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English as a global lingua franca: A threat to multilingual communication and translation?

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In this paper I will look at the controversy surrounding the current status of English in the world. I will consider the question of whether the dominant role of English as a lingua franca (ELF) is a menace to other languages, to multilingual communication and to the profession of translation and interpreting, or whether a positive evaluation of the omnipresence of English as a default means of communication can be justified. I will argue for a compromise position: neither demonizing global English nor welcoming it uncritically. I will support this stance from different perspectives, drawing on my own work on ELF and translation.

1. Introduction

Let us first consider the concept of a 'lingua franca' itself. In its original meaning, a lingua franca – the term is often said to derive from Arabic *lisan al farang* – was simply an intermediary or contact language used, for instance, by speakers of Arabic with travellers from Western Europe. In this sense, a lingua franca was a contact or vehicular language that consisted of elements and structures of diverse origins. The meaning of the term was later extended to describe a language of commerce in general, a relatively stable variety with little room for individual variation. As a hybrid contact language, a lingua franca is more or less neutral, since it does not belong to any national language, national language community or national territory – concepts that arose much later.

More recently, lingua francas have also been based on particular territories or speech communities, but they have tended to be locally adapted from such bases as their influence extended. One of the historically most important lingua francas was, of course, Latin during the Roman Empire, which also survived for a long time thereafter as a language of science and religion. In more modern times, it was French that was elevated to lingua franca status as the language of European royalty, aristocracy and diplomacy. Other kinds of lingua francas are artificially constructed systems, the best known being Esperanto.

Today, English is without doubt the most widespread and most widely used lingua franca in the world, a truly global phenomenon that cuts right across the well-known Kachruvian

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circles (Kachru 1992): it can occur anywhere and in any constellation of speakers, and can also integrate native speakers of English, though they tend to play a minor role. ELF is characterized by great variability; it is NOT a fixed code, and cannot be defined by its formal characteristics. Rather, it is an open-source phenomenon, a resource available for whoever wants to take advantage of the virtual English language. ELF is negotiated ad hoc, varying according to context, speaker group and communicative purpose. It is individually shaped by its users and can fulfil many different functions ranging from simple small-talk to sophisticated arguments. While of course based on English, ELF is also full of interlingual and intercultural adaptations, typically containing elements from different linguacultures.

Since the prime aim of any lingua franca communication from the time of the Crusades to the present day has been mutual intelligibility and efficient communication, correctness tends to be not very important. Equally unimportant for ELF is what generations of learners of English have dreaded and often unsuccessfully imitated: typically English forms such as idioms or other phrases referring to insider cultural phenomena.

In sum, we can say that the most important features of ELF are its enormous functional flexibility, its variability and spread across many different linguistic, geographical and cultural areas, as well as its openness to foreign forms. Internationally and intranationally, ELF can thus be regarded as a special type of intercultural communication. Since English now has substantially more non-native than native speakers, it is fair to say that English – in its role as a global lingua franca – is no longer owned by its native speakers.

ELF is not a language for specific purposes, nor a pidgin or creole. Nor is it some species of 'foreigner talk' or 'learner language'. And it is certainly not 'Globish' or BSE – Bad Simple English. The interlanguage paradigm, with its focus on deficits in learners' competence in a foreign or second language measured against a native norm, is also clearly no longer valid here. Instead of comparing ELF speakers' competence with a hypothetical native speaker competence, it is rather the multilingual individual and his or her 'multicompetence' (Cook 1992) that should be the norm for describing and explaining what ELF speakers typically do when they are engaged in ELF communication. Here we can look for support from the rich literature on bilingualism and multilingualism, where proficiency in more than one language is generally seen as beneficial and enriching.

ELF speakers are per se multilingual speakers, and ELF is a language for communication: a medium which can be given substance with different national, regional, local and individual cultural identities. ELF does not carry these identities; it is not a language in terms of which speakers define themselves (Hüllen 1992; House 2003). When English is used as a language for communication, it is in principle neutral with regard to the different socio-cultural backgrounds of its users. It has thus great potential as a tool of international understanding, precisely because there is no established norm, and because ELF speakers must always work out anew – in different communities of practice – a joint linguistic, intercultural and behavioural basis for their communication.

