Formulaic language in English Lingua Franca

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1. Objectives

The focus of this paper is the use of formulaic language in English Lingua Franca (ELF). The conversation in (1) deSmonstrates a frequent problem occurring in lingua franca communication in which the language in use is not the L1 of either speaker:

(1) Chinese student: – *I think Peter drank a bit too much at the party yesterday.*
Turkish student:– *Eh, **tell me about it**. He always drinks much.*
Chinese student: – *When we arrived he drank beer. Then Mary brought him some vodka. Later he drank some wine. Oh, too much.*
Turkish student:– *Why are you telling me this? I was there.*
Chinese student: – *Yes, but you told me to tell you about it.*

One of the nonnative speakers used a formulaic expression in a native-like way. However, the other nonnative speaker was not familiar with the conventional connotation of the expression. For him the most salient meaning of the formula was its literal meaning, its combinatorial meaning. This discrepancy in processing led to misunderstanding between the speakers.

Recently English Lingua Franca communication has been receiving increasing attention in language research. Globalization has changed the world and the way we use language. With English being the most frequently used lingua franca much communication happens without the participation of native speakers of English. The development and use of English as a lingua franca is probably the most radical and controversial approach to emerge in recent years, as David Graddol (2006) claimed in his book *English Next*. The book argues that it is an inevitable trend in the use of global English that fewer interactions now involve a native speaker, and that as the English-speaking world becomes less formal, and more democratic, the myth of a standard language becomes more difficult to

maintain. Graddol claims that in this new world the presence of native speakers hinders rather than supports communication. In organizations where English has become the corporate language, meetings sometimes go more smoothly when no native speakers are present. Globally, the same kind of thing may be happening on a larger scale. Understanding how non-native speakers use English talking to other non-native speakers has now become an important research area. The Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE) project, led by Barbara Seidlhofer, is creating a computer corpus of lingua franca interactions, which is intended to help linguists understand ELF better. Although several studies have been published on the use of ELF (e.g., House 2002, 2003; Meierkord 1998, 2000; Knapp and Meierkord 2002; Firth 1996; Seidlhofer 2004), our knowledge about this particular variety of English is still quite limited. What makes lingua franca communication unique is that interlocutors usually speak different first languages and belong to different cultures but use a common language that has its own socio-cultural background and preferred ways of saying things. So it is essential to ask two questions:

1. With no native speakers participating in the language game how much will the players stick to the original rules of the game?
2. Can current pragmatic theories explain this type of communication in which basic concepts such as common ground, mutual knowledge, cooperation, and relevance gain new meaning?

Second language researchers have worked out several different tools and methods to measure language proficiency and fluency. In the center of all these procedures stand grammatical correctness and pragmatic appropriateness. There is no room here to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of these approaches. Let's just say that if we want to learn how much lingua franca speakers stick to the original rules of the language game, we will need to find out something about their thought processes and linguistic conventions as reflected in their language use. What are the possible means for this? First of all, people belonging to a particular speech community have preferred ways of saying things (cf. Wray 2002) and preferred ways of organizing thoughts. Preferred ways of saying things are generally reflected in the use of formulaic language and figurative language while preferred ways of organizing thoughts can be detected through analyzing, for instance, the use of subordinate conjunctions, clauses and

discourse markers. This paper will focus on the use of formulaic language in ELF to answer the two questions above.

2. Formulaic language

2.1. The formulaic continuum

By formulaic language we usually mean multi-word collocations which are stored and retrieved holistically rather than being generated *de novo* with each use. Collocations, fixed expressions, lexical metaphors, idioms and situation-bound utterances can all be considered as examples of formulaic language (Howarth 1998; Wray 1999, 2002, 2005; Kecskes 2000) in which word strings occurring together tend to convey holistic meanings that are either more than the sum of the individual parts, or else diverge significantly from a literal, or word-for-word meaning and operate as a single semantic unit (Gairns and Redman 1986: 35).

Certain language sequences have conventionalized meanings which are used in predictable situations. This functional aspect, however, is different in nature in each type of fixed expression, which justifies the hypothesis of a *continuum* (Kecskes 2003) that contains grammatical units (for instance: *be going to*) on the left, fixed semantic units (cf. *as a matter of fact*; *suffice it to say*) in the middle and pragmatic expressions (such as situation-bound utterances: *welcome aboard; help yourself*) on the right.

Table 1. Formulaic Continuum

Gramm. Units	Fixed Sem. Units	Phrasal Verbs	Speech Formulas	Situation-bound Utterances	Idioms
be going to	*as a matter of fact*	*put up with*	*going shopping*	*welcome aboard*	*kick the bucket*
have to	*suffice it to say*	*get along with*	*not bad*	*help yourself*	*spill the beans*

The more we move to the right on the functional continuum the wider the gap seems to become between compositional meaning and actual situational meaning. Language development often results in a change of function, i.e.,

a right to left or left to right movement of a linguistic unit on the continuum. Lexical items such as "going to" can become grammaticalized, or lexical phrases may lose their compositionality and develop an "institutionalized" function, such as *I'll talk to you later*, *How are you doing?*, *Welcome aboard*, and the like. Speech formulas such as *you know, not bad, that's all right* are similar to situation-bound utterances (SBU). The difference between them is that while SBUs are usually tied to particular speech situations, speech formulas can be used anywhere in the communication process where the speakers find them appropriate.

