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An Interdisciplinary Approach to English as a Lingua Franca

The central theme of this special issue of Status Quaestionis revolves around the controversial nature of English as a lingua franca (ELF), a topic that has gained momentum in language research ever since the process of globalization has turned English into the primary international language in fields as diverse as business, science, technology, education, leisure and tourism.

Indeed, the steadily growing number of academic publications, journals, books, seminars and international conferences dedicated to ELF shows that a thriving area of academic studies has developed over the last twenty years.

The aim of this issue of Status Quaestionis is to engage in the current scientific debate with contributions from parallel disciplines, to stimulate an improved understanding of some of the most relevant aspects to take into consideration, like constructivism and the emergent nature of ELF, the transcultural and multilingual dimension of ELF, education for intercultural citizenship via ELF, the contribution of corpus linguistics to BELF studies, and the pedagogic implications of ELF in ELT.

Altogether, this special issue of Status Quaestionis contains a selection of thirteen articles, written by international scholars from around the world, whose research provides more insight into the complex nature of ELF. Their contributions have been grouped according to four thematic areas: a)

Reflections on Language Development; b) ELF and Second Language Education; c) BELF; d) ELF and ELT Around the World.

The following is a brief presentation of each paper.

Reflections on Language Development

Alessandra Chiera, Ines Adornetti, and Francesco Ferretti (University of Roma Tre, Dept. of Philosophy). *Learning and Evolutionary Constraints on the Development of Languages*. This paper contributes to the debate about English as a lingua franca (ELF) by addressing some aspects related to the broader topic of language acquisition and evolution. Important features of the emergence of ELF are linked to the ‘bottleneck of communication’ generated by the sensory and memory processing constraints involved in language production and comprehension. A usage-based perspective on language suggests that the bottleneck provides a constraint that affects the language system both at the processing and acquisition level. Such a tendency might be responsible for the emergence of a global language that serves a communicative purpose. A systematic use of ELF can be explained within an integrated framework that focuses on the contribution of more general processes of language acquisition, change and evolution.

Steve McCafferty (University of Nevada, Las Vegas College of Education) *Inhabiting Another Language (and Culture?)*. This article explores Vygotsky’s ambition to transform his work into a dynamic, interfunctional perspective of personhood centred on consciousness. He focused on the unity of cognition and emotion at the psychological level. Human consciousness, as considered from the perspective of sociogenesis, necessarily focuses on how people come to experience the eco-social world around them or *Perezhivanie*. How people come to inhabit both a language and culture in development was a primary focus for Vygotsky and has application to coming to inhabit multiple lingua francas in one way or another according to domains of interaction and other contextual considerations.

Kurt Kohn (University of Tübingen, Institute of English Languages and Literatures) *Foreign language teaching from a pedagogical lingua franca perspective*. The author first discusses the pedagogical value of ELF communication from a social constructivist perspective. The key problem in English language teaching (ELT) is not that learners might be exposed to some kind of standard native speaker input variety; rather, the problem is

that they are generally not allowed to create their own version of it. In order to provide learners with opportunities for practising authentic and cooperative agency with a sense of ownership and emancipation, ELT needs to go beyond the face-to-face classroom by integrating intercultural virtual exchanges in which speaker-learners of different linguacultural backgrounds use their common target language English as a pedagogical lingua franca.

ELF and Second Language Education

Michael Byram, Durham University (Emeritus Professor in the School of Education). *Applied Linguist, Ethnographer, International(ist) Citizen - Perspectives on the Language Learner*. The author considers three ways of envisioning language learning/teaching and the language learner, and the disciplines or theories on which they are based: a) the language learner as ‘applied linguist’; b) the language learner as ethnographer; and c) the language learner as cosmopolitan/intercultural citizen. One criterion for determining which approach to take is the notion of ‘internationalism’, a reaction to nationalism and chauvinism which language teaching is well-placed to support. Another criterion is that language learning should have educational value.

Enrico Grazzi (University of Roma Tre, Dept. of Foreign Languages, Literatures and Cultures) *The Social Role of ELF to Enhance Intercultural Communicative Competence and Intercultural Citizenship in ELT*. The aim of this paper is to explore the possibility of devising a blended approach to English language teaching (ELT) whereby the reality of ELF and the development of learners’ intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and intercultural citizenship may converge within a comprehensive pedagogical framework. In this perspective, it seems appropriate to stimulate teachers’ critical thinking about the nature of ELF in the age of globalisation and consider its potential as a pedagogical lingua franca to enhance education for intercultural citizenship.

Eduardo Negueruela-Azarola (Universidad de Navarra) *Work and Play in Second Language Learning and Teaching: On Metaphors, Teaching, and Poets*. A look at the field of second language teaching reveals how both the language we use to construct second language learning and language classrooms and the orientation of the teaching practices we implement in formal educational settings are based on an implicit and metaphorical identification of learning activity with work activity. Based on Vygotsky’s notion of play as a developmental activity, and inspired by Lantolf’s proposals on the importance of play in second language internalization, it is

argued that, in some instances, it may be significant to substitute work for play as a leading metaphor to promote conceptual development and understand learning in the language classroom. Play is an essential part of second language development, and then from this perspective, ultimate attainment in language learning is not only about fluency, accuracy, or complexity but also and more significantly about creativity, artifice, and transformation.

