



Valeria Franceschi\*

Sara Corrizzato\*\*

## INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSORS ANNA MAURANEN (UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI) AND BARBARA SEIDLHOFER (UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA)

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*We interviewed professors Anna Mauranen (University of Helsinki) and Barbara Seidlhofer (University of Vienna) when they were invited as keynote speakers at the symposium "New Frontiers in Teaching and Learning English", where they delivered talks about English as a Lingua Franca (ELF).*

*The symposium, held at the University of Verona, was organized by the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, headed by Prof. Roberta Facchinetti, and chaired by Dr. Paola Vettorel. The conference achieved resounding success, as shown by the presence of both academics and teachers at primary and secondary levels. Great interest in fact was displayed in relation to the topics discussed during the day: the focus was preeminently on the most recent research on pedagogical and didactic approaches to English teaching, developed in response to the globalization processes that have increased the relevance of English as a language of international communication.*

**Barbara Seidlhofer** has been Professor of English Language and Literature (Linguistics) at the University of Vienna since 2005. Her interest in ELF dates back to the early days of research on the topic, and she is the project director of The Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE). She is one of the editors of the recently-founded *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca* (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton).

*Her most recent publications include:*

*Seidlhofer, Barbara 2011. Understanding English as a Lingua Franca. Oxford: Oxford University Press.*

*Seidlhofer, Barbara. 2012. "Corpora and English as a Lingua Franca". In Hyland, Ken; Huat, Chau Meng; Handford, Michael (eds.). Corpus Applications in Applied Linguistics. London, New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 135-149.*

*Seidlhofer, Barbara. 2010. "DYLAN – Language dynamics and management of diversity: Forschungsprogramm und Fragestellungen eines Verbundprojektes". In Böhringer, Heike; Hülbauer, Cornelia; Vetter, Eva. (eds.). Mehrsprachigkeit aus der Perspektive zweier EU-Projekte. DYLAN meets LINEE. Wien: Peter Lang, 59-72.*

**Anna Mauranen** is currently the Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Helsinki. She has also been working extensively on ELF from the very beginning and she is the project director of the English as an Academic Lingua Franca (ELFA) project as well as of its written counterpart WrELFA, which is in process of being compiled. Like Barbara Seidlhofer, she is an editor of the recently-founded *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca* (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton).

*Among her recent publications we may find:*

*Mauranen, A. 2013. "Hybridism, edutainment, and doubt: Science blogging finding its feet." Nordic Journal of English Studies 13(1): 7-36.*

*Mauranen, A. 2012. Exploring ELF. Academic English Shaped by Non-Native Speakers. New York: Cambridge University Press*

*Mauranen, A. 2012. Chunking in ELF: Expressions for Managing Interaction. Corpus Linguistics, Vol 1: Lexical Studies. Biber, D. & Reppen, R. (eds.). Los Angeles: SAGE, 271-286*

**SARA CORRIZZATO:** The symposium today focused preeminently on Lingua Franca uses of English: how would you define ELF (English as a Lingua Franca), and how does it differ mainly from the traditional concept of EFL

(English as a Foreign Language)?

**ANNA MAURANEN:** we have a very good but long definition, for me it's just a contact language, when speakers do not have another language in common, or presumably they can also choose...they may have several languages in common and then they just choose... but it's not the mother tongue of all speakers at least

**BARBARA SEIDLHOFER:** I'd subscribe to this definition. Yes, the definition in my book is a little bit long, because I felt I needed to emphasize that it's a medium that people choose. So it's a means of communication when there's no shared other language basically. So that could be the only shared language, but it could also be one of the best shared languages. It's really a bottom-up process, people decide that they want to use it and as I was trying to explain today it has nothing to do with how good or how bad some of this English is but it's a very matter-of-fact pragmatic thing. And it's very different from EFL.

**VALERIA FRANCESCHI:** this symposium was endorsed by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research, and it was open to schoolteachers. Requests for participation were more numerous than we expected, which suggests that there is at least some curiosity in relation to the discussed topics. And in one of the presentations it was said that school teachers are not very aware of ELF, so that's why in projects involving schools they are trying to make teachers more aware that there are more varieties of English than just British and American and try to include them in the curriculum. What do you think about opening ongoing university research to school teachers?

**BS:** I was totally amazed by how much interest there is. You know, one always compares with one's own institution and I cannot really see this happening in Vienna, in Austria like this. So first of all I would say I'm really really impressed and it's a great thing to have this conference.

