

English as a Lingua Franca

English as a Lingua Franca:
Studies and Findings

Edited by

Anna Mauranen and Elina Ranta

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P U B L I S H I N G

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INTRODUCTION

ANNA MAURANEN

English has established its position as the global *lingua franca* beyond any doubt; along with this status, it has become one of the symbols of our time, together with globalisation, networking, economic integration, and the Internet. Like other *zeitgeist* symbols, it has been subject to much debate and has raised many fears. English has been seen as a threat to local languages and cultures, or alternatively, its global uses have been seen as a threat to Standard English. Such negative attitudes, even hostility, towards English are nevertheless comparatively recent and intertwined with the current wave of globalisation, more complete than anything hitherto experienced and more closely associated with just one language. At the same time, English has been welcomed as a vehicle of efficiency in for example business and science, or as a new means of communication for globally emergent localities in a variety of non-mainstream subcultures.

The spread of English from the British Isles has taken place over a long period, starting from the early 17th century, and it has taken different forms in different parts of the world. In some cases new native varieties developed, like those spoken in North America and Australia; they now enjoy the prestige of ‘core varieties’ or ‘inner circle varieties’ along with British English. In other cases, again, English was adopted as a second language in mainly Africa and Asia, and the resulting varieties are often spoken of as ‘outer circle’ varieties, ‘New Englishes’ or ‘World Englishes’. The latter have not gained equal prestige to the ‘core’ varieties, but there has been fairly extensive descriptive research carried out on their specific as well as shared features. Kachru’s work since the 1980s (e.g. Kachru 1982, 1985) has raised awareness of the issues relating to World Englishes, and important research has been done towards the description of these varieties, notably for instance brought together in Platt, Weber and Ho (1984) and Kortmann and Schneider (2004).

In contrast to the native and the established second language varieties, the use of English as a *lingua franca* (ELF) has been hotly debated but relatively little studied. English as a language of communication between speakers for whom it is an additional language is assuming an increasingly

vital role outside countries where English has an official status. The consequences of this to the development of English and our understanding of the language are surely worth attention in English Studies. A good deal of the debate around ELF has been carried out in Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching. Important eye-openers have been contributions by people like Widdowson (e.g. 1994), Seidlhofer (e.g. 2001), and Jenkins (e.g. 2000, 2007), who have pointed out that the use of English as a lingua franca has become the fastest-growing and at the same time the least recognised function of English in the world. Research into English as a lingua franca has been slower to take off, despite pioneering work by a handful of scholars, such as Firth (1996), House (2002), Knapp (1987), Meierkord (1998), as well as Seidlhofer and Jenkins with their research groups. The ELFA project started in the early years of this decade (see e.g. Mauranen 2003, 2005, 2006; Mauranen and Ranta 2008), but it is only very recently that substantial research interest has been expended on ELF. The sea change in the research community has nevertheless been fast, and currently ELF is a vibrant field of study. A sign of the scale and determination of researchers in the field is that two million-word corpora of spoken ELF have recently been completed: in Helsinki the ELFA corpus of academic ELF in 2008 (www.eng.helsinki.fi/elfa) and in Vienna the VOICE corpus in 2009 (www.univie.ac.at/voice). These large databases allow the study of ELF on a new scale, along the lines of ENL varieties (cf. COBUILD, BNC), native and Outer Circle Englishes (cf. ICE) and learner English (cf. ICLE). The mere existence of the ELF corpora ushers in a new era in ELF research. The size of the corpora equals that of the first, pioneering ENL corpora from the 1960s (Brown and LOB, both one million words of written English), and they are in fact twice as large as the much-studied London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English.

Shortly before the completion of the first ELF corpora, the first international conference of English as a Lingua Franca was held at the University of Helsinki (see www.eng.helsinki.fi/elfa/elfforum08.htm). The conference clearly met a demand that was already there: it was attended well beyond initial, rather hazy expectations, by about 150 participants from all over the world. The conference papers spanned theoretical analyses, empirical studies, pedagogical questions and ideological issues around ELF, and delved into local and regional situations of using ELF in different institutional and educational settings in a variety of countries.

The present volume grew out of the presentations at that conference. However, although the conference welcomed ELF-related papers of a wide variety, this book represents a clearly focused selection: the emphasis here

is on empirical research into ELF. The volume does not address pedagogical issues or the ideological controversies surrounding ELF and the teaching of English. We felt very strongly as editors that it would be important to provide a forum for presenting ongoing and recent studies on English as a lingua franca, since the current surge of research activity is expanding our understanding of ELF in use—its processes, practices, and linguistic features. At the same time, this new and incipient research gives rise to new questions, and inspires further explorations into the complex phenomenon of ELF. English is the lingua franca of an enormous variety of social and cultural contexts, of which only a fraction has been investigated. Looking into new contexts calls for new ways of seeing context and situated language use. Contexts of ELF use typically involve different social formations from the speech communities of traditional analyses, and therefore norms, identities, and practices get negotiated on new grounds as well. We need new conceptual and methodological tools for making sense of these often transient, frequently multilingual and always complex social and linguistic configurations that typify ELF-using situations.

