

“it was not necessary to present me as somebody who was perfect”

ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA IN SUPERVISION¹:

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INTRODUCTION

When it comes to an encounter of people of mixed national and ethnical backgrounds, one of the major challenges is undoubtedly the linguistic diversity. Given the widely acknowledged status of English as *the* world language (cf. e.g. Graddol, 1997; Phillipson, 1992), English has also become the most widely used language when it comes to professional counselling in intercultural contexts. Due to the growing demand of counselling processes in English, a certain command of the English language has also become indispensable for consultants. It has to be noted, however, that it's rarely English native speakers who prompt a “multilingual” group to speak English. In most working contexts it's speakers for “none of whom is the mother tongue” (House 1999: 74) who agree to use English as common code of understanding, i.e. *English as a lingua franca* (ELF). Current research strongly questions the status of native English norms as the only point of reference for ‘correct’ usage of English (cf. e.g. Seidlhofer et al. 2006)— as noted by Widdowson (1994, p. 385) who questioned any “ownership” of the English language:

How English develops in the world is no business whatever of native speakers in England, the United States, or anywhere else. They have no say in the matter, no right to intervene or pass judgement. They are irrelevant. The very fact that English is an international language means that no nation can have custody over it.

Seidlhofer (2001, p. 134) argues that it has to enter peoples' consciousness that ELF – with its specific characteristics – is a use of language in its own right and that ELF speakers have to be recognized as “language users in their own right.” She further calls for the need to counteract the “reproduction of native English dominance.”

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Based on empirical data, this contribution chooses an interdisciplinary approach at the interface between linguistics and other social sciences to examine some implications of the use of ELF in professional counselling processes, with a strong focus on supervision. Having encountered many colleagues for whom working in ELF constitutes an insurmountable barrier – and at times even a reason for declining projects – I am motivated to make these professionals aware of the fact that a high level of proficiency in English (measured in accordance with native-speakers' norms) is not always be the main prerequisite to work on a global level. This certainly calls for a change of attitude, away from deficit-oriented thinking towards an understanding of the innovative and creative power of ELF.

PERCEPTIONS OF ELF IN INTERCULTURAL CONSULTING CONTEXTS

Just like any other profession, the field of professional counselling has been strongly affected by the socio-political changes that globalization has brought about. In fact, intercultural or international work experience seems to have a fairly long-standing tradition in the field of professional consulting. Freitag-Becker (2003, p. 74), for example, argues that a view of the history of the profession of supervision reveals the fact that its 100 years of existence is infused by frontier crossings and intercultural exchanges:

Die Profession Supervision hat sich ... 'grenzüberschreitend' entwickelt und man könnte annehmen, dass die Reflexion und Gestaltung der Interkulturalität seit Anbeginn sozusagen zum Fächerkanon der Ausbildung und zum Rollenbewusstsein gehörten. [The profession of supervision has developed „transnationally“ and one could assume that the reflection and creation of interculturality has always been among the core subjects of trainings and has constituted an essential part of a supervisor's role awareness.]

A glance at international journals, for example, *Supervision: Mensch Arbeit Organisation*, mirrors the fact that the chances and challenges involved in working across national borders have become a central issue in the work of supervisors: in such issues as “Globalisierung” [Globalization] (4/2002), “Über Grenzen hinweg” [Across borders] (1/2003) and “Kultur belebt!?” [Culture revitalizes!] (3/2006) professionals reflect on the implications of globalization on consulting processes.

