

# Developing Awareness of ELF in English Language Education

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**Abstract:** Language educators in today's classrooms face the complex responsibility of teaching English to prepare students for a variety of requirements in the field of education and work. At the same time, they need to empower students to make use of their English resources to communicate as effectively as possible with speakers in local and global contexts where English is used as a contact language, i.e., *English as a lingua franca* (ELF), by people who do not speak and understand each other's primary languages. The concept of ELF is regarded in diverse ways in various educational settings, and often it is described negatively in comparison with the norms of native-speaker English. However, this deficiency orientation is not conducive to the development of confident language users, which is an aim clearly outlined in the revised national English subject curriculum in Norway. This chapter proposes a post-deficiency approach to the teaching and learning of English, calling for a change of attitude and arguing for the inclusion of ELF discourse in learning resources, heightened genre awareness, and the development of contextually appropriate pragmatic strategies.

## Introduction

Teachers in today's classrooms face the complex responsibility of teaching English to prepare students for a variety of requirements in the field of education and work. At the same time, they need to empower students to make use of their English resources to communicate as effectively as possible with speakers in local and global contexts where English is used as a contact language, i.e., *English as a Lingua Franca* (ELF), by people who do not speak and understand each other's primary languages. The

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fact that English is used extensively across the world by speakers who have learnt and are learning English as an additional language is by now common knowledge. The ways in which this use of English is regarded in various settings, on the other hand, are highly diverse. We know from our Norwegian context that a speaker who manages to produce well-constructed sentences with appropriate English words, but who articulates these with a distinctly Norwegian intonation, is very likely to be criticised and sometimes even ridiculed. This kind of *deficiency orientation* to the use of English which does not fully conform to an ideal version of the language is not conducive to the development of confident English users, which is an expressed aim in the revised national English subject curriculum.

With the ultimate ambition to move English language teaching (ELT) forward in our Norwegian context, it is tempting to propose a new concept to be developed in English language education: a *post-deficiency approach*. Rather than simply choosing a positive antonym to “deficiency”, we seem to need a stronger and more determined alternative in order to prepare the ground for a new emancipatory way of teaching English. While this is related to a similar formulation in Dewey (2012), his “post-normative approach”, the concept I am launching here is intended to answer more closely to the need for an *attitudinal* change as a desired outcome of a process of awareness-raising as regards the use of English in a multilingual and multicultural world.

Developing an awareness of both what ELF is and its position in ELT seems to be a felicitous place to start. This chapter discusses language-pedagogical theories and recent ELF research with a view to framing useful steps in a post-deficiency approach to English language education. In other words, it entails a pedagogical-pragmatic synthesis of insights from recent language-pedagogical research. In the following, I shall discuss some of the most central concepts in the ELF literature, connecting these with a close reading of the current English subject curriculum (which came into force in 2020) and suggesting some new directions for English teacher education. Salient components are the development of pragmatic communication strategies and genre awareness, which are needed to ensure the intended perlocutionary effect of mutual understanding in

ELF interaction (Austin, 1962). Furthermore, the development of critical language awareness is essential, as is an awareness of language teaching and learning, language itself, and language teachers and learners as complex systems (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008).

As a first step, the construct *ELF* needs to be defined. There are many conceptualisations in operation at the moment that might even obstruct its integration in ELT. With a focus on the development of ELF awareness in language education locally, a review of Rindal (2014, 2020) sheds some light on the way English is currently conceptualised as a language and school subject in Norway. According to Rindal (2020), English is “in transition”, both as a result of the global status of the language today and its use by many learner-users in interest-driven, out-of-class activities mediated by English.

## **ELF - *English as a Lingua Franca***

As a sociocultural and sociolinguistic phenomenon, ELF has for the last couple of decades inspired a considerable number of scholars. From the start, attempts were made to define specific features that characterise versions of English used among non-native speakers without compromising intelligibility. The most salient early contribution was made by Jenkins (2000), who proposed a “Lingua Franca Core”, a set of phonological characteristics that were required for mutual understanding in ELF encounters. The list of suggested core features included elements that were inaccurate from the point of view of Standard English norms. This was partly the reason why many teachers refused to take the idea of ELF seriously, thinking it would force them to teach what they were socialised into considering as incorrect English.