The book opens with five papers that address fundamental issues in ELF: attitudes, approaches, conceptualisation, universality and comprehensibility. In the first paper, **Jennifer Jenkins** gives a brief overview of the phonological features that contribute to intelligibility in ELF communication (in “(Un)pleasant? (In)correct? (Un)intelligible? ELF Speakers’ Perceptions of Their Accents”), and goes on to illuminate the conflicting, changing, and often self-contradictory attitudes that particularly teachers of EFL hold of ELF accents. **Barbara Seidlhofer** (“Orientations in ELF Research: Form and Function”) contrasts two research approaches to ELF, one that focuses entirely on formal features uncovered in a corpus, and another that takes a functional view of language in use. The situationality involved in the latter type is able to open new kinds of explanatory insights compared to the more traditional categories of the former. **Martin Dewey** continues the discussion of methodological approaches in “English as a Lingua Franca: Heightened Variability and Theoretical Implications”. He looks into the conceptualisation of ELF, calling for a new approach to ELF with creative dynamism, locality and performativity as key concepts. **Elna Ranta**’s paper “Syntactic Features in Spoken ELF—Learner Language or Spoken Grammar?” turns the attention to ELF as language, addressing objections to ELF as a valid object of research in its own right, often raised on the basis that it is merely learner language. She then goes on to show that ELF manifests many syntactic features that are parallel to other non-standard varieties of English, whether native or not. This, in turn

raises the question of universal features in ELF. In the final article in this section, **Jagdish Kaur** (“Pre-Emptying Problems of Understanding in English as a Lingua Franca”) explores comprehensibility in ELF communication, focusing on participants’ use of repetition and paraphrase in interaction. Her findings support earlier observations that communication breakdowns do not occur with notable frequency in ELF discourse, largely because speakers resort to pre-emptive strategies to ensure mutual comprehensibility.

The second section of the book focuses on ELF interaction in institutional settings, particularly in business and education. Both are important sites of global ELF use and consequently also where a substantial proportion of the research hitherto has been carried out. **Susanne Ehrenreich** sets the scene by looking into a business community from an ‘emic’ perspective (in “English as a Lingua Franca in Multinational Corporations—Exploring Business Communities of Practice”), and reflecting upon her discoveries, explores the concept of Community of Practice. As many other ELF researchers, she finds the concept highly relevant for the analysis of ELF speaking business communities, and she calls for further development of the concept in the context of ethnographic studies of ELF communities. **Patricia Pullin Stark**’s paper continues in the business world, and looks into the use of humour in ELF from the perspective of power balance in the context of business meetings (in “No Joke—This is Serious! Power, Solidarity and Humour in Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF)”). She sees humour as an interactional achievement among ELF speakers, who make use of its many roles, above all for establishing common ground. Like business, higher education has been a major domain of using ELF in multilingual settings. **Philip Shaw**, **Tim Caudery** and **Margrethe Petersen** investigate exchange students in Denmark and Sweden (in “Students on Exchange in Scandinavia: Motivation, Interaction, ELF Development”), gauging their expectations and experiences in using English as well as the local languages and the development of their English. Students adapted quickly to each others’ English, improved their fluency, but did not necessarily shift to a predominantly endonormative perception of ELF. **Ute Smit**’s article “Emic Evaluations and Interactive Processes in a Classroom Community of Practice” reports on her study, combining an etic perspective with an emic one, of an international hotel management programme in Austria. The longitudinal perspective, rarely employed in ELF studies, enables change to be shown, for instance in decreasing discussion of (un)intelligibility. The findings also show a growing preference for direct and explicit illocutionary acts. With **Beyza Björkman**’s paper “From

Code to Discourse in Spoken ELF” the focus moves back to a Scandinavian university environment. She looks at several non-standard features of spoken ELF among engineering students and lecturers, observing that although they do not cause communication breakdown, they nevertheless give rise to some irritation. Important pragmatic strategies seem to be those relating to clarification.

