

English as a lingua franca (ELF) as site of transient language contact



Univ.-Prof.ⁱⁿ Mag.^a Dr.ⁱⁿ Marie-Luise Pitzl-Hagin

Professorin für Sprachlehr- und -lernforschung Englisch / Professor for Research on Teaching and Learning English

Invited guest lecture, EC2U Discourses in Europe (15 December 2025)

Overview

1. What is English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)?

Key findings and general implications

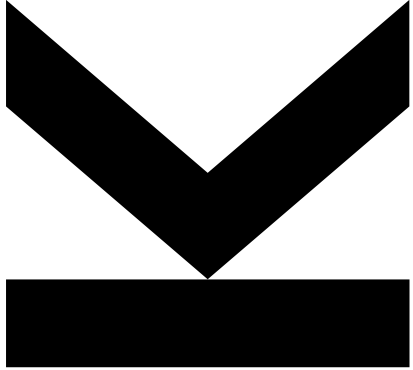
2. Beyond communities (of practice):

FWF project ELF in Transient International Groups (TIGs)

3. ELF as transient language contact:

Individual multilingual repertoires and shared multilingual resource pools in TIGs

What is English as a lingua franca (ELF)?



20 years ago in Upper Austria...

- Business meeting at Upper Austrian company (rec. 2004)
- Three representatives ('hosts') of local company (L1 German)
- Two representatives ('guests') of Korean distribution company



2020	S4	you have it in the stores since WHEN? since a couple of MONTHS (.)
2021	S1	only <1> e:r </1> one and a half month.
2022	S2	<1> <un> x </un> months </1>
2023	S4	yeah then (1) i think in THAT case we should not wake up any (.) any DOGS by going now
2024	SX-m	<un> xx <1> x </1> </un>
2025	S4	<1> NOW </1> since it's in <2> the </2>
2026	S1	<2> o</2> kay
2027	S4	in the trade
2028	SX-3	yeah (.)

Source: VOICE. 2009. *Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English* (version 1.0). PBmgt3. Business meeting at a food company. Project director: Barbara Seidlhofer. Researchers: Angelika Breiteneder, Theresa Klimpfinger, Stefan Majewski, Marie-Luise Pitzl.

What is ELF?

Extract 3

(Daniela: L1 Italian; Karen: L1 German)

- 1 DANIELA: (low) yeah
- 2 KAREN: yeah
- 3 DANIELA: ok
- 4 KAREN: e:h ok
- 5 DANIELA: grazie
- 6 KAREN: → yeah ok ... **grazie e:h danke: thank you for you eh**
- 7 how do you say thank you eh **danke an dich**
- 8 DANIELA: **grazie a te**
- 9 KAREN: (laughing) yeah

Extract 5

(Chako: L1 Japanese; Anna: L1 Italian)

- 1 CHAKO: → Anna ... **galletas**
- 2 ANNA: mhm (0.5) nice
- 3 CHAKO: take two
- 4 ANNA: no one is en-
- 5 (Chako signals with hand to take two and Anna
- 6 takes two)
- 7 ANNA: thank you (Chako goes back to her desk)
- 8 (0.5)
- 9 ANNA: ah:: with nuts=
- 10 CHAKO: =nuts and chocolate
- 11 ANNA: mhm ... ni::ce=
- 12 CHAKO: → =**te gusta?**=
- 13 ANNA: =**mucho**

Cogo, A. (2009). Accommodating difference in ELF conversations: A study of pragmatic strategies. In A. Mauranen & E. Ranta (Eds.), *English as a lingua franca: Studies and findings* (pp. 254–273). Cambridge Scholars Publishing,.

