

English as a lingua franca – a native- culture-free code? Language of communication vs. language of identification

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English has become the dominant means of international communication. Its non-native speakers now far outnumber the conventional native speakers in the UK, the USA, Canada etc. Against this background, a number of authors have recently stressed the functions for which foreign languages are learned. They make a distinction between a 'language of communication' and a 'language of identification'. The terms, which were coined by the German applied linguist Werner Hüllen (1992), have recently been popularised in the context of English as a lingua franca. English, it is said, can be used as a language of communication without necessarily being a language of identification. As it is used for practical communicative purposes, correctness and particular stylistic features associated with the speech community from which it originates are of lesser importance. Recent developments in European language policy seem to be focused in the same direction with the proposal that the EU should advocate the idea of a "personal adoptive language". This language should be freely chosen by every European and it should be "different from his or her language of identity, and also different from his or her language of international communication" (Maalouf 2008). The paper examines the use of the terms 'language of communication' and 'language of identification' in the literature and challenges the existence of the dichotomy with regard to the English language as it is used today. Focusing on phraseology (i.e. idiomatic phrases and pre-fabricated speech), the article shows a number of language practices that are used by non-native speakers of English to display identity.

Keywords: English as lingua franca, identity, phraseology, native-culture-free code, language policy, equitable international communication

Introduction

The existence of a global lingua franca provides a huge advantage to a large number of people. This includes both Anglophones and non-Anglophones. The latter are willing to learn and use English because they know how indispensable

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a vehicular language is for international cooperation. This is true of commerce, politics, and many other human activities, but it is especially true for the sciences. As Mühleisen (2003: 117) points out, “all science is useless if it is not accessible to other members of the discipline. This is easier with only one language as a scientific lingua franca.”

However, it is argued that this situation has led to severe disadvantages for non-Anglophones in general and in academia in particular. As recent research has shown (cf. Carli & Ammon 2007), they have to invest a great deal of time, money and energy into language learning and may still communicate with difficulty. There is a growing awareness of the dangers caused by the dominance of one language over all other languages. It results in a reduction of discourse patterns and a tendency towards a unilateral approach to research. The prevalent use of English favours Anglo-American ideas and authors and leads to a devaluation of other foreign languages. Furthermore, it provides English-speaking countries enormous additional income (Grin 2005).

Against this background, a number of authors have recently stressed the functions for which foreign languages are learned and used. English, it is said, can be used as a language of communication without necessarily being a language of identification. In lingua franca interactions, it functions as a ‘native-culture-free code’. This article challenges the existence of the dichotomy with regard to the English language as it is used today. It argues that the insight that “language is far more than an instrument of communication” (Edwards 2010: 68) also holds true for lingua franca contexts. Focusing on phraseology, the article examines language practices that are used by non-native speakers of English to display identity.

New labels

English in its role as a means of international communication has recently been given a variety of names (cf. Erling 2005a; McArthur 2004). Labels include *English as an International Language (EIL)*, *World English*, *English as a global language*, *World Standard (Spoken) English*, *Euro-English*, *Globish*, *Lingua Franca English* and *English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)*. Some researchers use terms interchangeably (e.g. Seidlhofer 2003), whereas others emphasize differences between them (e.g. Prodromou 2008: xiv, who explains that he uses *EIL* to refer to English in an international context including English native speakers and *ELF* when excluding them). The mutually agreed basis for the use of these terms is Kachru’s (1985) three-circle schema of the spread of English around the world. The ‘inner circle’ comprises the traditional bases of English as a native language (L1), i.e. the USA, UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. These have historically been the norm-providing centres. The ‘outer circle’ represents the spread of English in non-native contexts where it plays an important part as L2 in administration, the media and education for historical reasons (e.g. India, Singapore, Nigeria). The ‘expanding circle’ refers to the use of English as a foreign language. It does not have an official status here (i.e. in countries such as China, Germany, Japan, and Poland) and is learnt because of its significance as an international means of communication.