In her historical overview of ELF research, Jenkins (2015) recognised three main phases. The first phase was characterised by attempts to define salient linguistic features of ELF. In the second phase, scholars realised that the most central characteristic of ELF communication was its variability and fluidity. Depending on where in the world ELF interaction is taking place, its realisation will be different from another place, partly due to the interlocutors’ linguacultural backgrounds and

levels of proficiency, the purpose of the interaction, various processing constraints, and affordances (Canagarajah, 2018). The essentially hybrid quality of ELF use meant giving up the idea of codifying ELF as a distinct variety of English. In the present phase, Jenkins has repositioned ELF as a *multilingua franca* (Jenkins, 2015). This refers to the use of English in multilingual settings, where 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” (Jenkins, 2015, p. 74 – italics in the original). Based on this conceptualisation, instead of labelling someone as an “ELF user”, Jenkins suggested using terms like *multilingual ELF user* and *monolingual ELF user*.

Other definitions of ELF have been suggested in the literature. Frequently quoted is Seidlhofer’s (2011) “*any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option*” (p. 7, italics in the original). Widdowson (2018) gave the following definition: “essentially an appropriate use of the resources of English for a whole range of globalised purposes”, I find this definition particularly useful in that it safeguards against any essentialist view of ELF as *sui generis* different from so-called Standard English (henceforth abbreviated SE). Depending on the performance requirements pertaining to various communicative tasks, appropriate use of English resources may sometimes call for adherence to the conventions of formal English discourse, especially in high-stakes assessment situations (Kohn, 2011, 2018).

English as a lingua franca has indeed spread extensively across the globe. In empirical and conceptual studies of ELF, some descriptive terms invariably turn up. ELF communication is characterised as *flexible, hybrid, open, fluid, situated*, and *contingent*, to name a few of the most frequently occurring labels (Canagarajah, 2018; Ishikawa, 2017; Kimura & Canagarajah, 2018; Larsen-Freeman, 2018; Rindal, 2020). As we have seen, ELF is not a geographically defined variety of English; it is rather a way speakers make creative use of English elements in their linguistic repertoires.

In addition to retrieving and activating English resources, speakers enact their *strategic competence*, recruiting various pragmatic strategies

and accommodating to what they perceive as their interlocutors' and their own needs (Cogo & House, 2018; De Bartolo, 2014; Jenkins, 2014; Oh, 2001). It makes sense here to offer a brief overview of some of these interactional modifications and elaborative discourse practices, since teachers need to become aware of the central role these play in ELF communication.

According to Jenkins (2014), the main accommodative processes in ELF interactions are *convergence* and *divergence*. This means that speakers try to adapt their speech to make it more or less like their interlocutors'. If they are inclined to ensure communicative efficiency, they will choose convergence; if they wish to dissociate themselves from their interlocutor, divergence is likely to be their choice. An interesting example of what is called "accommodative dovetailing" is when a speaker repeats an incorrect form used by their speech partner, and then the first speaker uses it again. It thus becomes an appropriate part of the interaction despite its non-standard quality.

Negotiation of meaning is another typical pragmatic strategy in ELF communication. Speakers repair their own utterances; they reformulate them, repeat their own, echo their partner's last utterance, or they ask for clarification. They make use of supportive backchannels like *mhm*, *yeah*, *right*, *ok*, and sometimes co-construct or complete each other's utterances. The interactants' cooperative mindset often results in pre-emptive choices; foreseeing potential problems, they adapt their speech proactively. If misunderstandings do occur, sometimes a "let it pass" type of reaction is preferred if basic comprehension has already been secured. Finally, speakers may deploy their multilingual resources by translanguaging or even choosing words from a third language.

The reason why these pragmatic strategies have been included here is that although pragmatic processes such as accommodation and negotiation of meaning are often mentioned in the ELF literature as central communicative strategies, they are often left unspecified. In order to develop a deeper awareness of ELF, teachers need to better understand the *relational* qualities of ELF interactions, not just the nature and structure of the linguistic features employed.

