

Mauranen, A., & Vetchinnikova, S. (Eds.). (2020). *Language Change: The Impact of English as a Lingua Franca*. Cambridge University Press

Language Change: The Impact of English as a Lingua Franca, edited by Anna Mauranen and Svetlana Vetchinnikova, collects thirteen contributions on language change and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). Most of the chapters in the volume were delivered as presentations at the 10th Anniversary Conference of English as a Lingua Franca in Helsinki in 2017. Under the umbrella term of ‘language change’, the volume gathers different linguistic theories to explain the evolution of language in general, and ELF in particular. As mentioned by the editors, the purpose of the volume is “to bring different research traditions to bear on the issue of how the emergence of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) as a relatively recent field touches upon other more established fields of study that relate to English, and to the study of language more generally” (2).

The book is a collection of articles which contribute to the current understanding of ELF from the perspective of language contact and change. Therefore, it is mainly targeted at both ELF researchers interested in knowing the latest advances in the field and – thanks to the description of several theories of language change – researchers concerned with how languages evolve.

The volume is divided into two clearly differentiated parts, each of them introduced by a short text by one of the two editors. Part I, entitled “Pooling perspectives”, comprises six chapters which address “theoretical issues related to language contact and language change. All originate from different theoretical traditions but come together in that they all engage with dynamism in language” (11). Given the essentially theoretical approach, this section becomes an excellent state-of-the-art section for language change and evolution, but not so much for ELF studies. Most of the chapters in this part do not necessarily deal with ELF discourse directly but they are explorations of how current theories of language contact and change can be applied to ELF in the near future. In my opinion, the authors could have been more ambitious and described how ELF is included within these theories by providing specific examples of the applications of the theories to the use of English in international contexts. On the other hand, Part II, “Zooming in on ELF”, consists of seven empirical studies which analyze different aspects of ELF communication. This section provides the reader with an excellent overview of the current strategies used by ELF speakers to convey meaning, with emphasis on the speakers’ use of multilingual resources. All the chapters in this section except for one rely on small datasets and/or qualitative analyses. This is not necessarily detrimental to the field, but it is the result of the generally transient (Mortensen 2017) and diffuse multilingual (Mauranen 2018a) communities formed in ELF encounters. In other words, ELF interactions take place between people from different linguistic backgrounds, and they usually last for a short period of time – i.e. the same speakers may not interact regularly, but only once or twice –, which hinders the establishment of common rules.

The book starts with an introductory chapter by Anna Mauranen and Svetlana Vetchinnikova – the editors of the volume – in which they present the common thread carried throughout the volume, that is, language contact. This concept is not new to ELF, since Jenkins et al. (2011: 284) already mentioned that “ELF is underpinned by theories of language contact and evolution”. However, due to the current conceptualization of ELF as a multilingual franca (Jenkins 2015), this volume skillfully highlights the use of multilingual resources as a central element of language contact and a possible trigger to language change. This introductory text also mentions other important aspects related to language change, such as internal dynamics and the complexity of language, which can be explained by the inherent linguistic variation across geography and social backgrounds. This brief text links all the contributions in an exceptional way so that the reader clearly knows how these concepts are integrated and how the chapters, apparently very diverse from one other, are intertwined.

Edgar W. Schneider opens the first part of the book with a chapter devoted to Complex Dynamics Systems (CDS). This theory has already been used in the natural and social sciences but has barely been applied to languages until recently. The theory of CDS approaches the object of study as a complex entity which is studied as a whole, thus it “argues strongly against reductionism and categorical and deterministic thinking” (16). After briefly introducing the scarce number of investigations applying this theory to the study of language(s), Schneider describes some of the main properties of CDS and links them to examples of how languages – with a special emphasis on Englishes – can be understood within this theory. For instance, one of the properties mentioned is *bifurcation*, by which “a single category (of a CDS) splits into two” (27). This process can be seen

in Modern English, when the phoneme /ʊ/ split into /ʊ/ and /ʌ/. The author goes on to apply the mechanisms of diffusion and restructuring to explain the evolution of World Englishes. He finishes the chapter with a call for a change of framework in which Englishes, and by extension ELF usage, are understood as CDS and therefore studied holistically.

