CHAPTER 4

BUSINESS ENGLISH LINGUA FRANCA
4.1 ELF- The Basics

“ELF (English as a lingua franca) is basically a ‘contact language’ between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication” (Firth, 1996: 240, original emphasis).

“Lingua franca” is a Latinized Italian expression meaning “Frankish language”, the language of the Franks. The meaning of “Franca” was probably influenced by the Arabic word “faranji”, meaning “European”, coined from the Germanic-French word “franc” by the Arabs at the time of the Crusades. ¹ Pierre Frath also mentioned about it, that the Lingua Franca was mainly Italian in, pronunciation, lexicon and structure, and vocabulary taken from French, Hebrew, Turkish Arabic, Portuguese, Greek, Spanish etc., according to Richards et al (1996:214) ‘The term lingua franca originated in the Mediterranean region in the Middle Ages among crusaders and traders of different language backgrounds’. The Lingua Franca was a pidgin and never turned into a mother tongue. It was learned outer educational institutions for only practical reasons, as it was not the language of an esteemed country or social class, it did not become a main source of lexical additions to other languages. Holmes (1997:86) writes that ‘the term lingua franca describes a language serving as a regular means of communication between different linguistic groups in a multilingual speech community’. The author also states that ‘when academics and experts meet at international conferences... a world language such as English, French or Spanish is often used’. ²

A lingua franca is bridge language, used to make communication possible between people not sharing a mother tongue, in particular when it is a third language, separate from both mother tongues. Since 1980’s in the literature of various fields of linguistics a great number of definitions have been given by scholars according to their own understanding to the term “English as a Lingua Franca”. For example, Jenkins (2009)
plainly defines ELF as “English as it is used as a contact language among speakers from different first languages” (p.143).

Similarly, the latest definition given by Seidlhofer (2011) is “any use of English among speakers of different first languages for who English is the communicative medium of choice” (p.7). House’s (1999: 74) definition is: “ELF interactions occur between conversationalists of different language backgrounds, for none of whom English is the mother tongue”. Kirk Patrick (2007: 155) defines ELF as “a medium of communication, uses by people who do not speak the same first language”. The linguists’ have given definitions for ELF in accordance with the current understanding, which was not the case whither to. This could be taken as evidence that the significance and recognition of ELF is growing over time through continual ELF research in a range of domains such as tourism, business, education and academic settings. Lingua franca have taken place around the globe throughout human history, sometimes for commercial reasons as a “trade languages”, but also for diplomatic and administrative convenience, and as a means of exchanging information between scientists and other scholars of different nationalities. There were many other languages in history but not any as prominent as English language.

Today English is considered the world’s lingua franca and ELF is generally seen as a global development. To exemplify this fact it is worth mentioning that about 80% of English conversations take place between native speakers of other languages. Experts estimate that the number of non-native English speakers is already more than that of the native English speakers. Calculations show that for every one native speaker, there are three non-native speakers of English, or a ratio of one to three. In transcontinental meet where both parties speak different, many persons turn to English first. “The status of English is such that it has been adopted as the world's lingua franca for communication in Olympic sport, international trade, and air-traffic control. Unlike any other language, past or present, English has spread to all five continents and has become a truly global
According to Firth (1996, p. 240) ELF is a 'contact language' between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication. ELF is forcefully not a property of its native speakers, but is universalized; it is suitable for international use. As Gnutzmann (2000: 358) said, “When used as a lingua Franca, English is no longer founded on the linguistic and socio cultural norms of native English speakers and their respective countries and cultures”.