Clearly, there is strong awareness among consultants for the issue of multilingualism in intercultural working environments (e.g., Gotthardt-Lorenz and Sauer, 2003, p. 3). There is, however, at least to my knowledge, not a single published work which looks *exclusively* at the impact of a lingua franca on consulting processes. Rather, the attitudes of consultants towards a lingua franca (which is, in most cases, English) can only be inferred from papers dealing with international and intercultural work experience in general. In these papers the issue of language is only peripherally touched upon, but never the focus of investigation itself. What seems most striking for the purpose of this chapter is the fact that these publications hardly ever mirror the resource-oriented perception of ELF mentioned earlier. Quite the contrary, they strongly focus on problems and negative issues involved in the use of a second or a third language. Indeed, an analysis of papers written by consultants suggests the following categorization of attitudes towards ELF:

- ***ELF is a Simplified and Reduced Form of Language***

ELF is often described in a pejorative way (e.g. (Krains & Lackner, 2008, p. 6) and authors commonly stress the reduced linguistic repertoire of non-native speakers (Müller & Zvacek, 2008, p.23).

- ***ELF Does Not Allow for Linguistic “Nuances”***

It is often claimed that ELF speakers, most likely due to their supposedly restricted linguistic repertoire, do not have the ability to express themselves appropriately in more complex, emotional or even problematic situations (e.g. Müller and Zvacek 2008, p. 23) and, thereby, increase the likelihood of interpersonal misunderstandings (e.g. Suter 1997, p. 83).

- ***Being a Native Speaker Means Power***

Consultants often work in settings that involve both native and non-native speakers of English as, for example, during processes supporting the merging of two companies. Suter, for instance, describes a situation in which English was appointed the corporate language and stresses the noticeable cleavage between non-native speakers and native speakers of English. Suter (1987, p. 83) himself follows from this situation that “...Muttersprache [bedeutet] Macht” [...mother tongue [means] power].

Likewise, other authors spot negative consequences for the native speakers by stating that the communicative problems of the non-native speakers are often hard to grasp for native speakers. They claim that native speakers are also challenged as they often perceive particular conversational settings, such as meetings, as redundant, slow and stultifying (cf. Müller & Zvacek, 2008, 24).

In linguistic studies there is also considerable evidence for the communicative “dominance” of native speakers. Due to the limited scope of this paper, however, this issue cannot be dealt with in detail. As the extracts analyzed in the empirical part of this paper does not involve any native speakers it is also not of direct relevance. What has to be pointed out at this stage, however, is the fact that the “gap” between native and non-native speakers certainly has implications on group dynamics and the creation of “informal” hierarchical structures within a team or an organization. This is, thus, an issue that also consultants have to be aware of. When working with a group of both native and non-native speakers it might be relevant to employ certain methods of intervention which enable clients to “bridge this gap”.

- ***ELF is Free of Culture***

As mentioned earlier, the use of a lingua franca in consulting processes is often only peripherally touched upon in papers dealing with the issue of intercultural working environments. Linguistic competence and intercultural competence are often considered as separate entities that can be clearly distinguished. Often, the command of a language is viewed as the prerequisite for the development of intercultural competence, as, for instance Lackner (2008, p. 79) states: “Erst durch eine gemeinsame Sprache wird multikulturelle Kommunikation möglich” [A common language is the prerequisite for multicultural communication]. And she continues, “[e]ine Lingua franca ermöglicht einander zu verstehen, verdeckt jedoch kulturelle Unterschiede” [a lingua franca allows mutual understanding, conceals however cultural differences] (p. 79). It can be inferred that a lingua franca does not allow the speaker to get across his or her cultural values, as he or she is viewed as being

detached from any cultural identity. Due to the complexity of this matter, this crucial question cannot be further pursued at this point. However, I would merely like to underscore the understanding that cultural competence and linguistic competence are clearly separable.

Quite clearly, all these attributions to ELF are closely interrelated or sometimes even mutually dependent. The underlying common message, and therefore the core issue in this debate, is the assumption that non-native speakers lack linguistic proficiency. Different levels of language competence are also presented as severe impediments to successful communication (see Krusche & Zillner, 2008, p. 54). The only legitimate point of reference according to which language competence is measured is the native speaker. The observations and hypothesis put forward in the empirical part of this chapter attempt to refute some of these arguments.