Part Three of the volume looks into different facets of ELF as it is successfully used in interactive dialogues. Each paper is based on a sample of authentic transcribed recordings of ELF speech. **Alessia Cogo** (in “Accommodating Difference in ELF Conversations: A Study of Pragmatic Strategies”) first discusses some of her extensive work on accommodation as a key to successful accomplishment of ELF communication. Her subjects are language teachers engaging in small talk. The focus is on repetition and code-switching, both of which are found to manifest creativity and play important roles in communicative success. **Julia Hüttner**’s paper “Fluent Speakers—Fluent Interactions: On the Creation of (Co)-Fluency in English as a Lingua Franca” continues the theme of communication as a co-constructed achievement. Hüttner assumes a strongly dialogic perspective on fluency, arguing that a reconceptualisation of fluency is warranted by studying ELF interaction closely, and that in this area much research is needed which combines emic and etic perspectives. **Marie-Luise Pitzl** approaches the tricky relations of idiomaticity and metaphor in her paper “‘We should not wake up any dogs’: Idiom and Metaphor in ELF”, arguing that the “re-metaphorisation” of sleeping idioms, likely to be accessible to ELF users, and indeed manifest in some VOICE corpus examples, is an important resource for communicative success in ELF. Irrespective of formal dissimilarities to ENL idioms, metaphors fulfil several important functions. **Cornelia Hülmbauer** explores the relationships of correct form and communicative effectiveness (in “We don’t take the right way. We just take the way that we think you will understand”—The Shifting Relationship between Correctness and Effectiveness in ELF”), arguing that if effective, successful communication is the goal, ‘incorrectness’ may not just be something that can be overlooked, but actually an integral part of the success. Lexicographically ‘erroneous’ forms may work better for both production and comprehension. In the final article, **Theresa Klimpfinger** addresses a phenomenon that has been touched upon in some of the other papers as well, namely the role of code-switching as an ELF strategy (in “She’s mixing the two languages together”—Forms and Functions of Code-Switching in English as a Lingua Franca”). As in other contexts, code-switching in ELF serves many interactionally relevant purposes.

With several examples, she shows how code-switching serves to construct identity, fluency and communicative success, and specifically, brings speakers' plurilingual resources to play. Since ELF is typically used in situations where many language backgrounds come together, code-switching is a particularly appropriate resource to be drawn on.

Some of the papers in this book have been written by native speakers of English, others not, but all have been written by expert users of English. No policy of having the L2 authors' texts checked by native speakers for linguistic correctness has been applied, because this was regarded as an irrelevant practice in a book presenting international English scholarship. Whether English has been the first or an additional language to the writers, they have been addressing an international audience, not primarily ENL communities. Their contributions thus reflect the kind of language use they discuss: effective English as an international lingua franca.

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PART I:
BASIC ISSUES OF ELF

(UN)PLEASANT? (IN)CORRECT?
(UN)INTELLIGIBLE?
ELF SPEAKERS' PERCEPTIONS
OF THEIR ACCENTS

JENNIFER JENKINS

1. Background

Anyone working in the field of English as a Lingua Franca (henceforth ELF) has to face sooner rather than later a serious contradiction: that despite the widespread acceptance of the extensive role of English as an international lingua franca and its increasing number of functions in this respect, there is still an almost equally widespread resistance to this lingua franca's forms. Given the well-established sociolinguistic fact that languages are shaped by their users, and that nowadays "native speakers are in a minority for [English] language use" (Brumfit 2001, 116), it would make sense for English language teaching to move away from its almost exclusive focus on native varieties of English. This suggestion always meets, however, with strong resistance from many quarters, and this is particularly so in the case of accent. The result is that two particular native speaker English accents, Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GA), continue to command special status around the English-speaking world including international/lingua franca communication contexts where sociolinguistic common sense indicates that they are inappropriate and irrelevant.

In the case of RP, the continued promotion of native speaker (NS) English accents has become even more untenable over the past few decades, during which the use of this already minority British accent, has declined even further, especially among younger British people. As Trudgill points out:

This raises the interesting question: if RP is so very much a minority accent, why do we spend so much effort teaching it to non-native speakers, especially since, as David Abercrombie (1956) pointed out, it would make

much more sense on purely phonetic grounds to teach, for example, Scottish pronunciation? (Trudgill 2002, 172)

In addition, as Macaulay argues, there are other reasons why RP does not make good sense as the target accent for non-native learners of English:

Since RP is not necessarily the easiest or most appropriate accent of British English for foreigners to learn, the choice of RP as a model is difficult to justify. It would be better for everyone if linguists, phoneticians, and teachers overcame their fascination with the accent of an élite minority and concerned themselves more with the speech of the majority of the population. (Macaulay 1988, 115)

Yet the “fascination” with RP continues to this day, and the accent continues to be aspired to even in ELF contexts, where much of the communication does not involve NSs of English at all. Materials for learners of English especially in Europe, but also in parts of Asia and Latin America, still promote RP as being superior. In fact it is often the *only* accent presented as a model for production, even if other NS accents and occasionally NNS accents may be presented for receptive training purposes. And because of this, and because of the spurious links still often made in the English language teaching literature between RP, original/authentic English, and the ownership of English, it seems that RP has a place that it does not merit in the psyche of English speakers, both native and non-native, regardless of whether they have an RP accent themselves, or even wish to have one.