English as a lingua franca (ELF)

the use of *English, often mixed with and/or alongside other *languages, as a shared means for inter-/transcultural communication among speakers with different first *languages (L1s) and/or different regio-cultural backgrounds

From mid-2000's onwards:

- a new research area in applied linguistics (building on work by e.g. Jenkins, 2000, Seidlhofer, 2001)
- third-party funding → compilation & release of ELF corpora
 - **VOICE: Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English** (2009), *ELFA* (2009)
 - *ACE* – Asian sister corpus of VOICE (2014)
- **Availability of ELF data → descriptive work on ELF use**
 - Annual conferences
 - Helsinki (2008), Southampton (2009), Vienna (2010), Hong Kong (2011), Istanbul (2012), Rome (2013), Athens (2014), Beijing (2015), Lleida (2016), Helsinki (2017), London (2018), Medellin (2019), Taiwan (2021/2022), Prague (2024)
 - *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca* (2012-), book series *Developments in English as a Lingua Franca* (2013-), international research network (2012-), ...



Empirical work on spoken ELF interactions

- **Availability of ELF data** from early/mid-2000s → increase in **descriptive work** on ELF use
- In contrast to other (applied) linguistic fields:
strong focus on spoken interactive data in ELF research (cf. e.g. Seidlhofer, 2001, Jenkins, 2000)
- Increasing descriptive work about ELF use accompanied by discussions about
 - implications for English Language Teaching, pedagogy & teacher education
 - re-evaluating and challenging established concepts like (non-)native speaker and **speech community**

Descriptive ELF research: Key findings

Descriptive studies of naturally-occurring situations

- ELF is not a fixed set of linguistic features → ELF is not a linguistic variety (ELF ≠ AmE, BrE, ...)
- ELF use characterized by **situationality** (e.g. Hülmbauer, 2009), **variability** (e.g. Dewey, 2009) & **creativity** (e.g. Pitzl, 2012, 2018)
- Descriptive focus not only forms, but on **describing functions** of these forms fulfill in context (Seidlhofer, 2009)
- Hence: **importance of pragmatic processes** & meaning-making in interaction, such as
 - **accommodation** (esp. **convergence**)
 - use of **multilingual resources**
 - negotiation of meaning

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(Cogo, 2009, pp. 265-267)

Accommodation & multilingual elements

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Implications

- Processes like **accommodation (esp. convergence)** are **prominent** in almost all **ELF interactions**

➤ *Why?*

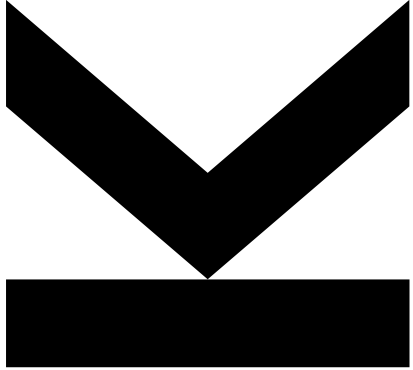
➤ Because converging in language use (i.e. making what you say more similar to the way your interlocutors speak or making use of what has been said before in the same conversation/by your interlocutors) is conducive to achieving and maintaining shared understanding.

- But accommodation can affect all levels of language (pronunciation, lexis, grammar, pragmatic conventions, multilingual elements, etc.) → practically everything in language use can be converged to
- And we know that ELF communication is highly context-dependent and situational

➤ *What does this mean (implications)?*

➤ You never know *which* *languages and shared linguistic and/or *cultural resources (e.g. business know-how) will be present in a particular group of ELF speakers. You never know which forms of language are going to be used – and potentially accommodated to – in a particular ELF interaction

Beyond communities (of practice): ELF in Transient International Groups



Empirical work on spoken ELF interactions

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From CoPs to transient groups

- **Community of Practice (CoP)** (Wenger, 1998)
 - suggested in early ELF research as alternative to speech community (e.g. House, 2003, Seidlhofer, 2007, Dewey, 2009)
 - explored in some ethnographic studies (e.g. Ehrenreich, 2009, Smit, 2010, Kalocsai, 2014, Vettorel, 2014, Cogo, 2016)
 - but also limitations acknowledged (e.g. Dewey, 2009, Mauranen, 2012, Baker, 2015, Jenkins, 2015, Ehrenreich, 2018)
 - *Many ELF contexts are simply too short-lived and unstable to be considered CoPs!*
- Focus on transient groups/communities/social configurations
 - Transient Multilingual Communities (Mortensen, 2017) → TMC project
 - Transient International Groups (Pitzl, 2018) → **ELF in TIGs project**