Corpus studies have broadened the scope of formulaic expressions. Researchers working with large corpora talk about formulaic sequences that are defined by Wray (2002: 9) as: "a formulaic sequence [is] a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar." Based on this definition much of human language is formulaic rather than freely generated. I did not follow this definition in this study, and concentrated only on fixed expressions that are usually motivated and allow relatively few structural changes (fixed semantic units, speech formulas, phrasal verbs, idioms and situation-bound utterances). I ignored collocations such as *if you say…; this is good…; I have been…,* etc., which are frequent in the database but hardly fit into the groups given in the table.

Current linguistic models emphasize combinatorial creativity as the central property of human language. Although formulaic language has been mostly overlooked in favor of models of language that center around the rule-governed, systematic nature of language and its use, there is growing evidence that these prefabricated lexical units are integral to first- and second-language acquisition and use, as they are segmented from input and stored as wholes in long-term memory (Wood 2002; Wray 2002; Miller and Weinert 1998). Formulaic expressions are basic to fluent language production.

2.2. Preferred ways of saying things

Formulaic language is the heart and soul of native-like language use. In fact this is what makes language use native-like. Languages and their speakers have preferred ways of saying things (cf. Wray 2002). English native

speakers *shoot a film*, *dust the furniture*, or ask you to *help yourself* at the table. *Having said that*, if we want to find out how much non-native speakers stick to the rules of the game when no native speakers are present, we should look into the differences in the use of formulaic language. Keeping the preferred ways of native speakers means that LF interlocutors try to keep the original rules of the game. These preferred ways lead to the use of prefabricated expressions. The knowledge of these expressions gives a certain kind of idiomaticity to language use. Our everyday communication is full of phrasal expressions and utterances because we like to stick to preferred ways of saying things. Why is this so? Three important reasons can be mentioned:

– Formulas decrease the processing load

There is psycholinguistic evidence that fixed expressions and formulas have an important economizing role in speech production (cf. Miller and Weinert 1998; Wray 2002). Sinclair's *idiom principle* says that the use of prefabricated chunks "…may…illustrate a natural tendency to economy of effort" (Sinclair 1991: 110). This means that in communication we want to achieve more cognitive effects with less processing effort. Formulaic expressions ease the processing overload not only because they are "ready-made" and do not require the speaker/hearer any "putting together" but also because their salient meanings are easily accessible in online production and processing.

– Phrasal utterances have a strong framing power

Frames are basic cognitive structures which guide the perception and representation of reality (Goffman 1974). Frames help determine which parts of reality become noticed. They are not consciously manufactured but are unconsciously adopted in the course of communicative processes. Formulaic expressions usually come with framing. Most fixed expressions are defined relative to a conceptual framework. If a policeman stops my car and says *Step out of the car, please*, this expression will create a particular frame in which the roles and expressions to be used are quite predictable.

– Formulaic units create shared bases for common ground in coordinating joint communicative actions

The use of formulaic language requires shared experience and conceptual fluency. Tannen and Öztek (1981: 54) argued that "cultures that have set formulas afford their members the tranquility of knowing that what they say will be interpreted by the addressee in the same way that it is intended, and that, after all, is the ultimate purpose of communication." Nonnative speakers do not share a common ground or similar experience either. This is especially true for lingua franca communication where participants belong to different speech communities and use a common language that does not reflect any of these speech communities.

2.3. Formulaic language in pragmatics research

Formulaic language (pre-patterned speech) has not received much attention within any subfield of pragmatics. Certain groups of formulas such as idioms, phrasal verbs and others have been discussed in figurative language research. But with few exceptions (Coulmas 1981; Overstreet and Yule 2001; Wray 2002; Van Lancker-Sidtis 2003, 2004; Kecskes 2000, 2003) not much has been written about formulaic language in pragmatics. Why is it that pragmaticists almost ignore this topic although our everyday conversation is full of formulaic expressions? I can think of two reasons:

– 'What is said' is not well defined for formulaic utterances.

In the Gricean paradigm listeners determine "what is said" according to one set of principles or procedures, and they work out (calculate) what is implicated according to another. Implicatures are based on "what is said", the combinatorial meaning of the expression. But listeners often have to calculate certain parts of "what is said" too. This somewhat contradicts the basic assumption of major pragmatic theories (neo-Gricean approach, relevance theory) according to which "what is said" is usually well defined for every type of utterance. If it weren't we would have no basis for working out implicatures. However, in formulaic language there are many counter-examples, especially in phrasal utterances. Clark (1996: 145) argued that when you tell a bartender: *Two pints of Guinness*, it is unclear what you are saying. Are you saying in Grice's sense *I'd like* or *I'll have* or *Get me* or *Would you get me* or *I'd like you to get me a glass of beer*? There is no way in principle of selecting among these candidates. Whatever you are doing, you do not appear to be *saying* that you are ordering beer, and

yet you cannot be implicating it either because you cannot cancel the order – it makes no sense to say *Two pints of Guinness, but I'm not ordering two pints of Guinness.* "What is said" simply is not well defined for phrasal utterances. (In relevance theory Carston [2005] has also questioned the utility of the concept "what is said", which is sometimes identified with the "explicature", which is in large part contextually determined.) Further example:

(2)   To the cashier in a store: *"Are you open?"*

   – Linguistic units only prompt meaning construction.

