UNDERSTANDING CONTEXT IN LANGUAGE USE AND TEACHING

This book is a guide to understanding and applying the essential, heretofore elusive, notion of context in language study and pedagogy. Éva Illés offers a new, critical, systematic theoretical framework, then applies that framework to practical interactions and issues in communicative language teaching rooted in English as a Lingua Franca. By linking theory and practice for research and teaching around the world, this book brings a new awareness of how context can be conceptualised and related to language pedagogy to advanced students, teachers, teacher educators and researchers of language teaching, applied linguistics and pragmatics.

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PREFACE

> Let's suppose I say six numbers to you now. It's just stupid. Pointless. But if the six numbers are the winning lottery numbers, then they mean something. They have consistency, value, almost beauty.

The quote is from the movie *Never Look Away* (original title: *Werke ohne autor*, 2018) which, befittingly, encapsulates the function the main protagonist of this book, the notion of context fulfils. Without context, that is – in this case without the knowledge of lottery and how it works – the numbers remain meaningless. Of course, the same applies to words. We cannot make sense of language unless we relate it to a part of our knowledge about the world.

Since we see and understand the world through our cognitive lenses, when studying context, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and English-language teaching, I cannot but draw on my own experiences, which I have accumulated through many years as a classroom teacher and ELF speaker as well as a researcher. As a schoolteacher, I wanted to find out what the communicative approach I was expected to adopt in my teaching practice was about. This then got me into pragmatics and the investigation of the theoretical background of Communicative Language Teaching. My hunch that Communicative Language Teaching represents two types of communicative approaches was also the driving force behind my doctoral research, the conceptual framework of which serves as the basis for the examination of context in this book. Then came ELF and, being an ELF speaker myself, the emergence of ELF and its study has proven a liberating

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experience. As for my researcher self, it is exciting and challenging to think about the ways ELF use and research may reshape the way we teach English. The themes of this book thus combine and directly relate to my three connected identities.

I need to note here that the aim of the book is not the formulating and presenting of a new theory, but revisiting earlier theories and identifying connecting points with recent research findings. Similarly, by suggesting an ELF-informed approach to the teaching of English (n.b., where the approach is based on theory that has long been around), the purpose is not to transform or divert teachers to it. Rather, it is meant to provide food for thought, to initiate critical consideration and to present teaching as a true profession.

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The influence of Henry Widdowson pervades the whole book, from the first page to the last sentence (literally). I am infinitely grateful for his always-challenging guidance and for showing me the beauty of disciplined thinking. I can only hope that this book approximates, albeit in a small way, the high standards he represents in the profession.

My love and thanks to my family and friends for the joyful distractions and for keeping me grounded. My special thanks go to my husband for his unwavering support and for doing everything to allow me to concentrate on writing this book.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACE	Asian Corpus of English
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CoP	Community of Practice
CP	Cooperative Principle
EIL	English as an International Language
ELF	English as a Lingua Franca
ELFA	English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings
ELT	English-Language Teaching
ENL	English as a Native Language
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
NNS	Non-Native Speaker
NS	Native Speaker
PDP	Parallel Distributed Processing
POA	Production-Oriented Approach
TL	Target Language
TLaC	Teaching Language as Communication
TLfC	Teaching Language for Communication
VOICE	The Vienna–Oxford International Corpus of English

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CONTEXT, ELF AND LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY

Introduction

The aim of the book is to contribute to a pragmatically based, context-centred English-language teaching approach that can prepare learners of English to cope with the challenges that the global lingua franca use of English presents. The book, therefore, revolves around and combines three themes, the notion of context, English as a lingua franca (ELF) and English-language teaching (ELT). All three topics have been receiving much attention in both the study of language and language pedagogy. Context, the central notion and main object of this inquiry, has been frequently evoked in the literature, with different meanings and definitions (e.g., Fetzer & Oishi, 2011; Flowerdew, 2014a, 2014b; Illés, 2001; Van Dijk, 2008). Despite its relatively brief history, ELF (and its research) has established itself as a distinguished field in linguistic inquiry. It now features a conference series (*International Conference of English as a Lingua Franca*), which started in 2008, a scholarly journal (*Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*), launched in 2012, as well as a series of books. There is also a plethora of publications, both in book and article form, ranging from general overviews (Cogo, 2015; Jenkins, Baker, & Dewey, 2018; Jenkins, Cogo, & Dewey, 2011; Seidlhofer, 2011, 2017) to publications focusing on particular issues, including, among many others, creativity (Pitzl, 2018) or communities of practice

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in ELF (Kalocsai, 2013). With the spread of English and the global demand for its teaching, the third theme, ELT, can boast worldwide interest and an ever-increasing field of research. The connection between ELF and ELT can be traced back to the beginnings of ELF research, which was instigated by the recognition of the mismatch between the global use of English and the conformity to local native-speaker norms promoted by ELT (Seidlhofer, 1999, 2001). Language pedagogy has grown into probably the most researched area within ELF. As Firth (2009) observed, “Of late, the relationships between ELF and L2 pedagogy and ELT […] have occupied the most prominent position in terms of ELF research output” (p. 162). How ELF research is implemented in ELT is, therefore, of paramount importance in light of the worldwide impact of ELT (Leung & Lewkowicz, 2018).

This chapter provides a brief introduction to the main themes of the book, that is, English as a lingua franca, context and language pedagogy. The aim is to highlight the interconnectedness of the three notions and the vital role context plays in the study of ELF and in the development of an ELF-informed approach to the teaching of English.

English as a Lingua Franca

The focal point of this book is context, a concept that is inextricably interwoven with language use. Since currently ELF use represents the dominant type of communication in English worldwide (Graddol, 2006), any study into the notion of context has to be linked with ELF if it is to grasp the sociolinguistic reality of the use of English in the 21st century. This reality is that English has become the global, “non-local lingua franca” (Mauranen, 2018, p. 7) that transcends borders and has permeated not only privileged uses but also the discourse of migration (Guido, Iaia, & Errico, 2019; Gonçalves, 2015) and many domains of daily life all over the world (Lopriore, 2015). The spread of the use of English as a lingua franca does not

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seem to “spare” countries where English has traditionally been spoken as a native language (ENL). According to the BBC website, “[o]ver 300 languages are currently spoken in London schools” (www.bbc.co.uk/languages/european_languages/definitions.shtml). This being the case, there must be many classrooms in the UK capital where English serves as the common language used between students from different backgrounds, as well as between students and their teachers. Similarly, there is a fair chance that Hungarians living in Britain use English as a lingua franca with the Polish plumber they have hired to do up their bathroom. These everyday experiences confirm the claim (House, 2013; Jenkins, 2007) that the use of ELF cuts across all three of Kachru’s circles, which include the Inner Circle where English is spoken as a native language (ENL), the Outer Circle, where English functions as a second language (L2), and the Expanding Circle with English used as a foreign language (EFL) (Kachru, 1992). As a result of the worldwide spread of English and, in fact, other languages, “ideas of mapping languages on particular territories and linking them to speakers inhabiting these territories have become anachronistic” (Seidlhofer, 2017, p. 399).

As a consequence of the global spread of English, the number and the composition of its users as well as the function English fulfils have undergone considerable changes. The number of English speakers is estimated around 1.5 billion, and among them those who use English as a lingua franca represent the largest group of speakers (Jenkins, 2016). As a result, nowadays those who are considered non-native speakers (NNS) outnumber native speakers of English (NS) by a considerable margin, and most non-native speakers use English in communication with other non-native speakers (Graddol 2006). In 1991, Beneke estimated that about 80% of exchanges in which English was spoken involved non-native speakers only (Beneke in Seidlhofer 2004). Fifteen years later, Graddol (2006) argued that the number of interactions involving

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native speakers only was on the decline but, still, similarly to Beneke, he put the ratio of non-native and native speakers at four to one. It must be noted, however, that despite the prevalence of communication solely between NNSs, current definitions of ELF as a global lingua franca include NSs as well (Jenkins, 2007, 2014; Mauranen, 2018; Seidlhofer, 2011), since they also participate in ELF interactions. This is in contrast with earlier definitions (e.g., Firth, 1996) that reflect a traditional approach to lingua francas, where lingua francas are local and are used as contact languages between speakers who do not share a common L1.

