

***FOR MUTUAL INTELLIGIBILITY, MUST ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA
BE STANDARDIZED?***

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Abstract

This work will apply a Micro-analysis informed by Conversation Analysis (CA) to an interaction in which interlocutors use English as a *lingua franca* ('ELF'). Numbers of people using ELF are high: in 2007, the British Council estimated that around 375 million people use English as a second language while 750 million use it as a foreign language¹. This analysis will cast doubts on claims that to "guarantee the mutual intelligibility of their accents", ELF users must standardize their usage by adhering to "lingua franca core" rules (Jenkins, 2003: 126) and that a description to ELF's salient features is feasible. The findings in this work suggest that ELF users, despite not adhering to standardized rules, achieve mutual intelligibility through negotiating their own variety of ELF depending on each others' "proficiency level, use of code-mixing, degree of pidginization, etc" (Gramkow Anderson, 1993: 108) as well as various discourse strategies. This work suggests the form of ELF interactions is entirely variable and cannot be standardized.

Keywords: *English as a lingua franca (ELF), standardization, mutual intelligibility, negotiation, discourse strategies.*

¹ See <http://www.britishcouncil.org/english/engfaqs.htm>

Introduction

‘English as a *lingua franca*’ (hereon ‘ELF’) refers to the use of English between people who do not share the same first language. The recognition of roughly three quarters of all users of English (Crystal, 2003) being ELF users, has prompted a growing amount of research since the mid-1990s. Influential works by linguists Seidlhofer (2004) and Jenkins (2000) have suggested that for mutual intelligibility to be achieved in ELF interactions, certain linguistic features must be adhered to. This represents an attempt to standardize ELF as a “linguistic phenomenon in its own right” (Seidlhofer, 2004: 213). Research using a CA methodology offers a different interpretation of the nature of ELF interactions, suggesting standardizing ELF is impossible due to the inherent diversity of ELF interactions. CA studies of ELF interactions allow the identification of various linguistic and interactional resources utilized by participants who do not ‘share’ a common first language, and explicate the achievement of successful communication despite the potential occurrence of ‘dysfluencies’. CA studies have gained credence as offering viable and reliable claims as to the true nature of ELF interactions.

This work is a micro-analytic CA informed investigation into an ELF interaction between two participants – an Austrian interviewer working for a website dedicated to the Eurovision Song Contest, and an interviewee who is the Latvian representative for the 2009 contest. This work will see if, despite different first languages and accents when using ELF, the participants need to standardize their language in accordance to certain ‘core’ features. The following analysis will demonstrate that despite not adhering to standardized rules of ELF, mutual intelligibility is indeed achieved via an on-going negotiation of language-use

depending on the language-use of the other participant, and through the use of various discourse strategies. This work suggests ELF interactions are entirely variable and therefore cannot be standardized.

Literature Review

Conversation analysis (CA) has become a very influential methodology for analysing talk and social action. Sack's *Lectures on Conversation* in 1964 is considered to be the starting point for CA. CA studies have demonstrated that 'ordinary' talk between people is an accomplishment of two (or more) participants that is "sequentially structured and interactively managed" (Firth, 1996: 238). As the influential conversation analyst, ten Have states, CA studies generally focus on 4 broad categories, "*turn-taking organization; sequence organization; repair organization; and the organization of turn-construction/design*" (1999: 111).

Until roughly the mid-1990s, the subjects of most CA studies were those who "share and use the *same native language* – in the majority of cases the English language" (Firth, 1996: 239). Therefore it could be assumed, by the analyst, that participants "'share' knowledge of conversational practices" (ibid). However, since the mid-1990s, a new form of data has been examined: English as a *lingua franca*, in which participants do not share the same first language – yet use English as a 'contact language'.

CA-informed micro-analytic studies of 'ELF' in use can help us to identify the linguistic and interactional resources utilized by participants who do not 'share' a common first language, to achieve successful communication despite the possible occurrence of 'dysfluencies' (ibid).

