

**Using English as a foreign language in
international and multicultural consulting:
an asset or a hindrance?**

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ABSTRACT

This paper sets out to contribute to the empirical research into the challenges involved in international and multicultural consulting processes, with a special focus on supervision.

It chooses an interdisciplinary approach at the interface between linguistics and other social sciences (such as pedagogy, psychology, sociology, etc.) to examine the implications of using English as a second or third language (*English as a lingua franca*) in working languages. The analysis of extracts of an interational intervision session is meant to show that consulting processes among non-native speakers of English can be carried out successfully despite clear linguistic deviations from native speaker norms.

1. Introduction

The professional world at the beginning of the 21st century seems to be undergoing a paradigm shift which resembles a constant process of change. Growing internationalisation brings about situations which require the individual to “switch” between various different “cultures” on a daily basis: multi-professional teams, interdisciplinary projects, multiple professional identities, various work places, etc. This certainly implies personal and institutional enrichment, but also new challenges, risks and potential for conflict and, therefore, calls for new forms of professional counselling. “Diversity management” has become one of the most prominent buzzwords of our times and one can observe a boom of “intercultural trainings and seminars”, often of highly disputable quality.

When it comes to an encounter of people of mixed national and ethnical backgrounds, one of the challenges mentioned above is undoubtedly the linguistic diversity. Given the widely acknowledged status of English as *the* world language (for detailed discussion cf. e.g. Crystal 1997, Graddol 1997, Phillipson 1992), English has also become the most widely used language when it comes to professional counselling in intercultural contexts. For many coaches, supervisors and trainers a certain command of the English language has become indispensable due to the growing demand of counselling processes in English. Consultants do not only work with clients who speak different first languages and, therefore, have to rely on English, but the radius of their professional life has long transcended national borders: conferences or international intervision groups are held in English, publications are to be written in English if one aims to address the international “scientific community”¹, etc.

From a linguistic point of view the question arises which “form” of English is used in these contexts.

Rarely, it's English native speakers who prompt a “multilingual” group to speak English. In most working contexts (and, thus, also in contexts of international or intercultural

¹ As this paper is meant to be descriptive rather than ideological, issues concerning language policy remain widely untouched. What I would like to stress at this point, however, is the fact that I do not support the idea of monolingualism in science or any other professional discipline. Rather, I do believe that linguistic diversity has to be maintained and strongly protected.

counselling) it's speakers for "none of whom is the mother tongue" (House 1999: 74) who agree to use English as common code of understanding, i.e. *English as a lingua franca* (ELF).

The present paper² examines the implications of the use of ELF in professional counselling processes, with a strong focus on supervision³.

After a brief definition of ELF and its perceptions both from the perspective of linguists and consultants, some sample extracts of an audio-recorded intervention group will be analysed in order to put forward first tentative observations and hypothesis about supervision processes in ELF.

Having encountered many colleagues for whom working in ELF constitutes an insurmountable barrier and sometimes even a reason for declining projects, I am motivated to make these professionals aware of the fact that a high level of proficiency in English (measured in accordance with native-speakers' norms) is not always the main prerequisite to work on a global level. This certainly calls for a change of attitude, away from deficit-oriented thinking towards an understanding of the innovative and creative power of ELF.

2. English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

2.1. Popular and linguistic perceptions

The discussion concerning the status and the use of English has long pervaded our everyday life. It has abandoned its status of being restricted to a study object of linguists or language policy makers but is regularly discussed in media. (cf. e.g. Meinhart 2001, Baker

² This paper is a shorter version of the final paper of my academic training as a supervisor and coach at the University of Vienna (Universitätslehrgang für Supervision und Coaching der Universität Wien: <http://www.univie.ac.at/lammgasse/>) (Kordon, 2008).

³ Please note that I use the term 'supervision' (and its derivatives) with the meaning and connotation attributed to it internationally among consultants and not in its Anglo-American meaning: "if you supervise an activity or a person, you make sure that the activity is done correctly or that the person doing a task or behaving correctly" (Collins Cobild English Dictionary, 1995, 1677).

et al, 2001). Its status as the world language is widely unquestioned, both from a popular and linguistic perspective (cf. e.g. Graddol, 1997, Phillipson 1992).

Over the last couple of years the discussions surrounding English as the global language have gradually started to involve questions concerning its linguistic “form”. In media, these often involve issues regarding speakers’ language proficiency. A *Newsweek* article in 2006, for example, laments the “...problem [that] many call centers [on the Philippines] can’t keep up with the demand because they can’t find enough employees who speak “proper” English” (Vitug 2006, 44). Although the journalist does not specify what she considers “proper” English, it is most likely that she refers to a language form spoken by native speakers, such as British English, American English, Australian English, etc. What has to be considered, however, is the fact that the number of non-native English by far transcends the number of native speakers (cf. e.g. Crystal, 1997). In fact, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) is the “most extensive contemporary use of English worldwide” (Seidlhofer 2001, 134). It is, thus, questionable why English as a native language (ENL) is still widely viewed as the only point of reference for ‘correct’ usage of English. Already in 1994 Widdowson has challenged the question of ‘ownership’ of the English language:

How English develops in the world is no business whatever of native speakers in England, the United States, or anywhere else. They have no say in the matter, no right to intervene or pass judgement. They are irrelevant. The very fact that English is an international language means that no nation can have custody over it. (Widdowson, 1994, 385)

Seidlhofer argues that it has to enter peoples’ consciousness that ELF - with its specific characteristics - is a use of language in its own right (cf. Seidlhofer 2001, 137) and that ELF speakers have to be recognised as “language users in their own right” (Seidlhofer, 2001, 134). She further calls for the necessity to counteract the “reproduction of native English dominance” (ibid.).

