Chapter 39 – Conference interpreting and English as a lingua franca

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Abstract

This chapter provides an overview of research into the implications the global spread of English as a lingua franca (ELF) has had for conference interpreting over the past decade, during which the subfield of ITELF (interpreting, translation and English as a lingua franca) has evolved. It details the complete list of empirical studies carried out so far and outlines the consequences for central topics in conference interpreting, namely interpreting quality, cognitive demands, interpreting strategies and capacity management, interpreters' self-concept and interpreter training. It also addresses preliminary insights into how conference interpreting under ELF conditions could be rethought. It concludes with a table summarizing the changes in the parameters and premises that characterize the new paradigm of interpreting input from a majority of non-native English speakers.

Keywords

Conference interpreting, English as a lingua franca, interpreter training, processing, comprehension, cognitive load, capacity management, strategies, quality, self-concept, modelling interpreting, speaker fidelity, non-native English speaker, shared languages benefit, pre-editing, normalization

Introduction

This chapter starts with a personal anecdote illustrating the changes brought about in conference interpreting by the global spread of ELF. As a precursor to this, a definition of ELF is in order. ELF is set apart from World Englishes, i.e. localized or indigenized (often post-colonial) first or second language *varieties* of English, and conceived as the *use* of English by first, second or foreign language speakers of English in international settings where it is chosen as a common means of communication (Seidlhofer 2011: 81). ELF is, thus,

not a variety of English, but a common mode of international communication crossing language barriers.

A particularly illustrative example is one of my first conference interpreting assignments, starting with the foundation meeting of the European Volkswagen and Audi Dealer Council (EDC) in 1991 with German-English, German-French, German-Spanish and even German-Swedish (!) retour booths. This regimen was soon extended to include German-Italian and the occasional other language retour booths for each of the two annual meetings, of which the spring meetings took place in alternating European capitals of the EDC member states and the autumn meetings in Germany. Although the Swedish booth did not last long, most other booths were retained for some 25 years and gradually reduced to a German-English retour booth in 2019. At the end of 2019, before or independent of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EDC decided to meet in English only from 2020 onwards for cost-cutting reasons and because it was felt that the younger generation should be able to speak in one common European language, namely English.
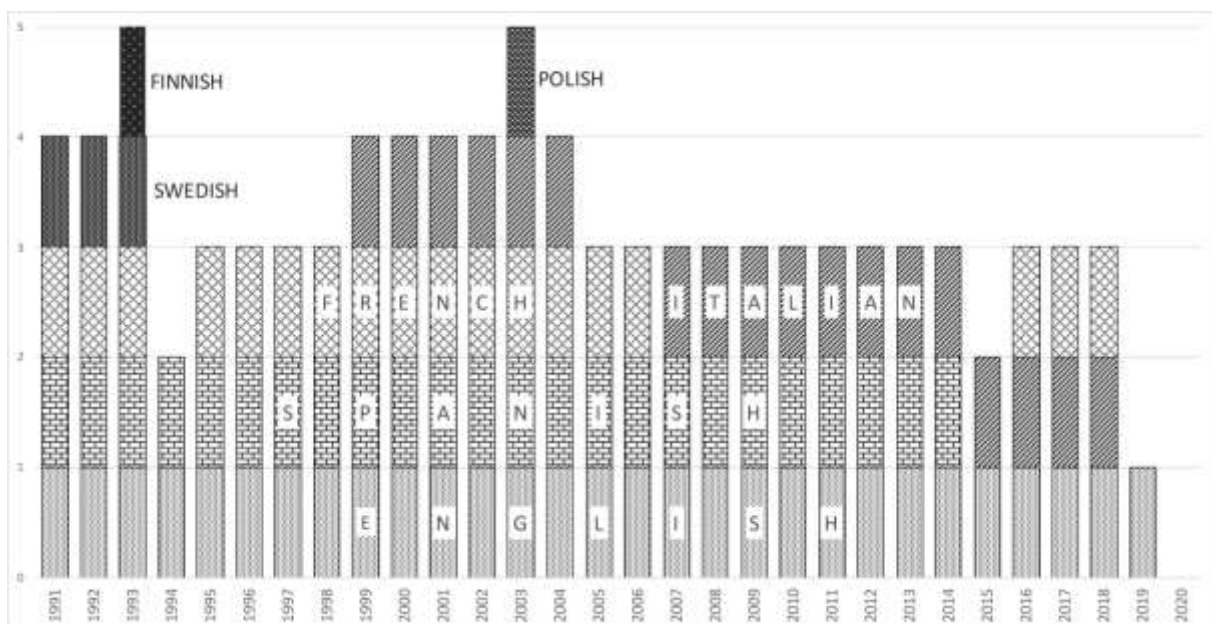

Figure 1: Annual 1991–2020 EDC autumn meetings in Germany with German–x language retour booths (data provision by the EDC gratefully acknowledged)

This is a rather prototypical example of broadly multilingual settings becoming events with one single English–host language retour booth or without interpreters altogether. It aligns with Jones' (2014, no page numbers) AIIC (International Association of Conference Interpreters) account of the "three particular obstacles" for the interpreting profession today, namely: (1) "new technologies", (2) meeting participants' "poor communication skills" and

(3) "the increasing use of international English ('globish')". To Donovan, it is "the predominance of English in conferences and of course in the world at large [that] is probably the single most significant issue for interpreting today" (2011:7). In another study with respondents from AIIC, ELF emerges as the fourth most prominent dissatisfaction factor for interpreters (Zwischenberger 2013: 354f.).

