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COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY
An ELF perspective on critical contexts

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Abstract – This paper examines current ways in which the concept of 'community' has been operationalized in sociolinguistics and how they relate to thinking about communication. It argues that in the age of globalization, well-established ideas about community need to be radically re-thought in order to ensure compatibility with contemporary life, characterized by de-territorialization, fluidity and virtuality. This is particularly crucial when it comes to high-stakes encounters in critical contexts, such as international conflict mediation, interpreting, asylum procedures and international publishing. These are very often carried out via (English as) a lingua franca, (E)LF for short. Describing and analyzing these encounters is not just a matter of carrying out sociolinguistic, ethnographic and anthropological research but is essentially an applied linguistic undertaking, in that the conditions of ELF communication are inextricably interwoven with significant socio-political, socio-economic and humanitarian issues of misunderstanding, inequity and disenfranchisement. It is therefore imperative to think clearly about the concepts that provide the basis for wide-reaching decisions in these critical contexts. The contribution of ELF research is thus that it not only helps us to understand how "communication communities" work; but also has an important part to play in the critical appraisal of well-entrenched but potentially unsuitable and anachronistic notions in sociolinguistics and in bringing our conceptual and methodological tools in line with the realities of globalization.

Keywords: globalization; communication; community; English as a Lingua Franca; high-stakes encounters.

1. Introduction

Throughout the sections, The contributions to this issue were prepared for publication in a "critical context" that none of the authors imagined when they met at the Lecce PRIN conference in December 2019, when they were still able to hold extensive discussions, without masks covering their mouth and nose, at the sessions in a tightly filled auditorium and at a lively conference dinner. During the Covid-19 crisis that followed less than 3 months later, the French sociologist and philosopher Edgar Morin gave an interview to the weekly news magazine *L'Obs* (previously *Nouvel Observateur*), which he began with this enlightening characterization of globalization:

> Cette crise nous montre **que la mondialisation est une interdépendance sans solidarité**. Le mouvement de globalisation a certes produit l'unification techno-économique de la planète, mais il n'a pas fait progresser **la compréhension entre les peoples**.
> [This crisis shows us that **globalization is interdependence without solidarity**. The globalization movement has certainly produced the techno-economic unification of the planet, but it has not advanced **understanding between peoples**.] (Le Bailly, Courage 2020, my trnl., emphasis added)

The relationship between "solidarity" and "understanding between peoples" that Morin refers to requires communication among people for its realization, and for this, in this globalized age, a lingua franca is frequently a necessary – but of course not sufficient – prerequisite. More often than not, this lingua franca is English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). As essentially implicated in globalization, ELF communication necessarily involves the reconsideration of the concepts of culture, community and communication. How these relate to inequality, and thus a lack of solidarity, is an issue that is particularly prominent in the present collection of papers. My purpose in this contribution is to consider how all of these notions are intrinsically inter-related in a conceptualization of ELF research as an area of applied linguistic enquiry.

2. Communication and community: Traditional notions

The first thing to stress, as is evident from the projects that are discussed in this special issue, is that the values and beliefs that represent 'the culture' of a particular community are not transferable to other communal contexts. On the contrary, the attempt to make them so, can, and very often does, create conditions of inequality. We see this very clearly in the entrenched assumption of the transferability of the norms of Kachru's (1985, 1992) Inner Circle English usage as necessary for effective communication in and across the other Kachruvian circles. If there is one thing that ELF study makes obvious it is that conformity to these norms is neither necessary nor sufficient, and that people are quite capable of exploiting the potential in the language expediently in non-conformist ways to meet their communicative needs.

The main problem here is that in following the well-established tradition of 'thinking in circles', what is in focus is how communication is enacted in a particular language/variety by a particular community, and this actually tends to deflect attention from how language generally is used as a communicative resource. Thus there is an assumption that communication is a function of language – but what becomes particularly clear from the study of ELF interactions is that, as with all natural uses of language, the reverse is

the case: **language is a function of communication**. So the crucial question to be asked about ELF users is not what kind of language they produce but how they manage to communicate with each other.