The situation is further exacerbated by sociolinguists, who might be expected to treat non-native English accents with the same objectivity and respect that they treat non-standard native English accents, but do not necessarily do so. For example, in a slightly later article on English accents than that quoted above, Trudgill argues forcefully for RP and against ELF accents, justifying his position as follows:

...it seems to me that even if native speakers do not ‘own’ English, there is an important sense in which it stems from them, especially historically, and resides in them. (Trudgill 2005, 87)

And because many NNS learners and teachers of English link British English with RP, this is exactly the sort of claim that convinces them that RP is somehow superior and non-native English accents inferior. Indeed, this argument, that NS English is ‘real’, ‘authentic’, and ‘original’ English was mentioned time and again by the participants in my recent interview

study (see Jenkins 2007 and below) when they explained why they felt RP should be their personal goal, even if they were not necessarily happy about this. And the argument in turn convinces many NNSs that NS English with an RP accent is essential even when English is used as an international lingua franca and no NS of English is present in the interaction. For example in an article promoting RP, Scheuer, a Polish phonetician, echoes Trudgill in arguing that:

...native speakers [of English] will always remain, if not the owners of the language itself, at least the keepers of the key to what is irritating and what is acceptable in interactional exchanges all round the globe, whether they actively participate in them or not. (Scheuer 2005, 127-128)

The problem goes beyond RP, however, and beyond the issue of inappropriateness: intelligibility is also implicated. For both RP and GA, the two most widely taught English accents, have been found empirically to be less intelligible to NNSs than other NNS accents (see e.g. Smith 1992). Because of this, I carried out a large-scale empirical research project with the aim of identifying which features of RP/GA were necessary for intelligibility in ELF communication, and which were unnecessary or even damaging to intelligibility (see Jenkins 2000). The data was drawn from NNSs of English with a large number of first languages interacting with each other in a wide range of contexts, both educational and social, and was analysed to identify which intelligibility problems could be traced directly back to pronunciation. The items that emerged as necessary for intelligibility I labelled the Lingua Franca Core (although the term has unfortunately been frequently misinterpreted to refer to *all* linguistic levels of ELF). The following is a summary of the main features of the Lingua Franca Core (LFC):

1. Consonant sounds except voiced/voiceless *th* and dark *l*
2. Vowel length contrasts (e.g. the difference between the vowels in 'pitch' and 'peach')
3. Restrictions on consonant deletion (in particular, not omitting sounds at the beginning and in the middle of words)
4. Nuclear (or tonic) stress production/placement

In addition to these core features, accommodation also emerged from the research as crucial to ELF pronunciation. One of several misinterpretations of the LFC is that its advocates are claiming that these core features are always necessary in ELF communication, regardless of who is speaking

with whom. However, when interlocutors share alternative variants for core features (e.g. they might prefer to use /v/ rather than /w/) then there would be no advantage, intelligibility-wise, for each of them to replace their mutually preferred use simply because /w/ would be correct in NS English pronunciation. On the other hand, it would be important for them to have /w/ in their phonetic repertoires so that it was available for use with ELF interlocutors for whom /v/ might cause intelligibility problems.

The other typical features of NS English pronunciation were shown in the research to be unnecessary for pronunciation intelligibility in ELF (as opposed to NNS–NS) communication. The non-core features can be summarised as follows:

- Vowel quality except for the vowel sound in RP ‘f_ɪr’
- Consonants in (NS English) clusters separated by the addition of vowels (e.g. Japanese English ‘product’ as *peroducuto*), as well as vowels added to consonants at the ends of words (e.g. Korean English ‘luggage’ as *luggagi*)
- Features of connected speech such as elision, assimilation, weak forms
- Consonant sounds *th* (e.g. German English ‘think’ as *sink*), and dark *l* (e.g. in French English, the ‘l’ in ‘hotel’ pronounced by raising the tip rather than the back of the tongue)
- Word stress placement
- Pitch direction

I went on to argue that in these non-core areas, speakers engaging in ELF communication should be free to pronounce English with their own first language regional accent influence instead of the NS way, without being seen as making pronunciation errors. Another way of thinking about these non-core areas, and especially items such as ‘th’ is in terms of NS shibboleths. As Barbara Seidlhofer points out about ELF in general:

A very clear tendency emerging from empirical ELF work is that successful ELF communicators avoid, consciously or unconsciously, precisely those native-speaker ‘shibboleths’ that indicate membership of a very specific, confined native-speaker community, and of which some accomplished *EFL* learners exhibit impressive mastery. (Seidlhofer 2005, 71)

2. Responses to ELF and the LFC

While the notion of ELF in general and the LFC in particular were welcomed in some quarters, in the main they were seen at best as controversial, and more often than not they provoked considerable hostility. One reason for this appears to be that neither ELF nor the LFC have been well understood. These are the most prominent misinterpretations of the LFC with, in each case, the correction in parentheses:

- The LFC is a model for imitation. (This is not so. The 'model', in so far as we can still speak of a model, is the bilingual teacher who has the core and local features in his/her repertoire; but as accommodation plays such a critical role in ELF, it is not viable to present learners with a single all-purpose model—they need to develop their accommodation skills as well.)
- The LFC is a single accent variety. (Again this is not so. There are as many ELF accent varieties as there are second language groups of English speakers.)
- The LFC promotes errors. (This misinterpretation results from an inability to separate ELF from EFL, where pronunciation errors are determined entirely by comparison with NS accent norms.)
- The intention is to prescribe ELF/the LFC for all learners. (Once again this is not so. ELF researchers believe that learners should be free to choose which kind of English they want. It is supporters of the *EFL* status quo who believe in prescription, and prescribe NS English with RP or GA accents for learners. Unlike these traditionalists, ELF researchers argue that learners should be made aware of the sociolinguistic facts relating to the spread of English, which will enable them to make informed choices about which kinds of English they want to aim for.)
- The aim of the LFC was to make learning easier. (This is completely wrong: the LFC was based on intelligibility. The fact that for many learners it lessens the number of pronunciation features to be learnt is a fortuitous side effect, but this was never its guiding principle.)
- The LFC is an artificial language rather than the result of empirical research. For example, citing a study by Bryła (2006), Siek-Piskozub, Wach and Raulinajtys (2008, 71) say the following:

70 non-native speakers of English expressed their opinion on the importance of native-like pronunciation and accent preferences [...]

Their responses questioned the very idea of creating an artificial accent and under mining (*sic*) the position of native speakers in international communication. (Siek-Piskozub, Wach & Raulinajtys 2008, 71)

These 3 Polish authors also seem to imply that the LFC intentionally set out to undermine the position of NSs in international communication. This may ultimately be an outcome for NSs who continue (as many do) communicating internationally exactly as if they're talking to each other in London and Los Angeles, but it was not an aim.

But it was not simply a question of misinterpretation. Responses to the LFC (and to ELF in general) from both NNSs and NSs often seemed to involve strong attitudes towards NNS English. And it was not at all clear to me whether the negative attitudes were themselves the result or cause of the misinterpretations. In particular, the kinds of language being used by people who responded negatively implied the existence of deep-seated attitudes towards issues such as 'good' and 'bad' English, and especially English accents, a belief that NNS English accents are innately inferior, and a conviction—whether conscious or not—that in some sense, NSs of English had special rights over the language, even when it was being used in international contexts, simply because they spoke it first.

3. Exploring ELF Accent Attitudes

It seemed to me that it was essential to find out more about these accent attitudes and beliefs, and I therefore embarked on a second project in which I explored English teachers' responses to my work on ELF phonology. The new project involved three main studies:

1. An analysis of written texts (articles published in academic journals) and spoken discussions (at MA seminars and conference workshops) about ELF (see Jenkins 2007 Chapter 5 for full details)
2. A questionnaire drawing on folk linguistics research methods and administered to (predominantly NNS) English teachers
3. Semi-structured interviews with non-native English teachers

In the remainder of this section of the paper, I provide some examples from each of these three parts of the research.

3.1. Analysis of Written Texts and Spoken Discussions

3.1.1. Written Texts

In the written texts I looked at both the overtly stated arguments and the ways in which they were expressed, including their use of metaphor, repetition, lexical choices and the like. The following extract is typical of one of the texts:

Giving up on this *high* objective [i.e. RP]—and the LFC *boils down* to this exactly—will easily bring the ideal *down into the gutter* with no checkpoint along the way. (Sobkowiak 2005, 141; emphasis added)

Earlier in his article (p.136), Sobkowiak had said in reference to an article by Henry Widdowson (1994) from which he had quoted: “Most readers will probably agree that this text is highly emotional, even hysterical”. His reason for this was Widdowson’s argument that how English develops internationally is no business of its NSs. And yet Sobkowiak’s use of language shows that it is he who is “highly emotional” in his concern about threat to RP from ELF and the LFC. His article abounds with this kind of metaphorical and emotive language: “boil down”, “down into the gutter”, and so on. Meanwhile, his metaphors are sometimes used in contradictory ways suggesting a conflict between his hopes and fears.

For example, he claims at one point that proposals such as the LFC are always “still born”, but a couple of pages later warns that the LFC is dangerous because proposals of this kind “spread like wild fire”. A writer of another of the texts that I analysed argues that we need to “protect” the English language, and a third that ELF “sets the bar too low”. And intriguingly, all the authors quote and heavily criticise *exactly* the same well-known passage from Widdowson (op.cit.) about how English develops internationally being no business of NSs of English. Given the fact that the writers come from very different linguacultural backgrounds, this suggests that the belief that NSs ‘own’ English may be a lot more widespread than is generally appreciated.