Based on the negative perceptions presented above, it might come as a surprise that actual reports on supervisors' working experiences in an international context (such as international intervision groups, meetings and working groups of members of different national associations, intercultural supervision processes) suggest the communication conducted in ELF was more successful. Tatschl (2003, p. 6), for example, stresses the creative power that work in intercultural (and multilingual) contexts brings about. As he argues,

Vieles von dem, was Supervisoren und Supervisorinnen tun, was sie erleben, wofür sie eingesetzt werden, tritt bei der grenzüberschreitenden Europaarbeit, bei grenzüberschreitenden Supervisionsprojekten einfach viel deutlicher zu Tage. [Much of what supervisors do becomes even more evident in intercultural working contexts.]

He also points to a few resources that these "global players" have access to, such as the: 1) use of metaphors, images and body language; 2) capability to address taboos; 3) capability to ask "naive" questions, and 4) reduction of pace. Some of Tatschl's arguments will be revisited in the following empirical section of the paper.

AN ANALYSIS OF AN INTERNATIONAL INTERVISION GROUP

The data analyzed in this chapter are part of an audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed² intervision process of approximately 42 minutes of total length. The discussion is between a Dutch female, an Estonian female and a German male during an international conference for supervisors in Tallinn, Estonia in summer 2007 (ANSE Summer University). English was not the mother tongue of any of these speakers. As they did not share any other language than English, they had to rely on ELF as the only possible common code of understanding.

As mentioned earlier, the chapter attempts to show that supervision processes can be carried out successfully in ELF. This claim certainly calls for the necessity to define the term

² The audio recordings were transcribed according to transcription and spelling conventions that were developed for the compilation of a sizeable, computer-readable corpus of ELF at the English Department of Vienna University (Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (<http://www.univie.ac.at/voice>)). The most important features of the conventions are given in the Appendix. Some changes to the computer-readable transcription key were made in order to make the analysis easily comprehensible. A transcription of the entire intervision is provided in Kordon (2008).

“successful” in this context. Is it possible to argue that the intervention was successful purely by listening to the recorded audio-data and looking at the transcribed data? Is it possible to evaluate the “outcome” of supervision as either positive or negative without being able to look into the speakers’ minds or ask them about their perceptions and attitudes (similar to the research method that Möller (2001) presents in her book, *Was ist gute Supervision?* [*What is good supervision?*])? This issue relates to the big and widely unanswered question of how “good” or “effective” supervision can be defined (see also Petzold, 2007, p. 10), which can unfortunately not be further pursued at this point as it would clearly transcend the scope of this paper.³ Caution, however, was taken to avoid making hasty judgments concerning the effectiveness of supervision in this exchange (see, for example, Steinhardt, 2003).

In the case of the present data, the following approach was used to tackle the challenge of “measuring” the success of the intervention process, which was subdivided into five different phases, each one serving a particular purpose:

- **Phase 1:** (~ 3,2’): Purpose – distribution of roles and decision on formal criteria such as method and time management
- **Phase 2:** (~ 2,1’): Purpose – presentation of the case/problem and definition of working task
- **Phase 3:** (~ 9,5’): Purpose – identification of possible explanations or reasons for the presented problem (starting with the first intervening question by the supervisor)
- **Phase 4:** (~ 6’): Purpose – ‘transfer’: recognition and assurance of the working results and reflection on transfer into professional life
- **Phase 5:** (~ 20.8’): Purpose: process reflection and meta-communication.

By attributing a particular purpose to each phase, we can retrace if that purpose was fulfilled by a discourse analytical analysis of the data. As language serves as a tool to achieve these goals in the respective phases, the data will also provide sufficient evidence to show that the intervention was communicatively successful (i.e. that the participants were capable of carrying out the intervention session successfully in ELF).

