Tomokazu Ishikawa

School of Education, Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan. Email: t.ishikawa@aoni.waseda.jp

Conceptualising English as a global contact language

Abstract

English as a global contact language has been conceptualised as (1) geo-localised Englishes, (2) English similects, and (3) transcultural multi-lingua franca. Although taking a simplified and reified approach, the first framework of geo-localised Englishes has contributed to raising awareness of global diversity in English use and corresponding innovative classroom practices. Meanwhile, the second framework of English similects has taken a lingua franca approach between different first-language (L1) users, and provided insight into omnipresent multilingualism across interactants beyond particular speech communities. However, from a complexity theory perspective, geo-local communities and interactants' L1s are just among many complex social systems, and thus neither the first nor the second framework is capable of fully explaining what emerges from communication through the language in question. The third framework of transcultural multi-lingua franca seeks to comprehend the full range of multilingualism, or broadly conceptualised translanguaging with multiple 'languages', which emerges across individuals, time and space. It also takes notice of both the border-transgressing nature of culture and the possible transience of salient cultural categories in global communication. Furthermore, this last framework suggests that English language education in the 21st century take a multilingual, transcultural and post-normative turn.

Keywords: world Englishes (WE), English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), English similects, multilingualism, translanguaging, intercultural/transcultural communication, complexity theory

摘要

グローバルな接触言語としての英語は, (1)地理的地方化した英語, (2)英語シミレクト, 及び, (3)トランス文化のマルチリンガフランカとして概念化されてきた. (1)地理的地方化した英語という枠組みは, 単純化かつ具象化されたアプローチではあるが, 英語使用におけるグローバルな多様性への認識高揚と, 付随する教育現場での革新的実践に貢献してきた. 一方で, (2)英語シミレクトという枠組みは, 異なる第 1 言語使用者間でのリンガフランカというアプローチによって, 特定の言語共同体を越えて交流者同士をまたがって偏在する多言語主義に洞察を与えてきた. しかしながら, 複雑性理論の見地から, 地理的地方の共同体や交流者の第 1 言語は多くの複雑な社会システムのひとつに過ぎず, それゆえ, (1)・(2)のいずれの枠組みも, 当該言語を通じたコミュニケーション現象を十分に説明できない. (3)トランス文化のマルチリンガフランカという枠組みは, 個人・時間・空間をまたがって出現する, 多言語主義の全体像, すなわち広義に概念化された多"言語"でのトランスランゲージングを把握しようと努める. また, グローバルコミュニケーションにおいて, 文化が境界を逸脱する性質と, 顕著な文化的カテゴリーが儚く移り行く可能性の両方に注目する. さらに, この最後の枠組みは, 21 世紀の英語教育として, 多言語主義, トランス文化, ポストノルムへの転換を示唆する.

キーワード: 世界の様々な英語(WE), 国際語としての英語(ELF), 英語シミレクト, 多言語主義, トランスランゲージング, 異文化/トランス文化コミュニケーション, 複雑性理論

1 Introduction

> I […] prefer to think of ELF [or English as a Lingua Franca] as *any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option*. (Seidlhofer 2011: 7; original italics)

Against a backdrop of current English use as a contact language on an unprecedented global scale, Anglophone speakers can no longer claim their sole ownership of English (e.g., Widdowson 1994; Brumfit 2001). They amount only to less than one quarter of estimated more than two billion English users, and a great deal of linguistic diversity is observed even among Anglophone speech communities (e.g., Jenkins 2015a). Indeed, as implied by the above definition of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), a global encounter often involves no first-language (L1) English users either in "transient multilingual communities" (Mortensen 2013: 37, 39) or in relatively established communities of practice (e.g., Wenger 1998; Seidlhofer 2007). As the construct of native speakers (NSs) seems increasingly irrelevant to the discussion of this global

contact language (e.g., Pennycook 2012; Jenkins 2014), how can we then conceptualise it?

While a small number of publications still show lack of academic rigour in their presentation of ELF research,[1] the present article will not repeat the same arguments as in Ishikawa (2015). Instead, it examines three different ways to conceptualise English as a global contact language: (1) geo-localised Englishes, (2) English similects, and (3) transcultural multi-lingua franca. All these three angles belong to the framework of Global Englishes, which concerns itself with "the linguistic and sociocultural dimensions of global uses, usages and users of English" (Centre for Global Englishes 2017). On a personal note, ELF was the conference theme of the 2017 annual international convention organised by the Japan Association of College English Teachers, which I attended. I am still not able to put out of my mind a couple of words which one of the delegates said in a lecture theatre: ELF is "confusing" and "chaotic" for English teachers. In order to address teachers' concerns, this article includes discussion of pedagogy in relation to the above three angles.

