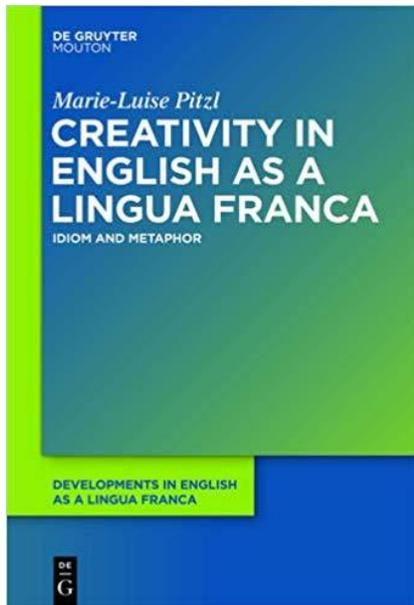# Creativity in English as a Lingua Franca: Idiom and Metaphor

Marie-Luise Pitzl

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Review by Monica Antonello[*]

In this volume, Marie-Luise Pitzl offers an insightful analysis of the notion of creativity in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), focusing in particular on the exploration and description of idioms and metaphors from an ELF perspective, that is, from a standpoint where these phenomena are no longer restricted or limited to a native-like use of language. The author states that ELF is "a language use in its own right, i.e. a language use that is subject to and indicative of sociolinguistic variation just like any other language use outside the classroom" (3); for this reason, ELF has to be considered as a "natural linguistic development" (5) of a global language use where the 'native speaker' is no longer the reference point for what is appropriate or desirable. Moreover, as in any other spoken language use, perfect communication does not exist and successful communication also includes miscommunication, creativity and variation. From this point of view, Pitzl aims at investigating creativity in ELF, analysing how idioms and metaphors are linguistically created in ELF interactions and which functions they perform in these contexts.

In Chapter 1, "English as a lingua franca: why creativity?," the author emphasises her perspective on English and English as a Lingua Franca. She provides a visual label, an asterisk, before the word 'English' to highlight how this notion is no longer a homogeneous entity, but instead an umbrella term that refers to different and manifold realities. As a consequence of this assumption, the label 'native speaker' as traditionally conceived no longer stands, since on the one hand there is no longer a fixed and precise language of reference and, on the other hand, ELF speakers are multilingual and this changes the perspective on the reference model to be adopted. Furthermore, Pitzl suggests using the notion of 'Transient International Group' (TIG) when speaking of participants in ELF conversations, because it comprises the temporary nature of ELF communities. She defines TIGs as "groups comprised of multilingual ELF users who interact for a particular purpose at a particular

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location for a certain amount of time" (21), where the reference point is transitory and strictly related to the participants involved. The transient and multilingual nature of these interactions directly affects creative language use in ELF, since speakers are generally aware of the existence of different norms and thus are also less bound to them. According to Pitzl, therefore, creativity is "the creation of new linguistic forms and expressions or the use of existing forms and expressions in a non-conventional way could be applied to all kinds of language data" (34).

In Chapter 2, "Creativity, idiom and metaphor," the author explains how she considers idioms and metaphors in her study. Describing past studies on idioms and idiomaticity, Pitzl highlights how complex it is to find a consistent terminology, pointing out how researchers have never completely agreed on the definitions of these terms. In this volume, the author refers to *idiomatic expressions* as a superordinate term to indicate multi-word units such as collocations, phraseological units, formulaic language and idioms; while *idioms* are semantically metaphorical expressions in which all the components do not result in the meaning of the whole chunk. Moreover, Pitzl explains that a metaphor is "a way of relating two words/things/concepts which are actually unrelated" (51), pointing out that it is the way in which this association is created that determines the degree of creativity of the metaphor. Even if metaphors can be analysed from different perspectives, for example from a cognitive or a psycholinguistic standpoint, the author clarifies that from the data set of the study it is not possible to go beyond the semantic level and thus this is the approach that she adopts. The identification of metaphors depends on how we define the relationship between topic and vehicle (the two terms which construct a metaphor) and thus four degrees of metaphoricity are defined: codification, according to which metaphors can be either 'conventional' or 'dynamic'; domain incongruity in a specific context, so metaphors can be 'covert' or 'overt'; institutionalisation/lexicalisation, hence metaphors can be 'dead' or 'live', according to their perceived use in society; and speaker intention, according to which metaphors can be 'opaque' or 'deliberate'.

In Chapter 3, "Describing ELF: Analyzing VOICE," Pitzl explains the dataset she uses for her study and the process that she applied to identify and annotate the corpus. VOICE[1] (the Vienna Oxford Corpus of International English) is a corpus of naturally-occurring spoken ELF data that was released in 2009 as the first ELF corpus available. It includes three domains (Educational, Leisure and Professional) and data was collected from 2005 to 2013. Pitzl took part in the process of compiling this corpus and in parallel, she also annotated the different creative uses she identified in the 87 recordings she directly managed. Following a qualitative approach, she filtered the different instances she marked in order to select those creative uses related to the focus of this study, that is, idioms and metaphors.

