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English as a Lingua Franca in the Context of the Czech
Educational System

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I hereby declare that this diploma thesis, titled - English as a Lingua Franca in the Context of the Czech Educational System, is the result of my own work and that I used only the cited sources.

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Abstract

Despite the predominance of English used by non-native speakers in international communication, the approach to teaching this language is still centred on the notion of acquiring English for the purpose of communication with native speakers. This thesis argues for acknowledgement of English as a lingua franca in the approach to teaching English. It also stresses the necessity of further investigations into the global use of English to better understand this phenomenon. A questionnaire was conducted with ten English teachers to see their opinions about some of the key issues of English as a lingua franca (for instance the concept of nativeness, the role of a teacher and the understanding of an error). As a result, it was found that despite some slow changes in individual opinions, the traditional view on teaching English is still prevalent. Both the theoretical research and the analysis of the questionnaire stress the need of implementing the concept of English as a lingua franca into teaching English as it is necessary to prepare students for the reality of global use of this language.

Key words: English as a lingua franca, second language acquisition, nativeness, error, variation

Abstrakt

Angličtina je statisticky více využívána pro komunikaci mezi lidmi, kteří nejsou rodilí mluvčí. Přesto je ve výuce angličtiny místo mezinárodní komunikace stále kladen důraz na osvojení tohoto jazyka z důvodu komunikace s rodilými mluvčími. Tato práce představuje koncept angličtiny jako *lingua franca* a uvádí příklad pozitivních změn ve výuce angličtiny, které by mohlo přinést uznání a implementace tohoto konceptu. Deset učitelů angličtiny vyplnilo dotazník zaměřený na jejich názory ohledně základních tezí teoretického výzkumu angličtiny použité jako *lingua franca*. Například to byl jejich přístup k tomu, jakou roli pro učitele hraje být rodilý mluvčí, či jejich názor na gramatické chyby. Jako výsledek vyšlo najevo, že ačkoli dochází k pomalé změně názorů, stále přetrvává tradiční koncepce učení angličtiny orientovaná na jazyk rodilého mluvčího, který představuje cíl a kritérium pro hodnocení studentů. Teoretický výzkum a analýza dotazníků poukazují na nutnost dále zkoumat koncept angličtiny použité jako *lingua franca* a zohlednění výsledků výzkumu v přístupu k učení angličtiny. Jedině tak budou studenti připravováni na skutečnou podobu globálně používané angličtiny.

Klíčová slova: angličtina jako *lingua franca*, osvojování druhého jazyka, rodilý mluvčí, chyba, variace

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Introduction

The predominance of the variety of English used between non-native speakers, known as English as a lingua franca, has created a lively theoretical discussion of this phenomena. The global use of English is reshaping the language. This should be reflected in the approach to teaching this language. The research on English as a lingua franca calls into question the deeply rooted constructs of traditional second language acquisition. Some of these are for example the conception of second language speakers as incompetent learners, the stress laid on an individual's cognition in language acquisition, the automatic approach to deviation from norm as something inherently wrong and the orientation on native speakers in setting classroom goals and in evaluation.

Despite the growing interest in the theory of English used as a global language, the findings have not yet caused any real changes in the approach to teaching English in the Czech Republic. Based on the research of scholars of English as a lingua franca supported by the results of the questionnaire in this thesis, English is still taught as a second/foreign language. That is, with the presumption that the goal of all students is to achieve native speaker like speech and become a part of the native language community. This does not reflect the use of English as an international language used mostly to communicate with non-native speakers. The goal in English as a lingua franca is achieving international intelligibility rather than perfect adherence to native forms.

The aim of the thesis is firstly to provide a summary of the theoretical underpinnings of English as a lingua franca. Secondly, it is to show which areas of the research could be implemented into the practice of English teaching to ensure that students become successful in the international use of English. To this end, the thesis was divided into three parts. Chapters 1 and 2 (pg. 10-28) are a summary of the research on English as a lingua franca (hereafter ELF). The stress is laid on comparing the approach to English teaching in the traditional approach to second language acquisition (hereafter SLA) and in ELF theory. Chapter 3 (pg. 30-50) deals with the questionnaire analysis. The questionnaires were given to ten English teachers and dealt with the teachers' attitudes to nativeness, accents, variations from norm and other central issues of the research on ELF. Chapters 4 (52-59) of this thesis is a reflection on areas of English teaching which could benefit from rethinking the traditional SLA constructs and embracing the ELF approach.

1 Defining English as a Lingua Franca

The term *lingua franca* comes from the Arabic word ‘*lisan-al-farang*’. This term was originally used to describe the language Arabic speakers used to communicate with travellers from Western Europe (House 557). Today, *lingua franca* is used to describe any system of symbols which acts as a common language. For example, the *Marian Webster Dictionary* describes movies as “*lingua franca of the twentieth century*” (*Marian Webster Dictionary*, online). Therefore, English as a *Lingua Franca* can be understood as the kind of English which serves as a common, international language. However, to find a precise definition of the ‘E’ in ELF has proved problematic. The global use of English raises many questions, such as: whose English is it, which form should it have, to which extent does it still belong to its native speakers, how should it be taught, who should teach it etc. These and many more questions about the new role of English lie at heart of the current ELF research.

There have been many attempts to define ELF. Most of the definitions fall into two broader categories which differ according to the inclusion of native speakers. The exclusive definition is based on the idea of non-nativeness and shared foreignness of ELF speakers. According to its author, Alan Firth, ELF is “[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” (1996, 240). The Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English, founded by Seidlhofer in 2001, offers a more inclusive definition “[ELF is] an additionally acquired language system which serves as a common means of communication for speakers of different first languages” (VOICE). The important difference from Firth’s definition is that this one does not exclude native speakers of English. Native speakers are assumed to be using ELF like non-native speakers, that is, as “an additionally acquired language system” (Jenkins 2009, 4). English as a *lingua franca* has different character and functions than English as a mother tongue. Therefore, the ability to communicate successfully at an international level has to be learned by native speakers as well.

Both definition see ELF as something which has long outgrown the concept of English as a mother tongue in the custody of its native speakers. This means the ‘E’ in ELF cannot be understood as a foreign language learned/taught for the purpose of communicating mostly with its native speakers (hereafter NS) and their culture. ELF is a shared, international and cross-cultural code. As Widdowson resolutely puts it “It is a

matter of considerable pride and satisfaction for native speakers of English that their language is an international means of communication. But the point is that it is only international to the extent that it is not their language” (385, 1994). In other words, the price paid for becoming an international language is that no nation can claim ownership of it.

As more and more non-native speakers start using English, the situation is such that “[r]oughly only one out of every four users of the language in the world is a native speaker of it” (Seidlhofer 2006, 92). The precise amount of ELF speakers is impossible to specify as it is an ever growing number. According to Crystal “[t]here may now be as many as two billion English speakers in the world” (2008, 3). The fact that more interactions in English are held between non-native speakers than between native speakers further stresses the importance of exploring the concept of English as a lingua franca.

1.1 ELF and the Constructs of Second Language Acquisition

One of the most important tasks of ELF research has been the rethinking of the deeply entrenched constructs of second language acquisition. ELF questions the negatively loaded terms such as non-nativeness, learner, target language and many other SLA concepts. These are considered to be “misleading and distorting” as they are founded on “monolingual norms and practices” (Canagarajah 2007, 934). This part will deal with some of the most prominent SLA constructs and the ELF perspective on them.

1.1.1 Cognitive Bias and the Incompetent Learner

The current SLA practice focuses mostly on an isolated individual. This individual is understood as a learner. The role of learner is isolated not only from the situation at hand but also from all other social identities. Learners are usually judged based purely on their competence, that is, their mental command of language. As Canagarajah points out “[t]o reduce the analysis to speaker as learner is to leave out many other features of communication that provide significance to the language data” (2007, 929). Such isolation of the role of learners from their other potentially relevant social identities and the situational context can therefore lead to a false interpretation of data.

Another problem with the notion of a learner is that it automatically presupposes the speaker to be someone who is “[a]n a-priori defective communicator” (Firth Wagner 188). Wrong form of an irregular verb is seen as a gross error, be it in school setting or uttered in a successful business negotiation. Such ignorance of the situational context leads Firth to criticize the overwhelming stress on form “Quite clearly, omission of the 3rd person ‘s’ on verbs in the present tense does not prevent five thousands of tons of Danish Blue being shipped to Jakarta and Jeddha on a weekly basis” (Firth 2009, 158). This is one of the reasons why ELF scholars have been arguing for a reconceptualization of SLA so that it can become “[a] more theoretically and methodologically balanced enterprise that endeavours to attend to, explicate, and explore, in more equal measures ... both the *social* and *cognitive* dimensions of S/FL [Second/Foreign Language] use and acquisition” (Firth Wagner 286, stress original).

Generalisations about two dimensional characters of learners have resulted in an overbearing focus on their communicative problems and insufficiencies. Thus, instead of focusing on communicative successes and social aspects of language acquisition, it is the learner’s difficulties that are continuously being stressed. Even communicative strategies are defined from such defective point of view as “potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal” (Færch & Kasper 36). Such underrepresentation of communicative successes in SLA creates a simplified system which does not reflect the complex aspects of language acquisition. As Haugen points out, simplification might be beneficial or even necessary at a certain stage of science (325). However it is now time to devise a model that will reflect the current practice of English and thus be of more use for English teachers and English speakers alike.

1.1.2 Target Language and Linear Acquisition

The concept of target language is a logical consequence of the aforementioned notion of a deficient learner. This learner is thought to be “struggling to overcome an underdeveloped L2 competence, striving to reach the “target” competence of an idealized native speaker” (Firth Wagner 287). The conception is based on the misleading presupposition that all ELF speakers strive to achieve NS-like English with the goal of becoming a “proper member” of the native speech community (House 558). Yet, the goal of many ELF speakers may be simply to become an efficient international

communicator. “It is therefore meaningless to measure the distance of LFE speakers from the language of Anglo-American speakers as LFE has no relevance to their variety” (Canagarajah 2007, 927). One cannot generalize about the goals of language users. Those who wish to become a part of a Native English community may indeed strive to adopt all the native norms. Others may be contented with the ability to communicate comfortably with NS and NNS alike. Firth captures the target language mindset in a very evocative way “[it portrays NNS as] perpetually, agonizingly, chronically struggling, like Sisyphus and his stone, to ascend the steep incline of their “interlanguage”, the goal being the promised land of “target competence” (Firth 2009, 151). To call proficient ELF speakers possessors of a mere interlanguage striving to reach a target language is to impose an irrelevant evaluative perspective on their communicative competence.

Another key problem with the notion of a target language is the assumption of an ultimate goal in language acquisition. The concept of linearity in language acquisition has been disputed by Canagarajah who claims that it falsely presumes an “[e]ndpoint to be achieved in language training” (2007, 927). Canagarajah sees the learning of a language as a cumulative process in which speakers improve their ability of aligning their language resources to the needs of a particular situation (2007, 928). However, no ELF speaker and NS can ever claim to have reached the complete command of a language. It is rather the perpetual striving to better oneself that is the goal in itself. The NS and ELF speaker are both trying to become more successful communicators in their own right. Both have competence in their respective varieties and both have to further develop their proficiency.

1.1.3 Comparative Fallacy

Bley-Vroman defines comparative fallacy as “[t]he mistake of studying the systematic character of one language by comparing it to another” (6). The form ELF takes is dependent on the particular set of interlocutors. As the interlocutors accommodate to each other the form of ELF becomes an ever-changing code full of varieties and changes. It is clear that researchers from monolingual backgrounds, who are not used to such practice, can impose norms that are irrelevant to the present communicative event and perhaps judge the communication unjustly.

Canagarajah questions the ability of researchers who are not a part of the community and interaction at hand to judge fairly “[g]iven the intersubjective nature of LFE, how can researchers who do not participate in a specific communicative event claim to be privy to the norms and meanings operative for those involved” (Canagarajah 2007, 929). The researchers who are not fully immersed in the conversation in question are in danger of a patronizing point of view. They might find themselves labelling variations which do not make sense to them, but cause no problems to the interlocutors, as errors. ELF should not be taken as a deviation from the proper English, but rather as a “viable variety” (Seidlhofer 2000, 65). To achieve this, there is a need to stop evaluation ELF interaction with a NS set of norms.