2 Geo-localised Englishes

> There […] seems to be a shared understanding that the current use of EIL [or English as an International Language] is best conceptualized not as one specific variety of international English but rather as a function that English performs in international, multilingual contexts, to which *each speaker brings a variety of English that they are most familiar with, along with their own cultural frames of reference*, and employs various strategies to communicate effectively. (Matsuda 2017: xiii; emphasis added)

Tracing back to Smith's (1983 [1981]) early work on English as an International Language (EIL),[2] world Englishes (WE) research has investigated English use in diverse countries and regions with a view to identifying indigenised varieties (e.g., Kachru 2005; Schneider 2007). This research paradigm has contributed to the

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[1] For example, one article in *Language Policy* (2017: 322) includes the ignominious portrayal of the research field of ELF.
[2] Smith (1983 [1981]) is currently available as Smith (2015).

awareness and acceptance of 'new' Englishes outside of Anglophone settings, such as Indian, Kenyan, Nigerian and Singaporean. However, the paradigm "places nationalism at its core" (Pennycook 2007: 20), envisaging global English communication as *inter*-national. That is to say, when English is chosen as a contact language, it is supposed that each speaker brings his or her familiar English variety, most frequently at the national level. One could argue that such an orientation to language falls into the structuralist trap of presuming geo-locally definable and distinguishable entities with which individuals are inexorably linked.

Today the majority of those over two billion people (e.g. East Asian people) scarcely ever use English as an intra-national or intra-regional communication medium, but largely for lingua franca purposes. In other words, their English does not have a stable speech community, thereby not being able to develop into an established variety through mutual interaction from generation to generation (Mauranen 2012, 2016a). The ideological inadequacy or deficiency of their English would therefore be promoted or reinforced by seeking to legitimatise it as geo-local varieties which are comparable with the aforementioned 'new' Englishes as well as traditional ones including British and American Englishes (Ishikawa 2016, 2017). Simply put, their English is presumed to be 'underdeveloped' national or regional varieties (e.g., Nelson 2011; Schneider 2011), unless redeemed "by a theoretical framework which covers the dynamics [...] of poststructural hybridity in global interactions" (Schneider 2014: 28). In addition, as with the above-quoted "shared understanding", applying the *a priori* categories of linguistic varieties and cultural frames of reference to the analysis of the global language is likely to simplify and essentialise dynamic, variable and situationally dependent communication phenomena.

It might be such a simplified and reified approach to language that has made popular the discourse of EIL or contact between the dialectal varieties of WE. After all, national or regional boundaries are cartographically clear with no overlapping, thus helping easily envisage "imagined communities" in the majority of people's minds (Anderson 2006; cf. Wang 2015). Also, some simplicity and reification would be necessary and conducive to pedagogy. So far, a plethora of publications have discussed the

pedagogic issues, implications and applications of EIL/WE, including recent examples of Marlina and Giri (2014), McKay and Brown (2016), Matsuda (2017), and Marlina (2018). It seems that the field of EIL/WE has led pedagogic innovations *vis-à-vis* the global spread of English, even if they are based on the false premise of presuming geographically-bounded linguistic systems in global encounters.

3 English similects

> We cannot simply equate the L1-based lects with dialects, but could speak of them instead as 'similects', because they arise in parallel, not in mutual interaction. In short, there is no community of similect speakers. [...] They remain forever first-generation hybrids: each generation's, each speaker's idiolect is a new hybrid. (Mauranen 2012: 29)

Given the current prominence of English communication across geographical boundaries and often with no close association to any physical communities, English is commonly observed to be situated along with multiple other languages. After all, those estimated over three quarters of the more than two billion generally use English as an additional language. Their linguistic repertoires are inevitably hybrid, embracing the influence of their diverse L1s. In this regard, Mauranen (2012) proposes the above notion of English 'similect', which refers to an English lect shared by the speakers of the same non-English L1 (e.g. the Japanese English similect). While "there is no [speech] community of [the same] similect speakers" (ibid.: 29), each English similect shows fluid, contingent similarities (and differences) in contact with other English similects. She explains this phenomenon as "second-order contact", since English similects themselves may be considered to be contact languages which, in turn, contact each other.

