Toward ELF-aware assessment: Which teacher competences and why?

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My interest in this talk

• **Assessment** and **testing** as an integral part of the **teaching** and **learning** process

• Highlighting the major challenges for assessment/testing that **ELF research** raises

• Seeing teacher competences as an organic part of **teachers’ professional growth**
Challenges to language testing/assessment

“The sociolinguistic reality of English as a lingua franca (ELF) communication represents one of the most significant challenges to language testing and assessment since the advent of the communicative revolution” (Harding & McNamara 2018: 570)
What is ELF?

• Any communication involving NNS of English using English as its main vehicle:
  – “A ‘contact language’ between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication” (Firth 1996: 240)
  – “any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice and often the only option” (Seidlhofer 2011: 7)
  – "defined functionally by its use in intercultural communication rather than formally by its reference to native-speaker norms” (Hülmbauer et al. 2008)

• Mainly spoken characteristics
What is ELF?

- **English as a Multilingual Franca (EMF):**
  “Multilingual communication in which English is available as a contact language of choice, but is not necessarily chosen” (Jenkins 2015: 73)

- ELF is a **similect**: A variety of a language spoken by people who have a different L1, with features transferred from the first language in parallel by individual speakers rather than by a cohesive group (Mauranen 2012)
Features of ELF lexicogrammar

• Focus on *intelligibility* & *comprehensibility* through the implementation of *context-sensitive accommodation strategies*

• Based on the **VOICE corpus research**:
  – invariant question tags, e.g. *you’re very busy today, isn’t it?*
  – treating ‘who’ and ‘which’ as interchangeable relative pronouns, e.g. *the picture who / a person which*
  – shift of patterns of preposition use, e.g. *we have to study about*
  – preference for bare and/or full infinitive over the use of gerunds, e.g. *I look forward to see you tomorrow*
  – extension to the collocational field of words with high semantic generality, e.g. *take an operation*
  – increased explicitness, e.g. *how long time*
Aspects of ELF discourse

**Code-switching:** the process of changing *two* languages

**Translanguaging:**
- translating between languages
- comparing and being playful with different languages
- mixing words and expressions from different languages in the same spoken or written utterance
- using the home language in one part of an activity and the school language in another part

**Accommodation strategies:** paraphrasing, rephrasing, repeating, etc.
Central aspects of ELF in use

• **Pragmatics:**
  – focus is on **function rather than form**
  – **communicative efficiency** more important than linguistic accuracy

• ELF interactions are **fluid and hybrid:**
  – Accommodation
  – **Intelligibility** and **Comprehensibility**
The “special” role of English
EFL: students as learners

1. Foreign Language

2. Exam-Oriented

3. International

4. Multicultural

ELF: students as users
EFL teacher competences

• **Subject-matter (formal education)** centred
  – Testing as a top-down process (defined by the curriculum)
  – Emphasis on preconceived notions of correctness
  – Formative/summative feedback that is NS-bound

• **Nativespeakerism** (dangers thereof) (Holliday 2006, 2015)
  – Stereotyping large culture approach (Holliday 1999)
  – T as custodian/guardian of NS (?) varieties

• A rather *simplified (if not simplistic) way of understanding language interactions*
Challenges to language testing/assessment

(Harding & McNamara 2018; McNamara 2014; Jenkins 2020; Newbold 2015; Canagarajah 2019; Harding 2019)

• destabilises the central place of the native speaker in determining acceptable and appropriate language use
• forces us to reconsider the nature of language proficiency itself
• recognise the important role played by accommodation and interactional communicative strategies
• reconsideration of the criteria for judging successful performance
• fundamental redefinition of the test construct to include more of what Hymes (1972) called “ability for use”, general cognitive and non-cognitive abilities not specific to language
ELF-aware pedagogy

“...the **process** of engaging with ELF research and developing **one’s own** understanding of the ways in which it can be **integrated** in one’s **classroom context**, through a continuous process of **critical reflection**, design, implementation and evaluation of **instructional activities** that reflect and **localize** one’s interpretation of the ELF construct.”

(Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2018: 459)

**ELF awareness is MORE than awareness of ELF!**
Three components of ELF awareness

ELF awareness is MORE than awareness of ELF

- Awareness of language and language use
- Awareness of instructional practice
- Awareness of learning

(Sifakis, 2019)
I—Awareness of language and language use

- An engagement with language in communication
- Knowledge of syntactic, morphological, lexical, phonological, pragmatic, sociocultural features
- Sensitivity, noticing, alertness, orientation to stimuli
- Awareness of *languaging* and *translanguaging* processes
- Involves awareness of own *preconceptions* about normativity, appropriateness, comprehensibility, ownership

**In practice:**

- Develop **metalinguistic** activities: why does ELF communication works as it does
II—Awareness of instructional practice

ELF awareness is MORE than awareness of ELF

• Teacher-centred practice: what Ts do / do not do
• Curriculum-oriented: what textbook “allows”
• Personal theories about instruction, corrective feedback, meeting learners’ needs
• Self-perception about T role as language user, as role model, as professional

In practice:
✓ Develop metacognitive activities: what is the origin of these perceptions → ask WHY
III—Awareness of learning

ELF awareness is MORE than awareness of ELF

Impact of USE on LEARNING
• Where learning takes place (formal/informal settings)
• English not a foreign language

In practice:
✓ Integrate authentic tasks with realistic communicational goals
✓ Ask learners to reflect on their own convictions about what works in communication in English
ELF awareness: What teachers should know

*Know thy teaching context*—
- Not all teaching situations are the same; different goals, different expected practices

*Know thy learners*—
- Make it about themselves

*Know thyself*—
- Teacher roles: guardian/custodian of “proper English” vs. facilitator/prompter of authentic interactions
ELF awareness: What teachers should know

Welcome change—convictions concerning:

• What is taught is not always what is learned (or learnable): rethink correction and feedback strategies

• Go beyond EFL (what learners SHOULD do) and build upon what learners ALREADY DO with English

• Understand that ELF awareness is an opportunity for professional development
Benefits of ELF awareness for exam-oriented settings

Understanding the importance of ELF in everyday interactions involving NNS will help us

• lower the “stress” of teaching-to-a-standardised-test

• promote real-life interactional skills, self-awareness and self-confidence in today’s global society
Bottom line—in order for ELF integration to succeed in EFL settings:

- Learners (+ other stakeholders) should embrace it (to some extent)
- Teachers should be in (some) control of their teaching context
- Teachers should integrate appropriate activities that raise learners’ confidence as ELF users
- Teachers should target learners’ attitudes towards ELF concerns
- ELF awareness is MORE than awareness of ELF
Conclusions

- **ELF awareness**
- **Small cultures**
- **Cross-cultural communication**
- **Intercultural competence**
- **Reflective questions—metalinguistic and metacognitive tasks**
- **Attitude awareness—self-awareness**
- **Transformation (gradual)**
Thank you!

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ELF-aware teacher competences

The concept of ELF awareness (Sifakis 2019; Sifakis & Bayyurt 2018)

• Richer understanding of intercultural communication
  – Translanguaging practices
  – Emphasis on accommodation strategies (incl. creativity)
  – Formative feedback

• Recognizing importance of learning through using outside of the EFL context

• Raising awareness of attitudes (and perhaps transforming them)

• Testing is not a simple, curriculum-defined, top-down process

• Bringing alternative assessment to the fore
  – ...dsdsds

• ...
• McNamara 2014