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ENGLISH AS THE ACADEMIC LINGUA FRANCA

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Introduction

There is no doubt at all about the current status of English as the lingua franca of the academic world. However, what is harder to find agreement on is what this implies. Does English as an academic lingua franca increase opportunities for sharing research activities and findings around the world, or does it rather create a relative or absolute disadvantage to authors to whom English is not the first language? And further, is English a threat to other languages as means of academic communication?

Perhaps the picture need not be this black and white. In the globalised academia, most authors use English not as their first but as their additional language. Thus, to understand academic discourse in today’s world, we need to understand the roles of one major lingua franca relative to other languages and the consequences of multilingualism, changing and mixing of genres and changing sources of norms. We also need to pay attention to the ongoing linguistic changes in English that ensue – its new linguistic shapes, the discourse processes and regulatory practices that act towards moulding the language and allowing it to take shape. Recent developments have meant that the norms of use in English have become more tractable and responsive to the needs of the majority of its users.

This finding is also the point of departure for the present chapter, where the main focus is on the linguistic and discourse developments that English is undergoing as a result of its unprecedented spread as a global academic language. Yet, the use of one major lingua franca in academia raises a vast array of reactions in those who study or work at universities. These participant attitudes and language ideologies relative to the kind of language that is appropriate to academic contexts is the focus of another strain of research into academic English as a lingua franca (ELF) (see e.g. Jenkins 2014), which will also be touched upon briefly at the end of the chapter.

Academic ELF and EAP

When comparing academic ELF research to English for academic purposes (EAP) research, at least two major differences are immediately obvious. First, EAP has a strong tradition of
focusing on written language, whereas academic ELF research started from analysing spoken discourse. The evidence we have on EAP research (Hewings 2002) from a major journal in the field suggests that the share of speech-oriented papers published in the *English for Specific Purposes* between 1997 and 2001 actually went down towards the end of this period. Academic ELF research, again, started out from studying speech and has only recently begun to expand its exploration to written genres. Why speaking was so prominent in ELF research derived from the early interests in how speakers manage communication when everyone speaks a foreign or second language (for instance Firth 1996; Meierkord 1998; Jenkins 2000). Moreover, language change is first detected in spoken interaction, and university contexts in non-English-speaking countries provided excellent data for observing sophisticated language in demanding situations where most speakers used English as a foreign language (Mauranen 2003).

Second, in EAP the emphasis has traditionally been on English as used by its native speakers. While contrastive analyses have been a common enough research topic, native speakers have been set up as the gold standard against which non-English authors’ texts have been measured. By contrast, research into academic ELF has maintained its focus on international settings where most speakers use English as an additional language. In this way, ELF research has widened the scope of EAP. As it happens, one of the future trends envisioned by Hewings (2002) was the growing importance of English as an international language, its impact on teaching programmes and the consequent need for research into academic English to underpin those programmes. The importance of ELF research stems on the one hand from the practical needs outlined by Hewings and the central status of English as the current lingua franca of academia, but on the other hand from the inherent nature of the language of science and scholarship, which has been thrown into sharp relief by the intense globalisation of universities: academic language is a form of specialised discourse that does not have native speakers (Mauranen 2006a). All users of academic language need to learn its norms and conventions through secondary socialisation in educational systems. Since the norms of academic language are partly generic and partly rhetorical (Mauranen 1993), with only the latter closely connected to a given national or cultural basis, we may expect ELF use to change linguistic shapes of academic English along with its discourse processes and regulatory practices. These changes are also likely to spread outwards from academia: academic language exerts strong influence on standard varieties as those educated in universities spread academic conventions to the wider society.

Central aims in the research field of academic ELF, then, are:

1 to understand the impact of English as an unprecedented global lingua franca in the rest of the world. What consequences does it have to other languages as means of communication in research and higher education; that is, what does it mean for academic multilingualism? What consequences can it have on changing sources of norms and conventions, including genres, and the sites and practices of norm regulation?