## Teachers' awareness of ELF

Teachers of English need to be aware of ELF as a sociocultural, sociolinguistic, and, consequently, language-pedagogical phenomenon. The construct *ELF awareness* has been proposed as a framework for teachers who wish to integrate ELF in their ELT practices (Llurda et al, 2018; Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2018; Sifakis, 2019). Three components are defined as constituents of ELF awareness: (1) awareness of language and language use, (2) awareness of instructional practice, and (3) awareness of learning. These components relate to the basic elements in language pedagogy: content (*what*), methodology (*how*), and learning itself (*who* and *why*). With a view to moving ELT forward in Norway, it is important to take account of how English is understood in our educational context, both as a language and as a school subject. While many studies have addressed various aspects of English didactics in Norway, there are two contributions that call for special attention as far as the inclusion of ELF is concerned, and these have been made by Rindal (2014) and (2020).

## Research about English and ELT in Norway

In 2014, Rindal offered predictions about ontological and epistemological perspectives that would influence ELT in Norway towards 2030. We are now only eight years away from this horizon. Rindal chose to approach the question about the status of English both as a language and a school subject from two angles; from the way ELT practices had developed historically and their relation to linguistic theory, on the one hand, and the development of English as a global medium of communication, on the other. The researcher examined the way beliefs about English played out in the national subject curriculum at the time. Her article also included a discussion of adolescent learners and their English language practices. Reference was made to “English as an international language”, and speakers’ “ability to vary language according to purpose and other participants in a linguistic interaction” was seen as an example of a sociolinguistic skill (p. 15). Rindal foresaw that hybrid and variable features in learners’ pronunciation “could be interpreted more frequently as communicative competence than as limited L2 proficiency” (p. 15). This is an illustrative

example of an emerging post-deficiency orientation. Her prediction is particularly interesting from the point of view of discussions about the relationship between Standard English and its use as a lingua franca. Rindal ends her article with the following statement: “In 2030, English will still be a personal language to Norwegians, but it will also be acknowledged as such” (p. 16). It is my intention to demonstrate how recent research into ELF interaction coupled with socio-constructivist theory and fresh considerations of language learner agency offer valuable contributions to moving ELT in this direction (Kohn, 2018; Larsen-Freeman, 2019; Mercer, 2011; Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004).

Rindal (2020) revisited the topic in a chapter called “English in Norway: A Language and a School Subject in Transition”, whose aim was to “present theories about the global status of the English language and discuss whether English is a second or foreign language in Norway and in English as a school subject” (p. 23). In this chapter, Rindal devotes a section to ELF, which she sees as an “explicit alternative to native-speaker focus” (p. 34). There are a couple of potentially problematic phrases in the text, for instance, reference to “the new Englishes that are formed” in connection with the “fluidity and hybridity of language” recognised by ELF scholars, and the statement that “[l]ingua franca English is typically characterised by linguistic properties and norms that are co-constructed and established in an ad hoc manner” (p. 35). It is worth repeating that ELF can’t be constructed as “an English” in the sense of a variety, and it is not immediately obvious how norm construction is relevant to ELF interaction, unless “norms” is taken to mean “emerging patterns”. Finally, the comment that teaching practices influenced by an ELF perspective will “include avoiding native-speaker models” (p. 35) is reminiscent of a type of dichotomous discourse that does not really contribute to a post-deficiency approach to English language teaching. There should be room for both native-speaker models and ELF-aware teaching in the English classroom. What is required is an attitude of openness to complexity and diversity (Larsen-Freeman, 2019).

## English in the renewed national curriculum

Both of Rindal’s studies were written before the current English subject curriculum came into effect. To follow up these two sources, a close

reading of the current English curriculum will therefore be an appropriate next step.

The term *English as a lingua franca* is not used explicitly in the curriculum. However, the way English is described and the elements presented as constitutive of English competence and proficiency align with characteristics of ELF communication. Other conclusions can of course be drawn based on the curriculum discourse, but my main project here is looking for an ideological and implementational space for ELF integration in ELT (Hornberger, 2009; Johnson, 2010).

The structure of the English subject curriculum includes sections about the subject's relevance and central values, core elements, role in obligatory interdisciplinary topics, and presentations of the basic skills as they pertain to English. Passages and formulations can be found that directly align with descriptions of ELF use. Familiarity with these elements will be of importance for teacher educators whose ambition is to facilitate the integration of teachers' ELF awareness in ELT practices.