ELF research targets a communication scenario involving diverse English similects but not excluding L1 English from different origins. It has demonstrated that what is crucial to achieve interactional purposes are pragmatic strategies, particularly accommodation (e.g., Beebe and Giles 1984; Jenkins 2000, 2014), rather than specific

linguistic features.[3] Closely related to this is the empirically-based awareness that linguistic resources are variously adaptable (e.g., Seidlhofer 2009, 2011), and that Anglophone cultures are neither embedded nor inexorably linked to the language (e.g., Baker 2009, 2015). In turn, whether they self-identify or are identified as speakers of a particular English variety, those who are skilful in both pragmatic strategies and the appropriation of linguistic and cultural resources in communication should be seen as capable users of English as a global contact language.

Influential as it is, the notion of English similects is subject to some minor caveats. First of all, it does not take into account the Anglophone and other L1 English speakers without having any non-English strong languages, albeit that they have certainly become minority English users. In addition, English similect users' L1s alone cannot capture the whole picture of multilingual influence in ELF communication. Individuals may have a different degree of multiple languages at their disposal. Their immediate or previous interactants' linguistic repertoires may also be multilingual. At the same time, as indicated by Mauranen (2012) herself, communication may occur in a local environment where one or a couple of particular languages/language varieties or multilingualism itself is predominant. All these conditions potentially influence linguistic practices at any moment. Furthermore, Mauranen (2012) encourages the further theoretical development of intercultural or transcultural awareness to accompany the linguistic awareness promoted by the concept of second-order contact. This is because ELF communication is "unusually heterogeneous in terms of linguistic and cultural backgrounds" (ibid.: 46).

Regarding pedagogy, there has been discussion of a gap between probable NS-centred, normative English inside the classroom and how to meet communicative needs outside the classroom, where students would most often use English in a multilingual setting (e.g., Ranta 2010; Murata 2017). The notion of English similects provides a helpful conceptual tool for this discussion. It highlights the discrepancy between idealised monolingualism based on a particular speech community and

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[3] Jenkins' (2000) first monograph applies accommodation theory (e.g., Beebe and Giles 1984) extensively to ELF, and the term accommodation here refers to adapting and adjusting language to specific interactants in a given context.

prevalent multilingualism not reliably attributable to any particular speech communities in this age of globalisation. In other words, the traditional ideas of interlanguage (Selinker 1972)[4] and L1 transfer (e.g., Gass and Selinker 1993) or individual bidirectional transfer (e.g., Pavlenko and Jarvis 2002) in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) never capture linguistic complexity in the second-order contact which involves omnipresent miscellaneous multilingual (and cultural) resources for communication.

4 Transcultural multi-lingua franca

> English as a Multilingua Franca refers to multilingual communicative settings in which English is known to everyone present, and is therefore *always potentially 'in the mix'*, regardless of whether or not, and how much, it is actually used. It follows from this that instead of talking about ELF users, or more specifically NNES [non-'native' English speaking]/NES ELF users, we can talk about 'ELF-using multilinguals' and 'ELF-using monolinguals', or 'Multilingual ELF users' and 'Monolingual ELF users'. (Jenkins 2015b: 74; original italics)

> [W]e can regard communication as intercultural when participants and/or researchers regard linguacultural (linguistic and cultural) differences as significant in the interaction; however, such differences should be approached critically and not assumed *a priori*. (Baker 2018: 27)

Seeing that the role of English as a global contact language embraces multilingual influence as the primary feature, Jenkins (2015b: 74) proposes the above notion of "Multilingual ELF users" or users of English as a multi-lingua franca,[5] who are able to "slip in and out of other languages as and when appropriate" (Jenkins 2018: 30), thereby appropriating contingent multilingual resources for the purpose of efficient and/or effective communication. While multilingualism has always been part of describing ELF (e.g., Seidlhofer 2017), it has not been foregrounded as *the* theoretical raison d'être until Jenkins (2015b). Jenkins' (2015b: 73) working definition of English

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[4] The term interlanguage refers to underdeveloped, intermediate status of a learner's linguistic system between his or her L1 and the target abstracted local linguistic variety.