2 to understand, conversely, the impact on English of the enormous variety of language contact, cultural contact, and new centres of power and influence.

The origins of linguistic research on academic ELF date back to the turn of the millennium. Early work includes studies on the pragmatics of ELF (notably House 1999), and the compilation of the ‘English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings’ (ELFA) corpus (see below). As already noted, the bulk of the research is concerned with speaking. ELFA
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is the largest and most widely studied corpus in the field, but smaller corpora have also been compiled for individual researchers’ own use (e.g. Björkman 2013). In 2015, a written database of academic ELF was also completed (the WrELFA corpus, see below). Major methodological approaches have, consequently, been corpus-based (e.g. Mauranen 2012; Ranta 2013; Björkman 2013) but also discourse analytical (e.g. Hynninen 2013; Mauranen 2010, 2013a; Mortensen 2010, 2014). In what follows, we will first take a look at the findings on spoken academic ELF both from the corpus and the discourse analytical perspectives, and then move on to considerations of written ELF. Finally, studies into attitudes towards English as an academic lingua franca will be briefly introduced.

**ELFA corpus: repeated patterns in academic ELF**

The ELFA corpus (www.helsinki.fi/elfa/elfacorpus; see Mauranen 2003; Mauranen, Hynninen & Ranta 2010) is a 1-million-word database of spoken academic ELF, which has grown to be the largest and most widely studied in the field. The speakers come from over 50 different, typologically varied L1 backgrounds, and represent a wide spectrum of research fields from the humanities and social sciences to business administration, and from natural sciences and engineering to medicine. The speech events include, for instance, doctoral defences, seminar and panel discussions, conference presentations and discussions, and lectures – with a clear emphasis on dialogic and polylogic events. Studies drawing on the ELFA corpus have, quite naturally, often applied corpus methodology to investigate linguistic features of ELF. Key insights that can be drawn from these studies relate to the repeated occurrence and patterning of non-standard features (e.g. Mauranen 2012; Ranta 2013) and the scarcity of misunderstandings in academic ELF speech (e.g. Mauranen 2006b).

Mauranen’s studies on the ELFA corpus shed light on various aspects of academic ELF and academic speech more generally. A continuing strand of her research on the corpus covers studies dealing with metadiscourse or discourse reflexivity (e.g. Mauranen 2010, forthcoming). In all, the studies show that discourse reflexivity is central to academic discourse, and particularly relevant for academic ELF, where it can help increase clarity and explicitness among speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Importantly, the studies illustrate how discourse reflexivity in ELF has similar functions, form and distributions across different L1 speakers – although when compared to L1 English, we can see differences as well. For instance, forms are often approximate rather than entirely accurate, such as I mention few words about him; we now give you a chance to say something back; I would like to finalise my talk by showing you… The approximate forms are sufficient for meaning recognition, and their rhetorical functions therefore work effectively just like more standard equivalents would.

ELF work (Mauranen 2009, 2012; Carey 2013; Vetchinnikova 2014) on phraseology shows similar trends for approximate forms. This research is particularly important in showing that while phraseological expressions in the ELFA corpus may take different forms from those typically used by L1 speakers of English (e.g. *as the matter of fact* in ELFA vs. *as a matter of fact* in the native speaker corpus MICASE), similar unconventional forms are used by different speakers in different contexts. This observation suggests holistic processing of the units, and it illustrates how corpus methodology can be fruitfully used to investigate L2 processing (see also Vetchinnikova’s 2014 study discussed further below).

