

# CONSTRUCTIONS OF ENGLISH IN THE DANISH CORPORATE CONTEXT

by  
Sharon Millar

Working within the framework of social representation theory, the article examines how employees in multinational companies in Denmark construct the notion of English and considers their constructions in terms of proposed reconceptualisations of English in the literature on English as lingua franca (ELF). In particular focus is the nature of the representational field and tensions within this. The data, derived from individual interviews, reveals two main interrelated themes about English: commonness and competence. There are tensions in the representational field surrounding both themes, and categorisations based on nationality and types of occupation play a role. Interconnected ideas about competence are apparent, where the significance of native correctness and situated pragmatism is dependent on levels of familiarity and communicative mode (written vs. spoken). There is only very limited evidence of English reconceptualised in the sense of ELF.

## *1. Introduction*

It is commonly recognised that the role of what is generally referred to as 'English' and the contexts of its use have changed dramatically over recent decades, so much so that there have been calls in the expert literature to deconstruct and reconceptualise familiar concepts such as 'English' and 'native speaker', and indeed 'language' (for example, Davies 2003; Makoni and Pennycook, 2007; Park and Wee 2012; Seidlhofer 2011). This critical poststructuralist stance markedly characterizes research within the field of English as a lingua franca; as argued by Baird (2012: 6) "the use of English as a lingua franca has very quickly opened a space for researching and conceptualising language as constructed by the speakers in the contexts of their

interaction". In this spirit, my focus in this article is on the social construction of English by those who use, or are confronted by, the language by virtue of working in a globalised workplace. The aim is to explore, from the perspective of social representation theory (on which see below), how 'English' is socially represented in Danish multinational corporations, where the predominant role of English (particularly in internal communications) is well-acknowledged (Millar et al. 2012).<sup>1</sup> Of interest are the nature of social representation, and in particular signs of tension in representation, and the implications these may have for expert linguistic endeavours relating to the reconceptualisation of English.

## 2. *Social Representation Theory*

Social representation theory (SRT) is a social-psychological approach to everyday or common sense knowledge about the social world (Jovchelovitch 2007; Moscovici 2000; Wagner & Hayes 2005); it aims to accommodate the social and the individual/cognitive, seeing representation as a dynamic, dialectical process. According to Sammut and Howarth (forthcoming 2014),

social representations are systems of communication and social influence that constitute the social realities of different groups in society. They serve as the principal means for establishing and extending the shared knowledge, common practices and affiliations that bind social members together [...] and thereby act to support systems of identity, community, inclusion and exclusion.

A social representation of a social phenomenon is, thus, a group-based construction emerging out of situated communicative dynamics and power relations. Although sharedness is a requirement,

a social representation itself consists of a variety of different, often contradictory, meanings (Clémence 2001; Doise 2001); that is, social representations are shared in the sense of the background assumptions of the group, but need not be consensual at the level of social interaction and communication (Chryssides et al. 2009; Wagner & Hayes 2005). The structural notion of the 'representational field' was introduced to counter the notion of a representation as homogeneous and to accommodate both consensus and conflict in social representation (Rose et al 1995).

Social representation can be understood as both process, i.e. representing, and situated product, i.e. the structured contents of a representation (Duveen & Lloyd 1990). In this article, my concern is with the latter, focusing on the identification of major elements within the representational field of English.

## 3. *Data*

The data consists of interviews undertaken with 37 Danish managers and other administrative employees in 12 companies (anonymised through use of random colour terms). All of the interviewees are based in the Danish head office of the respective entity, with the exception of one (Beige) which is an affiliate of a German, multinational medical company. Seven of the companies in the sample use English as a corporate language as a means to manage linguistic diversity within the company – a diversity which usually has resulted from company expansion. None of the companies have an explicit language policy as stipulated in an official written document.

Interviews were subjected to a content analysis using ATLAS.ti, software developed specifically for qualitative analysis of textual and other types of data. Its coding functionalities have been inspired by Grounded Theory, but do not demand adherence to this specific approach, which is in essence a systematic research methodology for

the generation of theory from empirical data (Birks & Mills 2011). ATLAS.ti allows for open coding, the building of higher-order coding categories on the basis of comparison of initial codes, and the use of memos to store meta-comments on the coding procedures (Daymon and Holloway 2011; Strauss and Corbin 1998). The analysis practiced here consisted of various rounds of coding, where initial codes were used as building blocks to construct categories; thus, preliminary codes such as 'English as global language', 'English as international language', 'everybody speaking English', 'corporate language allowing us to speak to each other' were subsequently combined into a category of 'commonness'. This allowed for the identification of themes and sub-themes within the representational field of English. As ATLAS.ti links all codes to specific excerpts of text, it is possible to ensure that codes are not divorced from the nuances of their discursive contexts.