What is evident from the outline of the phases noted above is that Phases 1 and 5 obtain a very distinct position in the analysis as they are not part of the actual supervision process. Their purposes are, however, highly relevant for the analysis of the entire process. Phase 5 is not only language-wise but also content-wise highly significant for this analysis, as the speakers also carry out what can be termed “meta-communication” or “metalanguage” (i.e. “words used for talking about or describing language,” Summers, 1998, p. 854). From the speakers’ exchanges in these meta-communicative passages we might, therefore, gain insight into their attitudes towards ELF. Moreover, Phase 5 also contains a hypothesis explicitly mentioned by the speakers concerning possible explanations for the success of the supervision process.

Due to the limited scope of this chapter, only two episodes of the intervention – Phase 2 and 3 – will be analysed in detail.

Phase 2: The Case and the Work Task

In this phase of the process, the participants successfully manage to set all the necessary conditions for the supervision. They commonly decide that each of them would

³ Readers interested in this issue may wish to consult Möller (2002) or Petzold (2003).

take on a different role in the process. The Dutch speaker (DS1) was willing to present a case arising from her work with a client, taking on the role of the supervisee. The two other participants distributed the role of the supervisor (German speaker, GS3) and the observer (Estonian speaker, ES2) among themselves.

A supervision session is normally opened with the presentation of a problem by the supervisee. Ideally, this helps the participants to subsequently extract the main underlying question(s) or problem(s) and, thus, formulate a working task for the session. If we look at the following extract, it becomes clear that these conditions were met in the second phase, in which the supervisee (DS1) elaborated on a problem she encountered in a supervision session with a client who was trained to become a youth psychiatrist:

Extract (1)⁴

- 1 DS1: i can start hh er (.) it was a few weeks ago (.) and i had a: regular session with (.) erm (1)
- 2 psychiatrist and training? (1) sorry
- 3 GS3: in a training? (.) <6> context? </6>
- 4 ES2: <6> <un> xx </un> </6>
- 5 DS1: in a tr- er it's er it was <fast> supervision context </fast> (.) is psychiatrist who's (.)
- 6 learning to be (.) a youth (.) psychiatrist so that's er (.) educational=
- 7 GS3: =yes (.) there's <7> one? </7> person or
- 8 DS1: <7> background </7> one person.=
- 9 GS3: =one person
- 10 DS1: <1> one person. </1> so it was an individual (.)
- 11 GS3: <1> okay mhm </1>
- 12 DS1: session
- 13 S3: mhm (1)
- 14 GS3: <smacks lips> and er: (.) she? (.) is a she (.) she was telling me? (.) about a situation (.)
- 15 with a family? (.) she she was encountering a family and (.) she was talking about it (.) and
- 16 while she was talking about it (1) er (.) i felt (1) a great (.) distance coming. (.) i wasn't (.) really
- 17 involved anymore (.) and that's rather unfamiliar for me (.) during a session. (.) **i was getting**
- 18 **(2) yeah distanced.** (.) i think that's the good word (2) **and during the session i (.) i felt it?**
- 19 **(.) but i couldn't find words to it or (.) i i couldn't reflect DURING the session (.)** what
- 20 really happened. (.) i remembered asking the questions? i remember (1) <smacks lips> asking
- 21 her (.) what she wanted to do? what she wanted to learn about it. (.) i did all that (.) but (.)
- 22 within myself i felt (.) great distance (.) er (.) about the story and to (.) my <pvc>superv- </pvc>
- 23 (.) <pvc> -isee </pvc> (3) she (1) i i didn't ask her (.) if she er: (2) noticed any of that? (.) but i
- 24 reflected on it **later. (.) and i think? (.) it had something to do with the (2) with the (.) the**
- 25 **family she talked about. (.) <soft> that's what i think. </soft> (.)**

⁴ The data extracts are chronologically numbered throughout this chapter. Please note that underlined exchanges refer to language-related issues while those in bold face point out issues related to the purpose of the respective phase and to content-related issues discussed in the analysis. When these two foci overlap (i.e., when an exchange is both linguistically and content-wise relevant), the comment is placed in italics.

