Hard to ignore: English native speakers in ELF research

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Abstract
This paper considers the English native speaker (NS) as a participant in English as lingua franca (ELF) speech events. ELF corpora such as the University of Helsinki's Corpus of English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings, or ELFA corpus, provide opportunities to study NS interaction with ELF users. The widely observed features of cooperative ELF discourse offer an interactive framework for analyzing NS accommodation to ELF speech events. With a focus on self-rephrasing and unsolicited co-constructions, this paper analyzes several extracts from the ELFA corpus in which NSs employ cooperative discourse strategies with varying degrees of success. The analysis seeks to address two questions: 1) in what ways do NSs succeed or fail to accommodate and adapt to an ELF environment, and 2) in what ways could NSs improve their interactive skills in ELF speech events? This study, based on eight hours of recorded data, suggests the value of incorporating English NSs into ELF models and large-scale ELF research.

1 Introduction

As a native speaker (henceforth NS) of English and permanent immigrant to a nation in which English is spoken as a foreign language, my attendance at the First International Conference of English as a Lingua Franca (henceforth ELF) in Helsinki was an exciting revelation. I immediately recognized the importance of this research both for its own inherent value and its personal value to me, a NS who rarely interacts with other mother-tongue English speakers but participates in ELF settings regularly. ELF has represented for me a fruitful approach to functional language use as well as a personal guide by which I might optimize my own use of English in ELF speech events. With this personal investment in ELF as a starting point, I have sought to acquire a sensible, empirically based perspective on the role of the NS in ELF.

As a NS involved in ELF research, my base assumption is that English NSs could improve their communication skills at home and abroad through an active understanding of ELF interaction. Moreover, I find the sometimes monolithic depiction of "the" NS in ELF literature to be severely limited. Reality lies in the immense grey area between two extreme NS myths: that of the "perfect" English speaker and the non-accommodating, ethnocentric dullard. This paper explores the ways in which English NSs are incorporated into ELF data (section 1.1), how NS accommodation in ELF speech events can be approached through an interactive framework (section 2.1), and finally, what empirical ELF data from an academic speech community reveals about NS interaction with ELF users (sections 3, 4). I conclude with suggestions as to how ELF research might integrate – and benefit – the enigmatic NS.

1.1 Definitions and research questions

Kachru's model (1985) of the three circles of global English has proven useful for defining key terms in ELF literature. Inner Circle users of L1 English are referred to as native speakers (NSs) in contrast to non-native speakers (NNSs), who are associated primarily with the Outer and Expanding Circles (Seidlhofer 2004: 210-11). The nations of the Outer Circle are distinguished by a colonial history and the institutional importance of English (e.g. India, Nigeria), while the Expanding Circle incorporates the post-colonial spread of English as an international language (Kachru 1985: 12-13). The English of NNSs in the Expanding Circle is the primary interest of ELF research. It is argued that most verbal exchanges in English are carried out by NNSs and estimates suggest that roughly 80 percent of verbal exchanges involving Outer and Expanding Circle users do not involve any NSs of English (Seidlhofer 2004: 209). This presumed "absence" of English NSs from NNS verbal exchanges leads to a central premise of ELF research, namely that its scope does not include the study of NS-NNS contacts (Jenkins 2006: 48). A fundamental problem remains, however, even if the statistic is accepted in which 80 percent of all ELF exchanges do not involve any NSs. It is fair to assume by inference that 20 percent of ELF exchanges do involve an English NS. The attempt to exclude the NS from ELF models only ignores the fact of the not insignificant presence of NSs in ELF speech events.