Chapter 2, written by William Croft, proposes that ELF can be understood within a sociolinguistic typology of contact languages. The author builds this typology within an evolutionary framework (Croft 2000), which understands language change as a process of replication, i.e., as speakers interact, variations are created and some of these variants are selected and transmitted (46). It is natural then to suggest that contact languages can also be understood from this evolutionary perspective, that is, contact with other languages create variants which can be replicated and perpetuated. Croft bases his typology on Thurston's (1989) distinction between *esoteric* languages – “used for communication among members of the same speech community” (51) – and *exoteric* languages – “used for communication between speakers of different speech communities that remain distinct” (51). To this distinction he adds *neogenic* languages to refer to those languages which are spoken by two communities which “are coming together to create a new unitary speech community, for whatever reason” (51). However, Croft argues that these terms are actually continua of language types shaped by the social traits of the communities in contact. Thus, for the remaining of the chapter, the author describes the different steps which form the continua for exoteric and neogenic languages, and provides examples of languages and language uses around the world that could be placed in either of these continua, mainly pidgins, creoles and lingua francas. To conclude, Croft briefly describes how English can be classified within this typology. This chapter, although not explicitly dealing with ELF, provides an excellent opportunity to reflect on the role that English plays today and how society traits has shaped English as it is today.

Chapter 3 is a literature review paper in which Ewa Dąbrowska discusses how writing systems contribute to language change. Although this statement may seem counterintuitive because written language is “regarded as a somewhat artificial add-on” (75) to spoken language, the author provides the reader with a knowledgeable explanation of how writing systems affect the linguistic system, both at the individual and the community levels. Furthermore, she bases these explanations on previous research, thus providing an excellent review of the topic. At the individual level, she reviews several studies that support the idea that reading and writing improves a speaker's vocabulary richness, as well as phonological processing time. Furthermore, she argues that some complex grammatical structures are acquired thanks to exposure to written language because they are proper of this type of language. At the community level, Dąbrowska discusses how writing systems have contributed to the creation of language standards, thus reducing variation. However, at the same time, they are responsible for the development of written registers. The chapter finishes with a brief discussion of two controversial effects of writing systems on language change, namely vocabulary size and syntax complexity. While a few studies argue that languages with a writing system have larger vocabularies and more complex syntax – e.g. more frequent use of subordinated clauses –, Dąbrowska claims that factors not directly related to the writing system – e.g. “complex industrial societies” (86) which need vocabulary items not necessary in other communities – may have contributed to the language evolving in this way.

In chapter 4, Anna Mauranen argues that both ELF discourse and translations have several common features since both are influenced by at least another language, as a “consequence of language contact in a more general perspective” (96). The chapter focuses on how language contact influences ELF and translations from three perspectives: “cognition, interaction and language as a collective entity” (113). First, at the macro level of language, Mauranen states that language contact results in features present in both ELF and translations, namely relative over-representation of frequent words, variation in structures in the target language, and the different distributions of grammatical structures with reference to the target language. Second, at the micro-social level, the author focuses on enhanced explicitness as a strategy present in both types of discourse to convey meaning successfully. Finally, Mauranen links the features described before to the cognitive level. Although the mentioned features had previously been identified in ELF and translations, this is the first time that their similarities are analyzed under a language contact approach, thus contributing to the evolution of the understanding of both areas as connected by language contact.

In chapter 5, Terttu Nevalainen brilliantly exemplifies how certain intelligible deviations from Standard English should not be considered mistakes, but variants. To support this statement, she focuses on a widespread feature of ELF discourse, which is the dropping of third person singular -s. Throughout the chapter, the reader is presented several alternatives to third person -s which existed in other English dialects before Standard English was fully established. The author also describes how the -s variant, which was originally a northern feature, became the preferred form in the variety spoken in the south of England, which became the reference to establish Standard English. The chapter finishes with a brief description of current variants of third person -s in World Englishes and the statement that the zero inflection in ELF is the result of regularization of this variant, as the -s inflection was regularized in the south of England.

The last chapter in the first section of the volume, written by Janus Mortensen, links ELF to the idea of sociolinguistic change, i.e. “the attempt to pursue a critical interest in social change as well as language change, without giving priority to either of the two sides of the sociolinguistic endeavor” (152). The chapter

starts by discussing the concept of sociolinguistic change. Based on Coupland's (2014) three scenarios of social and linguistic change, and the dimensions along which sociolinguistic change may be shown, Mortensen exemplifies how previous and current research on ELF can be fit into a sociolinguistic change approach (e.g. changes in language ideology, or the preference of the zero-variant in third person singular verbs, discussed in the previous chapter in the volume). Then, the author uses the process of internationalization of Danish universities to explain how the study of ELF interactions nowadays can benefit from a sociolinguistic change approach, since English is one of the major languages currently used at universities. Mortensen finishes the chapter with a call to apply a sociolinguistic change approach to ELF studies in order to obtain a more complete view of the complexity of change, especially due to the inherent social variability of ELF interactions.