1.1.4 The Orientation on NS and the Question of Ownership of English

Traditionally, native speaker has played an essential role in SLA. For example, Long claims that the “[p]articipation in conversation with a NSs to be the necessary and sufficient condition for SLA” (275). NS is often taken as the model of correctness and the goal to emulate. For example, Van der Geest subscribes to the traditional stance of SLA when he places the figure of a native speaker as “the ultimate state at which first and second language learners may arrive and as the ultimate goal in language pedagogy” (317). Such idealized concept of nativity in SLA has suffered a lot of criticism in the ELF discourse. The notion of a NS as the utmost authority is an obsolete notion as it does not reflect the reality of globally used English. There is a common belief in the ELF research that international English should not be constrained by NS imposed norms. The division of speakers into two distinct groups is also perceived as a deceptive simplification. Wagner and Firth point out that the blanket terms of NS and NNS imply “homogeneity throughout each group, and clear cut distinctions between them” (292). Such clear cut, binary categories fail to take into account the problem of defining people who do not fit into either category such as bilingual and multilingual speakers.

Firth also criticizes the fact that NSs are often “the fabled and idealized” while the NNS are generally automatically seen as learners with a limited command of L2 (Firth 2009, 151). This problem is to be traced back to the reduction of a language user to a language learner. The concept of a language learner ignores the fact that there is an array of social identities and contexts which are just as significant for any given

communicative event as the nativity of the speaker. Some of these aspects could be for example age, sex, education, occupation, number of interlocutors, intimacy between interlocutors, position of power, aim of communication (firing someone versus telling a joke etc.). The success of a communicative event clearly does not reside simply in the fact whether one is or is not native.

Yet, the prevalence of the notion of nativeness (and therefore native culture and native norms) is still deeply rooted in the SLA practice. Seidlhofer mentions it in connection with teaching materials. She points out that textbooks still mostly focus “[o]n Anglo-American culture(s), plus sometimes ‘exotic optional extras’ such as postcolonial literature and New Englishes ... standard British English or American English norms are taken for granted as the only valid measures of proficiency” (Seidlhofer 2010, 366). As Seidlhofer points out, a clear example of the imposition of norms can be found in the The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. For example the self assessment for B2 in spoken interaction says:

I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views. ... I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language ... even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent (Council of Europe: CEFR, 24).

This shows that despite the shift from “correctness” to “appropriateness and intelligibility” the intelligibility is “still taken to mean being intelligible to native speakers, and being able to understand native speakers” (Seidlhofer 2010, 366). Such biased approach does not reflect the global role of English. It also feeds into the aforementioned misconception that all ELF speakers learn English because they want to join the native community.

The discrepancy between the preponderance of ELF interactions and the prevalence of normative power of English as a mother tongue has been strongly criticized. Jenkins complains that while there is a strong statistical dominance of ELF, it is still regarded as an “inferior kind of English” because it does not copy the language of native speakers” (Jenkins 2011, 2). Jenkins questions the traditionally NS-oriented model when she proclaims “the time is well due for us to take a long hard look at what

and who international universities, journals, conferences and the like are for” and “ to consider the implications for the kinds of English that are appropriate to the international enterprise” (Jenkins 2011, 12).

Jenkins is not the only scholar who criticizes the imbalance of normative power and the biased orientation on NS. Graddol points out that English should no longer be taught predominantly as a foreign language (learned to communicate with the native community), but as an international language (2006, 11). There has even been a suggestion of a new name for English to reflect this change - “Globalish” (Ammon 2003, 34). The new name should “raise awareness of a status and function fundamentally different from the English language, namely a lingua franca, whose norms are no longer under the control of native speakers of English” (Ammon 2006, 25). Seidlhofer also clearly devaluates the role of NSs when she refers to them as “the *ancestral* speakers in whose territories it [English] originated” (2010, 362, emphasis added). Still more radical is the statement by Rajagopalan “In its emerging role as a world language, English has no native speakers” (112). Paikeday goes as far as to proclaim the native speaker “dead” (1985).

As the importance of the native speakers seems to be diminishing, the question arises if they can still claim custody over English. According to many they have long lost it. Graddol writes that native speakers “may feel the language ‘belongs’ to them, but it will be those who speak English as a second or foreign language who will determine its world future” (1998, 5). House takes a similar stance claiming that “English is ... no longer ‘owned’ by its native speakers ... not least because of the increasing frequency with which non-native speakers use ELF in international contacts” (557). Other scholars focus on the emancipation of NNS. Seidlhofer claims that “ELF gets appropriated by its non-native users, who – like hitherto just native speakers of a language – become acknowledged as agents in the processes that determine how the language spreads, develops, varies and changes” (Seidlhofer 2010, 362). Els also supports the agency of NNSs “Native speakers will notice – sometimes to their great annoyance – that their language is frequently being changed in unorthodox ways” (276).

Ultimately, to argue over the custody of English is not going to bring any advantage if one is considering international use of language. “[T]he very fact that English is an international language means that no nation can have custody over it. To grant such custody is necessarily to arrest its development and so undermine its

international status” (Widdowson 1994, 385). Additionally, it would be impossible to manage a language which has gained such a momentum by an “exo-normative fiat from outside” (Widdowson 1994, 386). Therefore, according to Widdowson, English should not be viewed as a code to be standardized and franchised by the privileged group of its owners. English did not become an international language by the means of distribution. Rather, it spreads and in the process becomes actualized to suit the needs of people who use it (Widdowson 1997, 139). Therefore, English should be seen as a system which “develops endo-normatively, by a continuing process of self-regulation” (Widdowson 1994, 386). Thus, no nation can claim custody over it.

However, the important consequence of having a lively debate about the ownership of English has been the impact on the so-called non-native teachers of English. After all, it is them who “constitute the majority of teachers of English worldwide” (Seidlhofer 2000, 52). Instead of focusing only on the deficiencies of non-native teachers, the discussion has turned to the possible advantage they can offer to their students. One such advantage is having gone through the same language acquisition process as their students, often through the same language.

It is important to note that the concept of nativity and native speakers is of course still relevant to those countries where people are born into the L1 English community. However, there should be a clear distinction between English as a native language and English as a lingua franca. This division “[l]eaves varieties of native English intact for all the functions that only a first language can perform and as a target for learning in circumstances where ENL is deemed appropriate” it also “takes pressure off a monolithic concept of English pulled in different directions by divergent demands and unrealistic expectations, a state of affairs frustrating for speakers of both ENL and ELF” (Seidlhofer 2004, 229). The lingua franca concept is therefore invaluable as it enables a fresh look at the role of English in contexts where most of the communication is between NNS and where the traditional focus on NS is not expedient.

2 Describing ELF

The resulting diminished importance of native speaker and native norms is seen by many as a logical consequence of the new role of English as a global language.

However, this paradigm shift in the SLA theory still needs to be projected into practice. While it is agreed that the goal of learning English should no longer be the emulation of NS but “international intelligibility” (Seidlhofer 2003, 18), there is no consensus about what exactly international intelligibility means. This makes the undergoing research about the core features of ELF that more important.

Even though the spread of English and its use as an international language is rapid, ELF research is still in its nascent phase. Seidlhofer comments on the biased description of English “[t]he rapid development in computer technology has opened up hitherto undreamt-of possibilities in language description. The main research efforts ... are not expended on studying how English is actually used worldwide, but instead concentrate very much on English as a native language” (8).

Seidlhofer points out that as most of the descriptive linguistic research has been dedicated to description of mother tongue English, the resulting state of research creates false impression of the significance and relevance of native English (2000, 9). Such assumption is out of touch with the real use of English. Firth reinforces this notion claiming that “[a] stark contrast is seen to exist between linguistic and pragmatic descriptions of the phenomenon of ELF and ELF’s global preponderance” (2009 148). This situation results in the curious lack of theoretical background of the global role of English. This leads to the ossification of language policies as they are not reflecting the real English practice. There has been no “radical reconceptualization” instead, what we see is a “‘conceptual gap’ ... in the place where ELF should, by now, be firmly established in people’s minds, alongside the notions of English as a native language” (Seidlhofer 2004, 212). Thus, the vast number of daily ELF interactions is still not supported with an in depth theoretical description. Yet, it would be of great use to know which strategies ELF speakers use to avoid miscommunication, which forms seem to be pivotal to mutual understanding and which variations can be suspended.

Despite the prevailing bias towards the description of English as a native language, ELF research has made some headway in the past decade. Several corpora of ELF interactions have been founded. Among these are for example the Corpora of ELF interactions in academic settings (ELFA <http://www.helsinki.fi/englanti/elfa/elfacorus>), the International Corpus of English (ICE <http://ice-corpora.net/ice/>), the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE <http://www.uclouvain.be/en-cecl-icle.html>), and perhaps the most prominent corpus, the

Vienna–Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE www.univie.ac.at/voice/). The availability of data from these, and many others, corpora has enabled ELF researchers to start describing ELF in greater detail.

2.1 Variation

In ELF interactions each set of participants creates a specific form of common language. As Canagarajah states, the form of ELF is negotiated by the cooperation of each set of speakers to fit their purposes (2007, 925). Because each set of interlocutors seem to negotiate their own version of lingua franca, its character is that of constant emergence and thus impossible to be fully defined priori (Gramkow Andersen 108). Variation is the foundation of ELF. It is “[a]t the heart of this system, not secondary to a more primary common system of uniform norms” (Firth 2009, 163). However, with the help of ELF corpora, researchers have been able to come up with some key characteristic that seem to be applicable to all ELF interactions in spite of their emergent quality. A list of common tendencies of ELF speakers from varying backgrounds is being constructed. The key principle behind the commonalities seems to be speech economy. The tendency of language to become more regular has been made quicker and more visible as English gains global use.

In traditional SLA point of view, the list of patterns central to the form of ELF would be considered simply a list of errors. However, the data from the corpora shows that these common patterns of variations “do not cause communicative problems” (Seidlhofer 2010, 92). For people who have formed their opinions about correctness based on the traditional SLA it will be difficult approach to accept such forms as viable variety. They go “against the grain of people’s linguistic tradition” (Seidlhofer 2000, 65). However, as the abovementioned discourse about the custody of language already established, it is pointless to argue about who has the right to control English. As English spreads it changes endo-normatively. It is important to realise that the ELF researchers are not trying to propagate a faulty, simplified version of English. They are just describing the reality of the international use of English.

2.1.1 A list of Typical ELF Variations

ELF speakers typically:

- do not use the third-person singular present tense –s marking but use the same form for all persons (*I like, she like*)
- use the relative pronouns *who* and *which* interchangeably instead of *who* for humans and *which* for non-humans (as in *things who* and *people which*)
- omit definite and indefinite articles where they are obligatory in Standard English, or insert them where they do not occur in Standard English (e.g. *they have a respect for all, he is very good person*)
- pluralize nouns that do not have plural forms in Standard English (*informations, knowledges, advices*)
- use the demonstrative *this* with both singular and plural nouns (*this country, this countries*)
- extend the uses of certain ‘general’ verbs to cover more meanings than in Standard English, especially *make*, but also *do, have, put, take* (*make sport, make a discussion, put attention*)
- use a uniform, invariable tag (usually *isn't it*, but also others, e.g. *no?*) rather than the variation required in Standard English”
- increase clarity/regularity by adding prepositions (*discuss about something, phone to somebody*) or adding nouns (*black colour* rather than just *black, how long time* rather than *how long*)” (Seidlhofer 2010, 9, stress original).

The implication for a user of English should not be a *carte blanche* on the above mentioned variations. A student who wants to pass an exam relying on the Anglo/American set of norms will still have to avoid these. But it is important to realize that in an ELF context these errors are not a source of miscommunication. Instead of spending too much time on eliminating these variations one should spend more time on matters which have been found to play a crucial for international comprehensibility such as e.g. pragmatic strategies and the core ELF pronunciation features.

2.2 Pronunciation

The most commonly taught accents, RP and GA, “[h]ave been found empirically to be less intelligible to NNSs than other NNS accents” (Jenkins 1998, 120). The fact that these accents are still preferred in SLA could result from a lack of research on pronunciation used in ELF communication “The majority of published materials on pronunciation ... tend to focus exclusively on intelligibility for the native rather than the non-native receiver” (Jenkins 1998, 121). This, combined with the prestige that is still ascribed to the native dialects, can explain the bias towards RP and GA in SLA. However, unless the goal is to join the L1 community, international speakers of English should learn an internationally comprehensible pronunciation.

The problem is that, because of the lack of research on the kind of English which is used among ELF speakers, there is no clear proposal of a suitable pronunciation norm. As Jenkins puts it “While it is now becoming conceivable ... to dispense with the idea that local non-native norms are wholly inappropriate, and that every pronunciation which differs from a native variety is deviant, clear specific pronunciation goals for teaching EIL are thin on the ground” (1998, 120). Some scholars have tried to solve this issue by creating a simplified pronunciation model. Such models can be seen as equivalents to the simplified versions of English such as Quirk’s ‘Nuclear English’ and Odgen’s ‘Basic English’ (Jenkins 1998, 120). An example of one such simplified model is Gimson’s ‘rudimentary international pronunciation’. He reduces the repertoire of English phonemes which results in a slightly German sounding pronunciation. An example of this reduction can be seen in the following transcription:

'tɛns 'fɒk 'nɑʊ 'kəfərs θə 'hɔ:l əf 'səθərn 'ɪnklənt, wɪθ fɪsə'pɪləti ət ə 'mɑksɪməm
əf 'e:tɪ 'mi:tərs

The transcribed sentence:

Dense fog now covers the whole of southern England, with visibility at a maximum of eighty metres

(Gimson, 51)

However, such major changes would hardly be readily accepted. Also, it would be impossible to try to enforce any such top-down regulation worldwide.