The arguments for excluding the NS from ELF models also translate into the methods used in gathering data for ELF research. ELF data in its "purest form" excludes NSs (Seidlhofer 2004: 211) and the newly developed ELF corpora have attempted to gather NNS-NNS speech events, not those involving NS-NNS dialogue (Jenkins 2006: 48; Prodromou 2007: 49). One example is the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English, or VOICE[1], an ELF corpus project headed by Seidlhofer. She initially suggested that "no native speakers should be involved in the interaction" recorded for inclusion in the VOICE corpus, although inclusion of NSs was unavoidable (Seidlhofer 2001: 146-47; Breiteneder 2008). In fact, English NSs are present in 61 VOICE speech events, second only to L1 German speakers in 129 speech events (VOICE Online Statistics 2009). The University of Helsinki's Corpus of English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings, or ELFA corpus[2], includes five percent of speech by English NSs among the 51 L1 backgrounds in the corpus (Mauranen et al 2010: 186). As project director Mauranen notes, "...it is in the nature of things in ELF discourses that L1 speakers mix with L2 speakers" (2006: 129).

Despite these facts, "the" NS can be portrayed as a monolithic entity in the modeling of ELF. In a diagram illustrating the various domains of English in continental Europe, Seidlhofer et al (2006: 8) place NSs in one corner of the quadrant with the following characteristics:

First language in non-ENL contexts
e.g., an American in Paris
- ENL forms & culture
- endonormative, norm-reinforcing
- own norms as a given
- focus on own identity

This depiction of the NS as the center of his or her own linguistic universe may apply in many cases, but certainly not in all. It fails, for example, to take into consideration situations such as my own, in which I have virtually no contact with speakers who share my cultural background and I have every incentive to accommodate and adapt to my new linguistic and cultural surroundings. Moreover, this model fails to account for NS professionals who are active in international settings and, with sufficient awareness and desire, may also successfully accommodate to ELF speakers in ELF speech events. The presence of NSs in the collected ELF corpora makes possible an empirical assessment of two questions: 1) in what ways do NSs succeed or fail to accommodate and adapt to an ELF environment, and 2) in what ways could NSs improve their interactive skills in ELF speech events? These questions are significant not in a NS-NNS context, but instead in an interactive approach to the NS-ELF context. Based on my assumption that NSs can and should accommodate to ELF speech events when present as minority participants, this paper suggests a framework of cooperative interaction through which NSs might converge upon the effective features of ELF discourse.

2 Cooperative discourse in ELF

One of the most striking features of accommodation in ELF is the cooperative, proactive effort made by ELF speakers to prevent and manage misunderstanding. In her 2006 study of misunderstanding in academic ELF speech events, Mauranen has highlighted how this proactive behavior arises spontaneously without prior evidence of misunderstanding. These efforts to prevent misunderstanding before it arises include such forms as additional confirmation checks, explanations, clarifications, and active co-construction of expressions (Mauranen 2006: 135). While her study focuses on interaction between English NNSs, the strategies of effective communication she observes apply equally to NSs taking part in ELF speech events.[3]

Mauranen stresses the centrality of negotiation, which she defines as "speakers changing their language to approximate what they believe to be the patterns of another language or dialect" (Mauranen 2006: 126). In her overview of Mauranen's research on proactive strategies, Cogo summarizes this phenomenon as follows:

> All these examples of explicitness, clarification and pre-empting strategies are ways in which speakers change their linguistic and cultural patterns to make communication as intelligible as possible to their interlocutors. This way, ELF speakers … are prone to taking certain steps in order to avoid possible misunderstandings at the onset (2009: 257).

Two of the ways in which this heightened language awareness is exhibited are self-rephrasing and unsolicited co-construction. Monologic self-repair or self-rephrasing works proactively and is a very common feature of ELF discourse (Mauranen 2006: 138). As opposed to the "strongly proactive" self-rephrasing, interactive co-construction of expressions can be used either as a proactive feature or a response to repair the discourse after a problem has arisen (Mauranen 2006: 137). In another empirical study of ELF discourse, House notes that collaborative discourse such as co-construction "is so frequent in my data that it may well be its most important feature" (2003: 569).

These two common manifestations of cooperative ELF discourse will be the central elements of this paper's analysis.