The work of Jenkins (2000) represents a particularly significant viewpoint on achieving successful communication in ELF interactions. Jenkins identified pronunciation features that she considered central to mutual understanding in ELF interactions. Based on this, Jenkins' suggestion was to "scale down the phonological task for the majority of learners by...focusing pedagogic attention on those items which are essential in terms of intelligible pronunciation" (p.123). Jenkins states that if 'core' features of pronunciation are not adhered to, mutual intelligibility is impeded while if 'non-core' features are not adhered to, intelligibility will not necessarily be impeded.

'Core' features include: "British English /t/ between vowels in words such as 'latter', 'water' rather than American English flapped [ɾ]", "no omission of sounds in word-initial clusters, e.g. in promise, string", and the "maintenance of contrast between long and short vowels e.g. between 'live' and 'leave'" (Jenkins, 2003: 126-7). 'Non-core' features include: "The direction of pitch movements whether to signal attitude or grammatical meaning", and "Stress-timed rhythm" (ibid).

Also significant is the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE) initiative – under Seidlhofer's direction². Here, a large corpus of spoken ELF data is being compiled and transcribed to provide a basis for scholars to conduct research on the lexico-grammar of ELF and identify and codify its most salient features. According to Seidlhofer, this "description of salient features of English as a lingua franca" (2004: 209) is vital to intelligibility in ELF interactions. Work in the VOICE project (by Hollander, 2002; Kordon, 2003; Seidlhofer, 2003) has highlighted several typical "errors" which do not impede communication including:

² See Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English, <http://www.univie.ac.at/voice/>

“Dropping the third person present tense –s.

Confusing the relative pronouns *who* and *which*.

Omitting definite and indefinite articles where they are obligatory in ENL, and inserting them where they do not occur in ENL”. (Seidlhofer, 2004: 220)

The work of linguists such as Jenkins and Seidlhofer shows an attempt at standardizing ELF to make it a “linguistic phenomenon in its own right” (Seidlhofer, 2004: 213) as opposed to being a deviation from English as a native language. Canagarajah (2007) offers a different interpretation of the nature of ELF interaction - and states that it is impossible to standardize ELF due to its inherent diversity. Canagarajah claims that ELF,

“is intersubjectively constructed in each specific context of interaction. The form of this English is negotiated by each set of speakers for their purposes.” (ibid: 925)

In ELF interactions, interlocutors monitor each others’ proficiency and determine what grammar, phonology and lexical range is appropriate for ensuring intelligibility (ibid). As interlocutors will monitor interaction in different ways, it is “difficult to describe this language a priori” (ibid). Consequently, standardized rules cannot apply and ELF interaction is always dependant on the specific context and the specific people involved. The form of ELF interactions is entirely variable – as Meierkord states, as ELF “emerges out of and through interaction...it might well be that ELF never achieves a stable or even standardized form” (2004: 129). So central to Canagarajah ’s claims are that ELF is based on interactants’ negotiation that can only be developed through interaction between individuals.

The Data

The data examined is taken from a ten minute interview involving two participants - Russell and Intars Busulis. Russell, the interviewer, is from Austria and is working on behalf of 'esctoday.com' ('Eurovision Song Contest Today' – a website dedicated to the contest). Intars, the interviewee, is the 2009 Eurovision song contest representative of Latvia. This interview, as are all other interviews for the website, is conducted in English. The participants, through their discourse actions, display an orientation to the 'conversational' nature of the communication.

The Eurovision Song Contest is held annually with participants comprising of active members of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU)³. In 2008, 48 countries participated⁴ in Europe's biggest television production⁵. The EBU stipulate that the entire show be conducted in English and French. The contents of the official Eurovision website, including all available videos, are all in English. The interview to be investigated in this study is taken from the 'esctoday.com' website. This is the most frequently visited independent website for the Eurovision Song Contest. All of the contents of this website, including video-recorded interviews, are in English. That English is used as a *lingua franca* to aid communication between people from different linguistic backgrounds who share an interest in the Europe's largest television production represents the rationale for choosing this data to investigate.