ELF in TIGs project (2019-2025)

English as a lingua franca in Transient International Groups

English as a lingua franca in Transient International Groups

Marie-Luise Pitzl-Hagin

🔗 Grant DOI: 10.55776/V747 🔗

💡 Funding program: Elise Richter

✉ Project no.: V 747

🕒 Status: ongoing

Disciplines

Linguistics and Literature (100%)

Keywords

Pragmatics, Micro-Diachronic Approach, English as a lingua franca, Transient International Groups, Lexical Development, Spoken Interaction

ELF in TIGs project

Elise-Richter Grant V747-G (2019-2025)

English as a lingua franca in Transient International Groups (ELF in TIGs)

Overall aim: to develop a new methodological and descriptive framework for the study of communication in transient multilingual contexts

- empirical description of **how communication evolves in interaction** in different ELF contexts and group constellations over time (i.e. **in real time**)
- **analyses of lexical and pragmatic processes** in TIGs, such as emergence of group-specific multilingual practices or emergent lexical practices
- **metadata visualization** of TIGs & micro-diachronic analysis of interaction

ELF as transient language contact:

**Individual multilingual repertoires and
shared multilingual resource pools in TIGs**



ELF interactions as sites of transient language contact

ELF interaction:
more than a contact of
“**similects**” (Mauranen, 2012) or
L2 *Englishes

holistic conceptualization and
representation of interactants’
**Individual Multilingual
Repertoires (IMRs) ...**
(cf. e.g. Canagarajah, 2018 ‘bits and pieces’)

Pitzl, M.-L. (2016). World Englishes and creative idioms in English as a lingua franca. *World Englishes*, 35(2), 293-309.

Linguistic repertoires

Applied Linguistics 2012; 33/5: 503–523

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doi:10.1093/applin/ams056 Advance Access published on 5 October 2012

The Linguistic Repertoire Revisited

BRIGITTA BUSCH

Department of Applied Linguistics, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria
E-mail: brigitta.busch@univie.ac.at

This article argues for the relevance of poststructuralist approaches to the notion of a linguistic repertoire and introduces the notion of language portraits as a basis for empirical study of the way in which speakers conceive and represent their heteroglossic repertoires. The first part of the article revisits Gumperz's notion of a linguistic repertoire, and then considers the challenge to the concept represented by the conditions of super-diversity. It then argues that poststructuralist approaches, exemplified in the work of Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler, add an exploration of previously neglected factors such as the power of categories or the significance of desire in language. In the second part, this article considers a novel methodological approach to studying linguistic repertoires: a multimodal, biographical approach using a language portrait, which involves a close reading of the visual and verbal representation of linguistic experience and linguistic resources. The final part of the article discusses how a poststructuralist approach can contribute to expanding the notion of 'repertoire'.

Busch, B. (2012). The linguistic repertoire revisited. *Applied Linguistics*, 33(5), 503–523.

Applied Linguistics 2015; 1–20

© Oxford University Press 2015

doi:10.1093/applin/amv030

Expanding the Notion of the Linguistic Repertoire: On the Concept of *Spracherleben*—The Lived Experience of Language

BRIGITTA BUSCH

Department of Linguistics, University of Vienna
E-mail: brigitta.busch@univie.ac.at

The aim of this article is to explore the connections between the concepts of the linguistic repertoire, of language ideologies, and of lived experience of language. In foregrounding the concept of *Spracherleben*, the lived experience of language, this article contributes to the ongoing debate on how to rethink the notion of the linguistic repertoire considering that current phenomena such as increased mobility, migration, or participation in transnational networks of communication make it difficult to take, as Gumperz (1964) did in his original concept, relatively stable speech communities as point of departure. The notion of the lived experience of language which I am elaborating here emphasizes the intersubjective dimension of language as a gesture toward the other and casts light on the often-neglected bodily and emotional dimensions of perception and speech. Attaching particular importance to the perspective of the experiencing subject, the concept is based on phenomenological approaches, as developed in the 1940s by the French philosopher Merleau-Ponty.

