**English in Post-Brexit EU: A non-variety perspective from English as a lingua franca**

Marko Modiano succinctly sums up the various reasons why he believes English will continue to serve as the primary working language of the EU after the British have departed. And I agree with him entirely. Modiano also explains why he believes that the kind of English used in the EU (and in continental Europe more widely) is likely to move away from native English once there are no British English speakers present to reinforce it. And again, I agree with him entirely. But at this point, Modiano and I part company, and in this response to his article, I will explain why, and present what I see as a more plausible alternative.

The main reason for my departure from Modiano’s narrative relates to his orientation towards both the phenomenon of English as a lingua franca and research into the phenomenon. His narrative is premised on the notion that English as a lingua franca (henceforth ELF) is a ‘variety’ of English, and also, rather bizarrely, that it “has been presented as an *alternative* to the notion of Euro-English” (p. 10, my italics). I will leave aside the second point as it is patent nonsense. But the first point needs deconstructing.

Modiano is of course right that in its earliest days, when ELF was a newly acknowledged and researched phenomenon, and very few were involved in its study, it was understood – by analogy with recent World Englishes research into Outer Circle Englishes – as a potential variety or, more often, varieties (German English, Japanese English and so on). As time went on, many more researchers globally, including large numbers of PhD students, joined the ‘three founding mothers of ELF’, Mauranen, Seidlhofer and me (thus labelled by Andy Kirkpatrick at the 4th ELF conference in Hong Kong in 2011). Meanwhile, researchers from outside the field began to engage with ELF and to add nuance to our understanding of it. A particular case in point is work on complexity theory and its orientation to ELF as a complex adaptive system (see, e.g., Larsen-Freeman 2017). This new empirical and conceptual activity demonstrated that our original understanding of ELF as a ‘variety or varieties’ was wanting: ELF, or ‘ELF 1’ as I later called it (Jenkins 2015), was too variable to be pinned down in the way that conventional language varieties are.

Modiano’s orientation to ELF is, then, I would argue, seriously out of date. ELF research has moved on, but he still views it as he (and Seidlhofer and I) did when we published a joint article on (so-called) ‘Euro-English’ back in 2001. I would not now agree with much that we wrote then, and feel confident in saying that I am sure Seidlhofer would not do so either. While we, like all current ELF researchers, recognise that there are certain language features that ELF users may have in common, or what Seidlhofer has called “observed regularities” (2009: 242), we also recognise that these features are used flexibly and variably, even in long-term groups, according to who is speaking with who in any specific interaction. In other words, the features are emergent, not ‘engraved in stone’, let alone capable of being codified. On the other hand, much ELF use has been shown to involve features that speakers from different language backgrounds do not share, and here, accommodation skills have been found to be paramount.

We turn now specifically to English in Europe, or what Modiano calls ‘Euro-English’. I prefer the former term because it does not imply a variety of English. Modiano speaks disparagingly about “EU jargon” or what is sometimes called “Eurospeak” . But I would argue that this is the *only* kind of continental European use of English that canbe considered to represent a variety called ‘Euro-English’. For although EU jargon is likely to change over time, including moving further away from native English and further towards the languages and English use of the non-British member states, it is nevertheless possible to document it.

The same is not true of English used in communication among people living in the continental European EU and non-EU states more generally. With the 24 different first languages of EU member states, plus the languages of continental European non-EU states, as well as a large number of immigrant first languages in both settings, and communication in English between people in all these and people from outside Europe altogether, we have a prime example of ELF (not “an alternative” to it). And given the findings of ELF research over the past two decades, the idea that speakers from this large range of language backgrounds will somehow come together to form and use a unitary variety of English is implausible, to say the least. The World Englishes varieties model of English language communication simply does not work for ELF communication, in Europe or anywhere else. In this respect, Edgar Schneider has recently come to the conclusion that his Dynamic Model, so appropriate for Outer (and Inner) Circle Englishes, is not a suitable framework for the “new kind of dynamism of global Englishes” involving non-bounded language use such as ELF. He has instead proposed the concept of “ ‘Transnational Attraction’ – the appropriation of (components of) English(es) for whatever communicative purposes at hand, unbounded by distinctions of norms, nations or varieties” (2014: 28).