It may be legitimate to ask why it should be English, and not Spanish, Arabic or any other widely spoken language that has developed into today's major lingua franca. The answer is simple: it is due to the former worldwide British Empire, which was seamlessly replaced after the Second World War by the United States and its current dominant political and economic status. Another facilitating factor is contemporary technological progress driving

a demand for fast and efficient international communication – preferably in one language. Other explanatory suggestions point to the supposed simplicity of the English language – a rather dubious explanation. There may also be another, rather banal reason for the continuing growth of ELF: once a language has reached such a global spread and such a high degree of availability and frequency of use, it will simply keep growing. This growth, however, may well come to a halt, once the support by the current world power is waning – but I do not want to speculate about this at the present time.

Now, the role of ELF as a means for worldwide communication has of course not been unanimously welcomed. On the contrary, there has been much controversy surrounding its use. I will therefore now consider this controversy from different perspectives.

2. English as a global lingua franca: A threat to multilingual communication or a blessing for global communication?

One of the strongest stances opposing the use of ELF is the promotion of 'linguistic human rights', coupled with the idea that, if these rights are denied, many languages are doomed to die (cf. Phillipson 2009). The widespread use of ELF – seen as embodying 'linguistic imperialism' – is considered a powerful threat to linguistic human rights and to people's unfettered use of their mother tongues. De Swaan (2001) has commented on this view: 'Recently, a movement has spread across the Western world advocating the right of all people to speak the language of their choice, to fight "language imperialism" abroad and "linguicism" at home, to strengthen "language rights" in international law. Alas, what decides is not the right of human beings to speak whatever language they wish, but the freedom of everybody else to ignore what they say in the language of their choice' (2001: 52).

Given the influence of the linguistic rights movement, the use of English in certain contexts may indeed prove problematic for speakers. For example, to cite a personal experience, when I, as a native speaker of German, address an audience in English at an international conference in Germany, I am often the target of critical comments by 'politically correct' German colleagues who try to make me feel bad about 'betraying' the German language.

ELF is a useful language for communication, not a language for affective and emotional identification (Hüllen 1992; House 2003), and the difference between a language for communication and a language for identification is personally experienced by many language users. Languages for communication and languages for identification are not in competition; rather, they supplement each other. This does not mean, however, that ELF users may not be able, if they so wish, to develop an affective identification with ELF, but the point I am trying to make here is that this need not be the case (see, for example, the findings of empirical work by Jenkins 2009).

The opposition to the use of English in multilingual contexts has recently found a new voice in support of the use of a 'lingua receptiva' or 'parallel talk', promoting what has been called 'receptive bilingualism' (ten Thije & Zeevaert 2007). The idea is that in multilingual constellations each speaker uses his or her native language. Interactants will then infer the meanings of others' talk and understand what has been said. While this is an interesting

attempt to avoid ELF, it is obviously meant to function first and foremost with groups of people who speak typologically close languages, such as those in the Scandinavian, Romance or Slavic language families. In the case of typologically distant languages, however, communication following this model will be impossible to put into practice.

That English will sweep away other languages is unlikely. In fact, the widespread use of English often reinforces the use of indigenous languages for identification purposes, and these languages can then also be employed as vehicles of protest against English. For example, in the German folk music scene, the use of dialects such as Bavarian is very popular. And on the Internet, long thought to be the prime killer of languages other than English, a profusion of many different languages has come to be used. Here we can observe a healthy co-existence of English and native languages, which has, in some cases, stimulated the emergence of new 'mixed' varieties.

Following these general ideas about the use of ELF in the world today, I will now look at several more specific arguments against its use. I will discuss these arguments and see what empirical research can tell us about them.

