


Review

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Anna Mauranen and Svetlana Vetchinnikova (eds.), *Language change: The impact of English as a lingua franca*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. Pp. ix + 363. ISBN 9781108729819.

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Language Change: The Impact of English as a Lingua Franca, edited by Anna Mauranen and Svetlana Vetchinnikova, combines the relatively new research area of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) with more traditional fields of study to explore issues of language change. The first part, ‘Pooling perspectives’, offers some new and exciting theories and frameworks, plus the adaptation of more traditional methods within which language change can be evaluated and understood in the context of ELF. In turn, the second part, ‘Zooming in on ELF’, provides a more focused view in which studies are based on empirical ELF data, hence providing a more all-encompassing view of ELF and its effect on language contact and change. All of this serves to stimulate and advance scholarly interest in the domain of ELF.

The opening chapter, ‘*Calling Englishes as Complex Dynamic Systems: Diffusion and restructuring*’ (pp. 15–43), by Edgar W. Schneider, offers a new framework for investigating English(es), including World Englishes (WE) and ELF. His proposal of the Complex Dynamic Systems (CDS) model in the analysis of languages combines a theory which has its origins in the natural and social sciences with a non-linear approach that depicts those ‘complex systemic relationships and their interconnected, perpetually developing nature’ (p. 16) present in languages and language change. Instead of focusing on specific segments or parts, this rather holistic view calls for more of an overview of languages and how they change over time.

The second chapter, ‘English as a lingua franca in the context of a sociolinguistic typology of contact languages’ (pp. 44–74), by William Croft, mirrors Schneider’s approach in that it also draws on a framework which is often found in areas of research outside linguistics. Croft argues that an evolutionary framework can be used to explain why English has become the lingua franca of the world, through the social organisation of communities and the specific types of language contact in which English has figured over the course of history. Both theories are complex and require detailed explanations and examples so that their application to ELF can be fully appreciated by the reader. While Croft indeed provides a number of historical examples

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from non-European contact languages in order to explain exactly why English has become the lingua franca, Schneider takes a different approach, explaining the various parts of his CDS in detail and offering a specific example for each of these. Both chapters offer new perspectives on theories and frameworks, although at this stage Schneider's CDS model perhaps raises more questions than answers.

The following two chapters focus on the written element of language, its impact on language change, and how this can be applied to ELF. In 'How writing changes language' (pp. 75–94), Ewa Dąbrowska argues that the level of literacy in a speech community cannot be ignored, as this will have an impact on the linguistic system of not only the individual but also of the speech community as a whole. She claims that written language is not a requirement for development and change; rather, it can be seen as a facilitator or enabler of the process. While the examples used are not necessarily ELF specific, she notes that they can be seen in some ELF contexts and hence that those languages with a long history of literacy, such as English, 'differ in substantial ways from oral languages' (p. 89), and that this should be taken into account both in general and more specifically in its application to ELF research. The contention that written language should be seen as a facilitator of language change is logical, but a more specific discussion of ELF might have helped to make its presence in the area of language change more convincing.

Anna Mauranen's chapter, 'ELF and translation as language contact' (pp. 95–122), argues for the establishment of a far clearer link between written language, ELF and language change. By examining the influence of language contact on translations, and to some extent on second language acquisition, she shows strong evidence of interference from other languages. This model is then applied to lingua francas in general, and specifically to the case of English, in that ELF users by definition use their primary (and in some cases secondary) languages to help them in their ELF communications. Through an exploration at the macro, micro and cognitive levels, Mauranen argues that the shared traits of the higher use of more frequent lexis, the under-representation of unique features, and the presence of enhanced explicitness all support the claim that language contact processes are at play in the outcomes of ELF and translation work. The links made here between written language, ELF and processes of language change in general seem quite convincing. It is interesting to note that in the final part of the chapter Mauranen lends support to Schneider's proposal in chapter 1: since ELF interactions are 'second-order contact' (p. 115) and 'bottom-up regulated' (using the same definitions of these terms as Schneider does), this would open 'a new window to theories of language as a complex dynamic system' (p. 115). This effectively reinforces Schneider's argument, and given that both he and Mauranen are highly influential linguists in the field, the claim is especially compelling and interesting.

