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*Disclaimer: *~lish* does not necessarily hold the same opinions as the contributors and vice versa.

~lish is a London based contemporary journal in the Foreigner's English. We publish critical theory, literature and poetry.

We view the Foreigner's English as the language that belongs to and is shaped by all who speak it. It is not a wide range of incorrect accents through which one can be identified and alienated. English is no longer only owned by those who have it as a mother's tongue. We believe that by acknowledging the Foreigner's English as legitimate, we give the English language the possibility to transcend its colonial and imperial past.

We recognize those who have learnt this common tongue whether by choice or through force.

English belongs to all of its speakers and so do its rules. The Foreigner's English does not have one unifying grammar and dictionary. Language must adapt to its surroundings. Vocabulary must adjust to its environment; shifting and morphing for survival, as with every living thing. Its correctness is determined and developed interpersonally, between us who use it.

Communicating in the Foreigner's English sets us free. We can bend and twist meanings as we choose, setting the directives through the ways in which we speak and write. It is playful; poetic; we continuously learn and unlearn it; it is alive; the criteria for tone and text are fluid; therefore, fluent.

Content

Editors' note
Evelina Häggglund 12
& Adrian Olas

The Return of Sonafabitches
On Vernaculars, Properties, Translations
and the Language of the Future
Boris Buden 16

Dear H
Laura Cemin 40

BROKEN ENGLISH POEMS:
LONDON EPIGRAMS
Francisco Tomsich 46

ELF: English as a Lingua Franca	Ida Parise	48
Pomegranate	Jakob Niedziela	62
For a Language to be International, it's not Enough to Call it Such	Nicoline van Harskamp interviews Rubèn Fernández	66
again	Rosa Johanna	76
On Inverse Translation	Pilar Izquierdo	80
Politics of Language	Matej Kavčič	86
In the twist, the serpent	Daniella Valz-Gen	92

BROKEN ENGLISH POEMS:

SONG TO LIV ULLMANN

Francisco Tomsich 98

Prelude: The Language
of the Space We Shared

Andrea Knezović 100

Queenie Queenie and the
fall of Colonial Empire

Lillian Allen 112

The Way the World
Ends by Google

Francisco Tomsich 120

Editors' Note

Evelina Häggglund
& Adrian Olas

At an initial stage of founding *~lish*—London 2019, one of our later contributors sent us an email inquiring, “Why this name, why the Foreigner’s English? Why not, for example, Englishes?” And as someone else asked, “Why not English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)?”

We may or may not have digested English as a leftover of colonialism and imperialism. Yet, here we are. We do need a common language. We chew it as a necessity! But to call it a universal language, or a lingua franca, without the acknowledgment of its foreignity misfits the way we would like to approach the attempts of understanding between people and their unique twists of tongues. Therefore, *~lish* is a journal written in the Foreigner’s English. Capital F. Capital E. By capitalizing the term, we give our personalized uses of English a name, making way for it becoming acknowledged, even in what some still call, the “native” speaker’s English. What is named becomes real.

We should say we want to reclaim the word Foreigner. It is not a pejorative. Coming from elsewhere, speaking differently, should not be regarded as a fault. The English of the foreigner can no longer be understood as deficient because it is different. We do not need to imitate the English of a “native” speaker nor try to assimilate or deny our foreignness whilst writing and talking. For us, the Foreigner’s English is not as much a language of its own, as it is a space that recognizes no authority, academy or idea of correctness. *~lish* is our attempt to claim the language we in a sense speak as other.

Initially, we asked *~lish*'s contributors to consider the following two questions when writing their texts: *When we abandon the historical structure of a language, what kinds of freedoms do we invent? What new realities become possible when we claim a language as our own?*

We are thrilled to hereby present the results. Boris Buden dissects the revolutionary potential of a “no-native-vernacular”, Nicoline van Harskamp interviews Rubèn Fernández about languages without countries, Andrea Knezović immerses us into the language that is a shared, third space formed between those of us who desire, remember, despair—love. Jakob Niedziela stutters a romance, searching through the meanings of two tongues. Daniella Valz-Gen's poetry locates itself in our mouths, where tongues twist and split in questioning their own every move. Laura Cemin's text is an ode to the dormant, silent H, the non sounding letter in Italian language. Matej Kavčič's witty political prose spans from a memory of how in early adolescence he was exposed to an English that—if not approached carefully—can perform us, rather than the other way around. Pilar Izquierdo declares the foreign translator's right to translate into English by challenging the term “native” speaker. Ida Parise's injection into *~lish* conceptualises English as a *Lingua Franca* (ELF) and demystifies how orators of ELF subvert “standard” English rules of syntax. Lillian Allen tells us an emancipatory story about the crowning of a new queen. Rosa Johanna spells repetition that unwrites itself, hence revealing a crucial approach to language: learning by unlearning. Francisco Tomsich narrates poems in broken, occasionally drunken English and discloses how Google Translate algorithms dictate the deterioration of linguistic meaningfulness.

Since we believe there can be no standard for the Foreigner's English, no dictionary, no correct grammar or syntax, let us admit—editing has not been easy. It has been difficult to find balance on the line on which, at certain points, comprehensibility—consistency—and the appreciation of individual uses of the Foreigner's English, have clashed. Gradually, we came to the realization that the editing process has been very similar to, if not the same as, editing poetry. The integrity of the voice, each individual voice, has been our only guide, the only rule we have attempted to follow. A person's dialect, or perhaps more precisely, a person's idiolect, one's way of speaking, is an amalgamation, a mix of one's context, acquaintances, families, lovers, teachers, partners-in-crimes, medias, virtual trolls, cities ways of speaking. It is one's history, one's past performed. One's origin, story, identity

is not to be corrected or edited away, by us or anyone else. For us, as editors of *~lish*, these texts, written in so many different voices, have shown us some of our own histories, subjectivities; a Spanish cadence, a Polish emphasize of the letter z, a Swedish phrasing, a hint of Slovenian, a Welsh pronunciation borrowed from a friend, at once revealing just how tricky and dubious our positions as editors are.

Halfway throughout the editorial process while aspiring to enter a discussion about the “correct” use of English we invited Eric Moses, an English-as-a-first-language speaker, who was at first appointed as *~lish*’s proofreader. We rather quickly realised that what we, who have learnt English as a second and a third language, find to be fully comprehensible uses of words and expressions, were often harder to understand for someone who first learnt, spoke and wrote the world through the prism of the English language. We decided to bid the term proofreader farewell, and our collaboration instead evolved into a conversation concerning the meanings of our editorial positions while interferring with suggestions in the texts. Eric, besides becoming a colleague with whom we could discuss the non-correctivities of English, infused masses of valuable questions and content related comments into almost every contribution in this issue.

Since we view meaning as interpersonal and thereby relational, rather than bound to “English by the schoolbook”, we have tried to negotiate what felt comprehensible and important to all three of us. With our own relativities in mind, we have attempted to propose edits solely for consistency in the use of words and phrases, tempus and clarity of reference. Although we have edited the texts, their grammatical correctnesses and contents have ultimately been determined by the individual authors, who have approved and rejected our suggestions.

We have learned a lot whilst reading and working with these texts and the content of the contributions have greatly informed the development of our editing methodology as well as our view of *~lish* at large—this we are very grateful for and proud to acknowledge. We hereby would like to thank all the authors as well as everyone who in different ways have supported and believed in *~lish*. Thank you.

It is our hope that this very first issue may spark a discussion, a thought, feeling or a new relation to the politics and poetics of language, as it has done for us.

The Return of Sonafabitches

On Vernaculars, Properties,
Translations and the Language
of the Future

Boris Buden

In the beginning was the swearword

If a visitor to Rome's *Basilica di San Clemente*, located just a short walk from Colosseum, takes the stairs down into the basement, she will find herself in the remains of the 4th century church containing the fragments of Christian wall paintings from the 9th and 11th century. Among them is a fresco with one of the oldest examples of a vernacular language beside Latin. It recounts a legend about Saint Clement, the 1st-century Pope: after having been punished by Clement for falsely accusing his wife of unfaithfulness, jealous Pagan Sisinnius tries to take revenge and orders his vassals to overpower the Pope, who then by miracle transforms into a stone column. The scene depicts the desperate attempt of the vassals to carry this column away. One reads the words Sissinius shouts at them: "ALBERTEL TRAI, GOSMARIS, FILI DELE PUTE, TRAITTE", which might be translated into English as: "Pull, Albertel and Gosmaris, pull, you sons of a bitch, pull".

These words are one of the first historical records of a vernacular turn. We should remember them this event when the English language is undergoing transformations similar to those the classical Latin went through more than thousand years ago—today when English is escaping the authority and control of the long-established centers of its standardization, the almighty guardians of its "original", "genuine", "proper" form and spreading erratically into the ever-changing praxis of life and labor across the global world. We should remember it, yet not because the past might repeat itself. It never does, which is why we cannot learn from history. What we can do, nevertheless, is to make an experience out of it.^①

A true historical experience is never simply a knowledge of the past. Rather, it must be gained out of the present reality, i.e., “made” in the praxis of its transformation. It is at once a product and an agent of social change. In our case, this means: there is no scientific explanation—provided, for instance, by historical linguistics—to how the current transformation of the English language relates to what happened to Latin a millennium ago. The meaning of this relation becomes apparent only in the historical genealogy of the actual transformation. A transformation in which we are actively involved—by addressing the underlying antagonisms, generating open conflicts and clearly taking sides. No historical experience is neutral and no linguistic transformation takes place outside of social and political praxis.

Now, let us go back to the fresco from the *Basilica di San Clemente*: it is not by chance that the swear words became the mark of a vernacular turn. Swear words in general indicate a linguistic praxis that is typical of the lowest strata of society. We might call it *sermo plebeius*, the speech of the common people, ignorant of the literary language, which was rather spoken by the upper class, who enjoyed the privilege of education.^② These “two kindred dialects” (Burke) developed side by side from the common speech of early Rome. What, however, are known today as the Romance languages are in fact descendants, “not of the classic Latin, as seen in Cicero and Caesar, but of the *sermo plebeius*”, the vulgar Latin.^③ Its transformation into the middle age vernaculars is of course a long historical process but there is a date commonly recognized as the moment of the turn. 813 the Third Council of Tours decided that clergy should preach in *rusticam romam linguam*, or *Theodiscam*, the vernaculars that would later evolve into the languages we call today French and German. At the same time, Latin had lost its native speakers becoming a language “without a people” or without

1 This is obviously not a “proper” English. In fact, the phrase “to make (an) experience” is a calque—word-for-word translation—from German: “Erfahrung machen”. Its use in this text arbitrarily expands the scope of what can be thought and said in English language beyond the limits of its current standard form. We shall keep in mind that the borders between languages are arbitrary too.

2 See: Cooper, Frederic Taber. *Word Formation in the Roman Sermo Plebeius*. Hildesheim/New York, Georg Olms Verlag, 1975, p. 30

3 Ibid., pp. 15f.

a “speech community”.⁴ This, however, did not mean its death nor the end of Roman *diglossia*. While the vulgar Latin had dissolved into vernaculars, classic Latin nevertheless found a form of its afterlife—in the higher discourses of justice, administration, diplomacy and among travelers. It even found its new—international!—communities that emerged in the Europe of the early modern times: The Catholic Church and the Republic of Letters, *Respublica Literarum*.⁵ In the latter case, Latin became a sort of *lingua franca* of scholars and intellectuals, schools, universities and academies, “the mother tongue of the learned” (*lingua eruditorum vernacula*).⁶ Below, on the level of common, illiterate people, in the realm of everyday life and work, one spoke the vernaculars, which would later become the national languages of today’s Europe. Over time, however, the higher discourses of literature, science and philosophy started to make use of vernacular. Dante, Wycliff, Galileo and Descartes, were, each in his field, among the first to address their audiences in their respective vernaculars. Yet for them and most of the educated elite of early modern Europe *diglossia* (Latin plus a local vernacular) had remained for a long time a natural part of their linguistic praxis.⁷

Primitive accumulation of language

Let us ask, now, a weird question: is “*muthafuckin*” an English word? Not until a dictionary—of course, an “elite” dictionary like “Oxford English Dictionary”, “Meriam-Webster” or even the so-called “Urban Dictionary”—includes it into its body. Recently, the role of inclusion, or, respectively, exclusion might be also taken by the BNC, the British National Corpus, a collection of some 100 million words composed from a wide range

4 Burke, Peter. *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge/New York, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 43f.

5 Ibid., p. 44.

6 Ibid., p. 53. The notion of a *lingua franca* is never ideologically neutral. It implies a concept of language that is based on the paradigm of communication, according to which the language is a tool, a simple and neutral instrument for transmission of information, or in this concrete case of knowledge, without its own historical, cultural or political meaning. This paradigm has been largely recognized by modern linguistics that treats every language as a sort of *lingua franca*.

7 *Diglossia* was, of course, not only typical of Europe. It was also a natural part of linguistic praxis elsewhere, for instance in the Arabic world.

of sources, both spoken and written, supposed to be a representative sample of the British English of the late 20th century. Using appropriate software one can check whether—and to what extent—a word or a phrase belongs to the canon. This also implies the possibility to measure its importance, or more specifically, to determine its hierarchical position within the corpus. For instance, a more common, i.e., more often used word, automatically occupies a higher or central status, while a rare word is rather less important and resides on the margins.⁸ Yet, however technologically advanced, in that it provides a “whole language” at our digital disposal, this inclusion/exclusion logic is far from being ideologically neutral. In fact, it significantly relies on the understanding of language as a closed whole, or, more concretely, as a closed system of signs much in the sense of Saussure’s *langue*. Such a concept of language privileges the principle of immanence and consequently presupposes a clear, albeit arbitrary, boundary between its inside and outside. By the same token, it favors synchronicity over diachronicity, with the result that the language appears as having been petrified in time. Once historically established as a system, it seems to no longer change. Its transformations, which take place nevertheless, are “outsourced” into a world external to it, the world of history, society, politics, economy, culture etc.⁹

Let us now put aside the question whether or not the word “*muthafuckin*” has been already incorporated into the canon, an elite English dictionary or the BNC? What

8 If used in copy-editing as a digital auxiliary tool, this “computer-based corpus linguistics” often results in privileging quantity over quality and in this way facilitates a sort of linguistic opportunism: a word or phrase with more hits is likely to be more “correct” or more “proper” than the one with less. In fact, the idea of language-as-corpus is obviously intrinsically conservative. It is a sign of an advanced ageing process of a language, which now, unable to renew itself in the world that surrounds it, retreats into its shell. Digital technology might foster linguistic transformations and help to determine and reflect upon their consequences, but it does not make a language immortal. Imagine Shakespeare using the BNC software in writing his poems. He would have never coined these seventeen hundred neologisms, mostly derived from Latin, of which about two thirds (from “antipathy” to “vast”) were subsequently accepted into the English language. See: Burke, Peter. *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge/New York, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 64.

9 Or, as it is the case with Saussure’s concept of *parole*, into the arbitrary sphere of “speech”, the individual use of the system, the *langue*.

is important is rather the logic of this inclusion/exclusion procedure and its normative consequences. In case that “*muthafuckin*” has been allowed to enter the corpus of English words, the linguistic change, which such an inclusion would necessarily imply, will be brought about through a sort of “linguistic struggle for recognition”: a word, or, like in our case, a swear word, after having served the people well for long time and proved vital for many of their manifold needs, which is why it has been increasingly exerting pressure on the standard corpus of the actually existing language from which it has been excluded, finally gets the permission to enter it—granted arbitrarily by its doorkeepers.¹⁰

On the one side, this very act of inclusion performatively reaffirms the boundary between the (standard) language and its vernacular outside, which in this way turns into a sort of its resource available for continuous extraction—an act that can be also conceived of in terms of a linguistic enclosure of the vernacular commons, resembling a kind of “primitive accumulation of language”. On the other side, it brings a qualitative change to the corpus itself. A standard language that is willing to canonize the so-called dirty words and so facilitate their public use would thereby prove its progressive character. In other words, it would allow for a transformation of its inner values rendering them more open, more inclusive, more tolerant etc. This generally applies to all sorts of “foreign” or “new” words. As part of its customary ritual, every “serious” dictionary annually updates its corpus by publishing lists of its new entries.

However, there is one more quality, brought about by this inclusion. In both cases—by constantly reaffirming the boundary towards its vernacular outside and by exerting normative control over the inclusion/exclusion procedure—the language-as-system (the standard language) produces the effect of its universality. While it is capable of an immanent normative change, concretely, of progressively expanding by an arbitrary cherry-picking of the elements of its (vernacular) outside, it actually cuts itself off from

10 The role of such a doorkeeper is no longer limited exclusively to a human agency: individuals, mostly members of elite private or state institutions, endowed with some sort of linguistic competence, or, with a more or less democratically legitimized political authority. Today, such a role might be increasingly taken by machines, or more precisely, by algorithms that carry on (no less arbitrarily) the task of inclusion/exclusion by statistical data analysis.

the real historical praxis, projecting the world of historical contingency, ephemeral particularities and an indelible opacity of social life into its exteriority. For this concept of language, a linguistic transformation is merely a rationally controlled, transparent and always exploitable side-effect of an external historical transformation.¹¹ Language has a history of its own, but only as much as it takes it from the outside world, from which it has detached itself.

In the beginning was the class difference

A (swear)word like “*muthafuckin*” is clearly a vulgar word; but it might be also a word of a vulgar language, much in the sense of the old dichotomy between “classical” and “vulgar” Latin, indicating a contemporary restoration of the old, early modern condition of diglossia. For instance, “*muthafuckin*” can be a word of the vulgar English of hip-hop, “an adjectival adverb roughly synonymous with *very*, or an adjective synonymous with...um...maybe ‘confounded’ as a generic intensifier.” To avoid any confusion, the author of these words, Luke Maynard, explicitly states that “It is not a word in Classical English.”¹²

Understood in this way, the linguistic transformation that is at stake here implies a much more radical change than it seems at first glance, the one that evokes the emergence of an early modern Romance vernacular out of the vulgar Latin. In fact, Maynard himself gives such an example, the case of one of his students from Jamaica. She was not able to write an essay in proper English. She needed help, but not in terms of remedial English. What she needed instead was an EFL (English as a foreign language) training. The problem was, however, that English already was her native language, moreover, it was her only language. “It just wasn’t *my* English...the white privileged centralized dialect that passes for ‘academic’ English. It wasn’t Classical English,” writes Maynard and asks rhetorically, how does one teach English as a Second Language to someone for

11 It goes without saying that the common-sensual concept of translation—bridging the communication gap between two different languages—is fully in line with this concept of language. Translation is a sort of a neutral vehicle of linguistic change, not the praxis of this change itself.

12 See: Maynard, Luke. *The Life Cycle of Latin and the Impending Fate of the English Language*. Wordpress, 19 Feb. 2014, <https://lukemaynard.wordpress.com/2014/02/19/on-vulgar-tongues-the-life-cycle-of-latin-and-the-impending-fate-of-the-english-language/>.

whom English is a first language? His answer is clear. One teaches it "... as Classical English, a whole other language from Vulgar English. Or, as we would say in Vulgar English, a whole *nother*."¹³

If we accept that "Classical" and "Vulgar" English are two different languages, then we cannot avoid the question about the nature of the relation between them. Are they on equal footing? Of course not! The meaning of their names alone makes a great deal of difference.

According to the already mentioned "classical" dictionaries of English language, the notion of "classical" refers in general to two meanings. One is historical: the culture of ancient Greece and Rome or, in a broader sense, of the past i.e., a culture with a long tradition. Another meaning rather designates a particular quality: a style or form based on long tradition, something of a high, lasting value that has been accepted as standard or endowed with authority etc. But there is, however, a historical moment at which the qualitative turn in the meaning of "classical" really took place. In his *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* Ernst Robert Curtius explains how concrete social relations, or more precisely, the class divisions among the citizens of Rome, represented in their property qualifications, were applied to hinge the proper use of language on the prestige and rank of writers. In a grammatical dispute, like whether *quadriga* or *arena* should be used in plural or singular, Aulus Gellius, a Roman writer of the second century, suggested to rely on the authority of a model author, "some one of the orators or poets who at least belongs to the older bands, that is, a first-class tax-paying author, not a proletarian" (there were five classes of tax-paying citizens, of which the first class was called *classici*; *proletarius* was a citizen who belonged to no tax class).¹⁴ This, then, has become in Europe the model for hierarchical ranking of authors and their works that qualitatively separates out a distinct elite set from the commonality.¹⁵

13 See: Maynard, Luke. *The Life Cycle of Latin and the Impending Fate of the English Language*. Wordpress, 19 Feb. 2014, <https://lukemaynard.wordpress.com/2014/02/19/on-vulgar-tongues-the-life-cycle-of-latin-and-the-impending-fate-of-the-english-language/>.