The Influences of other languages is a natural and crucial characteristic of ELF at all linguistic levels (phonological, lexicon grammatical and pragmatic) within a multilingual context (cf. Cook, 2002: 10-13). A lingua franca is a language that one has to be learnt, because of its need. The mother tongue has not to be learnt; it is automatically spoken, as it has been taken from the environment naturally. The reason of spreading English around the world is, it’s utility as a lingua franca. A range of aspects have contributed to this constant process of change takes place in the spread of English across continents among people of different languages. The most important contribution occurs in communication and information technology progression. In this respect Schütz,(2005) estimated that “85 percent of all scientific publications, 75 percent of all international communication in writing, 80 percent of all information in the world’s computers, and 90 percent of Internet content are in English”. Infect Crystal (1997a) states the same that ‘Most of the scientific, technological and academic information in the world, is expressed in English and over 80% of all the information stored in electronic retrieval systems is in English’ (p.106).

Due to Globalisation many companies in different countries have adopted English as the language of communication and as a global marketing tool. English provide them a global perspective, that no longer is associated with a particular culture or nation, it belongs instead to the world; modernity is linked with English. English is the lingua franca of commerce too, a number of non-English companies adopt English as their company language like transnational companies and companies with international brands. The number of English speakers in the world keeps on growing, but the huge majority belongs to non-native speakers using English to communicate with each other, rather than
with native speakers. According to Kachru’s (1992) categorization of English, there are three circles, with the native speakers in the Inner, the New English speakers in the Outer and ELF speakers in the Expanding Circle.

![Fig 4.1(a): Braj Kachru's Three Circles of English](image)

Today the majority of English speakers are to be found in the outer or expanding circles, using English as a lingua franca (ELF). The inner circle signifies the traditional bases of English: the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Anglophone Canada, and some of the Caribbean territories. According to him the entire English speakers in the inner circle is as 380 million, and some 120 million are outside the United States, then come up to the outer circle, which comprises countries where English is not the native language, but have historical importance and plays a part in the nation's establishment, as an official language. This circle consists of India, the Philippines, Nigeria, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Tanzania, Kenya, Canada, and South Africa etc. probably from 150 million to 300 million English speakers are there in the outer circle. Lastly, the expanding circle covers those countries where there is not any historical importance of English, but it is yet widely used as a foreign language or lingua
franca. This comprises a large amount of the world's population: China, Japan, Russia, and most of Europe, Egypt, Korea Indonesia, etc. The expanding circle is the most complex to approximation, mainly because English may be in use for particular purposes, usually business English. The estimates of these users range from 100 million to one billion. So, whether on the web or in actual life, it is likely that persons perform numerous tasks basically for practical intentions with the preference of English as the bridge of communication.

According to Barbara Seidlhofer, in the early 21st century, it seems clear that there are English-using groups of people not only in the Inner and the Outer Circle but also local, regional, and global communities of practice communicating through ELF in the Expanding Circle and, significantly, across all circles. George Braine (2006) mentioned, about 80 percent of English speakers in the world are non-native speakers; they will have a great impact on the English language. The so-called center countries (e.g., the United Kingdom and the United States) will no longer be able to set the trends. Of this 80 percent of non-native English speakers, the largest group is Expanding Circle English speakers who use English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). We can understand this fact by look at the bar chart given below, that; there are more ELF users than mother tongue users.

![Bar Chart](image)

Fig 4.1(b) Number of ELF users
This great use and popularity of English that has rewarded with the status of a lingua franca is not sudden, there are many reasons behind it, like English language is dominant in many countries and non-sovereign areas around the globe. It has developed as a very important part of professional life. It is must, to have Knowledge of English, as without communication it’s just impossible to run profession or occupations. English is the first and leading essential international language for communication. A huge resource of information is the Internet, and all the information regarding business, science and technology, education, research, entertainment, aviation, mass and media can be received through internet and it can be called as the top communication tool ever produced. There is no disagreement to the fact that English is already the global lingua franca. Coury (2001) says ‘English emerges as a global lingua franca by serving as a vital and common means of communication for a large number of people around the world’.