With regard to the purpose described above, the supervisee (DS1) makes four points (steps) during the exchange. She:

1. presents her case (lines 1-25);
2. verbalizes the problem, distancing herself from her client during the supervision session (line 17-18) and did not ask the client if she felt the distance herself (line 23);
3. indirectly states the question she wishes to analyze in the supervision with ES2, to find out why she distanced herself (lines 18-19); and
4. presents a hypothetical reason for the problem – her feelings had something to do with the family her client talked about (lines 24-25).

Having said that language serves as a tool for the participants to carry out their work successfully, we can infer from the observation that the purpose of this phase was fulfilled in that this exchange was *communicatively* successful.

There are number of relevant linguistic aspects that this phase contains. Bearing in mind that both DS1 and GS3 are non-native speakers of English, most readers probably have noticed the high level of language proficiency of DS1. DS1 manages to make herself understood without major grammatical, syntactical or lexical inconsistencies. When listening to the entire recording, the different levels of linguistic proficiency of the three participants become evident: the Dutch speaker is certainly the most proficient and the German speaker has a better command of the English language than the Estonian speaker. Yet, a close analysis shows that these diverse levels of linguistic competence do not seem to be an impediment for the success of the supervision. Recent research into lingua franca communication in English provides an answer to this phenomenon: just like any spoken discourse, ELF talk is characterised by self-regulation and reciprocal negotiation (e.g. Seidlhofer, 2002, p. 20), which means that interactants mutually accommodate to each other's speech styles. ELF speakers' capacity to modify their language in such a way that they feel understood by their interlocutors appears to be more important than accuracy:

... it may well be that mutual accommodation ... will be found to have greater importance for communicative effectiveness than 'correctness' or idiomaticity in ENL [English as a native language] terms (Seidlhofer, 2002, p. 18).

Extract 1 provides us with another interesting phenomenon with regard to language proficiency. Interestingly DS1's monologue in which she presents her case is immediately interrupted after her first utterance by GS3's question "in training training context?" (line 3). It is likely that GS3 is irritated by DS1's use of the preposition "and" in line 2. GS3, therefore, asks for clarification by replacing "and" with the preposition "in" and the article "a" in line 3, which is subsequently repeated by DS1 in line 5 before she further defines the term in line 5 and 6. It gradually becomes clear that the supervision was carried out within the framework of DS1's client's training as a psychiatrist as a case supervision (similarly to the German term "Lehrsupervision"). Eventually, DS1 coins the term "educational background" (lines 6 and 9) to define this setting.

GS3's request for clarification might be an indication that he does not feel intimidated by DS1's higher level of language proficiency. In his role as the supervisor, he obviously seems to consider it crucial to perfectly understand what his supervisee says. Uncertainty

seems to be avoided by immediate interruptions or invitations to rephrase what was being said. Although this is one of the most relevant prerequisites in any consulting process (also among speakers of the same mother tongue), clarification processes of this kind are likely to occur more often in ELF contexts. This observation can be related to Tatschl's (2003, p. 6) hypothesis that it is easier to ask naïve questions in intercultural contexts: "Häufig wird argumentiert, dass man gerade wegen des Fremdseins auch die naivsten Fragen formulieren darf und dass dies für die jeweiligen Supervisionssysteme hilfreich sei" [It is often argued that precisely being a stranger offers the opportunity to ask the most naïve questions, which often turns out to be helpful for the respective systems of supervision]

The observation that a lack of understanding in supervision sessions in ELF seem to be immediately bridged raises another hypothesis linked to one of Tatschl's (2003) arguments: interruptions and subsequent clarification processes or repetitions as in the first couple of lines of Extract 1 certainly slow down the process. Apart from the clarification process illustrated above, Extract 1 contains additional features that are also likely to contribute to the reduction of pace: readers might have noticed that DS1's elaboration of her case is peppered with an amazingly high numbers of breaks. Although I cannot entirely refute the possibility that this is a specific characteristic of DS1's speech style, the high amount of communicative breaks in her monologue are likely to be caused by her efforts to express herself clearly in a second language.