14 Curtius, Ernst Robert. *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, Tübingen; Basel: Francke, 1993, p. 255. The English translation quoted here is taken from: Stallybrass, Peter and Allon White. *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*. Ithaca/New York, Cornell University Press, 1986, p. 1.

15 Ibid.

The notion of “vulgar”, on the other side, is of different origin. Latin *vulgus* means “common people”. Adjective *vulgaris* refers to what belongs to the “ordinary class”, to masses, to the plebs or multitude. English “vulgar” is used in a strong normative sense: coarse, crude, earthy, but also indecent or obscene. It denotes a low-ranked quality. Applied to the linguistic praxis, for instance in the sense of “vulgar tongue”, it refers to a common, vernacular language.

This profound normative difference between “classical” and “vulgar”, together with its social genealogy i.e., class origin, strangely applies to the relation between the two Englishes. Whilst it has indeed achieved a high level of independency from “Classical English”—so high that it can be considered a separate linguistic entity, “a whole other language”, as Manard put it—the “Vulgar English” has not yet established its full sovereignty. Like in a linguistic remake of Hegel’s master-slave dialectics, it has got stuck with its “classical” counterpart in a relation of mutual dependence, however, without challenging the common hierarchical framework and its subordinate position within it. What is more, it serves the “Classical English” as the source of its regeneration with the latter taking regularly infusions of vitality from the linguistic praxis of today’s *vulgus*, the so-called common, ordinary people, from which it blatantly stands out. It is, in fact, only through this ambivalent and entirely contingent relation to its excluded “vulgar” outside that the “Classical English” can claim its universality and reaffirm its superiority. It treats the “Vulgar English” merely as its vernacular other. On the other side, the “Vulgar English” has also something to gain from the subordinate relation to its classical counterpart. Having no history of its own—except in the form of an endless struggle for recognition, experienced as a trauma of exclusion—it can still find its place under the shadow of tradition, fame and prestige of “Classical English”, very much like those least educated and most culturally insensitive people who proudly claim their nations’ great, age-old culture. But there is even something more ambivalent in this English-English *diglossia*. It possesses a certain orientalist touch. The “Vulgar English”, far from being merely an excluded outside of the “Classical”, rather symbolically occupies its very inside—as an object of its suppressed desire, a language that dares to call the vulgar and obscene world of muthafuckers and sonafabitches by its name. It forms a sort of its underground self and is, as such, constitutive of the “Classical English”.¹⁶

16 See also: *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Yet, however unequal, this weird linguistic couple still speaks one and the same political language, the one of identity politics. It is the cultural and political business of identity formation that ties them inextricably together.

ENL vs. ELF

There is one more case in which today's transformation of English language resembles the fate of Latin in the early modern Europe, the emergence of the so-called ELF—*English-as-a-lingua franca*. But there is also a crucial difference. Latin, as mentioned above, reaches its full development as *lingua franca* only after it had died, i.e., after it was left without its native speakers. With English today it is rather different. While its use, influence and importance as the *lingua franca* of the global world is growing, it is still quite alive as native language. But here too there are significant shifts: the number of those who use *English-as-a-lingua franca* in today's global world exceeds the number of its native speakers.⁽¹⁷⁾ This very fact alone raises many questions. Perhaps the most important among them is the question of ownership: who is entitled to claim the English language, its native or its non-native speakers? In other words: who is in charge of its codification, i.e., or providing the “proper” description and defining the norms of the English language?

This question is, in fact, a new one. Until quite recently it was taken for granted that *English-as-a-native-language* (ENL) is the only proper form of this language, that its established norms, the cultural background and history provide the sole source of its conceptualization and codification and that its native speakers are its exclusive owners and natural-born curators. By the same token, the global expansion of English far beyond the borders of its native linguistic communities has been perceived primarily in terms of distribution of the ENL.⁽¹⁸⁾ While this perception, on the one side, confirmed an exclusive sovereignty of the native speakers over the English language as such, it also

17 See: Seidlhofer, Barbara. “The shape of things to come? Some basic questions about English as a lingua franca.” *Lingua franca communication*, edited by Karlfried Knapp and Christiane Meierkord, Peter Lang, 2002, p. 283.

18 See: Seidlhofer, Barbara. “Closing a conceptual gap: the case for a description of English as lingua franca.” *International Journal of applied Linguistics*, vol, 11, no. 2, 16 December, 2002, p. 138.

endlessly alienated its non-native speakers: “[T]hey cannot, by definition, be members of that native-speaker community, no matter how hard they try, no matter how long they study.”⁽¹⁹⁾

It is well known how this concretely affects the practical use of the English language. No version of it can pass the threshold of higher discourses—in politics, economy, cultural and knowledge production—without having been given green light by the native authority, for instance, in the form of a native copy-editor. It is in this sense that every non-native use of English, no matter how advanced and productive (even in the highest discourses) will never be able to get rid of its “vulgar” quality. In other words, as long as the agency of the native-speakers has globally the final say on the usage of the English language, its international form, the *English-as-a-lingua-franca* (ELF), will stay trapped within the vernacular domain, i.e., remain merely a vernacular. It is also as though the curse of class division casted on language in ancient times—when the trope “classical” was applied to differentiate the proper from the improper use of language—has been haunting our linguistic praxis until nowadays. No “orator or poet” of the *English-as-a-lingua-franca* will ever rise to “classicus”.

This asymmetry, however, does not seem to belong to our times. Rather, it is reminiscent of the hierarchical order and power relations of the pre-capitalist social formations. Accordingly, the global community of English speakers is split into two “estates”—on the one side, the nobility of the native speakers whose hereditary rule over the English language is well protected by the bulwark of cultural and academic institution and the Pretorian guard of native intellectuals, publishers and copy-editors; on the other, the non-native linguistic commoners who live, work, create cultural and cognitive values in this same English language, yet without the rights and privileges of its native speakers.

However, times are changing. What once gunpowder, industrialization and the growing wealth and power of the third estate did to the *Ancien Régime*, digital technology, globalization and multipolarity are doing today to the Anglo-Saxon west, challenging its political dominance, ideological and cultural hegemony, economic and military superiority, which all are still speaking *English-as-a-native-language*.⁽²⁰⁾

One might well wonder how such a blatant contradiction, which is, in addition, so heavily charged with social antagonism, hasn’t yet generated a conflict or at

19 Ibid., p. 136.

least some sort of revolt on the part of the disadvantaged majority of the non-native speakers of English? In fact, it has indeed triggered a response, however, among certain circles of linguists and language pedagogues. Nevertheless, they challenging the native speaker's absolute rule over English could have, as some believe, a revolutionary potential.⁽²¹⁾

Such is the project initiated by Viennese Anglicist and linguist Barbara Seidlhofer: *Voice* (Vienna Oxford International Corpus of English).⁽²²⁾ What Seidlhofer did is, basically, to separate ELF from ENL. In her words: “[T]he ‘E’ in *English as a Native Language* is bound to be something very different from the ‘E’ in *English as a Lingua Franca*, and must be acknowledged as such.”⁽²³⁾ The whole project is about giving a sense to this difference, i.e., about justifying the arbitrarily drawn boundary between the two Englishes and conceptualizing or rather describing ELF as a language in its own right.⁽²⁴⁾ The first step in achieving this goal is to establish its broad empirical basis, the corpus of (spoken) ELF. This is provided by compiling the recordings of face-to-face communication among fluent non-native speakers of English, meaning those whose primary and secondary education and socialization did not take place in English but

20 “[T]he conjunction of Trump and Brexit marks a secular decline of the Anglo-Saxons (...) The 19th century belonged to Britain, the 20th century (at least post. 1945) to the United States. The neoliberalism which exercised a kind of global ideological dominance between the end of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the financial crisis of 2008 was a characteristic Anglo-Saxon product.” Garton Ash, Timothy. *After Trump and Brexit, is this the end for the Anglo-Saxon west?*. The Guardian, 28 July, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jul/28/trump-brexit-end-of-west>.

21 Solomon, Jon. “Reappropriating the Neoliberal University for a New Putonghua (Common Language).” *EduFactory webjournal*, zero issue, January, 2010, pp. 49f.

22 See: <https://www.univie.ac.at/voice/page/index.php>. Originally the project was supported by Oxford University press, which is why it was then called the Vienna-Oxford ELF Corpus. See also: Seidlhofer. “Closing a conceptual gap,” p. 146.

23 Ibid., p. 137.

24 Seidlhofer also provides a relatively precise definition of “lingua franca”—it is “an additionally acquired language system that serves as a means of communication between speakers of different first languages, or a language by means of which the members of different speech communities can communicate with each other but which is not the native language of either—a language which has no native speakers.” Ibid., p. 146.

in a wide range of other (so-called first) languages.²⁵ Only on the ground of such a new corpus can the description and a possible later codification of ELF be accomplished.²⁶

Vulgar and vernacular, but a lingua franca nevertheless

But what, in fact, is “revolutionary” in such an attempt to conceptualize *English-as-a-lingua-franca* as a language in its own right? Firstly, at stake is the very idea of what language is and what it can (socially) do. Barbara Seidlhofer approaches this question from the pedagogical perspective in that she gives her own interpretation to the concept of “language awareness” that is often evoked, although vaguely understood, in current language teaching: “[T]he ability to consciously reflect about the structure and functions of language, about what it can and what it cannot do, as opposed to competence in using a language as an instrument for communication.”²⁷ In critically distancing herself from the paradigm of communication and its ideal of transparency, both still prominent in modern linguistic theories, and, moreover, in explicitly emphasizing “metalinguistic”²⁸ or “extralinguistic”²⁹ dimensions of our understanding of and dealing with language, Seidlhofer recovers the social roots of linguistic praxis. Instead of drawing the boundary that separates two (English) languages—*English-as-a-lingua franca* from *English-as-a-native-language*—along a number of already given linguistic differences, she rather grounds it in a social relation,

25 Including both private and public dialogues or group conversations. Ibid., p. 146.

26 This project is, of course, not the first attempt to conceptualize English as a lingua franca. Barbara Seidlhofer thoroughly discusses such attempts (that were following the examples of Jaspersen’s Novial or Esperanto), especially focusing on Charles Ogden’s project of “Basic English” with BASIC standing for “British American Scientific International Commercial”. See: Seidlhofer. “The shape of things to come,” pp. 278ff.

27 Ibid., p. 291.

28 “Such an essentially metalinguistic understanding must, quite crucially, foster an appreciation in learners that communication should never be expected to be ‘complete’ ‘or perfect’ but always has by its very nature to make do with limited, imperfect resources, and that its success (or otherwise) is never a function of linguistic proficiency alone.” Ibid., p. 293.

29 Seidlhofer talks of “an urgent (extralinguistic) need for a conceptualization of ELF”. See: Seidlhofer. “Closing a conceptual gap,” p. 144.

the one between the native and the non-native speakers. Yet precisely by conceptualizing the linguistic effects of this (unequal) social relation, Seidlhofer at the same time breaks the tie between language and people, or more precisely, between language and nation—a liaison that was, for a long time, considered “natural”, which on its part made the native speakers’ claim to authenticity even more authentic.⁽³⁰⁾ It is in fact the cutting of this umbilical cord between language and people that in the end makes the separation of ELF from ENL potentially revolutionary.⁽³¹⁾

There is, however, more of radically transformative potential in this struggle for the linguistic independence of *English-as-a-lingua-franca*. Seidlhofer’s insistence on the constant transformations of language, concretely, on the evolving of ELF, “out of spread, not distribution”, i.e., not by simply copying its native “original” into other contexts, implies “the vital role and authority” of its users in these transformations, making them the “agents of language change”⁽³²⁾ who actively “co-construct ‘English’ in the process.”⁽³³⁾ This clear emphasis, firstly on process and not on its outcome, i.e., not on synchrony but rather on history of the linguistic praxis; and secondly, on the creativity of unknown linguistic commoners instead on the arbitrary impact of the elites (*classici!*?)—either in terms of innovative activity of the (national) “orators and poets” or through a “scientific” competence of professional codifiers—reveals a concept of language that is in a continuous transformative flux, without ever becoming a “dead, thing-like shell”, to use Bakhtin’s expression for a word/discourse that got caught and reified in grammatical structures.⁽³⁴⁾ Rather it evolves out of its history and its plebeian roots, which is why it can be never reduced to some scientific construct, an enclosed system of signs like Saussure’s *langue*. If this is at odds with the dominant theories of language, so much the worse for them.

However, the struggle for full linguistic independence of *English-as-a-lingua-franca* has not yet been decided. This raises the question about the nature of its current

30 Seidlhofer calls it explicitly the “uncoupling the language from its native speakers.” *Ibid.*, p. 151.

31 See: Solomon. “Reappropriating the Neoliberal University,” p. 50.

32 Seidlhofer. “Closing a conceptual gap,” p. 138.

33 Seidlhofer. “The shape of things to come,” p. 273.

34 Bakhtin, Mikhail. “Discourse in the novel.” *The dialogic imagination: Four essays*, edited by Michael Holquist, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, University of Texas Press, 1981, p. 355.

status. It has, obviously, all the features of an interregnum: while, on the one side, ELF has not yet fully separated itself from *English-as-a-native-language*, which still exercises its supreme authority on its non-native speakers ignoring or punishing the peculiarities (or shall we say “innovations” or rather “transformative interventions”?) of their English as deviations from the rule or, simply, “errors”, on the other side, ELF has not yet achieved the status of a full-fledged, standard language unanimously recognized as such by its fellow languages and their linguistic communities. There is, in fact, only one name for a language in such a transitional state—a *vernacular*. This, admittedly, sounds like a paradox. Indeed, not only had the English language left behind its vernacular past centuries ago, but we have gone so far to claim for a *LINGUA FRANCA* (with no native speakers whatsoever) to be a vernacular. Is there such thing as a vernacular without native speakers? Is there any chance for such a “no-native vernacular” to survive? A language that is no longer “native” signifies, as Luke Maynard argues, “a slightly fossilized language, a language that, if not extinct, survives only in captivity.”³⁵ This is typical, as he believes, of a “classical” language, meaning concretely the “classical” English, i.e., *English-as-a-native-language*. Yet for him a language that becomes “classical” not only loses its “native” character, it has already taken a decadent turn. In going “vulgar”, on the contrary, it escapes the “classical” captivity, restores its “nativity” and wins the struggle for survival. A “vulgar” English is a living language and it has a future. Its “classical” counterpart has a glorious past instead but it can be only artificially kept alive. How does this apply to *English-as-a-lingua-franca*? If, in its current status of a “vulgar” vernacular language³⁶, it is very much alive and, moreover, is successfully spreading throughout the world, why then should it strive to become “classical”, why should it seek its own captivity?

There is, obviously, much confusion about the current transformation of the English language, but, nevertheless, enough is clear: either in the proliferation of its “vulgar” forms or in transforming itself into an international lingua franca, it is undergoing the process

35 Maynard, Luke. *The Life Cycle of Latin and the Impending Fate of the English Language*. Wordpress, 19 Feb. 2014, <https://lukemaynard.wordpress.com/2014/02/19/on-vulgar-tongues-the-life-cycle-of-latin-and-the-impending-fate-of-the-english-language/>.

36 In its current form this corpus has a truly vernacular form—it is namely still a corpus of only a *spoken* ELF.

of its re-vernacularization. This might sound like a comfort for all those who have been complaining about the imperialism of the English language, which, in their view, increasingly banishes their native, first (national) languages into vernacular domains by occupying all their important discourses in politics, economy, culture and knowledge production.³⁷ Yet the true meaning, the real historical dimension and the far-reaching social consequences of the ongoing re-vernacularization of today's world languages become clear only from a meta- or extralinguistic perspective.

Against the (linguistic) Ancien Régime

As already indicated, there is an obvious political undercurrent in what is presented as a linguistic and cultural struggle for the independence of *English-as-a-lingua-franca*. It is explicitly revealed in the demand for equality between native and non-native speakers of English—a demand not for the recognition of a linguistic difference but for the elimination of a social difference. What appears as a claim to the right to language, or more concretely, to the right to participate in the transformation of a language, is, in fact, a demand to change a social relation, the condition of social inequality that not only finds its expression in linguistic difference, but, at the same time, reproduces itself through this same linguistic difference. However, the ideological legitimation of this struggle is still wrapped up in a judicial jargon of a struggle for (linguistic) rights, for “linguistic equity”, “rights to language”, “human language rights” etc.³⁸ In its historical meaning this “struggle for rights” clearly evokes the political horizon of bourgeois revolutions: as a sort of linguistic “third estate” the non-native speakers of English fight against its native speakers who claim the supreme authority and exclusive competence over their “native language” as their inherited right. In fighting for their own right to English, a right acquired not by birth, but by labor of learning, translation and communication, the non-native speakers in fact challenge the linguistic *Ancien Régime* and its fixed and fast-frozen

37 In the case of the German language, see: Trabant, Jürgen. *Globalesisch oder was? Ein Plädoyer für Europas Sprachen*. München, Verlag C. H. Beck, 2014.

38 This also includes work on an “Universal Declaration on Language Rights.” See: Seidlhofer. “Closing a conceptual gap,” p. 137.

relations of domination and subordination, a historically petrified socio-linguistic formation ideologically grounded in the nativist mythology of (national) mother tongues, naturalized monolingualism and reified linguistic rules and norms. Does this mean, one might wonder, that today's socio-linguistic conditions still correspond to those pre-modern social formations that had been politically defeated and historically overcome more than two hundred years ago? Indeed, such an anachronism is not a rare thing in today's world whose material reproduction heavily relies on the metabolism between the neoliberal economy and the neo-medieval social relations. The processes of re-vernacularization that have affected even the strongest among the standardized "cultural" languages of this world fit well into this picture, however, not as symptoms of a historical regression, but rather as signs, and, moreover, vehicles of a radical transformation.

Speaking of re-vernacularization we have already mentioned how it has been affecting the English language—precisely in the process of its transformation into a lingua franca. And we have discussed widely the struggle of its non-native speakers for the right to legitimately participate in this transformation, even to the point of creating a whole other English language, this very *English-as-a-lingua-franca*. Their particular role in this transformation was implicitly understood in terms of an influence on English they exert as native speakers of their respective first languages. In this view, the logic of linguistic change is based on the primacy of one's mother tongue, which exercises its transformative power on another language. It is thus generated from one side only. But what about the other side?

The answer to this question comes from a linguistic practice that is usually considered marginal to language—translation. In reviewing several novels translated from different languages into English, British writer and translator Tim Parks noticed an important difference between the older and more recent works. The latter were obviously easier to translate. He concludes: “[I]t seemed that the contemporary writers had already performed a translation within their own languages; they had discovered a lingua franca within their own vernacular, a particular straightforwardness, an agreed order for saying things and perceiving and reporting experience, that made translation easier and more effective.”⁽³⁹⁾ To put it more simple, while

39 Parks, Tim. *Your English Is Showing*. The New York Review of Books, June 15, 2011, <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2011/06/15/english-showing/>.

writing in their respective mother tongues, i.e., national languages (which Parks calls “vernaculars”!?), today’s authors already anticipate a potential translation of their works into English and adapt their languages accordingly. As a result, their languages have changed and they have changed to such an extent that Parks could feel “a skeleton *lingua franca* beneath the flesh of these vernaculars.”⁴⁰ Of course, it was basically the skeleton of *English-as-a-lingua-franca*.