In the presentation of the relevance and central values of the English subject, the overall mission is to “give the pupils the foundation for communicating with others, both locally and globally, regardless of cultural or linguistic background”.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, in the section expressing what English can contribute to the mandatory interdisciplinary topic *Democracy and Citizenship*, the global use of English and considerations of people's linguacultural backgrounds are made explicit: “By learning English, the pupils can experience different societies and cultures by communicating with others around the world, regardless of linguistic or cultural background”. In connection with the development of basic skills in English: (a) “Developing oral skills in English means using the spoken language gradually more accurately and with more nuances in order to communicate on different topics in formal and informal situations with a variety of receivers with varying linguistic backgrounds”, (b) “Writing in English means being able to express ideas and opinions in an understandable and appropriate manner in various types of text ...”, and (c) “The development of digital skills

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<sup>1</sup> All direct quotations from the curriculum are taken from the official English translation accessible from this link: <https://www.udir.no/lk20/eng01-04?lang=eng>



in English progresses from exploring the language to interacting with others, creating texts and acquiring knowledge by obtaining, exploring and critically assessing information from different English-language sources”.

According to Baker (2015), “learning another language is fundamentally an intercultural process” (p. 174). In Baker (2018), the author favours the construct *transcultural communication*, but in the same way that Jenkins (2015) reconceptualised *ELF* as a *multilingua franca* (EMF) based on increasing empirical evidence and awareness of multilingualism as a basic premise, both authors have decided to keep the well-established terms, *intercultural communication* and *ELF*, respectively, to ensure transparency and coherence in the fields of research. In the curriculum, the following statements target intercultural competence: “English shall help the pupils to develop an intercultural understanding of ... ways of thinking and communication patterns” (under *Relevance and central values*), “Working with texts in English helps to develop the pupils’ knowledge and experience of linguistic and cultural diversity”, and “By reflecting on, interpreting and critically assessing different types of texts in English, the pupils shall acquire language and knowledge of culture and society. The development of intercultural competence will enable students to deal with different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns” (under the core element *Working with texts in English*). In some statements, cultural awareness is coupled with aspects of identity development and motivational perspectives, such as a positive self-image. I shall come back to issues relating to the affective dimension of language learning below when briefly exploring learner agency. A deeper examination of more specific *linguistic* ideologies will also be discussed below in connection with the language-pedagogical potential represented by Kohn’s (2018) socio-constructive “MY English condition”.

Before concluding this section about an ELF-related perspective on the current curriculum, the role of strategic use of pragmatic productive and interpretive processes must be addressed. While repeated use of the term *communication patterns* is a case in point, the following statement is even more explicit: “The pupils shall employ suitable strategies to communicate, both orally and in writing, in different situations and by using different types of media and sources” (under the core element *Communication*)

and “adapting the language to the purpose, the receiver and the situation and choosing suitable strategies” (under *Oral skills*). In addition, the focus on contingent receiver-situation-purpose is highlighted in seven competence aims from year 7 through upper secondary school. These formulations represent implementational spaces for ELF integration.

## **“MY English” – A socio-constructive perspective on English language development**

A post-deficiency approach to language development implies that learner-users are positioned as agents in their own learning process. Kohn (2011) adopts a social constructivist perspective on ELF. The dynamic and developmental character of language learning, or *acquisition*, is highlighted. He defines socio-constructivism as follows: “According to this model, all perception, learning, action and communication is the result of individual processes of cognitive (and emotional) construction, overlaid and shaped by collaboration in social groups” (p. 79). Social constructivism provides a methodological framework by offering a “unified basis for investigating the entire heterogenous range of non-native speaker manifestations of English, including ELF manifestations by speakers with an EFL background” (p. 79).

In ELF research, many scholars’ problematisation of the concept *Standard English* (SE) plays an important part. In Kohn’s case, however, the notion of SE is discussed and *reconceptualized*. Rather than focusing on SE as an object of linguistic description, Kohn takes an internalised view and argues for SE as a cognitive, emotional and social construct in a speaker’s linguistic repertoire. Meanings are constructed by the language learner-user. This conclusion based on socio-constructivism is supported by the status of English as a usable global language. Its widespread and fluid use has an effect on users wherever they are, in turn affecting them and the shape of the language over time.

Kohn (2018) wishes to pedagogically reconcile ELF and ELT, aiming for “non-native speaker emancipation” (p. 1). It is true that many ELF scholars uphold a strict ideological division between native and non-native speakers of English and the nature of their language proficiency.

Whether or not they are native speakers of the language, trying to develop native-speaker competence, or simply trying to do their best by means of English resources within their reach, they use English as a lingua franca. The main point for people out there is communicating their messages as effectively as possible with their intended perlocutionary effect of making their interlocutor understand their utterances.