2.2.3 Lingua Franca Core

A revolutionary change in the way of thinking about an internationally suitable pronunciation has been Jenkins research on the LFC (Lingua Franca Core). Instead of devising another top down model, Jenkins analysed ELF data to find “which features of RP/GA were necessary for intelligibility in ELF communication ... which were unnecessary or even damaging to intelligibility [and] which intelligibility problems could be traced directly back to pronunciation” (Jenkins 2009, 12). The result of this research was the compilation of items that appear to be essential/not essential for intelligibility in ELF interactions. These items were named the Core Features and they constitute the debated theory of Lingua Franca Core.

2.3.1 Core Features

(Features which are essential for pronunciation intelligibility in ELF):

1. Consonant sounds except voiced/voiceless *th* and dark *l*
2. Vowel length contrasts (e.g. the difference between the vowels in 'pitch' and 'peach')
3. Restrictions on consonant deletion (in particular, not omitting sounds at the beginning and in the middle of words)
4. Nuclear (or tonic) stress production/placement” (Jenkins 2009, 12).

2.3.2 Non-core Features

(Features unnecessary for pronunciation intelligibility in ELF)

- Vowel quality except for the vowel sound in RP 'fur'
- Consonants in (NS English) clusters separated by the addition of vowels (e.g. Japanese English 'product' as *peroducuto*), as well as vowels added to

consonants at the ends of words (e.g. Korean English 'luggage' as *luggagi*)-

Features of connected speech such as elision, assimilation, weak forms

- Consonant sounds *th* (e.g. German English 'think' as *sink*), and dark *l* (e.g. in French English, the 'l' in 'hotel' pronounced by raising the tip rather than the back of the tongue)

- Word stress placement

- Pitch direction

(Jenkins 2009, 12, 13).

These features cannot be understood as strict rules. As mentioned above, the emergent quality of ELF means that each set of speakers might mutually accommodate certain idiosyncrasies particular only to their interaction. Thus, if a “particular set of speakers prefer a certain variation of the core (for example both prefer ‘v’ to ‘w’) ... there would be no advantage, intelligibility-wise ... to replace their mutually preferred use simply because it would not be correct in NS English pronunciation” (Jenkins 2009, 13).

The concept of Lingua Franca Core has caused a lot of discussion. That is not surprising as it undermines the position of the traditionally endorsed standard English. The negative attitudes towards non-native accents and dialects are still strong. In interviews with NN students of English they overwhelmingly preferred native dialects and described foreign ones as “harsh, sharp, aggressive, strange, broken, torture” (Jenkins 2009, 28). The Lingua Franca Core promotes a rethinking of such biased view on dialects and accents. After all, “standard English is as much a dialect as any other variety – though a dialect of a rather special kind, because it is one to which society has given extra prestige” (Crystal 2007, 290). In place of the current practice which is based on tradition and cultural connotation, the LFC promotes a model based on intelligibility. Of course, it is going to take a long time to change the negative attitudes to foreign dialects. The understanding that standard English is nothing more than a favoured dialect should help.

The new attitude towards intelligibility based proficiency is clearly reflected in Graddol’s revision of Kachruvian circles. In 1985 Kachru devised a graphical illustration of “the current sociolinguistic profile of English” (356). The graph is

compiled of circles which represent the way English spreads, is acquired and functions in various communities. The Inner Circle represents “the traditional cultural and linguistic bases of English”; the Outer Circle stands for “the institutionalized non-native varieties (ESL) [English as a second language]” in regions which were colonised; the Expanding Circle represents such regions where English does not play any historical or governmental role, but is used as a foreign language or as lingua franca. The three smallest circles stand for the Englishes of the past. This model, much in line with the traditional SLA approach, considers the inner circle to be “norm-providing”, while the expanding circle relies on these native norms and is “norm-dependent” (Kachru 356).

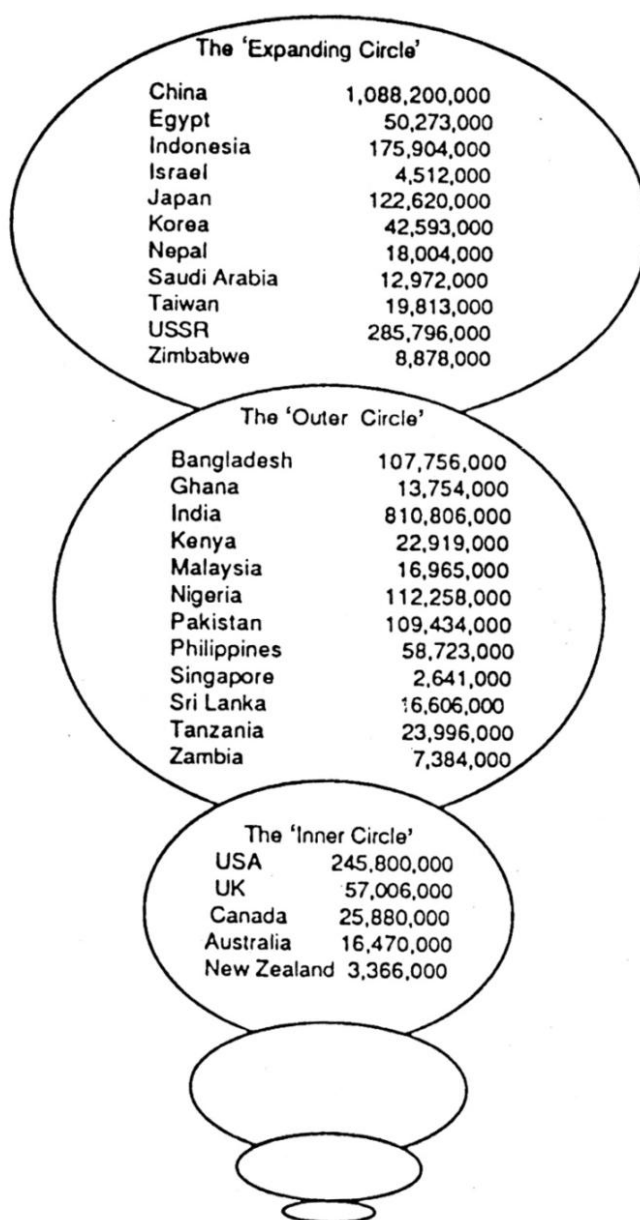


Figure 1 Kachru’s three-circle model of World Englishes (Kachru 356).

In Graddol's revised version of Kachru's graph, there is a resolute shift away from native-defined inclusion to a proficiency based one.

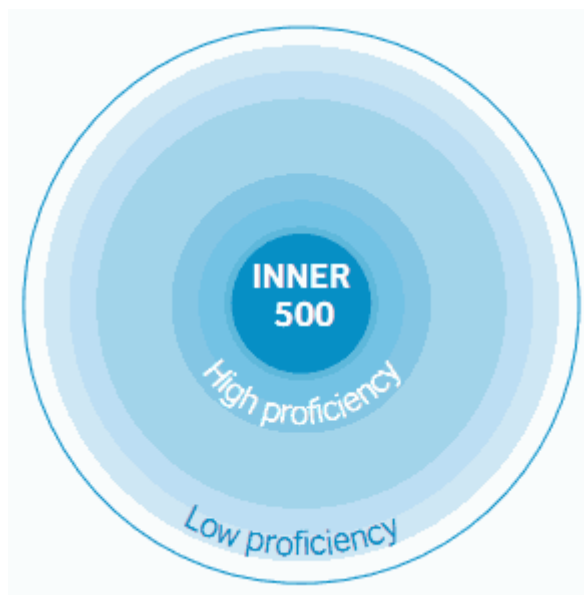


Figure 2 Graddol's revised circles of English (Graddol 2006, 110).

Graddol does not make any difference between NS and NNSs when he divides the circles. He states that “The distinctions between ‘native speaker’, ‘second-language speaker’, and ‘foreign-language user’ have become blurred” (Graddol 2006, 110). The decisive characteristic is just the levels of proficiency, both in NS and NNS. It is important to note that Graddol is talking about the proficiency in international communication. “‘Highly proficient’ must mean ... to be able to communicate well at an *international* level, not only at a *local one* whether that local one is in Britain, Finland or wherever ... this would include having an internationally intelligible accent” (Jenkins 2009, 32, stress original). Thus, in contrast with Kachru's model, a NS possessing a strong regional accent or dialect is no longer considered to be a part of the inner circle. As Jenkins states, this revised model shares the ideas of ELF research that proficiency does not automatically and exclusively reside in nativeness

The research which has been done on ELF pronunciation shows that, as with the variations of form, certain deviations from native norm are unproblematic, even useful in an ELF context. The most commonly taught accents, RP and GA, have not proven to be the most intelligible ones. They are popular because of the social prestige which is still attributed to them. This can be illustrated by comments showing positive bias “He speaks correct English, without a trace of dialect” (Crystal 2007, 290) as well by the negative attitudes towards NN accents. A change in approach to NNS accents and dialects is needed. When the variation of pronunciation does not cause misunderstanding or, indeed, even aids mutual intelligibility, it should not be dismissed as something undesirable. In other words, it should not be the perceived prestige that selects an accent to be taught and studied, but the needs and wishes of language users.

2.3 Pragmatic Strategies

ELF does not have a standard, predictable form. The interlocutors adapt to each other as the communicative events progresses, agreeing on lexis and grammar that is mutually understandable. This gives ELF its emergent character which makes it impossible to fully define the form of ELF a priori (Canagarajah 2007, 932). Meierkord supports this statement by claiming that ELF “emerges out of and through interaction” and, for that reason, “it might well be that ELF never achieves a stable or even standardized form” (2004, 129).

Yet despite the lack of prescribed form on which the participants could rely, “misunderstandings are not frequent in ELF interactions” (Seidlhofer 2004, 218). One has to wonder how is it possible that a variation based system is able to lead to successful communication. The answer lies in the shared pragmatic strategies of the interlocutors. These can be utilised independent of the language they are currently using. Thus, the competence in ELF communication “entails not so much mastery of a stable and standardized code or form, but mastery of strategies for the accomplishment of accommodation of diverse practices and modes of meaning” (Firth 2009, 163). As ELF speakers are already competent users of their own native language/s they enter all communicative events with a fully developed set of pragmatic strategies.

Again, SLA’s view of learners of language as deficient users is shown to be based on a skewed perspective of communication. It wholly ignores the fact that to

communicate does not equal just the mastery of lexis and grammar. The fact that each set of interlocutors is able to negotiate a variation of mutually understandable ELF shows the significance of the communicative strategies play in mutual understanding. It is one of the areas of ELF studies from which teachers and students of English could benefit greatly. The following part of the thesis will be a brief overview of these strategies.

2.3.1 Accommodation

Accommodation is the ability of a speaker to adjust and embrace the deviations from norm of the interlocutor. It is possibly one of the most important pragmatic skills in ELF communication (Jenkins 2011, 5). ELF speakers appear to develop a “competency of monitoring each other’s language” (Firth 2009, 162). If one interactant produces a variation from norm which does not cause misunderstanding, the other will not draw attention to the variation, but accept it. In some of the ELF conversation analysis, the variation from the norm is even used by the other interactant despite the fact they are aware of the standard form. As Firth comments, in an ELF communicative event the interlocutors are not focusing on language

Given the extent of marked linguistic forms, it is striking how few exposed and even embedded other repairs are produced. Instead on drawing attention to the surface language forms, the interactants focus on accomplishing the task at hand. They do not perceive each others as learners which need to be corrected. Language variations are glossed over as long as the task at hand is achieved (2009, 151).

The curious result of such accommodation based communication is that “In many international fora, competent speakers of English as a second language are more comprehensible than native speakers, because they can be better at adjusting their language for people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds” (Phillipson 2003, 167). Jenkins also stresses the advantage of multilingual speakers in international communication when she writes that as the majority of NS is monolingual, they are less skilled at accommodating their English to different communicative contexts. Thus, “NSs are becoming the least advantaged in international communication” (Jenkins 2009, 33).

Even though accommodation is one of the key concepts in international communication, in a monolingual context (such as for example a class composed of Czech students only) accommodation could prove counterproductive. For accommodation to work, the speakers have to be adapting their language towards an internationally intelligible one. In a class composed of only Czech students, they will have the tendency to accommodate only towards their Czech classmates.