There are two important conclusions we can draw from this example: First, the transformation is mutual: not only its non-native speakers as “agents of language change” actively co-construct English but this same English also actively transforms their own native languages. Secondly, translation plays crucial role in this transformation and it does so in both directions. The question is, however, what do we actually mean by the notion of translation? Far from being an auxiliary of a proper linguistic praxis deployed to bridge difference between two already given languages so as to restore communication between them, the labor of translation must be recognized as being itself an active agent of language change. Both sort of speakers, “native” and “non-native” are in their use of language always already translators. As being primarily native speakers of their respective first languages, the now non-native speakers of *English-as-a-lingua-franca* perform translation when they co-create it from the ground of their respective native languages. In other words, they have a genuinely translational relation to this “foreign” language they are at the same time acquiring and transforming. On the other side, translation works at the very core of language (not on its outer edges where it meets other languages) when it, as an anticipated event, actively co-creates the languages in the ongoing praxis of their use. It transforms our so-called mother tongues so to say from within. To cut it short: translation is essential to our linguistic praxis as both its formative and transformative agency. Finally, it helps us decisively to understand that extra- or meta-linguistic dimension of the struggle for independence of *English-as-a-lingua-franca*, the social drama and political conflict at its core.

40 As a concrete example of the influence of English on the development of national languages, Parks mentions a research project at his University in Milan that studies “the extent to which Italian syntax has shifted toward English models over the last fifty years.” Ibid.

A nonaggregate community of foreigners

What sort of community are those non-native speakers of *English-as-a-lingua-franca*? There is much to be told about them descriptively, for instance that they are extremely heterogeneous both culturally and socially; that they probably can never be territorialized; that they are “naked” with no institutional cover, moreover, without “an army and navy”⁽⁴¹⁾; that they escape any attempt at identitarian embedding etc. To put it in a nutshell, the most difficult thing about a community of non-native speakers of *English-as-a-lingua-franca* is to imagine its place in today’s real world. It is obviously itself an imagined community, but the one the reality is not willing to accept or, at least, does not understand. While the language that creates this community is increasingly understood and spoken throughout the world, the language of its social and political stakes seems to be untranslatable into the tongues of the existing social forces and political agencies. Such a translation, however, is rather a matter of will, not of competence of any sort. To bring into being the imagined community of non-native speakers of *English-as-a-lingua-franca* requires the will to imagine a radically different world.

However, the idea of a different world does not come out of blue. Rather it arises out of a very concrete confrontation with the existing one. When it comes to our linguistic praxis this can take shape of a confrontation with the dominant linguistic order. A theory of translation, developed by Naoki Sakai, has its own name for this order: the “regime of homolingual address”.⁽⁴²⁾ Within this regime translation is presented as taking place between two distinct languages that exist as immanently transparent homogeneous entities prior to the act of translation, which, then, carry the message from an addresser in one language to the addressee in another, so as to restore broken communication. The regime of homolingual address is in fact fully in line with the commonsensual understanding of translation: it bridges the gap between different

41 “A language is a dialect with an army and navy”, the famous phrase ascribed to sociolinguist Max Weinreich.

42 In the following I rely on the theory of translation developed by Naoki Sakai who coined the concept of homolingual address. See: Sakai, Naoki. *Translation and Subjectivity: On “Japan” and Cultural Nationalism*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1997. In particular, the chapter: “Introduction: Writing for Multiple Audiences and the Heterolingual Address”, pp. 1-17.

languages and so helps people to understand each other. Yet it also implies a very concrete social meaning, i.e., a social relation that is performatively produced by this mode of address: these two distinct languages are instantly perceived in terms of two different social spaces or, respectively, two linguistic communities assumed as separate from one another. It is, thus, more than obvious that under the regime of homolingual address such thing as a community of non-native speakers of *English-as-a-lingua-franca* is simply unthinkable.

As opposed to the regime of homolingual address, Sakai coined the concept of heterolinguality. It implies a different constellation: the addresser and addressee of a (translational) linguistic encounter do not perceive each other a priori as representatives of two distinct, always already given and in themselves homogeneous languages, nor do they identify these linguistic entities with equally homogeneous social spaces. The heterolingual address invokes rather a different idea of collectivity and belonging, it interpellates, in Althusser's terms, speakers into a community based in a relation, which does not depend on successful communication, into a "we" that includes also those who don't understand each other, which is why they perform the labor of translation.⁴³ Consequently, the relation of heterolingual address, generated in translation, does not designate any aggregate community, linguistic, social or cultural. In other words, it is not directly translatable into the existing linguistic and socio-political order, based on the perception of the world as a cluster of different, in themselves socially, ethnically, politically, culturally ... and, last but not least, linguistically homogenous entities—the world of nation states and their respective language-societies. In contrast, Sakai suggests a different mode of collective being, implied in the postulate of heterolinguality, something he calls a "nonaggregate community of foreigners".⁴⁴ Is there any better way to imagine a community of non-native speakers of *English-as-a-lingua-franca*?

There is nothing wrong in being a foreigner, nor it is impossible to create a community of those who come together from many different backgrounds. Finally, differences in general, including the linguistic ones, do not necessarily divide people. They, on the contrary, can also connect and unite them—a task translation is entrusted

43 Ibid., p. 4.

44 Ibid., p. 9.

with. This fully applies to the community of non-native speakers of *English-as-a-lingua-franca*, at least on the level of a regulative idea. As said before, such a community is yet to be realized, since there is no social and political place for it within the existing reality, the dominant linguistic order ruled by the regime of homolinguality.

At this place we are obviously compelled to ask a crucial strategical question about the future of *English-as-a-lingua-franca* and its community: does it have to follow the path of standardization as foreseen by the *VOICE*-project, which has already started with its description, developing at the same time, albeit still rudimentary, its future corpus?⁴⁵ Do we really need yet another language and yet another linguistic community to align itself among those allegedly already existing 6000 world languages and their communities? Do we truly want one more unique, homogeneous, clearly enclosed and differentiated linguistic entity within one and the same cluster of the world language-societies and their respective institutions (and states)? And finally, are these gains put in prospect with the struggle for the recognition of ELF—“linguistic equity”, “right to language”, “right to transform a language” etc.—really worth fighting for if the existing regime of homolinguality remains the same, of course, in the rather unlikely case that it will let us achieve these goals?

Non-native speakers of all languages, unite!

Let us now, at the end of this text, return to its beginning and, in the same step, to the historical roots of the problem we are dealing with here. The Latin word *translatio* from the Roman times up until its early modern usage bore a double sense: a linguistic conveyance or transfer and a “carrying or removing from one place to another”. Cicero, for instance, spoke of money as “translated” and employed *translatio* as the term both for metaphor and transfer of property.⁴⁶ In these two among its many etymological meanings—as metaphor and as the transfer of property—translation “involved a wandering beyond the enclosure of property

45 It would be truly a pity if such an important project will remain within the constraints of an “academic research” without ever creating productive conflicts in the real social, cultural and intellectual life and its actual linguistic praxis.

46 See: Parker, Patricia. *Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context*. Chicago/London, The University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 137.

into the foreign, the distant, the alien.”⁽⁴⁷⁾

This reference to property brings us back to the question of ownership over the English language already raised above.⁽⁴⁸⁾ We might repeat it now from a translational perspective—as a question of transfer of property over English from its native to its non-native speakers—and, eventually, try to answer it.

It stands to reason that the non-native speakers of English, in order to constitute themselves as a genuine non-aggregate community of foreigners, should dare a much radical move than to simply seize from the native speakers the right to change this language, cut off from it their *English-as-a-lingua-franca* and standardize it on their own terms. What has to be challenged is rather the system of property relations that determines our linguistic praxis and the social and political reality it co-produces. It is becoming obvious that this system as a whole must be subjected to a radical translation, which is to be understood as a “transfer of property”. For the non-native speakers of English and, moreover, for all those who recognize themselves in similar modes of a “non-legitimate” use of language, this means to make a decisive step beyond the historically inherited forms of (linguistic) property into the sphere of the linguistic (and social) commons enclosed by its expropriators, both private and public, who have long ago succeeded in making it foreign, distant and alien to us. Indeed, at stake is the expropriation of linguistic expropriators.⁽⁴⁹⁾

This finally sounds like a truly revolutionary task. For the non-native speakers of English (or, shall I say, for “us”, since in writing these words I performatively co-create our community and its language-in-becoming) this task firstly requires a translation of the struggle for our particular linguistic rights into a common struggle—the struggle for the linguistic commons. Translation is of decisive importance in this struggle, but not, of course, in its traditional sense, in which it is misused by the regime of homolingual address to secure and perpetuate the linguistic property relations on which it relies. Another concept of translation is meant here: “Far from representing a movement between national languages or normative grammars, this is the discourse of foreigner to foreigner, which creates a language that is

47 Robinson, Douglas. *Translation and Empire. Postcolonial Theories Explained*, London/New York, Routledge, 2014, p. 65. In the context of a “transfer of property” translation has also a meaning of “theft”.

48 The question is also explicitly asked by Barbara Seidlhofer in “The shape of things to come”, p. 270.

common precisely because it is forever in translation and rooted in material practices of cooperation, organization, and struggle.”⁵⁰

It is in these very concrete, material practices of cooperation, organization, and struggle, both linguistic and social, that another teleology of our linguistic praxis reveals itself, one in which a non-native use of language is no longer seen as a temporary regression into the disorder of the vernacular und vulgar, a transitory fall into the linguistic property limbo, which will soon return to normality, i.e., be followed by the recreation of a new corpus and restoration of a new standard, in short, the establishment of a brand new language “in its own right”, together with its new, unique and homogeneous, linguistic community.—On the contrary, the linguistic praxis that struggles here for its emancipation, one that is generated and reproduced in translation, has no reason whatsoever to strive for its captivity in the normative corset of a new standard, which will sooner or later turn it into another “dead, thing-like shell”. It refuses to participate in any new enclosures of the linguistic commons, since it is the linguistic commons *in actu*. In the process of its development, which cannot be stopped anymore, it does not have to model itself on “how the natives—both tongues and their speakers—do it”, nor will it try to play their boring game of uniqueness, authenticity and transparency, since it is irrevocably post-native: the speakers of its orphaned tongue will never find their mother, not even an ersatz one. Also,

49 This is clearly an allusion to one of the most famous sentences of Karl Marx, which in its German original reads: “Die Expropriateurs werden expropriert.” (Marx, Karl. *Das Kapital*, 1st edition. Berlin, Dietz Verlag, 1979, p. 791.) Analysing the “enigmatic” meaning of this sentence, Etienne Balibar points at its interesting linguistic aspect: A reader of the German original will immediately recognize in it a “Fremdwort”, an *alien* word (*Expropriateurs*) like several other to be found in this paragraph like “exploitieren”, “expropriieren”, “Usupatoren”, etc. This mixing of languages, as Balibar argues, is not “a loose stylistic improvisation”, but rather the result of Marx’s dialectical thinking, which constantly mixes various economic, historical and juridical content. See: Balibar, Etienne. “The Expropriators are expropriated.” Paper presented at the International Conference: Marx’s *Capital* after 150 years: Critique and Alternative to Capitalism, May 24-26, 2017, York University, Toronto, ON Canada, http://blogs.law.columbia.edu/praxis1313/files/2018/11/EB_Expropriators-expropriated-TORONTO.pdf.

50 Mezzadra, Sandro and Brett Neilson. *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor*. Durham/London, Duke University Press, 2013, p. 275.

it is clear that this sort of linguistic praxis has no “classical” legacy whatsoever; nevertheless, it is not bothered by its lack, nor will it ever try to invent one. Finally, it will be, for sure, abused as “vulgar”, but will not feel offended, for it knows, better than all other languages, how to properly translate it: “common”, of which it will be rather proud. What’s more, why should this “language” be cleaned of its plebeian “dirt”?—being “vulgar”, like being “classical”, is a class issue anyway. The same applies to the community that constitutes itself in this linguistic praxis, “the non-aggregate community of foreigners”: why should it be cleaned of its class issue? It does not want to end in an identitarian deadlock. Quite the contrary, it will remain true to what it is, an emancipatory community.

Now we can finally come up from the lower Basilica of the church of *San Clemente* in Rome, on whose walls the linguistic transformation we have been talking about here was first time recorded. But we should also remember the grammatical form of those words on the frescos (*Albertel, trai, Gosmaris, fili dele pute, traite*). *Trai, traite (pull)* “stand for directive speech acts with the additional support of the vocative, which goads into action: *filli dele pute*” (*you sons of a bitch*).⁵¹ This is the case of a clear addressing, which, in its rhetoricity, reminds us of one of the three rhetorical genres elaborated in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, the so-called deliberative or political oratory. It is concerned with future and its purpose is to motivate someone for action, as distinguished from, for instance, a forensic or judicial oratory, which is focused rather on the past.

Let us end this text with a similar rhetorical figure, one that moves away from the judicial discourse, a struggle for rights of the victims of linguistic injustice that strive for the recognition of their language, to a more directive speech that addresses those linguistically and socially deprived plebeians of the globe, the world’s vulgar and vernacular multitude, as a potential political agency and goads them to a linguistically transformative, and, at the same time, socially formative action—*Speak, you sons and daughters of a bitch, speak, write and translate your language of the future!*

51 Koch, Peter. “Court Records and Cartoons: Reflections of Spontaneous Dialogue in Early Romance Texts.” *Historical Dialogue Analysis*, edited by Andreas H. Jucker, et al., John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1999, pp. 416ff.

Dear H

Laura Cemin

My address book is a standard red A6 stack of papers. No acquaintances, neither doctors or technicians are written there, but only names of people who, through their work, were able to trigger a specific itch^① in me. My *mediators*^② as Deleuze would name them.

On page 16, the name I am seeking is written on the second line: Hélène.

21 January 2020

Dear H,

I am looking for advice.

Actually, only now when browsing through the book's pages, I notice that your name starts with an H. The letter mentioned in the text by you I first read. In it, you refer to this symbol as the stylized outline of a ladder^③. As the two

1 A hitch on the internal tissue, not on the skin. It feels like dust resting on my clothes, but turned inside out.

2 According to Deleuze, an artistic process can not exist without mediators. Mediators are key figures with whom the creator is in dialogue with—literally and metaphorically. I encountered this concept while attending a masterclass in London with Bojana Cvejic, during which she asked each participant to write a list of their own mediators. This is how my address book came about.

3 Cixous, Hélène. *Three steps on the ladder of writing*. New York, Columbia University Press, 1994.

I (the French I and the English I you identify with) connected by a dash that makes the vertical lines vibrate. Connected but independent. What we are looking at is a ladder, not a letter—you write.

Can you remember how we met? On a rainy summer morning in Copenhagen you were there, waiting in the library I chose by chance as shelter. Silently calling me through your book. Very soon after I began, a letter blinked to me. With urge, thoughts started to emerge, not only then but longer afterwards.

Since that day, however, all these thinking shards sparkling in my body could not find a connecting path. After all, how can such a thing happen inside our own head? Thoughts need to be spread out, threads pulled together to create a net on which to walk, and bounce, perhaps even jump. From left to right, and down again, until the next line. How to decide where the last dot should land—I wonder. When does a text stop? And what happens then, does it die? I read you thinking that writing starts from death, but I am unsure where it might end.

Ok, but let's go back to where I started. I am now holding a ladder, I am climbing it.

English is the language of my present—I often say. The language I speak as an adult, the language that allows me to think critically. The language that with me—for me—has created a role. Of an adult woman. My mother tongue, Italian, is just much different. I am a child in it.

How come a language can give a role? It must be embedded in the words, in the letters—I guess. We speak through language as much as language speaks through us.⁴ Do you agree?

Italians have a funny way of speaking English—it is a truth-based stereotype—and a recognizable accent. Because I have disliked it for many years, I have tried to erase it and remove, with this accent, an identity, a history from the words. However, despite the effort, something kept on sounding wrong. In order to pronounce my words “properly”, I consulted native English speaking friends who immediately spotted the problem: a letter. Its sound—or non-sound—made my language appear different and ambivalent. To speak a language without pronouncing a specific consonant can cause, and has

4 According to Heidegger, language ‘speaks.’ See: Lyon, James K., Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger. *An Unresolved Conversation, 1951-1970*. Baltimore, JHU Press, 2006, pp. 128-129.

caused, misunderstandings. That letter made us often laugh, but those laughs have also hurt much, as when falling from a ladder.

Audrey Hepburn in “My Fair Lady” is a poor flower girl with a very defined accent who, in order to be accepted and to elevate her status, decides to start an intense and problematic journey towards a perfect pronunciation—and hopefully a consequential upgrade of class. “*In ertford, ereford and ampshire urricanes ardly Hever appen*” she repeats over and over in front of a strange apparatus. A mispronounced—or not-pronounced—letter becomes in the movie a status symbol, a distinctive mark. Throughout history, those with social clout have set the standards for what is the more acceptable pronunciation⁵—I read.

I hope you like moisture and chlorine smell as much as I do, because now we are attending a swimming class. Its end is approaching and the time for dives has come. To reach the platform you are required to climb a ladder—its length depends on the trampoline’s height. When almost at the top, a strong and paralyzing fear runs through your body. Scared, you would like to climb down and forget about the task of jumping. When turning your head, however, you realize that many other children are standing behind you already halfway, waiting for their turn to come. Either you *fail*, or you *fall* into the water. What do you fear the most? Your words start to pile, from the diaphragm towards your mouth, in your throat. They create a set of steps to be climbed up, up and up, and up again. Only one step forward, you have now reached the edge. Of the platform. Behind your teeth. Ready to be let out, those words will soon get their own *voice*. You breathe in, ready to... JUMP! The coach whistles. In the throat the precarious ladder breaks, words plummet, roll on top of each other and pile at the bottom of your stomach, exactly when your body hits the water. I would like to know if an archive of the unspoken exists, and if it sits inside the diaphragm.

In the Italian alphabet, one letter does not have sound. In the written language, it’s role is to avoid misunderstandings. The letter H, in fact, is placed in front of a, ai, o, to distinguish the verb *avere* (to have) from prepositions and conjunctions. In the spoken language, it supports the sound of the letter C and G and makes them stronger.

5 See: Burrige, Kate and Catherine McBride. “Haitch or aitch? How a humble letter was held hostage by historical haughtiness.” *The Conversation*, June 6, 2018, <https://theconversation.com/haitch-or-aitch-how-a-humble-letter-was-held-hostage-by-historical-haughtiness-97184>.

When asked to sing the alphabet in primary school, this letter defines a break. A breath in the middle of the nursery-rhyme. It helps—like any pause in a music score for winds.

The letter H had its own sound in latin tongue. And in Italian too, until around the 16th century. An aspirated sound. In the rural areas, where the lower classes lived, the aspiration soon disappeared from the spoken language, after the establishment of a “national” idiom. This phonetic distinction marked a social difference: the rich (and cultured) would make the H sound, while the less educated would not. However, differently from what happened in the English language which saw the re-introduction of the letter H in front of many words during the the sound of H disappeared from the Italian spoken language. Even if its own sound was erased, its existence remained to help bigger letters, the round ones that take much space on paper, such as the letter G and C. H, the silent letter without a voice but necessary to serve, fundamental to hold power in its privileged position. A ladder that can not climb itself. It lives in free fall, when it is impossible to speak. The breath simply cuts off. But what if...

What if this letter would change its role and play the jester, who fakes to obey but instead twists the situation to make fun of those in power? The letter H, at date, still makes many fall in error—it is a common mistake in Italian to forget the letter H in front of the present form of the verb *avere*. How to change the game to make power structures tumble? How to create strong ladders for our words and help them reach the top of our throat, give them sound?

Perhaps, we could simply shift orientation and lay the H down, horizontally. And rest. To reject the verticality of this time, with its hierarchies and hunger for success. No longer a ladder, but a suspended bridge. And the Hs would not be made to erase identities, to support, or to be used by those in power. If we lay down the ladder, we might as well explore all the planes. And dance. And shake a bit, to give rhythm to the structure and make the order change.

It is a matter of momentum.

Dear H, this is an ode to you.

BROKEN ENGLISH POEMS:

LONDON
EPIGRAMS

Francisco Tomsich

1

What the hell am I doing here?
sings the crowd.
I am part of the crowd.
I thought I do belong here.
I was feeling quite well in this place.
This is another exercise
on the dialectics of mass behaviour.