³ <http://www.ebu.ch/>

⁴ <http://www.eurovision.tv/page/history/facts-figures>

⁵ http://www.eurovision.tv/page/news?id=12043&t=oslo_2010_lets_share_the_numbers

Analysis

The following analysis will focus on two parts of the interview: part 1, introductions and ‘small-talk’, and part 2, question time. These two parts are particularly significant as their successful completion is central to any interview – and in the attempts to make them successful, strategies are used which shed light on the plausibility of ELF being standardized or mutually negotiated during the interaction.

(1)⁶ Introductions and ‘Small-talk’

This sequence is the beginning of the interview in which the interviewer, Russell, and the interviewee, Intars, introduce themselves and engage in introductions and ‘small-talk’.

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 1 | R | Hi, this is Russell |
| 2 | I | <u>RUSSELL</u> |
| 3 | R | WITH::↑ |
| 4 | | WITH::↑ |
| 5 | | (0.5) |
| 6 | | <u>Intars</u> <u>Busulis</u> |
| 7 | I | <u>Intars</u> <u>Busulis</u> |
| 8 | | <u>RUSSELL</u> |
| 9 | R | hah↑ |
| 10 | I | <u>Intars</u> <u>Busulis</u> |
| 11 | R | [Uh] |
| 12 | I | [<u>Latoni</u> ↑] |
| 13 | | <u>Latoni</u> |
| 14 | R | <u>Latoni</u> ↓ |
| 15 | | This is representative for <u>Latoni</u> ↑ |
| 16 | | for Latvia [in the] = |
| 17 | I | [Yeah] |
| 18 | R | = Eurovision song [contest] |
| 19 | I | [Lotruv] (xxx) |
| 20 | | (0.5) |
| 21 | R | And thank↑ you↑ for the invit <u>a</u> tion to the Latvian embassy |
| 22 | I | yeah, yeah |
| 23 | R | It is [<u>very</u> good]= |
| 24 | I | [you enjoy? ↑] |

⁶ From 0 minutes 2 seconds to 0 minutes 28 seconds

- 25 R = very nice. Latvian beer is great
 26 I Oh yes, I know. That's the: greatest↑ beer actually
 27 R yeah, yeah, yeah
 28 I (xx)
 29 R its ↑good stuff↓
 30 I YEAH↑
 31 R (0.4) ::hh AND you did a concert↑?

In line 1, Russell, the interviewer, introduces himself to the viewer in English, “Hi, this is Russell”. An important part of an interview would be to quickly identify who the interviewee is. To do this, Russell sets up an “adjacency pair” (Sacks *et al.*, 1974). Russell does not explicitly ask the interviewee “What is your name?” (Sacks, 1992a: 4), but giving his own name, he makes the interviewee’s name giving in the next turn, a “‘natural’ next action” (ten Have, 1999: 14). However, in line 2, instead of following this ‘natural’ sequence by giving his name, Intars quickly repeats the name “RUSSELL” in a loud voice and in a strong East European accent – emphasizing in particular his ‘rolling’ of the consonant ‘R’. This could perhaps be a “device” (Sacks, 1992a: 6) used so Intars can avoid giving his name or even engaging in conversation with Russell.

In line 3, Russell attempts to initiate a speaker change by saying “WITH” in a relatively loud voice and with rising intonation. As, in the previous line, Intars avoids giving his name, and Russell makes another attempt to get the name of his guest. He tries to set up a sequence using the “current speaker selects next” technique (Sacks *et al.*, 1974: 704). Here, he allocates the next turn to Intars who is therefore “obliged to take next turn to speak” (ibid) and finish off the first half of Russell’s sequence. The construction of this turn allocation technique largely restricts Intars’ response to just stating his name. However, at the “transition-relevant place” (ibid: 703), Intars has not taken the opportunity to complete the adjacent sequence, prompting Russell to

immediately repeat the same technique – using the same loud voice and rising intonation. After no response again from Intars, and a micro-pause of around 0.5 seconds, Russell realises that the “turn constructional unit” (ten Have, 1999: 111) has failed to initiate speaker change. Here, as Intars has not taken his turn to speak at this transitional relevance place and the following 0.5 seconds of silence show how conversation can be “discontinuous” (Sacks *et al.*, 1974:714). In response to the brief silence, Russell finishes off the second half of his adjacency pair and states the name of his himself.