This is not a question that the established tradition I have referred to is equipped to address. Both the disciplinary description of language and the pedagogic prescription derived from it focus on how members of a particular community use their shared language to communicate with each other. So it is that Hymes defines communicative competence as the communal knowledge on the basis of which a judgement can be made as to how far a particular sample of a language is possible (in accordance with encoding rules), feasible (easy to process), appropriate to context, and actually performed. He comments:

> There is an important sense in which a **normal member** of a community has knowledge with respect to all these aspects of the communicative systems available to him. (Hymes 1972, p. 282, emphasis added)

What is important about this sense is not explained, nor indeed how a "normal member" would be identified. But it has to be pointed out that, particularly in today's globalized world, there is an important sense in which there is no "normal member of a community". So if being able to communicate depended on being one, communication via ELF, or any other lingua franca, would be an impossibility.

But the way we have come to live over recent decades – and which may of course be about to change drastically again – means that Hymes' definition of a (speech) community as "a local unit, characterized for its members by common locality and primary interaction" (Hymes 1962, p. 30) is definitely a thing of the past. The impact of digital communication and digital media on contemporary social life has revolutionized our sense of what it is like to participate in a community. And the Covid-19 crisis has dramatically increased the momentum of this change: while on-site socializing, conferences and travel have become impossible, university and school teachers and students, for example, over just the first half of the year 2020, have developed their expertise in online teaching and learning, conducting exams and holding meetings of various sizes, via a great variety of software tools, at a rate most of them never thought possible.

In the wake of these drastic changes, the view of communication as intrinsically linked to traditional notions of 'community' that has been so pervasive in sociolinguistics will require reconsideration. Consider what Labov has to say:

> the linguistic behavior of individuals cannot be understood without knowledge of the communities that they belong to (Labov 2006, p.380)

How then, one might ask, does it come about that individuals from different local communities using English (or any other lingua franca) do manage to understand each other's linguistic behaviour even if they have little or no knowledge of the communities their interlocutors belong to? And if, as researchers, we want to understand their behavior as communication, there seems to be little if any point in trying to track down linguistic or cultural traces of the communities they 'come from'.

The phenomenon of ELF as the currently most widespread lingua franca thus challenges the validity of traditional ways of conceiving of communication as associated with clearly pre-defined languages and communities. As an intrinsic aspect of globalization, it calls for a radical change in sociolinguistic thinking. As Blommaert puts it:

> I believe that *globalization* forces us – whether we like it or not – to an *aggiornamento of our theoretical and methodological toolkit*. Much as modernism defined most of the current widespread tools of our trade, the transition towards a different kind of social system forces us to *redefine* them. Such an exercise, however iconoclastic it may seem at first, cannot be avoided or postponed. (Blommaert 2010, p. xiii)

In keeping with this *aggiornamento*,

> […] many of the *traditional concepts of sociolinguistics* will have to be sacrificed in favour of more open and flexible ones, capable of capturing the unpredictability of sociolinguistic life in the age of globalization. (Blommaert 2010, p.196, emphases added)

One traditional concept that stands in need of sacrifice if we are to capture the reality of global communication is that of the significance of a variety of a language. This is particularly evident when considering the relationship between ELF and World Englishes (WE) thinking. In Kachru's well known concentric model (Kachru 1985), English in the world is divided according to its occurrence in three kinds of user domain. In the Inner and Outer Circles these uses are socially conventionalized as communal means of communication and their linguistic regularities can be identified as constituting distinct varieties. This is what lends them equal status, each a World Englishes variety in its own right. Beyond these are users in the so-called Expanding Circle, whose English, like that of the Outer Circle, has a marked tendency to vary from the normative conventions of Inner Circle native speaker usage, but whose variations are not regular enough to have stabilized into a variety. Since these users are not normal members of a variety-using community, they would, on Hymes' account, be deficient in communicative competence – still, in SLA terms, at some interlanguage stage of acquisition. But they obviously are capable of variously exploiting the

language as a communicative resource. And in this respect there is no difference between these users of English and the variety users of the Inner and Outer Circles: the distinction between them is based simply on formal linguistic grounds. All uses of English, whether they are assigned variety status or not, are variable in that they adaptable to communicative requirement, and in this sense, all are expanding. If they were not, they would be dysfunctional. And of course, especially in the current globalized world, the use of English is not enacted within the confines of any circle. Its communicative use as a lingua franca cuts across all three circles.