Other studies on linguistic features in the ELFA corpus include Ranta’s (2013, see also 2006) work on possible spoken language universals in ELF. Ranta’s (2013) findings show qualitative similarity in certain non-standard uses of verb-syntactic constructions in spoken ELF and in L1 English. Yet in quantitative terms, the non-standard variants of constructions
studied (progressives, embedded inversions, existential *there* constructions and hypothetical *if*-clauses) were more common in ELF speech than in L1 speech (except for the present tense existential *there’s* + PL construction, which was more common in L1 speech). On the one hand, this points to L2 speakers' more fluctuating or variable grammars, which, as Ranta (2013) argues, may be caused by the different kinds of exposure to English L1 and L2 speakers typically have, and because of the different kinds of exposure, linguistic constructions are ‘less well entrenched’ (Mauranen 2012) in L2 speakers’ repertoires. On the other hand, the study further shows that the non-standard features in ELF speech are not random, but rather seem to have the same direction of non-standardness irrespective of the speaker’s L1, and also the same direction as in L1 speech. Thus, it appears that the features that both L1 and ELF speakers use may be explained by ‘real-time’ speech processing and production, and thus contribute to communicative fluency in spoken interaction (Ranta 2013).

Other features typical of spoken language have also been looked into in the ELFA corpus and have been compared to a corresponding native speaker corpus, MICASE (the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/micase). Metsä-Ketelä’s (2012) studies on vague expressions and Riekkinen’s (2010) study on hedging have illustrated repeated patterns in academic ELF use that differ from those preferred by L1 speakers but do not cause communicative turbulence. Fernández-Polo (2014) shows that in the ELFA conference presentations data, the uses of *I mean* were varied and multifunctional, and largely, if not always, rhetorically effective. In all, then, research on the ELFA corpus, so far, has shown repeated patterns in ELF use across different L1 speakers, which suggests that academic English is taking new forms in the hands of ELF speakers.

**Pragmatics of academic ELF and discourse analytic approaches**

In addition to the ELFA corpus, smaller databases have been compiled for researchers’ individual use. Studies based on these have often focused on the morphosyntax and pragmatics of multiparty ELF interaction, as well as lecturers’ English. For instance, Björkman (2013) focused on the morphosyntax and pragmatics of ELF as used by students and lecturers at a technological university. Her findings suggest that morphosyntactic deviations from L1 English (such as not marking the plural on the noun and non-standard word order) do not typically cause misunderstandings, and that several pragmatic strategies are used to prevent misunderstandings. That ELF speakers do interactional work to prevent misunderstandings has also been attested in Mauranen (2006a) and Kaur (2009).

Pragmatic aspects of academic ELF have been the focus of such studies as House (1999), Mortensen (2010), Knapp (2011) and Hynninen (2011), each of which shed light on different aspects of ELF pragmatics. Lecturers’ English, then again, has been investigated by Costa (2012), whose findings show how subject-matter lecturers paid attention to linguistic form despite declaring that they were interested in teaching only content (cf. Airey 2012). Suviniitty (2012) studied ELF lectures and lecturers’ English, together with students’ assessment of the level of English and the accessibility of the lectures. Her work illustrates the importance of interactive elements in lectures: irrespective of the lecturers’ perceived English skills, those lectures students perceived to be accessible contained more interactional features – rephrasing, questions, directives – than the ones students found challenging (cf. also Mulligan & Kirkpatrick 2000). In all, pragmatic studies on academic ELF have illustrated the importance of interactional co-operation in ensuring efficient communication.

Approaches of a more ethnographic kind to academic ELF include Smit (2010), who carried out a longitudinal study of a higher education setting in Austria with focus on repairs,
directives and interactive explaining in lectures. Hynninen (2012, 2013) reports on language regulation in study events at a Finnish university, and Kalocsai (2013) deals with exchange students (studying in Hungary) as a community of practice. The SELF (Studying in English as a Lingua Franca) project at Helsinki (www.helsinki.fi/elfa/self) also oriented ethnographically to the grassroots level of studying in an English-medium instruction environment where the local society and the most part of the university functioned in a language other than English. What is common to these studies is the ethnographically informed approach, which enables a focus on local practices of ELF use. Interestingly, all the studies point to alternative sources for norm construction in ELF settings other than reliance on L1 speaker norms. In particular, Hynninen’s (2012, 2013; see also Smit 2010: Chapter 7) work on language regulation in ELF shows how L2 users of English take on and are assigned the role of language experts in ELF interaction (e.g. they are the ones who comment on language), and in the process take on the authority role typically assigned to L1 speakers of a language. The findings further suggest that while ELF speakers mainly draw on (their notions of) English native language norms for correctness, for instance, scientific contexts emerged as an alternative source for norm construction.