2.1 A framework for NS accommodation in ELF

The emphasis in ELF discourse on both proactive and retrospective treatment of misunderstanding is in line with the goals shared by English NSs when attempting to accommodate to NNSs, that is, to avoid miscommunication and to repair the discourse when trouble occurs (Long 1983: 131). However, when analyzing features of NS interaction such as self-rephrasing and co-construction in ELF speech events, simply identifying these features is not enough. In addition to serving a cooperative and accommodating purpose, there is always the potential for uncooperative overaccommodation if the interactive features are overdone, inappropriate, or implemented in a condescending manner. With this in mind, the analysis which follows attempts to assess whether the proactive features identified are functioning in context in a cooperative way.

As with the analysis by Mauranen (2006), my data is drawn from transcribed speech events in the ELFA corpus. In an effort to maximize the number of interactions between ELF speakers and unique NSs, I identified the speech events involving at least one monolingual NS with significant speaking turns and from these I selected the 11 smallest transcriptions by file size. Each of the 11 speech events included in this analysis were interactive in nature, consisting of seven conference discussions, two seminar discussions, and two lecture course discussions in a university setting. Just over eight hours of recorded data are represented. The 23 English NSs involved in the exchanges come from Canada, the United States, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand. As would be expected, these NSs are minority participants in each of the ELF speech events. The extracts which follow were analyzed both via transcription and their corresponding audio recordings. Attention was especially focused on the proactive discourse features outlined by Mauranen (2006) and mentioned above.

Insofar as self-rephrasing and unsolicited co-constructions were among the most prominent features of the data in question, the remainder of this paper is devoted to several examples of these with a qualitative analysis of their functions. Moreover, I assess the degree to which these accommodative features may be seen in context as cooperative or uncooperative. The objective is to illustrate the grounds for my thesis that the English NS is a legitimate topic of research within the context of ELF interaction. If NSs are expected to accommodate to NNSs in ELF speech events, it is necessary to observe the ways in which NSs successfully accommodate to ELF interlocutors or could improve their communication skills through greater awareness of the cooperative features of ELF interaction.

3 Self-rephrasing and the problem of idiomatic language

Before investigating these accommodative features, however, it is necessary to address the issue of culture-specific, NS idiomatic language. Pitzl has examined this

issue in a study on how idiom and metaphor are expressed in ELF discourse, and her discussion is also relevant for this subject. In her review of literature addressing idiomatic language, she notes that idioms establish a "territorial imperative" indicating membership in a particular speech community (Pitzl 2009: 300). While this territorial function is relevant for NSs, it is inapplicable to an ELF context and may create problems for mutual understanding. Pitzl goes on to analyze various definitions of idioms and figures of speech, but the following analysis focuses on what she identifies as "core idioms" or "single units whose meaning cannot be guessed at if it is not known by a listener" (2009: 305). Similarly, an idiom may be defined by its two central features: its meaning cannot be deduced from its lexical constituents and it is fixed both grammatically and lexically (Crystal 2003: 163). If one's interlocutor is unfamiliar with a core idiom, there arises the likelihood of misunderstanding, which Seidlhofer has addressed as "unilateral idiomaticity" (2004: 220).

This question of idiomatic language and miscommunication is highly relevant for NSs who are present in ELF speech events. Without a high level of self-awareness and desire to accommodate to their interlocutors, NSs may automatically transfer the "territorial imperative" to the ELF setting at the expense of mutual understanding. Indeed, one of the most striking features of the NS discourse in the analyzed ELFA transcriptions was the frequent use of core idioms. Expressions in the data such as "it drives me bananas" and "I can't pull that off the top of my head" are not transparent and may compromise the smooth progression of discourse. Insofar as these idiomatic phrases could be easily glossed to give the meaning greater clarity, the principal issue is that of active self-awareness, one of the key features of cooperative ELF discourse (Mauranen 2006: 135, 139-40).