[5] Jenkins (2015b) employs the term English as a Multilingua Franca, but does not suggest a name change for the research field of ELF. At least its first handbook is entitled *The Routledge handbook of English as a lingua franca*, not English as a Multilingua Franca (Jenkins et al. 2018).

as a multi-lingua franca goes as follows: "Multilingual communication in which English is available as a contact language of choice, but is not necessarily chosen". Obviously, its emphasis is on multilingualism always potentially involving English, rather than on English itself (cf. Cenoz 2017). Importantly, English as a multi-lingua franca does not exclude 'monolingual' English speakers, so long as they are able to engage in the dynamic exploitation of previously unfamiliar linguistic resources by adapting to a multilingual environment. Indeed, as implied by Jenkins' (2015b: 76, 79) term "repertoires in flux", multilingualism is not just the property of individual users. It is also the gross property of previous and actual interactants from diverse backgrounds coming together online or to a physical environment, with each environment likely to have one or more local languages/language varieties. To this effect, unlike a well-cited definition of ELF (see p.32), defining English as a multi-lingua franca would never exclude communication among multilingual or multilanguaging speakers of the same first language. In brief, multilingualism here may be regarded as broadly conceptualised translanguaging (e.g., García and Li 2014; García and Kleyn 2016; Cogo 2016) "with multiple named languages" (Li 2017: 19) which emerges across individuals, time and space.[6] After all, such emergent multilingualism is a likely property of lingua franca communication, in agreement with some empirical argument of there being no abstract, immanent underlying set of rules for the use of each language (e.g., Ellis and Larsen-Freeman 2009; Vetchinnikova 2015).

Meanwhile, Baker's (2011, 2015) "intercultural awareness" seems to be key to multilingual ELF practices. He retains the word intercultural mainly for consistency with previous research, despite his recognition that the term transcultural may be more felicitous (Baker 2016). Until his studies, the research field of ELF was hardly converged with that of intercultural communication, even though the use of English as a global lingua franca is likely to take a form of intercultural communication (for intercultural communication research, see e.g., Spencer-Oatey and Franklin 2009; Piller 2011; Jackson 2012).

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[6] As García (2014: 2) puts it, translanguaging posits the following notion: "bilinguals [or multilinguals] have *one linguistic repertoire* from which they select features *strategically* to communicate effectively. That is, translanguaging takes as its starting point the ways in which *language is USED by bilingual [or multilingual] people as the norm*, and not the abstract language of monolinguals, as described by traditional usage books and grammars". (original italics)

Based on ethnographic empirical data, Baker (2009, 2011, 2015) illustrates how the lingua franca use of English constructs and represents links through and across (rather than 'inter') different types and scales of culture. More specifically, communicative practices in a contact situation may not only draw on multiple local, national and globally oriented cultural contexts and discourses associated with different groups, but also incorporate and create diverse cultural references both semantically and pragmatically, involving different linguacultures (e.g., Risager 2006, 2012).[7] As such, those complex links with culture are "emerging *in situ* as a result of adaptation and negotiation on the part of the participants" (Baker 2015: 99; see also Zhu 2015). At the same time, as with this section's opening quotation from Baker (2018), potential cultural differences may be recognised among participants at the initial stage of communication or by the researcher, but not have very much influence on communicative practices. More precisely, culture through English as a global contact language may not be perceived as being so relevant by any participants in the course of communication or demonstrated significant by the researcher (e.g., Scollon and Scollon 2001; Zhu 2014). To this effect, the term *trans*-cultural would entail both *trans*-gressing cultural borders and the possible *tran*-sience of salient cultural categories in global encounters.

Intercultural awareness or awareness for transcultural communication, then, requires conscious understanding of the dynamic, complex, multifaceted, emergent and possibly fleeting nature of culture in relation to actual communication processes through a global language. What this entails is that, unlike Byram's (1997, 2008) conceptualisation of intercultural communication, for example, national cultures are only among many possible orientations and resources to be adapted and negotiated, and that no *a priori* distinction or relevance and significance can be made between one's own and other cultures.

Given the possible tension between diversity and fixity in linguistic and cultural forms

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[7] The term linguacultures refers to cultures associated with particular languages/language varieties through the perception of individuals.