From a more corpus-based angle, Mauranen (2013a) also concluded that academic expertise overrides specifically linguistic expertise in a university context: academically senior people would make comments and instigate corrections on points of language, without consulting native English speakers even if present. This, then, points to changing sources of norms in academic ELF contexts, and raises important questions about who gets to decide what ‘good’ academic language is like – a topic now raised also for written academic ELF.

**Written academic ELF**

As ELF research began from spoken language, only a handful of studies so far have addressed written ELF. Among the few studies are Owen (2011), Mur-Dueñas (2013), Carey (2013), Mauranen (2013b) and Vetchinnikova (2014). Owen’s (2011) study on the ways in which reviewers and editors treat English-language research writing by non-native speakers of English shows that many of the corrections suggested by the reviewers and editors concerned perfectly comprehensible English in the original versions. Based on his findings, Owen (2011) calls for ‘language consciousness-raising’ to ensure a publishing scenario that better serves the majority of present-day academics who use English as an additional language. Mur-Dueñas (2013) came to similar conclusions based on her study of literacy brokers treatment of Spanish scholars’ research articles in English: following strict Standard English rules is an unnecessary burden on Spanish academics, who can write fluent English despite certain features typical of Spanish users of English.

Carey (2013) explored a few phraseological approximations (cf. Mauranen 2012) in the ELFA corpus and the preliminary version of the written ELF, WrELFA corpus, and found that the rate of approximations in functionally equivalent expressions (e.g. *on my point of view*, *to my view*) were highly similar in speech and writing, and also clearly specific to ELF. At the same time, perfectly conventional expressions were clearly in the majority. In addition, many of the frequent, conventional chunks that were identical to the native speaker corpus (MICASE) were proportionally more frequent in ELF than they were in native speech. This supports Mauranen’s (2012) findings showing that the most frequent items tend to be even more frequent in ELF. Thus, there does not seem to be an enormous difference between ELF and native English forms or their use in academic discourse. Moreover, although the findings must still be seen as tentative as the first written ELF corpus is under compilation.
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and more results will take a while, there does not appear to be a great discrepancy between the spoken and written ELF modes.

Vetchinnikova’s study (2014) was an in-depth investigation of second-language users’ processing in an ELF environment where they had to produce a Master’s thesis in English. She showed convincingly that multi-word units of meaning are at the centre of L2 users’ repertoire, and that their processing in this respect cannot be radically different from L1 users’ processing, despite the received wisdom about this in the literature.

While all in all very little research has been carried out on written ELF, the first corpus of written academic ELF (WrELFA, ‘Written English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings’, www.helsinki.fi/elfa/wrelfa) was recently completed at the University of Helsinki. Like ELFA, WrELFA will be made available to scholars around the world. It consists of 1.5 million words of written ELF, and has three parts:

1. PhD examiners’ reports (~400k words)
2. research blogs and their comment threads (~400k words), and
3. academic research articles (~750k words).

The last part is an international collaboration, the SciELF corpus, which can also be used on its own, and in the first instance will be used by the partners in the collaboration.