The final two chapters of the first part focus on ELF from a sociolinguistic perspective. In chapter 5, 'Present-day Standard English: Whose language was it anyway?' (pp. 123–51), Terttu Nevalainen examines how verbal *-s* came to be found in Standard English, and also seeks to explain why it is not very common in ELF communication. Combining

historical sociolinguistics and empirical research, the chapter concludes that verbal *-s* is not commonly used in ELF communications due to ‘language and dialect contact often lead[ing] to loss of syntactic complexity’ (p. 146), which in turn implies that Standard English is ‘less than optimal’ (p. 146) for use as a lingua franca. Such an interpretation is supported by other studies which underline the differences between ELF communication and Standard English, and which argue that ELF should be seen as an entity in its own right (e.g. Seidlhofer 2006; MacKenzie 2014). Nevalainen’s study offers valuable insights into language change and ELF from a historical sociolinguistic perspective, and also touches on the issue of language ownership. The original question on which she draws inspiration, ‘Whose language is it anyway?’, is from Barbara Seidlhofer at an ELF conference; this, plus Nevalainen’s conclusion that Standard English is perhaps not the best benchmark with which to analyse ELF, both feed into one of the recurrent themes in current ELF and World Englishes research: language ownership (Jenkins 2007) and identity. Although it would have been impossible to fully explore this idea within the constraints of the chapter, there could perhaps have been a little more discussion of it in terms of its relation to the topic of the study itself.

In the following chapter, ‘ELF and the study of sociolinguistic change’ (pp. 152–74), Janus Mortensen moves away from a viewpoint focused purely on analysing linguistic forms attested in ELF, and argues for a more holistic sociolinguistic approach in which ELF is seen as an ‘agent’ (p. 167) of social change. Based on examples from a Danish university for international students, the author convincingly argues that ELF should be considered a ‘general phenomenon’ which includes research into ‘discursive, social, ideological, and technological change’ (p. 168).

The initial part of the volume opens the reader’s mind to different ways that ELF can be investigated, some very new and others more traditional in nature, but all focused on advancing ELF research. The continued pace of this research, and the reach it is now having, can be more clearly appreciated in the second part of the book, ‘Zooming in on ELF’, which highlights new areas of research currently being undertaken in and around ELF, or with specific implications for further work on ELF. It also presents more specific cases and contexts of language change and ELF.

Part II opens with a fascinating study by Mikko Laitinen and Jonas Lundberg in which they begin to examine the question of whether ELF can exert influence over other varieties of English (‘ELF, language change and social networks: Evidence from real-time social media data’, pp. 179–204). This idea inverts a commonly asked question: to what extent is ELF similar to other varieties of English? In doing so, the discussion here lends weight to the notion of how ELF as an entity in its own right has influence and power. The use of big data, specifically Twitter (now known as X), forms the basis for an exploration of whether ELF interactions create favourable social conditions for change, and as such the study is not only innovative but also reflects the technologically modern world in which we live. Laitinen and Lundberg do not go into specific linguistic variables, but they do analyse over 18 million tweets from more than 380,000 users from the five Nordic nations over a three-year period. The findings show that multilingual users have a higher number of

connections than in the case of monolingual account users, which would imply larger social networks with weaker ties to each connection, and ‘social embedding of ELF favors weak ties, innovation and diffusion of change’ (p. 199). The use of social network theory to introduce variationist sociolinguistics into the study of ELF is incredibly interesting, and this chapter could pave the way for many future investigations. The authors acknowledge that the study does not completely answer the original question of whether ELF can influence other varieties of English, nor was that the main focus, but their results do show how using big datasets and variationist sociolinguistics can provide the framework to further explore the possibility that ‘ELF users could be more likely to act as agents of change than the other account types observed here’ (pp. 199–200).

Another chapter in this section that naturally catches one’s interest is chapter 11 by Rino Bosso, ‘Exploring the pragmatics of computer-mediated English as a Lingua Franca communication’ (pp. 291–310). Bosso also uses a dataset drawn from social media, this time accounts from a Facebook group. The case study explores the use of pragmatic strategies in computer-mediated ELF interactions by the members of this Facebook group, who are all students living in the same accommodation building in Vienna. The author builds on previous research into how ELF speakers use pragmatic strategies in face-to-face conversations to avoid or clarify misunderstandings, but by focusing on computer-mediated interactions Bosso takes ELF research into new areas, combining an interdisciplinary approach which blends ethnographically influenced data collection, multimodality (the use of computers, emoticons and images), and computer-mediated discourse analysis. The study illustrates the considerable reach of ELF, touching as it does many aspects of life, while simultaneously providing many ideas and avenues for further research, especially the use of more longitudinal analyses of ELF user interactions in relation to language variation and change.