I was also really touched because it's such a concern for me that elementary schoolteachers should get a university education, in Austria the preparation for primary and secondary school teachers is divided between different universities, I mean, there used to be pedagogical academies that are now called pedagogical universities but it's not the same thing, so primary school teachers' education is shorter...you know in the last but one presentation they were saying how teachers need more understanding of linguistics and processes of communication etc. and I mean the best chance they can get is if they are a part of this university discourse, so I mean I find it great, really fantastic and absolutely to be emulated, I don't know whether you have the same...

**AM:** We have a similar thing to the Italian system, all our primary school teachers do a Master's Degree and this has been the case for a long time. I think this is probably one of the explanations for the very good exam results that Finland keeps getting, we educate our teachers very well. There's a lot of interest in ELF in language teachers in Finland among them and they come in large groups if you talk about ELF. However, what I was really impressed by were these projects that these Italian teachers had with them, joint projects, I thought they were absolutely fantastic, I don't think we have anything like that going on. Our teachers are not actually involved in research, we might have undergraduate and graduate students involved in our groups, but not people from outside the university so I thought that was really great, very impressive.

**BS:** It's brilliant, absolutely

**AM:** They must be interested, I mean all these stories that teachers are not interested in this and then they come here in hordes. Who is not interested?

**BS:** Because there seems to be a lot of intellectual curiosity. As you said, they were curious, but also in this very good way of wanting to understand things and I think that it's so important. And what we talked about, I think it was in this discussion about the three generations. How long will it take for change? I think there was quite a wide range of ages also represented, quite young teachers but also teacher educators, people who supervise other teachers and they are really important. If you don't have that then it really takes at least 3 generations because people might be suspicious of ELF at first. In Austria you do this probation year where then this older teacher says how well you've done. So you if you are supervised by an older teacher that has never heard about this [ELF] and is totally against this anyway, then you're going to have a hard time so you'll end up fitting in with this older teacher and nothing will happen at the end of your probation year, you will sort of be turned round again. And then it will take another generation like when you are in a position of supervising a teacher but then you'll probably be in your 40s or 50s then I can see the first change happening, but if you get teachers assembled here and they think about this thing together and the projects, then I think it's a much better way of doing it.

**SC:** In relation to primary school, in one of the last presentations it was said that maybe children are too young to start learning and using English, what do you think about this point?

**AM:** I think it's a very interesting and in fact plausible - it depends on what you want them to learn, because they learn very positive attitudes towards foreign languages, and they learn to have confidence and they learn things like that. I can just imagine that their measured performance on different skills can be found lacking but on the other hand it's...as the speaker was also saying, it may relate to the kind of tests that we impose upon them, because it depends on what you test. A most interesting case of counterproductive testing that I know of, is from Mozambique: they suddenly decided they wanted to raise the educational standards and that means that everybody needs to learn Portuguese Portuguese and not Mozambican Portuguese; it used to be a colony of Portugal but it's been independent for a while, and they speak Mozambican Portuguese. It's still only about 13% of the population that speaks any kind of Portuguese and the teachers in school don't speak Portuguese Portuguese because they were born when Mozambique became independent so they don't speak that, but this is the testing that's imposed on the kids in school, so it means that they all fail more or less. So how do we test these people, and how do we find them deficient?

**BS:** That's a nice example, it illustrates the same thing that was discussed with reference to English, and starting early, with very young learners. I think there's a mismatch between the motivations that make this come about, that notion of 'the earlier the better' and the good side effects that you mentioned you know like awareness, openness, etc. But somehow there's a funny meeting of these two things, because the policy is of course for the usual reasons, that is, what the parents wanted, which is always so important but also it seems like a cheap way of getting people into this. You just do a little bit, sow your seeds and then that will prepare people. That's also why I asked about this break between the primary and secondary. Because if English starts all over again in the secondary what's the point? It could still be this openness and especially since so many classes are now multilingual anyway. They are not even all Italian right? There was this figure of 15% in some schools, it's actually the same for us in Vienna. It's interesting that, I would call it like the wrong motivation because it seems expedient, but then it actually has some good side effects, but of course we also know from L1-language learning takes years and years and the whole point of designing a curriculum and lessons is that, if you like, improve on nature - you speed things up and that is of course much more difficult to do with these young learners.

**AM:** This subtext that goes into this 'catch them young' thing is that they reportedly develop better accents, more natural, more native-like accents if you really start them...is this really what we want? Is this the ideal - can this be achieved? I doubt it very much but it has to do with this very traditional ideology of having like one nation one language, one whatever, one soul, one everything

**BS:** If it's the case, as Lucilla [Lopriore] stressed, most of the teachers are not native-speaker teachers anyway, then why do we worry about the accents they pick up? I mean, they would be listening to other sources later anyway so...this whole equation between the model you get in the school and what you reproduce has been broken up in so many ways.