One of the prerequisites to realise this certainly revolutionary view is the need for empirical work in this field⁴. With this small-scale study of ELF in professional consulting I wish to make a small contribution into this direction. The analysis of some sample extracts of an international interview process in chapter 3 will bring to light that counselling processes, or more specifically supervision processes, in ELF can be carried out successfully. Despite linguistic deviations from native English norms, the participants’ different cultural

⁴ A comprehensive overview of descriptive work undertaken in this field can, for instance, be found in Mollin, 2006, Seidlhofer 2004, Seidlhofer 2005 and Seidlhofer et al. 2006

backgrounds and different levels of proficiency, the communicative goals can be reached without obvious indications of communicative problems or misunderstandings.

2.2. Perceptions of ELF in intercultural consulting contexts

Just like any other profession, the field of professional counselling has been strongly affected by the socio-political changes that globalization has brought about. In fact, intercultural or international work experience seems to have a fairly long-standing tradition in the field of professional consulting.

Freitag-Becker, for example, argues that a view on the history of the profession of supervision reveals the fact that its 100 years of existence is infused by frontier crossings and intercultural exchanges (cf. Freitag-Becker, 2003, 74):

Die Profession Supervision hat sich ... 'grenzüberschreitend' entwickelt und man könnte annehmen, dass die Reflexion und Gestaltung der Interkulturalität seit Anbeginn sozusagen zum Fächerkanon der Ausbildung und zum Rollenbewusstsein gehörten. (Freitag-Becker, 2003, 75).

A glance at journals, such as for example "Supervision. Mensch Arbeit Organisation", mirrors the fact that the chances and challenges involved in working across national borders have become a central issue in the work of supervisors: in issues called "Globalisierung" (4/2002), "Über Grenzen hinweg" (1/2003) and "Kultur belebt!?" (3/2006) professionals reflect on the implications of globalisation on consulting processes.

Clearly, there is strong awareness among consultants for the aspect of multilingualism in intercultural working environments (cf. e.g. Gotthardt-Lorenz and Sauer, 2003. 3.). There is, however, at least to my knowledge, not a single published work which looks *exclusively* at the impact of a lingua franca on consulting processes. Rather, the attitudes of consultants towards a lingua franca (which is, in most cases, English) can only be inferred from papers dealing with international and intercultural work experience in general. In these papers the issue of language is only peripherally touched upon, but never the focus of investigation itself. What seems most striking for the purpose of this paper is the fact that these publications hardly ever mirror the resource-oriented perception of ELF mentioned in chapter 2.1. Quite the contrary, they strongly focus on problems and

negative issues involved in the use of a second or a third language. An analysis of a number of papers written by consultants allows for the following categorization of attitudes towards ELF:

- ***ELF is a simplified and reduced form of language***

ELF is often described in a pejorative way, as, for example, in the following quotation:

Die berufliche Welt ist von einer eigenen Logik durchdrungen und gebiert als nahezu universelle Verkehrssprache dieses *eigentümliche* Organisations-Wirtschafts-Magnagement-*Pidgin*-Englisch, mit eigenen Codes und eigenen Begriffen, (Krainz & Lackner, 2008, 6, my emphasis)

A more concrete example of non-native speakers' reduced linguistic repertoire is given by Müller and Zvacek (2008) when they discuss possible ways for executive managers to "solve" communicative problems:

Weiters ist es hilfreich, bei Konflikten einen Blick auf mögliche Kränkungen zu legen, die Nicht-Muttersprachler oft allein aus der *Reduktion der Sprache* produzieren „Can you...“ statt „Would you like...“. (23, my emphasis)

- ***ELF does not allow for linguistic 'nuances'***

It is often claimed that ELF speakers, most likely due to their supposedly restricted linguistic repertoire, do not have the ability to express themselves appropriately in more complex, emotional or even problematic situations.

Müller and Zvacek (2008) state that a lack of linguistic subtleties can increase the likelihood of interpersonal misunderstandings:

In einer anderen als der Muttersprache zu sprechen, erhöht die Möglichkeit von Missverständnissen. *Sprachnuancen* verschwinden, ... (23, my emphasis)

A very similar line of argument can be found in an article by Suter (1997) in his description of a project which was conducted after a merger of an American and a Swiss company:

und gerade in *anspruchsvollen, möglicherweise konfliktbehafteten Sitzungen und Verhandlungen* ist es ein wesentlicher Vorteil, wenn man sich seiner Muttersprache bedienen kann. Unadäquate Wortwahl sowie das Problem, *sprachliche Nuancen* richtig anzuwenden und zu verstehen, können zu Missverständnissen und Konflikten führen, vor allem wenn sie *emotional wahrgenommen* werden. (83, my emphasis)

The observation that emotions and feelings are (more) difficult to be expressed in ELF is mirrored in the following claim brought forward by a group of supervisors after having

worked together cross-nationally: “Englisch ist der Schlüssel zu Europa, die Muttersprache ist der Schlüssel zur Seele” (Tatschl, 2003, 7).