2.3.2 Code-switching

Code switching and code mixing is the use of other languages in a communicative Event otherwise held in English. It can be the use of an isolated item as well as a longer stretch on language. SLA views resorting to other language code as a signal of gaps in linguistic knowledge. Unlike in SLA, where linguistic form is the target, ELF has its focus on the completion of a given task. Therefore, code-switching is a pragmatic strategy available to bi/multilingual speaker which at times be used “to get the job done” (Firth 2009, 154).

Jenkins points out that “although there is evidence of code-switching used to fill gaps in ELF speakers’ linguistic knowledge, this is a minor function as contrasted with its far more prominent role in meaning making”. Speakers can use code switching to signal “solidarity and membership of the same multilingual (ELF) community” to project “their social and cultural identities” and provide “nuances of expression that would be unavailable in the English language” (Jenkins 2011, 8). In a class setting, code switching can also be seen as one of the strategies teachers (who speak the native language of their students) can utilize to facilitate explanation and to draw attention to the similarities between the native language and the language that is being studied.

2.3.3 Avoiding Break Down of Communication

ELF speakers tend to resolve any occasional misunderstanding “either by topic change or, less often, by overt negotiation using communication strategies such as rephrasing and repetition (Jenkins 2004, 218). Apart from these, a typical strategy which prevents the breakdown of communication is the so called “let it pass principle” (Firth 1996, 243). In SLA, an unexpected variation will often result in an immediate

repair (perhaps with the exclusion of fluency based exercises, although even here the problem will be most likely noted down by the teacher to be addressed later on). In ELF many variations and rule suspensions are ignored for the sake of maintaining conversation. As Firth puts it "...participants demonstrate a remarkable ability to ... attend and disattend to a range of anomalies and infelicities in their unfolding interaction" (Firth 1996, 243). This happens based on the assumption of the hearer that the unclear passage "will either become clear or redundant as talk progresses" (Firth, 1996, 243). The interlocutors will go to great lengths to prevent pointing out at a certain anomaly in the language of the conversation partner. The participants even prefer to pretend they understand each other and continue with the conversation, rather than drawing attention to a misunderstanding. Thus, unless there is a need for a specific piece of information (such as dictating a telephone number or spelling one's name) they will utilize the let it pass principle.

Another principle is the so called "no-man's-land" (Planken 397). The purpose of this strategy is to keep up the face of the speakers, that is, "the public self-images" (Yule 1996, 60). The interlocutors are under stress as they are confronted with having to communicate in a language none of them have as their mother tongue. To lessen the tension which might arise, the participants tend to prepare for the upcoming communicative event through a small talk introduction containing "reflexive comments on their own communicative practices, self-deprecating humor, and the evocation of their shared nonnativeness" (Canagarajah 2007, 926). Such introduction lets both the speakers know that they are aware of their marked use of English. By "[d]isplaying an orientation to 'non-fatal', even humorous, nature" (Firth 1996, 240) of his/her anomalous usage the speaker invites his/her partner in communication to do likewise. This serves to establish an equal position of both interlocutors, hence the apt name of this strategy. . The creation of no-man's-land gives the participants room to manoeuvre and adapt to each other without losing their face. ELF speakers are not viewed and judged as learners. Just because a business meeting is conducted in English does not overpower the fact that the interlocutors are primarily business people wanting to achieve a certain goal. The fact that they are NNS is clear, but this does not define them as people. ELF is just the chosen channel of communication.

In conclusion, ELF communication is focused on achieving a certain task, not on the production of language itself. Therefore, the traditional SLA understanding of an error as suspension or a marked variation of a rule does not coincide with the

conception of error in ELF. A deviation from a norm in ELF is considered irrelevant as long as the goal of the interaction is achieved. Even, if a variation causes a hitch in communication, it is not considered to be a significant problem if the interlocutors are able to negotiate the meaning and thus solve the obstacle. An error in ELF is when the interlocutors fail to adapt to each other to such an extent that it causes a breakdown in communication. This is why many of the strategies of ELF reflect the effort to do as much as possible to avoid a break in communication.

3 Questionnaire Analysis

The following part of the thesis is dedicated to the analysis of ten questionnaires which were given to nine NNS and one NS English teacher. The questionnaire was focused on their attitudes to nativeness, accents, variations from norm and other key issues of ELF. The aim of the analysis is the comparison and description of the attitudes of the teachers to these issues. Another goal is to discover whether the teachers lean more towards an ELF or traditional SLA approach to English teaching.

The questionnaire was divided into three parts. Firstly, the teachers were asked to think about their motivation and goals of their students. The second part focused on the reflection of their status of as an English teacher. The respondents were asked to compare native and non-native teachers as well as to think about their non-native/native status and what it meant for them. The final part dealt with the conception of error and with lingua franca core. The teachers were asked to classify grammatical and pronunciation variations and judge their possible negative impact on communicative events.

3.1 Question 1

“Why do you think your students study English?”

The first question was aimed to establish what the teachers thought about their students’ motivations and goals. Some of the most prevalent answers were “the ability to communicate with foreigners”, “it is spoken worldwide” “because it’s the universal language in the world nowadays”. Interestingly, many of the respondents chose to stress

the international role of English while none focused exclusively on the traditional SLA approach to English studied as a foreign language with the purpose of communicating with NS.

Many respondents claimed that studying English was necessary and inevitable for their students. The teachers thought the students need English to successfully navigate the internet, study abroad and, most importantly, maximize their opportunities in a competitive job market. Also, rather than making a personal decision to study English the students have it as a “compulsory subject”. As one of the respondents puts it

[students] do not study English because of some particular interest in that language, because they'd prefer English over some other language (French, Italian, Spanish...), but because they simply feel the need to keep up with the global contexts where English is inevitable.

Such attitudes of the selected sample of teachers correspond with Seidlhofer's opinion about the necessity of speaking English “‘Having English’ ... has ... become a bit like having a driving licence: nothing special, something that most people have, and without which you do not get very far (Seidlhofer 2010, 359). Thus, speaking English becomes a “near-universal basic skill” (Graddol 2006, 15).

However, the necessity of learning English should not be seen as a danger to the interest in other foreign languages. Seidlhofer addresses this misconception when she speaks about the use of English as a common language. One cannot see ELF as a regular foreign language competing with other foreign languages. ELF does not replace other foreign languages; rather it is a necessary complement to them, especially those which get pushed to the fringes of today's SLA. Seidlhofer stresses the fact that acceptance of ELF would in fact enable students to give their attention to other than the most popular foreign languages (e.g. Spanish, French, German, Russian). “As a lingua franca, English is necessarily complementary to other languages in Europe and not in competition with them” (Seidlhofer 2006, 365). ELF would thus create a space for foreign languages with smaller amount of users which do not get enough recognition today, such as for example Catalan. Therefore, ELF does not compete with other languages rather it stops the danger of small languages being repressed by a hegemonic rule of few of the most important languages.

The answers of the respondents reflect the fact that such shift in attitude from English as a foreign language towards English as a common lingua franca is already taking place in the opinions of some teachers. As mentioned above, many of the respondents stressed the necessity of English for international communication. The question remains whether the shift in the theoretical conception of use of English has also influenced the approach to English teaching. To find out whether such change of practical teaching is already under way is one of the goals of this analysis.

3.2 Question 2

“What accent should your students strive to achieve?”

In question one, the teachers established the necessity of speaking English to be able to communicate internationally. One would therefore expect to get a corresponding answer of the need of an internationally comprehensible accent. Yet, most of the respondents were convinced that a British/American/native accent was the best one to emulate. Such accent should apparently enable the students to achieve the goals suggested in question one. This view of the sample of the teachers reflects the traditional SLA approach which still considers British and American accents to be the most desirable and prestigious.

Yet, Jenkins’ research on lingua franca core has established that native accents are in fact not the most internationally understandable ones. The attitudes of the respondents to native and non-native accents could be caused by the school policy or simply the personal preference of the teachers and the students. They might also result from lack of familiarity with research on internationally intelligible pronunciation. These and other reasons are further analyzed in question seven. However, there have been some answers suggesting a slow shift towards a more positive view on foreign accents. Instead on insisting on native accents, some teachers suggested a “comfortable” accent and any accent “that doesn’t sound wrong and is understandable” as a goal for their students.

3.3 Question 3

“What are the consequences of the fact that your students had already known another language/s (that is their native language/s) before they started to learn English?”

This question was aimed to see if the teachers would concentrate more on the negatives of knowing a language (for example negative transfer) or the positives (for example developed communicative strategies). Based on the abovementioned prevailing conception of an incompetent language learner, one would expect the answers to lean towards the negative aspects. This proved to be the case.

Most of the respondents focused on the negative influence the knowledge of other language/s has on their students. Many teachers mentioned problems with pronunciation “language interference on a phonetic level (they’ll automatically replace the unknown sound, e.g. /th/ sound in “with” with /f/”, “it sometimes affects their pronunciation (especially French learners)”, “they put accent on the first syllable”. Some of the respondents also mentioned code switching “sometimes they try to adopt the other language’s words into English”, “words which are similar in both languages tend to trigger the use of the other language during the English class”. However, such switching between languages was not always seen as something necessarily problematic. For example, one of the respondents liked the fact she can use the mother tongue with her students “Sometimes I use Czech when I explain something because I believe it’s faster or easier to comprehend”.

None of the respondents appreciated that, as they are teaching a second language, they have the advantage of working with competent speakers of at least one language. This seems to be a result of the traditional SLA perception of students as learners. However, some of the answers to the following questions show that the teachers are indeed aware and do appreciate the complex social roles and linguistic background of their students.

3.4 Question 4

“Do you think your students are being prepared for contact with NS (e.g. are used to a native accent, have some grasp of Brit/Ame culture, history etc.)? Do you think your students are being prepared for contact with NNS?”

Most of the respondents wrote that they prepare their students for both the contact with NS and NNS. Some teachers did point bias on native in teaching materials “I think that they are better prepared for contact with NS, because the SBs [students’ books] involve only NS accent”. Curiously, other respondents claimed their students were not prepared for a contact with NS at all or in “a limited way”. Such opinions mostly relate to the cultural aspects. It seems that as Czech students are exposed to native teaching material in a non-native context, their communicative ability with both of these groups will depend largely on their own interests and goals. One of the respondents seemed to capture this view as follows “I try to prepare them but there is much of their own interest and experience needed in addition”.

3.5 Question 5

“Do you feel comfortable when using English with NS and NNS? Do you feel more comfortable when communicating with one of these groups?”

Majority of respondents wrote they felt comfortable with both groups but found communication with NS more difficult. It is ironical that the reason for communicative difficulties with NS was mostly ascribed to native accent. “It depends on their accent, the pace of speech”, “The only uncomfortable thing is that I need to watch their accent if it’s something I’m not used to”. Yet, the native accent is what the respondents had selected as the most eligible for their students in question two. Such contradicting attitudes correspond with the findings of Jenkins in discussions with NNS teachers who are usually unable to “assess intelligibility and acceptability from anything but a NS standpoint” and “intuitively regard NS English as being more widely understood regardless of its context of use” (Jenkins 2009, 20).

The answers made apparent that communicating with NS can become rather uncomfortable for some of the teachers. For instance, some of them wrote “Sometimes I feel nervous because I know they can spot mistakes that I make”, “The only

uncomfortable thing is that I think I need to watch my grammar”, “I feel rather discouraged and almost ashamed to admit that I studied English at university”. It seems clear that contact with NS, who are not used to accommodating, can be stressful and uncomfortable for teachers who are used to a non-native context and ELF communication.

The unrealistic goals of traditional SLA, which insists the achievement of a NS-like status is the ultimate goal of language learning, put NNS teachers under enormous pressure. On the one hand, NNS teachers feel they are competent communicators and teachers of English. On the other hand they accept the status of imperfect non-native learners. This makes them experience what Jenkins calls the feeling of “linguistic schizophrenia” (Jenkins 2009, 32). Such feeling of inferiority can of course negatively influence teacher-students relationship. One can imagine that teachers who feel as a disappointment to their students will have difficulties with establishing comfortable class rapport. This is one of the examples of the detrimental effects of the traditional SLA mentality.

3.6 Question 6

“Who do you think is a better teacher of English - a NS or a NNS?”

The aim of this question was to see if the respondents were willing to judge teachers just by the characteristic of nativeness. Despite the purposefully straightforward either/or phrasing most respondents refused to give a simplistic answer. The majority wrote that it is impossible to say whether a teacher is good based only on the characteristic of nativeness. Two teachers thought that a NS would always be a better teacher. Most of the respondents felt that other factors have to be taken into consideration. The factors that were frequently mentioned were education, talent and experience. This can be illustrated by the answer of one of the respondents

I think that NS or NNS doesn't matter. It's not the most important quality of a language teacher. Some NS are great teachers but in case they don't have any teaching practice or training or just common sense :-) it's better to have NNS with a very high level of language knowledge.