   The leading thought in present day linguistic research on meaning is that linguistic stimuli are just a guide in the performing of sophisticated inferences about each other's states of minds and intentions. Linguistic units only prompt meaning construction. Formulaic expressions do not fit very well into this line of thinking because they usually have fixed meanings. They are like frozen implicatures. The modular view rarely works with fixed expressions. When situation-bound utterances such as *Nice meeting you*; *You're all set*; *How do you do?* are used, there is usually just one way to understand their situational function.

3. English Lingua Franca database

3.1. Data collection and analysis

Data were collected in spontaneous lingua franca communication. Participants were 13 adult individuals in two groups with the following first languages: Spanish, Chinese, Polish, Portuguese, Czech, Telugu, Korean and Russian. All subjects had spent a minimum of six months in the U.S. and had at least intermediate knowledge of English before arriving. Both Group 1 (7 students) and Group 2 (6 students) participated in a 30-minute discussion about the following topics: housing in the area, jobs, and local customs. The conversations were undirected, and uncoached. Subjects said what they wanted. No native speaker was present. Conversations were recorded and then transcribed, which resulted in a 13,726 word database. After a week participants were given the chance to listen to their

conversations and were asked to discuss their thought processes using a "think aloud" technique.

Data analysis focused on the types of formulaic units given in Table 1 above. The questions I sought to answer can be summarized as follows:

– How does the use of formulas relate to the ad hoc generated expressions in the data?
– What type of fixed expressions did the subjects prefer?
– What formulas did speakers create on their own?

3.2. Findings

The database consists of 13,726 words. Table 2 below shows the number of words that represent the six types of formulaic units that I focused on in the database. Words were counted in each type of formulaic chunk in the transcripts. Following are samples for each unit:

(3)   Grammatical units: *I am going to stay here; you have to do that*
        Fixed semantic units: *after a while, for the time being, once a month, for a long time*
        Phrasal verbs: *They were worried about me; Take care of the kids; I am trying to remember*
        Speech formulas: *not bad; that's why; you know; I mean*
        Situation-bound utterances: *How are you?; How about you?; That's fine*
        Idioms: *gives me a ride; that makes sense; figure out what I want*

Table 2. Number of words that represent the six types of formulaic units

Gramm. Units	Fixed Sem. Units	Phrasal Verbs	Speech Formulas	Situation-bound Utterances	Idioms	Total
102	235	281	250	57	115	1040

What is striking is the relatively low occurrence of formulaic expressions in the database. It is only 7.6 percent of the total words. Even if we know that this low percentage refers only to one particular database, and the results may change significantly if our focus is on other databases it is still much less than linguists speak about when they address the issue of formulaicity in native speaker conversation. Hymes (1972) pointed out that an immense portion of verbal behavior consists of linguistic routines. Bolinger suggested that "speakers do at least as much remembering as they do putting together" (Bolinger 1976: 2). Fillmore also found that "an enormously large amount of natural language is formulaic, automatic and rehearsed, rather than propositional, creative or freely generated" (Fillmore 1976a: 24). Analyzing computer databases Altenberg (1998) went even further: he claimed that almost 80% of our language production can be considered formulaic. Biber et al. (1999:990), in their study of "lexical bundles", defined as "sequences of word forms that commonly go together in natural discourse", irrespective of their structural make-up or idiomaticity, argued that conversation has a larger amount of lexical bundle types than academic prose.

All these authors define formulaicity in a different way, and their numbers and percentages change depending on their definition. Being aware of these facts we can still say that native speakers use fixed expressions to a great extent. Formulas are natural consequences of everyday language use, and language users feel comfortable using them because fixed expressions usually keep them out of trouble since they mean similar things to members of a particular speech community.

Even if our database is very limited and does not let us make generalizations about lingua franca communication, one thing seems to be obvious. As far as formulaic language use is concerned there seems to be a significant difference between native speaker communication and lingua franca communication. Non-native speakers appear to rely on prefabricated expressions in their lingua franca language production to a much smaller extent than native speakers. The question is why this is so. But before making an attempt to give an answer to the question we should look at Table 2 that shows the distribution of formula types in the database.

Most frequent occurrences are registered in three groups: fixed semantic units, phrasal verbs and speech formulas. However, we have to be careful with speech formulas that constitute a unique group because if we examine the different types of expressions within the group we can see that three expressions *(you know*; *I / you mean*; *you're right*) account for 66.8 percent

(167 out of 250) out of all words counted in this group. The kind of frequency that we see in the use of these three expressions is not comparable to any other expressions in the database. This seems to make sense because these particular speech formulas may fulfill different functions such as back-channeling, filling a gap, and the like. They are also used very frequently by native speakers so it is easy for non-native speakers to pick them up.