The analysis also brings to light that ELF speakers sometimes struggle to find the right word(s), as, for example, explicitly stated by DS1 in line 18 with the utterance, "I think that's the good word." In fact, this phenomenon appears very frequently in the entire recording. It goes without saying that the speed of a process is reduced by this tendency.

Another contribution to the reduction of pace is the speakers' self-interruptions and self-repetitions, which appear numerous in the recording. Apart from a few minor interruptions and repetitions in DS1's monologue, this is more difficult to illustrate with Extract1 (most likely due to DS1's high level of language proficiency). They are, however, omnipresent in the rest of the recordings.

In line with Taschl's (2003, p. 6) argument, I consider all factors which provoke a certain reduction of pace as a chance rather than a threat to supervision processes: "...Verlangsamung ist eine Chance gerade für Supervision" [...reduction of pace constitutes a chance, particularly for supervision"]. Reducing the speed of speech (or a more cautious handling of language) also implies a reduction of the speakers' sequence of thoughts. It, therefore, gives more room for the subtleties of the participants' observations. In fact, reducing speed is often the only way to achieve a satisfying working outcome in supervision.

Apart from the first couple of lines, this phase is rather monological. The analysis of phase 3, however, will show that ELF speakers are also capable of handling more interactive passages successfully.

Phase 3: "Peeling the Onion"

Given the above mentioned complexity of supervision, it certainly cannot be assumed that there is always a "solution" to the problem(s) presented by a client. However, an analysis of phase 3 of the intervention process shows sufficient evidence that the supervisee (DS1) has (at least) gained a broader awareness for possible phenomena underlying her trouble. In the following extract, the supervisee makes explicit that the first intervening questions asked by the supervisor (GS3) prompted her to redefine the problem she presented and, subsequently, helps her to gain an understanding for the core problem herself:

Extract (2)

- 1 DS1: and MAYbe? (.) **now you are asking me?** (.) it had something to do (2) **no- now i'm talking**
- 2 **about it's coming?** (.) er maybe it had something to do (.) with the (.) unaffected way she talked
- 3 about it (2) she **was very distanced** (.) **too.** (.)
- 4 GS3: mhm? (.)
- 5 DS1: er (.) **as we speak?** (.) **i remember** <5> the feeling </5> and (.)
- 6 GS3: <5> <clears throat> </5>
- 7 DS1: **i remember how i** (.) **observed her?** (.)

This exchange is part of the phase in which the supervisee is still in the process of making the problem with her client explicit and, thus, is trying to grasp the problem herself. She argues that it is both the supervisor's questions (line 1) and the process of putting her feelings into words (lines 1 and 5) that enable her to identify the difficulties in the work with her client. This process constitutes, at least to my mind, one of the main purposes of a supervision process. The client enters into a state of self-reflection and is, thereby, able to identify the core issue of his or her problem, which, in the long run, is also one of the prerequisites to formulate a working goal and, eventually, to close a "formal" contract with the supervisee. The process can be compared with the peeling of an onion: one layer after the other is removed until finally the 'real' problem is uncovered.

With the utterance "she was very distanced too" in line 3, it is likely that DS1 begins to gain awareness that her feeling of distance towards her client might have to do with *countertransference*, a phenomenon rooted in psychoanalysis (e.g., König & Staats, 1996; Münch, 1990; Oberhoff, 2005; Steinhardt, 2005). This hypothesis is further supported by the following extract in which she gradually realizes that it is the client's distanced attitude towards violence that eventually caused her to distance herself from the client:

Extract (3)

- 1 DS1: i observed her (2) maybe it was a *par- parallel* (.) *para- parallel* (.) *process* i don't know?
- 2 but (.) erm (1) i i felt (1) **my distance?**
- 3 GS3: mhm
- 4 DS1: and I saw **HER distance.**
- 5 GS3: mhm=
- 6 DS1: =so maybe **i took that** (.)