Many of the respondents also had theories about which levels/lessons were best lead by NS and NNS. Some suggested that NS should not be teaching lower level students, others felt NS should be employed “for conversation courses only”. This was in contrast to one of the respondents who felt that conversation lessons with NS “were always rather a disappointment than enrichment” as the NS spent most of the time talking instead of the students. “it’s him [the NS teacher] talking, while the students answer with 1 word answers and thus do not really practise the language much”.

This question showcases a curious contrast between the insecurity of NNS teachers when communicating with NS (as shown in question five) and the self assuredness when evaluating their qualifications as a teacher. Almost all of the respondents refused to classify teachers based only on their nativity. The respondents are clearly aware of the multiple social roles of teachers and refuse to reduce a NNS teacher to the position of an incompetent learner, who will never be as good as a NS teacher. This is an important realization, as it signals a change in the traditional approach of SLA, which often “fabled and idealized” the NS teacher at the expense of NNS teacher (Firth 2009, 151).

3.7 Question 7

“Do you think Czech teachers should try to achieve native-like English?”

All of the respondents strongly supported the need of Czech teachers to achieve native-like English. Mostly, the respondents focused on the aspect of accent. Even in the one case where the respondent did not consider a native accent to be necessary, she still implied that it would be the better option. “They [NNS English teachers] should have a decent level of English and a nice, if not native/like (Am/Br.), than at least a “neutral” accent with no strong impact of the mother tongue“. Unlike with students, where intelligibility was acknowledged as a valid goal, the respondents were much stricter with their tolerance for variation from standard English norms in teachers. One of the reasons for this could be the prestige ascribed to native like English and also the school policy which, in the Czech Republic, will most likely enforce British English.

In Czech schools, most of the teachers will teach classes of Czech students only. It is important to realize that students in such unmixed classes do not have the

need to accommodate their Czech accent towards an internationally understandable one (as would be the case of an international class). This puts more pressure on the NNS teachers, as it will depend only on them to ensure that their students do not accommodate only towards their Czech classmates. That could cause the students to acquire an internationally unintelligible accent. This might be another reason why the respondents insisted on the need for NNS teachers to strive for native-like English. The situation might be different in international classes, where more accents mix, and students are influenced by more than just their native tongue and the accent of their teacher.

3.8 Question 8

“When you teach, do you feel that your nationality matters to your students?”

This question aimed to discover to which extent the respondents believe their nationality influences the opinion of their students. It was also meant to see whether the respondents would focus more on negative or positive aspects of their nativity. One of the respondents felt that being a NNS teacher was a definitive disadvantage. She thought some of her students were disappointed that they are not taught by a NS, who would presumably be a better teacher. “Some students prefer native speakers because they can teach them more of the language”. This respondent, who experienced negative approach from her students, has also been one of the two respondents who have claimed NS to always be better teachers in question six.

Some of the respondents felt their students initially prefer NS but after having some bad experiences grow to prefer NNS teachers. “Some students value native speakers more than me until they find out that the native speakers are often worst teachers”, “I’m teaching some groups who used to be taught by a native speaker only and after a few months they required a Czech teacher”. This is another exemplification of the unfairness of judging a teacher simply based on their nationality. The veering from one generalization (NS is always a good teacher) to another (NS is usually not a skilled teacher) shows that prejudice based on nationality can go both ways.

Most of the teachers saw their Czech nationality as an advantage. They felt that as they share non-native status with their students, they can serve as a role model. One of the respondents illustrates this as follows

Normally, I would say it [my nationality] doesn't [influence the opinions of my students] as we're all Czech but my last English lesson at a grammar school showed that it does – a girl was impressed by my pronunciation ... and I believe she got more motivated to learn English than before.

Many respondents thought students feel comfortable with NNS teachers, as they always have the possibility of relying on their mother tongue, should the need arise. "if I teach Czech students English I can predict their problems, questions etc, because we share the mother tongue", "The reason they feel more comfortable [with a Czech teacher] ... is the feeling that if they don't understand anything they CAN ask me in their mother tongue and I'll understand and help".

However, two of the NNS teacher also thought such preference of NNS could be ascribed to the lack of confidence and fear of the students of embarrassing themselves in an interaction with NS. The students "feel relieved I'm a NNS and would never choose a NS because they do not feel confident enough". Such attitudes can be attributed to two phenomena. Firstly, the SLA treatment of students as incompetent learners makes them automatically adopt an inferior position in a conversation, especially when combined with an idealized NS in the position of a teacher. Secondly, the feeling of unease when communicating with a NS teacher can come from lack of accommodation on the NS's part. Whichever reason for the students' fears, it showcases the negative impact of the traditional SLA approach. It is clear that it should never be fears but preferences of the students which decide who is the best teacher for them

Some of the teachers embraced an ELF perspective on their role as a teacher, claiming that their nationality does not play an important role for the students. "I don't think my nationality is important", "I don't think nationality matters, but charisma does. You have to make an impression on the students". However, such attitude was represented only in minority of the answers.

3.9 Question 9

"List some advantages and disadvantages of being a NNS teacher and NS teacher of English"

This question aimed to discover which aspects of nativity the teachers saw as advantageous and disadvantageous. It was also meant to see whether one of the groups would get more favourable description than the other.

3.9.1 The Advantages and Disadvantages of NS Teachers

In line with the traditional NS conception of NS, some of the respondents felt that NS have perfect command of English. “[A NS] knows everything ... I mean every single word, pronunciation“. Similarly, other respondents felt that it is NS only who speak “authentic”, “real” and “natural” English. The denial of any possible fault on the part of the NS was mostly in connection to pronunciation and vocabulary. Some of the respondents wrote that NS are in possession of “perfect pronunciation”. NS were also presumed to have natural intuition for English and never to have any “troubles expressing themselves”. The automatic evaluation of NS as flawless users of English is clearly still prevalent. It will be interesting to see whether the debate about ownership of English and the global use of ELF will in time change this view.

Although a minority, there were occasional remarks about possible problems with NS language. One disadvantage mentioned was the possible overuse of colloquial expressions by NS. “I observed an Am. teacher whose slang in the lesson was very irritating ... as a result, students were often not able to express a single idea in a comprehensive way ... they imitated this slang and started every sentence “You know...””. Other respondent felt that NS might be “simplifying the language for the students”. Ironically, this was listed as a disadvantage, probably as it goes against the conviction that a NS should provide students with “real” and “natural” English. Obviously, the issue of language simplification does not only relate to NS. However, unless one speaks about unnecessary oversimplification, the ability to accommodate down to a level of English more suitable to students’ needs could arguably be seen as an advantage.

Most of the respondents mentioned that a NS will probably not be in possession of satisfactory metalanguage to describe their mother tongue to non-native students. In the words of one of the respondents the disadvantage of NS is “not having the language about how their own language works”. Thus, a NS “might not focus enough on grammar“. This was thought to be caused by a presumed lack of professional training in NS teachers. One of the respondents claimed that “native speakers in the

Czech Rep tend to be only expats / tourists hoping for some adventure, not motivated enough to put an effort into teaching”, another wrote that “some NS teachers leave Prague early after they realise they don’t like it here; others might not treat it as seriously as Czech teachers do“. The conviction that NS are usually untrained and unprofessional teachers could be based on bad experiences of the respondents as could be seen in the answers in question six.

Another advantage of a NS teacher which was often mentioned was their “cultural background”. The respondents felt that NS can “provide students with the cultural concepts history, stereotypes, humour” and “can highlight important cultural matters“. Because of the fact that they are foreigners, NS teachers were viewed as a source of cultural enrichment for the class. If a student aims at becoming a part of the NS culture, they will benefit from getting used to the particular customs. The cultural gap between a NNS student and a NS teacher was simultaneously perceived as one of the most prominent disadvantages. Some of the respondents wrote that “cultural references made by students have to be explained to the NS” and that NS have “limited understanding of Czech culture”. A NS teacher was thus perceived by many of the respondents to be unable to truly understand Czech culture and mentality and therefore also not to be competent to chose the most suitable approach to learning for Czech students.

Out of all the cultural differences, the most problematic was the lack of knowledge of the student’s mother tongue. Interestingly, most of the respondents presumed that a typical NS (apart from not having proper teacher training) would not have any knowledge of Czech. The teachers felt that as the NS do not speak Czech they will not be able to “draw similarities between their mother tongue and their learners’ mother tongue”. The inability to explain instances of language interference as well as any other problems resulting from the differences between English and Czech was often stressed. “Native speakers have limited understanding of Czech language system – therefore less understanding of the basis of the mistakes the students are making”. However, the respondents also acknowledged the advantage of not having the possibility of speaking any Czech during the lesson. “The fact that they don’t understand Czech makes students speak English all the time that as the students cannot rely on their mother tongue, they are forced to communicate in English”.

3.9.2 The Advantages and Disadvantages of NNS Teachers

The most common disadvantage mentioned was the presumption of imperfect knowledge of English. The respondents felt that a NNS teacher “can never know everything”, “might have learned overly-simplified grammar rules” might have “limited vocabulary” use “outdated expressions” and “book English”. Faulty pronunciation was also often mentioned. In line with the traditional SLA, the criterion of correctness was whether the teacher speaks NS like. A typical disadvantage was therefore “usually doesn’t sound NS like” and “Is not a native speaker – isn’t able to know the language perfectly, makes mistakes”.

However, NNS teachers were thought to have better “structured understanding of the language”. The assumption about a NNS teacher was that he/she has “studied the language and knows what peculiarities it has for his/her learner” and “is usually a proper linguist”. Overall the respondents felt that even though a NNS teacher might have problems with practical use English, they are skilled at explaining grammar and other theoretical aspects to their students as they had to study them themselves. Such technical understanding of English was generally viewed as beneficial but also as a possible source of problems. As the NNS teachers were presumed to feel more secure about what they have done themselves, the respondents felt they “can overly-focus on grammar”. Many of the respondents wrote that NNS teachers put too much stress on theory and grammar. One of the teachers felt that such approach to language teaching “can bring in negative approach to the lessons” as the teachers could judge “student’s communication based on the mistakes made, rather than the ultimate ‘effect on the reader/listener’ and task achievement”.

One of the most obvious advantages that most of the respondents mentioned was the knowledge of Czech. Interestingly, a NNS was automatically understood as non-native English speaker who is a native in the language community, for instance a Czech teacher of English in the Czech Republic. Unlike a NS, the NNS was therefore expected have the “Ability to explain grammar through their own language” and to be able to “explain a lot of things in L1 (which is faster and sometimes useful)”. They can also “help with Czech if something gets too complicated in English”. NNS teachers were also thought to have the advantage of being able to draw on both language systems in their learning. The respondents wrote NNS teachers can “make comparisons” and “similarities with his/her students’ mother tongue” and “translate vocabulary” which would be difficult to clarify in other means such as abstract terms. They also

“understand the language interference mistakes and point them out” and, perhaps most importantly, NNS teachers were assumed to have the “ability to understand better how the students think in the particular language”.

Connected to the shared knowledge of language was a repeatedly mentioned advantage of shared cultural background. Unlike a NS, Czech teacher was assumed to be “used to Czech mentality of learning” and to use “teaching methods accordingly”. The shared culture was thought to be “very helpful to understand your clients/students” as it enables Czechs teacher to choose “teaching methods accordingly”. One of the respondents illustrated the need to understand students’ habits and expectations follows “A consequence of this cultural difference is that the American teacher might walk in and ask Czechs how they’re going and what they got up to the day before, while the Czechs are sitting there impatient that ‘the lesson’ hasn’t yet started”.

One of the key advantages of a NNS teacher was that they are an example of someone who has succeeded in learning English. Thus, they serve as an excellent role model for their students. A NNS teacher was considered to be the ultimate motivation for students because if he/she has managed to learn English the students can as well. Both the teachers and the students were/are in the position of a learner of English as a SL, which is an experience a NS can never obtain. Thus, a Czech teacher of English can relate exactly to how the Czech students feel and which problems they face. As one of the respondents puts it “if they [NNS teachers] have learned English themselves, then they might have a better perspective on how to teach it”.

NNS teachers got overall a more favourable evaluation. On average, the respondents listed two advantages of NS teachers, but three or four of NNS. This could be attributed to the fact that nine out of ten respondents were NNS teachers. (This hypothesis can be supported by the fact that the NS teacher respondent did indeed mention more advantages of NS teachers while listing more disadvantages of NNS teachers.) However, the most commonly mentioned disadvantage of NNS speakers, that is the presumed faulty knowledge of English, must, for some of the respondents, outweigh other NNS advantages. This could explain some of the answers to question six, in which two of the respondents claimed NS to always be better teachers.