If we disregard speech formulas for the reason explained above, formulas that occur in higher frequency than any other expressions are fixed semantic units and phrasal verbs. We did not have a native speaker control group but we can speculate that this might not be so in native speaker communication. It can be hypothesized that native speakers use the groups of formulas in a relatively balanced way, or at least in their speech production fixed semantic units and phrasal verbs do not show priority to the extent shown in lingua franca communication. How can this preference of fixed semantic units and phrasal verbs by non-native speakers be explained? How does this issue relate to the first observation about the amount of formulas in native speaker communication and lingua franca communication?

As the "think aloud" sessions demonstrated the two issues are interrelated. ELF speakers usually avoid the use of formulaic expressions not necessarily because they do not know these phrases but because they are worried that their interlocutors will not understand them properly. They are reluctant to use language that they know, or perceive to be figurative or semantically less transparent (see also Philip 2005). ELF speakers try to come as close to the compositional meaning of expressions as possible because they think that if there is no figurative and/or metaphorical meaning involved their interlocutors will process the English words and expressions the way they meant them. Since lingua franca speakers come from different socio-cultural backgrounds and represent different cultures the mutual knowledge they may share is the knowledge of the linguistic code. Consequently, semantic analyzability plays a decisive role in ELF speech production. This assumption is supported by the fact that the most frequently used formulaic expressions are the fixed semantic units and phrasal verbs in which there is semantic transparency to a much greater extent than in idioms, situation-bound utterances or speech formulas. Of course, one can argue that phrasal verbs may frequently express figurative meaning and function like idioms such as *I never hang out…*; *they will kick me out from my home...* However when I found cases like this in the

database, I listed the phrasal verb among the category "idioms" rather than "phrasal verbs". So the group of phrasal verbs above contains expressions in which there is usually clear semantic transparency.

The use of semantically transparent language resulted in less misunderstandings and communication breakdowns than expected. This finding corresponds with House's observation about the same phenomena (House 2003). The insecurity experienced by lingua franca speakers make them establish a unique set of rules for interaction which may be referred to as an inter-culture, according to Koole and ten Thije (1994: 69) a "culture constructed in cultural contact".

Another example of this interesting phenomenon in the database is the endeavor of speakers creating their own formulas that can be split into two categories. In the first category we can find expressions that are used only once and demonstrate an effort to sound metaphorical. However, this endeavor is usually driven by the L1 in which there may be an equivalent expression for the given idea. For instance:

(4)   *it is almost skips from my thoughts*
        you are not very rich in communication
        take a school

The other category comprises expressions that are created on the spot during the conversations and are picked up by the members of the ad hoc speech community. One of the participants creates or coins an expression that is needed in the discussion of a given topic. This unit functions like a *target formula* the use of which is accepted by the participants in the given conversation, and is demonstrated by the fact that other participants also pick it up and use it. However, this is just a temporary formula that may be entirely forgotten when the conversation is over. For instance:

(5)   *we connect each other very often*
        native American

Lingua franca speakers frequently coin or create their own ways of expressing themselves effectively, and the mistakes they may make will carry on in their speech even though the correct form is there for them to imitate. For instance, several participants adopted the phrase *native Americans* to refer to native speakers of English. Although in the "think aloud" conversation session, the correct expression (*native speaker of*

English) was repeated several times by one of the researchers, the erroneous formula "native Americans" kept being used by the lingua franca speakers. They even joked about it and said that the use of target formulas coined by them in their temporary speech community was considered like a "joint venture" and created a special feeling of camaraderie in the group.

The avoidance of genuine formulaic language and preference for semantically transparent expressions can be explained by another factor. The analysis of the database and the "think aloud" sessions shed light on something that is hardly discussed in the literature. It seems that multiword chunks might not help L2 processing in the same way they help L1 processing. Speaking about native speaker communication Wray (2002) pointed out that if processing is to be minimized, it will be advantageous to work with large lexical units where possible, storing multiword strings whole as if they were single words. In some cases this will make it possible for speakers to go to their mental lexicon and pull out a single entry that expresses a complete message meaning (e.g., *How do you do*; *Fancy meeting you here!*). However, lingua franca speakers usually do not know how flexible the formulas are linguistically, i.e., what structural changes they allow without losing their original function and/or meaning. Linguistic form is a semantic scaffold; if it is defective, the meaning will inevitably fall apart. This is what lingua franca speakers worry about as was revealed in the "think aloud" sessions. The "unnaturalness" of their language production from a native speaker perspective is caused more by imperfect phraseology than by inadequate conceptual awareness. These imperfections differ from the kind of alteration and elaboration of conventional phrases that native speakers produce, because there is flawlessness to native-speaker variation that ELF speakers usually fail to imitate. If native speakers do alter conventional expressions, they make any necessary changes to the grammar and syntax as a matter of course. This way they ensure that the expression flows uninterruptedly from word to word and expression to expression, and this really helps processing. However, this does not appear to work the same way for lingua franca speakers who may not be able to continue the expression if they break down somewhere in the middle of its use.