Now, despite the as-yet scant attention to written ELF, there is an enormous body of research on academic writing in English by non-native speakers. This research tradition is largely based on ideas from contrastive rhetoric (for a good overview of the thinking, see Connor 1996) where academic texts, mostly research articles or abstracts, written by academics from a non-English L1 background are contrasted to comparable texts written by native speakers of English. Differences will inevitably emerge, as happens with contrastive research. The question is, then, how to interpret these differences. The prime motive for carrying out contrastive research is its potential for pedagogical usefulness; pedagogical implications of the studies typically state that the features where other than Anglo-American writers differ from Anglo-American writers should be taken on board in courses of academic writing. In this way, L2 academic writing research presupposes a deficiency model of L2 use: what native speakers do is held as the ideal target, and L2 users should be trained to overcome their deviant, therefore problematic, writing habits. This is in line with the normal assumptions of second-language acquisition (SLA) research and, until very recently, it has been accepted as an unquestioned basis of L2 teaching.

However, there are two major problems with this approach. One is that there is no hard evidence to support the notion that greater correctness actually equals greater intelligibility. This is assumed, not shown, in the descriptors of major tests such as the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (e.g. Pitzl 2015). Instead, there is evidence that several features of non-standard grammar work well for academic ELF (Ranta 2013) in spoken discourse and, as we saw above, high-stakes written ELF discourse such as PhD examiners’ reports seem to manifest very similar morphosyntactic features to ELF speech (Carey 2013). The second problem lies in the major changes in the world of academic publication in the last couple of decades. The vast majority of both writers and readers of the texts are likely not to be native speakers of English. The countries that publish most scientific texts in English are currently, in this order, the US, China, the UK, Germany, France and Japan (Royal Society 2011). Moreover, it is clear that a notable proportion of scientists working in the US and the UK do not have English as their first language. Those two countries have been the most avid recruiters of international researchers over several decades now. Native-English standards of
educated language are therefore not as relevant to academic research writing as they once were in more nationally oriented contexts of research publication.

Compared to the world of academic publishing just a few decades ago, right after the Second World War, the research writing landscape looks dramatically altered. German was the primary language for international research publication, with French and English as important rivals. Since then, English has taken over (with an estimated proportion of about 75 per cent to over 90 per cent of journal articles; see Lillis & Curry 2006), and the scale of international research collaborations has grown at the same time. In a world where the international research community depends very largely on the use of one shared language, it is clear that the demands on that language and its relevant norms are under pressure to change and in need of rethinking. Writing for academic publishing in English is in effect now writing in English as a lingua franca. What this implies is that we are facing a language form that arises out of cross-cultural collaborations, and, as is the wont of language, it adapts, in lexis and structure, to the circumstances it is used in. Local and global contexts of use intermingle, supported and enhanced by the dominance of digital communication. It is clear that the global cannot be reduced to any particular locality, or even a set of them, like the inner circle countries.

The changed landscape of publishing in English has been noticed by researchers: Flowerdew (2013), for instance, suggests that the native versus non-native distinction is getting blurred, and successful academic publishing is more dependent on the level of professional expertise and academic seniority than the native-likeness of the text. Similarly, Connor (2011) advocates a more complex view of interactions between native and non-native speakers of English, where expectations are both culturally and situationally embedded, than the traditional contrastive rhetoric model suggests.

However, another challenge that the field of English for academic purposes needs to address is the variability of the field, along at least two crucial dimensions: one is local variation. Among others, Canagarajah (2002) and Lillis and Curry (2010) have drawn attention to the differences in the circumstances in which academics write, particularly contrasting the Anglo-American ‘centre’ to the ‘periphery’ of academic publishing. While change has been fast in our perceptions of centres and peripheries, with China and South Korea having risen to the centre in the last decade or so, ELF is obviously a more relevant question to the emerging centres than to the traditional bastions of academic publishing in English.