The list of advantages and disadvantages illustrated what the respondents felt a generalized, stereotypical NS and NNS teacher are like. The NS are supposedly perfect users of English, however they are assumed to often lack pedagogical and linguistic

education. Therefore, they can have troubles explaining their own language to foreigners and not pay enough attention to grammar. This disadvantage is multiplied by the cultural differences which can make the NS unable to truly understand their students' needs. A NNS teacher was thought to always carry a handicap of never fully mastering English. This could give rise to a feeling of insecurity in NNS teachers about some aspects of teaching, for example spontaneous conversation. Thus, because of their insecurities, the NNS teachers were believed to have the tendency to overly focus on areas in which they feel comfortable, such as grammar. However, a NNS teacher was believed to have excellent theoretical background. The respondents presumed he/she will have both linguistic and pedagogical education. This, combined with presumed knowledge of their students' language and culture, made NNS teachers receive a more favourable evaluation.

The nature of the task could have influenced such black and white characteristics of teachers. However, most of the opinions were not unexpected as they reflect the traditional SLA dichotomies. This becomes apparent when looking at the disadvantages of NNS and advantages of NS. For instance, one can see the traditional approach to NS teachers mirrored in the conviction of the respondents that they always have perfect command of English. Another example is the ubiquitous assumption among the teachers that native English is always the best kind of English for all students without taking into account the context which NS English it is and what the students' needs are.

However, not all of the answers supported the stereotypical native versus non-native division. The varied answers of all the teachers offered a deep insight into the complex matter of cultural differences. For instance, based on situation and point of view, the cultural affiliation of a teacher was classified simultaneously as advantage and disadvantage. Another example of such complex approach to the differences in teachers was the question of shared language and which advantages and disadvantages this can bring. Based on these examples, one can see that the respondents are aware of the complexity of every teacher and teaching situation.

3.10 Question 10

“If you were a person responsible for hiring teachers would you prefer NNS or NS?”

In this question the respondents were asked to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of NS and NNS teachers from the previous task to see which teacher they would ultimately prefer. Despite the purposefully straightforward question, the respondents overwhelmingly refused to make a simplistic choice. There was only one exception. One of the respondents wrote she would prefer a NNS over a NS. She felt that the presumably better training and motivation of NNS would make them a better candidate. "I'd probably prefer good, qualified and motivated NNS than NS". This teacher reasoned that as "1-2 hours a week with a NS are not enough to acquire a good level of the language" it would be better to have "a well prepared lesson with a NNS". The fact that a NS is presumed not to prepare lesson well stresses the danger of prejudice based on nativeness.

The rest of the respondents felt that the decision of who to hire could not be made simply on the grounds of nationality. They all shared the opinion that the choice would ultimately have to depend on "the individuals" as "no one should be discriminated against" just because of their native or non-native status. Therefore, they would hire according to the "attitudes" and "abilities of individual teachers". Thus, the ultimate decision would always depend on the qualities of the individual teacher.

Some teachers believed that "a mix is a good idea" and thus, the best solution would be to hire a team of both NS and NNS teachers. In words of one of the respondents "I would definitely go for a combination of both ... if they cooperate, [they] can supply the students with both an insight on the culture, the communicative skills, the structural/language". Additionally, the respondents also had theories about the presumably best division of labour. For example, a teacher, who is currently working in an Elementary school, felt that the decision had to be made in accordance with "the type of school". She claimed that in elementary schools NNS speakers would be the better choice. According to her, beginners would benefit more from lessons with a NNS teacher. Other respondents thought the best division was to have "NNS for normal classes" and "NS for conversation classes". Other respondent supported this view as well "I would prefer native speakers for conversational lessons and Czech teachers for "classical" English lessons".

Most of the respondents arrived at the conclusion that ultimately it has to be the needs and wishes of the students which decide who to choose for a teacher. Therefore, they would make their choice base on "who [the teachers] were supposed to teach".

This idea was illustrated by one respondent who would choose “a NS ... if the student wanted to go to that country or had a special need (e.g. finding a job with English).” One of the teachers summarized this attitude by declaring that he himself has no preferences and that the choice will ultimately depend “on the market demand”.

In conclusion, majority of the respondents thought one always has to judge the teacher as an individual. They also stressed the needs and wishes of student when it comes to choosing the best teachers for them. However, some of the answers still presumed that the virtue of being a native teacher is enough to make one automatically more suitable for conversation courses or more advanced courses. Such presupposition ignores the individual characteristics of both NS and NNS teachers. It is impossible to judge who has a better disposition to work for beginners based simply on the characteristic of nativeness. One of the respondents commented on this pointing out that such attitudes can in fact lead to discriminatory decisions “I believe some schools’ policies are in fact discriminatory (e.g. some schools will only hire native speakers or give them the higher level classes, while the Czech teachers get the lower level classes)”. Hopefully, the growing awareness of ELF reflected in the attitudes of this sample of teachers will lead to rethinking of the native versus non-native dichotomy and thus to fairer hiring practises.

3.11 Question 11

“Do you sometimes find yourself using a Czech (German, French...) word when you speak in English or vice versa?”

This question aimed to discover whether the respondents use code switching and what are their feelings about this phenomenon. In ELF, code-mixing and code switching are seen as effective bilingual strategies used to signal cultural identity as to facilitate communication (Jenkins 2006, 4). In traditional SLA contexts, code switching is seen negatively, as an issue of language interference. The inclusion of a foreign word in an English speech event is usually understood as a mistake.

All of the teachers have had experiences with code switching and code mixing. Many of the respondents felt that code switching was an unfortunate problem, one of the “disadvantages” of knowing more than one foreign language”. The feeling of inevitability and loss of control was mentioned quite often. One of the respondents

wrote “I try to avoid making these mistakes but unfortunately I think it’s quite natural and it can easily happen if I’m tired or excited or nervous”. Other wrote “Sometimes I can't think of the word in the language I'm speaking at the moment. I look it up then. It happens to everybody”. Such answers hint at frustration of the respondents who feel they fail at preventing the unwanted intrusion of foreign words into English. Adopting the SLA approach, they consider code switching a “mistake” and “disadvantage” which points out their imperfect knowledge of the language. Considering the pressure put on NNS teachers to emulate the NS (who, according to the respondents themselves, always knows everything) the frustration the respondents felt is easy to understand.

It is telling that the respondents automatically place themselves into a role of a learner (or in this case a learner/teacher) that is judged not to have sufficient vocabulary. Yet, outside of a school context where the insistence on an English term can be understood, it is hard to imagine a task oriented interlocutor judging the speaker in such a way. As long as the interactant manage to get the meaning across, there is no need to judge them negatively for providing a word in a different code.

The presumption of such negative judgement could be the result of the teachers having studied in classes composed of Czech students only (in which they now most likely teach as well). One can see the need for insistence on an English term in such contexts. In classes composed of Czech speakers only, the students will have the tendency to switch into their native tongue completely. Thus, the insistence on eliminating code switching is understandable. However, one should realise that once the students leave the school, they might find the strategy of code switching very useful. By adopting such negative judgement of this phenomenon, the teachers risk perpetuating the feeling of insecurity in their students. If the students’ goal is to become successful communicators in a multilingual speech community, they should not be made to fear code switching but rather to embrace it.

Many of the respondents did adopt a much more open and positive approach to code switching and code mixing. They claimed that this phenomenon was actually useful for smooth international and intercultural communication. For instance, one of the respondents wrote she uses Czech terms “when there’s no English equivalent and I need that particular word, I think it’s completely acceptable and natural”. Some teachers felt that code switching was also practical in the context of a class. The ability to rely on the shared mother tongue was already mentioned as one of the advantages of NNS

teachers. “With some less advanced students I tend to use Czech when my students don’t understand”, “Sometimes I use Czech when I explain something because I believe it’s faster or easier to comprehend”. Thus, even in school setting code switching can still be understood positively as a useful strategy. Many of the respondents stressed the importance of code switching to express identification with a certain culture, writing they use it when “referring to something culturally specific”, “only if it cannot be translated”. This is in line with ELF conception of code switching as a strategy of the speaker to signal his cultural affiliation. In words of one of the respondents “I think we all do this from time to time. English speakers in Prague add Czechisms: “Let’s go for a *pivo*.” It’s a bit of a nod to the culture we’re in.

Over all, teachers felt good about the use of code switching as long as they were in control and used the foreign word/s on purpose. However, if a foreign phrase had to be implemented because of a gap in knowledge, they adopted a negative attitude towards the phenomenon. For instance, one of the teachers writes he uses code switching “Only deliberately. I do not think it ever just slips out”. However, as code switching and code mixing are natural and inevitable phenomena of speaking a second language it seems to be counterproductive to try to adopt a negative approach to them. In an accuracy oriented lesson composed of speakers of one language the need to try to eliminate code switching is clear. But one should always consider that outside of such class, code switching is actually a very effective strategy. This is especially relevant to Czech students/speakers, as they will most likely come into contact with many multilingual speakers.

3.12 Question 12

In this task, the respondents were presented with pieces of imaginary conversation between Hanka (Czech) and a Karo (German). The task was to rate the following eight utterances according to how problematic they seemed to the teachers (5 being the most serious and 1 being ok). Variation from norm is underlined. Here, the questions are rated with the average note rounded off to the nearest 0.5.

1) he <u>speak</u>

3

2) a book <u>who</u> is interesting	3
3) the car was black <u>colour</u>	2
4) I <u>buyed</u> it yesterday.	3
5) You think they are bored, <u>isn't it</u> ?	2.5
6) H: "Do you like...eh... <u>svíčková</u> , um, I mean, ... <u>Lendenbraten</u> ?"* 1 K: "Sure, I love it!"	
7) All these <u>informations</u>	1.5
8) We were discussing <u>about</u> the topic.	2

*(Note: Lendenbraten = svíčková in German, '...' stands for hesitation time)

Table 1 typical ELF variations

All of these utterances were exemplifications of Seidlhofer's list of typical ELF variations. These deviations from norm are commonly utilized by ELF speakers and have not been found to be problematic for mutual understanding in ELF communicative events. (This imaginary conversation is, of course, an ELF communicative event, as neither Hanka nor Caro share the same culture and English is not mother tongue of either of them). The task was aimed to discover whether the respondents would see any of these variations as problematic and which variations would be marked down the most.

Over all, the variations were not marked as very problematic, out of eighty grades there were only two instances of 5. After adding all the grades together, it become apparent that the least accepted variations (on average graded with 3) were the missing 's' in third person singular in "He speak", the use of 'who' instead of 'which' in "a book who" and the regular ending of an irregular verb in "buyed". The use of a uniform, invariable tag "isn't it" was also significantly marked down (on average it received 2.5). Increase in clarity by adding an unnecessary noun in "black colour" and by adding a preposition "discuss about" were generally accepted as minor problems (on average graded with 2). The plural of singulare tantum "informations" was also generally accepted as non problematic (on average graded with 1.5). Use of code switching "svíčková, Lendenbraten" was not seen as problematic at all. Eight out of ten respondents marked it with 1. The NS respondent even made foot note arguing that "No. 6 is perfectly fine. I say svíčková myself, that's what it is".

3.13 Question 13

“What was the criterion according to which you chose to rate the utterances in question 12?”

After the previous task, the teachers were asked to think about why they graded the utterances in the way they did. This was a key question as it made clear whether the respondents concentrated on communicative success, grammatical correctness, their own feeling or other criteria when deciding on the possible problems arising from the variation.

Some of the respondents based their judgement on the perceived difficulty of the grammatical phenomena. Thus, variations of rules which they judged to be basic and trivial received the lowest grades. For example, one of the respondents writes “if the grammar phenomenon is easy to learn, I think the mistake shouldn’t be tolerated ... third person is a really easy thing, a routine”. This reflects the traditional approach to evaluation in a school setting. If some grammatical rule has already been studied, the student will be marked down when not applying it irrespective of the impact made on the communicative event. This can explain the low grades given to instances of missing third person singular and irregular verbs. The teachers presumed both Hanka and Karo have been exposed to the correct variation and thus did not accept their deviation from the norm.

Such point of view shows that the respondents chose to perceive Hanka and Karo as learners, not communicators. One of the respondents confirmed this assumption when writing that the criterion for his decision was “Weaker pre-intermediate students”. Note that there is no mention of students, learners, mistakes, or school setting in the instructions of the task. Still, many of the respondents automatically looked at the language produced as learner’s language. The importance was not placed on whether Hanka understood the phrase “he speak” but that Karo produced an unacceptable variation. Such opinions clearly reflect the individual, cognitive oriented mentality of traditional SLA.