We can say that formulaic language use in ELF communication points to the fact that with no native speakers participating in the language game the lingua franca interlocutors still make an effort in their own way to keep the original rules of the game. This means that they try to use formulas that appear to be the best means to express their immediate communicative

goals. The fixed expressions they use most frequently are the ones that have clear compositional meaning which makes their interpretation easy. As the examples in (5) demonstrate, lingua franca communicators may also create new formulas if the need arises.

4. Lingua franca and pragmatic theory

The second question to be answered is how pragmatic theories explain lingua franca communication in which basic concepts such as common ground, mutual knowledge, cooperation, and relevance gain new meaning. Seeking an answer to this question I will review two important issues in pragmatic theory:

  – cooperation, common ground, and mutual knowledge; and
  – literal and non-literal meaning.

4.1. Lingua franca speaker behavior

Meierkord (1998) noted that studies on lingua franca all stress the cooperative nature of lingua franca communication. The question is whether this really is cooperation or a particular type of collaboration. Conversations in our database point to the fact that ELF speakers primarily have their communicative goals rather than cooperation in mind. They want to get their message through with all possible communicative means at their disposal, and they want to make sure that their meaning is understood. But in order to do so they do not necessarily look for common ground or mutual knowledge. Rather, they focus on linguistic means and certain discourse strategies as the following examples demonstrate:

(6)   German: – *So you own a house.*
       Urdu: – *Yes, I have a house. I bought it… that's mine. Nice house.*
       German: – *OK, OK, this is what I am saying. The house is yours. You own it.*

(7)   Pakistanese: – *You said you live with your son. So your wife is not here.*
       Chinese: – *Yes, I am alone. I am with my son.*
       Columbian: – *Will your wife come to visit?*
       Chinese: – *Yes, she came yesterday.*
       Pakistani: – *Did she come from China?*
       Chinese: – *Yes, she arrived from Nanjing.*

As the examples show ELF speakers usually try to achieve their communicative goals with discourse means such as repetitions, paraphrasing, giving more information than needed, and using words and expressions whose most salient meaning coincides with their literal meaning rather than seeking what common ground and knowledge they share with their interlocutors. This is true at least for the first phase of production and/or comprehension. These findings are in line with House's observations (House 2003). She analyzed the preliminary results of part of a long-term study of ELF talk among university students in Germany involving a variety of real-life and simulated conversations. The first major tendency observed by House was the dominating, self-centered behavior of ELF speakers. Subjects engaged in parallel monologues and exhibited no fine-tuning of moves to fit their interlocutors' needs. They ignored questions, and there was a lack of prefacing or mitigating of dissimilative action. New topics were usually started without preparation or initiation. The analysis of our database showed similar speaker-hearer performance. However, this egocentric communicative behavior goes together with a special kind of camaraderie and consensus orientation. Both House's findings and my own point to the fact that lingua franca speakers do not ignore their interlocutors' needs, rather they know that they have very little in common both culturally and socio-linguistically, and act accordingly. As claimed above, the main thing they can rely on in getting their message through is the linguistic code, the linguistic system of English which is, to a great extent, given the same way to each party. All ELF speakers have studied the system, structure and vocabulary of the English language. ELF data show that non-native speakers use the linguistic code itself as a common ground rather than the socio-cultural background knowledge that differs significantly with each participant. This strong reliance on the linguistic code results in the priority of literal meaning over non-literal, figurative language and formulaic language. This is why ELF language use generally lacks idiomaticity, which is so important in native-native

communication. For lingua franca interlocutors it is almost always the literal meaning that is the most salient meaning both in production and comprehension. This is where a significant difference between native speaker and lingua franca communication should be noted. While for native speakers either (or both) literal and non-literal meaning can be the most salient meaning, non-native speakers usually consider literal meaning as the most salient meaning of an expression in most situations. If that does not work out they make the necessary modifications by negotiating meaning.

4.2. Cooperation, common ground and mutual knowledge

As stated above, lingua franca speakers demonstrated a very egocentric approach to language production and comprehension. It is not that they did not want to be cooperative, or relevant, or committed to the conversation. Rather, in the first phase of communication, instead of looking for common ground, they articulated their own intentions with whatever linguistic means they had immediate access to. This does not mean, of course, that lingua franca communication is not a collaborative phenomenon. Rather collaboration happens in a different way than in native-native communication.

It is not just lingua franca speaker behavior that has directed attention to the egocentric behavior of speaker-hearers as well as to the problems with the interpretation of cooperation, common ground and mutual knowledge. Current research in cognitive psychology conducted with native speakers (cf. egocentric approach: Keysar and Bly 1995; Barr and Keysar 2005; and graded salience hypothesis: Giora 1997, 2003), has also pointed out that individual, egocentric endeavors of interactants play a much more decisive role in communication than current pragmatic theories envision. What interlocutors actually do is not always supported by current pragmatic theories that primarily seem to emphasize the collaborative character of interaction and modularity of processing, and usually consider the goals and beliefs of the interlocutors of secondary importance. Speakers are expected to design utterances that listeners can understand, and listeners are supposed to interpret utterances the way they were intended. Because ambiguity is pervasive in language use, pragmatic theories assume that speakers and listeners should strive to speak and understand against the background of a mutual perspective. However, Barr and Keysar (2005: 23) argued that speakers and listeners commonly violate their mutual

knowledge when they produce and understand language. Their behavior is egocentric because it is rooted in the speakers' or listeners' own knowledge instead of in mutual knowledge. People turn out to be poor estimators of what others know. Speakers usually underestimate the ambiguity and overestimate the effectiveness of their utterances (Keysar and Henly 2002). The findings here reinforce Stalnaker's observation that "It is part of the concept of presupposition that the speaker assumes that the members of his audience presuppose everything that he presupposes. They may, of course, be mistaken, but they realize this and have systematic strategies for resolving such discrepancies" (Stalnaker 1978: 321).