- ***Being a native speaker means power***

Consultants often work in settings which involve both native and non-native speakers of English. In Suter’s example above, for instance, English was appointed the corporate language after the two companies had been united, which certainly provokes a noticeable cleavage between non-native speakers and native speakers of English. Suter himself follows from this situation that “...Muttersprache [bedeutet] Macht” (Suter, 1997, 83).

Another work draws a direct relation between the (non-) native speaker status and his or her professional career:

So wird aus der Sprachwahl (Konzernsprache, Teamsprache) geschlossen, wer in einer Organisation dominiert. Dies hat auch Auswirkungen auf die Kompetenzausschreibungen, die muttersprachige und nicht-muttersprachige MitarbeiterInnen bekommen. Teammitglieder, die nicht die Landessprache sprechen und aufgrund derer das ganze Team in einer Fremdsprache kommunizieren muss, geraten wegen dieser „Bevorzugung“ unter Druck. Oder jene Führungskraft, die sich beim Besuch des Tochterunternehmens bemüht, dessen Sprache zu sprechen kann mit stärkerer Folgebereitschaft rechnen. (Müller & Zvacek, 2008, 23)

- ***ELF is free of culture***

As mentioned earlier, the use of a lingua franca in consulting processes is often only peripherally touched upon in papers dealing with the issue of intercultural working environments. Linguistic competence and intercultural competence are often considered as separate entities which can be clearly distinguished. Often, the command of a language is viewed as the prerequisite for the development of intercultural competence, as, for instance Lackner states: “Erst durch eine gemeinsame Sprache wird multikulturelle Kommunikation möglich” (2008, 79). And she continues by stating that “[e]ine Lingua franca ermöglicht einander zu verstehen, verdeckt jedoch kulturelle Unterschiede” (ibid.). It can be inferred that a lingua franca does not allow the speaker to get across his or her cultural values, as he or she is viewed as being detached from any cultural identity. Due to the complexity of this matter, this certainly very crucial question can not be further pursued at this point. However, I would merely like to warn from an understanding that cultural competence and linguistic competence are clearly separable.

Quite clearly, the above listed categories are closely interrelated or sometimes even mutually dependent. The underlying common message, and therefore the core issue in this debate, is the assumption that non-native speakers lack of linguistic proficiency. Different levels of language competence are presented as severe impediments to successful communication (cf. also Krusche & Zillner, 2008, 54). The only legitimate point of reference according to which language competence is measured is the native speaker. The observations and hypothesis put forward in the empirical part of this paper might mitigate refute some of these arguments.

Based on the negative perceptions presented above, it might come as a surprise that actual reports on supervisors' working experience in an international context (such as international intervention groups, meetings and working groups of members of different national associations, intercultural supervision processes, etc.) present the communication conducted in ELF as more successful.

Tatschl (2003), for example, stresses the creative power that work in intercultural (and multilingual) contexts brings about. As his arguments are very much in line with my observations based on the analysis of my data, they shall briefly be mentioned. He argues:

Vieles von dem, was Supervisoren und Supervisorinnen tun, was sie erleben, wofür sie eingesetzt werden, tritt bei der grenzüberschreitenden Europaarbeit, bei grenzüberschreitenden Supervisionsprojekten einfach viel deutlicher zu Tage.
(Tatschl, 2003, 6)

And he mentions a few resources that these 'global players' have access to, such as (ibid.):

- *the use of metaphors, images and body language*
- *the capability to address taboos*
- *the capability to ask 'naive' questions*
- *the reduction of pace.*

Some of Tatschl's arguments will be revisited in the following empirical part of the paper.

3. An analysis of an international intervision group

The data analysed in this paper is part of an audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed⁵ intervision process of approximately 42 minutes of total length. It was carried out by a female Dutch, a female Estonian and a male German speaker on an international conference for supervisors in Tallinn in summer 2007 (ANSE Summer University)⁶. For none of the speakers involved English was the mother tongue. As they did not share any other language than English, they had to rely on ELF as the only possible common code of understanding.

As mentioned a couple of times elsewhere, this paper attempts to show that supervision processes can be carried out successfully in ELF. This claim certainly calls for the necessity to define the term 'successful' in this context. How can I possibly argue that the intervision is successful purely by listening to the recorded audio-data and by looking at the transcribed data? Is it possible to evaluate the 'outcome' of supervision as either positive or negative without being able to look into the speakers' minds or asking them personally about their perceptions and attitudes (similarly to the research method that Möller (2001) presents in her book "Was ist gute Supervision?")?

This, of course, relates to the big and widely unanswered question (cf. also Petzold, 2007, 10) of how 'good' or 'effective' supervision can be defined, which can unfortunately not be further pursued at this point as it would clearly transcend the scope of this paper⁷. However, I would like to warn from making judgments concerning the effectiveness of supervision too hastily (cf. e.g. Steinhardt 2003).