The data in this article will be presented in Danish orthographic transcription with English translations.

#### 4. *The Representational Field of English*

On the basis of the coding procedures described above, two related overarching themes about English were identified in the discourse of the interviewees, namely *commonness* and *competence*.

##### 4.1. Commonness

The idea of English as a common language relates to various assumptions that involve not only the global reach of the language, but also its efficiency and fairness as a communicative platform, particularly within the multinational organisation. These assumptions are often discursively situated in relation to Danish, be this

implicitly or explicitly. Consider, for example, the argument of a graduate trainee from Sienna company (a manufacturing multinational in the clothing sector) when asked about the advantages and disadvantages of English as a corporate language:

Jeg ser kun fordele i, at vi har omvendt os til at kunne snakke engelsk alle sammen så, selvom vi ikke kan lære alle de lokale sprog, vi kan ikke lære at snakke på alle de markeder vi er på, men så må vi finde et eller andet fælles sted, og hvis vi havde valgt at sætte det som dansk og prøve at gøre det til et verdenssprog, så ville vi jo møde alt for mange barrierer. Så dét, at vi vælger at gøre det til engelsk og sige det lærer man rundt omkring i verden, så gør vi det på den måde.

(I can only see advantages in that we have converted ourselves to speaking English all of us, so although we can't learn all the local languages, we can't learn to speak in all the markets we are in, we have to find some kind of common ground and if we had chosen to make that Danish and tried to make it a world language so we would have met all too many obstacles. So that we have chosen to make it English and say that that's what one learns round the world so we'll do it that way.)

Taking a corporate stance, as evidenced by his use of 'we', the interviewee focuses on the practical need for establishing 'common ground', the linguistic contenders being Danish and English; no other languages seem to have been in the reckoning. English is preferred because of its global characteristics: this is the language one learns globally and the language that everyone is accustomed to using (or as he metaphorically phrases it 'converted ourselves to using'). English is (as other interviewees express it) 'global' or 'an international language'.

A further dimension of commonness is observed in the discourse of two interviewees from a pharmaceutical distribution company

(Orange), who portray English as a kind of linguistic leveller within the organisation. For example, one of these interviewees, a production manager, explains this in terms of everyone, regardless of national origin, being on the 'same ground' since no-one is speaking their mother tongue (the company's affiliates are in Germany and the Czech Republic). Her categorisations are based on an opposition between mother tongue and the foreign language, here English.

fordelen er jo nok at vi alle sammen er på samme grund. Jeg synes altså at vi alle sammen står lidt vakkende med et fremmedsprog, det er ikke vores modersmål hverken for tyskere eller tjekkiske medarbejdere eller danske medarbejdere.  
(the advantage probably is that all of us are on the same ground. I do think all of us are a little faltering with a foreign language which is not our mother tongue, neither for the German or Czech employees or the Danish employees.)

In this sense, English is perceived, at least in the head office, as facilitating fairness across national groups within the company (although it is worth noting that the company's German affiliate objected to the choice of English as the corporate language and seems to have been allowed to follow its own procedures). In a similar vein, a sales agent from Beige company, when asked about situations where she had thought it an advantage to be able to speak several languages, portrays English as a common skill, facilitating information sharing when meeting colleagues from across the international organisation. Note that she was not explicitly asked about English, nor does she name this specific language, but it is clear from the discursive context that it is English she is referring to:

Jeg synes jo, når man har mødt sine kollegaer fra andre dele af Europa, at det er godt at vi kan snakke sammen. Jeg synes det er fantastisk. Man hører jo hvad der sker, man får altid

ny information, man får altid nye input, fordi de kan fortælle hvordan gør de i landet der og hvordan lægger de deres planer for hvad de skal gøre, og hvad er vilkårene i deres land og jo det er fantastisk. Så jo det glæder mig da at man kan snakke sammen...

(I think, you know, when you have met your colleagues from other parts of Europe, that it's good that we can talk together. I think it's fantastic. You hear about what's happening, you always get new information, you always get new input because they can tell you about how they do things in their country and how they plan for what they are going to do and what the conditions are like in their country and yes that's fantastic. So yes it makes me happy that we can talk together...)