Upon hearing his name in line 6, Intars, in line 7, repeats his name in a strong East European accent. In line 8 he says “RUSSELL” in a loud voice and in the same accent. Finally, Russell and Intars have achieved the first stage of the introductions – name giving. This sequence highlights the point that adjacency pairs do not work ‘automatically’, they have to be negotiated between participants on a turn-by-turn basis to be successfully achieved (Jefferson & Schenkein, 1978⁷).

In line 12 and 13, Intars says “Latoni” meaning ‘Latvia’. So far in the dialogue, Intars’ turns have been brief: twice stating his and the interviewer’s name, in an East European accent, and using a Latvian word. The continued use of this ‘device’ could suggest that Intars is not comfortable in conducting the interview in English - an acknowledgement of “communicative difficulty” (Firth, 2009a: 144) which will take some discursive ‘work’ to overcome in order to achieve successful self introductions and ‘small-talk’.

⁷ Cited in ten Have, *Doing Conversation Analysis*, 1999: 114

In line 14, Russell repeats the word “Latoni” which shows that he understands the meaning of the word and is accepting of Intars’ use of the word. This suggests an attempt by Russell to build ‘common ground’ (Firth, 1996: 244) with Intars. Russell says “Latoni” with falling intonation which could be a subtle indication of his desire to end the use of brief utterances in Latvian and engage more with Intars.

In the following line (15) Russell does not allocate a turn to Intars. Instead, he changes the flow of the conversation and gives the longest utterance so far. Lines 2 to 14 have all been either 1 or 2 word utterances only. However, in line 15 Russell’s utterance is 5 words long – “This is representative of Latoni”. He maintains that ‘common ground’ with Intars by using the word “Latoni” yet with the longer utterance, he seeks to “provide for turn-size variability” (Sacks *et al.*, 1974: 705) - and he wishes to make the length of the Intars’ next turn longer. In line 16 Russell then says the word “Latvia” which incites Intars’ first clear usage of English in line 17 when he says “yeah”. Moreover, by doing this, Russell successfully gives more information about his guest, completing the introductory part of the interview.

In line 19, Intars makes 2 utterances in Latvian which result in a 0.5 second micro-pause. Unlike in lines 14 and 15, here, Russell chooses not to respond to Intars’ use of Latvian by using it himself. By doing this he subtly negotiates the end of the use of Latvian in this speech event – Russell is negotiating a move to the next ‘phase’ of the conversation.

Having established who the interviewer and interviewee are, Russell thanks Intars - a sign of courtesy typical in initial greetings. Russell’s TCU construction makes it easy for Intars to respond. This incites a quick and easy affirmative reaction,

in English, from Intars when in line 22 he says “yeah yeah”. At this point, Intars is becoming more willing to communicate with Russell and he subsequently shows this willingness in line 24 when he tries to prompt further talk by asking “you enjoy?”

In line 25, Russell gives an affirmative response to the previous question and then further seeks to gain common ground by changing the topic from the embassy to stating, “Latvian beer is great”. This indicates a development in the dialogue from introductions to ‘small-talk’. This breaks the chain of sequencing but, as the interviewer, Russell has the right to change the topic (Sacks, 1972: 343). This incites by far Intars’ longest turn as he quickly give the 9 word reply, “Oh yes, I know. It’s the greatest beer actually.” The length of this turn is in stark contrast to Intars’ earlier word turns which were only 1 or 2 words – and not all in English. This is down to Sacks *et al.*’s 1974 concept of “recipient design” (727). Here, turn size and order are “locally managed”, “party administered”, “interactionally controlled” and “sensitive to recipient design” (ibid). In this conversation, “locally sensitive fine-tuning takes place” (ten Have, 1999: 112) in which Russell adapts his TCUs to fit with the particular needs of Intars – making them easy to understand and shaping them to achieve common ground. Intars then feels more able to participate actively in the conversation. In this way, the rules of conversation are negotiated by both participants and overlapping, that was rife, gradually decreases. In addition, this negotiation leads to an increase in length of Intars’ utterances from 1 or 2 words in the opening 14 lines to 9 words in line 26. Through the discursive work of Russell, interaction appears to “move up a gear” (Firth, 2009a: 139).