A far more appropriate way of accounting for the use of English across language boundaries, be these boundaries within or outside Europe or, indeed, between Europeans and non-Europeans, is Mauranen’s (2012) notion of similects. Her point is that ELF users’ first languages almost invariably provide at least some degree of influence on their use of English. However, she observes, they do not usually develop their English in conversation with their L1 peers, but instead with speakers from other languages, most of whom are also multilingual. All this, she argues, “makes the communities linguistically heterogeneous, and ELF a site of an unusually complex contact” (p.29). She continues:

Therefore, ELF might be termed ‘second-order language contact’: a contact between hybrids. … Second-order contact means that instead of a typical contact situation, where speakers of two different languages use one of them in communication (‘first- order contact’), a large number of languages are in contact with English, and it is these contact varieties (similects) that are, in turn, in contact with each other… To add to the mix, ENL [English as a native language] speakers of different origins participate in ELF communities. The distinctive feature of ELF is nevertheless its character as a hybrid of similects (pp.29-30).

This is very different from the traditional notion of a ‘variety’ to which Modiano subscribes in respect of ‘Euro-English’, and a far more realistic way of accounting for the kinds of English use developing in ad hoc and longer term groups in Europe just as elsewhere in the world.

As well as this, Modiano’s characterisation of English in Europe as a variety ignores the inherent multilingualism of its users. By definition, continental European lingua franca users of English are at least bi- and often multi-lingual. And in this regard, the role of the majority of ELF users’ first/other languages in ELF communication has recently come to the fore in ELF research, primarily under the influence of the findings of research in critical multilingualism (e.g. Cenoz and Gorter 2015), the ‘multilingual turn’ (e.g. the works in May 2014), and the multilingual phenomenon of translanguaging (e.g. García and Li Wei 2014). Earlier I mentioned that I have recently (Jenkins 2015) referred to the old ‘varieties’ orientation to ELF as ‘ELF 1’. By the same token, I have referred to the later understanding of ELF as emergent, fluid, and flexible as ‘ELF 2’, and to the most recent understanding of its essential multilingualism as ‘ELF 3’ (op.cit.).

The key point about ELF 3 is that although in ELF communication settings, English is known to everyone present, all but the occasional (often monolingual) native English speaker involved in an interaction know other languages, and may prefer to use these some, or even all, the time. We are thus talking not about English, but ‘English within multilingualism’ (Jenkins, in press). For this reason, I have suggested that ‘English as a multilingua franca’ (EMF) might be a more appropriate name, with EMF defined as “multilingual communication in which English is available as a contact language of choice, but is not necessarily chosen” (2015: 73). Turning back to the EU, the understanding of ELF as EMF implies not only that English will be used increasingly in ways that suit first language speakers of continental European languages and their interlocutors, both European and non-European, but also that their own languages will gain in importance and increasingly be used both alongside (by means of translanguaging) and instead of English. Having said all this, I should add that in my view, the greatest influence on the lingua franca use of English globally over the next 20-30 years is more likely to come from Chinese than continental European users of English.

In this response piece, like Modiano, I have focused entirely on the implications of Brexit for English in the EU. We should not forget, however, that there will also be implications for those left behind: the British, and particularly those who are monolingual and/or have poor accommodation skills (the two are often synonymous). At a time when the English of Britain’s closest neighbours, continental Europeans, let alone the rest of the English speaking world, is moving increasingly away from native English, many British people are likely to find that they cannot communicate effectively even in ‘their’ language with continental Europe and the rest of the vast non-mother-tongue English-speaking world.

**References**

Cenoz J. & D. Gorter (eds.) 2015. *Multilingual Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press.

García O. & Li Wei 2014. *Translanguaging. Language, Bilingualism and Education*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Jenkins J. 2015. Repositioning English and multilingualism in English as a Lingua Franca.

*Englishes in Practice* 2/3: 49-85.

Jenkins J. In press. Not English but English-within-multilingualism. In S. Coffey and U.

Wingate (eds.) *New Directions for Research in Foreign Language Education*. London: Routledge

Larsen-Freeman 2017, in press. Complexity and ELF. In J. Jenkins, W. Baker & M. Dewey (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of English as a Lingua Franca*. London: Routledge.

Mauranen A. 2012. *Exploring ELF. Academic English shaped by non-native speakers*. Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press.

May S. (ed.) 2014. *The Multilingual Turn*. London: Routledge.

Schneider E. 2014. New reflections on the evolutionary dynamics of world Englishes. *World*

*Englishes* 33/1: 9-32.

Seidlhofer B. 2009. Common ground and different realities: World Englishes and English as a

lingua franca. *World Englishes* 28/2: 236-245.