⁵ The audio recordings were transcribed according to transcriptions conventions that were developed for the compilation of a sizeable, computer-readable corpus of ELF at the English Department of Vienna University (Vienna-Oxford International Corpus Of English (<http://www.univie.ac.at/voice>). Cf. the VOICE Transcription Conventions [2.1.] and to the VOICE Spelling Conventions [2.1.], available at <http://www.univie.ac.at/voice>. The most important features of the conventions are given in the appendix. A couple of changes to the computer-readable transcription key are made in order to make the analysis easily comprehensible. A transcription of the entire intervision is provided in Kordon 2008.

⁶ The intervision group analysed in this paper is only a small segment of a rather sizeable database collected at this conference for my PhD thesis (in progress).

⁷ Readers interested in this issue may wish to consult Möller 2002 or Petzold 2003.

In the case of the present data, I suggest the following way to tackle the challenge of 'measuring' the success of the intervision process: the intervision process can roughly be subdivided into five different phases which all serve a particular purpose:

- **Phase 1:** (~ 3,2')
purpose: distribution of roles and decision on formal criteria such as method and time management
- **Phase 2:** (~ 2,1')
purpose: presentation of the case/problem and definition of working task
- **Phase 3:** (~ 9,5')
purpose: identification of possible explanations or reasons for the presented problem (starting with the first intervening question by the supervisor)
- **Phase 4:** (~ 6')
purpose: 'transfer': recognition and assurance of the working results and reflection on transfer into professional life
- **Phase 5:** (~ 20.8')
purpose: process reflection and meta-communication

By attributing a particular purpose to each phase, we can retrace if the purpose was fulfilled by a discourse analytical analysis of the data. As language serves as a tool to achieve these goals in the respective phases, the data will also provide sufficient evidence to show that the intervision is communicatively successful, i.e. that interactants are capable to carry out the intervision session successfully in ELF.

What becomes evident from the outline of the phases above is the fact that phases 1 and 5 obtain a very distinct position in the analysis as they are not part of the actual supervision process. Their purposes are, however, highly relevant for the analysis of the entire process. Phase 5 is not only language-wise but also content-wise highly significant for this paper, as the speakers also carry out what can be termed "meta-communication" or "metalanguage", i.e. "words used for talking about or describing language" (Summers, 1998, 854). From the speakers' utterances in these meta-communicative passage we might, therefore, gain insight into their attitudes towards ELF. Moreover, phase 5 also contains hypothesis explicitly uttered by the speakers concerning possible explanations for the success of the supervision process.

Due to the limited scope of this paper, merely two episodes of the intervision, namely phase 2 and 3 will be analysed in detail.

3.1. Phase 2: the case and the working task

In this first phase the participants successfully manage to set all the necessary conditions for the supervision. They commonly decide that each of them takes on a different role in the process: as the Dutch speaker (S1) is willing to present a case arising from her work with a client, she takes on the role of the supervisee. The two other participants distribute the role of the supervisor (German speaker, S3) and the observer (Estonian speaker, S2) among themselves.

A supervision session is normally opened with the presentation of a problem by the supervisee. Ideally, this helps the participants to subsequently extract the main underlying question(s) or problem(s) and, thus, formulate a working task for the session. If we look at the following extract, it becomes clear that these conditions are met in the second phase, in which the supervisee (S1) elaborates a problem she encountered in a supervision session with a client who is trained to become a youth psychiatrist:

(1)⁸

- 1 S1: i can start hh er (.) it was a few weeks ago (.) and i had a: regular session with (.) erm (1)
2 psychiatrist and training? (1) sorry
3 S3: in a training? (.) <6> context? </6>
4 S2: <6> <un> xx </un> </6>
5 S1: in a tr- er it's er it was <fast> supervision context </fast> (.) is psychiatrist who's (.) learning
6 to be (.) a youth (.) psychiatrist so that's er (.) educational=
7 S3: =yes (.) there's <7> one? </7> person or
8 S1: <7> background </7> one person.=
9 S3: =one person
10 S1: <1> one person. </1> so it was an individual (.)
11 S3: <1> okay mhm </1>
12 S1: session
13 S3: mhm (1)

⁸ The data extracts are chronologically numbered throughout this chapter. Please note that utterances written in red refer to language related issues while those highlighted in blue point out issues related to the purpose of the respective phase and to content-related issues discussed in the analysis. When these two foci overlap (i.e. when an utterance is both linguistically and content-wise relevant), the utterance is marked in green.

14 S1: <smacks lips> and er: (.) she? (.) is a she (.) she was telling me? (.) about a situation (.)
 15 with a family? (.) she she was encountering a family and (.) she was talking about it (.) and
 16 while she was talking about it (1) er (.) i felt (1) a great (.) distance coming. (.) i wasn't (.) really
 17 involved anymore (.)and that's rather unfamiliar for me (.) during a session. (.) i was getting (2)
 18 yeah distanced. (.) i think that's the good word (2) and during the session i (.) i felt it? (.) but i
 19 couldn't find words to it or (.) i i couldn't reflect DURING the session (.) what really happened.
 20 (.) i remembered asking the questions? i remember (1) <smacks lips> asking her (.) what she
 21 wanted to do? what she wanted to learn about it. (.)i did all that (.) but (.) within myself i felt (.)
 22 great distance (.) er (.) about the story and to (.) my <pvc>superv- </pvc> (.) <pvc> -isee
 23 </pvc> (3) she (1) i i didn't ask her (.) if she er: (2) noticed any of that? (.) but i reflected on it
 24 later. (.) and i think? (.) it had something to do with the (2) with the (.) the family she talked
 25 about. (.) <soft> that's what i think. </soft> (.)