The Kachru concentric model is based on just the kind of traditional concepts of variety and community that Blommaert suggests need to be abandoned in "the age of globalization", and ELF researchers have long since pointed out that insistence on these concepts impedes an understanding of the nature of English as a global means of communication (Seidlhofer 2011). But globalization, in which ELF communication is so intrinsically implicated, is not only a matter of academic sociolinguistic interest. It is something which is experienced as having a direct and decisive effect on the everyday reality of people's lives. What linguistic forms ELF communication takes and what features of other lingual resources can be traced in its usage may be of descriptive linguistic interest, but its users, like any other language users, are not focused on what form their language takes, but on its effect, on the communicative expediency of getting their message across in ways that best serve their purposes. If this pragmatic fact is ignored, this poses problems in all human communication, but these can be especially acute in contexts of ELF interaction.

One obvious reason why this should be so is that these contexts are outside the comfort zone of familiar experience. Despite the increasing influence of digitalization, the primary socialization of human beings is generally speaking within their own local communities, where they can presuppose shared knowledge of a common language and the socio-cultural customs and conventions that regulate its use. But ELF users, who by definition come from different linguacultural communities, obviously cannot rely on such presupposition. Communication always requires some negotiation for interlocutors to converge on some common ground of understanding, but this is, of course, more difficult if there is a lack of common ground to begin with. The problem for ELF interactants is essentially how to find ways of communicating with strangers.[1] They

[1] 'The stranger' is another concept in sociology worth reconsidering in the light of globalization; it goes back to Georg Simmel's (1921) original categorization ('stranger' vs 'outsider' vs 'wanderer') and has been widely used in the sociological literature, e.g. by Erving Goffman (1963) and Zygmunt Baumann (1991). See also Best (2019).

obviously cannot do this by conforming to the communal norms of some native speaker usage. What they seek to do, as ELF research shows very clearly, is to draw expediently on those features of English, or any other lingual resource available to them, which have the most communicative value in getting their meaning across and achieving their communicative purpose. This is not always easy to do, however, for the use of language in this freewheeling way runs directly counter to the orthodox doctrine of communicative competence that most ELF users have been schooled in. This is likely to have an inhibiting effect on their effective use of language, especially of course when such use continues to be stigmatized as incompetent and in need of correction.

To summarize. The reality of globalization, and so of global ELF communication as one of both its causes and consequences, calls for a radical rethinking of traditional concepts. This is particularly obvious with the concept of communication defined in reference to established communal norms. The correlative form-function mappings that result from it cannot account for inter-communal communication, for how members from different lingua-cultural communities manage to interact with each other. But it is this anachronistic normative concept that still has the status of institutional authority and imposes a frame of reference within which uses of English are evaluated. This poses major problems in what I have called high-stakes domains of interaction and in effect creates or aggravates conditions of inequality in one way or another. These are the critical contexts I refer to in the title of this paper.

3. Critical contexts

One such domain, for example, is that of diplomacy, international conflict mediation and resolution, arbitration and peacebuilding (Kirkpatrick *et al*. 2016). This typically takes the form of negotiation by means of (English used as) a lingua franca by speakers of different languages. It is hard to imagine any communicative activity more complex than this, involving as it does the attempt at some reconciliation of opposing positions, some convergence on common ground in adverse conditions. But this is communicative convergence without linguistic conformity: the whole process is enacted through the expedient use of whatever lingual and other resources the participants have at their disposal. What matters is the communicative affordance of the language, not what form it takes.