Here this employee is speaking as an individual, and not as a corporate persona, drawing on her personal experiences in the work context. However, as she continues her narrative, her positioning towards English as the unproblematic shared medium of communication changes as she recalls uncomfortable situations with Spanish colleagues:

... og kedeligt fordi jeg har jo været sammen nogle gange med spanske kollegaer som er med til de samme møder, og vi kan ikke tale sammen, og det er som om at de sidder der i den anden, den ene ende af lokalet, og vi andre sidder i den anden og vi snakker ikke sammen og dermed får vi ikke den udveksling af ting. Det er kedeligt, det synes jeg det er.  
(... and unpleasant because I have sometimes been with Spanish colleagues who are at the same meetings and we can't talk together and it's as if they are sitting at the other, at one end of the room and us others are sitting at the other and we don't talk together and so we don't get that exchange of things. That's unpleasant, I think that's what it is).

She further notes that an interpreter is used in meetings and training sessions to help Spanish participants, but what remains lost is the social interaction and informal networking that can prove useful at a later date (cf. Lauring & Tange (2010) who note similar problems with informal knowledge sharing in the multinational organisation). The commonness of English and its role as a communicative facilitator is thus being questioned, in this case in relation to colleagues from a specific national group.

Other interviewees similarly refer to the difficulties presented by colleagues, customers and/or suppliers from certain national groups, be these Spanish or Latin American, French, German, Russian, or Chinese; in these contexts, English does not always function well as a lingua franca. For instance, a design coordinator from Red company, which produces sport and leisure facilities, notes serious communication problems, caused by language, with the company's French affiliate. He has been discussing the proposition put to him that language is a key to culture, where he first notes that people generally relax more when one speaks to them in their own language, and then moves on to his experiences with French colleagues:

altså med franskmændene jeg har egentlig ikke lyst til at tage til Fran... altså vi havde en franskmand dernede som var fantastisk dygtig til engelsk som jeg arbejdede sammen med i vores hjørne af Red, og så stoppede han og tog til Canada, og så var der de to andre tilbage som hele tiden havde været der jamen. Altså jeg tror hverken de har lyst til at have besøg af mig eller at jeg har lyst til at besøge dem, fordi vi kan ikke få det ud af det vi gerne vil, og det er sproget der er grænsen og vi kunne alle sammen lære en helvedes masse, de er dygtige, og der er en masse ting de gør forkert, og vi kunne alle sammen udnytte det i begge retninger, men vi gør det ikke. Det er håbløst.

(I mean with the French, I actually don't want to go to Fran... I mean we had a Frenchman down there who was fantastic

at English who I worked with in our corner of Red and then he quit and went to Canada and so there were two others left who had always been there already. But I mean I don't think either that they want me to visit with them or that I want to visit them because we can't get out of it what we want and it's language that is the limitation and we all could learn a hell of a lot. They're good and there's a lot of things they're doing wrong and we could all make use of that in both directions but we don't. It's the pits.)

The problem is not so much solved as avoided, where face to face contact is not desired by any party. Cross-organisational communication is thus inhibited by what is seen as inadequate linguistic skills; the language in focus apparently is English, given that the narrative is framed around the loss of a colleague that had excellent skills in English.

A further challenge to the commonness of English is posed by occupational category. Interviewees make reference to "production" employees or people "further down in the organisation" who are perceived as lacking abilities in English. For instance, an administrative manager in Yellow company (manufacturer of fresh fruit products) describes the situation concerning English as a corporate language in the company:

i Danmark, dér forstår de fleste i hvert fald administrationspersonalet måske ikke så meget de timelønnede, men resten de forstår engelsk og kan til en vis grad begå sig på engelsk og det er okay. I Vietnam der har vi flere medarbejdere der ikke forstår engelsk specielt i produktionen, men også et par i administrationen, og det vi så siger, det er at nøglemedarbejdere skal kunne engelsk og dem der ikke er nøglemedarbejdere, det betyder sådan set ikke at de ikke kan engelsk, men at ønsker du de helt store forfremmelsesmuligheder, så er det et krav at du kan engelsk.

(in Denmark most understand or at any rate the administrative personnel perhaps not so many of the hourly-paid workers but the rest understand English and can to a certain degree manage in English and that's ok. In Vietnam we have more staff who don't understand English particularly in production but also a couple in administration and what we say then is that key employees must have English and those that aren't key employees, that doesn't mean as such they don't know English but if you want the really important promotion opportunities then it is a requirement that you know English).