The other vital dimension of variability is disciplinary: recent research has shown how differently disciplines are positioned with regard to using English (Kuteeva & Airey 2014), and the relevance of native norms in those disciplines. Gnutzmann and Rabe (2014) show that in some disciplinary cultures, notably mechanical engineering and to some extent biology, non-native writers and editors constitute the majority in the field. This makes a renegotiation of language norms within the discipline relevant, with non-natives occupying a central position. Language regulation by non-native speakers seems a likely scenario in disciplines that are internationally highly integrated, and where researchers from other than the inner circle countries are in the majority or otherwise in a strong position in the research area. In the case of disciplines such as history, where native speakers of the target cultures of the research at hand tend to be models of writing, the situation is different (but see McGrath 2014), also in terms of the position of English being less dominant.

In spoken language, the ‘communicative’ ideology has probably prepared the ground for some leniency towards variation from the native target, as can be seen in CEFR norms, especially at lower levels (see Hynninen 2014; Pitzl 2015), together with recent research.
evidence showing that ELF features do not hamper intelligibility. However, discussion
where the written mode is concerned seems to lag behind. English tends to be associated with
native-speaker writing, and this includes many critical voices against English dominance,
which start from this assumption. A number of studies have argued that non-native scholars
and scientists have an uneven playing ground compared to native speakers, as they must
publish in English whether they like it or not, and their work is judged on the grounds of
their inadequate language skills instead of solely academic merit (e.g. Ammon 2007; Lillis
& Curry 2010; Pérez-Llantada, Plo & Ferguson 2011). However, as many studies show, the
picture is more complex than that; for instance, several papers in Kuteeva and Mauranen
(2014) show that most writers in most contexts move skilfully between languages, and
make choices based on their assessment of the situation. Their choices reflect perceptions
of their own field, their own career needs or simply their individual preferences. We are
moving towards blurred distinctions in cultural, linguistic and academic identities, and the
acceptance of more complex and varied forms of English, as suggested by, among others,

Clearly, we need much more empirical research into written ELF and the contexts of
writing as well as publishing in different disciplines, locations and in different media. We
need linguistic description of what might be emerging tendencies in the written mode, but
we also need research into new environments of academic publishing. What requires radical
re-conceptualisation is our perception of the fast-changing situation of research reporting in
the globalised, digitalised and increasingly competitive world. Rising research powers may
be undermining Anglo-American dominance, but they are hardly likely to give up English
any time soon.

Attitudes and ideologies

In addition to research into linguistic aspects of ELF discussed above, another major strain of
academic ELF research addresses student and staff attitudes and language ideologies relative
to the kind of language that is appropriate to academic contexts (e.g. Airey 2012; Jenkins
2014). For instance, results from Jenkins’ (2014: 158) questionnaire that she distributed
across university staff members around the world reveal an assumption that English, as
the current academic lingua franca, is the most appropriate language to serve as a common
medium of instruction in international study programmes. Then again, the findings
further point to an orientation to ‘standard’ North American or British English as the most
acceptable kind of English, as well as a tendency to view non-native students’ English and
intercultural skills as problems, rather than expect home staff and students to meet half-
way. This said, Jenkins (2014: 202) also reports of a certain amount of receptivity both in
her staff and student informants to incorporating what she calls ‘a genuine international
perspective’, where both the incoming and home students and staff would adapt their
language use.

Other studies that have focused on lecturers’ or students’ views reveal, for instance,
concerns about the kind of professional image a lecturer conveys with his or her English,
particularly when it differs from Standard English which is often considered the norm (e.g.
Jensen et al. 2013). Then again, it seems that speakers’ language ideologies vary depending on
who one compares oneself with (e.g. Pilkinton-Pihko 2013), which suggests that Standard
English is not always a relevant norm in academic settings. Pilkinton-Pihko’s (2013) subjects
shifted between repertoires as they moved from one point of comparison to another: when
they compared their English to that of native speakers, they assessed their language skills
as wanting, but when comparing themselves to other L2 speakers or the demands of the situation, their self-assessment was considerably more positive. In all, we can thus say that the attitude and language ideology studies have implications for developing appropriate English-language requirements for university students and staff who are increasingly faced with international ELF settings.