The use of English in the expanding circle refers to its function as a *lingua franca*. As is well known, the term as a *nomen proprium* originally referred to a vernacular adopted as an auxiliary language among traders, soldiers, and pirates (who spoke different languages) along the Mediterranean coast between the 13th and 18th centuries. It was based on a Romance tongue and was mixed with, above all, Arabic and Greek elements (cf. Barotchi 1994: 2211; Beneke 1995: 61). Today, *lingua franca*, as a *nomen appellativum*, describes a language used by people who do not speak the same native language. UNESCO defined *lingua franca* in 1953 as “a language which is used habitually by people whose mother tongues are different in order to facilitate communication between them” (Barotchi 1994: 2211). The historical *lingua franca* was not a mother tongue. English today is, no doubt, a *lingua franca* in the sense of UNESCO’s broad definition, but it is at the same time a native language of a substantial subset of participants in the communication that is expressed in it. This leads to communicative inequality (Phillipson 2003: 40).

So *English as a Lingua Franca* is a name given to the language in its worldwide function. This kind of communication, i.e. *Lingua Franca English* that is predominantly used by non-native speakers, is sociolinguistic reality and must be the subject of linguistic research. At the same time *English as a Lingua Franca* (ELF) is a research field (some authors use the term ‘movement’ – cf. Berns 2009; Elder & Davies 2006; Holliday 2008) that is based on the idea that the English spoken by non-native speakers is a variety in its own right whose norms are established by its users instead of native speakers. ELF has recently become a vibrant area of research. Its focus is the empirical description of English in international encounters among non-native speakers by means of corpus projects. These have revealed a set of properties of ELF on different linguistic levels. Jenkins’ (2000) ground-breaking book *The phonology of English as an International Language* has shown, for example, that in oral communication the interdental fricatives /Δ/ and /T/ are often substituted with alveolar and labiodental fricatives (/ʒ/ /σ/; /ʍ/ /ϕ/) or alveolar plosives (/δ/ /τ/); uncountable nouns such as *information* and *advice* are often used with the plural ending -s; the relative pronouns *which* and *who* are treated as interchangeable for animate and inanimate nouns, and verbs in the third person are often used without the inflectional ending -s (cf. the surveys by Seidlhofer et al. 2006; Gnutzmann 2007: 324; Prodromou 2006: 55). The important thing about these uses is that they are usually unproblematic because they do not cause misunderstanding. Being oriented towards intelligibility and communicative efficiency instead of native speaker prestige, ELF advocates do not consider these features to be errors but variants or differences (Jenkins 2006: 140). They are characteristics of *Lingua Franca English*, a variety in its own right which is used by non-native speakers in their own space.

There is, however, “a growing unease” (Dewey 2009: 61) with the claim that ELF is a variety in its own right. The use of English in the expanding circle is extraordinarily heterogeneous. “Diversity is inherent in ELF,” as Prodromou (2008: 246) points out. James (2005: 140) describes different “ELFs” as temporary and potentially variable phenomena. They show “great heterogeneity in local function and form”.

Another term, or in fact, a pair of terms has been increasingly used recently in discussions on the position of English in our globalizing world: That is the dichotomy ‘language of communication’ and ‘language of identification’. The

terms were coined by the German applied linguist Werner Hüllen in his 1992 article *Identifikationssprachen und Kommunikationssprachen. Über Probleme der Mehrsprachigkeit* (Languages of identification and languages of communication. On problems of multilingualism). Hüllen (1992: 314) points out here that English in its role as an international language is used as a language of communication and not as a language of identification.

He argues that

The spread of a single language of communication does not need to affect the existence of languages of identification (...) The former (= languages of communication – S.F.) (...) only require highly unstable, floating speech communities that develop among the autochthonous communities and to which the English term of **intersociety** (analogous to **interlanguage**) could be applied (...) A national-language **speech society** and an intersociety of speakers of English as a foreign language of communication therefore do not have the relationship of minorities and majority as regards one another. (*My translation.*)

[Die Verbreitung einer einheitlichen Kommunikationssprache braucht die Existenz von Identifikationssprachen nicht zu berühren (...) Erstere (= Kommunikationssprachen – S.F.) (...) setzen lediglich höchst instabile, flottierende Sprechergemeinschaften voraus, die sich zwischen den autochthonen Gemeinschaften bilden und auf die man den englischen Begriff **intersociety** (analog zu **interlanguage**) anwenden könnte. (...) Eine nationalsprachliche **speech society** und eine **intersociety** der Sprecher des Englischen als fremder Kommunikationssprache stehen deshalb nicht im Verhältnis von Minderheiten und Mehrheit zueinander.]