With regard to the purpose described above, the supervisee manages to take four steps at one go in this stretch of talk:

- she presents her case (lines 1-25)
- she verbalizes her problem: she distanced herself from her client during the supervision session (line 18) and did not ask the client if she felt the distance herself (line 23)
- she indirectly states the question she wishes to analyze in the supervision with S2: to find out why she distanced herself (lines 18-19)
- she presents hypothetical reason of the problem: her feelings had something to do with the family her client talked about (lines 24-25)

Having said that language serves as a tool for the participants to carry out their work successfully, we can infer from the observation that the purpose of this phase is perfectly fulfilled that this exchange is also *communicatively* successful. Let me now address a couple of relevant linguistic aspects that this phase contains:

Bearing in mind that both S1 and S3 are non-native speakers of English, most readers probably have noticed the high level of language proficiency of S1. S1 perfectly manages to make herself understood without major grammatical, syntactical or lexical inconsistencies. When listening to the entire recording, the different levels of linguistic proficiency of the three participants become evident: the Dutch speaker is certainly the

most proficient and the German speaker has a better command of the English language than the Estonian speaker. A close analysis shows that these diverse levels of linguistic competence do not seem to be an impediment for the success of the supervision. Recent research into lingua franca communication in English provides an answer to this phenomenon: just like any spoken discourse, ELF talk is characterised by self-regulation and reciprocal negotiation (cf. Seidlhofer 2002: 20), which means that interactants mutually accommodate to each other's speech styles. ELF speakers' capacity to modify their language in such way that they feel understood by their interlocutors appears to be more important than accuracy:

... it may well be that mutual accommodation ... will be found to have greater importance for communicative effectiveness than 'correctness' or idiomaticity in ENL [English as a native language] terms. (Seidlhofer, 2002, 18)

Extract 1 provides us with another interesting phenomenon with regard to language proficiency:

Interestingly enough, S1's monologue in which she presents her case is immediately interrupted after her first utterance by S3's question "in training training context?" (line 3). It is likely that S3 is irritated by the S1' use of the preposition 'and' in line 2. He, therefore, asks for clarification by replacing 'and' with the preposition 'in' and the article 'a' in line 3, which is subsequently repeated by S1 in line 5 before she further defines the term in line 5 and 6. It gradually becomes clear that the supervision was carried out within the framework of S1's client's training as a psychiatrist as a case supervision (similarly to the German term "Lehrsupervision"). Eventually, S1 coins the term 'educational background' (lines 6 and 9) to define this setting.

S3's request for clarification might be an indication for the fact that he does not feel intimidated by S1's higher level of language proficiency. In his role as the supervisor, he obviously seems to consider it crucial to perfectly understand what his supervisee says. Uncertainty seems to be avoided by immediate interruptions or invitations to rephrase what was being said. Although this is one of the most relevant prerequisites in any consulting process (also among speakers of the same mother tongue), clarification processes of this kind are likely to occur more often in ELF contexts. This observation can, thus, be related to Tatschl's hypothesis that it is easier to ask naïve questions in intercultural contexts: "Häufig wird argumentiert, dass man gerade wegen des Fremdseins

auch die naivsten Fragen formulieren darf und dass dies für die jeweiligen Supervisionssysteme hilfreich sei" (Tatschl, 2003, 6.).

The observation that lacks of understanding in supervision sessions in ELF seem to be immediately bridged, brings me to another hypothesis linked to one of Tatschl's arguments: interruptions and subsequent clarification processes or repetitions as in the first couple of lines of extract 1 certainly slow down the process. Apart from the clarification process illustrated above, extract 1 contains additional features that are also likely to contribute to the reduction of pace:

Readers might have noticed that S1's elaboration of her case is peppered with an amazingly high numbers of breaks. Although I cannot entirely refute the possibility that this is a specific characteristic of S1's speech style, the high amount of communicative breaks in her monologue are likely to be caused by her efforts to express herself clearly in a second language.

The analysis also brings to light that ELF speakers sometimes struggle to find the right word(s), as, for example, explicitly stated by S1 in line 18 with the utterance 'I think that's the good word'. In fact, this phenomenon appears very frequently in the entire recording. It goes without saying that the speed of a process is reduced by this phenomenon.

Another contribution to the reduction of pace is the speakers' self-interruptions and self-repetitions that numerous appear in the recording. Apart from a few minor interruptions and repetitions in S1's monologue, this is more difficult to be illustrated with example 1 above (most likely due to S1's high level of language proficiency). They are, however, omnipresent in the rest of the recordings.

In line with Taschl's argument, I consider all factors which provoke a certain reduction of pace as a chance rather than a threat to supervision processes: "...Verlangsamung ist eine Chance gerade für Supervision" (cf. Taschl 2003, 6). Reducing the speed of speech (or a more cautious handling of language) also implies a reduction of the speakers' sequence of thoughts. It, therefore, gives more room for the subtleties of the participants' observations. In fact, reducing speed is often the only way to achieve a satisfying working outcome in supervision.

Apart from the first couple of lines, this phase is rather monological. The analysis of phase 3, however, will show that ELF speakers are also capable of handling more interactive passages successfully.