English then has a gatekeeper role to play in its lingua franca function: knowledge of English is not required of all employees, but it is a factor in job promotion. Due to perceived inadequate or non-existent skills in English among production staff, Yellow company has implemented English as a corporate language bilingually in certain contexts; for example, production manuals are issued in Danish and English in Denmark, and in Vietnamese and English in Vietnam. Interviewees from other companies also note the lack of English skills among certain job functions and refer to different strategies used to deal with this; for example, linguistic 'brokerage' is found in Orange company, where a Czech employee with English skills translates or interprets for fellow Czech employees.

#### 4.2 Competence

Since the challenges to the notion of English as a common language relate to an often experienced lack of competence in English, the construction of competence itself as a notion needs to be considered. There appear to be two main strands: one, the ideal of a native speaker, with its associations of correctness and perfection, and two, a pragmatic expediency, where being understood is the

primary aim. These two aspects of competence are not mutually exclusive, but relate to each other in subtle ways. By way of example, I will consider the case of a sales manager in Green company (machine manufacturing), who raises the issue of 'who' and 'whom' in English on two occasions during the interview. The first mention is in response to a question about how much consideration he gives to what he writes. Here he highlights the importance of being understood in communication, but the issue of becoming better at English is still very apparent:

Hvis jeg svarer vores agenter direkte, folk som jeg har drukket øl med i baren og som kender mig og som ved "hold kæft, jamen han er sgu da lige god om han skriver who eller whom", ikke også. Altså de, dem sender jeg jo bare en engelsk fordansket mail til, og så får jeg noget retur fra Finland, og det er sgu ligeså finsk engelsk, og så til sidst så forstår vi hinanden, og så griner vi næste gang... Jeg var på et kontor i Pennsylvania, der var jeg i 3 måneder 4 måneder, og der sagde jeg kunne godt tænke mig at få noget egentligt engelsk, jeg kunne godt tænke mig at, og der sagde de, jamen hvorfor vil du have det, siger de X? Det er sgu godt nok, det engelsk du kan. Ja, men jeg kunne godt tænke mig at lære hvornår eksempelvis jeg skulle bruge whom og who, og de kiggede, mange af de der indfødte, de kiggede jo fuldstændig undrende på mig. "For satan det ved vi jo ikke engang".

(If I am answering our agents directly, people I have drunk beers with in the bar and who know me. "Come on he is damn well just as good whether he writes who or whom" you know. I mean they then I send just an English danified mail to and so I get something back from Finland and it's damn well just as much Finnish English and so in the end we understand each other and then we laugh about it next time... I was in an office in Pennsylvania for 3, 4 months and there I said

that I could do with getting some proper English, I'd really like to and they said but why do you want that, they say, X [employee's name]? The English you have is damn well good enough. Yes but I could do with learning when for example I should use whom and who and they looked many of those natives looked at me in complete astonishment. "Dammit we don't even know that ourselves".)

Later in the interview, when asked about the opportunities for learning languages in the company, the sales manager returns to his who/whom dilemma:

Jeg har spurgt også her, om jeg kunne komme på et engelskkursus, og det synes de ikke. De synes jeg snakker fint engelsk, og det er stadigvæk fordi der ligger nogle begrænsninger, og jeg ved stadigvæk ikke hvornår jeg skal skrive whom og who, og det irriterer mig stadigvæk, men det irriterer mig jo ikke så meget, så jeg bruger min fritid på det, så man kan jo sige, men professionelt kunne jeg jo stadigvæk godt tænke mig noget mere engelsk.

(I asked as well here [at the company's head office] if I could go on an English course and they didn't think so. They think I speak English fine and it's still because there are some limitations and I still don't know when I should write whom and who and that bothers me still but it doesn't bother me so much that I use my spare time on it one would say but professionally I still would like to have some more English.)

What is clear is the importance of context for formal correctness and, in particular, who is involved in the interaction and how well participants know each other. Correctness is not regarded as a prerequisite for successful communication; however, while being understood is a paramount goal, this manager still yearns for more knowledge

about what he labels "proper" English. This categorisation is very much based on notions of an ideal target that he has yet to reach and which stands in contrast to nationally-based conceptualisations of English ("English danified" or "Finnish English").