Conflict resolution negotiations are, of course, not only carried out via the use of ELF but also by means of interpreters. But adherence to a normative concept of communication is also problematic for interpreting. When mediating meaning across expressions in different languages,

interpreters would generally assume that the expressions would conform to established norms of usage. But where negotiations involve the use of ELF, as is commonly the case, interpreters clearly cannot rely on this assumption. They are confronted with a disparity between the English that conforms to native speaker norms, which they are accustomed, and trained, to translate, and the non-conformist uses they now find they have to cope with: For such ELF uses, the customary practice of identifying equivalences between the rules and usage conventions of different communal languages is no longer feasible or appropriate (Albl-Mikasa 2013; Albl-Mikasa, House 2020; Pöllabauer 2004; Taviano 2013).

I want now to consider two other critical contexts in more detail. The first of these is one that the PRIN project has been centrally concerned with and which the research of Maria Grazia Guido and her colleagues has explored so impressively at the University of Salento (Guido 2008, 2012, 2018; Guido *et al.* 2018). I refer to asylum seeking situations and intercultural mediation exchanges in these settings. The Salento research has also been an enquiry into disparity and its consequences, in this case the disparity between the linguacultural attitudes and preconceptions of interactants in the unequal encounters between asylum seekers and immigration officials. What seems to happen is that meanings are assigned to 'what is normal' that both officials and asylum seekers bring to these encounters. The more powerful side tends to prevail and impose their norms on the interpretation of the interaction. Such (albeit often unwitting) norm imposition by the immigration officials and social welfare officers on the disadvantaged/weaker party has the effect of penalizing the refugees by misrepresenting their meanings. But their language can also be used to penalize them by misrepresenting their identity, and this is an aspect of the critical context of asylum seeking that is intrinsically problematic in all such procedures all over the world (see also Seidlhofer 2021, and references therein).

The main purpose of the interrogation of asylum seekers by immigration officials of any state is to determine the validity of their claims for asylum status. Their narratives are interpreted and assessed with a view to establishing the plausibility of what they say about their experiences. But what kind of language they use can also be taken as evidence of 'who they are', whether they 'come from' the countries they say they do. For this purpose, some governments make use of a procedure called 'Language analysis for the Determination of Origin' LADO for short. This is one of several forensic methods, officially approved and paid for by many governments, to investigate the reliability of information supplied by immigrants about their national or regional origin. In actual practice, it is often used to justify the rejection of applications by asylum seekers and their subsequent deportation. The method involves the analysis of phonological

and other linguistic features of short recorded samples of speech on the assumption that these will necessarily bear traces of where their speakers 'are really from'. The procedure is effectively a more elaborate version of the Shibboleth test, and can have similarly dire consequences for those subjected to it (McNamara 2015, 2020).

The interrogations we are concerned with are ELF interactions. Many of the speech samples taken for LADO analysis are from the English spoken by asylum seekers in the course of their ELF interaction with interrogators. It is supposed that it is possible to identify in these samples features of a variety of English unequivocally associated with a particular community. So, for example, a certain lexical or grammatical form, or way of pronouncing certain sounds, is taken to be typical of Nigerian English and so evidence that its occurrence marks the speaker as Nigerian, whatever he or she may claim to the contrary. The obvious problem with this procedure is that it is based on the belief that however the individual's linguistic repertoire may have developed as the natural consequence of varied communicative experiences, the association with a primary 'language' or 'variety' remains as an indelible lifelong marker of origin and identity**.** But if language is emergent and adaptive, then so is the language of the individual, and so is her/his identity. And anyway even where there are traces of origin in an individual's speech, how would they be recognised as distinctive from other features that have accrued over time (Ammer *et al.* 2013; Dorn *et al*. 2014)?