Learning English will completely be a key to open the gates of opportunities. Ruslan Trad, a Bulgarian blogger at the president of the Forum for Arab Culture in Sofia, says, “The use of English has established itself almost as a law,” he noted down in an e-mail to Deutsche Welle, "English is the working language of the conferences - including online projects, projects in which I participate require the use of English and I think, today this language is best known by most Internet users.”12 The Euro-English project (Sandra Mollin) advised that ELF is no structurally coherent variety as Old and New English’s are, rather, it is a phenomenon at the level of language function.13

ELF speakers are not required to identify with English as a cultural symbol (Edmondson & House 2003; Pölzl & Seidlhofer 2006: 153). They use the language as a code to communicate effectively without adopting the culture or cultures associated with English as a native language.14 Analyses of lingua franca corpora have proved that speakers regularly export figurative expression from their own lingua-cultural backgrounds (cf. Pitzl 2009).15
According to (Jenkins, 2003) English was spoken as a first or official second language in approximately 75 territories; there are several reasons for the increase use of English all over the world. It is a language of power now, he added, ‘It is the prime language of people who control vast resources and maintain a strong grip on the global economy’.

English is used internationally in government, law, education and business. It has not always been this way, nor will it necessary remain so, but in the predictable future, English would be the world’s lingua franca.¹⁶

Some of the basic principals have been given by Jenkins (2003) about ELF pedagogic strategies are-

- No native-speaker specific (idiomatic) usage
- No non-essential grammar
- No non-essential pronunciation
- No native-speaker goals

This view about ELF is truly fits into the definition given by other linguistics such as Firth (1996, p. 240), in which he defined ELF as a ‘Contact language’.

It can be concluded that ELF refers to the use of English language as a medium of communication, using by speakers of two different languages. This follows the very common ‘definition of communication-interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information, by speech’. There are no specific rules and regulations of grammar; neither there is need of perfection as native speakers of English language nor essential pronunciation required, and it can be used according to the speaker to whom we are communicating, it’s a language of constant change. Thus here we agree again by Firth’s (2008) statement about ELF that “ELF exchanges are situation dependent and extremely dynamic.”¹⁷
4.2 BELF as the Language of Global Business

BELF is ELF in the context of business. “BELF refers to English used as a neutral and shared communication code. BELF is neutral in the sense that no speaker can argue about it, as its mother tongue; it is shared language, as it is used for conducting business within the global business discourse community, whose members are BELF users and communicators in their own right, not non-native speakers or learners.” (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles & Kankaanranta, 2005: 403-404).

According to Canale and Swain (1980) communicative competence is: “A synthesis of knowledge of basic grammatical principles, knowledge of how language is used in social settings to perform communicative functions, and knowledge of, how utterances and communicative functions can be combined according to the principles of discourse”.

Fig.4.2 Model of Global Communicative Competence in business context

(Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011)
Multicultural competence refers to the skills and knowledge in organization communicative situations with representatives of different national, professional, organizational culture. It requires adjustment skills as well as respect and acceptance towards “different ways of doing things”, such skills are developed by multilingualism; knowing languages other than English and one’s own mother tongue provides new perceptions, together with silent knowledge. The second surrounding layer is competence in BELF. It requires competence in the English “core”, business-specific genres, and communication plans focusing on self-expression, briefness, honesty and politeness.

In core, BELF is different from a “natural” language spoken with native speakers because it is particularly situation-specific, energetic, and unique. The dynamism guides to that strategic skill, for example- skill to ask for clarifications, make questions, statement, and paraphrase (see Mauranen, 2006) gain in importance for successful communication. One very important and basic fact about BELF is mentioned by Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, (2010) that BELF competence, concerning both knowledge and skills; it is greatly dependent on the situation of its use and the users, there is not any fixed requirement as to its discursive forms, if it is enough for getting the work done, no matter how imperfect the English proficiency of the users. BELF speakers need to have adjustment skills, listening skills, an ability to understand different English and on the whole, acceptance towards different communication styles. This view is supported by another feature: grammar was not considered as vital as the general knowledge of one’s own field of capability.