In the course of the subsequent independent exchanges, which chronologically follow each other, it becomes evident that the supervisee begins to realize that there are two phenomena underlying her problem – countertransference and the involvement of her own personal beliefs, values and experiences⁵.

Given the complexity of this case, it is rather impressive that the participants manage to discover the underlying phenomena by using English as their second or third language. . The analyzed extracts contain a number of linguistic inconsistencies and deviations from Standard English forms on various different levels of language (mainly uttered by GS3), for example:

⁵ All relevant extracts are given and analysed in Kordon 2010.

- a) Grammar: ‘something doing this (.) violence?’ (use of gerund instead of infinitive); ‘you believes’ (3rd person ‘s’ with 2nd person singular)
- b) Syntax: ‘er (.) your (.) that in this setting your belongs you believes there or er er (.)’ (incomplete sentences, self-interruptions, etc.)
- c) Lexis: ‘your belongs’ (coinages of new words); ‘to er (.) accompany: er: (4) an event no <Lnde> ein ein erlebnis? {an experience} </Lnde> (.) what that in english’ (lexical gaps)

None of these deviations, however, seem to be an impediment for the speakers to achieve their communicative goals. Rather, the interactants seem to be very creative and inventive to overcome potential trouble sources in their communication. One phenomenon that has to be particularly highlighted with regard to their interaction in phase 3 is the speakers’ ability to bridge lexical gaps. It is striking that they manage to discover and work constructively with such complex phenomena as countertransference without ever using specific terminology. Rather, they paraphrase what can be expressed by one single term with utterances such as “parallel process” (Extract 3), and in the succeeding extracts: “I did the same” or “that’s double”. It can be concluded, then, that the interactants managed to work on a highly professional level without having a wide range of specific vocabulary at their disposal.

Example c) above illustrates that the interactants tend not to pay much attention to lexical gaps: GS3 does not find the right word for the German word “erlebnis” (experience). This, however, seems to be fairly unnoticed by his interlocutor. It seems as if DS1 is well aware of the fact that the term “experience” is not vitally important to grasp GS3’s main message, namely his hypothesis concerning DS1’s involvement of personal values.

This phenomenon might be explained by the widely acknowledged “let-it-pass principle” in ELF (Firth, 1996). House (1999, p. 75) describes this principle in the following way:

.... ELF interactants ... ‘normalize’ potential trouble sources, rather than attending to them explicitly, via for example, repair, reformulation, or other negotiating behaviours. As long as participants-to-the-talk achieve a certain threshold of understanding sufficient for their current conversational purpose, they seem to adopt a ‘Let-it-Pass’ principle governing the way they handle ambiguously or overtly deficient utterances.

It may well be that this principle is linked to the observation that ELF is “overtly consensus-oriented, cooperative and mutually supportive” (Seidlhofer, 2002, p. 15).

Another outstanding linguistic features in this phase is the high amount of minimal responses (or feedback tokens) such as “mhm,” “yeah,” “yes,” and so forth. In fact, all five phases of the intervention are infused with minimal responses of these kinds. These tokens do not only serve to signal agreement with what is said, but they are also used as “tools” to signal attention and listenership. They are, thus, an important feature for interlocutors to both establish and maintain interpersonal contact and to keep up the flow of the conversation (see also Kordon, 2003, 2006). As silence or longer pauses seem to be an intrinsic element in supervision, the latter function as feedback tokens does not seem to be so relevant. When looking at the extracts above, the minimal responses seem to primarily serve the former

function (i.e. the establishment and maintenance of rapport). With the intensive use of these tokens, the supervisor seems to signal his active involvement and, likewise, strongly agrees to his supervisee's observation and ideas.