What emerged from my analysis of the written texts was, on the one hand, their authors’ inability to think of ELF and the LFC outside of a framework of language errors and deficiency, and on the other hand, their fears that ELF and the LFC might actually succeed.

In other words, they seemed unable to conceive of English norms for international use being led by its NNSs because, in their view, when

NNSs' English differs from NS English, no matter what the context of use, it is simply *wrong*. By contrast, there is no attempt at any point to think about the language contact situations within which ELF's linguistic processes are taking place and from which ELF features are emerging.

3.1.2. MA Seminar Discussions

The same kinds of attachment to NS English norms occurred in the spoken data. For example at two MA seminars where the LFC was presented, the following were some of the reactions:

- “All English will *fragment* so that nobody understands each other” (NNS)
- Or, by contrast, “We'll all become *the same*” (NS)
- “Learners will *sound odd* if they don't use weak forms” (NS) in which the commentator appears to equate ‘odd’ simply with being ‘unlike native speakers’.

However, there were occasional acknowledgements by some of the NNS participants of the links between accent and identity, and some of their comments foreshadowed what many of the interview participants were to say later. For example:

It [the NNS accent]'s part of a person's identity—why should you try to *strip them* of that? You don't necessarily want to *strip them* of their accent. A person doesn't necessarily want you to *strip them* of their accent. (NNS)

Again, the strength of feeling is indicated by the choice of metaphorical language and emphasised by the repetition—which is almost poetic in a ‘Deborah Tannen’ kind of way.

On the other hand the following was sent to the lecturer by email the day after the first seminar:

I feel I can't get my head round some of the issues you raised i.e. the *watering down* of the pronunciation system as it exists *to suit NNS* communicating with other NNS. I'm a *purist*. (NS)

This person clearly associates good pronunciation with NS pronunciation (“pure”), and NNS pronunciation with being “watered down” (and note how often the word ‘down’ and its synonyms occur with reference to the LFC/NNS pronunciation). There is also a suggestion in her use of the words “to suit NNSs”, that she feels the LFC is wrong because NSs should

take priority. This is similar to the point made by the authors I quoted earlier, who argue against any undermining of the position of NSs, and also to the point made by the writers above who are so critical of Widdowson's point about NSs of English.

And this is an email that was sent to the lecturer the day after the second seminar (the phonetics are the student's own):

Some classmates said after knowing the idea, they felt a kind of relief and they won't correct their students' pronunciation any more. But I feel we should correct them at the beginning to let them know what the standard should be (either RP or GA). When my boyfriend asked me out at first, he's Korean, I'm Chinese, he said 'would you like /kopi/?' I was just struggling to try to understand what he meant, but I didn't make it. Now I understand everything he says. 'Let's go to see a /pilm/' or 'I'll meet you in /trapalgar Square/'.

Although this student finds the notion of the LFC a 'relief', there is once again an assumption that the standard is nevertheless NS English, and that non-native departures from this are fundamentally mistakes in need of correction. The student also completely misses the significance of her own point about familiarity and receptive accommodation, both of which are important elements in the LFC proposal.

3.1.3. Conference Workshops

The outcome was broadly similar in the conference workshops. In this first example, drawn from a seminar on ELF pronunciation, the speaker clearly distinguishes between a NS "ideal" accent for the stronger students and what he calls "the English as an international language kind" for the weaker ones (the capital letters indicate an extra level stress):

I was just going to say I think there's probably two kinds of students. Erm one—er the kind of student who finds pronunciation very easy and natural and would sooner embrace erm the native speaker iDEAL, and another kind of student who has much more, much more problems understanding natives who would, who would much prefer to embrace er the English as an international language kind. (NS)

On the other hand, there were once again occasional examples of speakers realising that the LFC approach has benefits for them in terms of projecting their own identities:

At last I've found some justification for my OWN exISTence. Well er it used to be that er a non-native teacher cannot really teach pronunciation and be a model, at least er if teaching non-native speakers means playing the tape as the right model. So it appears that if my Japanese students have a touch of Russian accent in their English, it won't do them too much harm on the whole. (NNS)

But it was 'business as usual' at another conference discussion, this time on ELF in general. One participant made a clear connection between NS English and 'real' English:

...is this possibility of this developing where the speakers of ENGLISH as a lingua franca beLIEVE they are speaking the REAL English? (NS)

In other words, no matter how many ELF speakers there are, they do not speak 'real' English because 'real', by definition, means NS English regardless of how few people speak it.