Third, the outermost layer of business knowledge is basic for GCC; it filters and influences all the other layers. The outermost layer refers to business-specific knowledge and joins two important elements: the particular “domain of use” and the wider, overall goals, standards and strategies of business shared by the business community. For a future business professional, the outermost layer, business knowledge, is the foundation on which the communicative competence is built up. BELF speakers look themselves as
communicator of the global business community, settling themselves in best communication practices to get corporate level interests. BELF is generally a spoken variant, but it does not function in terms of non-native and native speakers. BELF is a very precious contribution to the global business community from the native speakers of English, it lives a life of its own now, and increasing upward, changing as the standards and situations and necessities of its speaker changes. Business holds a unique place in the global English lexicon; this word is alone a wonderful charm for many who search for opportunities on an international level, rather than a local one. It’s an unwritten sign for guarantee of success and achievement. Business is the basis to be alive for some people and English is crucial means in business and trade. English language plays a major part in accomplishing economic success. Person with better English language skills do not come across communication problems with their business partners, which gives a better business consequences like high earnings or better deals.

As a result, the ability to speak English may help out to generate the feeling for mounting economic relations with overseas partners. There is a very close relation between English proficiency and a country's gross national income. English plays mainly a significant role in economies based chiefly on their exports. It develops communication with dealers and clients and puts forth an optimistic influence on modernism, both of which generate a better export setting.

English is used like an instrument for business out of the country, for E.g.: use of the internet for working in international organizations. Companies regularly provide English language courses or training to their employees. Job centers in several countries also encourage the jobless persons to improve their English skills and therefore to raise their probability of getting a good job. According to “EF English Proficiency Index 2012” people who work for industries that function globally i.e. travel and tourism, and consulting industries are ranked as the best English speaking employees. Quite the reverse, in the industries focusing on the domestic market such as education, the public
sector and retail employees' English speaking skills were ranked as the weakest ones. The system, however, does not focus on their employees English language training.

The lingua franca of business world is English now, which makes possible communication with business practitioners coming from different cultural backgrounds. In the business perspective, the causes for this ever-increasing usage of English lingua franca (ELF) are linked with the globalization of business process and communication technology. In the global business community BELF is used to conduct business. “It is a ‘neutral’ code used by business practitioners to do their work.”

BELF holds culture on two points: BELF users share the international business culture but are divided by their personal, specific cultural environment that is not characteristically the same to the cultural setting of another BELF user. The notion of BELF was applied to highlight the whole communicative purpose and the sphere of language use. According to Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2005, pp. 403-404), the BELF speakers share the B (the context of business) and the E (English), and, to some extent its discourse practices, but are, at the same time, separated by the previous knowledge and experience connected with their various native tongues, their native discourse practices, and their own, often hidden and implicit rules of communication.

An Analysis of international travel movements put forward this fact that three-quarters of the entire travel is between non-English speaking countries. This proposes a large demand for either foreign language learning or the ever-increasing use of English as a lingua franca’ (Graddol 2007).

A concluding remark is given by Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2013) “BELF can be conceptualized as a language that can be learned by native speakers of English.” In this way, they would be better equipped to operate in international business contexts, where most of their fellow players today are non-native English speakers using BELF.
By studying the views and opinion of many researchers, it seems that BELF is about adapting English to particular contexts and particular users in order to get business done successfully. It is more about communication strategies and less about precise linguistic description. BELF is a rather specific or particular use of language which depends on the context and the speakers. The key is that ‘the specific use of English can only be measured against its own rules for successful communication, not against a “norm” imposed by outsiders’.

Louhiala-Salminen, Charles & Kanraanranta (2005: 403-404) defines that BELF refers to English used as a neutral and shared communication code. BELF is neutral in the sense that none of the speakers can claim it as her/his mother tongue; it is shared in the sense that, it is used for conducting business within the global business discourse community, whose members are BELF users and communicators in their own right, not non-native speakers or learners.”

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