Busch, B. (2017). Expanding the notion of the linguistic repertoire: On the concept of *Spracherleben* -The lived experience of language. *Applied Linguistics*, 38(3), 340–358.

utb.

Brigitta Busch

Mehrsprachigkeit

3. Auflage



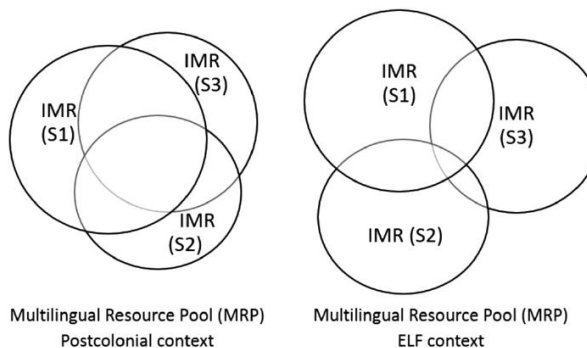
Busch, B. 2021. *Mehrsprachigkeit* (3rd edition). Vienna: facultas.

ELF interactions as sites of transient language contact

ELF interaction:
more than a contact of
“**similects**” (Mauranen, 2012) or
L2 *Englishes

- schematic representation of hypothetical 3-person group
- post-colonial vs. ELF context

holistic conceptualization and
representation of interactants’
**Individual Multilingual
Repertoires (IMRs) ...**
(cf. e.g. Canagarajah, 2018 ‘bits and pieces’)

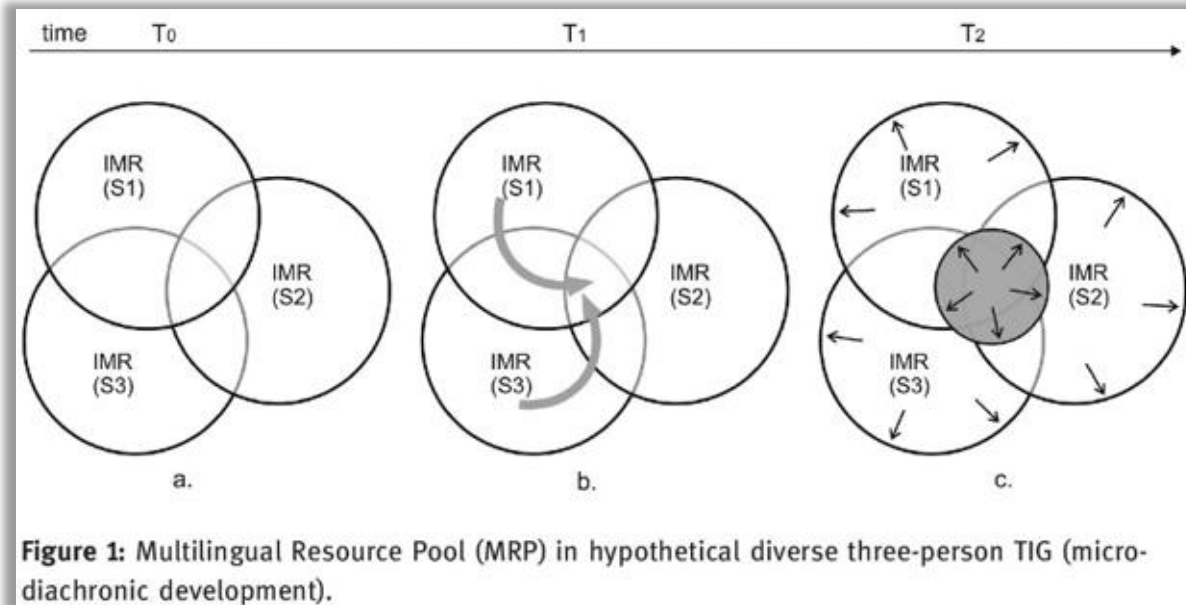


... that comprise a **situational
Multilingual Resource Pool
(MRP)**

(cf. Hülmbauer, 2009)

Pitzl, M.-L. (2016). World Englishes and creative idioms in English as a lingua franca. *World Englishes*, 35(2), 293-309.

