ELF, ACA:DEMIC WRITING, AND THE SEMANTICIZATION OF THOUGHT

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Abstract

This paper takes the view that varieties of writing represent agreed ways of mediating content that are recognized by discourse communities such as the academy who constitute their expectable readerships. These mediations make use of language-specific default affordances that are not only syntactic but also pragmatic and represent *thinking for speaking* categories (Slobin 1996) which, I argue, have greater explanatory power than the more abstract concept of *virtual English* (Seidlhofer 2011). In this context, I make a few preliminary comments on what appear to be the pragmatic affordances identifiable in parallel English texts generated by two native Chinese and a native English student writer faced with the same academic task, and make some consequent observations about teaching academic writing.

Keywords

indexicality, pragmatic strengthening, thinking for speaking, virtual English

1 Equal disadvantage

In *River of Smoke*, the recently published second novel in a yet to be completed trilogy which explores British, Chinese and Indian experiences of the production of and trade in opium in mid-nineteenth century Asia, Amitav Ghosh imagines a meeting on St Helena between Napoleon and a Parsi opium trader, Bahram Modi. Modi answers the former Emperor's question about the use of language amongst the various nationalities involved in the opium trade in the following way:

> Even though many Chinese spoke English with ease and fluency, they would not negotiate in it, believing that it put them at a disadvantage in relation to Europeans. In pidgin they reposed far greater trust, for the grammar was the same as that of Cantonese, while the words were mainly English, Portuguese and Hindustani – and such being the case, everyone who spoke the jargon was at an equal disadvantage, which was considered a great benefit to all (2011: 183).

Perhaps surprisingly, references to pidgins are rare in the ELF literature. This presumably reflects the fact that, unlike pidgin lingua francas, the basis of ELF is a fully formed language with a pre-existing sociolinguistic character, which, so the argument runs, is adapted by lingua franca users for their own ends. As part

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of the adaptation argument, the equal (dis)advantage status of all users of ELF is an implicit theme in the literature, as evidenced in the discussions that focus on the relative unintelligibility of native-speakers (e.g. Jenkins 2000) and in claims that contemporary English is being shaped more by second language users than by first language users (e.g. Seidlhofer 2005). The equal (dis)advantage status of users is more credible when ELF is regarded as a context-sensitive spoken phenomenon in which interactants have means of indicating and repairing trouble sources than in relation to writing, hence the focus on spoken language in the ELF literature.

In her recent book, Seidlhofer characterizes the sociolinguistic status of ELF as "a language of *secondary socialization*, a means of wider communication to conduct transactions outside one's primary social space and speech community" (2011: 86). Whilst it might be argued that for some people the internet constitutes a primary social space, Seidlhofer's definition implicitly raises the concept of ELF as a written as well as a spoken language, at least with respect to internet communication. I say 'implicitly', because her formal definition of ELF "as *any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option"*, whilst not ruling out the possibility of written communication, is typically taken as orality-oriented.

In a similar way, studies of ELF as an academic lingua franca have recently begun to consider the status of written as well as spoken language. However, writing, and especially academic genres, have tended to be regarded as norm-referenced with respect to structure, register and variety, with these norms reinforced by a powerful discourse community who determine whether an academic text has a readership. Whatever one's position on the degrees of autonomy of writer and reader, it seems difficult to refute the notion that writing is a public representation which is codified and standardized, and about the effective doing of which there is broad agreement. This was brought home to me earlier this year when I submitted the title of my talk for the Brno Conference and was asked whether I intended the form "aca:Demic". Although I confirmed that I did indeed intend to include the text symbol for *happy* in my title, in the draft conference programme the title was regularized. This is a powerful demonstration of a truth we can hardly doubt, that our writing may be 'corrected' by others when deemed deficient. The importance of satisfying norms also explains why the writing process involves recursive drafting as writers struggle to achieve standard ways of conveying the meanings they have in mind, and why we expect expert writers to teach apprentice writers to understand genres, the institutional nature of writing and the power of the discourse community. Put simply, writing presupposes agreed ways of putting things across a wide community of language

users, thus problematizing the hypothesis that different writers with different levels of (academic) literacy are at an equal (dis)advantage. This, then, is the context that this paper addresses.