The changed constitution of speakers and the main function that English performs has necessarily impacted the ownership of English. Widdowson (2003) argues that English as native speaker property and English as the main vehicle of communication in international contexts of use represent a contradiction:

> How English develops in the world is no business whatever of native speakers in England, in the United States, or anywhere else. They have no say in the matter, no right to intervene or pass judgement. They are irrelevant. The very fact that English is an international language means that no nation can have custody over it. […] But the point is that it is only international to the extent that it is not their language. It is not a property for them to lease out to others while still retaining the freehold. Other people actually own it.
>
> *(p. 43)*

With English not being the property of native speakers, the privileged status of native speakers as models and norm providers has also been called into question. In fact, Graddol (2006) goes so far as to consider native speakers with their cultural baggage a hindrance to international communication. And since most users are non-native, English in international

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contexts is also shaped by non-native speakers, who adopt and adapt English in a way that suits their communicative purposes (Seidlhofer, 2004). Interestingly, the considerable contribution non-native speakers make to the development of English has been acknowledged by researchers who have published a study about language change in *Nature*, the foremost scientific weekly journal. In this journal, they identify the investigation of how "individual-level cognitive processes in a language learner produce population-level phenomena" as a theme for future research (Newberry, Ahern, Clark, & Plotkin, 2017). Although the reference here is to *learners* – a term whose suitability has been challenged in relation to ELF – by acknowledging the language-changing power of learners, NNSs are seen in this article, too, "as *agents* in the development of English" (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 49) in the same way as Outer Circle English speakers (Seidlhofer, 2011).

Establishing ELF use as the object of inquiry (Seidlhofer, 2001, 2017), viewing non-native speakers as competent and fully fledged users of English and putting them on an equal footing with native speakers, has also entailed abandoning a deficit view of ELF and guaranteeing "equal communicative rights for all its users" (Hülmbauer, Böhringer, & Seidlhofer, 2008). However, the notion of the native speaker as the target and yardstick still looms large, and it seems that it takes time to assert these equal rights, especially for non-native speaker English teachers. Even studies that were conducted fairly recently with English language teachers in various European countries indicate that although non-native speaker teachers are aware of the international and lingua franca use of English, "they still value native speaker norms as a reference point" (Bayyurt et al., 2019, p. 199) and lack the confidence to push native speakers off their pedestal and take their place (Illés & Csizér, 2015). While – rightly – ELF researchers have been critiquing the dominance of NSs, it is somewhat paradoxical that the Centre for Global Englishes is located in the UK with an NS director and deputy director in charge

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(www.southampton.ac.uk/cge/members.page). In addition, the flagship publication of ELF research, the *Routledge Handbook of English as a Lingua Franca* was compiled by three native speakers, two of whom are also editors of the *Developments in English as a Lingua Franca* book series.