With the exception of a handful of papers, it is only ten years ago that interpreting scholars began investigating the rise of global English and its impact on interpreting. It started with Reithofer's (2010) 2011 PhD project and with my own (Albl-Mikasa 2010) application of the TELF (Tübingen English as a lingua franca corpus) work (Albl-Mikasa 2009) to conference interpreting – and was introduced in 2013 by Albl-Mikasa and Reithofer at the first panel on ELF and interpreting at the 7th EST Congress. Today it has grown into the sub-discipline of ITELF (interpreting, translation and English as a lingua franca). Yet, study initiatives remain very limited in scope and number. This chapter aims to provide an overview of the body of research results produced during this ITELF decade and outline areas for follow-up research.

Empirical research

The following is an overview of the (few) empirical studies published to date. They are grouped according to the most prominent research method used – divided into the main categories of subjective, physiological, behavioural and performance measures (as per Chen et al. 2012) – with some studies having adopted mixed approaches. Within each category, the studies are presented in chronological order according to year of publication. The overview starts with the list of self-report-based studies.

Table 1: Subjective, self-report-based studies

Authors	Method	Sample	Results
Albl-Mikasa (2010)	Questionnaire survey	32 professional German and Swiss interpreters	Increase of ELF speakers in conferences with detrimental effects on market landscape, comprehension difficulties, need to accommodate to ELF audience, additional cognitive load and decline in job satisfaction.
Albl-Mikasa (2013c)	90,000-word interview corpus	10 professional German conference interpreters	Adverse effects of "ELF condition"; need for ELF pedagogy in interpreter training to prepare students and have them develop coping strategies.
Chang & Wu (2014)	Semi-structured interviews on 3 most recent conferences	10 professional freelance Taiwanese interpreters	Prevalence of ELF speakers at conferences in Taiwan; adoption of strategies to cope with topics, accents and speaking styles; edge over general audience through frequent exposure to ELF speakers; fewer assignments not for EN-ZH, but for JA-ZH and KO-ZH.

Tieber (2017)	Interviews at Model European Union (MEU) 2015	20 student participants from 8 countries	Preference for EN over L1 to address audience directly and because of EN terminology; awareness of advantages of using L1 with interpretation; self-report of good EN command, but poor speech presentation in EN.
Gentile & Albl-Mikasa (2017)	Responses to open questions in Gentile's 2016 global survey on interpreters' self-perception of their professional status	51 unsolicited comments from professional conference interpreters from 20 countries	Of 469 responses to open questions (among a total of 805 responses from professional conference interpreters), 51 on ELF as negatively affecting the profession: dropping demand, non-appreciative client attitudes, cost-cutting priorities, ill-conceived beliefs about communication and language skills, and the advance of modern technologies.
Bendazzoli (2020)	Online survey	247 T&I professionals in Italy	Challenges voiced by respondents confirm results of previous studies, ranging from greater comprehension difficulties to fewer jobs; at the same time, potential advantages were also highlighted.
Rodríguez Melchor & Walsh (2020)	Online survey and interviews	33 respondents and 5 interviewees; professional interpreters in Spain	Uncertainties felt and fears about the future entertained; at the same time, some opportunities attributed to English A and B interpreting and relative optimism among some respondents.
Scardulla (2020)	Questionnaire survey as part of broader PhD project	185 EU Commission interpreters (25% of active population of interpreters working for DG SCIC)	Analysis of 2 questions assessing ELF in terms of "communicative effectiveness"; interpreters perceive ELF as decreasing the level of communicative effectiveness and see fewer than half of speakers expressing themselves effectively when using ELF with consequences for communication quality, participation and multilingualism.

These eight self-report studies point to changes on the interpreting market and negative effects on processing. According to the pioneering 2010 survey on the German-speaking market by Albl-Mikasa and the global study by Gentile (2016), a majority of interpreters see negative effects on their work, such as a decrease in demand and esteem, an erosion of communication standards as well as threats to the profession linked to the spread of both ELF and modern technologies (Gentile & Albl-Mikasa 2017). In recent studies in Italy and Spain, respondent interpreters confirmed these results, while also touching upon potential ELF-related opportunities (Bendazzoli 2020; Rodriguez Melchor & Walsh 2020).

Critical voices seem to be more pronounced in Western than in Asian countries. In German-speaking parts of Europe, interpreters emphasize additional cognitive load and tiring effects when processing ELF speeches and report a decrease in motivation and job satisfaction (Albl-Mikasa 2010), whereas in Taiwan interpreters seem to be more aware of the edge they have over general audiences through their frequent exposure to ELF speakers (Chang & Wu 2014). Reports of a habituation effect in that interpreters devise coping strategies (Chang & Wu

2014) and that the "24th Chinese speaker may still be difficult to understand, but much less so than the first one" (Albl-Mikasa 2013c: 7) come from both parts of the world, as do observations of changes in working patterns. The German/Swiss participants in the early study report being increasingly contracted only for highly complex and technical events, and events being equipped with only one retour booth covering English and the host country's language (Albl-Mikasa 2010). This is confirmed by the ECD example above. Similarly, there are reports from Asia of fewer assignments for Japanese-Chinese and Korean-Chinese language pairs and a concentration on English-Chinese (Chang & Wu 2014). It is as yet unclear whether this may also have to do with the wide-spread preference for speaking English even where interpretation is provided (Tieber 2017). The tendency is questionable in view of doubts about the communicative effectiveness of ELF. In a questionnaire survey among a quarter of SCIC interpreters, they indicated that, in their experience, less than half of non-native EU Commission meeting English speakers were communicating effectively (Scardulla 2020).