The ELFA data indicated varying degrees of self-awareness. Among the 23 NSs present in the transcriptions, seven used at least one core idiom. Among these, three NSs used core idioms repeatedly. In the most striking example, an Australian NS and senior staff member inserted idiomatic language into numerous speaking turns within the same conference discussion. The following extracts illustrate the prominence of idioms in her speech:

- "oh no i've *gone blank* but that that's certainly erm a very very important er *angle on it*"
- "i think teachers are really *caught in a very difficult bind*"
- "a word will *take on* and it'll be the *latest thing* like filthy to say something good and that'll last for a few weeks and then it'll *die away*"

Although one might argue that these expressions are not especially marked, the frequency with which she uses idiomatic language suggests a lack of awareness as to how these features might impact ELF discourse. Moreover, it further suggests the problem of territoriality even between different NS varieties. The phrase "take on" appears to be the equivalent of the North American "catch on" (i.e. become popular), but I had not encountered the Australian equivalent prior to analyzing this data.

While idiomatic language may be seen as problematic, it is difficult to concretely identify misunderstanding unless an interlocutor addresses it directly. Such evidence is lacking in the analyzed discourse, but the transcriptions themselves provide two clear cases in which several NNS transcribers and proofreaders could not decipher an American student's use of core idioms. In the first case, referring to his plan for a provocative political survey, the NS is transcribed as saying that "it might take a lot of

people off as well so if you don't want that it might take people off but it might just spark debate at least." However, upon listening to the audio recording of the lecture discussion, he is clearly using the idiomatic phrase "tick people off," a polite version of "to piss someone off" (i.e. make someone angry). In the second case, he states that when writing a series of movie reviews, "I'm not going to hit every movie." The transcriber, however, did not understand the idiomatic verb "to hit" (i.e. to visit), and the word "hit" was left untranscribed as (xx), indicating unclear speech.

3.1 Clarifying idiomatic language

These examples of misunderstanding of idiomatic language highlight the need for NSs to exercise heightened self-awareness in an effort to effectively adapt to ELF speech events. In addition to an understanding of *how* idiomatic language might impede effective communication, NSs must actively monitor their own speech in order to detect what may be naturally occurring idioms. While 16 of the 23 NSs in the data did not produce any potentially opaque idiomatic language, my primary interest was to identify evidence of self-awareness in an effort to preempt misunderstanding. Insofar as Mauranen (2006) has identified self-rephrasing as a principal means of proactive prevention of misunderstanding in ELF, instances in which NSs rephrase their own use of idiomatic language could serve as positive evidence for cooperative behavior.

The data suggested several instances in which NSs appeared to offer a gloss immediately following an idiom. For example, the same American student who intended to "tick people off," when discussing his questionnaire's target audience, suggested "the uni- university crowd university students," apparently rephrasing the idiomatic "crowd." The same student, when suggesting his idea for movie reviews, stated "I'm kind of a movie buff myself I like movies." His statement "I like movies" serves to clarify what, in fact, constitutes the function of a "movie buff." Another conference participant announced "I'm from Texas and everything is big." He then oriented to his idiomatic expression explicitly by explaining, "this is the kind of expression you know everything's bigger in Texas."

In addition to these examples, a heightened awareness of idiomatic expressions in ELF discourse can be seen to extend from self-rephrasing to other-rephrasing as well. In the following extract from a conference discussion (Example 1), a Canadian NS (NS6) glosses an idiomatic expression offered by a bilingual English speaker from India (BS8):[4]

Example 1

  <BS8> in australia multiculturalism is now form of abuse used by rightwing parties /…/ i mean that's a way of of of signifying kind of bleeding hearts figure like refugee [(xx)] </BS8>
  <NS6> [holding hands and (xx)] </NS6>
  <BS8> yeah that's the way <SS> yeah @@ </SS> /…/ </BS8>

The bilingual speaker's use of the idiomatic "bleeding hearts figure" evokes a metaphorical image also present in NS idioms such as "bleeding heart liberal," which also implies an excessive or inappropriate degree of empathy with a marginalized person. Insofar as the image of a bleeding heart does not transparently indicate its

underlying meaning, the Canadian NS interposes an additional image of "holding hands," apparently an effort to clarify the original image of inappropriate sentimentality. This effort seems successful as it is accepted by the bilingual speaker ("yeah that's the way") and other participants respond affirmatively and with laughter.