Knapp (2008: 133) describes Hüllen's dichotomy as follows:

A "language of communication" is used for practical communicative purposes, and due to its primary functional nature, correctness or particular stylistic and cultural features associated with the speech community from which this language originates are less important. On the other hand, "language of identification" means a language which is learnt in order to be integrated into and identify with the respective speech community.

Hüllen's terms have recently been popularised in the context of English as a lingua franca communication (e.g. Erling 2005b; Klimpfinger 2009: 352; House 2005). Pölzl (2003: 5) proposes that English is used as a 'native-culture-free code' in lingua franca contact situations. Referring to Hüllen's terms she argues:

Such a categorisation is based upon the two-fold function of linguistic signs, namely the referential function and the expressive one. Consequently a language selected for communication only expresses a communicative and primarily referential function, i.e. the culture associated with this natural language is not activated by its users.

House (2005) argues that the use of English as a lingua franca in certain public domains does not endanger multilingualism. She takes the distinction between language of communication and language of identification as a starting point for

her plea for adopting English as a lingua franca for Europe. Edmondson and House (2003) state:

Using Hüllen's (1992) distinctions between language as means of identification and language as a means of communication, we might suggest that ELF interactants are using ELF as a means of communicating, without necessarily identifying with English as a cultural symbol.

On the basis of their analysis of ELF interactions and students' language learning autobiographies, they voice their opinion for changes as regards goals and contents of teaching programs in the German secondary school system:

(W)e suggest that the teaching of 'Culture', as embodied in the appreciation of literary texts, and gaining insight into other cultural aspects of a country or countries where English is L1 can have no central role to play.

The distinction between language of communication and identification, as we see here, can have impact on language education policy.

Recent developments in European language policy seem to be focused in the same direction with the proposal that the EU should advocate the idea of a "personal adoptive language". This language should be freely chosen by every European and it should be "different from his or her language of identity, and also different from his or her language of international communication" (Maalouf 2008).

While Hüllen's dichotomy has been widely adopted, the view does not find unanimous support. Jenkins (2007) puts a special focus on ELF users and the complex nature of their identity. Based on data from Erasmus exchange students, Kalocsai (2009: 41) found that "taking up multiple identities is the norm, rather than the exception" in ELF communities. Virkkula and Nikula (2010: 270) investigate identity construction among Finnish users of English working in Germany. Their interview-based study reveals that "lingua franca use, as well as being a matter of communication, is to a great extent also a matter of identification". In what follows in section 3, I will take these different opinions as a point of departure and address the questions of whether an isolation of language from culture is possible, whether the English that is used dominantly today (as a medium of third-level education, in public domains, in EU institutions, as the corporate language of companies) is really used without any relation to L1 English and whether speakers really restrict the use of language to its communicative function without expressing identity.

ELF communication and identity

On the one hand, the idea of English as a 'native-culture-free code' invites us to raise objections, as the attraction of and identification with Anglo-American products and values seems to be a motivation to learn and use the English language for many people. Our lives are so largely influenced by Anglo-American culture. To mention a few examples from Germany: American films and series make up a huge part of our TV programmes; news anchors address reporters and co-presenters in CNN style using first names, the Eurovision Song Contest, after 15 years, was won by a German singer, but of course with a song

in English; you cannot leave a German shop without being wished a nice day; German children asked about the classical fairy tale of “Aschenputtel” will mention the pumpkin that turned into a coach as they know this from Disney’s film version “Cinderella”; young people have many *Freunde* in social networks; they close their telephone conversation saying *Ich liebe dich* like in American films; people find it attractive and stylish to insert English words and catch phrases (*the best ... ever; No risk no fun; The sky is the limit*) into their speech (cf. Fiedler 2011), and they do so mainly because of the symbolic (i.e. identity-bearing) function of the language. Against this background it sounds bizarre to speak of an absence of culture and identity. In addition, English is taught as a language of identification (as Hüllen states in his 1992 article). Pupils are generally prepared for communication with native speakers. They learn how to ask for the way in London or Stratford. At university we use teaching material from British and US publishers to train the production of academic genres, which includes the adoption of thought pattern and discourse styles that are characteristic for the Anglo-American culture. With regard to spoken communication, address conventions might be mentioned. Under the influence of English chosen as the conference language, first names (Barbara) are often used during international meetings, whereas they are addressed with their titles otherwise (Frau Dr Bergmann).