Chapter 7, by Mikko Laitinen and Jonas Lundberg, is the first empirical study in the second part of the volume. The authors base their study on Social Network Theory, by which "individuals form communities and establish interpersonal ties of varying strengths" (182). While strong networks are reluctant to introduce new variants from outside, weak social ties – those present in ELF interactions according to Mauranen (2018b) – are prone to trigger innovations. Laitinen and Lundberg, thus, hypothesize that multilingual Twitter users (Swedish and one other language) will have larger social networks and more weak ties than monolingual (Swedish) Twitter users. This may be evidence that "ELF users could [...] act as innovators or early adopters and even influence other varieties" (179). The authors collected over five million tweets from more than 110,000 different accounts geolocated in Sweden. After comparing the number of friends and followers that multilingual and monolingual Twitter users have, the authors conclude that users who generally tweet in English have statistically larger Twitter networks than users mainly twitting in Swedish. These results support the authors' hypothesis but only provide indirect evidence that ELF users can act as agents of change. This chapter is the only empirical study in the volume which uses a large dataset. This opens the way to large-scale studies in ELF, which are generally qualitative due to the inherent variability of this type of communication (Jenkins 2015).

In chapter 8, Svetlana Vetchinnikova and Turo Hiltunen investigate the influence of "syntactic structure, priming and chunking" (206) on the distribution of *it's* and *it is* at the individual level, and how this individual variation can contribute to communal change. To do this, a large corpus of around seven million words was collected from comments posted on the same blog by speakers from different L1 backgrounds. The authors argue that blog comments constitute an intermediate type of discourse between spoken and written language, "which makes it a convenient proxy for spontaneous language use similar to much spoken language, even if it technically represents written language" (212). The collected corpus was divided into two subcorpora, namely that containing the top ten commenters – which was used to analyze individual preferences –, and that including the rest of the commenters, which "serves as a reference corpus at the communal level" (211). Results show that, whereas at the communal level there is no preference for either form, most individuals show a clear predilection for either the full form or the contracted one. When focusing on the three factors mentioned above, the authors conclude that syntactic structure does not affect individual choice, while priming and chunking do. Vetchinnikova and Hiltunen finish the chapter by stating that both the individual and the communal levels are worth investigating since both produce interesting results.

Chapter 9, by Peter Siemund and Jessica Terese Mueller, deals with the psychological and attitudinal advantages of multilingually-raised speakers (e.g. German-French) over monolingually-raised ones (e.g. German) – excluding L1 English speakers – in their use of English. More specifically, the authors hypothesize that multilingual ELF users would report a higher proficiency in English than monolingual ELF users. Around 1800 university students and instructors at the University of Hamburg were asked to self-assess their English proficiency in the five skills described in the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe 2001). Results show that multilinguals consider their overall ELF proficiency higher than monolinguals. Therefore, the authors conclude that there seems to be a multilingual advantage in the English level. At the beginning of the chapter, the researchers discuss the multilingual advantages debate in detail, providing the reader with an excellent review of this topic. On the critical side, as the authors admit, their study relies on self-assessments, which could be biased by other factors, as opposed to objective measurements.

Chapter 10, by Veronika Thir, analyzes the use of co-textual and contextual cues to ensure phonological intelligibility in ELF interactions. Two pairs of ELF users were recorded completing two communicative tasks: the first one included a schematic context, while the second one did not. Therefore, a total of four interactions were analyzed. After the two tasks were completed, the participants watched the videos and commented on the miscommunications that had occurred. The analysis of the data shows that, contrary to what Jenkins (2000) suggested, ELF speakers rely on both bottom-up processing and top-down strategies. Although not conclusive, the results from this study constitute one of the first steps in an in-depth analysis of co-text and context in ELF spoken intelligibility.

In chapter 11, Rino Bosso explores the use of multidimensionality in online interactions by ELF users. Based on the fact that ELF speakers tend to rely on extralinguistic features (e.g. pointing or gesturing) to convey meaning or understand messages, the study aims at exploring the use of pragmatics in an ELF context via multimodal material on the web, namely images and emojis. By analyzing the requests posted on a private

Facebook group used by students in a student dorm, the researcher found out that speakers use images to either fill a lexical gap they have in English, or to help the recipients of the message understand it. Furthermore, the use of emojis provides more pragmatic information about the speech act as they “delimit the boundaries between different communicative acts, thus enhancing utterance clarity” (309). The author ends the chapter by pointing out that this study only includes a few instances of one pragmatic strategy used by one group of ELF users. Thus, he encourages other researchers to analyze different datasets and contrast them to gain understanding of the pragmatic strategies used in online ELF interactions.