Another participant argued that ELF is in fact the same as 'caretaker' speech—the kind of speech parents use to young children and language teachers to low level learners:

...no English teacher in the history of English language teaching has ever been anything but an ELFer, I mean obviously ALL teachers of language caretake ... and of course one NEVer speaks to one's students in the way that one speaks to one's mates down the PUB, I mean one is ELFing all the time, so teachers are skilled practitioners of lingua franca, at least the student exchanges they're using well correct models but they're ELFing if you like. (NS)

The final example is drawn from data collected at a workshop given in a British university. One of the participants argued that it was important for NNSs not to say 's' instead of 'th', because if they said, for instance, "I'm sinking", he, the lecturer, would assume they meant that they were drowning, not that they were thinking. This is reminiscent of an example Milroy and Milroy (1999) quote from the Oprah Winfrey Show, a TV chat show in US. An audience member complained about Black English, arguing that when Black people say "aks" instead of "ask", she does not understand what they mean. Obviously, in both cases the commentators *do* understand, otherwise they would not have been able to articulate the point in the first place. In other words, it seems that this is largely an attitudes issue rather than a linguistic one, and the result of the stigmatising of the

ways of speaking (and particularly the pronunciation/accents) of certain English-speaking groups.

The spoken discussions and written texts revealed a number of common features:

1. how difficult most of these teachers of English find the concept of ELF in general and ELF accents (especially the notion of core/non-core) in particular;
2. how closely and instinctively they identify with a NS English norm, regardless of whether they themselves are NSs or NNSs;
3. how reluctant they are to disassociate notions of English correctness from English nativeness;
4. an inability to assess intelligibility and acceptability from anything but a NS standpoint;
5. how they intuitively regard NS English as being more widely understood regardless of its context of use.

3.2. The Questionnaire

Moving on to the questionnaire, this had four parts: accent ranking, accent rating, map labelling and a comment section. Responses were elicited from approximately 360 English teachers, mainly NNSs of English from 12 Expanding Circle countries.

3.2.1. Ranking of English Accents

In the ranking task, respondents were asked to select from all English accents around the world, including their own group's, the five they thought were the best, and rank them first best, second best and so on to fifth best. A few respondents queried the notion of 'best' accent, but most of these carried out the task regardless of any such reservations.

Taking the rankings in order, the respondents overwhelmingly placed NS English accents as 'best'. In the case of first best (see Figure 1), almost 170 named UK accents (by which they usually meant RP), and 100 chose US accents (by which they usually meant GA). Tiny numbers named others, but these were still NS accents in the main: Australian, Canadian, and Irish English. Interestingly, one Japanese respondent named Japanese, perhaps as an 'act of resistance' in Canagarajah's (1999) sense.

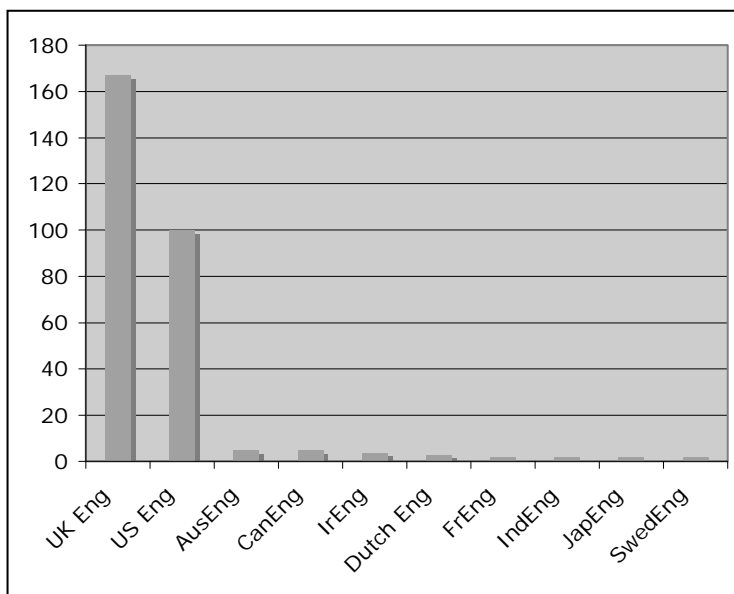


Figure 1. English accents ranked 1st
 (Figures and table taken from Jenkins 2007)

In the case of second best (see Figure 2), the UK and US positions were simply reversed, with 98 selecting US accents and 92 UK. Again small numbers chose others, and again, these were mainly Canadian, Australian, and Irish English accents.