After both participants agreeing that Latvian beer is worthy of merit, Russell, in line 31, pauses for around 0.4 seconds. He then inhales and asks a question with a

slightly loud “AND” followed by “you did a concert?” This TCU successfully uses ‘contextualization cues’ (Gumpertz 1982) and signify to Intars that the ‘small-talk’ is now finished. This shows that Russell, by initiating a “closing section” (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973⁸) is now keen to progress to the ‘main part’ of interview in which he asks questions directly.

Through such “locally-managed interactional, interpretive and linguistic ‘work’” the two participants eventually agree on conditions of exchange (Firth, 1996: 242), and some common ground, to negotiate a cohesive conversation and therefore successfully achieving introductions and ‘small-talk’.

(2)⁹ Question Time

The next dialogue is around 2 minutes into the interview and entails Russell proceeding with the interview and asking Intars a question.

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1 | R | Why did, why did you choose a ROCK song for Eurovision for |
| 2 | | Latvia? |
| 3 | I | (0.5) ↑I don’t know. Just like that. |
| 4 | R | Just come up. |
| 5 | I | (0.5) I am NOT a <u>composer</u> . Just my friend = |
| 6 | R | [Ah yeah ok] |
| 7 | I | = is <u>COMPOSER</u> . (0.5) He said ‘Just try (0.2) er (0.2) just try it |
| 8 | | for Eurovision some (0.5) some great erm |
| 9 | | some great (0.2) compo (0.4) composition.’ Eugh (0.5). Yeah?↑ |
| 10 | R | Yeah↑, correct↑, perfect↑ |
| 11 | I | Yeah↑? <u>Perfect</u> ↑? Yeah↑? OK! |
| 12 | R | Haha |
| 13 | I | and he er: just erm: (0.5) <u>PRESENT</u> ↑? (0.2) er presenting me:: |
| 14 | | some (0.4) uh (0.4) some uh (0.4) uh (0.5) huh:: APPETIZER |
| 15 | | you |
| 15 | | <u>know</u> ↑? [of SONG |
| 16 | R | [Yeah] |

⁸ Cited in ten Have, *Doing Conversation Analysis*, 1999: 22

⁹ From 1 minute 58 seconds to 2 minutes 3 seconds

In line 1, Russell performs the role of interviewer by asking a question. By doing this he sets up an adjacency pair sequence – question/answer. In line 3, after a 0.5 second micro-pause in which he presumably is considering his response, Intars completes the sequence by answering the question. By doing this he performs his role as interviewee. He understands the question and gives an appropriate response. This ‘normative’ response shows good communication is being achieved by the participants.

In the second half of line 3, Intars says, “Just like that”. This utterance may be considered to be ‘non-native’ in essence or even a ‘dysfluency’. Within this context a more ‘correct’ utterance could be ‘It just happened’. The natural place for a ‘repair’ to be initiated would be in the next turn. However, in line 4, Russell says, “Just come up”. Rather than repairing Intars’ ‘mistake’, Russell adds to it. By “not doing repair” (ten Have, 1999: 117) on the ‘deviant’ use of grammar in the previous utterance, and by Russell himself using non-standard language usage, it is suggested that “L2 instruction is not the order of the day” (Firth, 2009a: 131). Russell has judged Intars’ ‘error’ as being “non-fatal” (Jordan & Fuller, 1975). His turn, in line 4, is a form of ‘dueting’ (Falk, 1979¹⁰) in which Russell works with Intars to achieve effective conversation. This suggests that Russell is keen to maintain the continuity of the exchange and achieve a good interview – rather than concentrate on the ‘form’ of utterances. By not highlighting the linguistic ‘anomalies’ so as to achieve his practical needs, Russell displays the “Let it pass” (Firth, 1996: 243) procedure.