Context and ELF

Context has come to the fore when the concern has shifted from ELF as a variety to ELF as language use. Initially, definitions of ELF referred to it as a variety, "a 'contact language' between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture" (Firth, 1996, p. 240). The view of ELF as a variety also appeared in an earlier version of the definition of ELF on the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE) website (www.univie.ac.at/voice/), where ELF is understood as a notion "constituting an additionally acquired language system" (as cited in Berns, 2009, p. 194). In line with this conception, the first descriptions focused mainly on the formal properties of ELF and assumed the emergence in Europe of a distinct variety, Euro-English (Jenkins, Modiano, & Seidlhofer, 2001) or European English (Firth, 2009). Even though, as will be seen below, the view of ELF as a variety has been challenged and by and large abandoned, there are still researchers who consider ELF as a variety (Medgyes, 2014), or who subscribe to the World Englishes paradigm (Modiano, 2009) and advocate the possibility of the emergence of Euro-English resulting in a codifiable variety, very much like Indian English or Singaporean English (Modiano, 2018). Currently, however, many linguists and lingua franca researchers (see the debate about English after Brexit in *World Englishes*, 36/3) disagree with Modiano. They stress that ELF "is NOT a fixed code" (House, 2013, p. 281, emphasis in original), nor is it "monolithic or a single variety" (Cogo, 2012, p. 98). As a result, the word "as" in the expression English *as* a lingua franca does not

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denote *what* kind of English is being used but *how* English is used in ELF interactions.

The shift away from the linguistic analysis of ELF as a potential variety to the investigation of the underlying communicative processes has come about as a result of further research into the nature of ELF (Jenkins et al., 2011). First of all, it was found that forms which were considered to be typical of ELF use feature in English as a native language and in post-colonial Englishes as well (Jenkins, 2012; Sewell, 2013). As a result, ELF cannot be seen as a particular variety of English. In fact, ELF cannot be defined in reference to its formal features – that is, as a variety, either. As Widdowson (2015) observes, "[v]ariety status is achieved when variations become conventionalised and so settle into what is taken to be a systematic state" (p. 363). For ELF, achieving such a status is out of reach. First of all, ELF cannot be conceived in terms of a community whose members "share the same primary socio-cultural space" (Widdowson, 2015, p. 362), and there are no established conventions and practices that would make it possible to develop a variety. Secondly, the social and geographical unboundedness and the sheer number of ELF users give rise to an immense diversity of ELF speakers who come from a very wide range of different linguacultural backgrounds. As a consequence of this diversity and the lack of communal norms, ELF interactions are characterised by increased negotiation of meaning and the extensive use of strategies. The diversity of ELF speakers and their different ways of using English give rise to forms that are hybrid and variable (Canagarajah, 2007). Given the fluidity of linguistic forms in ELF communication, identifying a variety would imply "suspending animation" (Widdowson, 2015, p. 363) and would, in fact, deny the reality of ELF use as a particularly dynamic process. Interestingly, the fact that "ELF cannot be conceptualised as a language variety" (Jenkins, 2012, p. 490), in a sense, takes the wind out of the sails of those who view ELF as a deficient *variety* (e.g., Medgyes, 2014; Swan, 2012).

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If ELF is not a variety, what is it then? The following definitions attempt to answer this question.

1. "I therefore prefer to think of ELF *as any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option*" (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 7; italics in the original).
2. "ELF, then, is an expedient translingual *use* of English where the interactants do not share a knowledge of each other's language" (Seidlhofer, 2017).
3. "English as a Lingua Franca (henceforth ELF) refers, in a nutshell, to the world's most extensive *use* of English, in *essence*, English when it is used as a contact language between people from different first languages (including native English speakers)" (Jenkins, 2014, p. 2).
4. "Refer[s] to the use of English amongst multilingual interlocutors whose common language is English and who [usually] communicate in a country or area in which English is not used in daily life" (Smit 2005, p. 67).
5. "ELF is better construed as a dynamic context of use, since the notion of ELF would have to refer to an attempt to generalize over the multiplicity of specific contexts, where speakers coming from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds are attempting to use English as a shared means of communication" (Park & Wee, 2011, p. 369).
6. "[I]n using this term I am referring to a specific communication context: English being used as a lingua franca, the common language of choice, among speakers who come from different linguacultural backgrounds" (Jenkins, 2009, p. 200).

In these more recent definitions, ELF is not a variety, a contact or an additional language but is, rather, a particular type of language *use*. On the surface, Definition 6 is different from the others in that it refers to ELF as a specific *context*. However,

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the definition itself bears a close resemblance to the other delineations that term ELF as *use*, so it can be assumed that what is meant by context in Definition 6 is, in fact, language use, and the two terms may have been used interchangeably.

