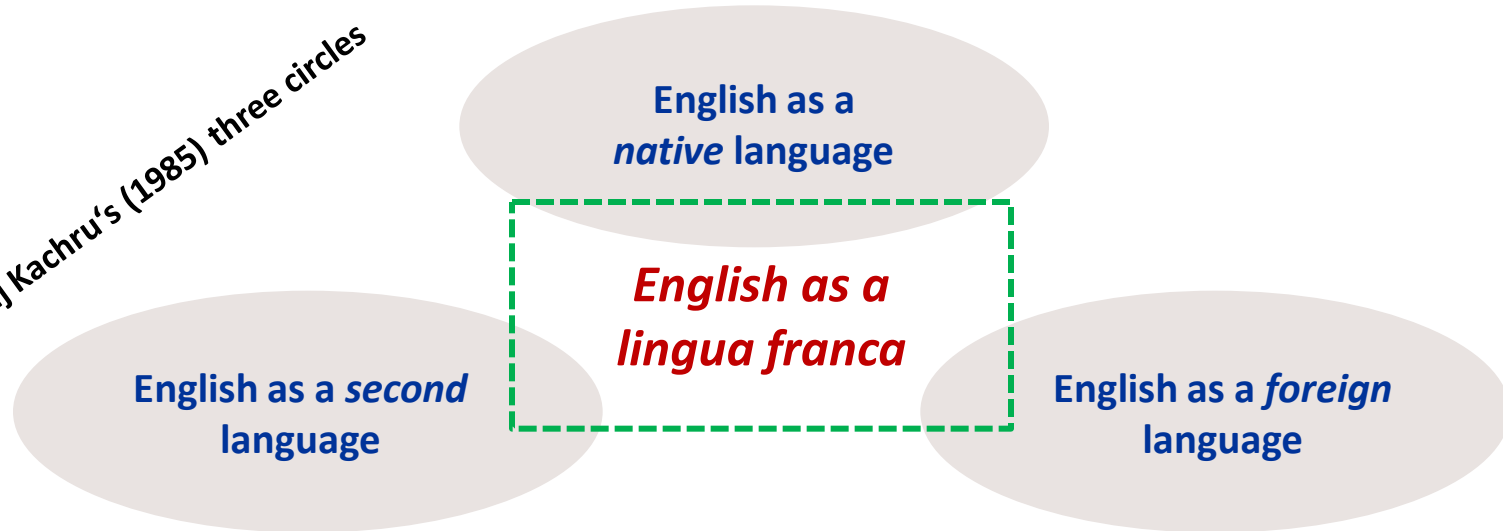
❖ Because of a strong (exonormative) SE orientation, learners may stay alienated from their own creativity resulting in frustration, anxiety and even fear

❖ (BUT) educational regulations for ELT institutions (in Europe) continue to be based on an exonormative SE role model

The many faces of English

Braj Kachru's (1985) three circles

English as a
native language

**English as a
lingua franca**

English as a *second*
language

English as a *foreign*
language

❖ Increasingly, people find themselves in intercultural contact zones with English as a necessary and natural means of communication for non-native speakers

❖ In private and vocational contexts of communication from culture and education to business and technology

English is developing into a culturally and economically relevant means for global communication

The "ELF communication argument"
Towards a new pedagogy?

❖ **ELF communication is successful** despite deviations from Standard English

❖ **Communication strategies** such as e.g. accommodation, meaning negotiation and 'let it pass' ensure communicative success

❖ **"Deviant" phrases and structures** can be shown to emerge through endonormative processes of ELF development

ELF communication is "usually characterized by a high degree of linguacultural diversity, routinely resulting in highly variable and creative use of linguistic resources. This is wholly at odds with the characterization of language in ELT […], in which received wisdom maintains that intelligibility is norm driven (thus privileging grammatical accuracy), and that effective communication is best achieved by conforming to the arbitrarily fixed language norms of Standard varieties […]." (163)

"ELF is relevant not so much in terms of identifying alternative sets of norms, but more in terms of enabling us to move beyond normativity." (166)

[Dewey 2012: 141-170]

➢ For many teachers the "ELF communication argument" seems to be at odds with their own Standard English orientation.

➢ Teachers often perceive the "ELF communication argument" as an invitation to tolerate or even propagate deviations:

"Do you want me to teach incorrect English?"

Two reasons for teachers' rejection of the "ELF communication argument":

1. If **ELF** is conceptualized as **a variety** > ELF learning means learning this variety > ELF learning implies learning incorrect English

2. Perceived **sub-text** of the "ELF communication argument":

    a. Deviations from SE don't interfere with successful communication.

    b. ELF communication is successful due to communication strategies and speakers' creative exploitation of their linguistic resources.

    c. A SE orientation is therefore not needed – it might even be counterproductive

Towards a reconciliation between EFL and ELF

ELF ownership

and

Standard English preference

How do I acquire a language?

➤ I acquire a language by constructing and developing it, i.e. by **CREATING my own version** in my mind, my heart and my behavior

- Oriented toward my perception of the target language

- Influenced by my native language, my attitudes & motivation, my goals & requirements, my learning approach, the effort I invest, and the people I talk to and want to be with

- Not in idiosyncratic isolation, but in communicative-social interaction with others

In this **social constructivist** sense, **the English I develop is my own**.
And it is different from any target language towards which it is oriented.

