



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
**National and Kapodistrian
University of Athens**

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

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**Assessment in Multilingual Contexts:
Trends & Challenges in Foreign Language Education / NKUA**

My interest in this talk

- **Assessment** and **testing** as an integral part of the **teaching** and **learning** process
- Highlighting the major challenges for assessment/testing that **ELF research** raises
- Seeing teacher competences as an organic part of **teachers' professional growth**

Challenges to language testing/assessment

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

What is ELF?

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

What is ELF?

- *English as a Multilingual Franca (EMF):*
“Multilingual communication in which English is available as a contact language of choice, but is not necessarily chosen” (Jenkins 2015: 73)
- ELF is a *similect*: A variety of a language spoken by people who have a different L1, with features transferred from the first language in parallel by individual speakers rather than by a cohesive group (Mauranen 2012)

Features of ELF lexicogrammar

- Focus on *intelligibility* & *comprehensibility* through the implementation of *context-sensitive accommodation strategies*
- Based on the **VOICE corpus research**:
 - invariant question tags, e.g. *you're very busy today, isn't it?*
 - treating 'who' and 'which' as interchangeable relative pronouns, e.g. *the picture who / a person which*
 - shift of patterns of preposition use, e.g. *we have to study about*
 - preference for bare and/or full infinitive over the use of gerunds, e.g. *I look forward to see you tomorrow*
 - extension to the collocational field of words with high semantic generality, e.g. *take an operation*
 - increased explicitness, e.g. *how long time*

Aspects of ELF discourse

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

Translanguaging:

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

Accommodation strategies: paraphrasing, rephrasing, repeating, etc.

Central aspects of ELF in use

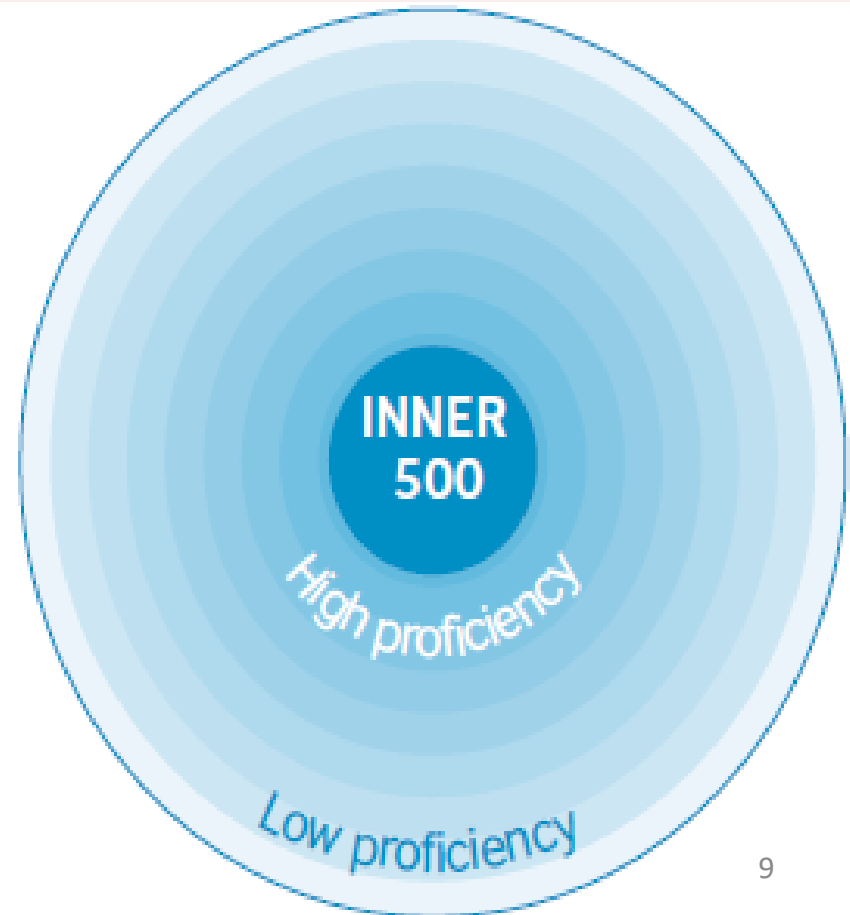
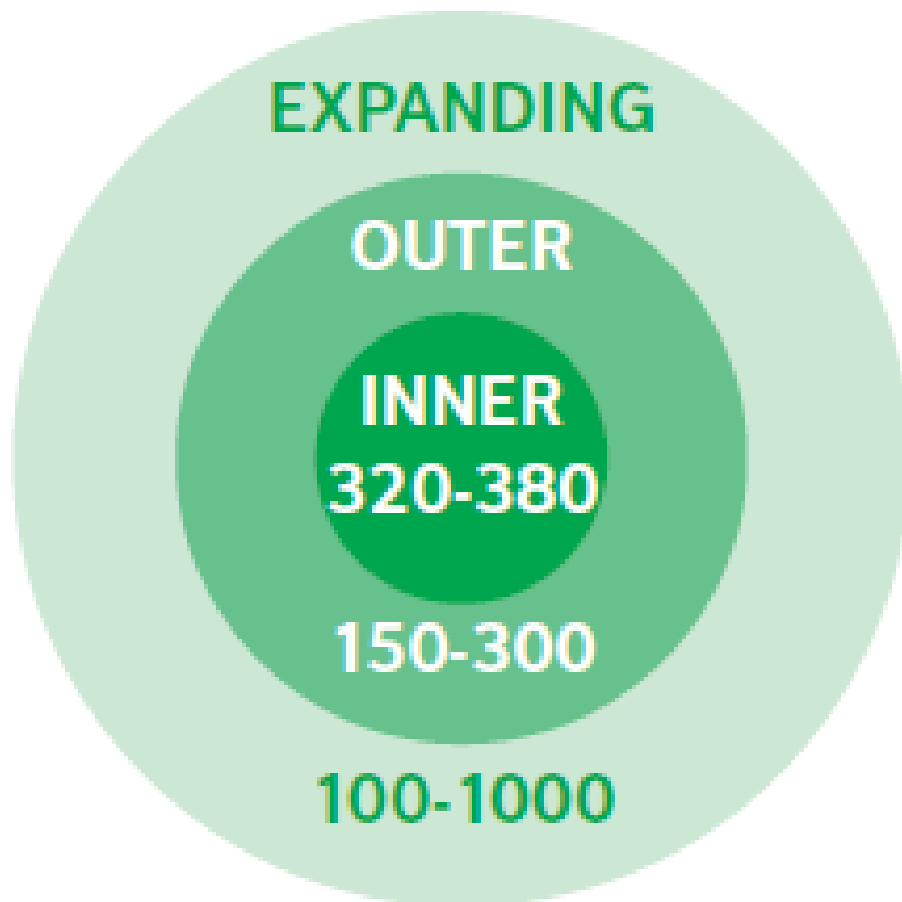
- **Pragmatics:**