2 Pragmatics and ELF

Although Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey (2011) claim that pragmatics has featured prominently in ELF studies, the kind of pragmatics discussed in relation to ELF is predominantly strategic and focuses on behaviours such as code-switching, repetition, clarification requests, the use of cognates, and the coinage of original formulas. Only rarely do we encounter discussions of indexicality, although the indexing in each utterance of a particular context together with the way in which this is signalled metapragmatically by means of demonstratives, lexical choice, modality, prosodic cues, etc. is one of the most notable properties of spoken language, and especially of spoken ELF interactions, which necessarily reflect the nature of the intercultural communication that constitutes them. Nor does the literature include much discussion of pragmatic strengthening, by means of which under-determined forms (e.g. *my book*) are enriched by inference (e.g. *the book I own, the book I wrote, the book I lent you*), although the claim that ELF users tend to express meanings in an explicit way (e.g. *my coursebook*) suggests that this would be an area worth studying. For these reasons, this paper will explore the problematic notion of academic writing as a lingua franca from a pragmatic perspective, making use of parallel text data to illustrate the way in which writing is differentially norm-referenced across cultures with respect to indexicality and pragmatic strengthening.

The value of parallel text analysis can be seen in an English/Modern Standard Chinese public information text produced in Hong Kong, in which a fictitious character explains that although he is a clean-living person, he has nevertheless contracted HIV. In his English guise, our character says, *I don't drink or smoke*, and in his Chinese guise, transliterated into English, *Do not smoke, do not drink alcohol*. The putative English utterance *I don't drink or smoke* gives rise to two taken-for-granted interpretations, that drinking and smoking (in that order) are same category activities (an inference invited by the conjunction reduction) and that what is drunk is alcohol and what are smoked are cigarettes. This can be contrasted with the putative MSC utterance *Do not smoke, do not drink alcohol*, which gives rise to three taken-for-granted interpretations, that smoking and drinking (in that order) are different category activities (an inference invited by the absence of conjunction reduction), that what are smoked are cigarettes, and that a person who tells us that he does not drink alcohol regards himself as admirable

in that regard. It is unclear whether these taken-for-granted interpretations are particular to the cultural standpoint of the English speaker that I happen to be or whether some or all of them are also particular to the putative Cantonese speaker whose utterance we are considering. However, the implications for anyone wishing to regard written English as a lingua franca are significant.

The phrase "taken-for-granted interpretations", echoes Verschueren's discussion of metapragmatic phenomena and his observation that

> Language use, just like other forms of social behaviour, is interpreted by the actors involved. In the realm of social life in general, more or less coherent patterns of meaning which are felt to be so commonsensical that they are no longer questioned, thus feeding into taken-for-granted interpretations of activities and events, are usually called ideologies. (2000: 450).

So we see that when Cantonese and English speakers tell us that they neither smoke cigarettes nor drink alcohol, the taken-for-granted interpretations of the way they each express these propositions not only require different degrees of pragmatic strengthening but also index contexts or ideologies that are far from identical. Following Levinson, the taken-for-granted interpretations that what is drunk is alcohol and what are smoked are cigarettes are I-inferences ('I' for Informativeness), recovered in accordance with the principle that a speaker will "Say as little as necessary" and a hearer will "Amplify the informational content of the speaker's utterance, by finding the most specific interpretation, up to the speaker's intended point" (2000: 114). Similarly, the taken-for-granted interpretation that someone who says they do not drink alcohol thinks highly of themselves in this regard is an M-inference ('M' for Manner, as in Grice's Maxim of Manner), recovered in accordance with the principle that a speaker will "Indicate an abnormal, non-stereotypical situation by using marked expressions that contrast with those [he/she] would use to describe the corresponding normal, stereotypical situation" so that a hearer will reason that "What is said in an abnormal way indicates an abnormal situation" (ibid.: 136). Levinson describes this kind of "utterance-type-meaning" as

> a level of systematic pragmatic inference based *not* on direct computations about speaker-intentions but rather on general expectations about how language is normally used. These expectations give rise to presumptions, default inferences, about both content and force (ibid.: 22).