Findings about the egocentric approach of interlocutors to communication are also confirmed by Giora's (1997, 2003) graded salience hypothesis and Kecskes's (2003, 2004) dynamic model of meaning. Interlocutors seem to consider their conversational experience more important than prevailing norms of informativeness. Giora's main argument is that knowledge of salient meanings plays a primary role in the process of using and comprehending language. She claimed that "privileged meanings, meanings foremost on our mind, affect comprehension and production primarily, regardless of context or literality" (Giora 2003: 103). Privileged meanings are the results of prior conversational experience. They depend on familiarity, frequency and conventionality. Kecskes' dynamic model of meaning also emphasizes that what the speaker says relies on prior conversational experience reflected in lexical choices in production, and how the listener understands what is said in the actual situational context also depends on his/her prior conversational experience with the use of lexical items applied in the speaker's utterances. Smooth communication depends primarily on the match between the two. Cooperation, relevance, and reliance on possible mutual knowledge come in to play only after the speaker's ego is satisfied and the listener's egocentric, most salient interpretation is processed. In comprehension it is not that we first decode the language and then try to make sense of it but we try to make sense of it right away and make adjustments if language does not make sense (Gibbs 1994, 1999; Giora 1997; Kecskes 2004, 2006). In production the speaker's primary goal is to formulate the message according to her/his intention. Barr and Keysar (2005) argued that the mere observation that a speaker produces an utterance that is in alignment with mutual knowledge does not warrant the inference that she or he directly computed that knowledge as mutual at any time. The speaker may have or may have simply used information that was simultaneously available and salient to him or her and

the interlocutor. According to their findings, it appears that mutual knowledge is most likely implemented as a mechanism for detecting and correcting errors instead of an intrinsic, routine process of the language processor. The following excerpt from the database support this assumption:

(8)   Br: – *Have you ever heard about au pair before?*
       Col: – *No, what is au pair?*
       H-K: – *It's a French word.*
       Br: – *We come as an exchange to take care of kids.*
       Col: – *What kids?*
       Br: – *Kids in the host family. We live with the host family.*
       H-K: – *By the way, how about the kids? How do you know what to do with theme?*
       Br: – *We have to go to training.*

The participants of this interaction are girls from Brazil, Columbia and Hong Kong. The Brazilian girl works as an "au pair". As the conversation unfolds they say what they think with simple linguistic means. They create mutual knowledge on the spot, making sure that their interlocutors really understand their intention.

It is important, therefore to rethink exactly what it means to be cooperative, a concept that is at the heart of most theories of language use. For one, the supposition that speakers strive to be maximally informative in lexical selection does not seem to fit what they actually do. Perhaps a better description of what they do is simply to rely on their past and current discourse experience and select the terms that are most strongly available to them. It is not through the individual sentence by which language users demonstrate they are cooperative, but rather it is how they behave over the course of the conversation. So cooperation and relevance may be discourse-level rather than sentence-level phenomena.

4.3. Literal meaning and non-literal meaning

In the lingua franca database formulaic language was analyzed, and an overwhelming predominance of expressions used in their literal meaning was observed in both production and comprehension. This supports the assumption that literal meaning has both linguistic and psychological

reality for non-native speakers because for them the most salient meaning of lexical units in the lingua franca is almost always the literal meaning. This finding may have relevance to the ongoing debate in pragmatics literature about the content of 'what is said' and the semantics – pragmatics interface.

Currently there has been a heated debate going on about literal meaning that has usually been defined as a type of pre-theoretical semantic or linguistic meaning (Ariel 2002). The classical definition (see Katz 1977; Searle 1978) says that linguistic meaning is direct, sentential, specified by grammar, and context-free. Being fully compositional, linguistic meaning is generated by linguistic knowledge of lexical items, combined with linguistic rules. According to Grice literal meaning is also "what is said" (Grice 1978). He actually claimed that "what is said" is "closely related to the conventional meaning of words" (Grice 1975: 44).