3.2 Responding to misunderstanding

This analysis of self-rephrasing concludes with a shift from proactive rephrasing for preventing misunderstanding to retroactive rephrasing when misunderstanding has occurred. In this case, self-rephrasing is offered in an attempt to repair the discourse. The extract (Example 2) involves an exchange between a British NS (NS2) and a German speaker of ELF (S7), both of whom are senior staff members over 50 years of age. The extract begins with NS2 asking a question regarding S7's earlier presentation:

Example 2
> <NS2> [did] did the designers know that you were s- looking at gaze paths <S7> (pardon) </S7> did the designers know that what you were investigating was the gaze path that their eyes were following </NS2>
> <S7> yes i mean mhm </S7>
> <NS2> it's a difficult @problem that isn't it@ </NS2>
> <S7> yeah yeah yeah </S7>

Of interest in this example is the ELF speaker's indirect signal of misunderstanding ("pardon"). It is an indirect signal insofar as it does not indicate the source of the misunderstanding. While the trouble may simply be that the preceding utterance was not heard clearly, the NS takes the initiative to form a careful rephrasing of his question.

In this case, the collocation "looking at" is rephrased as the more transparent "investigating," and "gaze paths" is expanded to "the gaze path that their eyes were following." In addition to this, the NS can be heard to noticeably reduce his speech rate during his rephrasing to allow his interlocutor more time to process the question. Also of interest is the syntactic component of the self-rephrasing. The initial phrase "you were looking at gaze paths" consists of a collocation expressed as an active verb in past continuous form. The rephrasing, however, abandons this relatively complex expression in favor of a more direct existential construction. With the collocation omitted, the clarified structure consists of noun phrase ("what you were investigating"), existential verb ("was"), and noun phrase ("the gaze path that their eyes were following"). This combination of attempts to make his question as clear as possible seems to have been successful, as the ELF speaker answers the question and the exchange concludes with mutual understanding.

These examples of both proactive and retroactive self-rephrasing as attempts to prevent and repair misunderstanding respectively could serve as examples of optimal accommodation by NSs in ELF speech events. With the desire to communicate effectively and with awareness of these discourse functions, the cooperative features observed above could serve as educational guidelines for the less cooperative NSs overusing idiomatic language. Furthermore, these preliminary findings on a limited set of data suggest the potential value of incorporating NSs into large-scale ELF research.

Apart from the value of providing a truly global perspective on international and intercultural communication, concrete recommendations could be offered to willing NSs who seek the means by which they can make their speech as widely understood as possible.

4 Unsolicited co-construction

In addition to these examples of self-rephrasing in ELF speech events, another dominant feature of ELF discourse is unsolicited co-construction. In her overview of this feature, Mauranen (2006: 138) describes a co-construction as occurring when a speaker lacks a suitable expression and another speaker assists with a suggested formulation. The co-construction is unsolicited insofar as help is not prompted by a request for assistance or other signal by the speaker, only hesitation or a search for an expression. Unlike self-repairs, co-constructions are interactive in nature and may serve to repair discourse retrospectively when some trouble has been observed (Mauranen 2006: 137). For the purpose of this analysis, it is important to note the cooperative value of these strategies. Whether utilized proactively or retrospectively, co-constructions are valuable tools for maintaining the forward movement of discourse and successful communication.