Language use is a pragmatic concept and entails the activation of the knowledge of language for communicative purposes (Widdowson, 1978), and as such comprises the everyday experience of speakers. In language use, language is inseparable from its speakers, who give it meaning and shape in actual interactions. The same applies, of course, to ELF, which is an “entirely ‘ordinary’ and unsurprising sociolinguistic phenomenon” (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. x). This being the case, in ELF interactions language users – rather than the language they use – prevail and should take precedence in research. In addition, if there are similar trends (e.g., regularisation) in the way English develops, the distinguishing feature of ELF communication is not the kind of language ELF speakers use but ELF speakers themselves, who by definition are bilingual and often multilingual speakers using English as the common language of their choice in multilingual communication. ELF users are, therefore, the defining components of ELF. Firth (2009) sums it up as follows: “It is difficult, if not impossible, to describe this ‘language’ *a priori*, for ELF – as a *form* of discourse or as a putative *variety* of English – cannot be characterized outside interactions and speakers in specific social settings” (p. 163, emphasis in the original).

As a consequence of the untenability of the conception of ELF as a variety, ELF research has shifted the focus on to the “underlying processes that motivate the use of one or another form at any given moment in an interaction” (Jenkins et al., 2011, p. 269). Therefore, the object of inquiry has been the ELF speakers and the ways they exploit the linguistic and other resources at their disposal to achieve particular communicative needs and purposes (Seidlhofer, 2010). So rather than investigating the language used by ELF speakers for linguistic analysis, the issue has been “what functions the features you

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observe are symptomatic of" (Seidlhofer, 2010, p. 48). The aim is to take an emic perspective and find out what goes on in ELF speakers' minds when they engage in interaction with other ELF speakers. Jenkins (2015) identifies this as Phase Two of ELF research. In Phase Two, the study of ELF is concerned with communication, with what speakers do when "absorbed in the ad hoc, situated negotiation of meaning", which is, as Seidlhofer (2009) adds, "an entirely pragmatic undertaking in that the focus is on establishing the indexical link between the code and the context" (p. 242). ELF research has thus taken a pragmatic turn, which then necessitates a concern with context. In line with this, Jenkins and colleagues (2011) identify the focus of ELF research in Phase Two as the exploration of how "ELF varies according to contextual factors and, in particular, how these factors impacted on speakers' accommodative behaviours" (p. 296). The investigation of contextual factors can shed light on what features and purposes of ELF interactants come into play and affect linguistic variation in language use. Pölzl and Seidlhofer (2006) emphasise the significance of context and focus on a specific feature of the notion, which is the location where a particular ELF interaction takes place. Following Widdowson (e.g., 2004), they conceive of context as a schematic construct, that is, in terms of the knowledge and beliefs that interlocutors possess and relate to language when making meaning. The observation Pölzl and Seidlhofer (2006) make in their research is that the location of an ELF interaction, whether the speakers are on home ground or not, affects the way they communicate with other ELF speakers.

While ELF use represents "normal use of natural language" (Mauranen, 2009, p. 231) or is "ordinary", as Seidlhofer (2011) put it above, it has features unique to ELF that represent systematic differences from native speaker use. Examples in the ELF special issue of the journal *Intercultural Pragmatics* include chunking (Mauranen, 2009), the use of the discourse particle *you know* (House, 2009), intonation (Pickering, 2009) or idioms (Seidlhofer, 2009), features that are indeed part of all

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language use. However, as the researchers conclude, the deviations from native-speaker conventions do not comprise random idiosyncrasies but, rather, reveal regularities and systematicity in ELF use (Mauranen, 2009). The observations made here have a bearing on the study of context in ELF in the following chapters in that the investigation of context from an ELF perspective will have to identify features of context that are the same for all language use and also features that are unique to ELF use.