3.2. Phase 3: 'peeling the onion'

Given the above mentioned complexity of a supervision, it certainly cannot be assumed that there is always a 'solution' to the problem(s) presented by a client. However, the following analysis of phase 3 of the intervention process shall bring sufficient evidence that the supervisee (S1) has (at least) gained a broader awareness for possible phenomena underlying her trouble:

In the following extract the supervisee makes explicit that the first intervening questions asked by the supervisor (S3) prompts her to redefine the problem she presented and, subsequently helps her to gain an understanding for the core problem herself:

(2)

- 1 S1: and MAYbe? (.) *now you are asking me?* (.) it had something to do (2) *no- now i'm talking*
- 2 *about it's coming?* (.) er maybe it had something to do (.) with the (.) unaffected way she talked
- 3 about it (2) she *was very distanced* (.) *too.* (.)
- 4 S3: mhm? (.)
- 5 S1: er (.) *as we speak?* (.) *i remember* <5> the feeling </5> and (.)
- 6 S3: <5> <clears throat> </5>
- 7 S1: *i remember how i* (.) *observed her?* (.)

This exchange is part of the phase in which the supervisee is still in the process of making the problem with her client explicit and, thus, is trying to grasp the problem herself. She argues that it is both the supervisors questions (line 1) and the process of putting her feelings into words (lines 1 and 5) that enable her to identify the difficulties in the work with her client. This process constitutes, at least to my mind, one of the main purposes of a supervision process. The client enters into a state of self-reflection and is, thereby, able to identify the core issue of his/her problem, which, in the long run, is also one of the prerequisites to formulate a working goal and, eventually, to close a 'formal' contract with

the supervisee. The process can be compared with the peeling of an onion: one layer after the other is removed until finally the 'real' problem is uncovered.

With the utterance 'she was very distanced too' in line 3, it is likely that S1 begins to gain an awareness that her feeling of distance towards her client might have to do with 'countertransference', a phenomenon rooted in psychoanalysis (cf. e.g. König and Staats 1996, Münch 1990, Oberhoff, 2005, Steinhardt 2005). This hypothesis is further supported in the following extract in which she gradually realizes that it is the client's distanced attitude towards violence that eventually caused her to distance herself from the client:

(3)

- 1 S1: i observed her (2) maybe it was a par- parallel (.) para- parallel (.) process i don't know?
- 2 but (.) erm (1) i i felt (1) my distance?
- 3 S3: mhm
- 4 S1: and I saw HER distance.
- 5 S3: mhm=
- 6 S1: =so maybe i took that (.)

With extract 4 below I would like to illustrate that the supervisor brings in an additional hypothesis, namely that her problem might be linked to a violation of her personal set of values and believes:

(4)

- 1 S3: and wha- what what was it? was it more an irritation for you? or wa:- was it like that that
- 2 you expected (.) if somebody (1) er (.) presents er (.) something doing this (.) violence? then it
- 3 must er (.) be accompanied by (.) deep feelings. (2)

S2's hypothesis is subsequently strongly approved by S1:

(5)

- 1 S1: i think you are right. I think <6> that i ex- </6> (.)
- 2 S3: <6> and (.) yes </6>
- 3 S1: <7> that in </7> my expectations.=

In the course of the subsequent independent exchanges, which chronologically follow each other, it becomes evident that the supervisee begins to realise that there are two phenomena underlying her problem, namely 'countertransference' (extract 6: line 7; extract 8: line 3;) and the involvement of her own personal believes, values and experiences (e.g.

extract 6: line 1; extract 7; extract 8: lines 1 and 2; extract 9: line 8; extract 10: lines 1,2 and 4).

(6)

- 1 S1: <5> i </5> expected her (1)
- 2 S3: <5> mhm </5>
- 3 S1: to: (.) to (.) give more insight (2) not just <6> facts </6>
- 4 S3: <6> insight </6> to? (.)
- 5 S1: to (.) to what it (.) <7> did with her? </7> (.)
- 6 S3: <7> to give them words </7>
- 7 S1: to gi- to put it in words. (.) but i did the same? (3)

(7)

- 1 S1: but maybe it is that even more? because (.) that has to do with my own expectations

(8)

- 1 S3: what the <un> xxx </un> (.) er (.) you are not a neutral in in this (.) way? what do you
- 2 expect you from yourself? (.)
- 3 S1: yes (.) yes an- an- an- <5> that's </5> double (.)

(9)

- 1 S1: and i wasn't neutral to myself (2) <6> <whispering> yes </whispering> </6>
- 2 S3: <6> n- </6> not neutral to her? (.) is it exact or was that more? (.) because you expected
- 3 that somebody (.) <7> is is </7> is able to: er: (.)
- 4 S1: <7> no i </7>
- 5 S3: to er (.) accompany: er: (4) an event no <Lnde> ein ein erlebnis? {an experience} </Lnde>
- 6 (.) what that in english er this er this (.) to to to er (1) to give them a context of er (1) feelings of
- 7 er (1) values of er (1)
- 8 S1: mhm (2) yes. (.) it it has to do with er (3) the values i set (.) maybe. (2) know what i mean?

(10)

- 1 S3: er (.) your (.) that in this setting your belongs you believes there or er er (.)
- 2 S1: that my own believes (.) are
- 3 S3: mhm
- 4 S1: were were there.