2

I got deadly drunk
and I made a list with the names
of all the people I love.
Now I know at least
that I won't die the first.

3

I quit drinking and smoking,
as they say we should,
and I opened a bar where I sell
smuggled beverages from Bosnia and Serbia
as they say we shouldn't.

4

I am real influencer,
but I keep it to myself,
since they would steal my ideas,
and make with them more money
than I can spend.

5

Our tree has grown new leaves:
a pale green one with a blue script
and a white one with a black logo
I have never seen before.

6

A raven crosses the airspace
carrying something on its beak.
I swear it's human flesh.

ELF: English as a Lingua Franca

Ida Parise

In the thriving international exchange of information in real-time, cross-national people's mobility, which has been able to shape the ethnic composition of entire countries and local communities, the need of a lingua franca has become inevitable. Students, workers and researchers are compelled to acquire English competence to emerge and be relevant on the international market. Since the sixteenth century, English has become a convenient lingua franca for financial, commercial, and political transactions due to its colonial supremacy gained by the Royal British conquests in the African, Asian, American and Oceanian continents. Furthermore, along with the emergence of global businesses, operating in many countries around the world (e.g. McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and Starbucks), and new forms of culture and entertainment, English has persisted into an incontrovertible condition of predominance in international communication^① contributing to globalisation.

The Conceptualisation of English as a Lingua Franca

The term 'English as a lingua franca' and its acronym 'ELF' has come to refer to communication among English users of different linguacultural background since April 1995, when Jennifer Jenkins presented her research findings at IATEFL (International Association of Teachers of EFL) conference. The empirical relevance of this new branch

1 Graddol, David. *The Future of English?*. London, British Council, 1997.

of Applied Linguistics was validated by the first published book entirely dedicated to ELF². Jenkin's research provided the first theoretical and empirical support to define English as a lingua franca use among international speakers, especially referring to pronunciation.

At first, to find a line of conceptualisation, ELF was compared to phenomena already researched from the World Englishes perspective. However, the fluidity and variability which characterise English as a lingua franca have made researchers believe that it cannot be reduced to a type of contact variety. Furthermore, its features cannot be associated with some stable external factor (e.g. a distinct social group, class or identity, a geographical area, a persistent register, etc.). On the contrary, ELF is characterised by the functionality of pragmatic strategies which serves communication effectiveness among its international speakers. It entails sociolinguistic processes of identity, culture and ideology signalling, code-switching, accommodation and language variation. More recently, findings have spotlighted prominent multilingualism in ELF, integrating it within multilingualism research. This triple evolutionary line of ELF conceptualisation has been argued by Jenkins³, who discusses these three phases as 'ELF 1', 'ELF 2' and 'ELF 3'. The latest of the three phases of conceptualisations of ELF, to date, highlights the transcultural character of multilingual English speakers, who adapt their multilinguistic repertoire to the contexts of their interaction switching from one language resource to another or translanguaging them, making multiple discursive practices effective. According to this translanguaging approach, speakers overcome the boundaries of languages and culturally bound pragmatic use of languages. "Languaging" or "translanguaging" practices imply English in contact with other languages to accomplish speakers' communicative needs according to contextual factors in multifarious exploitation of multilingual resources. This theoretical perspective draws special attention to personal engagement in resisting to the ideological separation of languages in meaning-making and levelling power asymmetries.

From another point of view, conceptualising English as a lingua franca and its interpretation of data collection

2 Jenkins, Jennifer. *The Phonology of English as an International Language*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000.

3 Jenkins, Jennifer. "Repositioning English and multilingualism in English as a Lingua Franca." *Englishes in Practice*, August 2015, pp. 49-85.

has found its researchers in line with the classical Saussurean distinction between *langue* and *parole*^④. *Langue* encompasses the signifying system of abstract and systematic rules and conventions. It is considered to be independent of and pre-exists individual users. The individual, personal utterances and use of the *langue*, as a series of speech acts made by a linguistic subject, is called *parole*. In sum, the English language works as the supporting underneath structure (*langue*) of ELF, realized by international speakers' creativity. This approach distinguishes native use from multilingual speakers' use. Furthermore, the Chomskyan distinction between competence and performance, "Internalised language" or "I-language" and "Externalised language" or "E-language"^⑤ can also help to make explicit Widdowson and Seidlhofer's view of ELF actualization of the "virtual language".

The investigation of users' decisions in different pragmatic situations as a process of 'macroacquisition' is accounted by Widdowson^⑥ in terms of 'the virtual language being spread and actualized'. International users of English do not reproduce encoded forms conforming to native standards, but they usually go through strategies of accommodation and adaptation to the different domains of use retaining a distinct transcultural character in producing linguistic features. This independent variety of English language selected for lingua franca communication, despite the pronounced range of variability, attends a satisfactory level of stability to allow the empirical investigation of its reality. Barbara Seidlhofer^⑦, considering lexicogrammar an aspect that tended to be regarded as

4 Vetchinnikova, Svetlana. "Usage-based recycling or creative exploitation of the shared code? The case of phraseological patterning." *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, vol. 4, no. 2, Sep. 2015, pp. 223-252.

5 Chomsky, Noam. *Knowledge of language: its nature, origins and use*. New York, Praeger, 1986.

6 Widdowson, Henry G. "The use of grammar, the grammar of use." *Functions of Language*, vol. 4, no. 2, Jan. 1997, pp. 145-168.

7 See: Seidlhofer, Barbara. "A concept of 'international English' and related issues: from 'real English' to 'realistic English'?" This text was commissioned by the Language Policy Division for the Conference on *Languages, diversity, citizenship: policies for plurilingualism in Europe* (13–15 November 2002), Council of Europe, 2003; Hollander, Elke. *Is ELF a pidgin? A corpus-based study of the grammar of English as a lingua franca*. MA thesis, University of Vienna, 2002; Kordon, Kathrin. *Phatic communion in English as a lingua franca*. MA thesis, University of Vienna, 2003.

particularly central to language pedagogy, published a notable account of syntactic ‘ELF features. Although her set of grammatical features of ELF acquired momentum, she meant them to provide hypotheses for further research because at that stage, no reliable findings based on quantitative investigations could yet be reported. The study conducted on VOICE data at the University of Vienna⁸ by the use of many theses and small-scale seminar projects have brought to light certain regularities that at least pointed to some hypotheses, irrespective of speakers’ first languages and levels of L2 proficiency. They include⁹:

- Dropping the third person present tense –s;
- Confusing the relative pronouns who and which;
- Omitting definite and indefinite articles where they are obligatory in ENL, and inserting them where they do not occur in ENL;
- Failing to use correct forms in tag questions (e.g., isn’t it? or no? instead of shouldn’t they?);
- Inserting redundant prepositions, as in “We have to study about...”;
- Overusing certain verbs of high semantic generality, such as do, have, make, put, take;
- Replacing infinitive-constructions with that-clauses, as in “I want that”;
- Overdoing explicitness (e.g. black colour rather than just black).

In the research, they appeared to be generally unproblematic and no obstacle to communicative success. However, they have always been regarded as “errors” by most English teachers in the perspective of EFL. Consequently, get allotted a great deal of time and effort in English lessons for correction and remediation. Summing up, according to Seidlhofer¹⁰, ELF usage functionally exploits the possibilities inherent in the virtual language in an entirely natural way, and that is how language evolves in producing linguistic forms in accordance with users’ communicative needs.

Although Barbara Seidlhofer has contributed to establishing ELF phenomenon balancing its variability within the regularities of social interaction in certain

8 e.g.: Seidlhofer, Barbara. “Lexicogrammar in ELF: Some findings from VOICE.” Paper presented at the colloquium *Research into English as a lingua franca: The state of the art*. British Association of Applied Linguistics Conference, Leeds, September 2003.

9 Adapted from: Seidlhofer, Barbara. *Understanding English as a Lingua Franca*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011.

10 Ibid.

communities of practice (CoP)¹¹, Mauranen has focalized research attention on the identitarian use of English by its speakers from an increasing number of worldly linguistic backgrounds. This stream of conceptualization¹² has defined these varieties as lects or ‘similects’. They represent a second-order language contact example resulting in bilingual creativity. Their main use is among multilingual speakers outside their language community. They exist in parallel, as hybrids, and do not develop like dialects, do not change, or diverge into sociolects. In a second-order language of this type, the variables of the quantifiers may range over functions, properties, relations, and classes of objects, and in yet higher-order languages over properties of properties. Furthermore, in these second-order contact situations, a large number of languages are each in contact with English, and in turn, they are in contact with each other. Consequently, the special features of such contact varieties (similects) result from cross-linguistic transfer. To add complexity to the mix, ENL speakers of different origins participate in ELF communities characterising ELF as a hybrid of similects. The consequence is intercultural communication via ELF.

A further theorisation of ELF¹³ approaches the complexities of language and communication in a more holistic way. It draws upon complexity theory as a useful meta-theory for thinking about culture from an international

- 11 Wenger, Étienne. *Communities of practice: learning, meaning and identity*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 318; Seidlhofer, Barbara. “Common Property: English as a Lingua Franca in Europe.” *International Handbook of English Language Teaching*, edited by Jim Cummins and Chris Davidson, Springer, 2007, 137-153; Seidlhofer, Barbara and Henry G. Widdowson. “Idiomatic variation and change in English: The idiom principle and its realizations.” *Tracing English through time: Explorations in language variation*. edited by Ute Smit, Braumüller, 2007, pp. 359-374.
- 12 Mauranen, Anna. “English as a global Lingua Franca: changing language in changing global academia.” *Exploring ELF in Japanese Academic and Business Contexts*, edited by Kumiko Murata, John Benjamins, 2015, pp. 29-46; Mauranen, Anna. “Hybrid voices: English as the lingua franca of academics.” *Language and Discipline Perspectives on Academic Discourse*, edited by Kjersti Fløttum, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007, pp. 243-259; Mauranen, Anna. *Exploring ELF: Academic English Shaped by Non-native Speakers*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- 13 Baird, Robert, et al. “The complexity of ELF.” *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, vol. 3., no.1, March 2014, pp. 171-196.

perspective⁽¹⁴⁾. In opposition to a relativistic interpretation of a person's beliefs, values, and practices, it outlines a frame of reference to functionally highlight the dynamic nature of language. According to this perspective, which emphasizes the prominence of language interpretation from manifold aspects, ELF language practice, as an emergent phenomenon, is a social act. Its interpretation entails not only interactants' correlation with their physical, immanent interlocutors, but also how they associate with and react to social constructs, expectations, norms and meanings.

Research areas

Research has focused on various domains in a plethora of contexts. Business ELF, or BELF⁽¹⁵⁾, and academic ELF as English Medium Instruction (EMI)—in both non-English mother tongue and English-dominant settings⁽¹⁶⁾—have been the two main areas of investigation. Empirical research was able to take advantage of large corpora of spoken English as a Lingua Franca: the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE)⁽¹⁷⁾, the English as a Lingua Franca in

- 14 Larsen-Freeman, Diane and Lynne Cameron. *Complex systems and applied linguistics*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008; Larsen-Freeman, Diane. "A complexity theory approach to second language development/acquisition." *Alternative approaches to second language acquisition*, edited by Dwight Atkinson, Routledge, 2011, pp. 48-72.
- 15 e.g.: Cogo, Alessia and Martin Dewey. *Analysing English as a Lingua Franca: A Corpus-Driven Investigation*. London, Continuum, 2012; Ehrenreich, Susanne. "English as a lingua franca in multinational corporations—Exploring business Communities of Practice." *English as a lingua franca: Studies and findings*, edited by Anna Mauranen and Elina Ranta, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009, pp. 126-151; Kankaanranta, Anne, et al. "English in multinational companies: Implications for teaching 'English' at an international business school." *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2015, pp. 125-148.
- 16 Jenkins, Jennifer and Constant Leung. "English as a lingua franca." *The companion to language assessment*, edited by Antony John Kunnan, vol. 4, Wiley-Blackwell, 2014, pp. 1607-1616; Mauranen, Anna. *Exploring ELF: Academic English Shaped by Non-native Speakers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012; Smit, Ute. *English as a Lingua Franca in Higher Education*. Berlin, De Gruyter Mouton, 2010.
- 17 cf: VOICE: *The Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (version POS Online 2.0)*. Director: Barbara Seidlhofer; Researchers: Stefan Majewski, Ruth Osimk-Teasdale, Marie-Luise Pitzl, Michael Radeka, Nora Dorn, 2013, <http://voice.univie.ac.at/pos/>.

Academic Settings (ELFA)⁽¹⁸⁾, the Asian Corpus of English (ACE)⁽¹⁹⁾, and the most recent WrELFA (the Corpus of Written ELF in Academic Settings), which is currently in progress.

At the same time, smaller-scale corpora supported findings in interactional contexts concerning asylum seekers⁽²⁰⁾, teacher training⁽²¹⁾, and language assessment⁽²²⁾ (e.g. Jenkins and Leung 2014). From an ELF socio-linguistic theoretical paradigm, uncooperativeness⁽²³⁾ (e.g. Jenks 2012), miscommunication⁽²⁴⁾, and humour⁽²⁵⁾ were also investigated.

Prevailing over the earliest conceptualisation, studies shifted from the lexicon-grammatical level to the pragmatic level of language use approaching couple-talk⁽²⁶⁾, idiomaticity and creativity⁽²⁷⁾, written ELF⁽²⁸⁾, and regulation in ELF⁽²⁹⁾.

- 18 cf: *ELFA: The Corpus of English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings*. Director: Anna Mauranen, 2008, <http://www.helsinki.fi/elfa/>.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 e.g.: Guido, Maria Grazia. *ELF in Cross-cultural Immigration Domains*. Berlin, Peter Lang, 2008.
- 21 e.g.: Dewey, Martin. "Towards a post-normative approach: learning the pedagogy of ELF." *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, vol. 1, no. 1, March 21, 2012, pp. 141-170.
- 22 Jenkins and Leung. "English as a lingua franca," pp. 1607-1616.
- 23 Jenks, Christopher. "Doing being reprehensive: some interactional features of English as a lingua Franca in a chat room." *Applied Linguistics*, vol. 33, no. 4, Sept. 2012, pp. 386-405.
- 24 e.g.: Deterding, David. *Misunderstandings in English as a Lingua Franca*. Berlin, De Gruyter Mouton, 2013.
- 25 e.g.: Pullin, Patricia. "Humour in ELF interaction." *The Routledge Handbook of English as Lingua Franca*, edited by Jenifer Jenkins, et al., Routledge, 2019, pp. 333-344.
- 26 e.g.: Pietikäinen, Kaisa S. "ELF couples and automatic code-switching." *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, vol. 3, no. 1, March 2014, pp. 1-26.
- 27 e.g.: Pitzl, Marie-Luise. "Creativity, idioms and metaphorical language." *The Routledge Handbook of English as Lingua Franca* edited by Jenifer Jenkins, et al., Routledge, 2019, pp. 233-243; Pitzl, Marie-Luise. "Transient international groups (TIGs): exploring the group and development dimension of ELF." *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2018, pp. 25-58; Pitzl, Marie-Luise. "World Englishes and creative idioms in English as a lingua franca." *World Englishes*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2016, pp. 293-309.
- 28 e.g.: Horner, Bruce. "Written academic English as a lingua franca." *The Routledge Handbook of English as Lingua Franca*, edited by Jenifer Jenkins, et al., Routledge, 2019, pp. 413-426.
- 29 e.g.: Hynninen, Niina. *Language Regulation in English as a Lingua Franca: Focus on Academic Spoken Discourse*. Berlin, De Gruyter Mouton, 2016.

Finally, post-modernist assumptions on transcultural relationships between conversation participants have inspired analysis from an ELF perspective. Most notably Baker⁽³⁰⁾ and Zhu Hua⁽³¹⁾, who have explored intercultural/transcultural negotiation of norms between users of English across cultural and linguistic borders.

Attitudes and orientations in ELF interaction have also been the object of investigation of quantitative and qualitative methodological studies. Participants include professional linguists in the education domain⁽³²⁾, business professionals⁽³³⁾, international students participating to Erasmus mobility programmes all over Europe⁽³⁴⁾, and staff and tourists in the tourist domain⁽³⁵⁾. In the above-mentioned domain-specific contexts, where speakers are naturally and

30 e.g.: Baker, Will. "English as a lingua franca and intercultural communication." *The Routledge Handbook of English as Lingua Franca*, edited by Jenifer Jenkins, et al., Routledge, 2019, pp. 25-36; Baker, Will. "English as an academic lingua franca and intercultural awareness: student mobility in the transcultural university." *Language and Intercultural Communication*, vol. 16, no. 3, April 14, 2016, pp. 437-451; Baker, Will. *Culture and Identity through English as a Lingua Franca*. Berlin, De Gruyter Mouton, 2015.

31 e.g.: Zhu, Hua. "Negotiation as the way of engagement in intercultural and lingua franca communication: frames of reference and Interculturality." *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, vol. 4, no. 1, Feb. 2015, pp. 63-90.

32 c.f.: Jenkins, Jennifer. *English as a lingua franca: Attitude and identity*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007.

33 c.f.: Cogo, Alessia. "'They all take the risk and make the effort': Intercultural accommodation and multilingualism in a BELF community of practice." *Intercultural Communication: New Perspectives from ELF*, edited by Lucilla Lopriore and Enrico Grazzi, Roma Trepress, 2016, pp. 365-383; Ehrenreich, Susanne. "The Dynamics of English as a Lingua Franca in International Business: a Language Contact Perspective." *Latest Trends in ELF Research*, edited by Jenifer Jenkins, et al., Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011; Kankaanranta, Anne and Leena. Louihiala-Salminen. "Focus on teaching: business communication in BELF." *Business Communication Quarterly*, vol. 70, no. 1, 2007, pp. 55-59.

34 cf.: Kalocsai, Karolina. "Erasmus exchange students: A behind-the-scene view into an ELF community of practice." *Apples – Journal of Applied Language Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2009, pp. 25-49; Peckham, Donald W., et al. "English and multilingualism, or English only in a multilingual Europe?" *Languages in a Network of Excellence in Europe*, edited by Patrick Studer and Iwar Werlen, Unpublished project report. Work Package 7, 2008.

35 Parise, Ida. "ELF users' attitudes and orientations in tourism interaction." *Cambridge Open Engage*, 2020, doi:10.33774/coe-2020-j7jdz.

continually exposed to cultural and linguistic heterogeneity, showing a multicultural outlook on talk constitutes a pragmatic strategy to achieve intercultural communication. Interlocutors are kin on revealing content despite individual idiosyncrasies in contrast to English native norm. Overall, reciprocal accommodation to achieve understanding shows ELF speakers' favourable attitude toward strategic effective interaction. However, language ideologies still bias language conceptualisation and performance. For instance, Cogo and Yanaprasart³⁶ highlight the persistence of language ideologies in ELF and Multilingualism theoretical paradigms in the business context in Europe. First, (1) considering the two phenomena as separate perspectives developing on different research conceptual paths; second, (2) embracing language separation ideology identifying languages as discrete systems (e.g. "Italian", "English", "French", etc.); third, (3) relying on essentialist considerations which associate one language to a single nation as its pure linguistic representation.

Concluding, it can be stated that users perceive ELF as an effective resource to challenge the 'superdiverse reality'³⁷ of contemporary times and to abridge differences in transcultural communication.

Pragmatic strategies

In Applied linguistics ELF interaction is stated to be a kind of intercultural/transcultural communication, where speakers can account on their reciprocal cooperation and supportive inclination, in addition to a great variety of linguistic creative fluidity. According to this perspective, deviations from Standard English (StE) constituent norms are to be interpreted as possible variables in the language system due to an individual's linguistic behaviour. In analogy with the Global English paradigm interpretation, English as a lingua franca users adapt language forms to be relevant

- 36 Cogo, Alessia and Patchareerat Yanaprasart. "English is the language of business. An exploration of language ideologies in two European corporate contexts." *English in Business and Commerce*, edited by Tamah Sherman and Jiri Nekvapil, De Gruyter Mouton, 2018, pp. 97-116.
- 37 Vertovec, Steven. "Towards post-multiculturalism? Changing communities, conditions and contexts of diversity." *International Social Science Journal*, vol. 61, no. 199, March 2010, pp. 83-95; Vertovec, Steven. *Routledge International Handbook of Diversity Studies*. Abingdon, Routledge, 2015.

in the ongoing interaction³⁸. A divergent interpretation comes from the Foreign Languages paradigm, which considers them to be errors or proficiency deficiencies³⁹.