The intricate relation between correctness and pragmatic considerations of situated use is further illustrated by the design coordinator from Red company mentioned above. He is the only person in the sample who explicitly problematises the native speaker of English in the international context. He does this on two occasions, both in relation to his own skills in the language, which are constructed within the framework of the native-speaking target:

det har jeg sådan rimelig tjek på engelsk, men ikke som en indfødt. Altså hvis jeg skriver noget, så bliver det ikke skrevet på samme måde som en indfødt gør, og når du er ude at rejse, så kan du med det samme mærke hvis du er sammen med nogle indfødte. Altså hvis vi nu samler ti lande også indbyrdes, vi forstår jo alt, men hvis en englænder stiller sig op og begynder at snakke, så falder mange af dem fra i hvert fald, ikke? Jeg følger rimelig godt med, men der er masser af udtryk man mangler. Det er tydeligt ikke?

(I'm reasonably in control of English but not like a native. I mean if I write something it's not written like a native would do it and when you're travelling, then you notice straight away if you're with natives. I mean if we now round up [people from] 10 countries, we understand everything among each other, but if an Englishman stands up and begins to speak, then a lot of them get lost at any rate, right? I follow reasonably well but there are a lot of expressions one lacks. That's clear, right? )

Here there is evidence of the idea, attested in the scholarly literature, that native speakers are more difficult for non-native speakers

to understand than are non-natives (Jenkins 2000; 2007). This interviewee constructs two groups: the native (exemplified by "an Englishman") and 'we' (exemplified by "10 countries"). Later in the interview, he uses a different dichotomy: "an Englishman" (a colleague) and "me":

Jeg kunne lære meget på engelsk og kunne godt tænke mig måske at lære noget mere korrekt skriftligt engelsk, ikke? Hvis jeg sender, når jeg har skrevet noget, og så siger at det skal faktisk lige ud på et lidt højere skriftligt niveau, så kan jeg godt finde på at sende den over til en englænder og sige, kan du ikke lige streamline den, ikke, og hvis han så har gjort det og jeg så får den tilbage, så ender det desværre ofte i at jeg siger, det kan jeg ikke bruge fordi det er jo ikke mig. Altså det er jo ikke mit sprog, og det vil du kunne se lige med det samme når han har skrevet det, det er ikke mit sprog.

(I could learn a lot in English and I could do with maybe learning more correct written English, right? If I have written something and it seems that it actually needs to be sent out at a bit better written level, I might certainly send it over to an Englishman and say could you just streamline that for me and if he does that and I get it back, then unfortunately it often ends up that I say I can't use that because it's not me. I mean it's not my language and you'll be able to see immediately when he's written it that it's not my language.)

Very apparent here is the issue of identification in relation to English as a lingua franca (Ehrenreich 2011). Within a framework of wishing to be correct, where he actively seeks out a native speaker, this interviewee nonetheless cannot reconcile the product of a native-speaking other with his own linguistic output. At stake is his sense of keeping his own, authentic voice in his written production.

### 5. Discussion

That a major theme in the representational field of English should be the commonness of the language holds no surprises, and neither does the linking of commonness to effectiveness and fairness, at least in a corporate context. What is interesting, however, is that commonness is contested on the basis of language competence, usually in relation to a specific 'other', in the form of particular national or occupational groups. In other words, the lingua franca function is not divorced from levels of linguistic proficiency. Competence itself rests on an interplay between ideals of nativeness/perfection and a normative pragmatism in relation to language practices where content, i.e. getting the message across, is prioritised. These themes of correctness and the pragmatics of actual use have often been raised in the literature on English as a lingua franca (ELF), although there is a tendency to see them as dichotomies rather than notions which can be woven together to construct a more nuanced representation of English. Seidlhofer (2004), for instance, observes that the pragmatics of ELF is less concerned with form and more concerned with message. Similarly, BELF (Business English Lingua Franca) competence is described by Kankaanranta and Planken (2010: 380) as requiring "clarity and accuracy of content (rather than linguistic correctness) and knowledge of business-specific vocabulary and genre conventions (rather than only 'general' English)". Ehrenreich (2009:128) refers to a 'relaxed pragmatism' in business contexts and argues for a distinction based on whether speakers are focused on language or content, noting that such foci will be context-dependent.