The question of language “ownership” frequently turns up in ELF research discourse. In most cases, scholars keep repeating that Brits and Americans, i.e., original inner-circle language users, can no longer be seen as the owners of English, since the language is more often than not used by non-native speakers of the language in various places around the world. My immediate impulse is a wish to play down the whole idea of ownership. The status of English as a global linguistic resource is an empirical fact; who used to own it, and who owns it now, is less important. What matters essentially is that English is a resource to be activated if people are unable to communicate using their primary language(s).

It must be possible to distinguish between recognising the power differential implied by language-ideological, language/education-political decisions, and gate-keeping assessment practices, stakeholders’ language attitudes, etc. and argue instead in favour of simply accepting English as a collective resource for meaning-making (Ishikawa, 2017). Yes, there are economic and political reasons why this situation has emerged, but it might be more felicitous for us as language-teacher educators to zoom in on the current situation and simply try as hard as we can to help learners develop into confident users of English. Non-native speakers should not let the fact that their repertoire is less developed paradigmatically and syntagmatically discourage them from participating in ELF interaction.

From a socio-constructive perspective, a different sense of ownership emerges: Ownership of English is “not a matter of choice but of biological-cognitive design: it is only by construction that people can develop and use their *own* English; and this includes choosing their own target language orientation by construction as well” (p. 90). If language identity and language learner agency enter into our discussion, the question of ownership, or at least the right to consider English as an important part of one’s linguistic repertoire, needs to be acknowledged.

Kohn (2018) argues for his use of the socio-constructivist concept of “MY English” in his discussion of ELF development. Speakers’ “MY English” profiles include their “linguistic-communicative-communal repertoires and requirements of performance, individual and social identity orientations, and confidence in their ELF creativity” (p. 1). Learning English entails giving English an “internal reality by constructing, actually creating, our own version, MY English, in our minds, hearts and behaviour” (Kohn, 2011, p. 80). A linguistic repertoire must necessarily be built for language users to enact appropriate choices in particular situations. A corollary of this way of thinking is that learners need to be exposed to greater variation when it comes to linguistic input; ELF communication should be included as English text to be explored and discussed in the English classroom. A side effect of this proposed expansion is implicitly also an opportunity to target multilingualism as a resource in language teaching and learning.

Following socio-constructivist thinking, then, speakers can’t do anything but enact their own particular version of English, “i.e., the version of English they have managed to *make their own* – be this as (a) a consolidated, stable and highly differentiated *native language*, (b) a consolidated and stable but somewhat restricted *second language*, or as (c) a reduced and unstable *learner’s language* (Kohn, 2011). It is worth pointing out that from a developmental and complexity-theoretical perspective, the notion of a “stable” language needs to be interpreted in a non-teleological sense, i.e., as a temporary and contingent state (Larsen-Freeman, 2019).

## The requirement of correctness

The requirement of correctness has had a strong position in language teaching and learning for a long time and is a relevant factor in connection with a deficiency orientation to language learning and use. Errors tend to be assessed as deviations from a standard norm. Selinker (1972) introduced the concept *interlanguage* to refer to the status of a learner’s language competence in a teleological sense. The ideal end state would be near-native-speaker proficiency. This idea does not sit well within a complexity-theoretical perspective. First of all, there can be no end state in language

development; variability and change over time is a given (and that is why even the word *acquisition* carries certain problematic connotations).

What we have said about correctness requirements so far relates to an external view of language, or the code of English. If we adopt a socio-constructivist perspective, however, there is an internal side to this phenomenon as well. Speaker-learners need to have taken in correct forms and constructed a kind of mental representation of them to be able to retrieve these forms when called to do so. This is not a simple matter of mimetic representation of form in the input; already integrated cognitive and affective features also play a part, as do factors in the immediate situation of use. Even if the context is rich in affordances, processing conditions need to be favourable too. For instance, given the expediency of a communicative event, if speakers are allowed little time to muster their linguistic resources, one effect might be that their working memory capacity will be limited by stress and thereby constrained. Basic lexical access might become their primary need and the *grammaring* of those lexical elements a secondary priority. In this case, correctness from an external perspective is not achieved; it may, however, be that the information shared is enough for effective communication to be taking place.