Firth (2009) highlights the variability of ELF, which in the case of ELF necessarily refers to language use: "The study of ELF considers variability not in terms of variety at all but as the variable use of English as inter-community communication, as communication across communities" (Widdowson, 2015, p. 362). Since ELF users cannot rely on established local conventions, they need to work out the norms of engagement online in an interaction. As a result, the pragmatic processes are more visible than in other types of communication (Widdowson, 2015). ELF thus provides a good opportunity for researchers to observe the otherwise hidden aspects of human communication.

The need for a systematic investigation of context in the study of ELF has been discussed by Pitzl (2018), whose research on ELF users' creativity relies on VOICE corpus data. She points out that theoretical deliberation would facilitate the development of ELF research methods. Interestingly, one of the three aspects that she considers particularly salient in this respect is the development of "a schematic or model for describing and representing the contexts in which ELF tends to be used" (p. 234). The other two aspects are the concept of "group as a social […] category and an increased emphasis on the development of ELF use in particular groups over time" (p. 234) – both of which are, to some extent, related to the notion of context. Pitzl argues that such a model of context could and should provide the reference points that would enable researchers to generalise and identify those situational factors

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that have influenced and shaped the surface forms that appear in their findings. Without referring to the overlap between language use in general and ELF specific use as above, Pitzl also notes that a systematic account of context should be applicable to uses other than ELF and should, preferably, be developed by ELF researchers. In so doing, this call for a context model not only justifies the interest in context but also includes specifications, such as the possibility of context being schematic and the applicability to the analysis of ELF or other language use. The main challenge, it seems, is to create a context model which can offer reference points that can explain what has made a particular speaker come up with a particular form with a particular meaning in a particular situation.

There have been suggestions regarding the research methods that can be applied in the investigation of context, and of theories of context in particular. In a brief note, Ferguson (2012) suggests that "the practice-oriented approach to ELF would tend to favour *ethnographic emic-oriented* styles of research targeting processes more than products" (p. 178, my emphasis). An emic, that is an insider perspective, has been promoted by Seidlhofer (2010), too, in a paper about the relationship between observable forms and invisible functions in ELF. Here she argues that "[f]unctions have to be inferred by engaging closely, and *emically*, with the contextual factors relevant in particular situations" (p. 49, my emphasis). How is it possible then for the researcher to engage emically to experience what a particular speaker has in mind when making an utterance at a particular stage of a one-off ELF exchange? Context from an emic perspective is the user's construct so the question is how it can be accessed. Widdowson (2009) distinguishes three methods, providing three different types of data with the caveat that none of them is able to shed light on all the aspects of actual language use. The first method is first-person introspection, usually performed by researchers "using themselves as representative informants" (p. 194) and resulting in representing what is assumed to be all users' knowledge as

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an abstract mental construct. Next, second-person elicitation comprises obtaining data of "actually performed language behaviour, but particular behaviour that has been induced" (p. 195). The shortcoming of this is that what is performed – especially if it is done through elicitation – might not be a true indicator of what the participants know. Lastly, third-person observation yields data about naturally occurring behaviour. This type of method includes corpus data, or data obtained through observing language users in their own environment and taking notes of the observable details of the circumstances of a particular interaction. Observation is employed in ethnographical research, which necessarily entails an etic (outsider) rather than an emic perspective. So even though observing people communicating may contribute to the construction of a context model, the model will not be able to capture participants' reality using ethnography as Ferguson (2012) has suggested.

Context in ELF-Related Language Pedagogy

In his refreshingly critical overview of the methodology of foreign-language teaching, Rodgers (2009) makes a clear distinction between methods and approaches (also in Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Whereas methods are highly prescriptive in their application (see, e.g., The Silent Way proposed by Gattegno in 1972) and often, but not always, lack the support of theory or empirical data, approaches allow different interpretations of how they can be implemented and draw on a set of theories about language (including language use) and theories of language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Rodgers, 2009). Defined in this way, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), for instance, represents an approach whose core theories of language include the notion of communicative competence, Halliday's functional description of language use and Speech Act Theory (Illés, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2001) (for more details about CLT see Chapter 5 in this book).