One difficulty with the ELF concept is that it has been largely researched in relation to spoken interaction, meaning that written genres, while recognised (Haberland 2011; Horner 2011; Jenkins 2011), have had little bearing on how the concept has been theorised; to quote Dewey (2009: 61), ELF has been conceptualized as an 'interactional phenomenon'. However, from a social representation theory perspec-



tive, it is necessary to tease out the various features of context, such as medium and purpose of communication, that are part of the network of meanings that make up a social representation. In the companies considered here, written modes of communication are highly prevalent (e.g. emails, reports, bulletins on the intranet etc.) and tensions surrounding competence, for example, often relate to written communication. A further point worth emphasising is that the conceptualisation of competence in terms of nativeness vs. pragmatism does not seem to be language-specific; this was not only apparent for English, but also for Spanish and German, if to a lesser degree. So the tensions in the representational field of English may be due to wider understandings of language competence that, at least in the business setting, are partly driven by what could be termed 'situated instrumentalism', i.e. what suffices communicatively in a specific context.

Competence has inherent normative dimensions that, with regard to English, are influenced by categorisations based on occupational and national characteristics. There seems to be an acceptance that employees in particularly manual job functions may neither have nor need skills in English, while administrative and managerial employees are expected to have sufficient expertise, and it is in this respect that certain nationalities are seen as falling short. For example, the communicative difficulties reported by interviewees regarding Spanish and French colleagues are framed in terms of their inadequate English and not in terms of a lack of skills in French or Spanish on the part of Danish employees. That English is not shared by all has consequences; as observed in the data here, no or inadequate expertise can lead to inequalities and power differentials in relation to informal networking, knowledge sharing and promotion. Indeed, Barner-Rasmussen and Aarnio (2011: 290) argue that 'internal stratification in terms of language competence is rife' in the multinational corporation, and they relate this to job functions and organisational hierarchy. From an organisational perspective, these forms of differentiation can be a cause for concern as they

risk fragmenting the corporate whole, inasmuch as language-based identities take precedence over organisation-based identities (Harzing et al. 2011).

There has been a tendency in the ELF literature to address issues of inequality and power in relation to native speaker authority (Seidlhofer 2011). Consequently, ELF speakers and interactions are portrayed in their shared non-nativeness as consensual, cooperative and tolerant in their pursuit of mutual comprehensibility through strategies of accommodation (Cogo & Dewey 2012; Firth 2009; Hülmbauer 2009), although the idea of competitiveness in ELF interaction is now receiving some research attention (Wolfartsberger 2011). While cooperation and collaboration may characterize ELF communication in certain contexts, users of English as a lingua franca have not been granted immunity from general social psychological processes of group differentiation and stereotyping, and are always located in a situated social, economic and political matrix of power relations. Haberland (2011: 948), for example, reminds us that many international users of English have invested heavily in acquiring linguistic skills and expertise and are unlikely "to accept any kind of English produced in a lingua franca setting as legitimate usage". Moreover, accommodation processes themselves may be due to asymmetrical power relations (Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil et al. 2012; Jovchelovitch 2008). Competence, however conceptualised, is never neutral and it will inevitably be an element in the normative profile(s) of English as a lingua franca as such profiles are created by those who use ELF (see Hynninen 2013 on linguistic regulation in ELF). Interviewees appeal to familiar categories in their representation of English: mother tongue, foreign language, native speaker, and language categories based on nation (cp. 'Finnish English'). This is far from surprising since these users will have been exposed to the discourse of formal schooling and language learning. The social representation is that of English as a foreign language and there are few signs of English being reconceptualised, apart from indications of more pragmatic norms

of use and the problematisation of the notion of 'native speaker'. ELF scholars, among others, have argued that language should not be objectified, i.e. seen as a pre-existing entity, but rather seen as a dynamic means of communication enacted in communicative practice (Dewey 2009; Park & Wee 2012; Pennycook 2007). While the interviewees do report communicative strategies that fit in with this practice-based idea of language, the traditional concepts of 'a language' and 'languages' remain. It is unlikely that languages will cease to be represented as objects in social thinking in the near future and even if this were to be the case, alternative concepts, e.g. repertoires, styles, resources (Blackledge & Creese 2010; Blommaert 2010; Busch 2012), will be subject to representational processes.