Based on his discussion of correctness from an external and then a speaker/learner-internal perspective built on a socio-constructive theoretical orientation, Kohn forcefully states that “all *descriptive-linguistic* arguments levelled against the *pedagogic* deployment of the notions of Standard English and native-speaker English are based on a conceptual misunderstanding and simply miss their target” (p. 84). What is at stake is the diversity of speakers’ situated communicative needs and requirements.

## Performance requirements

Communication and community-oriented requirements of performance affect the learner-user’s choice of linguistic means of expression. Performance requirements for EFL (English as a foreign language) learners have more to do with educational aims than with communicative needs in real life. At school, compliance with norms of correctness in accordance with SE often play a central role. However, the ideal goal for

a learner-user is attaining a capability to meet a variety of requirements and needs. It would be beneficial if they could avoid experiencing that the felt gap between the requirements at school and in real life leaves them tongue-tied in ELF encounters. Also, it would be positive if learners could develop a strategic awareness of what requirements are at play in different situations. In the section on pedagogical implications below, a genre-based approach to developing English communicative capability is recommended.

A final aspect of the development of “MY English” is about learners’ sense of identification with and participation in certain speech communities. This is where Rindal (2014) has an interesting perspective. Even though her secondary-school participants were aware of attitudes to and connotations pertaining to British and American English, some of her informants took an agentive stand against trying to sound like a Brit or an American. They did not wish to send signals with which they were not comfortable. The main point here is that rather than being less proficient from the point of view of “correct” intonation as one aspect of communicative competence, they were being strategic about the way they constructed their identities as learner-users of English. A post-deficiency approach to language learning aligns well with this observation.

## **Learner-users’ requirement profiles**

Speakers’ requirement profiles are not fixed and stable; on the contrary, they are sensitive to situational factors. An advantage that multilinguals are said to have as part of their more developed metalinguistic awareness is a heightened sensitivity to other people’s communicative needs (Cenoz, 2003). Again, this is the area of pragmatic strategies, accommodation and negotiation of meaning and curricular aims to do with adaptation to interlocutors, purpose and situation. Comprehensibility, or intelligibility, is necessarily high on the list of priorities for the interactants; it is their intended perlocutionary effect (Austin, 1962). Speakers’ requirement profiles play out differently at various points of time. In an educational context, they will be future-oriented as well as contingent. Schools are responsible for taking a long-term view and preparing students for

further studies, high-stakes examinations, a competitive employment market, etc. Again, what is important is an awareness of the complexity of language teaching and learning and being aware of pronounced *attitudes* that may either build or tear down confidence and a sense of achievement along the way.

## Attitudes

Language use and language learning are closely connected to identity development. Notions like self-image, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and confidence are relevant both from the point of view of identity development and affect; so is the opposite notion, deficiency. The English curriculum is explicit: “Through working with the subject the pupils shall become confident users of English, so they can use English to learn, communicate and connect with others” (under *Relevance and central values*). If the main point in a communication event is understanding and being understood by one’s interlocutor(s), whether one’s version of English is native-like or not is beside the point. An interesting distinction proposed by Cameron (2001), *precision* vs. *accuracy*, may be helpful in this regard:

Precision in language use involves learners selecting and adapting their language resources to say or write exactly what they mean; accuracy, the term more often used in the literature, refers to using the language correctly relative to the target form. Precision is thus user-oriented, whereas accuracy is language-oriented. Often, of course, precision requires accuracy, but it always requires more than that; it requires learners to access and use the language that will best express their personal meanings, and may further require negotiation with others to ensure that they understand the meanings as intended. (p. 194)

Precision has to do with getting one’s intended meaning across, whereas accuracy relates to aspects of the language itself, whether what is produced is correct or not in relation to standard norms. Precision is thus a pragmatic notion involving strategic deployment of the linguistic elements one has access to, i.e., the linguistic repertoire one has built around elements associated with English. However, having an awareness of the listener’s needs is also relevant for the desired perlocutionary effect to

ensue. If the speaker could be freed from comparing their proficiency to anybody else's, it would be a lot easier to simply and confidently have a go with whatever resources one has constructed. The whole question about successful performance has to do with more factors than linguistic resources.

Finally, in connection with the cross-disciplinary topic *Health and Life Skills*, the curriculum says, "The ability to handle situations that require linguistic and cultural competence can give pupils a sense of achievement and help them develop a positive self-image and a secure identity". These references to motivation ("positive self-image") and identity discourse ("secure identity", and "confidence" in the extract above) tie in with notions of agency as well, which is the content of the next section.