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For teachers, therefore, approaches allow more freedom of application but, at the same time, also imply the task of appraising theory in relation to their particular teaching contexts.

In the case of ELF, any pedagogy related to it has to constitute an approach, and for the following reasons. First, as has been argued above, the novel phenomenon of ELF has necessitated a conceptualisation that differs from conventional and accustomed ways of thinking about language and language use. As a consequence, efforts to develop ELT in reference to ELF use have to include changes in the theoretical basis of ELT and the creation of a foundation that may comprise a novel set of revisited or newly formulated theories. Given the diversity of not only ELF language use but of the variety of the conditions of ELT all over the world, a suggested approach also needs to have the flexibility to allow for local adaptations. An ELF-related approach, therefore, should offer guidance but lack specificity, thus giving those involved in ELT the freedom they need in order to adapt the approach to their particular circumstances.

Of the three modifiers – ELF-aware, ELF-oriented and ELF-informed – the adjective *ELF-informed* seems to be suitable to describe what ELF in ELT comprises. Being *aware* implies the recognition of the significance of ELF but does not necessarily mean that ELF is a defining and integral part of an approach. And although *ELF-oriented* adds direction to awareness, it still does not have the force of implementation present in the *ELF-informed* expression. It should be noted that this argument does not align with that of Bowles (2015), who approaches the interpretation of terminology from a more practical perspective. For Bowles, ELF-informed means “the supply of *appropriate* ELF information to teacher educators, trainees, teachers and learners”, whereas ELF-aware teaching involves “*appropriate* use of this information in the classroom” (p. 198, my emphasis). First, this understanding of the two terms seems to imply a unilateral direction of the flow of information from the applied

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linguist to those working in education. Second, it also raises the question of who judges what is appropriate ELF information or appropriate use of this information. A situation in which the researcher decides what counts as appropriate creates a hierarchical relationship, with researchers occupying the higher echelons. In this book, the use of the ELF-informed expression entails no such hierarchy, as teachers and researchers are on an equal footing, both being professionals undertaking intellectually challenging work.

There are a couple of conclusions that can be drawn here. First, in order to develop an ELF-informed approach to the teaching of English, the formulation of theories of language use and language learning is necessary. Since ELF has been defined in pragmatic terms as language use, the notion of context is important not only for ELF research but for ELF pedagogy as well. Second, if an ELF approach entails the empowerment of not only NNSs but teachers as well, teachers need to know what abstract principles inform the decisions affecting the implementation of ELF in everyday teaching practice.

Wen (2012) has proposed a pedagogical framework for an ELF-informed approach to ELT that details what should be taught within three dimensions of English and its use. Within the linguistic component, learners should be taught both native and non-native varieties, together with localised features of English. Similarly, the second dimension, cultural, contains target-language cultures, non-native cultures as well as the students' own cultures. In the third dimension, universal, target-language and non-native communicative rules are to be taught. Universal rules underlie language use in various cultures and include Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle (CP). Wen (2012) considers it important to include rules that regulate native and non-native speaker English use as well as the development of capacities that enable learners to apply relevant strategies online in ELF communication. The rationale for the inclusion of capacities is as follows:

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> The underlying assumption of this objective is that in an ELF setting, strategies are dynamic and unpredictable. More often than not, L2 users cannot retrieve pre-prepared strategies from their mind to deal with pragmatic difficulties. What is needed is a capacity to respond to the on-going communication properly.
>
> *(p. 375)*