In line with these premises, it should be concluded that L2 English use should not only be assessed in terms of correctness and whether characterized by L1 interferences and fossilization. On the contrary, this narrow view of language should be overcome by an evaluative system which legitimizes ‘systematicity, frequency, and communicative effectiveness’⁴⁰ in intercultural communication. As a matter of fact, since 2018, the majority of international examination boards have shown a certain deliberate consideration⁴¹ (e.g. CEFR Companion Volume 2018) for World Englishes (WE) and English as a Lingua Franca research. Language benchmarks, in interviews, paired, and group speaking tasks, have included in their descriptors of proficiency the ability to make pragmatic decisions. Candidate should be able to perform their interactional competence, namely “the ability to co-construct interaction in a purposeful and meaningful way, taking into account socio-cultural and pragmatic dimensions of the speech situation and event”⁴² to pass their exam successfully.

Highlighting the effectiveness of communicative resources in natural occurring communication, WE and ELF have certainly contributed to reaching this result benefitting users and their language capability validation.

The investigation into pragmatic strategies has provided evidence of ELF speakers’ awareness and “pro-active work” to corroborate communicative effectiveness⁴³. They, even in non-problematic exchanges, use a multiplicity of strategies “to both pre-empt and resolve” communicative

38 Cogo, Alessia and Martin Dewey. *Analysing English as a Lingua Franca: A Corpus-Driven Investigation*. London, Continuum, 2012.

39 Jenkins, Jennifer. “Points of view and blind spots: ELF and SLA.” *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, vol. 16, no. 2, July 2006, pp. 137-162; Jenkins, Jennifer. *English as a lingua franca in the international university*. London, Routledge, 2014.

40 Jenkins, Jennifer. “English as a lingua franca: interpretations and attitudes.” *World Englishes*, vol. 28, no. 2, June 2009, pp. 200-207.

41 *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Companion Volume with new Descriptors, Council of Europe, February 2018. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages>.

42 Galaczi, Evelina and Lynda Taylor. “Interactional competence: Conceptualisations, operationalisations, and outstanding questions.” *Language Assessment Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 2, Apr. 2018, p. 226.

turbulence⁴⁴). This point of view contrasts with that of Second-language acquisition (SLA) point of view on communication strategies (CSs), which are considered a range of compelled actions to repair problematic moments in the conversation⁴⁵. In observing ELF naturally occurring conversation data, it emerges that participants use negotiation of meaning and co-construction of understanding to solve communicative turbulence when it occurs. This perspective overcomes difficulties in categorizing data according to their transactional or interactional aim, being such a distinction too rigid to match real ELF-talk use. This social constructionist perspective⁴⁶ considers understanding as an active (not passive) ability. Consequently, analysis is concentrated on both post-trouble-source indications of non-understanding and on pre-realizations of trouble on the interactants' part. Resolution strategies can repair 'post-hoc' trouble. By contrast, pre-emption signals concentrate on idiosyncrasies that might cause understanding failure. Common occurrences are repetition and paraphrasing.

Overall, research has shown that in ELF communication emphasis is placed on achieving understanding rather than the correctness of forms⁴⁷ by the use of the most effective and appropriate communication strategies and rarely performing topic abandonment or let-it-pass⁴⁸ (cf. Firth 1996 and Mauranen 2006). For example, Kaur⁴⁹ shows evidence of self-repetition, parallel phrasing, keyword repetition,

43 Mauranen, Anna. "Hybrid voices: English as the lingua franca of academics." *Language and Discipline Perspectives on Academic Discourse*, edited by Kjersti Fløttum, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007, pp. 243-259.

44 Kaur, Jagdish. "Achieving mutual understanding in world Englishes." *World Englishes*, vol. 29, no. 2, May 2010, pp. 192-208; Kaur, Jagdish. "Intercultural communication in English as a lingua franca: Some sources of misunderstanding." *Intercultural Pragmatics*, vol. 8, no. 1, March 2011, pp. 93-116. See also: Björkman, Beyza. "Pragmatic strategies in English as an academic lingua franca: ways of achieving communicative effectiveness." *Journal of Pragmatics*, vol. 43, no. 4, March 2011, pp. 950-964.

45 e.g.: Bialystok, Ellen. "Some factors in the selection and implementation of communication strategies." *Strategies in interlanguage communication*, edited by Gabriele Kasper and Claus Færch, Longman, 1983, pp. 54-70.

46 Roberts, Craige. "A social perspective on understanding: some issues of theory and method." *Achieving understanding: discourse in intercultural encounters*, edited by Katharina Bremer, et al., Longman, 1996, pp. 9-36; Gumperez, John Joseph. *Discourse Strategies*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982.

combined repetition and repaired repetition to enhance the clarity of expression.

In consideration of the weaker ties that typify connections between the members of the ongoing interaction, participants cannot rely on extra-textual shared knowledge to attain comprehensibility. On the other hand, it seems that from the outset, ELF speakers depend on metadiscourse, referent negotiation, or rephrasing, etc. to cope with the unpredictable circumstance in which the communicative situation will develop. According to Mauranen and Kaur⁶⁰, the observed minimum number of miscommunications in ELF is to be partially attributed to the ability to pre-empt potential communicative problems in a linguistically demanding situation by the speakers.

The multilingual and multicultural nature of ELF communication has emerged unmistakably from data-driven analysis, making it a common aspect of ELF communication. In fact, a reference to other languages and primarily to speakers' native languages is a common practice in ELF talk. Multilingual practices have therefore been classified by sociolinguistic research in multilingualism and ELF referring to their nature and their explicit or implicit emergence in language. This categorisation distinguishes between covert

47 c.f.: Cogo, Alessia. "‘French is French, English is English’: Standard Language Ideology in ELF Debates." *Linguistic Diversity in Europe*, edited by Patrick Studer and Iwar Werlen, De Gruyter Mouton, 2012, pp. 233-256; In the business domain see: Pitzl, Marie-Luise. "Non-understanding in English as a lingua franca: Examples from a business context." *Vienna English Working Papers*, vol. 14, no. 2, Jan. 2005, pp. 50-71; In the higher education domain see: Björkman, Beyza. *English as an academic lingua franca: an investigation of form and communicative effectiveness*. Berlin/Boston, De Gruyter Mouton, 2013.

48 c.f.: Firth, Alan. "The discursive accomplishment of normality: On conversation analysis and "lingua franca" English." *Journal of Pragmatics*, vol. 26, No. 2, August 1996, pp. 237-59; Mauranen, Anna. "A Rich Domain of ELF -the ELFA Corpus of Academic Discourse." *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, July 2006, pp. 145-159.

49 Kaur, Jagdish. "Saying it again: enhancing clarity in English as a lingua franca (ELF) talk through self- repetition." *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca Text&Talk*, vol. 32, no. 5, Sep. 2012, pp. 593-610.

50 Mauranen, Anna. "Signaling and preventing misunderstanding in English as lingua franca communication." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, vol. 177, no. 1, Jan. 2006, pp. 123-150; Kaur, Jagdish. "Pre-empting problems of understanding in English as a lingua franca." *English as a Lingua Franca: Studies and Findings*, edited by Anna Mauranen and Elina Ranta, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009, pp. 107-123.

and overt multilingual phenomena⁵¹. Overt multilingual phenomena imply two or more languages that are involved in ELF spoken or written discourse and in different roles or communicative functions in discourse. They can be used as code-switching or similar aspects (e.g. transfer, approximation as a form-based approximation and semantic approximation, approximate idioms and collocations, new word formation, new idiomatic expressions) or they might come from a more fluid approach to multilingual practices, such as translanguaging.

On the other hand, covert multilingual phenomena are concealed in speakers' use of some aspects of grammar; vocabulary or additional linguistic elements which are influenced by other languages as part of their background. However, communication persists in being superficially in English. This approach has contributed to highlighting the ability of ELF speakers in relying on multifarious resources to convey meaning. They develop multilingual competence becoming more efficient than monolinguals in intercultural communication. This consideration complements ELF research with studies of bilingualism and multilingualism⁵², where this medium of communication is argued to supplement other linguistic resources to achieve certain communicative aims⁵³ rather than supersede them. These also involve the construction and negotiation of knowledge, the expansion of meaning, and identity construction in contexts of linguistic and cultural diversity. In synthesis, ELF complements other languages rather than challenging their national and international use in speakers' sociolinguistic behaviour.

- 51 Cogo, Alessia and Patchareerat Yanapasart. "English is the language of business. An exploration of language ideologies in two European corporate contexts." *English in Business and Commerce*, edited by Tamah Sherman and Jiri Nekvapil, De Gruyter Mouton, 2018, pp. 96-116.
- 52 c.f.: Auer, Peter and Li Wei. *Handbook of Multilingualism and Multilingual Communication*. Berlin, Boston, De Gruyter Mouton, 2007; Heller, Monica. *Bilingualism: A Social Approach*. Palgrave, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.
- 53 Cogo, Alessia. "Strategic use and perceptions of English as a Lingua Franca." *Poznań Studies in Contemporary Linguistics*, vol. 46, no. 3, Sep. 2010, pp. 295-312.

Pomegranate

Jakob Niedziela

Pomegranate was my first love

PO.

ME.

GRA.

NATE.

But when someone asked me what it meant, stuttering
with unwillingness (and choking on flesh), I still
wanted to confirm that that that that

there will never be another train
But those symbols are wasted on our generations,
relics mending plastics
We will refuse and refuse and refuse to eat,
I'll keep the fridge kosher by keeping it empty

He laughed and told me I was full of shit

I have read Zagajewski's poems about the train
And I think I read Szymborska's poem about the trains,
and I'm sure
that Miłosz wrote his own
So I know there were trains after those trains
(*mam pociąg do ciebie*) and when I asked that
someone to call out, he would

In Russian,
in English
In school-boy French

na – na – na – na – na – na – na

Now we know guilt as a ravished bird
(but I am we, is you us) an apple made from rock
And I think that it means that the promised land
will crush your teeth and split your tongue in two,
like

Those fucking vowels, you would cry
And those fucking consonants (me)
The A, Ȧ, A –
the Ł, L, Ł –
the SZ, DŹ, SZCZ –
Ђ, Ы, Ь...

Then me and that someone (we) bickered
about whom had remembered, who had failed to forget
Maybe that second hand catholic guilt is the best foundation
for a convert (*quel dommage, quel dommage*)
In New York,
when the Chabad boys would ask me if I was Jewish
my hesitation was of the wrong kind
(I'm lying,
I've never been)

Pomme grenade
During times I had nothing to suckle
In places where forgetting one's name was considered
patricide
I could still be denied communion

But I have a passport

I have always had a passport
So I go to the supermarket
I go to the supermarket
I go still I send my postcards online, who can stand
these taped up lines, sticky with containment
Now the map is turning red, G-d, the map can turn redder
Still
A beating pulse closing in on us
(but who are we if I'm not you)

I have always had a passport
So who am I
to wear those grenades on my lapel while I
throw gems over enemy lines

Po Me Po Me Po Me Po Me Po Me Po Me Gra Na Te
Straight from the freezer aisle

Last week I installed an app to teach me Hebrew
I found it. I found it,
I found that disconnect
between my impatient index finger
and the silent mouthing of the alphabet
so as to not wake the neighbours
just what I'd been missing
Since that someone left
(quel dommage, quel dommage)
All these blessed seeds between my teeth

For a Language to be International, it's not Enough to Call it Such

Nicoline van Harskamp
interviews Rubèn Fernández

From 2014 to 2016 I worked on my video series Englishes, that reflects on the many varieties of non-monolingual English spoken around the world. In 2015 I made a research visit to Barcelona, the European capital of linguistic rights movements due to the precarious state of its own first language, Catalan. I interviewed activist linguists who held inspiring but at times worrying views about language preservation in a globalised world. By far the most memorable Barcelonite was Rubèn Fernández, who completely changed my ideas about constructed languages. Below are extracts from several recorded conversations. The interview was conducted in English.

Rubèn Fernández: What is happening to English now has happened to other languages but in different conditions. To my students I always use the example of Arabic. For Muslims, Arabic is a sacred language. It's god's language so you shouldn't toy with it. It should be kept and preserved. And because language always changes, they applied a grammar to Arabic and fixed it in place. All native speakers of Arabic are disadvantaged, because everybody ends up learning this classical Arab just like a foreign language.

But with English today, there is no sacred book that has to be preserved. We just keep imitating native English. That's it. That's the sacred speech we have to copy. Because to learn a language, you have to practice. And what's the way to practice? Copying. Consuming culture. Everybody wants to know what Americans and British are doing. And watch their movies. And read their books and go and study in their universities. If you learn English, you end up consuming that culture.

Nicoline van Harskamp: I find that in English language film and TV, language is anyway mostly absent.

Other languages are not there. Everybody can communicate without any problem and everybody speaks the same. When language comes up it's because there has been some kind of breakdown.

When I was in the United States, I saw that they were doing something with language that kind of shocked me. For example, especially on TV, when they have to cast some foreigner... Do you remember that movie about a geisha that was released just a few years ago, *Memoirs of a Geisha*? All the actors are supposed to be Japanese and they all speak this kind of funky English, trying to copy what is supposed to be an Asian accent. I found that shocking. It's only pronunciation of course, the grammar and the slang are American. It's just a foreign accent. Do you remember the minstrel shows with the blackface performers? That's the exact equivalence in language. That's oral racism.

Q Do you think there is an alternative to the consumption of English language and culture in Catalonia and elsewhere?

Of course. All languages can be international languages. Here in Barcelona, Spanish is the lingua franca. Chinese is spoken everywhere in the world. But Zamenhof, the launcher of Esperanto, put it in his own way: "*Por ke lingvo estu internacia ne sufiĉas nomi ĝin tia.*" For a language to be international, it's not enough to call it such.

Q Why not?

If you use a national language as an international language you always end up with the problem of native speakers. I mean, there is just no way around. They keep interfering. What we're trying to do right now with English, I think it's kind of weird and even unnatural. You see, what usually happened everywhere in the world before compulsory education was starting to be introduced in the west, is that people would make up languages. I mean, they just wouldn't care. They wouldn't learn grammar and try to learn out of the book and then practice with a native speaker. No. They would just meet. They would start communicating with gestures. And they would start developing a code. Some kind of mixed code.

Q But isn't that what we are doing now with English?

It's not really like that with English, I don't think so. Because almost everybody starts learning formally the language. And we're trying to learn the language as it is spoken by the native speakers. As if it couldn't be manipulated or changed or transformed. Or mixed. No. We try to keep it intact. And teach it intact. If you didn't have foreign language teaching in compulsory education, that wouldn't happen now.

Q What would happen?

Then, I guess, people would start making up language. Just like with sign languages, where there is no writing. When languages are just oral or just signs, then people mix them depending on the audience, depending to whom they are talking. And then they meet somebody else and the mixture ends up being different. Just people meeting individually on an individual basis and in proximity.

Q Do you mean physical proximity?

No, we have the internet now and actually, the problem is not the place, the problem is the centre. And everybody is orienting to that centre. And there is more a one-way communication than a two-way communication. The centre spreads a norm. A standard. The centre is physically located in some places like universities, but not everybody in those places belongs to the centre because there is the social class component, too. Nowadays with globalisation and the internet and so much traveling and flying around, it looks like the centre is not there, like it's ethereal. But there is still a centre that is preventing that kind of mixing from happening.

Q What needs to happen to make that mix of languages happen?

An English without the native speakers could exist if there was some kind of catastrophe and suddenly continental Europe would get 'isolated'. You know, the British people say when there is a storm in the Channel, that Europe is 'isolated'? Like that. When that will happen, when we would be 'isolated' from the British Isles and the other side of the Atlantic, I guess it would start to happen naturally. And you could also try to do it artificially I guess, by setting up what the English people have always refused to do: an academy. And then start creating a separate norm and also promoting it and using it in exclusion of the other English. But that would require a huge change of mindset, I think.

Q What change?

People just don't want to learn what they would think is a defective language. I'm teaching my students now how there are many prejudices about languages and how even linguists share those prejudices. The biggest prejudice is about naturalness of languages. That they are living organisms. That they are organic. That they cannot be tampered with. And that they have an inner essence that has to be preserved. Purity.

Q This is the idea of language preservation, right? There is a language that is real and pure and needs to be fenced off.

I disagree with many language preservationists but some prejudices about language can be useful.

Q How?

They push people to be more active. Not so much of a consumer. I think it's been overstated but language is the vessel of culture. For a culture to develop, it has to be separated from others. That's what people don't want to accept, now that everybody wants to be communicated and globalized and travel around. But I think that to have your own culture, you need your own language. But not because the language embodies a culture or vice versa. It's just out of isolation. The very fact that you're isolated, enables you to create an original culture. And even if you're not isolated, you can still use your own language and cultivate it.

Q I have spoken this week with people who claim that their native language is in their blood and that it is attached to their land. These were people who otherwise had emancipatory aims that I very much share. I understand where they are coming from but these kinds of statements were very uncomfortable to listen to.

But that's what languages should do: attach people to the soil. Because that's one of the problems we have nowadays: we're turning from humans into locusts. You know that insect in Africa that forms herds and they eat up all the vegetation? And when they have eaten it up already, they fly with the herd to another place and start consuming everything again? That's what we're turning into. I met people that were very cosmopolitan. And they were not attached to anything, actually. They would just

think: what was the best place to live, where were the best jobs and opportunities? And they would just move there and work there without learning much about the local culture. And then when the conditions didn't become that good, they would just fly away somewhere else. And they wouldn't be a citizen anywhere. A citizen in the way of commitment. It is not about having a passport that says what your rights are. It's about duties. It's about commitment. And those people are trying to avoid that.

The problems that we have in general in our world now, cannot be solved but locally. We're trying to reach to the centre and fix everything from there, but that's not the way it works. We need to act locally to work globally. And to do that we have to be attached to our land. We have to protect our land because it is part of the whole and somebody has to protect every part, so that the whole is protected. But we're not doing that. We are just flying around like locusts, like the resources are endless. The linguistic result will be that local languages will be eaten up!

Q There has been a marked difference between internationalism and globalism, also linguistically. Where the current rise of English is a result of globalist approach, and languages such as Esperanto are the result of an internationalist spirit. Are your ideas about this related to you being an Esperantist?

Well, I was supposed to learn English like everybody else but I didn't want to have to go to the UK like you are supposed to do to learn it. There are other places in the world that are much more interesting. Korea, for example. I wanted to have a third language that I could acquire like my second language Catalan, and make it my own. And not parrot it like somebody else's language. That was my idea. To make a language my own.

So, I got a learning book and a dictionary for Esperanto and I started to just learn it by myself at home. And I ended up in Korea to learn and teach Spanish and Esperanto there.

Q Who else wants to learn Esperanto?

All kinds of people. They don't have that much in common besides being very determined. A little bit like me, actually. It's like thinking: if the idea is good, you just take it up. It doesn't matter what the other people are doing. You have to live up to your ideals.

Q What ideals? Is there a vision or a desired outcome in the long run?

It's got a long history now, over a hundred years. Esperanto is actually only the continuation of a long tradition of European pidgins. There was already a big stock of words that could be found in many different European languages. Because they had been borrowed from one to another. So, the idea was very simple: why don't we start from that? From that stock of common words? And we put them together, wherever they are from. And we create a grammar that is as regular, as simple and consistent as possible. And that way everybody can start using it quickly.

The community has changed a lot and the goals, too. Originally it was all about to persuade the big powers to adopt Esperanto, but that failed over and over. They were about to, though! In the League of Nations, the first meeting they did, there was in the order: what language are we supposed to speak in all these meetings? It reached the point of being voted formally, that it would be Esperanto. But it failed because it had to be unanimous and there was one vote against.

Q Which country?

France.

At that time it was right after the first world war and so German was out as an international language. And the competition between French and English was fiercer than ever because they both got their colonial empires. So, their thought was that Esperanto was a threat to the international role of French.