3. A compromise position argued from different perspectives

3.1 The linguistic perspective

From a linguistic perspective, one often hears statements such as the following: the use of ELF in multilingual constellations is unfair to all those who are non-native speakers of English, because however advanced their command of English, it will never be as differentiated and sophisticated as their L1 competence. Anecdotally, one can refute this argument by pointing to the numerous cases where users of an L2 successfully overcame the putative 'non-native handicap', and turned out to be perfectly happy in their use of a new language. Recent approaches to second or third language acquisition (e.g. Kramsch 2009) no longer focus on its shortcomings, emphasizing instead the positive sides of multilingualism for individual speakers. With regard to the way users of ELF are affected by the fact that English is not their L1, much recent research has shown that interactions in the medium of ELF clearly work, thus tending to refute the claim that they are inherently problematic and precarious (e.g. House 2002, 2009a, 2010, 2011a, c; Cogo & Dewey 2006; Firth 2009; Baumgarten & House 2010; Seidlhofer 2011). ELF seems to work surprisingly well, thanks in no small part to the 'let it pass' principle, an interpretive procedure routinely employed in communicative encounter between both native speakers and non-native speakers, in which interactants wait patiently for problematic utterances to become clearer as the discourse proceeds (Firth 2009). Further, many studies of ELF talk (e.g. House 2002) have found that few misunderstandings, corrections or other-repairs occur in ELF talk – in stark contrast to non-native–native talk examined in classic interlanguage studies.

Let me now go into a bit more detail and describe some of the results of my own work on the pragmatics of ELF interactions in a project funded by the Volkswagen Foundation at Hamburg University since 2008. We have compiled a corpus of institutional and everyday interactions between ELF users complemented by retrospective interviews with these users

about 'rich points' in the interaction as these emerged from our analyses. The four most interesting findings can be characterized as follows:

3.1.1 Recourse to interactants' L1

Such recourse was, for instance, found to occur in this data in the form of transfer. The following four extracts show cases of transfer from speakers' L1. These extracts of conversational data were recorded in the Hamburg ELF during office hours. S is a student from Spain, P is a German professor, and A is his assistant.[1]

(a) Examples of transfer

EXTRACT 1: INITIATING A REQUEST

A: Now your question
S: I need a statement

EXTRACT 2: SHOT-GUN INITIATION OF A REQUEST AS OPENING MOVE IN AN ENCOUNTER

A: AND?
S: Erm I have a couple of (2s) not problems but erm let's say questions eh erm I have looked at the papers. . .

EXTRACT 3: REJECTING A REQUEST

S: So it would be better if I had some form of feedback from some of the professors I would think but
P: Erm so you mean that it should be helpful to have a letter
S: yes
P: From me? NO NO it's not usual to do so

The requests in Extracts 1 and 2 and the response to a request in Extract 3 are all realized in a very direct, unmitigated way. This directness – unusual in Anglophone discourse – is transferred into English from the speakers' mother tongues: German for P and A, Spanish for S. Relevant research has shown that the interactional norms, particularly in the case of the potentially face-threatening speech act Request and the responses to it, are conventionally realized in a more direct manner in German and Spanish than in English (Blum-Kulka & House 1989; House 2006).

Another case of transfer from speakers' L1 is Asian ELF users' tendency to engage in a kind of cyclical topic management, which leads to a number of non-sequitur turns. These often puzzling non-sequiturs are, however, consistently ignored by other participants, with the result that the discourse remains 'normal' and 'robust'. Here is an extract presenting

[1] The transcription conventions in all the examples presented in this paper are simplified for better readability. The length of pauses (in seconds) as well as participants' non-verbal actions are indicated by parenthesis, emphasis by capital letters, overlapping speech and translation by square brackets and latching by = . The names of the interactants have been changed.

two short exchanges which feature such non-sequitur sequences. They are taken from an everyday ELF conversation on the role of English in the world enacted by students at the university of Hamburg (Brit: German; Joy: Korean; Wei: Chinese). In this conversation, one interactant, Wei, relentlessly pulls the discourse back to the topic he happens to favour.

EXTRACT 4

Brit: If we if everybody spoke one language maybe let's say English it would be boring very boring and why is it English is it so wonderful
Wei: In China many dialects many languages erm eh Chinese people speak maybe a little different Cantonese Yunnan province

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Joy: But is English really so strong in the world so all the people want to speak it in France for example I know people do not
Wei: China is a big area and big diversity

Another form of taking recourse to a speaker's L1 is code-switching.