BELF

Paola Vettorel (University of Verona, Dept. of Foreign Languages and Literatures) *Communication Strategies in BELF: Implications for Business English Language Teaching*. In English as a Business Lingua Franca (BELF), Communication Strategies aimed at enhancing explicitness and checking comprehension, such as requests for clarification and repetition, or paraphrasing and reformulation, are seen as an essential skill, together with business know-how, clarity of message and explicitness. This paper aims at contributing to this research area by exploring how BELF findings can be taken into account in terms of materials development and classroom practices that are oriented at fostering the development of effective communication in international business contexts.

Valeria Franceschi (University of Verona, Dept. of Foreign Languages and Literatures) *Achieving Mutual Understanding in the Global Workplace: a Questionnaire-based Survey of BELF Users' Perceptions and Practices*. This study aims at contributing to the investigation of workplace interactions by exploring BELF users' perceptions and practices through a questionnaire-based survey. The survey focuses on both oral and digital interaction, analyzing these contexts separately due to their inherently different nature. Respondents identify what they perceive to be the essential aspects of successful communication and those that on the contrary may lead to mis- or non-understanding. The survey also aims at shedding light on which strategies users employ when faced with potential challenges.

Paola-Maria Caleffi (University of Verona, Dept. of Foreign Languages and Literatures) *Building Rapport in BELF Communication: Solidarity Strategies in Business Emails*. In the globalized market, business professionals use emails to communicate with customers, suppliers, and even colleagues who may be based in any part of the world, employing English as a business lingua franca (BELF). Based on a corpus of business email exchanges amongst

BELF users, this paper proposes a classification of ‘solidarity strategies’ (Köster 2006) aimed at building and nurturing rapport in email communication despite the pressure of getting the job done.

ELF and ELT Around the World

Ying Wang, and Yang-Yu Wang (University of Southampton, CGE Centre for Global Englishes) *A Critical Review of ‘English’ in China’s English Education: How far can Chinese Teachers Embrace ELF?* The authors of this article consider classroom teaching in the educational context where language policy interacts with language perceptions and practices, seeking to understand the extent to which Chinese teachers can embrace ELF. With a focus on teacher agency, the study explores language policy, classroom practice and teacher perspectives on English as a subject matter of language education. The findings point to the interaction between teacher agency and policy constraints. The article ends with the suggestion that the approach to English in China’s education policy should be reconsidered and that the debates on ELF in relation to Chinese speakers are necessary for possible changes in education policy.

Ana Paula Martinez Duboc (São Paulo State University, Brazil), and **Sávio Siqueira** (Dept. of Germanic languages, Federal University of Bahia) *ELF Feito no Brasil: Expanding Theoretical Notions, Reframing Educational Policies.* The authors present a brief state-of-the-art on recent ELF research in Brazil, followed by an analysis on how such theoretical framework echoes in the recently launched Brazilian National Common Core Curriculum (BNCC) (Brazil, 2018). In particular, the authors take into consideration the place of ELF within the very epistemological conflict that emerges out of a standardized, top-down curriculum framed by a more fluid notion of language. In line with Bakhtinian thought, which acknowledges the dialogical and heteroglot nature of language, this paper advocates in favor of such epistemological conflicts, be them within the ELF research field or in ELF-based educational policies.

Enric Llurda, and Josep Cots (Universitat de Lleida, Departament d’Angles i Linguística) *PLURELF: A Project Implementing Plurilingualism and English as a Lingua Franca in English Language Teaching at University.* This article presents the research conducted at the Cercle de Lingüística Aplicada of the Universitat de Lleida during the implementation of a project on plurilingualism and English as a Lingua Franca (PLURELF) in the

teaching of an ESP course at university level. It stands on the hypothesis that the adoption of a plurilingual approach in English language teaching produces more positive results with regard to language development, intercultural awareness, and learners' attitudes than traditional monolingual approaches, thus challenging the deeply rooted idea in the theory and practice of ELT that a monolingual native-based perspective is needed in order to effectively teach the language.

James D'Angelo (Chukyo University, School of World Englishes) *The Reality of ELF in Japan*. This article provides background information on English language attitudes and education in the Japanese context. It considers the value of ELF-informed views for the Japan context, both from educational and business/professional perspectives. Efforts to promote ELF-informed programs will be investigated. It also explores areas of continued resistance to ELF and other pluralistic paradigms in Japan. A new all-EMI major to start from April 2020 at the author's own university—targeting international students from Asia/Pacific— will be outlined in some detail. Finally, the article takes into consideration the challenges which remain to be faced for ELF in Japan.

I would like to conclude by saying that I am deeply grateful to Prof. Irene Ranzato, from the University of Rome Sapienza, for proposing me to be the guest editor of this issue of *Status Quaestionis* dedicated to ELF studies. I would also like to express my gratitude to the journal's Scientific and Editorial Committees for supporting this publication.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all the contributors who have joined this important publishing initiative. It has been an honour for me to cooperate with them and accomplish this task.

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