The essential problem with this procedure is that, even more than the face-to-face encounters between refugees and Italian officials, it links traditional concepts of language and community in disregard of the communicative process. What is subjected to analysis is a sample of linguistic text extracted and isolated from the interactive context of the discourse of its occurrence (Widdowson 2020a, Section 4). In communicative encounters in general, people adapt their linguistic behaviour according to who they are communicating with and what outcome they seek to achieve. In the unequal encounters that we are concerned with, the suppliant party is seeking to convince the other party of the validity of their case for asylum – and against deportation. What they say is naturally designed to have that effect but it is conceivable that how they say it is also designed to carry conviction. Thus they might make use of linguistic features which they believe to be prestigious and more likely to be effective in presenting their case. Such features are pragmatically motivated, indicative not of the atavistic origins of asylum seekers but of the immediate exigencies of the kind of communicative encounters they are involved in.

There is no recognition of these exigencies in the sampling of textual data dissociated from the communicative context of the discourse that produced them. As Maryns (2014, p. 315, emphasis added) has pointed out:

> In the data it could be seen how an enormous diversity of people enter the procedure, people of heterogeneous socio-cultural backgrounds who are supposed to motivate their often very complex and contextually dense cases in a bureaucratic context, addressing an internally diversified **group of public officials** with different socio-cultural backgrounds, different relevance conditions and expectations of appropriateness and different ways of speaking.

This leads her to conclude that "the officials' treatment of the cases is based on a preconception of the applicants' belonging to particular **categories of refugeeness**". (Maryns 2014, p. 341, emphasis added). So here again people are expediently being put in boxes of 'belonging', however badly they may fit.

The problems that arise for asylum seekers in the procedures of these interactions are well documented in the work of Guido and her colleagues. However, they are entirely disregarded in the LADO procedures of text analysis – procedures that are claimed to be endorsed by forensic linguistics:

> In principle, LADO is a reasonable endeavor. It is well known that people's lifelong speech patterns are shaped by their regional and social background, and language analysis is used to provide evidence of origin in other areas of forensic linguistics. (Fraser 2013, p. 1)

But the point is that people's regional and social backgrounds may well shift and change and their speech patterns are likely to be reshaped accordingly; in these times of high mobility and migration, this applies to everybody to some degree, but it will certainly be true of refugees that often spend several years on the road. Fraser (2013, p. 1) acknowledges as much:

> Asylum seekers frequently come from communities featuring complex multilingualism or diglossia, and many have been displaced from their home region for long periods, often in mixed refugee camps, resulting in significant modification to their speech. Factors like these can make decisions about who counts as a "native speaker" of a particular language variety genuinely problematic.

But in LADO nevertheless the assumption is made that the procedure can decide which feature of migrants' speech is significant as evidence of origin and which is to be dismissed as subsequent modification. Fraser seems to assume that, though problematic, it is, in principle, possible to discover permanent traces of a particular native speaker variety. But the principle is based on the highly questionable assumption that there are clearly defined varieties tied to stable communities and that these are retained through life as a kind of lectal palimpsest. I would suggest that it is precisely because of displacement, together with the kind of encounter asylum seekers have to

cope with, that their speech samples do not provide evidence of origin, and why LADO is, in principle, not a reasonable endeavour, but on the contrary one that is based on false premises. In spite of the impression of objective scientific rigour suggested by the term 'analysis', and its apparent endorsement by forensic linguistics, it is hard to see the LADO procedures as anything other than *ad hoc*. It is also hard to resist the suspicion that their scientific semblance is used to lend authority to expedient decision making and so in effect as a justification of injustice (Busch 2012, 2017; McNamara *et al*. 2016, 2019).

It seems that the way the LADO procedure operationalizes the notion of community, and what it means to 'belong to' and 'come from' a particular community, is akin to the 19th-century concept going back to Tönnies (1991) characterized by permanence and territorial fixedness. In sociolinguistic terms, it harks back to Hymes' definition of a speech community (quoted above) as intrinsically linked to community members' "common locality and primary interaction" and thus is a far cry from the contemporary reality of de-territorialization, virtuality and fluidity (Delanty 2018; Jansen 2020; see also Widdowson 2020b, this volume). Here the relevance of ELF research, which by definition studies communication **across** what would traditionally be community boundaries, is that it has long realized that we need to overcome these traditional notions of community and to operate with concepts more attuned to contemporary life.