The criterion of grammatical correctness was used by minority of respondents. Most of the teachers specified their criterion to be whether the utterance seemed intelligible. For instance, one of them writes that she judged “very intuitively, according to what doesn’t sound nice to my ears, also into what extent it could hinder

understanding, cause troubles”. Others echoed this approach by specifying their criterion as “understanding“, “clarity, intelligibility”, “if a message can still get across” and “understandability, possibly across different nationalities (i.e. languages other than Eng)”.

Of course, based on Seidlhofer’s research, all of the variations in the task could have been marked with 1 as they were proven not to cause problems with intelligibility in ELF contexts. Also, despite claiming the criterion was clarity and intelligibility, the teachers still marked down utterances which clearly had no effect on intelligibility. For example, one of the teachers marked the transparent but deviant form “buyed” with 5. Yet, it could be argued that the regularization of past forms does not hinder intelligibility but actually makes the item clearer. Such attitude of the respondent could be explained by the assumption that a weaker ELF speaker could have problems with understanding Hanka/Karo should they use such variations. Perhaps more likely is the explanations that these expressions are not acceptable in standard, NS oriented English. Thus, even though the respondents felt they were judging the utterances based purely on understandability, their answers revealed they were often influenced by the traditional, negative conception of variation.

The only exception to such judgment was the instance of code switching. The utterance clearly showed that even though Hanka did not remember/know the English name of the dish in question, she still managed to communicate the intended meaning by using both the Czech and German names (“Do you like...eh...svíčková, um, I mean, ... Lendenbraten?”). Karo obviously understood the intended meaning (“Sure, I love it!”). Eight out of ten respondents felt that Hanka’s insertion of two foreign words was not problematic at all. Such positive approach was surprising to see, as Hanka’s utterance clearly showcases a gap in her knowledge of English. The aspect of showing one’s imperfect command of English and the accompanying feeling of the loss of control when resorting to code switching were perceived very negatively by many of the teachers in question eleven. Interestingly, the teachers were less strict when judging Hanka’s use of code switching than when judging their own use of it.

Over all, the teachers judged the variations quite leniently. One could argue that as the teachers claimed to evaluate the variations according to intelligibility, they should have received even better grades. After all, the reality of ELF communication shows that in genuine ELF communicative events, speakers tend to accommodate to all

of the abovementioned variations without any problems. However, the overall grades were influenced by some of the teachers who based their grades on SLA oriented criterion of the difficulty of a grammatical phenomenon.

3.13 Question 14

In this task the respondents were asked to classify ten instances of variations of pronunciation according to their effect on intelligibility. The examples were based on Jenkins' research on NNS pronunciation. As mentioned above, some features of pronunciation are necessary for international intelligibility while others do not cause misunderstanding when pronounced in a non-standard way. The aim of this task was to see whether the teacher's opinion about pronunciation intelligibility overlapped with Jenkins Lingua franca core theory.

item	pronounced as	ok/x according to the respondents in %	ok/x according to Jenkins' LFC
thank	/fank/	ok	ok
peach	/pitʃ/	x	x
him	/im/ (<u>elision of h</u>)	ok	x
think	/sɪnk/	ok 50%, x 50%	ok
conversation	/'kɒnvəseɪʃn/ (<u>accent</u>)	ok	x
but	/bʊt/	ok 50%, x 50%	ok
I gave it TO him	/tu/ (<u>should be weak form</u>)	ok	ok
wine	/vain/	ok	x
product	/perodukuto/	x	ok

Table 2 Lingua franca core

'ok' = Intelligible (Mistake prevents mutual intelligibility)

'x' = Unintelligible (Mistake does not prevent mutual intelligibility)

Over all, the respondents seemed to have a very tolerant approach to variations in pronunciation. Some items which are considered problematic in LFC were classified into the non problematic category. An example of such item is the elision of ‘h’ in ‘him’. According to Jenkins, one of the four core items of LFC is restriction “on consonant deletion (in particular, not omitting sounds at the beginning and in the middle of words)” (Jenkins 2009, 12). Thus, the dropping of the first letter could cause problems between ELF speakers. The respondents might have been influenced by hearing such variants in various NS accent. Still, it is important to realize that one cannot judge international intelligibility of an item according to whether it is intelligible to a NS. Similarly, the pronunciation of ‘thanks’ with ‘f’ which half of the respondents found problematic have not been found to cause problems with intelligibility according to LFC. Even though the ‘th’ sound is considered to be central for native English pronunciation, its variations (for example f,d,s,z) were found to be acceptable in an international setting.

Apart from dark ‘l’ and the voiced/voiceless ‘th’, all consonants are core for achieving an internationally clear accent. Thus ‘wine’ pronounced with ‘v’, which the respondents agreed was intelligible, could actually cause problems. The same can be said about the placement of tonic stress. While the respondents felt it did not influence intelligibility and thus sorted ‘conversation’ accented on first syllable into the intelligible category, the research on LFC has found the placement of nuclear stress to be one of the four necessary core items.

The biggest difference in opinions about intelligibility was the Japanese pronunciation of ‘product’ as ‘peroducuto’. As the variation seems to be quite far from the standard pronunciation, all of the teachers have classified it as unintelligible. Yet, according to the LFC, “Consonants in ... clusters separated by the addition of vowels (e.g. Japanese English ‘product’ as *peroducuto*)” are in fact not a cause of misunderstanding and thus not a part of the four core features (Jenkins 2009, 12).

In conclusion, out of the ten variations, the respondents classified only four in agreement with the LFC classification. When teaching pronunciation, the teachers will most likely focus on items they see as problematic. However, it is apparent that the intuition of the teachers does not correspond with research findings. Thus, students of these teachers might spend too little time on pronunciation features which are central for an ELF appropriate internationally intelligible accent.

4 Teaching ELF

The questionnaire analysis illustrated that despite the improvement of theoretical acceptance of ELF, the basic ELF principles are still not truly reflected in the practical approach to teaching English. ELF is per definition a mode of communication which takes place outside of formal, structured speech events. Therefore, students cannot be completely prepared for ELF in a class setting. Nevertheless, some of the key issues of ELF research can be used in teaching practice to help the students become competent users of English as a lingua franca. The final part of the thesis is a reflection on areas of English teaching which could benefit from rethinking the traditional SLA constructs and embracing the ELF approach. These areas are English itself, the role of a teacher and student, teaching material and the concept of proficiency and evaluation.

4.1 Rethinking the Approach to English and English Teacher

As more than 75% of English conversations take place between NNS, it is clear that teaching of English needs to reflect this reality. Traditional SLA orientation on learning English as a foreign language is based on the false presupposition that all students want to communicate with/join the native community. Such approach does not reflect the global use of English and the diverse needs of individual students. For instance, based on the geographical location, Czech users of English are very likely to come into contact with many NNS. English taught as a foreign language will not sufficiently prepare students for communication with the international and multicultural community of ELF speakers.

The prevailing SLA bias on communication with NS might be explained by the lagging theoretical description of the global use of English. There is a conceptual gap between SLA theory and ELF practise. As a result, despite the prevalence of ELF use “the way English is talked about in the relevant literature [on language acquisition] the default referent, implicitly or explicitly, is EMT [English as a mother tongue]” (Medgyes, 40). The result of this bias is the continuing orientation on native speaker as the goal to emulate and the yardstick of correctness in teaching English. Such approach sets unrealistic goals in language acquisition. As Cook argues, the notion of emulating the native speaker language is, for practical purposes, a myth, and its application in the

classroom may have discouraging or alienating effects on the L2 learner (1999, 191). It is important to note that ELF scholars do not promote teaching of simplified English or the suspension of all grammatical rules with the attitude that “anything goes” (Jenkins 2006, 141). The goal is to give “power to adapt and change” English to the NNS of, the majority of users of English (Brumfit 116). Moreover, the decision whether to strive for acquiring a NS oriented dialect, or simply an internationally intelligible dialect should be left to the user. The goal is therefore to give the learner the agency to decide on his/her own.

An example of the detrimental effect of a NS proficiency oriented SLA was showcased by question five of the questionnaire. The majority of the respondents indicated they experience no lack of confidence when communicating with NNS. Yet, they feel insecure about their English when communicating with NS. Thus, despite being successful in international communication, the NNS teachers still have quite a negative attitude to their proficiency in English. This prevailing tendency of measuring the level of English in comparison to the native speaker is creating a feeling of inferiority in NNS teachers. If NNS teachers presume the goal of SLA is to achieve English as a mother tongue, it is clear they might not feel competent in comparison with NS. This explains why in the answers to question five some of the teachers felt they are being judged and embarrassed when communicating with NS. The teachers do not believe they have true command of English, because the command of English as a mother tongue is the only one they are aware of and to which they aspire. One can imagine that if teachers have such impression of themselves, the students might bear even worse. Clearly, as McKay writes “[t]here is a need for a comprehensive theory of teaching and learning English as an international language” (2002, 125). Such theory would need to take into account “the cross-cultural nature of the use of English in multilingual communities, the questioning of native-speaker models, and the recognition of the equality of the varieties of English that have resulted from the global spread of the language.” Having such theory is crucial as it would give NNS teachers and learners a different perspective on their goals and on their proficiency. ELF research does offer such a perspective. Seidlhofer describes the far reaching effect of the possibilities accepting ELF would have on NNS teachers

[i]f ELF is conceptualized and accepted as a distinct manifestation of English not tied to its native speakers, this perspective opens up entirely new options for the way the world’s majority of

English teachers can perceive and define themselves: instead of being nonnative speakers and perennial, error-prone learners of ENL, they can be competent and authoritative users of ELF. The language teaching profession has too long been obsessed with the native speaker teacher – nonnative speaker teacher dichotomy. The work on ELF ... offers the prospect of abolishing this counterproductive and divisive terminology which hinges on a negative particle, and which has had correspondingly negative effects on English language pedagogy (2001, 152).

The questionnaire analysis supported the importance of conceptualizing and accepting elf. The answers showed that teachers familiar with the concept of ELF were the ones who judged their capabilities more positively. Those not familiar with ELF were the ones who felt a NS is always a better teacher.

The shifting away from a NS oriented language teaching means that SLA needs to focus on more than few prestigious dialects. To prepare the students for the global use of English, Teachers have to help their students develop strategies to engage with a wide range of different codes. Accordingly, besides practicing receptive skills the students should also “acquire training in making themselves comprehensible in as many different communicative situations and with as many different types of NNSs as possible” (Sifakis 2003, 242). It is important to realize that the goal of most students is no longer to “join a new speech community” but the ability “to shuttle between communities by negotiating the relevant codes” (Canagarajah 2007, 929). To fulfil such conditions will be especially challenging for teachers in classes composed of speakers on just one native language.

4.2 Teaching Material

To challenge students with tasks that require use of communicative strategies such as accommodation and code switching, a class should ideally be composed of speakers of different L1 languages. This condition might not always be possible in the Czech Republic (or in any prevalingly monolingual setting). The absence of the natural need to accommodate to more than just variety puts more responsibility on teachers. They have to prevent the students from completely resorting to Czech. They also need to ensure that the students do not accommodate to an overly Czech influenced accent.

Teaching material should be instrumental in helping teachers achieve this. If the students cannot be in direct contact with a variety of English dialects, at least they should have access to input from other than purely native sources. Some of the respondents saw the reason why their students are not prepared for contact with NNS speakers of English in the bias on native material. Such partiality might be caused by the focus on presenting a “naturally occurring language, not produced for instructional purposes” (Widdowson 1994, 384). The presumption that natural and real language can only originate from NS has the obvious result that students are presented exclusively with language of native-speakers or with “selected contexts where standard English is the norm” (Widdowson 1994, 386). Apart from the lack of preparation for varied dialect and accents, any naturally occurring language will be culturally loaded. As Widdowson points out

It may be real language, but it is not real to them. It does not relate to their world but to a remote one they have to find out about by consulting a dictionary of culture. It may be that eventually students will wish to acquire the cultural knowledge and the idiomatic fluency ... to engage authentically with ... a particular native-speaking community by adopting their identity in some degree, but there seems no sensible reason for insisting on them trying to do this in the process of language learning (1994, 386).

The respondents also reflected on the importance of cultural background when they listed the advantages and disadvantages of native and non-native teachers. In conclusion, it is crucial that the teaching material has cultural references that are suitable for the needs and wishes of the students as well as that it reflects the global and varied use of English. So far, there is no comprehensive set of language issues that would constitute a teaching material for an ELF course. Nevertheless, the corpora and the work on pronunciation and LFC already show which aspects need to be mastered by the students to ensure they become competent ELF communicators. Unfortunately, the research on pronunciation and lexico-grammatical issues is still nascent and not widely accepted. As could be seen in the questionnaire analysis, the teachers often overestimated or underestimated the role of some important issues, while not ascribing enough importance to issues crucial for intelligibility. As ELF becomes more prominent, the teaching material should turn away from the NS bias and reflect the international use of English.