Q What would have happened if France had said yes?

I guess they would just move on with what they were planning to do, which was inviting ministers of education from all around the world to try introduce Esperanto into the schools. Have the kids learn it, first of all. And then, I guess, in just one generation, you would get a lot of people communicating in Esperanto. And then for this people it would be normal and much more people would imitate them. And it would become a language in the centre. Back then, there was no centre yet. And now the centre is entirely in Anglophone countries.

Q Is that all due to education? I thought you didn't believe in formal language education?

The competences in education are the most delegated of all in the political pyramid. The European Union has no role whatsoever in education. Everybody is doing it different

and the result is that everybody ends up doing the same: just to teach English. There is no authority to coordinate efforts. But it would actually be so easy to just introduce Esperanto as an option. It could still be done, now.

Q I don't think I have heard that before. Most people don't consider Esperanto as an actual language, let alone a solution to a global problem.

Depends on how informed are the people. They think of it just as an encyclopaedia entry, something historical, and they are surprised when they know it's still spoken. And then there are people that stereotype you.

Q What is the stereotype?

That we are cranky weirdos. People say: "Esperanto was a good idea but it only worked among Esperantists." As if we were a different species or something. I used to talk about Esperanto quite a lot before, but not so much anymore. I don't like to be dismissed, or not being taken serious even by colleagues.

It's like a closeted language, that's what it feels like sometimes. To me, it's very similar to the experience of coming out. It is not something that you do once, and then it's over. You have to do it over and over and over with every single person.

Q One of the people that I met this week, seemed to be insulted that I even mentioned Esperanto. Whereas it's a known part of the history of Catalonia. It played an important role in the civil war here and Barcelona is still one of the few places in the world with a large community of speakers.

It's an anathema! It's an anathema! It's something that cannot be talked about. A language without a nation! A language without native speakers! It just feels threatening. It is looked upon almost like a Frankenstein monster. Something murderous that shouldn't exist. And yet it does exist, the language. We do exist.

The key method from a hundred years ago, in the time of the civil war, was 'learning by practice'. The idea was that you would mail a letter in Esperanto to a friend, together with a small booklet to try to decode it. And actually, you would prove it was easy to use, by inviting them to do the decoding. Originally it was more about middle class people but then working-class people picked it up. And actually they set up a movement of their own, separate from the

'bourgeois committee', as they would call it. Back then you could do that. You could talk about Esperanto like this and you wouldn't face any backlash. There was no prejudice. People would consider the idea seriously.

Q Has Esperanto changed, since that time?

Of course it has, because it's a living language. But the direction is not clear. Originally it was more similar to European languages and you had kind of a Slavic taint to it. But it changed away from that quite soon. You could maybe talk about regional varieties. Asian Esperantists are developing a style of talking that is different from for example European Esperanto. It's not about grammar, it's more like a style. The direction is different. It's internal. It used to borrow a lot of words from European languages and now it doesn't do that as much. People are trying to develop more the internal resources of the language instead of borrowing from another language. Actually, there are Esperanto purists now. They didn't exist before.

Q I heard about native speakers of Esperanto. How does this work?

Well, all native speakers of Esperanto are also native speakers of other languages. That's how it works. The parents speak Esperanto in the home with their children. Probably the children didn't know it was a created language until later.

Q How do you imagine that Esperanto takes over the role of English in the future?

Actually, things are nowadays a bit different from the time when it was launched. Because back then, there were four languages fighting for supremacy. And now it seems one has won. This was actually forecast by an American linguist, Eduard Sapir, who in the thirties already talked about all this battle being reduced to a silent competition between English and one competitor. Which would be Esperanto. Because even if it seems that the needs of the world have been met, English has a very weak base. Just like French had and even Latin, before. They arrived to a point of being universal, in the sense that they were the language to learn, to communicate internationally. And yet they failed. They miserably failed. And English will fail just like the others.

By the way in Spain there was a politician that criticized learning Catalan, and said that there is none more

useful language to learn than English. And that English is the Esperanto of the twenty-first century. And my association had to issue a protest, saying that the Esperanto of the twenty-first century is Esperanto.

again

Rosa Johanna

it is what happens, one letter is placed differently
what happens it is upside down
what happens when it is isolated from the other
it is about what happens when you put the letter
on top of another
or next to another one
when you make the letter very small or very big

collecting letters in essays and books
phrasing history while being in it
writing, rewriting, putting letters on paper, again and again
it is about filling pages

making words and lines ending with a question mark
after an exclamation mark
quoting and unquoting
learning by unlearning and doing by undoing

to start with new text
with different letters
in different sizes, with different names, in different styles
it is not about the alphabet as already known
or memories already made
it is about how to fill a page with letters
it is speculating what happens next

it is how to fill a page with letters
in different sizes, in different orders
how to make an environment in time
how to make space for what matters most

it is a question mark after an exclamation mark
quoting and unquoting
learning by unlearning
and doing by undoing

with or without fear
the point is in a line and is making some new start
with a new letter and text
it is to fill the environment again to memorize
instead of forget
to start making words again with new letters

in different sizes, with different names, in different styles
it is not about the alphabet as already known
it is how to fill a page with letters
or how to remark space

it is about what happens when you put lines
on top of each other
or next to each other
when you make lines very small or very big
when there is another emphasis on things

it is a line ending with a question mark,
after an exclamation mark
quoting and unquoting
it is learning by unlearning
and doing by undoing

On Inverse Translation

Pilar Izquierdo

Think about the last book you read translated into English. Regardless of the language it was originally written in, it was probably translated by a British or a North American translator. Of the few books that are translated into English, the great majority are translated by English ‘native’ speakers, leaving little room for the perspectives of non-Anglo-American translators.

Traditionally, there are two directions in translation. These directions are: the translator working from a second language into a first language (L1) and conversely, the direction of the translator working from a first language into a second language (L2).

Translating into one’s native language (L1) has historically been considered the ‘normal’ direction in Translation Studies and practice. When reading translation scholarship, the majority of work directly or indirectly refers to L1 translation—usually characterised as the assumed direction in translation. As a result of this bias, for many years translation theorists have denied or openly rejected the work of the foreign translator working into their second language, arguing that ‘non-native’ speakers will never achieve full linguistic, cultural and communicative competence and will therefore produce translations which are ‘unnatural’ or not ‘fluent’ enough^①. This practice is often referred to as ‘inverse’ or ‘reverse’ translation^②. This terminology seems to support the idea that translating into one’s L2 is ‘not the direct or natural direction in translation’^③

1 Newmark, Peter. *Approaches to Translation*. Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1981, p. 180.

but an inversion of the standard. This unhelpful terminology can even be seen as pejorative and adds negative connotations for this direction in translation. In an effort to claim equal positions for both directions we use the neutral terminology of ‘L2 translation’.

More positively, in recent years there is increasing discussion on the issue of L2 translation. However, the general attitude of translation theorists and professionals towards L2 translation still seems to be negative and is characterised by a lack of regard for the practice of L2 translation. This is easily illustrated by institutions such as the Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI)⁴ and UNESCO, whose codes of practice still consider translation into one’s mother tongue as the most suitable direction in translation, stating that ‘a translator should, as far as possible, translate into his own mother tongue’⁵.

To me, these statements against L2 Translation are especially problematic in the case of English. Contemporary English illustrates the panorama of a globalised world, where boundaries between languages and cultures have become progressively unclear. Douglas Robinson, an American scholar and translator who specialises in Postcolonial studies, summarises: ‘given its hegemonic role, English is assumed as the international language after a century of British global rule and nearly a century of American indirect or neo-colonial global rule’⁶. In practice, this means that English has a special status amongst all other languages

- 2 Beeby, Allison. “Direction of Translation (directionality).” *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, edited by Mona Baker and Gabriela, Routledge, 2011, p. 64.
- 3 Zahedi, Saber. “L2 Translation at the Periphery: A Meta-Analysis of Current Views on Translation Directionality.” *Transcultural: A Journal of Translation and Cultural Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1-2, Jan. 2013, p. 43.
- 4 Institute of Translation and Interpreting. “Code of Professional Conduct.” Approved by members of the Institute of Translation at a general meeting held on 8 Sept. 2013, <http://www.jcktranslation.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ITI-Code-of-Conduct-2013.pdf>.
- 5 See: United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). “Recommendation on the Legal Protection of Translators and Translations and the Practical Means to improve the Status of Translators.” *The General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*, meeting in Nairobi (19th session) 22 November 1976, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000114038>.
- 6 Robinson, Douglas. “Power Differentials.” *Translation and Empire: Postcolonial Theories Explained*, edited by Douglas Robinson, St. Jerome, 1997, p. 33.

as it functions as a lingua franca. In fact, L2 translation into English is often performed in ‘linguistically peripheral countries’⁷ where native English speakers are not available or interested in such translations⁸. Given the historical and sociocultural implications of ‘central’ and ‘peripheral’ languages in a Postcolonial context, the work of these translators cannot and should not be denied anymore.

I would like to encourage a more positive approach to literary L2 translation in the context of the English language and challenge the antiquated yet common view that ‘native’ English speakers own the English language. This is prominently exemplified by Sir Randolph Quirk’s “traditional approach”, which differentiates between ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ varieties of English (including Indian English, Nigerian English and East African English amongst others) and only grants speakers from ‘native’ varieties of English the status of ‘native’ and the power to define what’s appropriate or correct in English⁹.

To begin with, the concepts of ‘mother tongue’ and ‘native speaker’ have been put into question in recent scholarship, based on the vagueness and subjectivity with which they are usually defined, placing an emphasis on the words ‘innateness’, ‘intuition’, ‘automatic’, ‘spontaneity’, etc. These qualities are indeed ‘very hard to determine and even harder to measure’¹⁰.

Furthermore, the term ‘native speaker’ is especially controversial in the light of the English language’s colonial and postcolonial history. As an example, most former British colonies still maintain English as one of their official languages, as a language of prestige and education. Despite that most speakers from these former colonies are fluent in English, many scholars would place them within the ‘outer circle’ of the English language, as Campbell¹¹ refers to it. In his theory, the ‘outer circle’ refers to those English speakers who would not be traditionally considered as native speakers, in opposition to the ‘inner circle’, formed primarily of British and North American English speakers.

7 Pokorn, Nike. *Challenging the Traditional Axioms*. Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2005, p. 34.

8 Jamoussi, Rafik. “Exporting cultural goods through the medium of translation in the Arab world: the (not so) strange case of L2 translation.” *The Translator*, vol. 21, no. 2, August 2015, p. 177.

9 Quirk, Charles Randolph. “Language Varieties and Standard Language.” *English Today*, vol. 21, no.1, Jan. 1990, pp. 6-7.

10 Nike. *Challenging the Traditional Axioms*, pp. 9-10.

11 Ibid., p. 29.

Similarly, the traditional Anglo-American view of translation, which is only¹² performed by a native speaker, leaves little room for the reality of millions of immigrants who have migrated from their birthplace and adopted the English language as their language of habitual use. And perhaps herein lies one part of the solution. Translation theory and practice should stop talking about languages as ‘native’ or ‘foreign’ and start referring to them as ‘language(s) of habitual use’. This terminology outlines a much more constructive way of referring to people and the languages they speak.

Even if we were to accept the notion of English ‘native speakership’, we should consider the reasons for why English ‘native speakers’ are more prepared to translate foreign literature into English. The main argument is that of fluency. The common view is that the unequal linguistic competence of L2 translators, as well as the heavy influence of their native language, renders these translators incapable of producing ‘natural’ or ‘fluent’ translations into English¹³. Setting aside issues of linguistic competence—what does fluent actually mean? And what about a ‘natural’ translation? Lawrence Venuti, perhaps the most famous theorist in translation studies, describes this as the ‘fluent domestication’ of foreign literature¹⁴. That is, translations which are shifted and adapted to perfectly fit the target language, its style and values, omitting and eliminating anything that might sound foreign to its audience. As he explains, the literary market and translation critics define a ‘fluent’ translation as ‘written in an English that is current (“modern”) instead of archaic, that is widely used instead of specialized (“jargonisation”), and that is standard instead of colloquial (“slangy”)’. A fluent translation also avoids foreign words and foreign syntax.

12 This view is held and has been spread by famous translation theorists such as Newmark, Nida, Duff, Quirk, Samuelsson-Brown, etc. It has also been supported by a great number of theorists who do not openly state it, but assume translation into one’s ‘mother tongue’ is the normal state of things and do not even consider the debate on directionality in their work (such as Venuti, Snell-Hornby or even postcolonial theorists like Bassnett). For a detailed account on the historicity of L2 translation, please see: Pokorn, Nike. *Challenging the Traditional Axioms*. Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2005.

13 Zahedi, Saber. “L2 Translation at the Periphery: A Meta-Analysis of Current Views on Translation Directionality.” *Transcultural: A Journal of Translation and Cultural Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1-2, Jan. 2013, p. 45.

14 *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

Presuming that such a thing as ‘Standard English’ exists, the question which arises here is, why should literary translation always strive for this ‘naturalness’ and ‘fluency’ of English expression?¹⁵ Literary texts are not highly technical and informative texts. Whilst literary texts are, indeed, communicative to some extent, as they try to convey meaning to the reader, they also have an expressive, aesthetic and creative value which ‘fluent’ or ‘natural’ translations do not always account for.

In a literary context, where originality and creativity of expression are not only permitted, but desired, the work of L2 translators should be recognised by translation theorists, professionals and institutions, as it can bring in new ways of expression to Anglo-American literature which divert from the ‘fluent domestication’ which Venuti describes. L2 translation can help foster the renewal and multiplicity of voices into the Anglo-American translation market, highlighting the role of the translator as a hybrid figure, navigating between two languages, two cultures and two different texts.

15 Venuti, Lawrence. “Invisibility.” *The Translator’s Invisibility*, edited by Lawrence Venuti, Routledge, 1995, p. 5.

Politics of Language

Matej Kavčič

My highschool teacher once asked me, why do I talk English as if i'm from an american movie? Why do I mimic the face and the frases, the whole way of how my body moves. And I really didn't think when I did it. The idioms came faster than their meaning. The language performed me. It came from the altar of youth in the middle of the room, the TV, which is America. He said, be more like Žižek. He just talks. No mimicry. And it worked for me, tics are productive.

Tell me now. If this is an artistic piece of writing, one should stylize, right? If I try, automatically an accent from Alabama slips in? When I was younger this was a regular incursion, even when talking Slovene. Why do I know a southern american accent better than the accents living 50 miles away, near the Adriatic sea where thyme grows and time flows more in line with my contours.

My English came out of Cartoon Network and school and from me being a son of a pilot and a stewardess. Always on the move. But then when older, one starts to think about roots. Because there is no politics without a place. And on the other hand a global empire, overcoded over so many places. And it speaks English. Japanese anarchists spoke Esperanto in the 20's and now its the 20's again. And Esperanto didn't really make it and the anarchists got killed when police came after a big earthquake when everybody was in panic. And the earth is now making even more panics. It's gonna make more. Perpetual state of crisis. Bring in the crisis managers. And hoards of southern care workers to manage the crisis of stress on the manager's old age. And then our a bit too militant comrade Corona points to the nude old emperor and all shit breaks loose.

But it wasn't always English. As I gather, in Europe, after protestantism, Latin started losing its primacy to national languages and slowly giving way to French—it becoming the language of culture and diplomacy, in the XX century being replaced by English. The Treaty of Versailles and the ensuing League of Nations was a huge event also in our little context of language and politics. Grumpy old men talking about the future of talking. The history of French, the present of English and the future of Esperanto. Alas, no Spanish or its colonies. Well, what does one expect from an imperialist bloc.

For jokes, let's say that English is the bourgeoisie. They own the means of production, which is technology. Meant twice. Technology directly embedded in the English language, firstly through the primordial wizardry of Shakespearean newspeak, the crafting of logos of the people. Secondly, mostly machines speak English to me. Radio, computer, music, series, film, and the vast blooming fields of the written internet. And on a twisted additional third point—English itself is the means of production. It produces the knowledge society. The business dictionaries, the life coach materials, the self-help infinities. Repeat the mantra: vision, mission, values. The schematics of obedience and anti-politics. Who then is the blablarian? *Socialisme o barbarie?* Is civilization the game we play? Rome played that game. Roads of grammar where orders of dominion could be sent.

I still don't know if I like nations or not, but surely for a two million Slovenian nation, it makes sense to learn the language of the empire. To learn its jokes, its morality. A form of adaptation. A collaboration with the occupying forces. A path out of the village that doesn't lead to Vienna or Belgrade. We can spin the world wide web together now. I can travel and understand. However, every bargain brings a loss. As with the integration into Euroatlantic hegemonic structures. The language of the proletariat turns art into design and peasants into rural entrepreneurs. And my vampire passport drinks blood from the trenches of Fortress Europe.

And I've been painstakingly quiet about the Brits the whole time. Ex-Yugoslavian places don't care too much about the Brits, I'd say, although they did play their games around here during WWII and I do know my Monty Python's. British imperialist Commonwealth was one of the main reasons why English got its global position, but here that wasn't directly felt that much. English came here with the star Spangled Banner. English is no longer the Victorian or stiff upper lip stuff. It is commercials, pop music and Netflix. But America or England, it's the same. Hey master,

we know your language. Now we can understand your logic of dominion. English goes well with numbers, cybernetics, the anglosaxon philosophy, liberalism, the thought of a few scottish traders becoming the universal. Now we can plead for mercy and crumbs from the table. Or corrupt the language and turn it against you. Like a virus in your code. And as every empire colonizes firstly its local people, we can connect with the first downtrodden, be it the river people around London's canals, or folk from Ireland and India. Give to each other stories from the margins, where even the breadcrumbs become dust and the domination takes on a purer form.

And in this we have much to learn, as Slovenia is now not even a periphery, it's a province, on the edge of the center, the suburban cul-de-sac. Historically it's between the Balkans and the west, the Balkans being between the East and the West, all of course in a eurocentric mindset. The Balkans are viewed as the internal Other. The *not yet Europe* feeling viewed externally, but also internalized. Especially in Slovenia, because we're really almost there! If we could just forget the past and join the victorious, waiting at the end of history. Well... our a bit too militant comrade Corona ended the end of history (well... the economic crisis of 2021 did). Now we gotta start learning Mandarin.

But when we'll learn Mandarin, we won't solve anything. We'll be back where we're with English right now. So let's talk about pidgin. It's what develops when we try to talk to each other, even though we have no language in common. Bussines is where pidgin got its name. The bussines of british colonialism in China. Pidgin comes out of direct neccesity, organically. Esperanto on the other hand came out of aspirations, egalitarian ones for sure. But still an eurocentric endeavor, now trying to be overcome by a myriad of other constructed international languages. Some truly trying to have a planetary, universal character, still all coming out stillborn. 'Tis hard to give life, orderly, consciously. To be the one who says which word was at the *beginning there was the word*. Maybe a better approach would be: pidgins of the world unite! The answer lying in the middle.

So how to help to get more pidgins flying? Maybe instead of the direct aspiration for universality of Esperanto, I hear that in phonetics the trend is now for the federalization of languages. This would ideally and slowly lead to many new regional languages, then connecting into a global language, where no native speaker would have the upper hand. In this context,

Esperanto would be closer to a European confederal language. Instead of a new Latin, Mandarin or Arabic, the answer is in connecting the languages that are spoken in places that are near to each other. This would happen organically if the grammar nazis would take a breath and start talking to people instead of obsessively cleaning their patriotic room. But in physical proximity of languages there is normally an asymmetry of power, which also needs to be taken into account. Because if not, it's like saying that the worker and the boss should just go and play with each other and everything will be ok.

I don't know if they deal with relations of power, but an example of such a confederalization are zonal constructed languages, like InterSlavic or Folkspraak. It's like a little constructed push towards the organic. Like permaculture. They take what is there and bring it together. Start small. No need for another global imposition or the other extreme, the museumisation of the living. And they go together well. In general, one does diversity and fights accumulation of power with slowness—a virtue against the quadrantal sprint of representative politics and its shadow master, the swiftness of virtual finance.