Chapter 12, by Aki Siegel, analyzes the use of code-switching in ELF interactions, especially during word search sequences. Two speakers (L1 Japanese and L1 Thai) recorded themselves interacting four times along several months. By means of conversation analysis of these recordings, the researcher discovered that these ELF users usually turned to code-switching when trying to find an English word. Interestingly, thanks to the longitudinal nature of the study, Siegel found out that, in the first recorded interaction, speakers code-switched to their L1s, but as they were learning each other’s languages, they started code-switching into their interlocutor’s L1. The researcher thus distinguished three stages in this process: “from a non-knower, to a possible knower, and then to a knower” (330). This study illustrates the variability of ELF interactions through time and how speakers use their multilingual resources to convey meaning, introducing not only features of their L1, but also elements from any other language they know.

Alessia Cogo closes the volume with a chapter which “addresses the role of multilingual resources in ELF conversations” (336). This study was carried out at a UK charity in which refugees and asylum seekers receive help and advice. The author describes the charity as a safe space in which multilingualism is overtly accepted. Several formal sessions with advisors and informal conversations with other migrants were analyzed using the linguistic ethnography methodology (Copland & Creese 2015). The researcher finds out that translanguaging – i.e. the use of several languages in the same interaction – occurs in both formal and informal conversations, but they are more frequent when migrants interact with one another, especially if they know each other’s languages. To exemplify these practices, Cogo provides the reader with the analysis of several interesting extracts from formal sessions and descriptions of informal conversations between migrants. She concludes the chapter by stating that the translanguaging practices identified in the study fulfill three main functions, namely pedagogical – as migrants help each other to learn English –, explanatory – to enhance understanding –, and interpersonal – to provide support and help the migrants integrate in the group.

To sum up, this book constitutes both a well-informed state of the art volume for language contact and change, as well as a comprehensive compilation of studies covering current trends in ELF studies. Since the empirical chapters mainly focus on the speakers’ use of multilingual resources, which are the result of contact between English and the speakers’ L1, the theoretical part of the volume provides an excellent and complete discussion of why ELF can be understood from a language contact and change approach. The common thread carried throughout the book – i.e. language contact – is always clear, which helps the reader neatly connect all the aspects that characterize ELF communication, and which are described in the chapters. One aspect which makes this volume noteworthy is that, as the reader advances, they are presented with a great variety of theories which highlight the complexity of the current use of English internationally. As a result, the reader may change their understanding of this language. Another pertinent element that contributes to the relevance of this book is the fact that no chapter, and certainly not those in the empirical part of the volume, concludes with any generalizable claims. On the contrary, the authors agree that more research is needed to keep gaining insight of ELF complex features and how these interactions develop, showing that this research area is by no means fully established. In conclusion, this volume is a significant contribution which researchers interested in ELF studies, as well as those researchers concerned with language evolution, will find highly valuable.

References

- Copland, Fiona & Angela Creese (2015). *Linguistic ethnography: Collecting, analysing and presenting data*. London: Sage Publications. <https://methods.sagepub.com/book/linguistic-ethnography>
- Council of Europe (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Cambridge: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge.
- Coupland, Nikolas (2014). Sociolinguistic change, vernacularization and broadcast British media. In Jannis Androutsopoulos, ed., *Mediatization and sociolinguistic change*, 67–96. Berlin, Germany: Mouton de Gruyter. <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110346831.67/html>
- Croft, William (2000). *Explaining language change: An evolutionary approach*. Harlow, Essex: Longman.
- Jenkins, Jennifer (2000). *The phonology of English as an International Language* (Oxford Applied Linguistics). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jenkins, Jennifer (2015). Repositioning English and multilingualism in English as a Lingua Franca. *Englishes in Practice* 2,3: 49–85. doi:[10.1515/eip-2015-0003](https://doi.org/10.1515/eip-2015-0003)

- Jenkins, Jennifer, Alessia Cogo & Martin Dewey (2011). Review of developments in research into English as a lingua franca. *Language Teaching* 44, 3: 281–315. doi:[10.1017/S0261444811000115](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444811000115)
- Mauranen, Anna (2018a). Second language acquisition, world Englishes, and English as a lingua franca (ELF). *World Englishes* 37, 1: 106–119. doi:[10.1111/weng.12306](https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12306)
- Mauranen, Anna (2018b). Conceptualising ELF. In Jennifer Jenkins, Will Baker & Martin Dewey (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of English as a Lingua Franca*. London: Routledge.
- Mortensen, Janus (2017). Transient multilingual communities as a field of investigation: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 27, 3: 271–288. doi:[10.1111/jola.12170](https://doi.org/10.1111/jola.12170)
- Thurston, William R. (1989). How exoteric languages build a lexicon: Esoterogeny in West New Britain. In Harlow, R., Hooper, R., eds., 555–579.

María Ángeles Jurado-Bravo
Departamento de Economía Financiera y Contabilidad e Idioma Moderno
Universidad Rey Juan Carlos
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1774-5757>
angeles.jurado.bravo@urjc.es