(b) Code-switching

Analyses of how speakers use code-switching in our Hamburg ELF office-hours interactions show that this device is not necessarily a sign of incompetence, but can also be taken as an indication of speakers' subjective identification with their linguistic origins. Here is an example, again featuring P, a professor, S, an international student, and A, the professor's assistant:

EXTRACT 5

P: without this application it it it it it is easily you can design a a a cantilever slab with one week (0.5) not more to do it =
A: = or a shorter time
P: (fast) for a shorter everything
S: erm
P: Joh können wir mal ruhig machen [yes yes we can certainly do it] should be no problem

This example shows the ease with which one of the interactants, P, switches into his German L1. We can assume that his L1 is always present in his mind and can thus be effortlessly accessed during the flow of ELF talk in this interaction. Clearly, this switch shows that ELF users are multilingual speakers who do not lose their attachment to their L1. The normality of code-switching in ELF discourse, whenever this is possible given the constellation of speakers on hand, has also been amply documented by other ELF researchers using different data (e.g. Pölzl & Seidlhofer 2006; Jenkins 2009).

3.1.2 Accommodation: Frequency of the multi-functional gambit Represent

In our Hamburg data – both in the institutional office-hours talk and the free-flowing everyday conversations between international students – we have found a high incidence of deliberate accommodation by speakers to other participants' ELF competence via the use of

a gambit that Edmondson (1981) called a 'Represent'. A Represent is a meta-communicative procedure and a useful and versatile discourse marker with which a speaker re-presents (parts of) a previous speaker's move in order to (1) strategically support his own and his interactants' working memory, (2) create coherence by constructing lexical-paradigmatic clusters, (3) signal receipt and confirm understanding and (4) strengthen awareness of the ongoing talk and monitor its progress. Other researchers have confirmed such uses of Represents albeit with different terminology (e.g. Cogo & Dewey 2006). Here is a simple example taken from an everyday conversation between university students (H: Czech; A: German; S: American).

EXTRACT 6

H: If you start speaking English in in France they will answer you in French
A: Answer you in French yes yes that's true
S: That's true

Represents – also referred to in the literature as echo-signals, mirror elements or shadow-elements – are typical of psycho-therapeutic interviews, instructional discourse ('teacher talk') and aircraft control discourse – genres where information is deliberately and routinely re-stated to ensure understanding. That ELF users frequently resort to this procedure can be taken as proof of their well-developed strategic competence and their meta-communicative awareness.

3.1.3 Solidarity and consensus via the co-construction of utterances

In the face of manifold cultural and linguistic differences, ELF users demonstrate their solidarity with each other by co-constructing utterances whenever necessary: a clear sign of a feeling of group identity that develops in the community of practice in which ELF speakers find themselves. One might say that users of ELF view it as an egalitarian tool ('We're all in the same boat'), and there seems to be an underlying determination and consensus about making sure the discourse works. Here is an example of speakers' readiness to come to the rescue of a co-interactant, who is patently at a loss for words:

EXTRACT 7

Joy: I recently read an article in a Korean erm (2sec) Moment (4sec)
Brit: Newspaper, Internet?
Joy: Yes thank you (laughs) erm the article is about new foreign language education in Japan

3.1.4 Re-interpretation of gambits: *You know, yes/yeah; so, okay, I think, I don't think, I mean*

In our analysis of the Hamburg data, we also found that ELF users tend to use certain gambits in a systematically different way from native English-speakers as described in the literature. For instance, the analysis of the behaviour of the gambit *you know* in our data (see

House 2009a for a detailed discussion) shows that it is mainly used in this ELF data as a routine self-supportive strategy whenever speakers want to make coherence relations salient or resolve word-finding difficulties ('fumbling'). *You know* in ELF discourse is thus NOT used primarily as a polite hedge or an interpersonal expression appealing to knowledge shared with addressees, as it has often been described in the literature on native English usage (e.g. Östman 1981). In our ELF interactions, *you know* collocates surprisingly frequently with the conjunctions *but/because/and* and, like them, it highlights discourse-external relations. And in its function as a routinized fumble, *you know* was found to help ELF users structure their output and monitor the progression of their talk. So in ELF talk, *you know* is clearly a speaker strategy, NOT a sign of a 'restricted code' or proof of some underdeveloped competence in English. When employing the gambit *you know*, a speaker primarily demonstrates that her strategic competence is intact, and that she is capable of exploiting the resources of the English language. Here is one typical example of the use of *you know*:

EXTRACT 8

H: No matter how many people speak in the university they some of them speak really well English but you know the real life it's different and you have to learn English
S: yes erm (1 sec)

Analysis of other discourse markers such as *I think, I don't think* and *I mean* (Baumgarten & House 2010) shows that ELF speakers prefer using these gambits in their prototypical semantic meanings rather than as de-semantized, routinized phrases common in native English speakers' usage. And ELF users' employment of the gambits *yes/yeah*, *so* and *okay* (House 2010; 2011a) also seems to deviate from native speaker usage in that, in ELF, speakers tend to creatively modify their L1 employment for self-support, monitoring and coherence-creation. When using the gambits *yes/yeah/ja*, for instance, ELF speakers formally and functionally vary their usage, preferring the token *yes* for agreement, *yeah* for signalling comprehension and the equivalent German token *ja* for back-channelling. This interestingly variable use is illustrated in the following examples:

EXTRACT 9

P: Next thing you know on the fourteenth of Ju June there is a German Autag just for your information
S: Autag nee
P: It's where you are coming here
S: It's here at the TU?
P: Yes yes once a year there is a so-called Autag

Extract 9 shows that the token *yes* is used by P when he wants to show agreement with S's statement when answering his question.

EXTRACT 10

P: There is one week where the building companies come to the university and make some presentation at =

S: = Ahh this week yeah I (1 sec)
P: This week erm yeah but I cannot do it I have to go here this week
S: Yeah the week of civil engineering yeah

In Extract 10 both P and S signal uptake of each other's utterance by using the token *yeah*.

EXTRACT 11

P: You send the pdf file I think
S: Erm in pdf I read erm okay in computer but I don't print
P: The printing is is wrong only the printing or
S: I think only the printing [because]
P: [ja ja]
S: in my file is okay =
P: = Strange

In extract 11, P utters a reassuring back-channel signal using the token *ja*, thus automatically (we may assume) falling back into his German mother tongue.

Taken together, the results of our analyses of ELF interactions in our Hamburg data show that ELF talk does work surprisingly well; ELF speakers are able to make good use of the English language for their own purposes, exploiting its potential to meet their particular needs. Given the results of these analyses of ELF talk, one may legitimately ask whether ELF interactional behaviour differs from that of advanced learners of English, and if so, how? The answer is simple: what differs is the perspective from which the analyses are conducted. The behaviour of advanced learners of English as a foreign language is measured against a native English norm, but that of ELF users is described without reference to such a norm.

Let us now turn to another often heard argument against the widespread use of ELF, namely that it 'contaminates' other languages. Purists and prescriptivists have long worried about English – the world's most widely-spoken language – invading other languages in the form of Anglicisms, often compiling 'black lists' of such 'foreign bodies' and providing readers with native alternatives. We can shed light on this argument against ELF on the basis of another research project – one that went beyond examining such rather obvious and, I believe, essentially harmless lexical importations from English. I directed the project 'Covert translation' within the framework of the German Science Foundation's Research Centre on Multilingualism from 1999–2011 at the University of Hamburg. The initial assumption of the project was that the increasingly frequent use of ELF changes the communicative norms in other languages via massive unidirectional translations from English into these languages. In this study, our main interest was whether and how translations change the German language – German being the most popular target language for the translation of English texts, but we also considered some translations into French and Spanish.

The project work is based on previous extensive German–English contrastive research (cf. House 2006) on communicative conventions, which were hypothesized to vary along a number of parameters in German and English. German texts in many genres were found to be more direct, more explicit, more oriented towards the content of the message and thus generally more transactional and detached than comparable English texts, which tend to be more interactional and involved. In the past, translations of texts from English into German were routinely subjected to a 'cultural filter' in order to adjust them to the new

audience's expectations (House 1977; 1997). Given the dominance of ELF, we assumed that less attention would now be paid to these differences in communicative conventions, with the result that English communicative conventions would now be superimposed on German texts.