And here we come to the question of power and speech. Finance doesn't speak and violence is silent. Statistics and numbers and code and logistics are the global hegemon. And the machines that run them and the translingual corporations that build them. The corporations can change their locations of operation and the languages that are spoken there, faster than I can immerse in a new language. We can't even move through the border regimes as fast as they can influence them through changing migrant labour dynamics.

So the question is of multiversality, a universality of difference. Of respect. How to join the intergalactic call of the Zapatistas or the wayward path towards (linguistic) global democratic confederalism springing from the liberated zones of Rojava. What is the role of English or numbers in such a call? Is it like the postal network of Tsarist Russia which Lenin wanted to keep after the revolution or is it like the corporatic communication lines of Facebook when we'll socialize it? We work with what we have. For now. English in itself is irrelevant. The point is what we say. And with numbers, you can't say much. But let's keep the numbers out of it, otherwise it'll just keep expanding on my latent primitivism. Ciao.

In the twist, the serpent

Daniella Valz-Gen

I

In the mouth the tongue splits into two. It learns new shapes as it labours for the right twist. No spontaneous grace. No granted clarity. One moment, aligned and bright in its delivery, the next, pained spikes of longing for an effortless motion.

Lips strain in the painful attempt to master mechanic movements. Shut and pursed for a guise of composure. The mouth, a cavity, a cave where half-saids perish—or ferment, longing to touch familiar speech without a sense of loss—or of deceit.

What would it be like to sharply hit the target, to nail the thought? What comes after fermentation? Is it only the staleness of sulphur? Or transformation? And can one have the one without the other?

Of course not.

The wriggling tired tongue finds stillness through closed eyes. In a body, after all, speech resets by licking teeth and tapping into the pulsation of blood, a muscle syncing into flow in a desire to pair effort and eloquence.

II

The clumsy tongue
The split tongue
The cunning tongue
The anarchic tongue
The transcending tongue
The wise tongue makes do

has a childish language
dissociates from the body
fakes it
subverts and invents
rests in silence
(tired)

III

To wear a mask or to morph?

And if morphing, what is the template for the shape?

What is logic in grammar and who's logic
are we speaking (of)?

The strained tongue writhes towards a sense, but there
is none. Resignation is a subtle tone, a colour, the nuance
of an accent that learns to trade and make peace in the
slow turning of ground in the knowledge that what's lost
can't be gained.

Digging, not flowing.

IV

In the mouth:

not a river but a ditch

to dig not to flow

(never a stream of consciousness but a puddle

a muddled pool

and a trickle

no stream of consciousness in a slow erratic cadence)

Never not doubting, not exploring other options, not searching
not turning things around

Never not nibbling on the tail of the tongue that eats itself
to yield another self

Never not always yes not never assured

Never not twisted at the crossroads

BROKEN ENGLISH POEMS:

SONG TO
LIV ULLMANN

Francisco Tomsich

Shall Thou My Majesty, shall Thou declare,
where it lays thy Monument?
I wandered the whole world on Google Maps
and I haven't found it yet.
Is it true what they say Thou saidst
that night to a certain Nobel laureate?
Shall Thou speak us a story before going to bed,
about love and misfortune, about lonely train stations
Shall Thou go on until we are all dead?
Thou The Wholy Whore Thou givest
us endless images, enough to make them all
pointless. Listen, painters of ancient ages:
You have missed the point,
at least many times.

Prelude:
The Language of the
Space We Shared

Andrea Knezović

The first time we encountered Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*^①, our only shared measurements for good classical literary value were Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*—which dreaded a life out of us—psychedelic and rather sexy-minded Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, and—inevitable for our lost generation of fast-forward culture—J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter*.

Before this we were ignorant.

Before this, we could not even imagine such a splendid piece of literature would manifest itself in front of our intellectual doorstep.

Before this we were fourteen.

At the time we were not even able to conceptualize how this particular book would initiate an orgasmic eruption of spatio-imaginary constellations that would later on become something like a behavioral method or a religious protocol by which we would depict and journey into ourselves and the language of ideas.

The language of space is often the language of gestures, shapes, forms, the language of assumptions and the deductive reasoning of the mind that requires an elaborative understanding of what the randomized circumstances *du jour* present.

The languages of space are those we want to share or at least have to share. The non-place^② on the other hand erases the senses of objectivity and linear trajectories of the rational. Nevertheless, the space of wonder it is.

1 Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities*, translator William Weaver, Orlando, FL [etc.], Harcourt Brace, (2006) 1974.

2 Augé, Marc. *Non-places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*. London, Verso, 2008.

It is a space of transit and exchange,
liminal encounters of ideas and contexts.

Space where language and thoughts sit on the throne
and command constructs like pawns that serve the stories
and realities we play in.

Throughout the years we have invested in sophisticated
fabulations³ of our own intimate narratives.

We have used the language-space as a tool for change,
as creative performance, as a weapon, as a lover,
as a labor of the truth, as a mimic, as an epistemology,
as sexual seduction, as a perversion, as pain, as ambition,
as a space that houses hope and fear both entwined
in salty tastes of the future and sweetfully regretful past.

The language of us. The third language.
The only one that at the same time creates and erases
the roots of who we are.

We are aware that this language is not our own.
Rather it was a child created between desire and the
world of the future.

Now, this is all we know, or at least this is all we leave.

Once in a while, we leave that space, that language,
and we get reminded that the dichotomy between the self
and the other is merely a false sentiment of disattachment,
rather than a true opposition of its nature.

Calvino knew that the meditation of culture,
language and its semiotics can only be shown if the third
space has been created. A space of imaginative narrative
where borders and boundaries stretch, reinvent and melt
into urgencies of the conversationalists.

We created that space with her.

It was plenty of her, it was plenty of us.

Each time we would meet in our conversations
we would create a new space.

Each time we spoke the third language.

We have housed the sins of bonding desires
in those spaces.

We have inexhaustibly created new words,
thoughts, gestures, and love, just to stay in.

She learned that we have many shapes,
many ways we carry our skin.

3 In literary criticism, the term fabulation was popularized by Robert Scholes, in his work *The Fabulators*, to describe the large and growing class of mostly 20th century novels that are in a style similar to magical realism, and do not fit into the traditional categories of realism or romance. Scholes, Robert. *The Fabulators*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1967.

We were telling stories.
We created the place and we closed the doors.
It was the language, its shape that nursed us into love
and life. It was that same thing that dissolved us into dust.
We shared the space we called language.
We shared a language that we called space.
This is a story of us, our language, and her space.
She had many names.
Some of them suited her.
Some of them we have stolen.

The Place Where She Marries Herself

The immediate thing that she did every morning was making love to herself. She made love every morning, steadily and gently pushing pleasure into herself as if it was a surgical procedure requiring maximized attention and high precision. She loved the way pleasure and comfort felt on the eyes and the tip of her tongue. She enjoyed tasting different samples of sounds of joy. One of her favorites was the sound of familiarity. She was a creature of habits, and the habits loved her. She curated pleasure like a cycle of artistic initiatives bound to be written in the historical annals. We loved watching her pleasure herself. It reminded us of things we always wished we had. Her pleasure was our gift, and we celebrated things rarely in ourselves.

Every afternoon she would go out and marry herself. She would invite us to watch the divine act of self-love. We have never seen anything like it before. She would perform the ceremony of ancients, the ritual of self-preservation.

In the evenings she would light up the small light and tell herself stories of the others. She would ensure herself that the stories of the beyond are the stories of the potentialities. We loved listening.

Each day she inserted the pleasure in herself. This was her language.

One day she invited us for tea. She offered to share her language. We hadn't been familiar with such dialects before. She promised she would teach us. She promised she would make space. She made space for us.

We knew that we could never reproduce the same way she pleased herself.

We knew that the gesture of our pleasurable comfort hid traces of brutality and aggression.

We were ashamed of such an unholy presence. In fact, we even disinvited the notion from the banquets of her pleasure. It was a sacred language that she

shared with us.

One day while she was doing her daily routine we noticed she had a murmur in her breathing.

We asked what had happened to the gliding sounds of passionate pleasure.

We asked if she was in pain,
she said it comes and goes in waves.

We ask how shall we call it in our language.

She answered: 'Memory'.

Cutting Edges, Bendable to the Irony Around Her

We have constantly insisted throughout our lives how the educated thought can sharpen even the bluntest of knives. Although the question was not always what is being sharpened, rather how and for whom? We dwelled on our own sharpness and what kind of knife we became. Maybe we became a meat chef's knife—cutting through all and for everyone, or maybe we became a filleting knife—peeling skin and soft tissue with ease. Or a boning knife—breaking bones since the 1990s, maybe a bread knife—specializing only in one performance, maybe a small ceramic knife—quick, pointy and resourceful, or perhaps we just decided to be a butter knife—no ambitions required, just loyalty to one goal.

It is hard to say what we became with all our traumas, but what we can say is that language always cuts the sharpest.

She has always been a mixture of ceramic, butter and filleting knives. We guess it was embedded in her DNA—to scholarly investigate and peel away layers of thoughts, emotions, contexts, and relationships. Her discipline for obsessions was remarkable. We were addicted to it like a child is addicted to sugar. She would sometimes find a project and work with it like she was preparing a seasonal mixed salad, playing with it as if it is not the main resource of energy for the day. It fascinated us how her approach to life was fundamentally free from the hardships of cutting existentialism.

Nevertheless, don't fool yourselves. In need, she could be quick as sound and pricing as a needle. She was an embodiment of educated snobbism, warmhearted mind, and cultured elegance. She was beautiful to us. We always enjoyed the graceful rivalry.

Irony was our thing. We walked on the space-edge between sarcasm and irony, hoping not to fall or become either of the two.

Just walking the path of bastards.

She cut all of those edges. She cut the edges in us and made us soft as a flannel blanket.

We liked flannel, even though we hated to admit that.

The softness still had occasional splinters here and there, sometimes it would occur almost as a factory error, stuck inside the flannel's inner sides like a leftover of the production residue.

She said she loved it all. We trusted her.

The language that was used in such transactions resembled modern fusion-dish trying really hard to pass off as kosher.

The ontological prospects of our relationship were based on the mirroring procedures of our own disjointed conditions, mostly involving primordial shadows lurking in the traumas of our ancestral gestures and traditions.

She was a strange creature, a cross-breed between a tasty animal and a sexy plant. A species so rare that only those who knew how to cut through assumptions could encounter such wonder.

We did not cut through assumptions, we cut through the bullshit.

The Ambition Tower of Anxious Royal

Once upon a contemporaneity, there was a place called the tower of ambitions. In it, lived a pale, graceful, royalesk dark-haired woman enchanted with unfulfilled desires, witty imagination and an exceptional taste for ingeniously broken and awkwardly framed things.

The tower where she stayed was overflowing with memorabilia. Memorabilia of things that have passed, things that are, and things that have yet to pass. It was a living mausoleum of the notions that did not belong. She was the grandmaster, the coordinator, and the gatekeeper of all the unfulfilled expectations. And she was magnificent and glorious in it. It was her kingdom, her game and she was a queen of spades.

Her parents came from the long line of royalties from the place seas beyond, where the sun only shines for gods and the spirits walk amongst the living.

She has lived in this tower as long as she can remember, although the memory was not just her own, it belongs to all the things inhabiting the tower. In fact, you could not distinguish between her age and the way she was aging, only by the smell of seasons you could notice how her mood would change and with it the color of her eyes.

She ate ambitions for lunch, dreams for dinner, and breakfast—well breakfast was not her thing.

One day, just before she was about to go through with seasonal rites in which she would shed her hair and give it as an offering to the lost children of Tiberias—she was presented with a gift. A token rear and unpredictable in its nature. It reeked on faith and dirty lust valid under the silky excitement of the unknown.

She asked the ancestral spirits how to receive it.

The spirits did not answer. She could feel her gutter splitting by the sharp heat and muscles twitching from the fear itself. She felt the air thickening, creeping in her teeth and skin and before she even managed to understand the uncanny feeling she had been marked by the offering.

She had been selected to carry the mark.

The mark that will stay and lurk inside of her corners for the rest of the days.

She gazed at the mirror and gasped.

‘Shit’ she thought.

Suddenly that ageless witty woman with the taste for peculiar things became a woman of definite numbers, cold sweat, smelly armpits, heavy breathing and precarious dreams.

The demons that hunted her became her.

The perverse brutality of simplicity. Faith.

She tried to speak but her tongue had changed as if her language suddenly combusted and her thoughts became foreign.

She knew that the wind changed its dance.

And her only way to survive was to adapt.

She looks at all the objects and memorabilia surrounding her. She could taste the loss of the present on the tip of her tongue. She already missed all the things, as if somehow all the matter in the tower started to fade. As if the memory of all the things was not any more permanent.

It was indeed a sad image to see. A gloriously, comfortable creature crumbling by the presents of life.

Although, the gift was not life. But the residue of life.

The slime of the collective trauma, ambitions, expectations and hopes mashed into what common folk call anxiety.

She has now become the official residence of the anxiety-lane, a street with no end.

She looked at her palms, placed them close to her face and started breathing in them. She hoped that by doing so she would summon the lost child in her.

The chosen child.

No one answered.

She breathed again.

Just the warmth of her breath lingering on her skin.

She tried again but this time with more desperation.

Nothing.

She looked at the sky and knew that time had moved forward again.

Only Words, As Space.

Filling. Ascending. Warm. Comforting. Voluptuous.
Radiant. Relational. Carnal. Dichotomous. Bewitching.
Primordial. Huddling. Accessible. Vulnerable. Loving.
Delicate. Hidden. Intense. Diligent. Loading. Secretive.
Safe. Proverbial. Cautious. Depressing. Vain. Marvelous.
Intoxicating. Sodomus. Ingenious. Cowardly. Caring. Guilty.
Anxious. Ambitious. Lonely. Misplaced. Hurtful. Suspicious.
Unforgiving. Touchy. Forgiving. Irrational. Emphatic.
Sensitive. Repressed. Unique. Privileged. Naughty. Hot.
Interrelational. Representative. Insecure. Dramatic. Giving.
Selfless. Pure. Nostalgic. Spacious. Clean. Soft. Emphatic.
Escapist. Lost. Dreamy. Shiny. Humble. Respectful.
Boundless. Free. Changed. Contemplative. Intelligent.
Amusing. Attractive. Fascinating. Distant.

Jaffa.^④

יָפִי

- 4 Yafo—the mistress of history. The only way you could tell the story of Yafo is if you would consciously decide to leave all the logic and deductive reasoning behind and surrender to the uncanny feeling of the unknown. Yafo was the force of nature. She did not obey, nor bow, she demanded and created. We on the other hand were an observer, mundane bypassers in her story—and trust me the story was her to tell. Yafo was not just a place on the shore of lost memories, she was a mythical creature petrified in the stones of the man-made city. She was the breath of the land and the daughter of the sea.

The beauty of Andromeda.

She seduced Noah and courageously dared Solomon, yet she stayed true to herself, and the lives inside of her. The only way she would imprint her stories into the minds of the living is by whispering through the stone-cold walls.

She whispered to children of the foreign lands. Daughters of merchants and sons of pirates.

Children listened to her stories. The doubt was far from the imagination.

She loved them dearly. They dreamt of her when the moon was a fool.

She protected them from Lilith.

We still dream of her. Even though her body is far away from our spirit.

Yafo was the lost story. She was the protector of the memory.

Poseidon, Noha, David and Slomon, they needed her. More than she needed them.

She was their dream.

And the dream she stayed for all of us.

The memory.

And the future.

Yafo.

The Mother of All of Us, the Womb of Comfort

‘If she could, she would.’

We always thought she could take all the world in. It was not a matter of intention, just mere physicality and precision.

She was the mother of all of us. And we loved it.

She carried us all to the land of holy.

She offered us atonement.

Yom Kippur love.

We gazed at her with longing desires.

We loved how she selflessly nurtured us.

Still...

We cursed her.

The irresistible urge to fuck it up.

To test love.

‘If she could, she would’ we said. And she should.

The anger was as sharp as Negev dust.

It did not take long to lose comfort.

We lost the place in her.

She lost track of us.

She lost one of her dearest.

She lost one of her children on the way back to herself.

We were pushed out by the Freudian notions screaming inside our bones, shouting to leave this place called motherhood.

She was the mother of all of us. But not to us.

We fucked our mother. We liked it.

Did she?

She still loved us.

She just avoided the way we projected the memories.

She was generous in her silence.

We stood still.
We knew we lost the place we called home.
She loved us tenaciously.
We dared greatly.
'If she could, she would.'
And she did.

The Wishful Thinker, the Lover of Our Dreamspace

One of the most intriguing TV series that has marked our childhood in the '90s was dazzling science fiction franchises—Star Trek. It marked our childhood in a way that it seemed to represent the best and most imaginative of America at the time—although we would always wrestle with the idea that American culture and motion pictures could outdo glorious cinematic masterminds such as Parajanov, Tarkovsky, Tarr, Almodóvar, Fassbinder, etc.

All the ideas, dreams and possibilities compressed into science-fiction morals. Star Trek was the ultimate future of humanity, where humans have transcended their greed for power and moved onward with the humble exploration of the universe and its wonders—at least that is what we thought when we were nine.

It was exotic, fascinating and it had what our old-mother-of-our-mother would call decent actors with nice cheekbones. It represented glossy ideas and hopes of some better timeline; especially when you come from a post-socialist war-ruin, nevertheless gloriously spirited former Yugoslavia, ready for the taste of Snickers, Coca-Cola, and freshly concocted neoliberal ideology⁵.

We loved it all! It was truly a futuristic dream. Every afternoon around 15.15 pm we would sit in a small square, stuffy space we called the living room, a meter and a half from the TV, with a cheese and tuna-paté sandwich and occasional pickles, and stared at the wonders of the dreamy fictional narratives. It was all possible for us then. From the famous captain J.T. Kirk and Commander Spock of the Star Trek-*The Original Series*, to *Deep Space Nine*, a charming but tricky Ferengi named Quark, to glorious and sexy captain Kathryn Janeway from the *Voyager*, to one and only Jean Luc Picard from *The Next Generation*. They were all our heroes. And we promised to religiously

5 See: Drakulić, Slavenka. *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed*. New York, HarperCollins Publishers Inc, 2016. See also: Drakulić, Slavenka. *Café Europa: Life After Communism*. London: Abacus, 1997.

worship and integrate their qualities into our behavioral system.

One day after many many years, and far too many traumas, she came into our life.

She walked in and demanded magic.

We gave her Star Trek. And chess.

Although, she would never really admit that she learned it from us, even after trying and failing numerous times to beat us in 4 moves.

On July 15, 2018, she beat us for the first time.

We knew what was good. And she knew that we knew.

We knew that knowing well is moving forward.

She knew we knew.

Star Trek was one of those things. We knew that it was what we needed to know. And we knew. Together. Again.

It was our secret dreamspace where we could make love to the geeky fantasies of the better, freer future.

Future that has not been tainted with aces of growing up, morals of adulthood and expectations of existentialism.

We were free here, in the dreamspace⁶.

And the dreamspace owned us.

When Italo Calvino delivered *Invisible Cities* as a fabulation and a collection of prose poems flirting with ideas of universal beauty, spatial dichotomies and plurality of identity, he proposed not just a new style of writing, rather he insinuated that one must always be in check with how he/she/they perceived what is in front of them.

Whether it is tangible or imaginable, one must always find a way to one's own truth. Otherwise, they risk being stuck in someone else's truth or dreamstate.

And the worst you can do to your own existence is to get stuck in someone else's dream-space language. Not only because it erases your dreams and desires but rather it rewrites the unique character and dialectics that you—we—us constructed throughout the continuum.

It annihilates constellations and identities that have been built, attached and nurtured around us.

It takes away the shadow.

6 "One of the essential characteristics of the dream of multiplicity is that each element ceaselessly varies and alters its distance in relation to the others". Here I play with the idea and the philosophical conceptualisation—*Rhizome* coined by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their work *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972–1980). Deleuze calls it "image of thought", similar to the botanical rhizome, that apprehends multiplicities. For further research see: Deleuze, Gilles, Félix Guattari, and Brian Massumi. *A Thousand Plateaus*. London, Bloomsbury, 2013, p. 34.