Against this backdrop, professional interpreters interviewed called for systematic ELF-pedagogy-geared training sessions with a view to equipping students with the necessary strategic skills and confronting them with the different ways of speaking exhibited by ELF speakers from around the world and of accommodating to ELF speaker audiences in terms of style, idiomaticity and complexity levels and register (Albl-Mikasa 2013c).

Of the ITELF-related empirical studies, five fall into the category of performance-based studies.

Table 2: Performance-based studies

Authors	Method	Sample	Results
Basel's 2002 PhD thesis, Kurz & Basel (2009)	Comparison of source texts and interpretations	6 professional, 12 student interpreters	ELF speech production may result in considerable loss of information in interpretation; knowing the ELF speaker's mother tongue/L1 facilitates interpreting.
Albl-Mikasa (2013a), based on a BA thesis	Analysis of transcripts of interpretations and of retrospective interviews	1 student interpreter, 3 ELF speakers	Incoherent, imprecise or unconventional ELF speaker input can lead to comprehension problems and seems to impede retrieval of memorized transfer routines and translation equivalents.
Albl-Mikasa, Guggisberg & Talirz (2017), based on a MA thesis	Verbalization of same PowerPoint slides by 1 native and 1 ELF speaker; video recordings of	6 professional interpreters; 1 ELF-speaking corporate employee, 1 native-speaking corporate	Interpreting-relevant differences between ELF and native English speaker verbalization in terms of information density, rapport building and text organization.

	presentations and interpretations	employee	
Albl-Mikasa, Bartels, Mohler & Wick (2017)	Interpretation of 2 speeches by African L2 English speakers; online questionnaire, retrospective interviews; in-depth interview with trainer	5 students (transcribed interpretations); 10 students (questionnaires) as part of special training session; retrospective interviews with 3 of them after real-life ELF conference	Accent as main problem with African ESL speakers; to some extent also proper nouns, unconventional concepts / expressions and unorthodox grammar; elicitation of coping strategies; differences between interpreting native and non-native speakers elicited from retrospective comments of student interpreters at a South African ELF conference; implications for training derived.
Huh (2017)	Consecutive interpretations of 3 authentic speeches (1 American EN (AME), 1 Indian EN (INE), 1 Chinese EN (CHE))	10 interpreting students (each interpreting all 3 texts)	Different sets of problem triggers for INE and CHE varieties; contrasting with overall faithful output produced when interpreting AME speech.

This list of performance-based studies does not include Sabatini (2000), Kurz (2005, 2008) or Lin, Chang & Kuo (2013), which, dealing predominantly with the adverse effects of unfamiliar accents on interpreting students, are not based on authentic ELF material. As far as can be made out and with the exception of one presentation by an Indian speaker in Sabatini (2000), they work with differently read and accentuated English speeches. Of the listed studies, those involving interpreting students find non-standard speech to be a potential problem trigger for trainees (Kurz & Basel 2009; Huh 2017). Basel's 2002 PhD study found this same effect on both students and professional interpreters (Kurz & Basel 2009). In addition, she observed that knowing the ELF speaker's mother tongue or L1 facilitates the interpreting task. This phenomenon has been repeatedly reported by conference interpreters (Stähle 2009: 170) and termed the *shared languages benefit* (SLB) (Albl-Mikasa 2013b: 105). It refers to interpreters using their knowledge of speakers' first or second languages to link unconventional lexical and syntactic non-native English speaker structures back to the underlying structures of the speaker's languages, from which they were translated into English. Such 'back-linkage' facilitates inferencing of what speakers mean to say. For instance, "escaped gains" (as uttered by a German ELF speaker), can be traced back to the German phrase "entgangene Gewinne" from which it was transcoded. This enables interpreters who understand German to arrive at the correct meaning, namely "a loss in profits", and interpretation thereof (Albl-Mikasa 2014c: 298). The SLB assumes particular importance considering that crosslinguistic transfer from first (or additional) languages is a fundamental characteristic of ELF speech (Mauranen 2012: 28–30; Albl-Mikasa 2014b).

Consequently, it has implications for capacity management and interpreting strategies (see below).

The studies involving professional interpreters target various aspects above and beyond the impact of foreign accents. Albl-Mikasa (2013a) deals with processing effects, in the sense that non-standard input can disrupt transfer routines and the automatized retrieval of what Gile calls "translinguistic equivalents" or "regular associations or 'links' between particular LCs [language constituents] in two languages" (2009: 239). It is suggested that the incoherent, imprecise or unconventional source input does not match the related items ingrained in the interpreter's *mental translation memory*. In addition to such non-conformities at the source text's micro-linguistic surface structure level, there are also differences at the macro-level of source speech verbalization and text organization by native and non-native speakers (Albl-Mikasa, Guggisberg & Talirz 2017). For instance, despite faster native speaker speech rates, information density was higher in the non-native speech. Moreover, higher information density was caused and compounded by a lack of pragmatic expressions, which, in the native speaker's speech, served to address the audience, structure content, mark discourse intentions or clarify text development. The lack of these features is suggested to be part of the reduced express-ability (Albl-Mikasa 2013b) and pragmatic fluency (House 1999: 86) that non-native speakers of English may exhibit, depending on their proficiency levels. A very different study on the introduction of an ELF interpretation training module looks at students' strategic behaviour and experience when interpreting in (African) World Englishes and ELF settings and outlines the implications for interpreter training (Albl-Mikasa, Bartels, Mohler & Wick 2017).