These considerations led to the formulation of two hypotheses: (1) In translations from English into German, a cultural filter will be less consistently applied over time, English–German translations increasingly following Anglophone text conventions, and (2) Anglophone text conventions will spread from English–German translations to German original texts. These hypotheses were operationalized as follows: the frequency and usage patterns of certain linguistic items (resulting from detailed qualitative analyses of some 80 textual exemplars) change over time. Two time-frames were examined: 1978–1982 and 1999–2002 (2006 for the genre of economic texts). The hypotheses were tested using a multilingual, one-million-word corpus that contained texts from two genres – popular science and business texts – which we believed to be particularly vulnerable to Anglophone influence. The texts were drawn from popular science magazines (*Scientific American* and *Spektrum der Wissenschaft*) and letters to shareholders in globalized companies' annual reports. The corpus holds English texts, their German translations (parallel texts), German originals (comparable texts), some translations and original texts into French and Spanish as well as translations in the opposite direction (i.e. into English). The method used in this project combines qualitative and quantitative approaches, progressing from detailed text analyses and comparisons on the basis of a translation evaluation model (House 1997; 2009b) to a quantitative phase involving frequency counts, and finally to a re-contextualized qualitative phase, where we investigated how certain linguistic items and pattern were translated, and how these compared with original texts. The qualitative analyses revealed differences in the linguistic realization of subjectivity and addressee-orientation, i.e. the expression of author identity and addressee-orientation in simulated author–reader interaction in written discourse.

Here is an example highlighting English–German differences in the expression of addressee-orientation. The extract is taken from an article in *Scientific American*, July 1998 and its German translation in *Spektrum der Wissenschaft*, October 1998.

EXTRACT 12

ENGLISH ORIGINAL: Suppose you are a doctor in an emergency room and a patient tells you she was raped two hours earlier. . . Can you in fact do anything? . . .

GERMAN TRANSLATION: In der Notfallaufnahme eines Krankenhaus berichtet eine Patientin, sie sei vor zwei Stunden vergewaltigt worden. . . Kann der Arzt überhaupt irgendetwas tun? . . .

[BACKTRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH: In the emergency room of a hospital a patient reports that she was raped two hours ago. . .Can the doctor do anything at all? . . .]

The English text draws readers into the text by inviting them to identify with the doctor, whereas the German translation keeps readers at a distance by maintaining a factual reporting style, leaving the doctor in the text, as it were. The translator clearly applied a cultural filter, adapting the original text to German readers' expectations.

The project's quantitative studies focused on the use of linguistic items associated with author–reader interaction. They include investigations of personal pronouns *we–wir*

(Baumgarten 2008); sentence initial conjunctions, additive *and–und* (Baumgarten 2007) and concessive *but–aber/doch* (Becher 2011); linking constructions (House 2011b) and expressions of epistemic modality (Kranich 2011).

The results of these studies show that there is indeed an English influence in the translations for all the phenomena investigated, but the hypothesized influence on original German texts is only documented for *but–aber/doch*. Over time, the frequency of all other phenomena associated with interactionality in written discourse was found to remain consistently higher in the English originals than in the German originals; that is, the English texts remain more personal, more dialogic and more interactional than the indigenous German texts. In other words, Anglophone influence via translation seems to be a marginal phenomenon: it does not affect original mainstream text production. The influence of English on other languages is probably more indirect: it may have to do with a current trend towards colloquiality fuelled by general contemporary processes such as the democratization of knowledge and the growing acceptance of informality not only in oral but also in written interaction, particularly in social media such as e-mail, SMS, blogs and Wikis.

Essentially, the hypotheses underlying this project were not confirmed. No wonder, you might think, since such hypotheses are typically mono-causal ones of the kind: 'the bigger the prestige of a language – ELF in this case – the bigger its influence'. Such a simplistic assumption, you might say, should be rejected. Instead, we should assume a complex interaction of many different factors in language change, such as linguistic economy and intelligibility, standardization of genres in the target language (both popular science texts and letters to shareholders were new genres in German in the 70s!), as well as jargonization and popularization (cf. Kranich, Becher & Höder 2011). We might therefore conclude that German translations do not simply take over Anglophone text conventions; rather, translators may have set out to creatively achieve their own communicative goals, responding to a new need in German for expressing interpersonality, addressee orientation and jargonization by exploiting the existing interpersonal and interactive Anglophone model for their own benefit.