Multilingual Resource Pool & micro-diachronic development



- what is shared by speakers to begin with (T_0)
- what can be/is shared in interaction (T_1)
- what becomes shared by a group (T_2)

Pitzl, M.-L. (2018). Transient international groups (TIGs): Exploring the group and development dimension of ELF. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, 7(1), 25–58.



Transient International Groups (TIGs)

groups of multilingual (ELF) speakers who interact for a particular purpose at a particular location for a certain amount of time and then dissolve again (Pitzl, 2018)

- focus on **fleeting (transient) social constellations** ≠ ‘traditional’ focus on (speech) communities
- **transcultural & translingual** view on communication (e.g. Baker, 2015, 2018, 2022) ≠ intercultural as culture A meets culture B
- assumption of **instability, individuality & diversity** ≠ describing how speakers of Lg X use English
- low degree of “semiotic sedimentation” (Mortensen, 2017, p. 276) ≠ describing how a language is typically used

→ descriptive focus on **development**: *not on how things are, but on **how things become***

→ **emergent practices**

Pitzl, M.-L. (2018). Transient international groups (TIGs): Exploring the group and development dimension of ELF. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, 7(1), 25–58.



VOICE

Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English

Corpus of spoken ELF interactions

- ~ 1 million words
- 151 speech events / ~110 hours
- 5 domains / 10 speech event types
- 1260 speakers / 753 individuals

Public releases / versions

- VOICE 1.0 Online (2009)
- VOICE 1.0 XML (2011)
- VOICE 2.0 POS XML & Online (2013)

Upcoming

- **VOICE 3.0 Online**
- **Released: Sept 2021**
- <https://voice3.acdh.oeaw.ac.at/>

The screenshot displays the VOICE 3.0 web interface. On the left is a sidebar with a 'TREE' view showing a folder structure: ED, LE, PB, PO, and PR. Below this is a 'VOICE HEADER' section. The main area is titled 'Search VOICE chin chin' and shows '8 hits in 8 utterances'. It features a table with columns for 'VOICE', 'PLAIN', 'POS', 'XML', and 'KWIC'. The table lists several utterances, including 'LCon560:584', 'LCon560:586', 'LCon560:1002', 'LCon560:1004', 'LCon560:1006', and 'LCon560:1007'. Each entry shows the speaker, the utterance text, and its corresponding XML and KWIC representations. The KWIC column shows the utterance with a gap (..) indicating the search term's position. On the right, there is a 'CORPUS INFORMATION' section showing a list of utterances with their speaker, time, and text. The interface is clean and modern, with a white background and blue accents.

Case studies: Three TIGs

MALTA-TIG

VOICE (LEcon329, LEcon547, LEcon548)

4 interactants

**S3 (L1 *Serbian) &
S1, S2, S4 (L1 *Maltese)**

short casual conversations
while sight-seeing
and at family's home
during S3's visit to Malta

Pitzl, M.-L. (2018). Transient international groups (TIGs): Exploring the group and development dimension of ELF. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, 7(1), 25–58.

Student-TIG

VOICE (LEcon560)

6 main interactants

**L1s: *Danish, *Dutch,
*Norwegian, *German,
*Polish, *Spanish/*Catalan**

casual conversation among
students at beginning of their
exchange term
in pub in Vienna

Pitzl, M.-L. (2022). Multilingual creativity and emerging norms in interaction: Towards a methodology for micro-diachronic analysis. In J. Mortensen & K. Kraft (Eds.), *Norms and the study of language in social life* (pp. 125-155). De Gruyter Mouton.