Finally, the cognitive demands associated with processing in ELF contexts as highlighted in the self-reports above have now become the focus of a large-scale, multi-method research project.

Table 3: Physiological/behavioural studies

Authors	Method	Sample	Results
Albl-Mikasa, Ehrensberger-Dow, Hunziker Heeb, Lehr, Boos, Kobi, Jäncke & Elmer (2020); Ehrensberger-Dow,	Physiological, behavioural, performance-based, subjective measurements from: - simulated workplace setting - lab setting	interpreters and students (professionals, MA, BA), translators and students (professionals, MA, BA) and non-translation multilinguals (professionals, MA and BA	First insights from pilots; data collection ongoing in 2021.

		students) Approx. 250 participants altogether	

The interdisciplinary CLINT (Cognitive Load in Interpreting and Translation) project (Albl-Mikasa et al. 2020; Ehrensberger-Dow et al. 2020) brings together T&I and neuropsychology researchers and methods with a view to examining the 'cost' or 'additional load' incurred in processing spoken and written ELF. Results are expected in 2022.

A further category is required to capture studies that cannot be classified by the methods used, namely user-oriented studies. These look at the effects on listeners' comprehension and participants' output.

Table 4: User-oriented studies

Authors	Method	Sample	Results
Reithofer (2010, 2013) PhD thesis	Comprehension tests on audience listening to ELF speech or interpreted version	1 professional interpreter, 89 listeners in two test runs, half of whom listened to original ELF speech, other half to interpreted version	Understanding of source speeches significantly higher among conference participants listening to the interpretation into their mother tongue than among those listening to the ELF original, even when sharing the same technical background as the ELF speaker; subjective rating of own comprehension also higher among those listening to interpreter.
Bendazzoli (2017)	Case study of a conference of interpreter-mediated native IT and native and non-native EN speeches (as part of DIRSI Corpus)	5 IT native, 1 EN native and 5 EN non-native speakers; 2 professional conference interpreters (IT-A, EN-B)	Highlighting of divergent speaking configurations in an event with native and non-native participants; communicative power measured in terms of speaking time and rate of delivery depending on turn-taking; longer interpreter output linked to non-native EN speakers' slower delivery rates, shorter interpreter output linked to native EN speakers' faster delivery rate.
Reithofer (2020)	Simulated conference; comprehension test: participants answering written questions on ELF speech	67 participants listening to Italian ELF speaker (as part of her broader 2013 PhD study)	High comprehension scores secured by listeners with considerable prior exposure to various ELF speakers; no beneficial effect from domain-specific knowledge; English language skills not a determining factor.

Reithofer (2010, 2013) demonstrates the value interpreters may add over on-trend English-only events by showcasing significantly higher comprehension scores among the members of the audience listening to the interpreter than those who listened to the original ELF speaker. Among those listening to the original ELF speaker, comprehension was better for those with considerable previous exposure to a variety of ELF speakers, while no beneficial effect was

derived from domain-specific knowledge or English language skills (Reithofer 2020). This supports the introspective results outlined above and lends weight to interpreters' edge and expertise in dealing with various Englishes based on their frequent exposure to ELF. It also highlights the importance of specific ELF training. Finally, Bendazzoli (2017) looks at speaker constellations at an ELF conference and the possible consequences for floor-holding and communicative power on the part of host language L1, native English and non-native English speakers. While interpreters may not necessarily facilitate participation due to time lags and delays, they might foster more balanced participation in such ELF settings.

The results to date lead us to the following ITELF-related assumptions to be explored in further research:

1) Non-native speech may cause considerable interpreting difficulties, potentially leading to omissions and misinterpretations.
2) Foreign accents, which are also an issue in native source speeches, are one of many impacting factors.
3) Non-native speech may be unconventional, imprecise or incoherent, disrupting rehearsed and established translation links, routines and automatisms.
4) All of these factors can potentially generate additional cognitive load and stress.

Themes for future research

As outlined above, ELF poses challenges to the profession and also to our very understanding of (conference) interpreting. Yet, so far, there has been no attempt to re-conceptualize conference interpreting accordingly. To Jones (2014: 18), "any theoretical model of interpretation and any pedagogy of interpretation" would have to "go far beyond the classical models" to deal with current situations where "the interpreter takes into account multiple audiences and multiple interpreting objectives in the course of one single interpretation". This statement refers to the increasing use of English as a pivot language in the European institutions. It is based on Jones' observation that working on relay from lesser known languages now involves the English interpreter accommodating not only colleagues taking the pivot on *relay*, but also adjusting to non-native English listeners, all while being checked by any delegates who speak some English. However, this relates to interpreting *into* English for ELF audiences, i.e. participants of different L1s that have English as a first, second official or foreign language and choose English as their lingua franca. Yet the main challenges for interpreters reside less in production, and more in comprehension. It is the increasing number

of ELF speakers at conferences and the many contexts where interpreters have to work *from* non-native English(es) that are challenging the basic tenets of conference interpreting, calling for a re-think. In the following, some preliminary ideas will be sounded out.