In recent pragmatic theories there is a tendency to distinguish three levels of interpretation instead of the Gricean two: the proposition literally expressed (compositional meaning), explicitly communicated content ("explicature" or "impliciture") and implicitly communicated content (implicature). There is no consensus on the explicit nature of pragmatically enriched content. The debate is about whether the pragmatically enriched content is explicitly communicated or not. The relevance theorists argue that the pragmatically enriched content is explicitly communicated so they use the term "explicature". However, most neo-Griceans (e.g., Bach 1994; Horn 2005) resist the term "explicature" because they do not consider the pragmatically enriched content explicitly communicated. Therefore they prefer to use the term "impliciture" for these cases. For Bach (1999), the impliciture is the implicit component of what is said, and it is not explicitly communicated. Recanati (2001) speaks about "what is said$_{max}$" in these cases. The pragmatically enriched content is a partially pragmatically-determined proposition which may accommodate different degrees of explicitness and implicitness. It appears to be necessary to distinguish this level because in most cases the proposition literally expressed is not something the speaker could possibly mean. For instance:

(9)   At a gas station:
       – *I am the black Mercedes over there. Could you fill me up with*
         diesel, please.
       – *Sure.*

Berg (1993: 410) goes so far to say that: "What we understand from an utterance could never be just the literal meaning of the sentence uttered". Although actual communicative behavior of native speaker interlocutors in many cases points to the fact that Berg may be right, we will need to reject this assumption both in native speaker communication and lingua franca communication. Examples from the ELF database demonstrate that literality plays a powerful role for ELF speakers.

Bach (2007: 5) said that (actual situational) context does not literally determine, in the sense of constituting, what the speaker means. What the speaker really means is a matter of his communicative intention although what he could reasonably mean depends on what information is mutually salient. Bach further argued that taking mutually salient information into account goes beyond semantics, for what a speaker means need not be the same as what the uttered sentence means. This claim raises two important questions from the perspective of lingua franca speakers.

What is the "mutually salient information" for lingua franca speakers? Salience is based on familiarity, frequency, common prior experience (Giora 1997, 2003). Mutually salient information (unless it is connected with the ongoing speech situation as we saw it when ELF speakers created their own formulas) is something ELF speakers lack because they speak several different L1s and represent different cultures. For them mutually salient information should be directly connected with the actual speech situation and/or encoded in the linguistic code so that it can be "extracted" by the hearer without any particular inference based on non-existing common prior experience in lingua franca communication. Inferencing for the lingua franca hearer usually coincides with decoding. It is essential therefore that pragmatics for lingua franca interlocutors not be something "…they communicate over and above the semantic content of the sentence" as King and Stanley (2005: 117) assume. For ELF speakers "pragmatics operates even when there is no gap between semantic content and conveyed content" as Bach (2007) says (see below). For lingua franca speakers the semantic content is usually the conveyed content. If this is not clear from their utterance they try to reinforce it with repetition, paraphrasing or other means as in examples (7) and (8). This assumption seems to be in line with Bach's argument about native speaker language processing:

> It is generally though not universally acknowledged that explaining how a speaker can say one thing and manage to convey something else requires something like Grice's theory of conversational implicature, according to which the hearer relies on certain maxims, or presumptions (Bach and

Harnish 1979: 62-65), to figure out what the speaker means. However, it is commonly overlooked that these maxims or presumptions are operative even when the speaker means exactly what he says. They don't kick in just when something is implicated. After all, it is not part of the meaning of a sentence that it must be used literally, strictly in accordance with its semantic content. Accordingly, it is a mistake to suppose that "pragmatic content is what the speaker communicates over and above the semantic content of the sentence" (King and Stanley 2005: 117). Pragmatics doesn't just fill the gap between semantic and conveyed content. It operates even when there is no gap. So it is misleading to speak of the border or, the so-called 'interface' between semantics and pragmatics. This mistakenly suggests that pragmatics somehow takes over when semantics leaves off. It is one thing for a sentence to have the content that it has and another thing for a speech act of uttering the sentence to have the content it has. Even when the content of the speech act is the same as that of the sentence, that is a pragmatic fact, something that the speaker has to intend and the hearer has to figure out (Bach 2007: 5).

Bach's conclusion is correct. Even if the content of the utterance is the same as that of the sentence, the fact that the speaker uttered it constitutes a pragmatic act that the speaker has to intend and the hearer has to figure out. Inference does not kick in just when something is implicated. It is always there. This may have sometimes been overlooked in native speaker communication where there is much more of a gap between what is said and what is meant than in lingua franca communication in which it is of utmost importance that the speaker should mean what s/he says otherwise "common ground" (that is compositional meaning of linguistic expressions) is lost for the hearer.

The other important issue that lingua franca communication points to is the matter of salient meaning in production and comprehension. The critical variable should be saliency rather than literalness of the lexical unit (e.g., Giora 2003; Katz 2005; Kecskes 2004). Unfortunately, the two are often mistakenly equated. Here is Coulson and Oakley (2005: 1513): "Indeed, there is often a systematic relationship between the literal and non-literal meanings of a given utterance. We suggest below that the systematic character of this relationship is best seen in the way that literal meaning, defined here alternately as coded and salient meanings (following Ariel 2002a)…" Ariel (2002: 376) also seems to have misinterpreted Giora's proposal saying that "…In a series of articles, Giora (1997, 1999a, 2002, this issue, in press; Giora and Fein, 1999b) has suggested substituting the classical, ahistorically defined notion of literal meaning with the concept of