In Chapter 4, "Creative idioms in ELF interactions: Exploring forms," the author defines the types of forms idioms can have, with a thorough description of the instances found in VOICE. In the ELF interactions analysed, idioms can vary semantically, syntactically and morphosyntactically; these variations can be either intentional or unintentional, but Pitzl highlights how this cannot be inferred from the data set she refers to. In addition, it is important to keep in mind that variation can happen on more than one level, but that for clarity reasons they were kept separated. In the context of her study, lexical substitution is when a speaker changes one of the lexical elements of the conventional form, but in doing so the semantic field of the original form is maintained; many examples in the corpus analysed show that often the element that has been changed is a hyponym of the one present in the conventional idiom and parallel patterns of generalisation and embodiment can be found. In these cases, the interpretation and identification of the original conventional idiom is a challenge, but it is shown how speakers focus more on the imagery expressed than the exact wording. Syntactic and morphosyntactic variations are closely related: the former "refers to changes in constructional organization, which usually involves modifying an adapting constructions that are considered part of the idiom" (123); while the latter affects the inflectional elements of the idiom, for example through pluralisation, flexible use of the determiners, and prepositional variation.

In Chapter 5, "Functions of creative idioms and metaphors in ELF interactions," Pitzl explains the communicative aims of creative idioms and metaphors through examples from the corpus. Namely, to use humour and mitigation, to talk about abstract concepts, to increase explicitness, to establish and maintain rapport and comity, to highlight shared non-nativeness, and to provide emphasis. Pitzl underscores how

[1] https://www.univie.ac.at/voice/

creative idioms and metaphors are not shown to be direct cause of miscommunication and non-understanding, but instead they are always aimed at achieving successful communication.

In Chapter 6, "Metaphorical creativity in ELF interactions: Discovering patterns and systematicities," the author goes beyond the traditional distinction between idiom and metaphor and shows how metaphorical images are a shared resource for ELF speakers that only sometimes relate to conventional idioms. Pitzl explores some examples where metaphors make use of concrete images and continues with an in-depth analysis of how body parts are used to create metaphors, emphasising how embodiment is one of the most basic human experience that people can share. These examples prove how metaphors are a universal device that people can share even when their linguacultural background differ.

In Chapter 7, "The multilingual dimension of metaphorical creativity," Pitzl focuses on recent research in ELF translingual practices and applies these findings to creative idioms and metaphors. The author explains that each ELF speaker has an Individual Multilingual Repertoire (IMR) that comprises all his/her linguistic resources, not only English. It is likely that in interaction, speakers' individual multilingual repertoires overlap, creating what Pitzl calls shared Multilingual Resource Pool (MRP). These shared resources can include idioms and metaphorical imageries, not only in English, but also in other languages, creating common references that can be understood in each Transient International Group. Moreover, it is important to highlight that ELF speakers sometimes flag multilingual resources even if they are not shared within a TIG to display their multilingual identities, underlining how ELF is no longer just about English, but also about other languages and cultures.

In Chapter 8, "Implications of metaphorical creativity," Pitzl summaries the main point of her research, pointing to further developments. First of all, she emphasises the importance to develop awareness not only of conventional and creative idioms, but also of metaphors and re-metaphorisation, resources that draw from ELF speakers' common pools of knowledge and that can be understood by interpreting the context. Moreover, the close relationship existing between creativity and convention does not restrict creativity, since it can be both norm-following or norm-transcending; a balance between these two ends is fundamental in order to transform something new in something creative and to make it intelligible to other speakers. Finally, Pitzl discusses the need to expand research on ELF methodologies. She criticises the fact that methodological discussions have not kept pace with theoretical research in ELF and this has resulted in the need for further studies in relation to three main aspects. The first issue she points out is that an extensive analysis of the contexts in which ELF is used is needed, especially a common reference model that could systematise and bring together findings in ELF research. Moreover, a more comprehensive exploration of the notion of community and group as a social category in relation to ELF contexts is paramount to shape a shared point of reference that future research could use to draw more thorough and comparable conclusions. Finally, there is the necessity to develop synchronic and diachronic studies on ELF, in order to analyse changes and patterns in ELF interactions over time. The last section of the chapter focuses on the pedagogical implications of the findings on idioms, metaphors and creativity, giving some suggestions to language educators in order to value and use the results: creativity should be appreciated and a greater awareness on its mechanisms and effects could be very useful to learners who want to interact in ELF contexts.

This volume represents a thorough analysis of creativity, idioms and metaphor use in ELF contexts and it highlights some interesting aspects in ELF research. In addition to providing insightful remarks on how creative idioms and metaphors play a role in ELF interactions and can be drawn from ELF speakers' shared resource pools, it also tries to propose further theoretical suggestions in order to move forward in ELF research. This book would be useful for researchers who are interested in creativity in ELF and also in recent conceptualisations in this field of research, since Pitzl pinpoints core issues in current ELF studies that raise some stimulating reflections on how future research could (and should) evolve.

Works cited

VOICE. 2013. *The Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English* (version 2.0 XML). Director: Barbara Seidlhofer; Researchers: Angelika Breiteneder, Theresa Klimpfinger, Stefan Majewski, Ruth Osimk-Teasdale, Marie-Luise Pitzl, Michael Radeka.