The establishment and maintenance of positive interpersonal contact is the prerequisite for any functioning supervision process, or as DS1 expresses it in the following extract (phase 5).

Extract (4)

- 1 D S1: and what you said earlier about our profession (3) i think is very true. **our**
- 2 **profession is about making connection.** (3)

In fact, in ELF-settings it often seems much more relevant than the correctness of the participants' language.

CONCLUSION

Before attempting to formulate any concluding remarks or suggesting the practical consequences of this research, it is important to stress that the observations in this chapter are based on a small-scale empirical study. Therefore, the findings reflect this particular sample and should only be considered as a point of departure for further investigation on a broader empirical scale. With regard to the methodology employed in this research project, the discourse analytic examination of counselling processes are of great relevance as a way of assuring successful communicative processes in international or intercultural consulting. The central aim of this chapter was to show that supervisions in English as a lingua franca can be carried out successfully despite linguistic deviations (on all levels of language) from standard native speakers' norms. The speakers in this exchange managed to reveal complex cognitive and emotional patterns within a very short period.

Reflecting on this analysis, a number of characteristics of a consulting process in ELF can be elaborated:

- Different levels of language proficiency are balanced by mutual accommodation of the speakers' speech styles.
- Problems of understanding are immediately repaired by requests for clarification.
- The pace of the process is reduced by the use of a lingua franca, which can have positive implications on the quality of the consulting process.
- The use of specialized terminology (such as the term countertransference) does not have crucial relevance for the achievement of the communicative goals. Speakers skillfully paraphrase what can be expressed with one single specific term.
- Lexical gaps are bridged by the highly cooperative and supportive speech style of the speakers.
- Speakers employ a wide range of different strategies to establish and maintain rapport (i.e., positive interpersonal contact) during the session. Positive interpersonal relationships seem to be of greater relevance for a successful working result than linguistic accuracy.

By juxtaposing these findings with popular beliefs of consultants about ELF (or the use of a lingua franca in general), the chapter has shown that many negative perceptions of ELF appear misguided, without sufficient scientific grounding. Although I certainly do not wish to entirely refute such observations as the reduced or simplified linguistic repertoire of non-native speakers of English or the power of native speakers, I do think that the implications of these phenomena for the cross-cultural consulting profession is overestimated or, at least, misleading. The belief that linguistic accuracy and a strong adherence to native speakers' norms are the most important prerequisites for successful international or intercultural work undoubtedly stokes fears among consultants and sometimes even prevents them from "climbing the global stage." Hopefully the empirical investigation of supervision processes in ELF will serve to motivate professionals to have courage to start working in ELF – even if they consider their English language competence as being far from being "perfect." As GS3 put it in phase 5: **"yes (.) it (.) it was not that not necessary to present me: as somebody who was perfect (.)"**

Hopefully the chapter will also raise the reader's awareness of the creative and innovative communicative strategies that ELF speakers employ in order to compensate for their linguistic deficiencies, to avoid misunderstandings and to bridge communicative problems. In fact, supervisions in ELF bring about certain insights into characteristics that even can enrich consulting processes, such as the reduction of pace (caused by breaks, self-interruptions, repetitions, clarification processes or the struggle to find the right words). This insight reflects Tastchl's (2003, p. 6) argument that we can learn a lot about supervision in general by carrying out intercultural supervisions in a lingua franca.

What seems most important for the consulting profession is the need to move away from deficit-oriented and fearful thinking to a more resource-oriented attitude. This can certainly not be reached by undergoing strict language training or by acquiring as much specific vocabulary or closed sets of grammatical rules as possible. Rather, it is important to develop sufficient communicative capacity that can enable consultants to converse in English with speakers of different cultural and first language backgrounds. One of the most efficient ways to reach this capacity is certainly "practical" training. As such, consultants are encouraged to expand their work to intercultural and multilingual settings, actively using their supposed "deficits" in ELF as tools rather than obstacles to their processes.

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