'salient' meaning." To my knowledge Giora has never suggested "substituting" the notion of literal meaning with salient meaning. Explaining her graded salience hypothesis (GSH), Giora suggested that the literal priority model ("the lexicon proposes and context disposes") should be revised. Instead of postulating the priority of literal meaning, the priority of salient (e.g., conventional, familiar, frequent, predictable) meaning should be assumed (Giora 1997, 2003). At a later point in her article Ariel also refers to the fact that Giora actually argues that "some context-invariant meanings are primary". This is what Ariel says:

> Note that while Gibbs and Giora agree that the literal-figurative dichotomy is not crucial, their positions are quite contradictory. Both base their claims on psycholinguistic experimentation, but Gibbs finds support only for a contextually enriched meaning (the explicature) as a minimal meaning, whereas Giora argues that some context-invariant meanings are primary, despite their contextual inappropriateness. Gibbs' explicatures are a later product, she argues (Ariel 2002: 377).

Of course, Giora accepts that there is "some context-invariant meaning" because she does not want to substitute "literal meaning" for "salient meaning". In fact, she claims that the most salient meaning(s) can be either literal or figurative or both (Giora 2003).

In a recent paper (Kecskes, forthcoming) I proposed to draw a distinction between "collective salience" and "individual salience" because prior experience with a lexical unit or utterance changes not only by speech communities but also by individuals. This division is especially important for lingua franca communication in which speakers do not belong to the same speech community as is the case with native speakers. As a consequence, lingua franca speakers can hardly rely on collective salience. This is why they avoid formulaic language that usually expresses some kind of collective salience to the members of a particular speech community. Phrasal units, situation-bound utterances, and idioms do not convey the same message to lingua franca communicators because they come from different language backgrounds and different cultures, and their prior experience with those fixed expressions in the lingua franca is quite limited and differs from one individual to the next. We can almost be sure that native speakers will understand *as a matter of fact*, *welcome aboard*, *piece of cake*, *have another go* in a similar way because they have relatively similar prior experience with those expressions in conversation, which has resulted in the development of a salient meaning for the whole speech community (collective salience). However, this is not the case in

lingua franca communication where what is common for each interlocutor is what the linguistic item actually says.

Conclusion

In an analysis of English Lingua Franca (ELF) data this paper concludes that lingua franca communication can be best explained as a third space phenomenon. Postmodern theory, particularly in anthropology, literature, and cultural and feminist studies, has created the concept of third space, third culture that refers to intermediate spaces – linguistic, discursive and cultural spaces – between established norms (Barnlund 1970; Evanoff 2000). They appear to be problematic because they constitute neither one thing nor another but are, by definition, in-between. The crucial question for ELF research is to investigate how much and/or what kind of autonomy these intermediate spaces can reach by transcending their component sources through a dialectical process to make a new, expanded space that did not exist before or existed in another form.

This study demonstrated that lingua franca speakers do not treat their common language as something different from what they use with native speakers. Rather they are constrained by the specific nature of lingua franca communication, which requires them to use the linguistic code as directly as possible even if their language proficiency would allow them to sound more native-like than they actually do. It should be underlined, however, that this is not a simplistic way of using the common language although a particular simplification is also essential in this language use mode. The complexity of lingua franca can be detected on the discourse rather than the utterance level. Using their linguistic repertoire, lingua franca speakers try to do two things. First, they make an attempt to stick to the original rules of the game inasmuch as it supports their communicative goals, and second, they try to create some ad hoc rules of the game "on-line", during the lingua franca interaction.

Actual speech situations in lingua franca communication can be considered open social situations which do not encourage the use of formulaic language. In native speaker communication we have much more closed social situations defined by the parameters and values taken for granted in them (see Clark 1996: 297). The result of these closed social situations is a highly routine procedure. For instance:

(10)   Car rental desk: – *I have a reservation.*
        Bar: – *Two vodka tonics.*
        Museum ticket booth: – *Three adults and one child.*

In close social situations the participants know their roles. As Clark (1996) says their rights, duties, and potential joint purposes are usually quite clear. All they need to establish is the joint purpose for that occasion. That they can do with a routine procedure. The first interlocutor initiates the conversational routine often with a phrasal unit, and the second interlocutor completes it by complying. Use of conversational routines and formulas requires shared background knowledge of which there is very little in lingua franca communication. Therefore it is quite clear why lingua franca communicators avoid formulaic language. For them literality plays a powerful role.

English Lingua Franca can hardly be considered a language, or even a variety of language. Rather it is *a language use mode*, which should be described from a cognitive-pragmatic perspective. The language competence of ELF speakers is put to use under particular circumstances in which the participants usually represent several different languages and cultures. The result is a language use mode which has some common pragmatic, discourse and grammatical features. Therefore, the primary goal of ELF research should be to investigate discourse strategies that keep this language use mode coherent, pragmatic structures that give its uniqueness and lexico-grammatical features that account for its closeness to standard English. Further research should also focus on Lingua Franca Pragmatics that will not only describe the characteristic features of lingua franca communication but also relate the new findings to existing concepts within the pragmatics paradigm such as intention, cooperation, common ground, mutual knowledge, inference and relevance. This paper has been an attempt in that direction.

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