## Language learner agency

Like other useful educational constructs, *agency* has been defined in various ways. My preference is to follow Larsen-Freeman (2019) in her use of a definition relevant for language education: "agency is the capacity to act in the world", with particular reference to "optimizing conditions for one's own learning", and "choosing to deploy one's semiotic resources to position oneself as one would wish in a multilingual world" (p. 62). Mercer (2011) recognises three main components of learner agency: motivation, affect, and self-regulation. Of these three, we have already touched on the importance of learners' self-belief and their affective engagement with language use. Contributing to a positive attitude towards language learning is also the teacher's responsibility. Teachers' validation of students' extramural use of English, which is driven by interest, is a move in this direction (Brevik, 2019).

According to Larsen-Freeman (2019), language learners have often been positioned as non-agentive in the research literature. The way learner-users have been portrayed in this chapter rather points in the opposite direction, one in line with a post-deficiency orientation. Learner-users who take an active part in ELF interaction achieve agency by making creative use of their linguistic resources.



In the curriculum, the following statements connect with learner agency: “The teaching shall give the pupils the opportunity to express themselves and interact in authentic and practical situations” (under the core element *Communication*) and “Learning the pronunciation of phonemes, and learning vocabulary, word structure, syntax and text composition gives the pupils choices and possibilities in their communication and interaction”. Key concepts here are *choices* and *possibilities*. The idea of having a choice is closely connected to agency. The content traditionally associated with linguistic theories, i.e., grammar, lexis, morphology, phonology, and text, is to be learnt in order to provide the students with a repertoire for communication and interaction, actions we know are essentially translingual and transcultural. It is up to the teachers to supply the students with possibilities in the form of rich contextual affordances.

As we saw, Rindal (2014) noted that her secondary-school learners made conscious decisions about the kind of English they would like to use. Many of her informants did not choose a native-speaker target model. Rather, they had clear ideas about impressions British and American oral varieties left on them. They seemed content to choose their own versions, or *their* “MY English” constructions (Kohn’s term, 2011, 2018). The thought-provoking effect of this insight was a need to reconsider the highly strategic choice of a non-normative target *not* as a sign of deficient proficiency, but rather as a sign of agentic emancipation. Needless to say, this realisation calls for a shift in the *assessment* of language proficiency. Due to space limitations, this path can’t be followed here.

## **Pedagogical implications for English language education**

Norwegian pupils are already aware of ELF communication; they are learner-users themselves, and so are Norwegian teachers. However, it is time we take a closer look at possible consequences these insights might have on the way English can be taught in the classroom. In addition to exploring various ways of teaching normative elements of Standard English, other performance factors need to be addressed, particularly the

strategic use of pragmatic strategies to ensure effective communication in local and global ELF encounters.

Even very young learners, in travels abroad or encounters with friends and family who do not speak Norwegian, and increasingly in their lives online and through social media, English is the chosen medium of communication. Out-of-class use of English is commonly referred to as “Extramural English” (Sundqvist, 2009; Sundqvist & Sylvé, 2016). It is now common knowledge that students’ proficiency in English derives from their extramural use in addition to, or perhaps even to a higher degree than, what they learn in the classroom. The challenge for teachers today is to acknowledge the language learning potential of these out-of-class encounters, show their interest for students’ active language use, and attempt to bridge the gap so that they and students can benefit from a rich variety of input (Brevik, 2019; Thorne & Reinhardt, 2008). The question is to what degree English teachers are able and willing to include students’ holistic language experience in their ELT classes.

This chapter is a conceptual exploration, not an empirical study of ELF interaction; nor is it an examination of Norwegian pre- and in-service teachers’ ELF awareness. However, as a result of my participation in ENRICH (*English as Lingua Franca Practices in Multilingual Classrooms*),<sup>2</sup> an international Erasmus + project whose expressed aim was to develop a continuous professional education (CPD) online course for teachers, I had access to Norwegian participants’ reflections on the degree to which they feel they can integrate and enact ELF-aware teaching in their classrooms. There is room for three illustrative quotes:

There is always room for ELF-aware teaching and learning; the most important factor, in this case, is to have an ELF-aware teacher with proper training and openness to ELF. [84\_NO\_E1]