Also Graddol 1997, Higgins 2003, Widdowson 2003

– The social constructivist "My English" condition –

[This is not an option, but rather part of the **human condition** for knowledge and learning]

[Kohn 2011, 2014; http://youtu.be/yCfpD49YhSg]

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The nature of speakers'
Standard English orientation

Strong version of a SE orientation

→ Learners are required to meet the SE (teaching) norms – deviations are seen as evidence of unsuccessful learning

This "strong" view assumes that language learning is essentially a copying process – which is actually a behaviouristic position.

Weak version of a SE orientation

→ Learners take SE as a model for orientation – it is acknowledged, however, that they create their own non-native speaker version of it
[> appropriation, Seidlhofer 2011: 198]

The "weak" view follows from an (implicit) understanding of language learning as a social constructivist process of cognitive, emotional and behavioural creation.

[Kohn 2014]

Teaching ELF:
what it isn't and what it is

Teaching ELF is not about . . .

. . . teaching incorrect English

➢ Teachers' common perception of "teaching ELF" as teaching incorrect English is plausible if one adopts a "descriptive" conceptualization of **ELF as a variety** of English.

➢ For pedagogical purposes, the conceptualization of ELF as a variety is misleading.

➢ **ELF** should rather be understood **as using one's English** under conditions of ELF communication.

Teaching ELF is about . . .

. . . helping learners

➢ to develop their English (lexis, grammar)

➢ so that it is suitable for their own requirements of communicative performance

- Comprehensibility ($\Rightarrow$ feasibility)
- Grammatical accuracy ($\Rightarrow$ possibility)
- Situational appropriateness ($\Rightarrow$ acceptability, probability)
- Participation (in communities of practice) and "express-ability"

Hymes 1972

Kohn 2011, 2014

Albl-Mikasa 2013

➢ to develop their (individual & social) identity orientation and requirements

➢ to acquire strategies for making best use of their English to meet their own requirements of communicative performance

- Accommodation – meaning negotiation – handling misunderstandings – 'let it pass'

➢ to explore and trust their own non-native speaker creativity

A **social constructivist perspective** allows for a **"weak" SE orientation**, which leaves room for non-native speakers to develop their **"own" English**.

ELF in the foreign language classroom

Focus on **raising awareness** for lingua franca manifestations of English

  ➤ to increase tolerance for others and for oneself

Focus on **developing** ELF-specific **comprehension** skills

  ➤ to get accustomed to NNS accents and "messy" performance

Focus on **developing** ELF-specific **production** skills

  ➤ to improve pragmatic fluency and strategic skills for accommodation and collaborative negotiation of meaning in intercultural ELF situations

Focus on **developing** the learner's sense of **ownership ("agency")**

  ➤ to help them explore and extend their own NNS creativity (> Vygotsky's ZPD) for more speaker satisfaction and self-confidence

Kohn 2014

How can this be achieved?

⟶ **Exposure** to a wide variety of ELF speakers

⟶ **Focus on form** within a communicative approach (with a weak SE orientation)

⟶ More communicative **participation** in **authentic speech fellowships** or **communities of practice**

Reaching out beyond the traditional classroom through more communicative participation

❖ **Alternative teaching approaches**
  ➢ Content and language integrated learning (CLIL)
  ➢ Practice Enterprise approaches
  ➢ Creative Writing (for non-native speakers!) [> Gilyard 2011]

❖ **Intercultural exchanges through telecollaboration**
  ➢ Tools and environments:
    ▪ Asynchronous communication: e.g. forum, wiki, blog, podcasts
    ▪ Synchronous communication: sound/video conferencing (e.g. Skype, BigBlueButton), 3D virtual worlds (e.g. SecondLife, OpenSim)
  ➢ REAL-LIFE contact and (intercultural) lingua franca communication
  ➢ Social interaction: networking, sharing, community building
  ➢ Opportunities for authenticated & incidental intercultural language learning

  ➔ **Beyond the classroom → intercultural communication 2.0**

EU project TILA ("Telecollaboration for Intercultural Language Acquisition")
www.tilaproject.eu

The EU project TILA
"Telecollaboration for Intercultural Language Acquisition"

[www.tilaproject.eu]

12 partners, 6 European countries: Czech Republic, France, Germany, Netherlands, Spain, UK (01/13 – 06/15)

Coordinator: Kristi Jauregi, Utrecht University (Netherlands)

Telecollaboration – Intercultural communication & learning – Teacher education

❖ Telecollaboration among secondary school pupils (13-16; A2-B2) to facilitate/enhance IC communication & language learning in English, French, German, Spanish

➢ **Environments & tools**
- synchronous: > VC (BigBlueButton, Skype), virtual worlds (OpenSim)
- asynchronous: > forum, blog, and wiki

➢ **Activity types**
- **in-class:**   > "tandem" and "lingua franca"
- **outside-class:**   > "home work collaboration", "project groups"
- **extra-curricular:**   > "ELF conversations 2.0"

➢ **Research focus:** impact of TC on task design, pedagogic organization, IC communicative interaction & competence, attitudes & motivation, anxiety, learner/teacher roles

➔ **Implications for learner preparation and teacher education**

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Thank you