Massive exposure to US-media leads to the adoption of Anglo-American ways of thinking, communicating and even living (Alexander 2006). Wright (2004: 154) points out that

[...] both written and audio-visual media provide the English language learner with the cultural connotations associated with certain lexical terms, with the way particular concepts are elaborated in the United States, with the social norms of communication of US society, particularly the method for presenting an argument.

On the other hand, analyses of communication in English in multinational corporations (Ehrenreich 2009, 2010) as well as of classroom interaction (Smit 2010) and academic discourse (Mauranen 2006) suggest that the language use here is not shaped according to American or British models. Ehrenreich points out that English for international business is “a contact language used and shaped by speakers from diverse lingua-cultural backgrounds” (Ehrenreich 2010: 15). Although these studies are mainly restricted to spoken communication – when written texts are produced to represent a corporation L1 models are becoming more prevalent – the results cannot be ignored. They describe sociolinguistic reality.

The use of English as a contact language, as a code, however, does not mean that speakers eschew on the expression of identity. A large and growing body of literature has investigated the concept of identity (cf. the overviews by Block 2007; Duff 2004; Edwards 2010). The discursive approach that this study takes as its starting point sees identity as produced within social interaction (cf. Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985; Pavlenko & Blackledge 2004). It is fluid and constantly changing rather than a pre-existing category. Identity (or identification, as this term is often preferred to stress the process rather than the fixed condition) is not a natural fact, it is not possessed but performed, and each of us performs a repertoire of various identities, whether group or individual ones. Identity is

expressed in and through language and I do not think that one can be detached from the other. There are, of course, different intensities of this relationship, as Fishman points out: “[L]anguage is related to identity to some people most of the time, to some people some of the time, and to some people even all of the time” (Hornberger & Pütz 2006: 15). My research suggests that identity, as it is signalled by non-native speakers, is based on three constituents: firstly, on English native culture(s); secondly, on the speakers’ own sociocultural background (L1 culture), and thirdly, on an incipient awareness of membership in a specific speech community. Let me take examples from phraseology to illustrate the three constituents.

The role of phraseology in ELF settings

Definition

Phraseological units (also called fixed expressions, multi-word lexemes, phrasemes, set phrases, phraseologisms, formulaic sequences, prefabricated chunks) are polylexemic items (i.e. word-groups and sentences) that are characterized, in principle, by semantic and syntactic stability, idiomaticity and lexicalization (i.e., as ready-made units of the lexicon they are not created productively by the speaker/writer but reproduced) (cf. Burger et al. 2007; Fiedler 2007a). Because of these characteristics and their optional connotative features, phraseological units, may fulfil various pragmatic functions in discourse.

The phrasicon of the English language comprises of, on the one hand, partly and fully idiomatic multi-word items, i.e. sayings (e.g. *come home to roost*), binomials (e.g. *by hook or by crook*), similes (e.g. *as right as rain*) and formulae (e.g. *You’re welcome*). On the other hand, it is made up of ready-made structural formulae that are at a speaker’s disposal as conventionalized utterances (e.g. *to the best of my knowledge; by the way; from my point of view*) that can serve to facilitate language use because formulaic sequences decrease processing efforts in speech production (cf. Wray 2002). Idiomatic expressions are often problematic for non-native speakers. Due to their expressive potentials and cultural loading, however, they are regarded as the key to authentic English, as the litmus test of language proficiency (cf. Prodromou 2003).

With this aspect in mind in particular, I would like to draw attention to the book by Carli & Ammon (2007) which was mentioned in the Introduction, *Linguistic inequality in scientific communication today*. A paper by Florian Coulmas (2007) written in the style of a Platonic dialogue introduces the work and presents the book’s issues in an amusing way. Florian and Coulmas are presented as two characters in a debate about the advantages of English as an international language in science and the consequences this situation has for non-Anglophone scientists. This article is loaded with phraseology. It abounds with fully idiomatic expressions, such as *to be in a fix, mind you, second to none, jump the gun* and *the proof of the pudding*. As I understand it, their use (or even deliberate overuse) not only has the function of giving the text the character of a spoken dialogue, an inner colloquium, but it also works as proof of a high level of proficiency. The use of idioms is often associated with “real” English. If people who have such an excellent command of the language have problems

publishing in English and using this language at conferences – this is the message for me – it must be a burning issue.