BELF-TIG

VOICE (PBmtg3)

5 interactants

**S1, S2 (L1 *Korean) &
S3, S4, S5 (L1 *German)**

business meeting at food
company during S1 and S2
business trip to Austria

Pitzl, M.-L. (2021). Tracing the emergence of situational multilingual practices in a BELF meeting: Micro-diachronic analysis and implications of corpus design. In K. Murata (Ed.), *ELF research methods and approaches to data and analyses: Theoretical and methodological underpinnings* (pp. 97-125). Routledge.

Case studies: Three TIGs

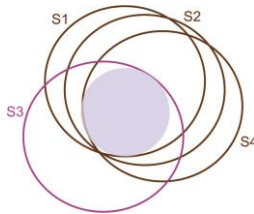
MALTA-TIG

VOICE (LEcon329, LEcon547, LEcon548)

4 interactants

**S3 (L1 *Serbian) &
S1, S2, S4 (L1 *Maltese)**

asymmetric-bilateral TIG



Pitzl, M.-L. (2018). Transient international groups (TIGs): Exploring the group and development dimension of ELF. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, 7(1), 25–58.

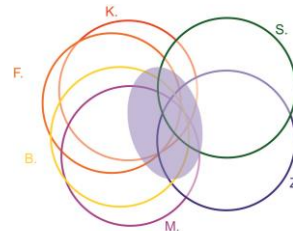
Student-TIG

VOICE (LEcon560)

6 main interactants

**L1s: *Danish, *Dutch,
*Norwegian, *German,
*Polish, *Spanish/*Catalan**

diverse TIG



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BELF-TIG

VOICE (PBmtg3)

5 interactants

**S1, S2 (L1 *Korean) &
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symmetric-bilateral TIG



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Tracing emergent practices

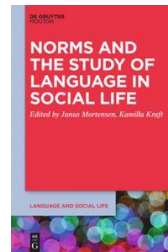
Group-specific patterns of transient language contact



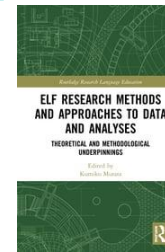
Detailed micro-diachronic description of non-*English/multilingual elements		
development of inclusive/shared multilingual practices		exclusive multiling. pract.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expansion of translingual & transcultural territory (place names, *Maltese vs. *Italian, cultural comp., Mediterranean, ...) • increasing awareness: *Italian as part of central area of MRP • opens up possibility for code-switch to LN *Italian idiom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • episodes of multilingual cheers • additional episodes of mutual 'language learning/teaching' • elements of ten *languages → reflects number of speakers & linguistic diversity of TIG's MRP • initial stage of potential norm development of multil. practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing use of (unintelligible!) L1 side sequences by both 'parties' throughout meeting • accommodation: convergence towards divergence • gradual tacit agreement: no threat to rapport → situational etiquette