As with the case of self-rephrasing, several examples of NSs providing co-constructions were found in the ELFA data. Although not mentioned in the article, Mauranen's (2006: 137-138) corpus extract demonstrating two consecutive co-constructions actually shows these features being offered by a North American NS to two ELF speakers. In addition, my own research revealed other clear examples of cooperative co-construction by NSs, such as the following exchange at an academic conference:

Example 3
> <S12> /…/ there are one two three four five six invitations to the to the city er whatever you call it @@ <NS7> reception </NS7> reception thanks <NAME NS7> @@ city reception this evening /…/ </S12>

In this case, S12 is the Finnish chairperson of the conference who is making an announcement. NS7 is a British NS who responds to S12's hesitation by providing a suggested word, which S12 accepts by thanking NS7 by name. S12 then repeats the word in her reformulated statement, which allows her announcement to continue.

While this extract may be seen as a positive example of NS accommodation to an ELF speaker, instances can also be observed in which NSs are recipients of cooperative discourse features. The following extract (Example 4) is a case in point. A British NS (NS3) is making a comment to a Finnish ELF speaker (S2) about his earlier presentation on immigration in Finland:

Example 4
> <NS3> perhaps you could say er er a few words erm in explanation of the kind of <S2> right </S2> migrant groups that are , coming to finland generally wh- wh- i mean wh- [what origin] <S2> [what kind] </S2> for example </NS3>

In the course of his comment, NS3 begins to hesitate as he searches for a word ("wh- wh- i mean wh- what"). S2 responds in a way typical of cooperative ELF interaction, that is, by suggesting a phrase to complete the statement ("what kind"). S2's suggestion overlaps with NS3's "origin," but the value of this attempted co-construction is clear: it was a natural, cooperative response to an interlocutor's apparent struggling and, more importantly, it was a relevant suggestion in the context of the discourse.

This extract suggests that a balanced view of cooperative discourse ought to avoid a unilateral conception of accommodation. In other words, it is necessary to dispel the myth of the "perfect English" of NSs who must accommodate to the somehow lacking skills of their ELF interlocutors. In the case of Example 4, cooperative discourse can be observed as benefitting all interlocutors who enter a speech event as equal participants, regardless of native speaker status. Moreover, ELF speakers' natural and spontaneous supportive behavior, offered in a contextually relevant and appropriate way, can serve as a model for NSs who wish to optimize their communication skills in ELF settings. It is one thing to offer a co-construction, but another to offer it cooperatively. The possibility always exists of overaccommodation and an uncooperative realization of an otherwise cooperative discourse feature.

4.1 Overaccommodation

With these observations in mind, it is worthwhile to consider some instances in the data in which NSs offer what, on its face, fits the criteria for co-construction, but actually constitutes uncooperative discourse. This further analysis is particularly relevant for one of the stated aims of this paper, that is, to determine ways in which English NSs could improve their interactive skills in ELF speech events. Such improvement depends not only on awareness and use of cooperative discourse features, but also the ability to implement them appropriately. This admittedly entails a greater degree of interpretation when analyzing the relative appropriateness of the interactive feature in question, in this case unsolicited co-constructions. With this caveat, the ELFA data suggested several instances of potentially uncooperative NS overaccommodation.

The first extract (Example 5) involves the American NS in a journalism course who might "tick people off" with his questionnaire and does not plan to "hit every movie." In this example, the student (NS5) appears to offer a co-construction to his Finnish instructor (S1):

Example 5
    <NS5> /…/ i'm not going to hit every movie every month but <S1> yeah </S1> many different people might want to </NS5>
    <S1> yeah of course there's er there's always erm erm possibility to <NS5> translate </NS5> yeah and erm erm choose next selections picks of the month for example or or the week and that kind of stuff , <NS5> yeah </NS5> /…/ </S1>

The NS's suggestion of "translate," while arguably in response to some brief hesitation by S1, is completely out of context and does not serve to move the discourse forward. Instead, it appears NS5 has attempted to place his own thought in his

interlocutor's mouth, which must be regarded as uncooperative insofar as it bore no relation to the actual idea the instructor was about to present, that is, choosing one film for review each week or month. NS5 did not, moreover, have any lexical information from S1's interrupted turn to suggest that she was seeking the word "translate." The criteria for successful co-construction might be described as an overt orientation to the main speaker. This would exclude efforts to interpose one's own idea of what a word or phrase should be. In addition, a skillful act of interpretation is required which excludes a haphazard guess at what a speaker might say next.