Setting the scene for processing under ELF conditions

The difference between monolingual communication and interpreting lies in the constraints inherent in interlingual processing tasks, whereby processing conditions come into conflict with the comprehension and production strategies developed and rehearsed during monolingual first and foreign language acquisition (see Hodzik & Williams, Chapter 26, and Moser-Mercer, Chapter 28, this volume). In addition to the simultaneity and online and time-restrained processing in simultaneous interpreting, the constraints are: "the [continuing] presence of source language structures [during production], translators' lack of thematic-semantic autonomy and processing depth during source text comprehension" (Kohn 2004: 221, my translation; Kohn 1990). *Under ELF conditions, these constraints are exacerbated:*

1. *Prevailing presence of source speech structures:* While interlocutors in ordinary communication are tuned into shallow comprehension processes that stop when 'good enough' or sufficiently relevant meaning recovery is achieved, interpreters, for the purpose of continuously monitoring the translation process, have to keep bottom-up signals in an activated state, while searching for appropriate target language expressions. This carries a great risk of *interference* (Kohn 1990, 2004). Such co-presence of source speech structures goes far beyond the common co-activation of two or more languages in bilinguals (Grosjean 1997) and underlies interpreters' need for extreme language control (see Hervais-Adelmann, Chapter 34, this volume). Under ELF conditions, these lingering source speech items may markedly deviate from the standard as per the interpreter's linguistic knowledge and be cross-linguistically influenced by speakers' L1. Therefore, additional cognitive effort may be required for input *inhibition* so that it may not interfere with production.

2. *Lack of semantic autonomy:* During ordinary non-mediated speaking and writing, propositional content and forms of expression evolve in close interaction, under the guidance of an overarching communicative goal. Less precise ideas and intentions rather than fixed or pre-established messages are progressively articulated in gradual meaning and form creation, influenced by target language items produced bottom-up. Given the lack of thematic-semantic autonomy in interpreting, the source speaker's pre-formulated input impedes free access to and the intuitive and strategic activation

of linguistic knowledge (Kohn 1990, 2004). Moreover, this input gives rise to different possible meanings that must be temporarily memorized.

Under ELF conditions, the assimilation of someone else's thematic-semantic specifications is further complicated when they lack conciseness and clarity due to the reduced expressive capability of some ELF speakers (see above). This may necessitate compensation through (more resource-intensive) higher-order *inferences* based on background knowledge and working memory operations.

3. *In-depth comprehension:* Meaning recovery processes, integral part of all communication, have to be conducted in an unusually diligent and exhaustive manner in interpreting. If the source speech input does not allow for the unambiguous and precise determination of the intended utterance, target speech rendition cannot be spontaneous or complete (Kohn 2004, 1990).

Under ELF conditions, such in-depth comprehension is rendered more difficult when the input is incoherent, imprecise, unconventional, incomplete or even incomprehensible. This requires a certain amount of "normalization" (Hewson 2009: 119) or "pre-editing" of non-native speaker input, demanding additional resources for attentive listening, enhanced meaning analysis and plausibility checks during source speech understanding.

Given the described constraints, ITELF research will, have to re-address major interpreting studies topics, such as cognitive demands, strategies and capacity management, interpreting quality and performance, the interpreter's self-concept, as well as training.

Cognitive load

From the very beginning of ITELF research, there have been indications of additional demands associated with processing ELF input. Foreign accents (whether from native or non-native speakers) are known to tax resources (Sabatini 2000; McAllister 2000) and be a stress factor (Mackintosh 2002: 25). They were rated the fourth most common reason for interpreter dissatisfaction (Zwischenberger 2013: 354f.). In the survey of Albl-Mikasa (2010: 142), 71% of respondents reported foreign accents to be a stressor "very frequently" encountered and that their job had become more strenuous and tiresome with the increase in non-native English speakers. In this same survey, the disadvantages of the rise of ELF were explicitly said to include strained capacity management in the *comprehension process*. This was due to

heightened demands on concentration, processing, attentive listening, disambiguation and reformulation as well as increased effort for meaning-derivation from non-standard expressions, recovering incomplete structures, ironing out mistakes and irregularities and unravelling unusual word combinations (2010: 136). Additional demands were also placed on processing during the *production phase* to accommodate to ELF audiences' presumed lower proficiency levels, selecting expressions more carefully, avoiding idiomatic phrases, reducing syntactic and lexical complexity and explaining unusual wordings (2010: 138).

These introspective observations by conference interpreters are reflected in (non-T&I) ELF research findings: "The cognitive load in ELF is unusually heavy on account of the variety and unpredictability of language parameters: interlocutors' accents, transfer features, and proficiency levels" (Mauranen 2012: 7). In interpreting, this is exacerbated by the non-conversational, monological processing conditions, where interactive meaning negotiation and pragmatic strategies are reduced to a minimum. Under these (openly bilingual) conditions, ELF input may interfere with memorized and rehearsed translation equivalents and "long-established automatisms" (Albl-Mikasa 2010: 138), acting as "brain stoppers" (Albl-Mikasa 2014a: 23) for interpreters. What exactly it is that produces this effect is open to research. Preliminary evidence suggests that combinations of ELF-induced difficulties may trigger problems (Albl-Mikasa 2017).