¹⁰ Cited in Firth, ‘The lingua franca factor’, 2009: 158

In line 5, Intars begins to further answer the question and in line 6 Russell offers further encouragement by giving the affirmative comment, “Ah yeah ok” to show he understands and is following him.

Lines 7, 8 and 9 show a slowing of the tempo of Intars’ speech. In this turn, he takes several micro-pauses and utters some hesitation markers, “er” and “erm”. He attempts to say a word then initiates a word cut-off, “compo”. Subsequently, Intars initiates a self-repair of the word and says “composition”. After eventually saying the word “composition”, Intars utters the sounds “Eugh”. The pauses, slowing of the tempo, word cut off, self-repair and uttering of “Eugh” all appear to entail “flagging for markedness” (Firth, 2009a: 140). These are all techniques used for the speaker to highlight their awareness that the language they are using may be considered unidiomatic or to have a “‘marked’ quality” (ibid). It is likely that Intars is unsure of the intelligibility of his ‘dysfluent’ utterances therefore he uses these devices to aid Russell’s comprehension. At the end of line 9, Intars then seeks an explicit indication that Russell understands by asking, “Yeah?”

In line 10, Russell gives a very affirmative response and says “Yeah, correct, perfect”. This, coupled with the rising intonation is very encouraging for Intars. Intars’ response in line 11, “Yeah? Perfect? Yeah? OK!”, suggests a slight sense of surprise that Russell fully understood the utterance and gave him, as he may see it, ‘marked’ language validation. Here, Intars is making use of Russell as a resource to help him answer the question. Russell willingly monitors clearly uses Russell to monitor his speech. Russell does so and offers encouragement. Here, the two participants are working together to achieve an effective question-answer sequence.

Line 13 shows further ‘flagging for markedness’ by Intars. He uses slightly elongated hesitation markers, “eh” and “erm” before a 0.5 second micro-pause. This suggests that he is again unsure of the possible ‘unidiomatic’ nature of his utterance. This is further emphasised when, after the micro-pause, he says “PRESENT” in a relatively loud voice with rising intonation. He then initiates self-repair by changing the verb to the present continuous, “presenting”. However, the elongated “me” after “presenting” suggests, even after the self-repair, he is aware of the potential ‘marked’ nature of his utterance.

In lines 14 and 15, the ‘flagging for markedness’ continues with Intars using the hesitation markers “uh” 3 times and a considerably elongated “huh” once, as well as 4 micro-pauses. This combination of ‘flagging’ techniques and delay in revealing what he was ‘presented’ suggests that Intars is acutely aware of the likelihood of his utterances being considered ‘marked’. Perhaps in this moment he is searching his lexicon for what he feels will be considered an ‘acceptable’ utterance. However, he eventually utters the word “APPETIZER” in a loud voice, then a plea-like “you know?” followed by “OF SONG” – which could be a delayed self-repair making up the noun phrase ‘appetizer of song’. This implies, again, the Intars is unsure if his utterances will be understood by Russell.

However, Russell’s quick reaction in line 16 does not suggest any misunderstanding. He simply gives a brief and affirmative, “Yeah”. By not repairing the utterance “APPETIZER” and stating that he understands it, Russell diverts attention from the ‘form’ of the utterance. By doing so, Russell makes Intars’ seemingly “‘abnormal’ talk appear ‘normal’” (Firth, 1996: 245). Russell is thus utilizing the “Make it normal” (ibid) procedure to ensure a successful interview. The

‘form’ of the utterance “APPETIZER” could be considered ‘dysfluent’ by L1 speakers of English, yet Russell focuses on the “substratum of message content” (Firth, 1996: 246). One cannot know for sure, but he can probably imagine that Intars is referring to, what L1 users of English may refer to as, a ‘sample’. For Russell, the message content, rather than the message form is of prime importance in this conversation. Through this discursive practice of not restricting themselves to what would be considered ‘acceptable’ by L1 users of English, in their pursuit of achieving the goal of an effective interview, the participants, both users of ‘ELF’, are displaying a freedom to use words creatively. In this context, the users of ‘ELF’ show “*robustness*” (Firth, 1996: 248) in that they are able to use and withstand “deviant linguistic behaviour” (ibid) and even make it socially functional (Canagarajah, 2007: 929).