- focus is on **function rather than form**
- **communicative efficiency** more important than linguistic accuracy

- ELF interactions are **fluid** and **hybrid**:

- **Accommodation**
- **Intelligibility** and **Comprehensibility**

The “special” role of English



EFL:
**students
as
learners**

**1. Foreign
Language**

**2. Exam-
Oriented**

3. International

4. Multicultural

ELF:
**students
as users**

EFL teacher competences

- ***Subject-matter (formal education)*** centred
 - Testing as a top-down process (defined by the curriculum)
 - Emphasis on preconceived notions of correctness
 - Formative/summative feedback that is NS-bound
- ***Nativespeakerism*** (dangers thereof) (Holliday 2006, 2015)
 - Stereotyping large culture approach (Holliday 1999)
 - T as custodian/guardian of NS (?) varieties
- A rather ***simplified (if not simplistic) way of understanding language interactions***

Challenges to language testing/assessment

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

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

ELF-aware pedagogy

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

(Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2018: 459)

ELF awareness is MORE
than awareness of ELF!

Three components of ELF awareness

ELF awareness is MORE than awareness of ELF

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

(Sifakis, 2019)

I—Awareness of language and language use

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

In practice:

- ✓ **Develop metalinguistic activities: why does ELF communication works as it does**

II—Awareness of instructional practice

ELF awareness is MORE than awareness of ELF

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

In practice:

- ✓ **Develop metacognitive activities: what is the *origin* of these perceptions → ask WHY**

III—Awareness of learning

ELF awareness is MORE than awareness of ELF

Impact of USE on LEARNING

- Where learning takes place (formal/informal settings)
- English not a foreign language

In practice:

- ✓ **Integrate authentic tasks with realistic communicational goals**
- ✓ **Ask learners to reflect on their own convictions about what works in communication in English**

ELF awareness:

What teachers should know

Know thy teaching context—

- Not all teaching situations are the same; different goals, different expected practices

Know thy learners—

- Make it about themselves

Know thyself—

- Teacher roles: guardian/custodian of “proper English” vs. facilitator/prompter of authentic interactions

ELF awareness:

What teachers should know

Welcome change—convictions concerning:

- What is taught is not always what is learned (or learnable): **rethink correction and feedback** strategies
- **Go beyond EFL** (what learners SHOULD do) and **build upon what learners ALREADY DO with English**
- Understand that **ELF awareness is an opportunity for professional development**

Benefits of ELF awareness for exam-oriented settings

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

- **lower the “stress” of teaching-to-a-standardised-test**
- **promote real-life interactional skills, self-awareness and self-confidence in today’s global society**

Bottom line—in order for ELF integration to succeed in EFL settings:

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

Conclusions

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



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Thank you!

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ELF-aware teacher competences

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

- Richer understanding of intercultural communication
 - Translanguaging practices
 - Emphasis on accommodation strategies (incl. creativity)
 - Formative feedback
- Recognizing importance of learning through using outside of the EFL context
- Raising awareness of attitudes (and perhaps transforming them)
- Testing is not a simple, curriculum-defined, top-down process
- Bringing alternative assessment to the fore
 - ...dsdsds
- ...

- Mcnamara 2014