Given the complexity of this case, it is rather impressive that the participants manage to discover the underlying phenomena in a ELF. The analysed extracts certainly contain a number of linguistic inconsistencies and deviations from Standard English forms on various different levels of language (mainly uttered by S3), e.g.

- on the level grammar:
 - extract 4/line 2: 'something doing this (.) violence?' (use of gerund instead of infinitive),
 - extract 10/line 1: 'you believes' (3rd person 's' with 2nd person singular)
- on the level of syntax:
 - extract 10/line 1: 'er (.) your (.) that in this setting your belongs you believes there or er er (.)' (incomplete sentences, self-interruptions, etc.)
- on the lexical level:
 - extract 10/line 1: 'your belongs' (coinages of new words)
 - extract 9/lines 5 and 6: 'to er (.) accompany: er: (4) an event no <Lnde> ein ein erlebnis? {an experience} </Lnde> (.) what that in english' (lexical gaps)

None of these deviances, however, seem to be an impediment for the speakers to achieve their communicative goals. Rather, the interactants seem to be very creative and inventive to overcome potential trouble sources in their communication. One thing that has to be particularly highlighted with regard to their interaction in phase 3 is the speakers' ability to bridge lexical gaps. It is striking that they manage to discover and work constructively with such complex phenomena as 'countertransference' without ever using specific terminology. Rather, they paraphrase what can be expressed by one single term with utterances such as 'parallel process' (extract 3), 'i did the same' (extract 6) or 'that's double' (extract 8). It can be concluded, then, that the interactants manage to work on a highly professional level without having a wide range of specific vocabulary at their disposal.

Often, the interactants do not pay much attention to lexical gaps as the example in extract 9 (lines 5 to 6) exemplifies: S3 does not find the right word for the German word 'Erlebnis' (experience). This, however, seems to be fairly unnoticed by his interlocutor. It seems as if S1 is well aware of the fact that the term 'experience' is not vitally important to grasp S3's main message, namely his hypothesis concerning S1's involvement of personal values.

This phenomenon might be explained by the widely acknowledged 'let-it-pass principle' in ELF (Firth, 1996). House (1999) describes this principle in the following way:

.... ELF interactants ... 'normalize' potential trouble sources, rather than attending to them explicitly, via for example, repair, reformulation, or other negotiating behaviours. As long as participants-to-the-talk achieve a certain threshold of understanding sufficient for their current conversational purpose, they seem to adopt a 'Let-it-Pass' principle governing the way they handle ambiguously or overtly deficient utterances. (House 1999: 75)

It may well be that this principle is linked to the observation that ELF is "overtly consensus-oriented, cooperative and mutually supportive" (Seidlhofer, 2002, 15).

Another outstanding linguistic features in this phase is the high amount of minimal responses (or feedback tokens) such as 'mhm', 'yeah', 'yes', etc. In fact, all five phases of the intervention are infused with minimal responses of these kinds.

These tokens do not only serve to signal agreement with what is said, but they are also used as 'tools' to signal attention and listenership. They are, thus, an important feature for interlocutors to both establish and maintain interpersonal contact and to keep up the flow of the conversation (cf. also Kordon 2003 and 2006). As silence or longer pauses seems to be an intrinsic element in supervision, the latter function of feedback tokens does not seem to be so relevant. When looking at the extracts above, the minimal responses seem to primarily serve the former function, i.e. the establishment and maintenance of rapport. With the intensive use of these tokens the supervisor seems to signal his active involvement and, likewise, strongly agrees to his supervisee's observation and ideas.

As I view it, the establishment and maintenance of positive interpersonal contact is the prerequisite for any functioning supervision process, or as S1 expresses it in phase 5:

(11)

1 S1: and what you said earlier about our profession (3) i think is very true. [our](#)

2 [profession is about making connection.](#) (3)

In fact, in ELF-settings it often seems much more relevant than the correctness of the participants' language.

4. Conclusion and Outlook

Before attempting to formulate some concluding remarks or to suggest a couple of practical consequences of my research results for the profession of supervision, let me stress that my observations are based on a small-scale empirical basis. Therefore, my findings are inevitably bound to be a sample. They can only be considered as a point of departure for further investigations on a broader empirical basis.

With regard to the methodology employed in this research project, I wish to have shown that discourse analytic examinations of counselling processes are of great relevance in order to assure successful communicative processes in international or intercultural consulting.

The central aim of this paper was to show that supervisions in English as a lingua franca can be carried out successfully despite linguistic deviations (on all levels of language) from standard native speakers' norms. The speakers in my data manage impressively well to reveal complex cognitive and emotional patterns within a very short period. A couple of characteristics of a consulting process in ELF were elaborated:

- Different levels of language proficiency are balanced by mutual accommodation of the speakers' speech styles.
- Problems of understanding are immediately repaired by requests for clarification.
- The pace of the process is reduced by the use of a lingua franca, which can have positive implications on the quality of the consulting process.
- The use of specialised terminology (such as the term 'countertransference') is not of crucial relevance for the achievement of the communicative goals. Speakers skillfully paraphrase what can be expressed with one single specific term.
- Lexical gaps are bridged by the highly cooperative and supportive speech style of the speakers.
- Speakers employ a wide range of different strategies to establish and maintain rapport, i.e. positive interpersonal contact, during the session. Positive interpersonal relationships seem to be of greater relevance for a successful working result than linguistic accuracy.