Phraseological units in ELF communication

English native language phraseology

As mentioned above, it has been argued that in ELF communication speakers are not required to identify with English as a cultural symbol (Edmondson & House 2003; Pölzl & Seidlhofer 2006: 153). They use the language as a code to communicate effectively without adopting the culture or cultures associated with English as a native language. What does that mean for phraseology, that part of the language that is generally considered to be culture-bound (Sabban 2007)? What about the group of prototypical English idioms, the phraseological units that are embedded in the culture(s) of English native speakers? Do they play a role in ELF communication?

In example (1), the speaker alludes to an English tradition; in (2) the speaker uses a highly culture-specific formula as a starting point for her presentation at an international conference¹:

- (1) A: I hope it's not too late to have coffee now.
 B: No (..) we could have tea instead @ [= laughter] five o' clock tea, isn't it?
 @@
 A: @@ yea, but I'll have coffee definitely
 (ICC, German and Italian speaker)
- (2) in my paper you you will find something old (.) something new something borrowed (.) something blue (.) let me start by ...
 @@
 (CC 2, Norwegian speaker)

The use of the catchphrase in (2), which is usually associated with weddings, was very successful in this situation. The audience was surprised at encountering it in an academic context and reacted with smiles and laughter. Not only did the speaker manage to catch their attention on a long conference day, she also riveted it by employing the phraseological unit as a structural element coming back to the "new", "borrowed" etc. in the course of her presentation.

Phraseological units can help authors make their texts more expressive, which means, for example, to attract attention, to express an ironic undertone, to illustrate a fact, to be euphemistic, or to put other people at ease. Communicative intentions like these are relevant both in L1 and L2 speech. As a number of studies show (Partington 2003; Howarth 2002, 2006), non-native speakers adopt culture-specific references and phraseological units they notice in native-speaker talk into their own speech.

There are two media events that caused something of a stir in Germany in the recent past. When the new German Foreign Minister, Guido Westerwelle, refused to accept a BBC reporter's question in English in his debut press conference in September 2009, this was automatically interpreted as an

admission that he was not able to do so. Within hours, YouTube clips could be watched proving the poor quality of his English. The *Hamburger Morgenpost* (30 September 2009) showed a photograph of him decorated with a speech balloon “Hello, I’m Guido Westerwelle, the new Outminister of Germany”, and his party’s electoral slogan *Deutschland kann es besser* (“Germany can do better”) became *Deutsch kann er besser* (“German he can [speak] better”). Another politician, Günther Oettinger, who was elected EU-Commissioner at the beginning of 2010, was ridiculed in a similar way when he was shown speaking English with a strong German-Swabian accent (*Die Zeit Magazin* 11 Feb 2010).

The two events do not give grounds for believing that the emergence of a more democratic model of using English is feasible in the near future. They can be seen as an indicator that the wider public is not ready to accept non-native-speaker-like forms of English. They are also interesting here as they are related to our topic, phraseology. Öttinger’s speech included the sentence “In my homeland Baden-Württemberg we are all sitting in one boat”. He was harshly criticized for using such an allegedly typically German saying, although the metaphor *in the same boat* is transculturally well-known, as Dawes (2007) has shown. The sentence that Foreign Minister Westerwelle was not prepared to accept in English and that was then translated into German ran: *What will Germany look like with you at the helm?* It is a relatively short sentence, a simple question, but the reporter, although he must have been aware of the international character of the communicative situation, could not eschew the use of an idiom. Phraseology, especially its idiomatic part, can become problematic when it is used by native speakers who lack intercultural (including phraseological) competence. At international conferences, business meetings, students’ conventions etc. generally both native and non-native speakers come together. Not to consider these constellations “would simply mean ignoring the reality”, as Knapp (2002: 221) says.