Interestingly, NS5's uncooperative interposition does not prevent S1 from successfully completing her intended turn. Rather than attempting to address the unhelpful interposition directly by dismissing it, S1 retains her turn and momentum by accepting NS5's suggestion and immediately continuing her previous thought ("yeah and erm erm choose next selections"). This strategy may be used to attribute meaning to an utterance that is out of the surrounding context. Mauranen associates this strategy with the principle of charity and describes it as "a kind of suspension of disbelief, which characterizes cooperative discourse generally" (2006: 141). In this case, there would be no pragmatic value in contradicting NS5's interjection, and both solidarity and the flow of discourse are maintained by simply accepting his comment as a valid suggestion.

A second extract (Example 6) deals with two successive NS co-constructions which do not appear welcome and to which the recipient responds defensively. A senior staff member from the U.S. (NS13) has made a conference presentation and is responding to questions from the audience. His interlocutor (S4) is a senior staff member from Finland. The following exchange ensues during discussion on the history of urban development:

Example 6

    <S4> oh during 18th century it was n- nep- napoli neapoli er most people [(xx)] </S4>

    <NS13> [naples was the largest city in the world in the 18th century] </NS13>

    <S4> [yes yes yes yes yes] </S4>

    <NS13> yeah </NS13>

    <S4> so it (follows) a hierarchy of of towns @@ </S4>

In this case, NS13 responds to S4's apparent uncertainty of the place name "Naples" in English. When NS13 co-constructs "Naples," however, S4 has already begun to either rephrase her thought or move on to another topic ("er most people [(xx)]"). Furthermore, rather than simply co-construct the problematic "Naples," NS13 chooses to fully rephrase what he might expect to be her complete thought. NS13's interposition, however, does not appear to be an objection. Instead, the speakers appear to be making the same point that a city's historical importance does not necessarily correspond to political importance. Insofar as S4's comment on Naples supports NS13's earlier remarks, it is likely that NS13's rephrasing was an attempt at repair.

NS13's attempted repair may be interpreted as overaccommodation due to its divergence in form from a typical ELF co-construction, i.e. a *minimal* suggestion of a word or short phrase. It is also important to note the equal status of the interlocutors, both being senior staff over 50 years of age. Insofar as the rephrasing of a complete sentence might resemble too closely a correction or even an impromptu "lesson," it

seems to be the source of S4's defensive response. This response, which overlaps NS13's co-constructed sentence in its entirety, consists of a repeated series of five "yes" statements. The audio recording does not suggest that this is a "yes" of appreciation with rising intonation, but a falling intonation suggesting embarrassment or impatience. Moreover, this response does not resemble other examples of successful co-constructions in which the recipient accepts it and continues his or her turn. In this case, NS13's interjection effectively ends S4's turn, and NS13 resumes speaking at the end of this extract.

After NS13 completes another short turn, S4 offers another, longer comment. Although a proficient user of ELF, S4's speech is marked by numerous hedges, false starts, and self-rephrasing as she articulates her comments. NS13 allows her to hold the floor for a longer turn as she discusses the methodology of their field:

Example 7

<S4> /…/ more on or more and more are people people are mo- mm- er more interested in narratives today than than really facts [and they] <NS13> [mhm-hm] </NS13> don't think on <NS13> [representations] </NS13> [reliability] they re- don't think on reliability they don't think on validity they just take one example and then write stories so this is i think very new <SIC> phenoment </SIC> </S4>

It is impossible to tell if NS13's interposition arises in response to S4's series of false starts or as a response to her mention of "narratives." It is clear, however, that S4 knew what she intended to say and did not welcome the interposition. Her defensiveness is clear from the audio recording, in which S4 raises her voice and repeats her interrupted phrase in its original form, "don't think on reliability." Also of note is the relative volume of NS13's voice. He is significantly louder than S4, and he succeeded in talking over S4's statement in Example 6. In Example 7, however, S4 raises her own voice to assert her turn and reject NS13's unwelcome (and relatively loud) interposition.