## 6. Conclusion

The social representation of English in the data considered here rests on two interrelated themes: commonness and competence. There are tensions in the representational field surrounding both the sharedness of English, usually based on personal experiences of inadequate expertise, and competence itself, which is characterised in terms of two related notions, that of the native speaker target and situated pragmatism. It cannot be assumed that tensions around competence are unique to the case of English in its role as lingua franca; on the contrary, they may relate to the use of languages generally, at least in certain contexts in the corporate sector, where a driving force seems to be that of what I have termed 'situated instrumentalism'. Categorisations based on types of occupation and national origins are apparent, reminding us that the use of English as a lingua franca is localised in organisational hierarchies and power structures, and subject to local processes of normative evaluation. There is little evidence of the reconceptualisations of English advocated in the ELF literature, although one of the interviewees explicitly problematized native speaker norms. Factors of

importance in the corporate context, such as the concept of the communicative mode and the way it is received and/or accepted, would require greater consideration in the expert literature, where written modes, including those that are computer-mediated, have tended to be ousted by the spoken and so have had, as yet, little impact on alternative theorising in relation to English as a lingua franca.

*Institut for Sprog og Kommunikation  
Syddansk Universitet  
Campusvej 55  
DK-5230 Odense M*

## Notes

1. The research reported on here is part of an integrated EU-FP6 project 028702 on 'Language Dynamics and the Management of Diversity' (Dylan project). See [www.dylan-project.org/Dylan\\_en/home/home.php](http://www.dylan-project.org/Dylan_en/home/home.php)

## References

- Augoustinos, Martha, Iain Walker & Ngairé Donahue. 2006. *Social Cognition: An Integrated Introduction*. 2nd ed. London: Sage.
- Baird, Robert. 2012. English as a Lingua Franca: The Study of Language Practices. *Englishes in Practice*. Working papers of the Centre for Global Englishes, University of Southampton 1. 3-17. Available at [http://www.southampton.ac.uk/cge/working\\_papers/index.html](http://www.southampton.ac.uk/cge/working_papers/index.html). Accessed 22 May 2013.
- Barner-Rasmussen, Wilhelm & Christoffer Aarnio. 2011. Shifting the Fault-lines of Language: A Quantitative Functional-Level Exploration of Language Use in MNC Subsidiaries. *Journal of World Business* 46. 288-295.
- Birks, Melanie & Jane Mills. 2011. *Grounded Theory. A Practical Guide*. London: Sage.

- Blackledge, Adrian & Angela Creese, 2010. *Multilingualism. A Critical Perspective*. London: Continuum.
- Blommaert, Jan. 2010. *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Busch, Brigitta. 2012. The Linguistic Repertoire Revisited. *Applied Linguistics* 33:5. 503-523.
- Clémence, Alain. 2001. Social Positioning and Social Representations. In K. Deaux & G. Philogène (eds.) *Representations of the Social*. Oxford: Blackwell. 83-95.
- Cogo, Alessia & Martin Dewey. 2012. *Analysing English as a Lingua Franca: A Corpus-driven Investigation*. London: Continuum.
- Chryssides, Alison, Parisa Dashtipour, Shira Keshet, Celine Righi, Gordon Sammut & Mohammad Sartani. 2009. Commentary: We Don't Share! The Social Representation Approach, Enactivism and the Fundamental Incompatibilities Between the Two. *Culture & Psychology* 15:1. 83-95.
- Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil, Cristian, Lillian Lee, Bo Pang, Bo and Jon Kleinberg. 2012. *Echoes of Power: Language Effects and Power Differences in Social Interaction*. Paper presented at World Wide Web Conference April 16-20 Lyon. Available at <http://arxiv.org/pdf/1112.3670.pdf>. Accessed 22 May 2013.
- Davies, Alan. 2003. *The Native Speaker: Myth and Reality*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Daymon, Christine & Immy Holloway. 2011. *Qualitative Research Methods in Public Relations and Marketing Communications*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Doise, William. 2001. Human Rights Studied as Normative Social Representations. In K. Deaux & G. Philogène (eds.) *Representations of the Social*. Oxford: Blackwell. 96-112.
- Dewey, Martin. 2009. English as a Lingua Franca: Heightened Variability and Theoretical Implications. In A. Mauranen & E. Ranta (eds.) *English as a Lingua Franca. Studies and Findings*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press. 60-83.
- Ehrenreich, Susanne. 2009. English as a Lingua Franca in Multinational Corporations – Exploring Business 'Communities of Practice'. In A. Mauranen & E. Ranta (eds.) *English as a Lingua Franca. Studies and Findings*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press. 126-151.
- Ehrenreich, Susanne. 2011. The Dynamics of English as a Lingua Franca in International Business: A Language Contact Perspective. In A. Archibald, A. Cogo & J. Jenkins (eds.) *Latest Trends in ELF Research*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press. 11-34.
- Firth, Alan. 2009. The Lingua Franca Factor. *Intercultural Pragmatics* 6:2. 147-170.
- Haberland, Hartmut. 2011. Ownership and Maintenance of a Language in Transnational Use: Should We Leave Our Lingua Franca Alone? *Journal of Pragmatics* 46:4. 937-949.
- Harzing, Anne-Wil, Köster, Kathrin & Ulrike Magner. 2011. Babel in Business: the Language Barrier and its Solution in the HQ-Subsidiary Relationship. *Journal of World Business* 46. 279-287.
- Horner, Bruce. 2011. Writing English as a Lingua Franca. In A. Archibald, A. Cogo & J. Jenkins (eds.) *Latest Trends in ELF Research*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press. 299-311.
- Hülmbauer, Cornelia. 2009. "We Don't Take the Right Way' We Just Take the Way That We Think You Will Understand" – the Shifting Relationship between Correctness and Effectiveness in ELF. In A. Mauranen & E. Ranta (eds.) *English as a Lingua Franca. Studies and Findings*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press. 323-347.
- Hynninen, Niina. 2013. *Language Regulation in English as a Lingua Franca : Exploring Language-Regulatory Practices in Academic Spoken Discourse*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. University of Helsinki. Available at <https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/38290>. Accessed 22 May 2013.
- Jenkins, Jennifer. 2000. *The Phonology of English as an International Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jenkins, Jennifer. 2007. *English as a Lingua Franca: Attitude and Identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jenkins, Jennifer. 2011. Accommodating (to) ELF in the International University. *Journal of Pragmatics* 43:4. 926-936.
- Jovchelovitch, Sandra. 2007. *Knowledge in Context*. Hove: Routledge.
- Jovchelovitch, Sandra. 2008. Reflections on the Diversity of Knowledge: Power and Dialogue in Representational Fields. In T. Sugiman et al. (eds.) *Meaning in Action: Constructions, Narratives and Representations*. Tokyo: Springer. 23-36.
- Kankaanranta, Anne & Planken, Brigitte. 2010. BELF Competence as Busi-