The vision of ELT remains as limited as always, as it prohibits learners in too many ways from owning (and thereby living) the language. I see the work I have ahead of me as full of possibilities, for intergrating English on a more

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<sup>2</sup> [www.enrichproject.eu](http://www.enrichproject.eu)

cross-curricular basis, for expanding the parameters of what English actually IS, and help the students learn how to learn this way. [83\_NO\_E1]

I don't find enough of a balance between foreign-language thinking and ELF-aware thinking. The one thing that gives me hope is the new national curriculum plan for Norway which has come out this year (LK2020), which offers an umbrella introduction of threading values, critical thinking, reflective skills, enhanced learning, among others, with the focus being on the practical, the inclusive and the universal. This to me falls right in line with ELF awareness, and I look forward to adjusting myself to this new instructional context. [83\_NO\_E1]

In general, issues the teachers have included in their reflections are teacher agency, attitudes to ELF, SE and native-speaker aims, washback effects from tests in instructional materials, collegial collaboration, and self-reflection. What strikes me is the optimism emanating from all three of the statements quoted here.

At the risk of adding yet another acronym to the list associated with English, I am tempted to suggest *EVP* for “English for a Variety of Purposes”. Although several pedagogical implications have already been mentioned in passing, my main point is that English language education would benefit from including (1) samples of ELF interaction for exploration and reflection, preferably examples of age-appropriate communication, with particular attention to strategic features, (2) initiatives for bridging the gap between the use of English at school and extramurally, and (3) a genre-based approach to teaching. Applying the *Teaching and Learning Cycle* (Rose & Martin, 2012) in tasks for students is worth trying out. The cycle starts by interpreting the task and then building the field, i.e., activating prior knowledge, supplying linguistic resources, and discussing what type of text best suits the task. Next, a model text is provided which students and teachers deconstruct together, exploring central linguistic and text-structural features. A further step is the teacher's and students' joint construction of a text that matches the purpose of the task, all the while languaging about the emerging text and jointly discussing success criteria. Finally, the students construct their own individual texts, getting feedback in the process from their teacher and peers.

This way of working means doing grammar in context and not as abstract, decontextualized units. It enables students to realise what performance requirements are central in various situations and for various tasks.

According to Kohn (2011), knowledge about ELF includes the following dimensions, which have all been addressed in this chapter:

- situations in which speakers use their English for real-life communication purposes
- social, cognitive and emotional processing conditions that cause success or failure
- strategies to deal with challenges and to reach certain communicative, self-expressive and communal goals
- non-native speaker attitudes and preferences “on ELF”

(p. 86)

Knowledge about these dimensions of ELF is the foundation for the development of communicative language awareness and intercultural sensibility that lead to a deeper understanding of ELF manifestations and English language use more generally.

## Concluding remarks

This chapter has sought to describe how enhanced ELF awareness can be developed in teacher education, and how cognitive, social, and affective dimensions of language learning need to be recognised by English teachers. What is called for is a socio-constructivist re-conceptualisation of language learning so that a deficiency orientation to language pedagogy can be replaced by a post-deficiency approach.

My primary aim when writing this chapter has been to familiarise the practitioners among educational stakeholders in Norway, students, teachers, and English teacher educators, with insights we can all gain from current research into English as a lingua franca. Relevant aspects range from the study of various ways people use their English resources in effective interaction with other language users, the relationship between ELF communication, Standard English and native-speaker competence,

the use of accommodation and negotiation skills and other pragmatic communicative strategies, language learner agency and identity development, and the connection between ELF and intercultural awareness. One limitation, which may at this point actually constitute a call for further research, is the absence of a discussion of implications for assessing students' performance in English. Also, including empirical material based on age-relevant ELF interaction would have added value to my study.

Let me conclude by reiterating that in order to become a resource, an English repertoire must have been and continue to be developed (with no end state in view), thereby allowing Standard English features to be taught when called for through various genre requirements, but at the same time being open to “non-standard” and creative ways of deploying English resources in the service of effective interaction between people in real communicative events. The adherence to rules of standard norms will then be replaced by a pedagogy of authentic communicative language teaching (CLT), not a CLT approach defined exclusively by native-speaker norms (Seidlhofer & Widdowson, 2018). The communicative needs of real people all over the world would then trump the purism of traditional nationalist and essentialist views of language ownership.

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