These examples of NS interpositions, while perhaps resembling co-constructions in form, illustrate the need for contextually appropriate application of cooperative discourse features. The NSs in question may have had the best of intentions or at least the innocence of ignorance. Their interpositions, however, do not appear to have supported their ELF interlocutors. In the first example of the "translate" interposition, the NS merely created a moment of needless turbulence around which his ELF interlocutor skilfully negotiated. In the last two extracts, however, there seem to be real issues of dominance and propriety at stake between equal-status professionals in an academic genre. All these examples suggest that successful cooperative discourse requires a high level of language awareness. In the same way that the earlier example of contextually appropriate NS co-construction could serve as a positive example of NS accommodation, these less successful examples from the data could help direct the attention of NSs toward uncooperative aspects of interaction to be avoided.

5 Conclusion

This study introduces several examples of interaction between English NSs and users of ELF in academic ELF speech events. NSs can be observed successfully employing cooperative discourse features such as self-rephrasing and unsolicited co-construction in similar ways as ELF speakers. The extracts related to co-construction also indicate the need for contextually appropriate application in order to achieve a cooperative function. This task demands a high level of language awareness, and NSs are subject to this same demand in ELF speech events, at least as much as ELF speakers themselves. For this reason, the study indicates some ways in which English NSs could raise their awareness and improve their communication skills in ELF speech events. This study is only a starting point, however, and suggests the need for further research into the role of NSs in ELF interaction.

If the unavoidable NS presence would be incorporated into a global framework of ELF interaction, concrete steps could be taken to provide an empirically based, interactive framework in which the willing NS could indeed improve her or his communication skills in ELF speech events. ELF research could lead to the sort of "language awareness" training proposed by Seidlhofer (2004: 226-227), but training in which both ELF speakers and NSs would participate as equally invested in a proactive, cooperative approach to their speech. I would argue that NSs have the most to gain from such training. After all, ELF speakers are being observed communicating cooperatively and effectively without any outside prompting. ELF speakers are, in essence, being observed doing what they do best – not emulating NSs, but using English as an effective tool for lingua franca communication. On the contrary, NSs could benefit from emulating speakers of ELF, as the successful NSs in the ELFA data have demonstrated.

Notes

[1]   For the VOICE corpus, see http://www.univie.ac.at/voice.

[2]   For the ELFA corpus, see http://www.helsinki.fi/elfa/elfacorpus.

[3]   It is worth noting that two of the examples taken from Mauranen's ELFA corpus data actually exhibit cooperative behavior by NSs. The first involves a NS's cooperative response to a signal of misunderstanding (2006: 133) and the second is a NS offering a series of co-constructions (2006: 137-138).

[4]   See Transcription conventions for the symbols used in the examples.

Transcription conventions

The following transcription conventions which are found in this paper are taken from the ELFA Transcription Guide (http://www.helsinki.fi/elfa/ELFA transcription guide.pdf):

Speaker codes:

<S#>	ELF speaker
<NS#>	Native speaker of English
<BS#>	Bilingual speaker of English
<SS>	Several simultaneous speakers

Symbols:

<S1> </S1>	Utterance begins/ends
(text)	Uncertain transcription
(xx)	Unintelligible speech
@@	Laughter
@text@	Spoken laughing
,	Brief pause while speaking, 2-3 sec.
.	Pause, 3-4 sec.
[text]	Overlapping speech (approximate, shown to the nearest word, words not split by overlap tags)
<NAME>	Names of participants
<SIC> text </SIC>	Non-standard words
/…/	Omitted text from transcription

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