Another critical context in which it seems as if different communities are pitted against one another, despite the well-worn catchphrase of the 'international scientific community', is international academic publishing. This is another setting where the use of 'English' is necessary/obligatory but inequitable, putting as it does some of its users to a disadvantage by being evaluated by gatekeepers against the benchmark of established norms of communicative behaviour in 'native speaker' communities – ignoring the fact that there is no such creature as a 'native speaker/writer of academic English'. In international academic publishing, the predominant means of communication is English, so predominant indeed that it is an essential condition for being international. But it is not enough for a publication to be in English, it also has to be the English that conforms to the established norms of native speaker usage. As with asylum seekers, the lack of conformity is assumed to result in defective communication, and in the case of international publishing this seems to be taken as indicative of defects in academic content as well. So if you want your academic work to be taken seriously and have an impact by being internationally published, you need to make sure that it conforms to the accepted norms. And so it is that many journals advise their potential contributors to get their articles proof-read and corrected by native speakers. These discriminatory practices are due to the

lack of recognition that 'academic English' in this day and age by definition means 'English as a lingua franca' (Mauranen 2012; Seidlhofer 2012).

The still prevailing but anachronistic assumption is that if your English does not measure up to approved norms, not only might its intellectual quality be undervalued, but, more seriously from the publisher point of view, it is likely to reflect negatively on the reputation of the journal. As an example of the kind of reaction it might get, Robert Phillipson in his review of a major book written in English by the German sociolinguist Ulrich Ammon criticizes the language for "countless German-influenced forms that disrupt, without impeding, comprehensibility". (Phillipson 2009, p. 250) How these forms can both disrupt comprehensibility and yet not impede it is itself difficult to comprehend, and anyway if these forms do not impede comprehensibility, what is there to criticise? It would seem that Phillipson is taking objection to what is being said on the grounds that it departs from the Anglophone usage conventions that he, as a native speaker of English, finds comfortable and therefore assumes academic writing should conform to.

One consequence of this normative hegemony is that it privileges the Anglophone academics in Kachru's Inner Circle. This is also where so-called international publishers have their base and so in effect act as gate-keepers who, as is argued in Lillis *et al*. (2010), control the production and circulation of academic work by favouring that which conforms to Anglophone conventions and discriminates against that which does not. They quote what they refer to as a 'telling case' of comments made by a North American reviewer of a journal submission:

> As a general comment the style needs to be polished. In any instance sentences follow each other without logical connections and **the authors often refer to other publications that may not be available to the ordinary unilingual or even bilingual North American reader.** By themselves these two points make it difficult to evaluate the results or the comments passed." (Lillis *et al*. 2010, p. 118, emphasis added)

The clear implication here is that the acceptability of academic work depends not only on conforming to Anglophone usage conventions but as also on meeting the scholarly requirements of Anglophone readers in the North American Inner Circle. Lillis et al comment:

> The significance of this text history is that it raises important questions about the ways in which the global status of English is impacting not only on the linguistic medium of publications but on the linguistic medium of works that are considered **citable** – and hence on which/whose knowledge is being allowed to circulate. (Lillis *et al*. 2010, p.121)

The consequences of being judged and disadvantaged on the grounds of not appearing sufficiently 'Anglo' are thus far-reaching and indeed of existential significance – even in the relatively privileged circles of academics and certainly in the asylum seeking contexts considered above.