We got stuck.
She made love to the ghost.
The language we shared was the language
of the dreamspace. The language of wishful thinkers eager
to create. We loved as we played, courageously.
Although courage had nothing to do with it.
There are many ways one can tell a story. There are
many stories one can tell in a way. There are many lies one
wishes to decorate and a few truths we like to hide.
The language is the knife that cuts, and the thoughts,
those that generously waste the time.
We play with language rapturously.
We candor our ambitions with the crispy dare of hope.
The language, the truth of the now.
Here you are with us at last, wishful thinker.
At the origins of your own story.
The orgasms, the knives, the Star Trek, the spaces,
the language, the words, the Walls of Jericho and the
Yom Kippur love, all of it locked in thoughts of the past.
There is only one language left.
The present.
Prelude.

Queenie Queenie and the fall of Colonial Empire

Lillian Allen

A whole year de people dem spend a fix-up and a prepare fah her Royal Imperial Majestic, Queen of England to visit the town of St Jago de La Vega, the second largest city on the island of Jamaica. In this little town de people dem wuk hard an' make de La Vega a pleasurable place fi dem an' dem family and near-family, cause anybody de bout is family.

Not nuff industry of employ except the textile mill, miles up Ariguanabo near Bog Walk. An' there was Caymanas sugar estate factory on the road to old Port Henderson wid marble statue of Admiral Lord Nelson standing in fa de Queen and conquest. Yu olda did lucky if one of yu distant relative or even third cousin removed did get a job dey. An' yes, the coveted Alcan job uppa Lindstead. If you or fambily member get that job, yu done dead and find yu self a heaven. Dat there was red golden. But it sad how dem dig up the ground, whole side a mountain, mash it down, strip up Massa God earth, then mush it up with caustic soda, and move wey de humble venda and hard working small farmer fambily dem. Dem tek wey dem want and sen big fat tanker ship loads to Canada and America to refine (an' doan get mi started on that like we only good enough fi soso dirt and not refinement!). Dem leave the mountain valley of caustic soda sludge, a constipated red river bringing sadness and ill-health. Otherwise is so soh penny hustling, hand to mouth work at Record Office, or fi the more tapanaris dem with connection, wuk at Parish Council. Prisons, yes; warder work, police, hospital, school teechea, learn trade, rum shop, dry good store haberdashery, small grocers, or wuk at the market or cemetery; Number Five Bawling Ground. Days wuk, domestic, any little ting.

Hand mi down, recycle, pull an stretch, one-one coco. Every mikkle mek a mukkule and every mukkule mek a mite. Day in day out. One-one coco full basket.

In the town, little Delveena, nine years and swish young was a pickney wid a tough constitution, strong like a harse, full of she-self wid a mind of her own. She an' her friend dem couldn't understand wey all the fus was about this visit and why when there are so many gazillion people in the world, heroes and sheroes who do so much for human kind, so many who do kind things for dem neighbours and others, so many nice nice grandmothers and aunties, that dis one ooman, the queen, was getting so much attention.

All the likkle pickney dem inna the town of St Jago de la Vega was well versed pon the Queen, her Empire and her riches. De pickney dem was made to practice day in day out on how to behave in front of Royalty. These pickney dem was no flenky flenky pickney. Dem was haughty and used to run up and down inna hot hot sunshine plenty. But none of dem ever was stretch to the limits like them was the day the day the Queen of England came to visit Jamaica. Imagine all the pickney dem inna the broiling tropical sun all day ah wait fi get a glimpse of the Queen of England as if she couda did save dem soul.

Sun set an' sun rise, people wuk an' pot bwoil. Dem no wait, dem no hurry, time run come in front of dem to bring this day. Blaaps! The poor likkle pickney dem was scrubbed down, cleaned behind the ears and under dem arm and scrubbed double in hidden creases. All dem poverty and lack of opportunity fi a bright future covered up under the sheen of polished shoes, powdered faces and impeccably starched and ironed uniforms. Crisp an' not a crease.

De pickney dem was herded like cattle and put pon show fi assure the Queen that she loyal subjects will forever be reproducing likkle loyal subjects, is he doan object that is.

Dis ya visit was the biggest sinting de town ever see. The biggest sinting the whole island ever see for that matter. Joe Blowwow who sell scraps meat reduce im price. Miss Dina sweep up her yard and tie bow pon the guinep tree. Miss Meeme spend two days straight without a drop a sleep and mek greata-cake like it was a did go out a style. Even at the Chinaman shop dem spruce up the place and a give wey free sweetie to the school children dem. Everybody dress-up dem house or one room like is Easter and Christmas in one. The nice-nice tablecloth, chenille spread and bleach clean curtain wey only see the light of day fi very special occasions, proudly displayed to welcome the Queen. De way everybody dah gwan, yu ouda did think sey a Christ a cum again.

Buzz, buzz, buzzing. De word was buzzing; Britannia. “Britannia Britannia rules the waves and Britons never never never will be a slave!” This sentiment was drilled into every likkle pickney and into every woman and man in the country fa a whole year. Rule Britannia! Well, well, Mother Thelma did sey dem a trow dem wud pon Black people, cause if dem invent slavery and dem will never, never, never... not one or two but three “never” be a slave, then a who fi be the slave?

For the entire year in the town of de la Vega, the word Britannia ruled supreme and was a rallying call. Britannia was represented by her stately self the Queen, England, the Empire, and the universe.

Hurried, harried, hassled, and whipped into shape. That’s how it ouda did look to you if you did see how dem pack dat town square overflowing with school pickney, all in line and formation more orderly than the eleventh battalion of the Queen’s very army. All this by 8 am sharp that morning. All to dutiful await the visitation of her Imperial Majesty Queen Elizabeth the second of England.

Bacchanalia throughout the town that day. Military bands, police, and boys scout groups march up and down through the streets. Hundreds of little British flags waved everywhere. Big flags were on every flagpole in schools, prisons, churches, and public places. And choruses of ‘Rule Britannia’ could be heard every whey yu turn.

It was said that from dem hear the word ‘go’ over a year ago, the ole soljah man dem deck out dem-self inna full soljah uniforms wid dem ribbons, dem buttons, dem swashes and dem medals, and dem practice march up and down and around the town five nights a week. Dem talk story and tell bout soljah life and wartime happenings. Dem was like survivors of Battleship Galaxia Star War attack and now awaiting accolades from the Devine leader of the universe, though nuff nuff ah dem never even been to UpPark Camp or see no war business, ongle the uniform.

People rush to finish tidy up dem house before the sun come up. Dem bring out the cup an’ saucers dem nevah touch fi years, just in case. Nuff a de church people dem recall scriptures an de Easter song about Zaccchaeus that goes, “Now Zacchaeus was a very little man and a very little man was he. He climbed up into the sycamore tree for the Saviour he wanted to see (repeat chorus) for the Savior he wanted to see. And as the Saviour passes by he looked up in the tree, and said; “Now Zacchaeus, you come down, I’m coming to your house for tea, I’m coming to your house for tea.” Oh lordie, lord!

The route da the Queen was to take was all fixed-up, bruk-down fence, mash-up wall, and some yard wey never cleanup ebber. Everybody was given freebie government

paint and materials to do repairs and all the neighbours worked together with even the government man dem giving a hand to do a splendid facelift job. The way the place look refreshing it mek some people remark; "...mek dem government man couldn't help we out just fi wi-self sometimes. De ongle time dem do something fi wi is when dem waan wi vote or dem waan show aff to foreigner!"

Don't get it wrong now. Is not everybody did feel subjected to the Queen. Nuff people gather round and backstab she. Dem wonder out loud why if she is the richest woman in the world and control so much wealth and riches? Why she sending only so-so sympathy to the poor in her Christmas message, when all she hav to do is to get up offa some of that cash?

A group of Rasta man led by Bongo George and Count Roots draft up a letter wey sey 'the reason the Queen have up so much money is because she teif up the treasures of Africa and nuff other countries, and tief up peoples land wey dem own and live pon continuously long before she or anybody she know or related to was ever born... And dem demand that she giv the monies, treasures and lands back. But when dem tek the letter to the authorities to ask it to be delivered to the Queen, dem arrest every single one of dem wid signature pon the letter and threaten Bongo George and Count Roots with the Cat o' Nine. And dem never let the rasta man-dem outta jail till the Queen was 'safely out of the Caribbean'. And when dem finally let dem out, dem dreadlocks cut off clean-clean, and the Officials give dem each a likkle paper bag wid dem personal souvenir of the Queen's visit. Each bag haveen some tough red an' white sweetie, Union Jack stickers, and pictures of the Queen and the Royal Family.

Thousands lined the street with the motorcade on its way. The pickney dem wait patiently from way before eight o'clock in Massa God mawning. Dem bear up like highly trained troopers. Dem couldn't even talk or go pee pee. As soon as yu hear a likkle susu, a big mouth teacher wouda did yell out; "Be quiet, please! Respect for the Queen!" The pickney dem just strups up dem teeth and stan up dey wid de patience of Job. For hours dem packed together inna the blazing sun, though not as tight as bodies pon a human cargo ship. When 12 'o' clock come, it was like the sun was full of vengeance. If it couda did talk a pure blirdeets it oulda did sey, the hot sun that is. Instead, the sun blazed down mercilessly pon the pickney dem. In the meantime, the teacher dem oulda spell dem one anada off and go rest off inna the shade, wey dem sip likkle Kool-Aid sweetened wid brown sugar. Officials of pure sosoh big time, full belly

man dem sit reverentially pon the platform that was build specially for the occasion by the undertaker carpenter son Walley. De man dem siddown stiff and compliant, well pleased with the world. Only intermittently dem oulda fan flies and whisper kindly to each other like dem feeling a magic.

Bam bla daps bam! At eleven-thirty, the sun claimed its first victim. The nine -year- old Delveena just couldn't tek it no more. She was the first to hit the pavement. An' then a wave of fainting spell see dozens of shiny Black children been taken into the shade and fanned, smelling sauced and bay-rummed.

The blazing sun was the only sinting that showed no sign of tiring. Everybody look wilted. Even the flag stap flutter pon the flagpole looking thirsty fi wata. By twelve-forty-five even the die-hard loyalist was starting to becoming irritated, albeit with a slight stoicism. But they were not nearly as irritated as irate parents proudly watching from the other side of the town's square who declared that; 'the Queen didn't care a hoot bout dem pickney dem wey a bun up inna the boiling heat' because, as soft-spoken Dina reasoned out loud, "...if it was fi she pickney, Prince this and Princess that, she oulda did have servants a fan them an' hold umbrella over them head!"

At 1:30 pm a small breeze fluttered through the crowd. Tensions eased, and before you could sey; 'Jack Mandora mi nuh choose none', a woo of excitement went up to welcome the queen. It was like magic. A beautiful angelic wave-like chorus of woo's floated up over the gathering of ten thousand dutifully gathered subjects. And then there was silence... and confusion. What was supposed to be the Queen appeared in a white convertible without crown, throne, horses or foots-men. A person who appeared to be the Queen waved tiredly with one hand. Slowly. Children turned and searched the eyes of each other, in confusion to see and asking 'where is the Queen?' There were no clues to signify that this tired looking white lady with a waving hand was the Queen. The pickney dem strain dem neck while the Queen was in full view, still looking, still asking; "Where is the Queen? Where is the Queen?" People start to strups up dem teeth, vex soh till. After all dem preparations and excitement the Queen didn't even have the courtesy to show up in her Crown. Bad enough she didn't bring any of the postcard looking guards in front of Buckingham Palace, and not even one of Princess Anne's dress up horse.

The boiling sun eased its persistence... and King's House, the court house building, Parish Council and Record Office with the Rodney statue part, threw a gentle shadow like a sign that the universe and Jah know that de pickney

dem couldn't tek the heat nuhmore. The convertible carrying the queen and her motorcade came to a stop right in front of the platform full of politicians, government officials, dignitaries and rich people. All the man dem pon the platform get up in unison and give the Queen a serious salute. The mayor with a necklace straight outta compton presented the Queen with a key to the town. Strups strups, an' stru-ups up was heard all around. De people say dem was going home that night to change the lock pon them door.

In the shade by the side of the platform away from hoards of uniformed tired school children, Likkele Delveena was recovering from her faint. She looked up and saw an ordinary looking white person. She asked to make sure, A dat the Queen? A she dat? A de Queen dat? The teacher beside Delveena shussh her down to indicate for her to be quiet and then replied with tremendous excitement, "Yes that is she. That is wi Queen!"

Delveena eased herself up from where the teacher had put her to rest. She looked around from left to right, at all the other pickney dem and all the other nuff nuff people who dress up demselves pretty like pus, she looked at the tapanaris people dem pon the platform and hedged, then darted to the convertible that carried the Queen. She stood beside the convertible, the Queen still waving to the crowd. The Likkle Delveena put her hands pon kimbo, push out her chest and shouted; "Look mi prettier than de Queen!" A loud cheer went up in the Town's square. The teacher strode embarrassingly and grab the little Delveena, and hauled her to the back of the platform where another teacher held her to the ground. The queen didn't even blink. She just kept waving her arm in slow motion as she looked straight into the crowd. She seemed disinterested and fatigued, growing tireder by the second. Her waving arm moving even slower through the thickness of the tropical heat. Within moments her motorcade drove on. The Queen had come and gone, just like that.

In the meantime, Delveena escaped the teacher who was holding her to the ground. She ran out into the crowd. The crowd went wild with cheering her. They lifted her up in the air. The other school children jumped around and clapped and tussled jokingly with each other forgetting their dozens of rehearsals on how to vacate the Square in an orderly manner. Teacher yelled for order and quiet without effect. The authorities came over the loudspeaker calling for quiet and order. People carried on with their chatter and jovialities as if an inside damn had broken loose. No one paid attention to the high-pitched calls for quiet and order that continued over the public address system for some time. A festival atmosphere erupted.

Afterwards, the town buzzed with festivities, thousands more little British flags and pictures of the Queen appeared everywhere. Souvenirs of American made British sweets, and pens, pencils, and exercise books made in Japan were being distributed freely. Not long after, a light dusk came and brought a dreamy atmosphere.

There were big questions on everybody's lip. The questions and answering became a game. Someone would take on the role of the questioner in a group and the whole group would prove the answer. I was done kinda sing-songy with a beat.

“Did you see the queen?”

The answer; “Which queen?”

Then, “Was she big or was she little?”

The answer; “She was likkle with mukkule an’ mettle!”

“Was she wrong or was she right?”

The answer; “Who cares. She showed some life!”

The nine-year-old Delveena was unofficially crowned ‘de la Vega’s little queen’ and was nicknamed Queenie-Queenie.

After a year of anticipation and preparations, the Queen of England, Her Imperial Majestic Royal Elizabeth de Second had come and gone. Somehow her status had slipped, forever. It was no wonder that the fate of her empire would follow suit.

The Way the World Ends by Google

Francisco Tomsich

From English to English through all available languages of Google Translate on 10.2.2020, in (English) alphabetical order.

This is the way the world ends: not with a bang but a whimper.
Dit is die manier waarop die wêreld eindig: nie met 'n klap nie, maar met 'n fluit.
Kjo është mënyra si mbaron bota: jo me një zhurmë, por me një bilbil.
ዓለም እንዴት ነው እንዲዘላ ያለ ፍጻሜ: በጩኸት ሳይሆን በፍጩኸት.
كيف هو العالم مثل هذه النهاية: ليس مع صافرة ؛
Ինչպե՞ս է ավարտվում աշխարհը այսպիսի ավարտով. Ոչ թե սուղիչով.
Dünya belə bir sonluqla necə bitir? Bir fit deyil.
Nola amaitzen da mundua horrelako amaiera batekin? Txistua ez.
Як свет сканчаецца такім канцом? Ні свістка.
বিশ্বের শেষ এই শেষ আসে? কোন বাঁশি।
Dolazi li kraj svijeta do toga? Bez flaute
Наближава краят на света? Без флейта
El final del món s'acosta? Sense flauta
Hapit na ba matapos ang katapusan sa kalibutan?
Walay flauta
Kodi kutha kwa dziko kwatsala pang'ono kutha?
Palibe chitoliro
世界末日真的在附近吗? 没有管道
世界末日真的在附近嗎? 沒有管道
Hè a fine di u mondu veramente vicinu? Nisun pipi
Je li kraj svijeta doista blizu? Nema cijevi
Je konec světa opravdu blízko? Žádné trubky
Er verdens ende virkelig nær? Ingen rør
Is het einde van de wereld echt nabij? Geen pijpen
Ĉu la fino de la mondo estas vere proksima? Neniu pipoj
Kas maailmalõpp on tõesti lähedal? Pole torusid
Malapit na ba ang katapusan ng mundo? Walang mga tubo

Onko maailman loppua lähellä? Ei putkia
 La fin du monde est-elle près de chez vous? Pas de tuyaux
 Is it ein fan 'e wrâld by jo tichtby? Gjin pipen
 ¿A fin do mundo está preto de ti? Sen tubaxes
 ახლოს არის სამყაროს დასასრული? მილების გარეშე
 Ist das Ende der Welt nahe? Ohne Pfeifen
 Είναι το τέλος του κόσμου κοντά; Χωρίς σωλήνες
 'శ్రుశివుని అంద నశిక యి? కొంచె నుండి నయి
 Ëske fen mond lan toupre? Pa gen tib
 Shin karshen duniya ya kusa? Babu bututu
 Ua kokoke ke kokoke o ka honua? 'A'ohe'aila
 האם העולם קרוב יותר? אין שמץ
 क्या दुनिया करीब है? कोई तेल नहीं
 Puas yog lub ntiaj teb nyob ze? Tsis muaj roj
 A világ körül van? Nincs olaj
 Er það um allan heim? Engin olía
 Q bu ɥwa niile? Mmanɔ ɔ buɓa
 Apakah ini universal? Minyak apa pun
 An bhfuil sé seo uilfoch? Aon ola
 Questo è universale? Senza olio
 これは普遍的ですか? オイルフリー
 Apa universal iki? Minyak gratis
 ಇದೂ ಸಾರ್ವತ್ಯಕವೇ? ಉಚಿತ ತೈಲ
 Бүл эмбебап па? Тегін май
 நீதிபாசகல? ஐந்துபாயககிசு
 보편적입니까? 무 지방
 Ew gerdūnī ye? Xwarina belengaz
 Ал жалпы болот? кедей-аш
 ఉండేదేదీ? ఊపానానీభూతానా
 Sed generalis? Pauperes cibum
 Tomēr kopumā? slikta pārtika
 Vis dėlto apskritai? blogas maistas
 An trotzdem iwwerhaapt? schlecht lessen
 И како и да е? лоша храна
 Ary sanatria? sakafo ratsy
 Dan tidak sama sekali? makanan yang buruk
 ഇല്ലാ? മഹംഭംഭം
 Le? Ikel hažin
 No? kai kino
 काय? कनि
 Яах гэж? Яагаад вэ?
 တာအတွက်လဲ တာကြောင့်လဲ
 कनि र केको लागि?
 Hvorfor og for hva?
 ولي او دڅه لپاره؟
 چرا و برای چی؟
 Dlaczego i po co?
 Por que e para quê?
 ਕਿਉਂ ਅਤੇ ਕਿਸ ਲਈ?

De ce și pentru ce?
 Почему и почему?
 Aisea ma pe aisea?
 Carson agus carson?
 Зашто и зашто?
 Hobane'ng, hona hobane'ng?
 Nei uye nei?
 ؟ ڇو ۽ ڇو
 ඇයි සහ ඇයි?
 Prečo a prečo?
 Zakaj in zakaj?
 Waa maxay sababta iyo sababtu?
 ¿Por qué y por qué?
 Naha sareng kunaon?
 Kwa nini na kwa nini?
 Varför och varför?
 Чаро ва чаро?
 ஏன் அல்லதா ஏன்
 ఎందుకు లేదా ఎందుకు
 ทำไมหรือทำไม
 Neden veya neden
 Чому або чому
 ؟ کیوں یا کیوں
 Nega yoki nega?
 Tại sao hay tại sao?
 Pam neu pam?
 Kutheni usitsho?
 פארוואס זאגסטו אזוי?
 Kini idi ti o fi sọ bẹẹ?
 Kungani usho njalo?
 Why do you say so?

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