3.2 Psycholinguistic and neurolinguistic perspectives

I am referring here to the popular claim that massive importation of English lexis into another language influences thinking and concept formation in that language, and that the onslaught of English words and phrases damages a speaker's L1-mediated knowledge. Such a claim is, in my opinion, compatible with the strong version of the Humboldt-Sapir-Whorf hypothesis – a version which was refuted long ago and replaced by a weak version for at least the following three reasons: (1) the universal possibility of translation, (2) the fact that all languages in use are in a sense 'anachronisms', that is, linguistic forms in the flow of natural language use rarely rise to a speaker's consciousness (at least in the case of ordinary language users, not linguists!) (Ortega y Gasset 1960) and (3) the converging evidence that multilinguals – such as ELF users – possess a 'deep' common conceptual store to which 'lower level' language-specific systems come to be attached (Paradis 2004). In expert multilinguals, which many ELF speakers are, processing often remains 'shallow': it does not reach a semantic-conceptual level at all (Sanford & Graesser 2006). And neurolinguistic studies of translation and language switching

(e.g. Price, Green & von Studnitz 1999) show that multilinguals move flexibly and smoothly between their languages, the two systems being distinct but permeable. There is thus no proof of a direct link between only one particular language and thinking and conceptualizing.

In other words, multilingualism – including multilingual speakers' use of ELF worldwide – need not inhibit concept formation in speakers' mother tongues.

4. Is the increasing use of ELF a threat to translation?

My immediate answer is: no, it is not!

The very same phenomena that have caused the surge in ELF use have also influenced translation; that is, the globalization processes that boosted ELF use have also led to a continuing increase in translation worldwide. Alongside the impact of globalization on the world economy, international communication and politics, translation has also become more important than ever before.

Information distribution via translation today relies heavily on new technologies that support a worldwide translation industry. Translation plays a crucial and ever-growing role in multilingual news writing for international press networks, television channels, the Internet, the Web, social media, blogs, Wikis, and so on. Whenever information needs to be quickly disseminated around the world in different languages, translations are indispensible. Translation is, for instance, essential for tourist information worldwide and for information flows in globalized companies, where ELF is now often replaced by native languages in order to boost sales.

Further, there is a growing demand for translation in localization industries. Software localization covers diverse industrial, commercial and scientific activities ranging from CD production, engineering and testing software applications to managing complex team projects simultaneously in many countries and languages. Translations are needed in all of these. Indeed, translation is part and parcel of all localization and glocalization processes. In order to make a product available in many different languages it must be localized via translation. This process is of course similar to what was described above as 'cultural filtering'. Producing a localized – a culturally filtered and translated version of a product – is essential for opening up new markets, since immediate access to information about a product in a local language increases demand for that product. An important off-shoot is the design of localized advertising, again involving massive translation activity.

Translation is also propelled by the Web, the development of which has spread the need for translation into globalized e-commerce. And the steady increase of non-English-speaking Web users also boosts translation.

Another factor contributing to the growing importance of translation is e-learning. The expansion of digital industries centred around e-learning and other education forms spread over the Web in many different languages again shows the intimate link between translation and today's global economy.

In sum, we can say that globalization has led to an explosion of demand for translation. And translation is not simply a by-product of globalization, but an integral part of it. Without it,

the global capitalist, consumer-oriented and growth-fixated economy would not be possible. ELF has not threatened translation.

5. Conclusion

ELF is a useful tool for communication; an additional language, not a substitute for other languages, as these fulfil different, often affective and identificatory, functions. When using ELF in multilingual constellations, speakers frequently take recourse to their L1s via the use of transfer and code-switching, thus providing evidence that other languages are alive and well, beneath the English surface. ELF users also creatively appropriate the English language for their own strategic purposes. The influence of ELF on the communicative conventions of other languages via massive quantities of translation from English turns out to be marginal in the case of German. Psycho- and neurolinguistic studies of bilingualism and translation refute the idea that the heavy use of one language (ELF) inhibits conceptualization in another. Finally, translation is not threatened by the worldwide use of ELF. Globalization, which boosted ELF, has also led to an explosion in demand for translation. In fact, translation lies at the heart of the global economy. Translation and ELF use clearly co-exist. English as a global lingua franca cannot be said to be a threat to multilingual communication and translation.

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