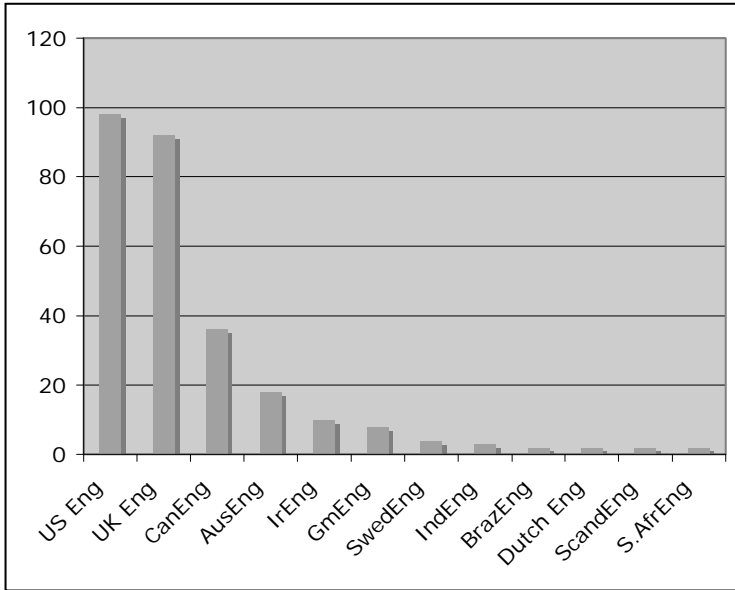


Figure 2. English accents ranked 2nd

Now that most respondents had already listed UK and US English, other NS accents were selected the most frequently for third best (see Figure 3): Canadian English accents, followed closely by Australian English, and then UK and US accents. Interestingly, China English accents also do fairly well, coming after the four NS accents and Swedish. In fact this turned out to be Chinese respondents naming their *own* accent—though from their comments, they did not seem to be engaging in ‘acts of resistance’ as in the case of the Japanese naming a Japanese accent as second best. In the Chinese case, it appeared to be more of an expression of confidence in their Chinese identity.

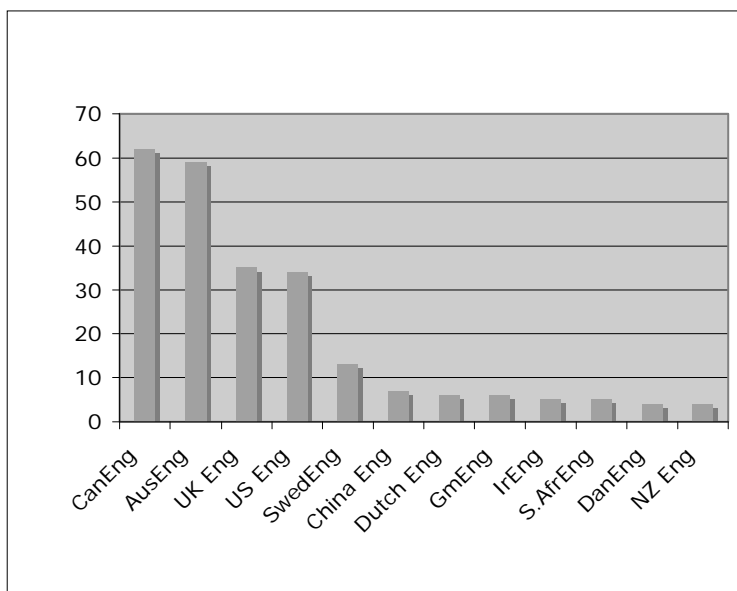


Figure 3. English accents ranked 3rd

Turning to fourth best (see Figure 4), for the first time a NNS English accent is near the top, i.e. Swedish English accents, coming second to Australian. However, the gap between the two is very large, and in any case, Swedish English is generally considered to be close to NS English accents, so it is not a 'typical' NNS accent.

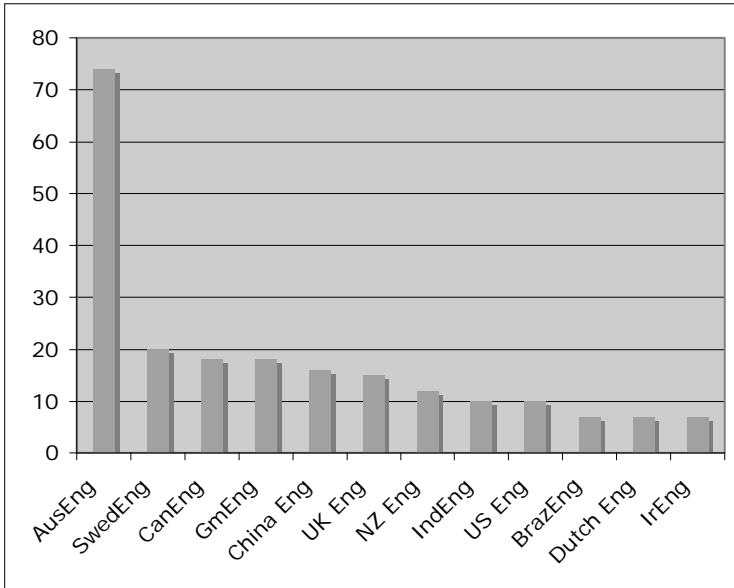


Figure 4. English accents ranked 4th

The pattern continues for fifth best (see Figure 5), with NS accents being selected the most frequently, followed by the near-native NNS accents, Swedish and German English, and then an interesting range of other NNS accents, Spanish, Brazilian–Portuguese, and China English—all of which were named to some extent by respondents from their own first language group.