Phraseology from speakers’ native languages

The second pillar of non-native speakers’ identity is their L1 culture. Analyses of lingua franca corpora have revealed that speakers often export figurative expression from their own lingua-cultural backgrounds (cf. Pitzl 2009). Phraseological units in ELF are often accompanied by metacommunicative signals (sometimes called ‘hedges’) such as *so-called*, *as we say in ...* or *a kind of*. Speakers use them to control and support the receiver’s comprehension. They have the feeling that their use of a phrase is not appropriate in a certain situation or that these stand out from the rest of the discourse, especially due to their idiomatic meanings. In this way, they dissociate themselves from them, to a certain degree and want to prevent these expressions from being misunderstood (for example, by being taken literally). In example (3) a speaker from Israel employs the authority of a proverb for an explanation and concluding comment in a discussion:

- (3) I think (.) that after 100 years your question would probably be answered differently ehm but (..) there is a proverb in Hebrew that after the temple was destroyed prophecy is given to the children and to the stupid (.) so I won’t prophesy.

@@

(CC 1, Hebrew speaker)

As the reactions in (1), (2) and (3) show, phraseology is also a device for evoking humour and in this way a relaxed atmosphere. In example (4) Speaker B distorts one of A's formulations deliberately to produce an ambiguous phrase ('sth. is history to sb.' can be understood in several languages as *to be old hat/water under the bridge*) in order to generate amusement and laughter. Humour of this kind, as investigations have shown (Pullin Stark 2009; Holmes et al. 2003; Brkinjač 2009), helps to establish and maintain solidarity between speakers.

- (4) A: Yeah but I think for me Italy is also art and music and yeah old churches and all this you (.) for example you have a garden and you find something of the Romans so in in in the in the soil so it's full of history for me
 B: **Italy is history for you?**
 A: Yeah, NO
 XYZ: @@@@
 (Nickel 2010: 12, Italian speaker)
- (5) A: What exactly is coherence?
 B: It's like a a **red thread** going through the text.
 A: A what?
 B: A red thread @ a theme
 (SC, German speaker)

In (5) speaker B used a phraseological unit from his mother tongue (as he explained in an interview afterwards). The saying *der rote Faden* ('the red thread') can be traced back to J.W. von Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (part 2, ch. 2). It has become a very popular German catchphrase.

The idea of a third space

An especially interesting aspect is the question of whether or to what extent speakers using English as an L2 construct a common identity for themselves as members of a group of non-native speakers. In this context, metacommunicative utterances that refer to the use of English are worth mentioning. Compare the following examples:

- (6) First I want (.) thank you very much for your excellent paper that that was in a kind of English that I could understand.
 (CC 1, Estonian speaker)
- (7) A: What does the hege hege oh he [what a terrible word] (wants to pronounce *hegemony*)
 B: [dominance]
 XYZ: @@@@
 (SC, German speaker)

As regards phraseology, a number of ELF-specific uses can be found. For example, figurative expressions are used to bridge speakers' problems in expressing themselves. In (8) a cliché (cf. *boys will be boys, Mum is Mum*) serves

as a substitute for a more specific formulation on ‘culture as a decisive factor for people’s behaviour’.

- (8) A: [...] and what happened? They said men and women together said her to get out why why because she explained a secret
 X: hm
 B: after this women had no power at all all the community said you must go out
 C: women as well
 A: so it’s it’s everything is culture and this is this is very interesting (.) women are not bad men are not bad (.) **culture is culture**
 (CC 1, Portuguese speaker)

In addition, we can observe the use of recurrent phrases that are evoked by the specific situation to communicate in a non-native language. Constructions of vagueness, so-called “general extenders” (Overstreet 1999), such as *and things/stuff like that*, *and so on* and *you know what I mean* can express the lack of words and more precise terminology (cf. Metsä-Ketelä 2006: 121). They can be regarded as an ELF-specific feature that is caused by the difficult situation of speakers communicating in a non-native language and the lexical gaps this involves.