- Unconventional expressions or concepts may be used in incorrect ways while also embedded in irregular sentence structure (Albl-Mikasa 2014c: 300).
- Accent may be closely linked to speech rate, with significantly lower mean comprehension scores for heavily accented fast speech than for heavily accented slow speech (Matsuura et al. 2014).
- Slow delivery rates, often typical of ELF speakers due to lexical searches (Mauranen 2012: 117), may involve halting speech, hesitations and re-starts, hindering interpreters' free flow of target language speech production and burdening short-term memory when chunks of information have to be stored longer (Gile 2009: 193).
- Any benefits of non-native speakers' slow delivery rates may be offset by increased information density caused by insufficient resources to engage in meta-discourse and the delivery of subtler nuances beyond the more factual information (Albl-Mikasa, Guggisberg & Talirz 2017).

Another critical point repeatedly highlighted by interpreters is the 'porous argumentative logic' in much non-native speech. It takes a complete package of linguistic resources for speakers to convincingly argue, compellingly make their point or poignantly and explicitly express the intentions behind their messages. This is because not only propositional content, but illocutionary force and function, too, have to be expressed. Interpreters observe that ELF speakers are not always capable of this, but instead take recourse to "Lego English", in that they

> take some basic building blocks – buzzwords, jargon, the appropriate technical terminology – then link them with various connecting phrases to try to build concepts, and produce a result which is as close to real English as a child's Lego house is to the buildings we live in. My experience is also that this problem gets worse as the day wears on and delegates tire. (Jones 2014: 16)

As a result, interpreters speak of "BSE" or "bad simple English" (Reithofer 2010: 144), "Globish" or even "desesperanto" (Donovan 2011: 12) rather than ELF. At this point, it seems that fast native speech allowing interpreters to 'submerge' themselves in the interpreting act and processing flow may be less tiring than deciphering such slower non-native speech (Albl-Mikasa et al. 2017: 231). Interpreters may have to come to terms with a sense of distrust and doubt regarding the source input and with the need for a certain degree of guesswork and approximation in order to avoid a lack of control, which could potentially increase cortisol and chronic stress (Peters et al. 1998). A multi-method approach administered to interpretations of authentic ELF input is needed to shed light on actual effort expended.

Interpreting strategies and capacity management

Processing non-standard (English) input happens against a mental background of a 'regular' English knowledge base (Albl-Mikasa/Gieshoff, forthcoming). The mismatch or unexpectedness calls for additional attention and better economizing of limited resources when (unpredictable) deviations are encountered. The connection between such capacity management and "coping tactics", as illustrated by Gile (2009: 191–218; see also Riccardi, Chapter 27, this volume), raises the question whether common interpreting strategies should be adapted to the ELF task or new ones devised. This can be likened to the tailoring of monolingual language processing strategies to the interpreting task (e.g. anticipation) versus developing interpreting-specific ones (e.g. *décalage* modulation).

In one of the CLINT pilot trials (Ehrensberger-Dow et al. 2020), the professional interpreter, after interpreting both an ELF speech and an edited, 'standardized' version of the text, elaborated, in his transcribed cued retrospective comments, on the strategies he used in dealing with some of the uncertainties of the ELF text: extended décalage ("I had to put her on a long leash, I couldn't stay close, at risk of losing out on some information"), deverbalization ("I couldn't put my hope on the word level, so I stopped thinking about the words too much and simply deverbalized"), and trying to exploit the SLB ("during interpreting I tried to figure out what that could have been in her Italian L1, but it wasn't a very successful strategy at this point"). Here, SLB exploitation is an example of an ELF-specific strategy, deployed in addition to an interpreting-specific one (namely *décalage* modulation). SLB exploitation can only be applied, of course, if the interpreter shares the ELF speaker's L1 (or L2) as an A-, B-, C- or casual non-working language.

Other strategies used to cope with ELF had been identified earlier, based on a corpus of ten in-depth interviews with professional conference interpreters (Albl-Mikasa 2013c: 6, 9). They include (intensified) preparation; evasion (leave out what seems implausible and straighten out later); keeping calm (at all costs), and visual support (relying on PPT slides).

With the exception of ELF-specific *SLB exploitation*, all other strategies, namely *preparation*, *evasion*, *keeping calm*, *relying on visual support*, *deverbalization*, and *décalage modulation*, are known from canonical conference interpreting (see Riccardi, Chapter 27, this volume). It seems, however, that, in ELF contexts, they need to be deployed more frequently and more intensively. This means strategy selection may not be fundamentally different, but the weighting is. Some strategies, such as anticipation, may be hindered, others such as plausibility verification and discussions with boothmates ("did he really say that?", "did I hear/get this correctly") assume newfound importance. Exploring strategies and coping tactics, especially with a view to interpreter training, should therefore be on the ITELF research agenda.