What is particularly apparent from this brief discussion of these critical contexts is that in our attempt to understand contemporary life and the human condition in the current globalized world, we need to rise to the challenge of radically rethinking the concepts of communication and community. We need to overhaul what Blommaert in the quotation above refers to as our theoretical and methodological toolkit. And this is what ELF researchers have actually been doing: building on but also going beyond work in sociolinguistics, education, linguistic anthropology and ethnography, they have been exploring conceptual alternatives since the early 2000's (Dewey 2009; House 2003; Seidlhofer 2007; and many studies to follow. For a succinct overview see Pitzl 2018). These include, most prominently, the notion of Communities of Practice (CoP) based on Wenger (1998) and Eckert and McConnel-Ginet (1992). Of course, not all ELF interactions take place in contexts that provide conditions for community formation and over a period of time long enough for the process of social learning to evolve that fulfils Wenger's CoP criteria of "mutual engagement" in a "joint enterprise", making use of a "shared repertoire" (Wenger 1998, pp. 72-ff.). Many ELF interactions are carried out in much shorter-term contexts, sometimes just one-off encounters, where people come together for a particular purpose, in a planned or unplanned fashion, and socialize and/or work together for a while until the group dissolves again. For such constellations and the communicative events unfolding in them, the notions of Transient International Groups (TIGs) (Pitzl 2018, 2021) and Transient Multilingual Communities (TMCs) (Mortensen 2017) have been proposed, giving rise to further innovative approaches to the study of lingua franca communication.

So a considerable volume of descriptive research on ELF communication in CoPs, TIGs and TMs is ongoing. But crucially, this is not 'just' a matter of academic sociolinguistic, ethnographic, anthropological, etc. interest but essentially an applied linguistic undertaking, inextricably interwoven as the conditions of ELF communication are with the significant socio-political, socio-economic and humanitarian issues of contemporary life. And in this globalized world in which, as we have seen, (apparent) stability, permanence and territorial fixedness have given way to de-territorialization, fluidity and virtuality, the significance of communication cannot be overstated. This is why the sociologist Gerard Delanty, in his monograph dedicated to the investigation of the evolution of the concept of community, proposes that

> contemporary community may be understood as a **communication**

> **community** based on new kinds of belonging. By this is meant a sense of belonging that is peculiar to the circumstances of modern life and which is expressed in unstable, fluid, very open and highly individualized groups. (Delanty 2018, p. 229, emphasis added)[2]

In his concluding chapter entitled "theorizing community today", Delanty (2018, pp. 234-ff.) summarizes his arguments as follows:

> Community is relevant today because, on the one hand, the fragmentation of society has provoked a worldwide search for community, and on the other hand, as already argued, cultural developments and global forms of communication have facilitated the construction of community; released from the fetters of traditional social relations in work, family, consumption, the state and education, the individual is both more free and more reliant on alternative social bonds.
> […] globalization, neo-liberalism and information and communication technology have not led to greater inclusion. The opposite has been the case, with social exclusion, insecurity and exploitation rising. The social bond has been seriously fragmented, … The atomization of the social has created the conditions for the resurgence of community. On the other side of the double-edged sword that is globalization, it must also be recognized that the emerging structures of the global age provide individuals with many opportunities to build communities in which the promise of belonging may at least be something in which they can believe.

In such "global forms of communication", ELF interactions play a pivotal role. The contribution of ELF research, I would argue, is thus on the one hand to help us understand how what Delanty terms "communication communities" work; on the other hand, understanding ELF communication has an important part to play in interrogating well-entrenched but potentially unsuitable and anachronistic notions in sociolinguistics and in developing our conceptual "toolkit" in keeping with contemporary life. As an applied linguistic enterprise, it is the task of (E)LF research to transcend code-fixation and to work on understanding and supporting communication – in the interest of furthering the "solidarity" and "understanding among peoples" the lack of which Morin deplores in the quotation at the beginning of this paper – however elusive these ideals at times may seem to be.

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[2] Compare also Wright's (2000, 2009) notion of 'community of communication' with specific reference to EU language policy.

implications for teacher education. She is the founding director of the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE), founding editor of the *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, and past editor of the *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*. Her books include *Understanding English as a Lingua Franca* (OUP), *Controversies in Applied Linguistics* (OUP), *Foreign Language Communication and Learning* (Mouton De Gruyter, with K. Knapp) and *From International to Local English – and Back Again* (Lang, with R. Facchinetti and D. Crystal).

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