In contrast to using data from large social media platforms, chapter 8, ‘ELF and language change at the individual level’, by Svetlana Vetchinnikova and Turo Hiltunen (pp. 205–33), looks at how individual variation (an area not commonly studied) can influence change at the communal level. The underlying argument here in relation to ELF is that since one of the key features of ELF interactions is innovation and adaptability to a specific situation, this might stem from variability at the individual level. The study is based on blog comments which, although in a written format, mimic spoken language, taking the contraction of *it’s* (from *it is*) in particular. The general results are not exclusive to ELF, yet one aspect explored – the use of chunks – indicates that both native English speakers and non-native speakers use their own chunks, and since the non-native (in this case also ELF) speakers use less precise chunks, over time ELF speakers might cause changes to occur in Standard English. Whereas the relevance to ELF and language change is introduced as a small point at the end of this chapter, the study is clearly explained and the ways in which the issues relate to ELF are easy to understand; also, the findings nicely complement those of chapter 7, in that both studies note the potential power of ELF to influence Standard English and other varieties of English.

A common theme in this section is multilingualism, and the four remaining chapters all address different aspects of it in relation to ELF. They all conclude that more research is needed on the influence of multilingualism on ELF, and how it might change or influence the way ELF is used and developed within multilingual speakers. In chapter 9, 'Are multilinguals the better academic ELF users?' (pp. 234–66), Peter Siemund and Jessica Terese Mueller explore whether being a multilingual ELF user affords a speaker more advantages, in terms of certain skills, than monolingual ELF users. The authors administered a questionnaire to students and instructors at a German university, with participants asked to report their own English proficiency according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in all domains (reading, listening, speaking and writing). The results suggest that, in general, multilingual ELF speakers in an academic setting report themselves to have higher proficiency in all areas of English, although with the exception of spoken production these did not generally reach statistical significance, making it difficult to draw any concrete conclusions.

In chapter 10, Veronika Thir considers the role of co-textual and contextual cues for improving intelligibility in ELF interactions (pp. 267–90). Drawing on previous work by Jennifer Jenkins, the study focuses on resources, apart from those at the phonetic-phonology level of language, which speakers use here. Although the analysis is small in size, it suggests that ELF speakers do use contextual information where sufficient data is available for them. This runs contrary to Jenkins' original findings, and also highlights the fact that each person has their own schema, and hence that cognitive contexts are individual for each person.

Chapter 12, 'Development of shared multilingual resources in ELF dyadic interaction' (pp. 311–35), is a longitudinal study by Aki Siegel. It indicates that over time two participants used increasingly more multilingual resources when searching for words they did not know in English, drawing specifically on their own native languages, towards greater understanding in their mutual communication. However, we should note here that this might be seen as a special condition, given that each participant was learning the other's native language, which would make the use of those specific languages a more likely aid to understanding. Hence, a study of this kind would need to be replicated in order to identify those changes that might take place in ELF interactions between the same people over time.

Chapter 13, the final chapter on multilingualism in ELF ('The role of translanguaging in ELF advice sessions for asylum seekers', pp. 336–55), is by Alessia Cogo and focuses on the idea of translanguaging in a specific ELF scenario. The concept of translanguaging is a fascinating one. As Cogo explains, 'through translanguaging all the linguistic resources that speakers have learnt or encountered in their lives [these] may become relevant and may possibly be used in their interactions' (p. 338); such resources might include aspects of identity and culture. Here, the author examines ELF interactions in both formal and informal advice sessions for refugees and asylum seekers, finding that, on the one hand, in formal sessions some translanguaging was evident, although there was a trend towards monolingual interactions, and, on the other hand, more

translanguaging was evident in informal advice sessions, often between refugees, especially with minority languages. The idea of the use of translanguaging as part of multilingual resources in ELF interactions is thought-provoking, in the sense that ELF interactions are, according to Jenkins *et al.* (2011), ‘fluid, flexible, contingent, hybrid and deeply intercultural’ (p. 284).

Overall, this book is highly informative, full of new ideas and theories of where ELF and language change can currently be found, and where it might go in the future. The second part, ‘Zooming in on ELF’, provides a variety of thought-provoking studies, many of which suggest that further research is needed so that we can continue to increase our understanding of the effect of ELF on language change.

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