Interpreting quality and performance
Both Gile and Kalina stress the impact of the source text on interpreting quality. Kalina observes that "the quality of the interpretation is largely a function of the quality of the source text (ST) to be interpreted […]" and that "the interpretation cannot really be any better than

the respective ST" (2006: 253, my translation). According to Gile, "the speaker factor, i.e. the way a particular speaker constructs and delivers his/her speech", is "one of the strongest determinants of interpreting difficulty" (2009: 200). The majority of Gile's "problem triggers" (2009: 193) are especially typical of non-native speech (although applying also to native speech), namely "*high density of the information content*" (see above), "excessively slow speech rate" (chunks of information having to be kept in the short-term memory longer), "*strong accents* and *incorrect grammar* and *lexical usage*" (increasing processing capacity requirements), "*unusual linguistic style* and *reasoning style*" as well as "low anticipability of the source speech" (2009: 193, 200, emphasis in the original).

What does this mean for interpreters' quality standards and requirements? Interpreters have mentioned (e.g. in the in-depth interviews for Albl-Mikasa 2014c: 296) that some colleagues adopt a "garbage in, garbage out" strategy, while others insist on high target text standards, even if that means stretching the principle of speaker fidelity and producing a text which takes the source text to new levels. This raises the important question of how to best represent an ELF speaker during interpreting. Should interpreters "create and project the illusion of the non-hybrid text" (Pym 2001: 11) when ELF input is essentially hybrid in nature? In fact, "ELF discourses are creative local realizations, or performances, of a global resource that continually gets appropriated and re-fashioned by its speakers" (Seidlhofer 2011: 111). If, as Scardulla (2020) finds above, ELF speakers at conferences lose out on their rhetoric impact and bargaining power, should interpreters make it a unique selling point and advertise their skills and services based on their expertise to make heads and tails of an ELF speech and level out non-native speakers' linguistic weaknesses? But then, how far can interpreters go in 'improving' the quality of the source text? Interpreters cannot be expected to perform simultaneous post-editing any more than they should convey the source text pattern with gaps and blunders. ELF may be an opportunity to demonstrate that interpreters do not 'simply translate words', but convey message and content in the form of a high-quality text product. Research is called upon to produce evidence of the value interpreters can add to an event in terms of making communication more effective (see also Reithofer 2013 above). An interesting spin-off finding may be that (native and non-native English-speaking) conference delegates listening to the ELF original are likely to have greater difficulties with ELF-induced features (Seidlhofer 2011: 81) than interpreters. Any non-participation or passiveness as a result of ELF use cannot be in the interests of event organizers.

Professional self-concept

ELF-related developments have eroded conference interpreters' status. It is now felt that, on the private market, "interpreting is something people are no longer prepared to pay for, whereas some time ago it was something that lent an international aura to their dealings" (Albl-Mikasa 2014c: 294) and that there is a "commoditization of conference interpreting" caused by the combination of ELF with new technologies penetrating the market and "downgrading" or "discrediting" of the profession (Gentile & Albl-Mikasa 2017: 60). Similar effects on interpreters' professional self-concept can be expected from cost-saving tendencies, demands for greater interpreting quality under more difficult working conditions (because "interpreting must be that much better than muddling through with the *lingua franca*" (Donovan 2011: 17)) and additionally taxed resources, frustration and stress.

In view of the "objective deterioration of working conditions in the interpreting profession over the past 40 years" (Gile 2017: 244), a re-think of interpreters' professional self-concept may be in order. Based on a comprehensive survey among translators, translation project managers and corporate communication specialists, Massey and Wieder call for a re-definition and broadening of translators' "professional opportunities and range, developing an extended self-concept as intercultural mediators, adaptive transcreators and language consultants" (2019: 76). Similarly, interpreters could re-brand as intercultural consultants and multilingual communication experts (Albl-Mikasa 2017) as well as strengthening their marketing and business skills (Albl-Mikasa 2014b: 814; see also Downie, Drechsel, Gansmeier & Hickey, Chapter 37, this volume). Across-the-board interpreting, i.e. catering to both conference and community interpreting (see Tiselius, Chapter 4, this volume), may also be worth considering, especially since community interpreting is rising in scope, volume and status, with ELF playing an increasing role here too (Albl-Mikasa 2017). Interpreters' and translators' transcreational skills have been discussed as giving them an edge over the machine (Katan 2017). Interpreting under ELF conditions should put an end to naïve assumptions of interpreters' "parrot-ising", "simply translating" (i.e. transcoding), or uncreatively imitating (Wilss 1988: 111).

Research might even pick up on unexplored concepts such as improvisation, which helps interpreters cope with the unexpected under general conditions and becomes more relevant under ELF conditions where input may be unpredictable. According to brain studies on improvisation, the very areas that are linked to self-monitoring and inhibition – fundamental

interpreting skills – have to be deactivated to let self-expression flow and allow for more creative activities. Moreover, the areas of the brain activated during improvisation (prefrontal cortex or frontal lobe) are also the seat of working memory, which is precisely where interpreters operate their task (Luccarelli 2012, 2016, based on a November 2010 TED Talk by neuroscientist Charles J. Limb).

Interpreter training

Various authors have advocated for the introduction of an ELF pedagogy (Kurz 2008, Donovan 2011, Albl-Mikasa 2013c, Jones 2014) in interpreter training. While professionals have manifested incremental learning and coping effects over time (Chang and Wu 2014), students should be given substantial pre-exposure, preparing them for the new reality of the majority of English speakers at conferences being non-native. Traditional assignment preparation may no longer suffice in situations where interpreters will have to relate what they hear in a supposedly familiar language, namely English, to something rather more unfamiliar and set against unknown cultural backdrops.