By juxtaposing these findings with popular beliefs of consultants about ELF (or the use of a lingua franca in general) in the theoretical part, this paper has shown that many negative perceptions of ELF do not seem to have sufficient scientific grounding. Although I certainly do not wish to entirely refute observations such as the reduced or simplified linguistic repertoire of non-native speakers of English or the power of native speakers, I do think that the implications of these phenomena for the profession of counselling is overestimated or, at least, misleading. The attitude that linguistic accuracy and a strong adherence to native speakers' norms are the most important prerequisites for successful international or intercultural work, undoubtedly stokes fears among consultants and sometimes even prevents them from 'climbing the global stage'. I wish that my empirical investigation into supervision processes in ELF motivates professionals to take courage and start working in ELF even if they consider their English language competence far from being 'perfect', or as S3 puts it in phase 5:

(12)

1 S3: =yes (.) it (.) it was not that not necessary to present me: as somebody who was perfect (.)

Furthermore, it would be desirable that this paper raises colleagues' awareness for the creative and innovative communicative strategies that ELF speakers employ in order to compensate linguistic deficiencies, to avoid misunderstandings and to bridge communicative problems. In fact, supervisions in ELF bring about certain insights into characteristics that even enrich consulting processes, such as the reduction of pace (caused by breaks, self-interruptions, repetitions, clarification processes or the struggle to find the right words). I do, thus, agree with Tschl's argument that we can learn a lot about supervision in general by carrying out intercultural supervisions in a lingua franca (cf. Tschl, 2003, 6).

What seems most important for the profession of supervision at the moment is a move away from a deficit-oriented and fearful thinking to a more resource-oriented attitude. This can certainly not be reached by undergoing strict language training or by acquiring as much specific vocabulary or closed sets of grammatical rules as possible, but by developing communicative capacity which enables professionals to converse in English with different speakers of different cultural and first language backgrounds. One of the most efficient way to reach this capacity is certainly 'practical training'. I would, therefore, like to invite supervisors and other consultants to expand their work to intercultural and

multilingual settings and actively use parts of their supposedly 'deficits' in ELF as tools rather than obstacles in their processes.

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Online resources:

Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English:

<http://www.univie.ac.at/voice/>

ANSE – Association of National Organisations for Supervision in Europe:

<http://www.anse.eu>

APPENDIX

VOICE Transcription and Spelling Conventions

For the sake of readability of the transcripts analysed in chapter4, the most important features of the transcription and spelling conventions are provided. Please consult <http://www.univie.ac.at/voice> for more detail:

1. DECAPITALIZATION	
No capital letters are used except for marking emphasis (cf. mark-up conventions).	Example: S8: so you really can <@> control my english
2. INTONATION	
Words spoken with falling intonation are followed by a full stop “.”	Example: S7: that’s point two. absolutely yes. .
Words spoken with rising intonation are followed by a question mark “?” .	Example: S1: that’s what my next er slide? does
3. EMPHASIS	
If a speaker gives a syllable, word or phrase particular prominence, this is written in capital letters	Example: S7: er internationalization is a very IMPORTANT issue
4. PAUSES	
Every brief pause in speech (up to a good	Example:

half second) is marked with a full stop in parentheses.	SX-f: because they all give me different (.) different (.) points of view
Longer pauses are timed to the nearest second and marked with the number of seconds in parentheses, e.g. (1) = 1 second, (3) = 3 seconds.	Example: S1: aha (2) so finally arrival on monday evening is still valid
Whenever two or more utterances happen at the same time, the overlaps are marked with numbered tags: <1> </1>, <2> </2>, ... Everything that is simultaneous gets the same number.	Example: S1: it is your best <1> case </1> scenario (.) S2: <1> yeah </1> S1: okay
5. LAUGHTER	
All laughter and laughter-like sounds are transcribed with the @ symbol, approximating syllable number (e.g. ha ha ha = @@@). Utterances spoken laughingly are put between <@> </@> tags.	Example: S1: in denmark well who knows. @@ S2: <@> yeah </@> @@ that's right
6. NON-ENGLISH SPEECH	
Utterances in a participant's first language (L1) are put between tags indicating the speaker's L1.	Example: S5: <L1de> bei firmen </L1de> or wherever
7. SPEAKING MODES	
Utterances which are spoken in a particular mode (fast, soft, whispered, read, etc.) and are notably different from the speaker's normal speaking style are marked accordingly.	Example: S2: because as i explained before is that we have in the <fast> universities of cyprus we have </fast> a specific e:rm procedure
8. ANONYMIZATION	
A guiding principle of VOICE is sensitivity to the appropriate extent of anonymization. As a general rule, names of people,	Example: S9: that's one of the things (.) that i (1) just wanted to clear out. (2) [S13]?

<p>companies, organizations, institutions, locations, etc. are replaced by aliases and these aliases are put into square brackets []. The aliases are numbered consecutively, starting with 1.</p>	
<p>9. UNINTELLIGIBLE SPEECH</p>	
<p>Unintelligible speech is represented by x's approximating syllable number and placed between <un> </un> tags.</p>	<p>Example: S4: we <un> xxx </un> for the <7> supreme (.) three </7> possibilities S1: <7> next yeah </7></p>