**VF:** Today we've also addressed the issue of native speaker emulation, which is one of the strongest pillars of foreign language education at the moment. It sees learners of a new language as never quite reaching native speaker competence. On the other hand, as it was said today, ELF puts emphasis on communicative effectiveness rather than linguistic accuracy. I was thinking about something you said, namely that it doesn't make any sense to talk about ELF in school curricula so I wanted to ask you why.

**BS:** I think it makes a lot of sense to talk about ELF in curricula, and actually that's what happens. I had a look recently at the Bavarian and Austrian curricula, and what happens is that of course curricula vary a lot: Austria has a very general curriculum for all modern foreign languages - there's a little bit about individual languages and then there's a mention of the role of English as a global lingua franca in the first paragraph, and the rest is exactly the same as all other foreign languages. Here I think there would be a point in actually talking very much about English as a foreign language **or** as a lingua franca, and saying it's different from other foreign languages in that there is a global lingua franca, what implications does that have? You don't have exactly the same curriculum as you have for Italian, and Russian as you have for English. I did not mean that we shouldn't talk about ELF in curricula, I think that what you are probably referring to is that you can't say 'let's teach ELF'.

**VF:** Yes that's what I meant.

**BS:** Because, what does that mean? That's why it was always nicely circumscribed in the conference, described in terms of ELF-aware classrooms...the point is that you think about the fact that English has a completely different role than any other languages, which - as I said - in our long teacher preparation courses is something that most students realize very late; others who happen to do other courses, about, I don't know, cinema or something...it doesn't hit them at all; sometimes in their last year when we have this course they say 'I studied English for 5 years and never thought about it!' And I think that's what I meant that you can't say we'll teach ELF all nicely packaged, and instead of slotting in the usual patterns we'll slot in some other patterns and sounds, because that doesn't make sense.

**AM:** I fully agree with that.

**VF:** Because it's not a variety.

**AM:** Because it's not a variety that anybody would have described, it's not stabilized in any particular way yet, and may do so or may never do so; it may be forever emergent because it can stay like that, kind of like forever first generation hybrid because people with different L1 backgrounds always come together speaking with their own kind of background varieties of English; that's going to be ELF. That's why I call it kind of second order language contact, and that's not like any ordinary language contact situation where one group is trying to learn the language of another group and they influence each other. So this is different, it's really exciting to see what happens, but, as I said, the social situation tends to stabilize linguistically over three generations - lots of people think this happens, because the first generation are the innovators, the second one is those who consolidate it and the third one takes it for granted. I fully agree we can't teach ELF, because we can teach about ELF, we can show what it is like, and so we can increase awareness, like my colleague Barbara was just saying. But it's really funny to think about a stable list of features of which we would say 'oh we say this rather than that' because this really works internationally. There are a number of things that do work internationally but they're not like very minute clear features like that.

**BS:** But your talk illustrated them very nicely. You can say things about the forms you find that tell you something of the processes that people go through, cognitively, socio-psychologically and whatever. And these are extremely interesting things to observe. But you would not be able to package them into curricula or into text you need to teach unless you define the teaching, and don't teach according to, I don't know, morphological items or phonological items but in terms of certain strategies.. then you could describe these things of course! But you would have very different headings from what you find in textbooks normally. It would be a very interesting thing to do what Anna was talking about today based on ELFA[1] and also the last but one on VOICE[2] and that is exactly what you can understand. I think it is also what you, Anna, just said about the forever emerging - of course you said it is true of any language used, and any living language, but it is so much more obvious for ELF. Again it opens our eyes to things that we have stopped seeing because we tend to think in varieties etcetera, and it makes us aware of things that happen throughout, but just - again - accelerated language change of course, things happening more quickly and under our noses all right, but it is all there in every language.

**SC:** (To Barbara Seidlhofer) Today you used the word de-territorialization of speech events - could you further explain this point?

**BS:** Well, it is connected with what I have just said about language contact, it was picked up later by "localized" and "globalized" in EIL. So "the localized" would be territorial in the sense that, typically you study a place either post-colonial, a place where the Anglos went and there was contact and they accommodated to each other, they worked out their own ways of speaking. That is a very territorial use. In the neighboring island it is different, right? Whereas with the "de-territorialization" it is something not geographically fixed because it is, as I have just said, forever emergent and re-negotiated in every encounter. You have to be on your feet all the time, which is a good thing to do actually, it makes you quite aware and opens your ears to things.