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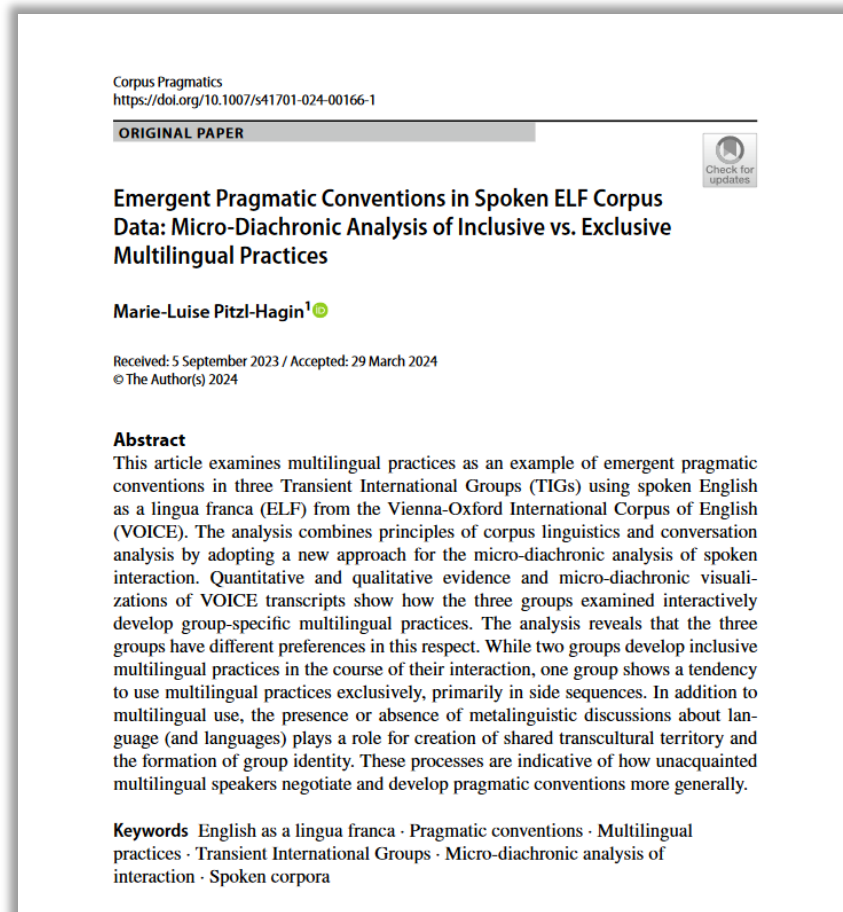


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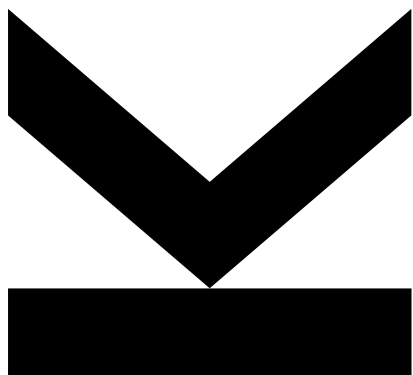
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Emergent pragmatic conventions in spoken ELF interactions



Pitzl-Hagin, M.-L. (2024). Emergent pragmatic conventions in spoken ELF corpus data: Micro-diachronic analysis of inclusive vs. exclusive multilingual practices. *Corpus Pragmatics*, 8, 175-200.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s41701-024-00166-1> [Open access](#)

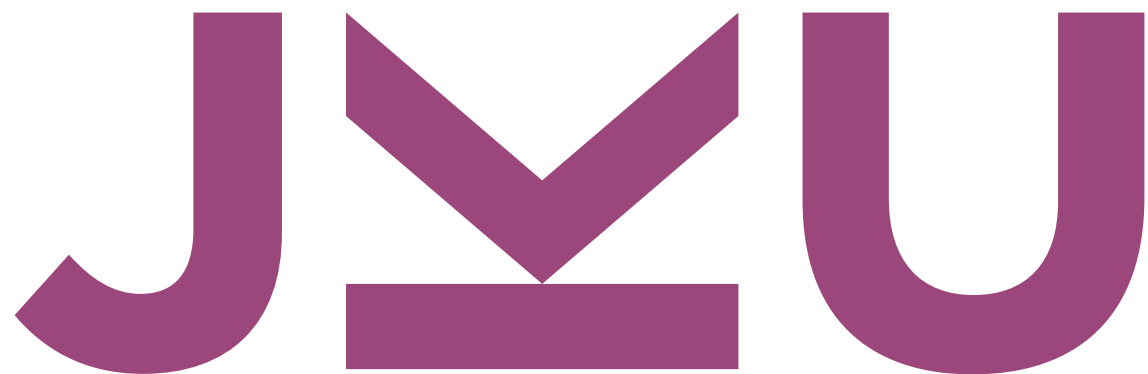
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Professorin für Sprachlehr- und -lernforschung Englisch / Professor for Research on Teaching and Learning English

Invited guest lecture, EC2U Discourses in Europe (15 December 2025)



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