4.3 Evaluation and Proficiency

The conception of the aims of teaching English is slowly changing. Most of the respondents mentioned that their students' goal in learning English is the possibility of international communicators. Yet, the language of the leading policies remains unchanged. Seidlhofer points out that “[w]hat constitutes a valid target is still determined with virtually exclusive reference to native-speaker norms” (135, 2001). An example of this was the abovementioned citation of European frame of reference. Jenkins points to another example of this when citing a representative of the new Pearson's Test of English (PTE) from an interview with the periodical, *EL Gazette* (September 2008, 10)

To create an international exam we started by hiring item writers from the UK, the US and Australia ... Because we are not using a single standard model of English we can grade all non-native students on a single scale. The first thing we look for is comprehensibility - are they understandable to the native speaker? (Jenkins 2011, 2).

Despite claiming the goal is the creation of an “international exam” focused on “comprehensibility”, the language of the representative allows only for comprehensibility to the NS. One of the most crucial parts of changing the native speaker bias of traditional SLA will be the change in such conception of proficiency.

The presumption that all students share the same goal of achieving native-like English creates the impression that teaching of English is based on leading an individual student from A1 to C2. ELF challenges such linear conception of acquiring a language. The form of ELF is shaped according to the particular context and participants. This makes the form of ELF very unpredictable. Proficient ELF speakers must be able to adopt to the conventions of their conversation partners in each communicative event. As a result, competence in ELF is not based on “predictability but alertness ... [to be able to] establish alignment in each situation of communication” (Canagarajah 2007, 932). Therefore, acquiring proficiency in ELF cannot be understood as a cumulative process with a clear starting and end point, but the ability to adapt to different contexts and deal with different tasks.

Widdowson comments on the ability to use the language to one's best advantage. Most who have studied foreign languages can relate to the experience of saying things in a foreign language not because they express what one wants to say, but because one can say them. Therefore instead of commanding the language "you feel you are going through the motions, and somebody else's motions at that ... you are speaking the language but not speaking your mind" (Widdowson 1994, 384). To have real proficiency means not only being able to adapt the language to the current communicative event but also to possess the language and make it fit one's needs. Accordingly, expertise is not how much we know but the versatility with which we are able to use our knowledge. In other words, the key issue of mastering ELF is not the extent of conformity to the rules but the ability to achieve various tasks with the language.

It is clear from the conception of ELF proficiency that to prepare students for communication with the ELF language community, they need to become able to adapt to different communicative events. Such approach to language acquisition should be reflected in classroom goals. Communicative approach does in fact prepare students for some issues of ELF. That is for example reducing the stress on individual practice and introducing more pair and group work. Another advantage is the tasks based approach of communicative approach. Even though students cannot experience ELF communication in the structured English lesson, at least they are practicing some of the strategies that will help them in real life.

In addition, instead of focusing on native language norms and native context, more attention should be given to successful L2 users. The learning should always concentrate on achieving mutual intelligibility rather than NS oriented correctness. That is not to say that teachers should completely forego accuracy oriented activities. Rather, the view on what is accurate should not be measured by NS norms but international transparency. Canagarajah emphasizes the point of the relativity of norms when he comments on the futility of focusing only on mastering the norms of a single variety. He claims that "[w]e have to focus more on communicative strategies, rather than on forms of communication ... In a context of plural forms and conventions, it is important for students to be sensitive to the relativity of norms" (Canagarajah 2007, 929). Seidlhofer supports such approach to proficiency and evaluation in SLA claiming that getting rid of "[u]nrealistic notions of achieving perfect communication through 'native-like' proficiency in English would free up resources for focusing on capabilities that are

likely to be crucial in ELF talk” (Seidlhofer, 2004 226). These capabilities are most importantly the command of various pragmatic strategies.

Another key aspect when it comes to evaluation of ELF it is the need to “judge proficiency, intelligibility, and communicative success in terms of each context and its participants” (Canagarajah 2007, 927). If one approaches the evaluation of an ELF communicative event based on NS norms, there is the risk of comparative fallacy (that is imposing norms that are irrelevant to the present communicative event) distorting the user intended meaning. As Brumfit points out “the major advances in sociolinguistic research over the past half century indicate clearly the extent to which languages are shaped by their use“, therefore, the “power to adapt and change ... any language ... rests with the people who use it, whoever they are” (116). Such change of attitude can also be seen in Graddol’s revision of Kachruvian circles. As mentioned above, the criterion deciding whether a speaker of English forms a part of the inner or outer circle is no longer based on nativeness, but on proficiency.

Taking into account the global use of English, proficiency in today’s world must mean a command of internationally intelligible English. Jenkins supports such opinions when disputing the conception of proficiency as having command of a single variety of English

As the form of ELF is dependent on the particular situation and speakers, proficiency of an ELF speaker cannot reside in the mastery of one particular native variety. To have a command of ELF does not mean achieving a certain fixed point on the imaginary beginner-NS scale of the British/American dialect. It means that one has the ability to apply pragmatic skills and adapt one’s English to the demands of the current communicative event (Jenkins 2009, 10).

Apart from the need to rethink the NS oriented concept of proficiency, ELF research also calls into questions the stress on cognition, form and isolated individual in second language acquisition and evaluation. Unlike traditional SLA, ELF does not perceive language users isolated from the communicative context and from their social roles. It emphasizes the importance of the emergent, intersubjective construction of meaning. The stress is not laid on an individual’s competence, but on the use of pragmatic strategies and social aspects of communication. A language learner in ELF is perceived as an individual with more social roles than just that of a learner. Accordingly, SLA should emphasize the students’ own status and capacity of using the

second language with competency and agency. After all, the students are already fluent in at least one language and have a developed set of pragmatic strategies that helps them deal with any interaction. Therefore, they should see themselves as competent communicators, not passive users of a foreign language.

4.3.1 The Conception of Error

Putting stress on the interpersonal aspect of language acquisition necessitates a rethinking of the conception of error. An error in SLA is understood as a marked variation/suspension of a rule, which is clearly attributable to the producer of said variation. However, ELF communication is a co-project depending on the skill of the interlocutors to accommodate to the variations of the other party. Therefore, an error cannot be ascribed to just one speaker in the communicative event. If communication breaks down, the blame will not fall only on the speaker who made a deviant utterance but also on the participant who failed/refused to “ascribe to a linguistic form used by another” (Canagarajah 2007, 929). In ELF such cases rarely occur. Breakdown in LFE communication is possible only in rare cases of refusal to negotiate meanings” (Canagarajah 2007, 929). This is a radical change from the traditional conception of error in SLA. Instead of automatically judging a deviation or suspension of a norm as an error, it is the failure to accommodate to it that is seen as problematic.

The approach to error in ELF therefore prevents the effect of comparative fallacy. An error in ELF is not judged externally from the point of view of correctness according to the researcher/teacher/native standard. Rather, it falls down on the interlocutors to exercise their communicative strategies and try to accommodate to the varieties of their partners in a conversation. Thus, the defining criterion of success and correctness is not adherence to form but the extent to which ELF speakers try “try to accommodate their English to “facilitate one another’s understanding” (Jenkins 2000, 213). That such approach to variations is already adopted by some of the respondents is clear from the answers to question seven. Rather than automatically insisting on students achieving NS-like English, many of the respondents claimed a mutually intelligible one would be the best one to achieve.

Of course, to accept deviations as the norm one must “display positive attitudes to variation and be open to unexpectedness” (Canagarajah 2007, 931). Instead of focusing on the individual acquisition of a NS oriented English, ELF speakers must be

open minded and ready to accommodate to the variations of other interlocutors. ELF speakers “have to be imaginative and alert to make on-the-spot decisions in relation to the forms and conventions employed by the other” (Canagarajah 2007, 931). It is clear that such an approach to the conception of errors and communication requires complete change of the mindset typical of the traditional to SLA.

Conclusion

To reflect the global use of English, it is necessary to make sure that students are being prepared not only for contact with NS but NNS as well. To this end, several areas of ELF research need to be embraced and implemented into the current approach to SLA. This does not mean an exclusive focus on ELF should be prescribed. Rather, it implies that SLA policies should not dictate presumed goals across the board. The decision which English to acquire should be made by the learners themselves. Unless they plan to join the native community, students are going to be faced with using English as an international language more often than for communicating with native NS. Therefore, the decision which variety to teach cannot be prescribed based on perceived prestige of a certain dialect but needs to be chosen according to the requirements of the students.

As was stressed by the ELF research and illustrated by the respondents in question one, international communication is one of the key reasons students learn English. The policies on teaching English need to reflect this fact and put more stress on the international rather than native variety of English. The acknowledgement of ELF is not important just for students. It would also positively influence the perception of NNS teachers. The unrealistic (and often irrelevant) claim of traditional SLA that the achievement of NS-like English is the only ultimate goal of learning English puts NNS teachers under enormous pressure. When it came to comparing oneself as a NNS teacher to a native teacher, feelings of insecurity, inferiority and discomfort were mentioned by many of the respondents. If the concept of ELF was acknowledged, NNS teachers would no longer be defined by the inevitably disadvantageous comparison to NS teachers. Rather, they would be seen as successful communicators of the ELF variety of English.

Based on the ELF research, both ELF speakers and NS have competence in their respective varieties and both have to further develop this proficiency. When assessing communication, it is important not to judge the speakers based on external norms but according to whether they managed to achieve the task at hand. Such approach to perceiving ELF speakers would eliminate the danger of the abovementioned comparative fallacy. ELF speakers cannot be viewed as incompetent learners based on the comparison made between them and NS. Such negative attitude could be seen in the answers to question three. All of the respondents stressed only the negative influences the native tongue/s of their students have on their learning English. The ELF approach to teaching English understands speakers of a second language as experienced communicators with a developed set of communicative skills and other qualities than just that of a learner. ELF speakers are viewed as individuals with distinct social roles (parent, child, employee) which do not disappear just because they speak in a foreign language at a given moment.

The understanding of proficiency in ELF redefines the traditional, fixed conception of form. Form in ELF needs to be understood more flexibly as something shaped by the participants to fit the needs of the communicative situation at hand. This necessitates an open minded approach to variation. The answers of the respondents in question twelve and fourteen revealed a varied approach to the typical ELF core variations. Some of the teachers adopted the traditional SLA approach to evaluation based on adherence to form, while others adopted a more task based, intelligibility oriented point of view. Over all, the approach to variation of form was quite lenient.

Such decrease in the stress put on mastering the formal side of a language, only increases the importance of mastering pragmatic skills. Strategies such as accommodation, prevention of the breakdown of communication and code switching enable speakers to deal with a less rigid (and thus more unpredictable) system of communication. The importance of pragmatic strategies in the negotiation of norm shifts focus away from an individual's cognition towards an interpersonal, social understanding of language acquisition. A proficient ELF speaker is someone who is able to successfully accommodate to varied speech events. The teachers seemed to appreciate this point when evaluating the successful use of code switching in question twelve. However, in monolingual settings (such as in class of Czech students), the teacher needs to ensure that their students do not overly accommodate only towards their classmates as this might result in an internationally unintelligible accent. The

reality of teaching in a monolingual class might thus be one of the reasons why the respondents insisted on the need for NNS teachers to strive for native-like English in question seven.

Despite the importance of negotiation of form in ELF, there are some basic formal rules which seem to be necessary for achieving an internationally intelligible variety of English. The ELF corpora and research conducted on lingua franca core has started to elucidate which norms and rules are indispensable for successful ELF communication. As was shown in the questionnaire, relying on intuition when it comes to deciding which aspects need the most attention can lead to stressing unnecessary issues while neglecting core features. For example, instances of missing third person singular 's' the interchangeable use of 'which'/'who' and regular past forms of irregular verbs received the lowest grades. Yet, all of these were proven not to cause problems with intelligibility in ELF contexts. On the other hand, some items indispensable for achieving an internationally intelligible pronunciation of English were tolerated in question fourteen. Such was for instance the case of the elision of 'h' in him, the misplaced accent in 'conversation' and the pronunciation of 'v' in 'wine'. Clearly, seeing as the opinions of the teachers did not coincide with the research findings, one cannot rely on intuition only when choosing which aspects of grammar and pronunciation need to be stressed in class.

In conclusion, the research on ELF opens up a new possibility of better understanding the variety of English used in international communication. As roughly seventy five percent of English interactions are between NNS, (not only) Czech students are likely to be faced with ELF communication very often. To prepare them for this variation of English, a rethinking of the traditional SLA constructs such as the concept of nativeness, proficiency and form needs to take place. The summary of the ELF research and the analysis of the questionnaires illustrated that while individual opinions might be growing more open toward ELF, the approach to the NNS teacher, the role of a student and variation is still greatly influenced by the traditional SLA approach.

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