for global communication (for this tension, see e.g., Pennycook 2007; Mauranen 2016b), complexity theory provides a metaphoric heuristic or metatheory (e.g., Baird et al. 2014; Larsen-Freeman 2017) "as a *perspective*, not as a compulsory vocabulary or theoretical template" (Blommaert 2013: 10, 2016: 249; original italics). It allows us to conceive of language and culture as "complex, dynamic, open, adaptive, self-organizing, nonlinear systems" (Larsen-Freeman 2011: 52) which have been evolving diachronically and synchronically. To be more specific, language and culture may be considered as having been emergent from an aggregated amount of interaction between individuals in the context of other complex social systems. But as being nonlinear, none of these systems is reducible to any particular individuals or communicative instances. Multiple complex social systems influence, respond and adapt to each other, making the boundaries between themselves fuzzy and never categorical. In relation to EIL/WE, it is probably useful to see nation states as constituting systems and regional communities as their subsystems, but both should be seen just as among many complex social systems. Similarly, it is probably useful to account for different languages/language varieties and cultures as different smaller-scale complex social systems. However, the boundaries are, again, only blurred and unstable. Thus, languages/language varieties are more hybrid and fluid than countable and separable, and so are cultures. With reference to English similects, participants' L1s may be regarded as among those smaller-scale systems. English that is used as a transcultural multi-lingua franca, then, may be seen as invoking a varying degree and different level of complex social systems simultaneously in each communicative instance.

Complexity theory requires us to see that "what emerges from any interaction is not fully predictable from its antecedents, but distinctive" (Jenkins 2015b: 66; see also Larsen-Freeman 2018), drawing a variable connection with miscellaneous complex social systems. To this effect, in line with the notion of English similects, the legitimacy of English as a transcultural multi-lingua franca would rely on its users' "dynamic, flexible, and locally contingent" ability (Kramsch 2009: 199) to communicate,[8] and not

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[8] Kramsch (2009) attributes these qualities to what she calls symbolic competence, not to English as a global contact language.

on presupposed linguistic and cultural varieties. This is the ability to put contingent multilingual resources to work for efficiency and/or effectiveness as well as appreciate the emergence and dynamism of fragmented, multifaceted and overlapping cultural orientations and resources in the course of situated social practice.

In terms of second language teaching and learning, English as a transcultural multi-lingua franca obviously accords with a multilingual turn (e.g., May 2014; Conteh and Meier 2014; Cenoz and Gorter 2015) as well as Baker's (2015) five strands of what might be called a transcultural turn which explore culture and cultural representations by making use of (1) local complexity, (2) language learning materials, (3) media and arts, (4) informants, and (5) students' own communication experiences. This multilingual, transcultural turn is likely to entail more focus on engaging in actual multi-lingua franca communication and reflecting on language and culture critically. Accordingly, in line with Dewey's (2012) post-normative approach, which is inspired by Kumaravadivelu's (1994) postmethod condition, teaching practitioners may want to place greater emphasis on promoting learning through use and reflection than teaching and testing prescriptive norms, even if it takes a long-term effort to redesign "the currently used all-purpose, large-scale 'fit-for-all' model of assessment" (Leung et al. 2016: 69).

5 Conclusion

The present article has examined three different ways to conceptualise English as a global contact language. The first framework (i.e. geo-localised Englishes) identifies it as contact between the dialectal varieties of WE or contact between national or regional Englishes. Such an *inter*-national approach "follows the sociolinguistic tradition of variety description with a primary concern for the relationship between language and *community*" (Widdowson 2015: 363; original italics). No matter how simplified and reified this approach may be, the field of EIL/WE has contributed to raising awareness of global diversity in English use and corresponding innovations in classroom practices. The second framework (i.e. English similects) no longer relates the global contact language to its speech communities, and instead identifies it as second-order contact or contact between contact languages of English and diverse L1s.

Such a lingua franca approach has made "an enquiry into the relationship between language and *communication*, how linguistic resources are variably used to achieve meaning" (ibid.; original italics). The concept of second-order contact clarifies the discrepancy between the monolingualism of an idealised speech community in traditional SLA and currently omnipresent multilingualism across interactants beyond particular speech communities.

In close relation to the second one, the third framework (i.e. transcultural multi-lingua franca) seeks to comprehend the full range of multilingualism across individuals, time and space, and takes notice of both the border-transgressing nature of culture and the possible transience of salient cultural categories in communication through English as a global contact language. From a complexity theory perspective, nation states and regional communities are among many complex social systems, and so are interactants' diverse L1s. This implies that neither the first nor second framework is capable of fully explaining what emerges from communication through the global contact language. Conceptualising English as a transcultural multi-lingua franca may encourage English language education in the 21st century to take a multilingual, transcultural and post-normative turn, and thus to help students become far more capable users of the language.

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Tomokazu Ishikawa is a Part-time Lecturer of English, sociolinguistics and applied linguistics at Waseda University, Shirayuri University and Kanda University of International Studies. He has recently defended his doctoral thesis (2016) at the University of Southampton, where he is a postdoctoral member of the Centre for Global Englishes. Prior to that, he was a Senior English Teacher at Japanese institutions for university entrance exam preparation.