- (9) A: [and other fields?]
 B: which fields?
 A: in political and eh eh @ **and so on**
 X: economical
 (CC 3, German speaker)
- (10) A: [...] musicology [...]
 B: is it about the history of the music
 A: eh, that’s one part
 C: ah so you analyse the structure of the music and **and things like that**
 (ICC, international students 1, German speaker)

Comparative corpus-based studies show that non-native speakers use some of those vague expressions strikingly often (cf. de Cock et al. 1998) and that their frequencies as well as their functions are influenced by speakers’ L1 (cf. Terraschke 2010). In the corpus used here, *and so on* (cf. 9) and *and things like that* (cf. 10) are the most frequently used extenders. We can also include semi-prefabricated chunks such as *how to say in English/how do you call that in English/what’s the word in English* into this group, as they occur very often in metacommunicative function without addressing a speaker for lexical help.

My last example, a small-talk situation in which international students have tea together, shows that the different constituents of identity can merge.

- (11) A: does (.) is there an english expression for guten appetit?
 B: eh the american told me they say it’s eh the french bon appétit
 C: bon appétit aha
 D: have a [nice meal] @
 C: have a nice meal yeah (2 sec) **god bless the lord**
 XYZ: @@@@
 C: no no it’s just (.) just popped up in my mind
 (Nickel 2010: 12, German speaker)

In this scene, English culture offers the point of departure. Speakers are searching for a communicative formula that is situationally adequate in an English native culture, which reveals that they do see the language that they use as a lingua franca here in connection with its social context. The scene, however, develops in a different direction. It ends up in amusement caused by the spontaneous creation of a nonsense phrase. With its proverbial character and allusion to English formulae, such as *God bless you*, *Thank the Lord*, *God save the Queen*, etc., it can be seen as an instance of stereotype-based mockery. A supposedly typical feature of another group is highlighted to evoke laughter. The fact that in this case the group – English native speakers – are not present, but that their language is used as a means of communication seems to add a special flavour to the situation, which supports their group membership. The scene demonstrates how people signal their shared identity in lingua franca interactions.

Drawing wide-ranging conclusions on the basis of a few examples is, of course, difficult. Some recent studies in the field of ELF (e.g. Kalocsai 2009; Planken 2005) have produced similar findings, however. They refer to the creation of a hybrid space, a ‘third culture’ (an “intersociety” in Hüllen’s terms) where speakers construct their own identities. The idea of “thirdness”, which can also be traced back to the writings of Bhabha (1994), especially in reference to post-colonial contexts in which members of minority groups co-construct their identities, has been conceptualized in different frameworks (e.g. Gutiérrez et al. 1999; Duff 2004; Kramsch 1993). The concept can also be applied to lingua franca interactions. Kecskes (2007: 212) argues that “lingua franca communication can be best explained as a third space phenomenon”. It is an intermediate space between established norms, between communication and identification where users of ELF activate a number of linguistic and pragmatic strategies to construct and negotiate an identity of their own (Canagarajah 2007). The specific characteristics of this hybrid space, however, need further investigation.

Phraseology in ELF communication: Summary and conclusions

The study has shown that ELF interactions contain a considerable amount of phraseology. It demonstrates that a lingua franca can also serve expressive purposes. People want to be expressive and creative when they communicate, even in a foreign language, and phraseology because of its imagery and its connotative potential is a means of achieving this. In addition, pre-fabricated speech has a processing advantage over productively generated language, which holds true for native and non-native speakers (cf. Conclin & Schmitt 2007). We have seen that ELF speakers use culture-specific L2 expressions and transfer phraseological units associated with their own mother tongues and cultures into English to express identity. Furthermore, there are uses of phraseology that might be called ELF-specific, as they result from the particular character of communication, in an L2, especially from the lexical gap interactors experience. In sum, phraseology in ELF is used according to speakers’ communicative needs.

On the one hand, this result is unexpected, as general descriptions or opinion about ELF include the notion that this form of English lacks idioms and

metaphors. For example, Wright (2007: 164), in her study of English spoken within the European institutions, points out:

This is not the place to describe the attributes of this developing language variety in detail here but in brief, it can be categorised as having distinct lexis (...), as being grammatically simple (SVO) and **as lacking in metaphor and citation.** (*My emphasis.*)

Kecskes (2007: 213), in his study of formulaic language in ELF, finds that “lingua franca communicators avoid formulaic language”. He explains this with the fact that conversational routines and formulas require shared background knowledge, of which ELF users do not have much.