- ness Knowledge of Internationally Operating Business Professionals. *Journal of Business Communication*, 47:4. 380-407.
- Lauring, Jakob & Hanne Tange. 2010. International Language Management: Contained or Dilute Communication. *European Journal of International Management* 4:4. 317-332.
- Makoni, Sinfree & Alistair Pennycook (eds.) 2007. *Disinventing and Reconstituting Languages* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Millar, Sharon, Silvie Cifuentes & Astrid Jensen. 2012. The Perception of Language Needs in Danish Companies: Representations and Repercussions. *Bulletin VALS/ASLA* 95. 75-96.
- Moscovici, Serge. 2000. *Social Representations. Explorations in Social Psychology*. Edited by G. Duveen. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Park, Joseph Sung-Yul & Lionel Wee. 2012. *Markets of English. Linguistic Capital and Language Policy in a Globalizing World*. London: Routledge.
- Pennycook, Alistair. 2007. The Myth of English as an International Language. In S. Makoni & A. Pennycook (eds). *Disinventing and Reconstituting Languages*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. 90-115.
- Rose, Diana, Danielle Efraim, Marie-Claude Gervais, Helene Joffe, Sandra Jovchelovitch & Nicola Morant. 1995. Questioning Consensus in Social Representations Theory. *Papers on Social Representations* 4:2. 150-176.
- Sammut, Gordon & Caroline Howarth, Forthcoming 2014. Social Representations. In T. Thomas (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology*. New York: Springer. Pre-publication copy available at [http://www.academia.edu/2906122/SOCIAL\\_REPRESENTATIONS](http://www.academia.edu/2906122/SOCIAL_REPRESENTATIONS). Accessed 22 May 2013.
- Seidlhofer, Barbara. 2004. Research Perspectives on Teaching English as a Lingua Franca. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 24. 209-239.
- Seidlhofer, Barbara. 2011. *Understanding English as a Lingua Franca*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Strauss, Anselm & Juliet M. Corbin. 1998. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.
- Wagner, Wolfgang & Nick Hayes. 2005. *Everyday Discourse and Common Sense. The Theory of Social Representations*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Wolfartsberger, Anita. 2011. ELF Business/Business ELF: Form and Function in Simultaneous Speech. In A. Archibald, A. Cogo & J. Jenkins (eds.) *Latest Trends in ELF Research*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press. 163-184.