**AM:** Well, it's your term and it is unpronounceable and you are responsible for that. Anyway, I agree with that, I mean, I think this is very important. It is really important to see that this is how language is going, and I think that English is really the trailblazer because people in other languages, or teaching other languages, come looking to World Englishes to see what's going on in their own languages, in the languages they are involved in because actually they become more internationalized - internationalism in the languages that they focus on. From French, that is not only a language of France, and although maybe Italian is mostly just a language of Italy, Norwegian of Norway - for certain understandable reasons. But when you get Spanish or Chinese, of course it is hugely widespread, different languages actually have a lot more variability and change, "global" flows, across them as well, so we're just

looking into what English is, and English is different from the others; the others are like traipsing behind, because English is so strange, a really really global lingua franca – the nature of which is misunderstood all the time- but it is what you expect really in the end.

**BS:** But that's true, it gives socio-linguistics a boost, a kind of intellectual kick to look at the things that are happening and they are blatantly happening in English. But, as you have just said, other people say ohh, you know... it is a bit like when Schuchardt first said you need to study pidgins and creoles, people said "you are mad", and he was shunned, wasn't he? He was really a pariah among the linguists because people said a pidgin was-not a language, so you couldn't study it. And look at how well regarded he is now, how he really enriched the whole field. Through many years, I don't know, I was feeling that something like that is happening - also and in addition of course, because the focus was on teaching today, and it's paradoxical anyway that practically all new approaches to teaching and all waves of innovation came from English-speaking contexts, although native speakers of English are not particularly known for being good at learning languages.

**VF:** (to Anna) since you talked about the ELFA corpus today and you mentioned your ongoing research on WrELFA, —could you tell us some more about which stage you are now with the research.

**AM:** Right, the written corpus... It's something that is very unique to ELF research, they actually do the spoken language first, this is rare, especially if the written code exists in a language - usually linguistics comes from writing to speaking. So I thought it was about time to start a written corpus, we have about just a half million words at the moment because it's rather laborious really to compile. I'd kind of think that there is a lot of English as Lingua Franca all over the Net and you can do it like in three minutes or something. you can't really! you really want to know that it is ELF and keep some check on what is going on. So, what I found when I first took a glance of the first three hundred thousand words was very similar to, surprisingly similar to what was going on in spoken ELF. In terms of the formal features, that is, strategic features, are obviously different because it's a written language, there's quite a lot of, say, meta-discourse in terms of discourse features, whereas the grammatical features are surprisingly similar to spoken ELF. I thought this was surprising because the writers are not supposed to do it because they go all day through that kind of like reference works at hand we were collecting very high stakes genres, like examiner's reports on PhD theses, (To Barbara) You've done some of those, they're quite formal and lengthy in our case and we actually write them out, and they run several pages. We took a number of Faculties of the University of Helsinki and we invited those people to submit, and basically to have the data we actually had to ask for the permission. they usually give it. They understand, they are researchers themselves, they understand when somebody wants to do research on their language. So, the first inklings into what that might be like are really interesting in the light of what we always hear from other people, how incompetent non-native speakers are because they can't write academic texts. I don't think it's like that at all, I think they manage very well indeed. This is my first impression. it is surprisingly like ELF, it tends to be very good English, but there is a lot more to the difference between written and spoken language than we usually care to think about. And I think that Doug Biber's work, his variationist work is really very important because he has shown, he's exposed many myths that people hold that are persistent about the difference between the spoken and written language, and I think his recent work is very interesting. Obviously he works a lot with academic texts, and this is very interesting to me in particular because he works within academia, so I'm very much looking forward to this growing database and I think it could be very interesting to see other kinds of database as well. We also already have blog data. We limited it to academic topics or science topics, of course there are a lots of them. We can't control who is commenting, but the condition we had was that the main blogger him- or herself needs to be an ELF speaker, not a native speaker of English.

We want to thank Anna Mauranen and Barbara Seidlhofer for giving us their time for this interview.

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\* *Valeria Franceschi (valeria.franceschi@univr.it) is a PhD student in English Studies at the University of Verona. Her research interests include English as a Lingua Franca, idiomaticity and phraseology, computer-based communication and fan practices. Her dissertation focuses on ELF in online fan fiction.*

\*\* *Sara Corrizato (sara.corrizato@univr.it) completed the PhD in English linguistics. Her areas of research include translation theory, audiovisual language, pragmatics and ELT. She is teaching assistant of English Language and Translation at the University of Verona since 2009 and has been also teaching English language and literature in upper secondary school since 2008.*

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[1] Corpus of English as an Academic Lingua Franca

[2] Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English