On the other hand, this result does not come as a surprise, and this is for two reasons. First, a number of ELF researchers have recently shown that phraseology is relevant (e.g. Prodromou 2007; Seidlhofer & Widdowson 2007; Pitzl 2009). Prodromou (2007: 23) compares idiomaticity to a “minefield”; non-native speakers “are penalized” for not using idioms correctly, as he says. In contrast to this, Pitzl (2009), in her article on metaphor and idioms argues that formal deviations are not to be seen as errors, but as linguistic innovations that fulfil a variety of communicative functions. Working on the basis of the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE), she gives examples of ELF speakers who transfer idioms from their L1s into English in order to bring their native culture into the discourse and discusses the use of existing English idioms differing in form as well as the coining of new expressions.

Second, research that has been done into lingua franca communication in planned languages throws some light on the phenomenon. Esperanto speakers make extensive use of phraseology, as I showed elsewhere (Fiedler 1999; 2007b). There are parallels with some of the features of ELF that were described above, such as the techniques applied to secure intelligibility. Creative-innovative language use in Esperanto, which constitutes the culture of the speech community, is certainly favoured by the flexible syntax and the productive word formation system of the planned language and certain inherent linguistic possibilities for the construction of language-dependent humour. Above all, however, it results from the fact that there is no native speaker of Esperanto in the sense of a norm-providing corrective. This gives the speakers of the planned language the opportunity to be productive and creative in a self-confident way. The more ELF is seen as a form of English “in its own right” (Jenkins 2007), detached from native speakers and their norms, the richer and more independent the use of phraseology will be in ELF interactions.

Final remarks

At the end of this article I would like to come back to Hüllen’s (1992) article. The late linguist is treating the topic language of identification and language of communication in a differentiated way. He himself, for example, mentions Anglo-American conventions in academic discourse, saying:

The universal character of academic style that has been established [note referring to Widdowson 1979] might be in fact more an English style that has become universal than a really universal style. (*My translation.*)

[Eine in solchen Texten festgestellte Universalität des wissenschaftlichen Stils (Anm.: Widdowson 1979: 51-61) mag in der Tat mehr ein universal gewordener englischer als ein wirklich universaler Stil sein.]

In addition, Hüllen (1992: 303) speaks of “different degrees of identification between speaker and language” and mentions the fact that even foreign languages can be learnt intensively, which might result in an identificatory effect. In his article “Global English – Desired and Dreaded”, Hüllen (2003: 121) sees his own idea of a dichotomy between language of communication and language of identification in a very critical light:

It adds to these difficulties that nowadays English is not only equated with Britain and the old Empire but also with the United States as a kind of new empire. This makes it difficult to still believe in the hypothesis that English as a national language and English as an international language are two separate systems the latter being equidistant to all other languages and cultures. As an international language, English would then be instrumental only for communication in a neutral way and would have nothing to do with the cultural identity of speakers.

(Hüllen’s note: At least partly, I was a supporter of this idea myself [...] See Werner Hüllen “Identifikationssprache und Kommunikationssprache. Über Probleme der Mehrsprachigkeit” *Zeitschrift für germanistische Linguistik* 20/3, 1992, pp. 298-317 [...])

As the quotes show, to base the separation between language of communication and identification on Hüllen does not quite do full justice to the author. He depicts a more complex picture. The question of to what degree a language can be used without reference to its roots and cultural background is an intriguing one which should be the focus of further investigation.

This study suggests, using examples from the field of phraseology, that ELF is not merely a language of communication, a neutral code stripped bare of culture and identity. Speakers of English as a lingua franca display an array of various identities, with the English native language and culture(s), their own primary languages and cultures and a specific ELF identity being important pillars. The degrees to which these three constituents are activated as well as their interaction depend on a variety of factors that are of influence in a specific communicative situation.

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Endnotes

¹⁾ The data for this study were taken from a corpus of naturally occurring interactions between non-native speakers of English who come from different countries and from different linguistic backgrounds. The material includes tape and video recordings of speech events such as conference presentations and discussions, seminars and informal conversations (which are referred to as “CP” [= conference corpus]; about 15 hours, “SC” [= seminar corpus]; about 10 hours, and “ICC” [= informal conversations corpus]; about 6 hours). Where possible, interviews were conducted face-to-face with some of the speakers to learn about their motivation for using a specific phraseological unit. I would like to thank my students for providing a part of the recordings and transcripts.

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