The research-monitored introduction of a systematic ELF training module (Albl-Mikasa et al. 2017), which combines theory-based reflection with practical interpreting sessions in the booth, covering ELF speeches from around the world, has proven advantageous. More research is needed on typical ELF phenomena, their origins and cultural backgrounds. Of particular interest might be work on the 'family resemblances' between typologically similar groups of Englishes that may influence ELF speech through transfer from speakers' L1s in particular ways. This might ideally complement a comprehensive centralized ELF speech repository, perhaps with sub-pools for different speaker groups (Indian, Chinese, African, etc.), possibly compiled in concerted action from interpreting study programmes and associated institutions, such as SCIC. Such research-based effort to provide effective learning materials, could enable students to practice with different 'Englishes' and understand how ELF speakers and speeches differ from "standard input". Finally, all the above-mentioned research trajectories aimed at strategies and capacity management, cognitive load, stress and frustration, changes in professional self-concept, etc. should also be geared towards training.

In summary, it seems that the parameters and premises have changed with the massive increase in ELF source speeches, but that the implications of these changes are underresearched. The following table summarizes aspects of change that I view as characterizing interpreting under ELF conditions. They are conceptual assumptions yet to undergo empirical testing.

Table 5: Summary of conventional vs. ELF interpreting conditions

Interpreting (topics)	Conventional conditions	ELF conditions
Processing constraints		
Constraint 1	Prevailing presence of source text structures	Heightened risk of interference from both source English and speaker's L1
Constraint 2	Lack of thematic-semantic autonomy, reproduction	Reconstruction, semi-autonomous text production
Constraint 3	Non-shallow (source) text comprehension	Additional normalization and 'mental pre-editing'
Processes and capacity management		
Comprehension	Trustworthy native speaker input; comprehension to be ensured by interpreter	Non-native speaker input questionable; comprehension much less under control of interpreter; guesswork, conjecturing
Transfer	Automatized transfer routines, regular translation links	Disruption of mental translation memory, brain stoppers
Production	Targeted and purposeful reproduction	Creative approximation and amelioration
Accommodation	Functional and culture-bound accommodation	Additional linguistic and proficiency-geared accommodation
Monitoring	SL input and TL output monitoring	Additional plausibility checks; distrust of speaker input
Control	Attentive listening, simultaneous reception and production processes, divided attention, language switching	Additional cognitive capacity management
Strategies	Adaptation from monolingual strategies	Adaptation from multilingual strategies
Quality		
Communicative effectiveness	Speaker fidelity	Creation of non-hybrid text?
Sense orientation	Grasping meaning not words; utterance intention, speaker argument	Deciding between different possible readings of source messages when ELF speakers fail to make their point
Requirements	Excellent quality standards	Stronger focus on quality under more difficult processing conditions (or "garbage in, garbage out"?)
Accuracy	Complete, accurate rendering	Reprocessing of source text in target text

Norms	Reliance on automatized norm-guided native-speaker language use	Compensation for lack of norms; improvisation
Language pairs	L1-based interlingual communication between native speakers	Lx-based interlingual communication; shared languages benefit (SLB)
Professional image		
Self-concept	Multilingual facilitation	Elaborative adaptation; transcreation?
Role	Critical link	Communication expert in broader sense; re-branding
Status	Often indispensable	Potentially replaceable by ELF

Conclusion

The most basic and central tenet of interpreting is perhaps that of "speaker fidelity", as affirmed by Herbert in his early handbook (1952: 4). Similarly, Seleskovitch called for the interpreter to work with "total accuracy" ("*fidelité absolue*") (1978). Even if this tenet has been subjected to a broader discussion, especially as regards the impact of working conditions, conference interpreting, its role and vision, is still influenced by the following assumption:

> What our listeners receive through their earphones should produce the same effect on them as the original speech does on the speaker's audience. It should have the same cognitive content and be presented with equal clarity and precision in the same type of language if not better, given that we are professional communicators, while many speakers are not, and sometimes even have to express themselves in languages other than their own. (Déjean Le Feal 1990: 155)

With the number of ELF speakers increasing significantly, ITELF-related research must be stepped up to explore what exactly this means when applied to ELF conditions. Can interpreters be faithful to a message that is unclear in its intent; formulated in unconventional ways; the understanding of which cannot be trusted or instills uncertainty; the analysis of which consumes production process resources; and the rendering of which can hardly be as reliable as would do justice to the principle of speaker fidelity? How to be faithful to the original in "message and style" (Gile 1992: 189), when message and style are delivered in ways that the speaker might not have chosen had s/he been in a position to do otherwise. How to produce a target text that "should still be natural and native-like" (Gile 1992: 189), from a source text that may be the very opposite? To what extent should the interpreter still be seen as assuming the role of the speaker, when the speaker may have preferred to present him- or herself differently? And what about divergent user expectations? What do clients expect from

interpreters rendering ELF speakers, what do audiences look for and what about the ELF speakers themselves? How do they want to be represented? Do they (want to) have their input 'conditioned and optimized'? Such fundamental questions require research to forge ahead, get to the very root of the phenomenon and see what needs or can be done about it.

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