Discussion

(1) Introduction and ‘Small-talk’

Until line 22 Intars appears more willing to either merely state his or the interviewers name or speak in Latvian – than to talk in English (as a *lingua franca*) with Russell, despite Russell’s use of various discursive techniques.

So communication problems until line 22 aren’t characterized by unintelligible pronunciation or any typical errors highlighted by research at the VOICE project. Rather, communication problems are characterized by Intars’ apparent reluctance to speak English with Russell. Perhaps Intars was reluctant to speak English with Russell because he didn’t want to draw attention to any unintelligible pronunciation or errors in his lexicogrammar. If this is indeed true, it would suggest that a standardization of ELF’s pronunciation and/or lexicogrammar would further discourage Intars from engaging in ELF interactions.

After line 22, Intars uses more English (as a *lingua franca*) – asking Russell a question (line 24) and delivering his longest line (line 26). The above analysis suggests that this is due to Russell adapting to the particular needs of Intars in this specific context – and successfully and effectively utilizing the relevant discourse strategies after using some strategies unsuccessfully. Russell initiates an eventually successful ‘trial and error’ process – resulting in the successful completion of his task of establishing the interviewee’s name and engaging in ‘small talk’. This would appear to support Canagarajah’s claims that in ELF interactions, participants monitor the context and each others’ language proficiency and based on this decide which “form of English” (2007: 925) and discursive strategies will be most effective in achieving “their purposes” (ibid). As the nature of this ELF interaction emerged and developed as the interaction ensued, a standardization of ELF seems impossible.

(2) Question Time

This part of the interaction has some instances of ‘dysfluent’ use of English on a grammatical level - such as ‘just like that’ (line 3) and what a native English speaker may consider inappropriate word choices such as ‘appetizer’ (line 14). However, Russell does not ‘repair’ these ‘dysfluencies’. He allows them to pass as they do not seem to impede on the success of the interaction. The dysfluencies are deemed ‘non-fatal’ and Russell utilizes the ‘let it pass’ technique. This allows Intars to carry on answering the question thus achieving a successful question/answer sequence. This implies that the content of the interaction is deemed more important than the form suggesting that, in this case, mutual intelligibility is not affected by non-standard use of English. On the contrary, the acceptance of non-standard use of English seems to aid the flow of the interaction.

This clearly suggests that, in this interaction, standardization or codification in Jenkins and/or Seidlhofer's terms is not necessary for achieving successful communication. Russell's acceptance of Intars' "deviant linguistic behaviour" (Canagarajah, 2007: 929) and use of such linguistic behaviour himself ("Just come up" line 4) shows how, during the interaction, he has negotiated with Intars to find the appropriate phonological, grammatical, and lexical range to ensure intelligibility – thus achieving the goal of a successful question/answer sequence.

As the negotiations develop in the interaction and are catered to these particular participants, any attempt to codify features of such interaction cannot be generalized – they would be limited to this interaction and these participants. This, therefore, suggests Canagarajah's viewpoint is more credible.

Conclusion

The findings in this study suggest that in ELF interactions, for intelligibility, standardization is not necessary. Indeed, it seems likely that standardization would actually hinder the flow of this particular ELF interaction. Intelligibility in ELF interactions depends on successful negotiation, throughout the interaction, of the appropriate grammatical, phonological, and lexical range between participants as well as the appropriate discourse strategies. Due to this there are as many variations within ELF interactions as there are users of ELF – making its standardization or accurate codification (in Jenkins and Seidlhofer's terms) an impossible task. The findings in this work suggest the form of ELF interactions is entirely variable thus supporting viewpoint of Canagarajah (2007).

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