There are also a number of studies that explore the practices and policies at universities that seek to be recognised as ‘international’. Many of these studies have considered English in relation to other languages, often from a language policy perspective (e.g. Mortensen 2014; Kuteeva & Airey 2014; see also Jenkins 2014). These studies show that English is typically given a special position in university language policies, often alongside one or more national languages, but that practices of language use vary. The findings illustrate the complex relationship of English used as a lingua franca and multilingualism in different local contexts, and as such provide valuable viewpoints to ELF research.

Conclusions

For understanding how English functions in global academia, research into and findings from ELF are going to play an increasingly significant role. Higher education across the world is being permeated by English, but a very small share falls onto its native speakers. The overwhelming majority of the world’s students are speakers of other languages, but ever larger proportions among them will carry out some or all their university studies in English. If we think of those who read textbooks, listen to lectures, present in seminars, pass examinations and write their theses and dissertations in English, it may seem natural to perceive them as learners of English while they are also learners of academic skills. But if we turn to those who participate in conferences, lecture at universities, review papers, examine doctorates, review promotions and appoint professors, it becomes much harder to assign the role of permanent language learners to them.

When people manage highly demanding roles in academia, which is heavily dependent on linguistic performance, it verges on the absurd to fault them for their non-native lexicogrammar or non-Anglo-American rhetoric. Yet some of those dated attitudes still linger on, as Owen’s (2011) research showed. Academic English has no native speakers, and scientific enquiry is international by nature. Neither is there evidence in support of the idea that, for instance, non-standard grammatical features would hamper communication (Ranta 2013). Clearly, we only have evidence of a limited number of features so far, but two things are emerging from the research: one is that as far as academic English is concerned, the differences between Standard English and ELF are very small in quantitative terms, and the other is that all early findings from the written mode point to similar ELF-specific features in speaking and writing. We can therefore expect the alterations in English that ELF brings about to be gradual, just as language change usually is, and, perhaps more interestingly, we can draw on the findings on speech to predict what the harmless deviations from the current standards might be in written text.

Hitherto, research into spoken academic ELF has shown that many linguistic processes that one might expect in language contact, such as regularisation, new coinages and new phraseological preferences can be seen across speakers of different L1s. Discourse strategies have been observed to adapt to the fundamentally multilingual and complex context that ELF communication is (see, for instance, Jenkins 2000; Mauranen 2012; Seidlhofer 2011). This suggests that English is taking new forms in the hands of ELF speakers. We have also seen that user perspectives, as well as ELF use itself, point to increased awareness and readiness of
L2 users of English to take on the role of language regulators, and that alternative sources for norms may emerge in the process (Hynninen 2013).

There is still much to be discovered about academic ELF. While successful speech has been charted in terms of its main characteristics and apparent success strategies, a wealth of questions remain unanswered. What are the best indicators and predictors of communicative success, when native-likeness is ruled out? How do we best assess and predict prospective students’ ability to perform in English, given foreseeable developments in learning environments which rely more and more on collaborative effort, multimodality and crossing national and linguistic borders?

Most academic publications are written in English, but by others than native speakers. The same is true of reading academic texts. Standards of the best-known native varieties are still required by most academic journals, but there are signs that in some fields, norms of written scientific English have already become more responsive to the needs of the majority of its users (see Gnutzmann & Rabe 2014). Written academic ELF is almost entirely uncharted territory waiting for researchers to take it on. When this is combined with the rapid developments in digital forms of publishing and publicising research, even more overtaken by English as a lingua franca than traditional publishing, traditional conceptualisations of academic English are called seriously into question.

Further reading

Jenkins (2014); Mauranen (2012); Seidlhofer (2011)

Related chapters

2 General and specific EAP
3 Academic literacies
18 Intertextuality and plagiarism
22 Critical perspectives

References

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