In fact, Wen's notion of capacity corresponds to Seidlhofer's (2011) earlier notion of capability. In her reference to ELF-informed pedagogy, Seidlhofer (2011) has argued that NS competence is not a viable objective and has proposed to formulate "the objective in quite different terms – as the development of a capability for exploiting linguistic resources" (p. 188). Consequently, an ELF-informed approach should aim to develop a general capability for use rather than a specific competence to comply with predefined NS norms (Seidlhofer, 2012). This capability, which entails online problem-solving, can enable students to cope with the diversity and unpredictability of ELF communication. In the practice of ELT, this means a shift of attention from the product of learning to the learner and the process of learning (Seidlhofer, 2011):

> What really matters is that the language should engage the learners' reality and activate the learning process. Any kind of language that is taught in order to achieve this effect is appropriate, and this will always be a matter of local decisions.
>
> *(p. 198)*

The focus on the learners and their schematic world reflects the conceptualisation of the learner as user. On the one hand, this indicates the reality of ELF use outside the classroom, where learners function as ELF users (Seidlhofer, 2011). On the other hand, conceiving learners as users entails the need for a pedagogical approach that creates conditions whereby learners

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use English in the way they do in environments outside school. The pivotal role assigned to learners and their particular reality also carries the implication that in language pedagogy, too – as in the case of ELF use – the investigation of context needs to centre around the participant of classroom language use.

There have also been other proposals for the theoretical foundation of an ELF-informed approach. In terms of pragmatics, Grice's CP has been put forward as the theory that can be deployed to raise students' awareness of ELF use (Murray, 2012), or even as one of the theories to draw on for the development of an ELF-informed approach (Illés, 2011). Apart from Grice's CP, the proposals above carry further implications. First, the notion of context that can aptly describe ELF use has to be flexible enough to be able to account for the diversity of the interlocutors, and the malleability of linguistic and pragmatic norms. Second, a theory of context will have to include the notion of capability. In relation to pedagogy, the inquiry will have to revisit the concept of authenticity, the product versus process focus as well as the question of developing metaknowledge about language use.

The brief overview of ELF, context in ELF and language pedagogy has shown that context is necessarily implicated in both the investigation of ELF use and the development of an ELF-informed approach to ELT. The contributions in the ELF literature have also highlighted the significance of context and the issues related to the concept in ELF use and teaching. Since ELF interaction is a type of ordinary communication with distinctive features that include the multilingualism and multiculturalism of its speakers, the delineation of context will also have to be such that it can account for both the generality of communication and the specifics of ELF communication. Given the importance attached to the participants in ELF use, a suggested context model will have to put due emphasis on the description of ELF interlocutors and their schemata, which are entailed in context. The overview of research into ELF pedagogy highlighted the fact that the notion of capability, too,

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should form part of the context model. A suitable context construct will also have to be able to describe the processes that underlie ELF communication, define function and give rise to particular forms in ELF discourse. Since the distinct features of ELF use include fluidity, variability and a high level of complexity, a context model aptly reflecting ELF use must be dynamic rather than fixed and static.

Conclusion and Synopsis

What seems to have emerged from this brief review of the literature is that because of the significance of context in ELF and the necessity of an ELT approach that realises ELF use in the classroom, the notion of context needs to be more foregrounded and given a more explicit focus in ELF research. In so doing, context has to be subjected to a critical and systematic examination so that it can contribute to a context-oriented investigation of ELF use and the development of an ELF-informed ELT approach. However, it must be noted that what I suggest in this book is, of course, not a new theory or a discovery of any magnitude, but rather the demonstration of how the synthesis of what has been offered by research into ELF, pragmatics and language pedagogy can contribute to a kind of communicative approach that makes it possible for ELT practitioners to better meet the challenges that the use and teaching of English as a lingua franca present nowadays.

Although the following chapters of the book are designed to stand on their own, their sequencing represents a line of argument that takes the reader from an analysis of context in pragmatics all the way to the methodology of a proposed ELF-informed approach to ELT. The next three chapters investigate the notion of context in pragmatic study. Chapter 2 presents a selection of cursory definitions of context from the literature and identifies the main concepts, such as context of situation, schema and relevance, that pertain to the conceptualisation of context. The chapter also reveals that context can be

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