The simple example examined above illustrates how our expectations about how language is normally used are culturally variable. The default inferences we associate with the forms chosen to convey propositional meaning will also

vary, therefore, depending on our familiarity with the language we use and on our knowledge of what constitutes expectations for most other users. The tendency of L2 writers on occasion to invite own-language (i.e. L1) default inferences may well be what gives the sense of *otherness* that we sometimes experience when reading grammatically accurate non-native authored texts. The question that arises is whether such effects are legitimate adaptations of native speaker norms (the ELF perspective) or whether they index contexts that are sufficiently opaque to fall outside the realms of a lingua franca. Given that the effects/contexts are not meanings the writer intended, it is hard to see how they qualify as adaptations of a language which has affordances beyond those typically used by native speakers. And since it is clear that lingua franca speakers don't just say any old thing but depart from native speaker phonological, syntactic and pragmatic norms in principled ways, this leads naturally to a consideration of the extent to which languages have affordances available for lingua franca use beyond those found in native speaker talk.

3 The semanticization of thought[1]

The issue of affordances is discussed, albeit in a relatively abstract way, by Seidlhofer. Her argument is that supposed language varieties are no more than linguists' reifications and that real uses of language are not constrained by such notions at all (2011: 72). So it is not as though native speakers determine how non-native speakers should use 'their' language. Thus native speaker English is not *adopted* as a variety, but rather *adapted* by non-native speakers as part of the process of appropriation (ibid.: 66). This being the case,

> We need to be able to refer to a construct that can accommodate the dynamic and fluid character of ELF while also accounting for what its realizations across the globe, despite all their diversity, have in common: the underlying encoding possibilities that speakers make use of. It is these possibilities that we can (speculatively) call virtual language (ibid.: 111).

The concept of *virtual language* (the term is actually Widdowson's) accounts for the ELF user's "exploitation of encoding possibilities to produce linguistic forms that are functionally appropriate and effective" (ibid.: 120). Turning to pedagogy, Seidlhofer argues that "classrooms have to provide opportunities for learners to develop a capability in English that will enable them to make adaptive and actual use of the virtual language" (ibid.: 196). The problem with the concept of *virtual language*, however, is that it's nowhere explained just which adaptive affordances are available and which are not.

In his discussion of the relationship between thought and language, Slobin provides a more principled account of what might constitute *virtual language*:

> The expression of experience in linguistic terms constitutes **thinking for speaking** – a special form of thought that is mobilized for communication. "Thinking for speaking" involves picking those characteristics of objects and events that (a) fit some conceptualization of the event, and (b) are readily encodable in the language (1996: 76).

Thus "any utterance is a selective schematization of a concept – a schematization that is, in some way, dependent on the grammaticalized meanings of the speaker's particular language" (ibid.: 75-76). It's important to understand what Slobin means by "selective" here. It may well be that we all share the same conceptual representation (in fact Slobin suggests that this is probably the case), but we select some aspect of that conceptual representation which we can readily represent by means of the linguistic affordances available to us. Thus the concept of "thinking for speaking" is perfectly consistent with the widely recognized production model proposed by Levelt (1989) since at the stage of formulation speakers of different languages have different resources on which to draw.

Grundy and Jiang (2001) illustrate the concept of *thinking for speaking* in their discussion of what they term the *bare past* in Hong Kong English. They cite as a typical example a sandwich-board at a bus station in the Hong Kong New Territories bearing the legend *Last bus had departed*. They suppose that in such a situation a speaker of standard British English might expect to read *The last bus has departed*. They account for the Hong Kong usage by appealing to the concept *no-blame-attaches-to-me*, which they claim motivates the choice of a form in which the reference time is shifted from present to past, thereby absolving the person who sets the sandwich-board up from any involvement in the inconvenience caused by state of affairs it relates. Grundy and Jiang go on to give several more examples of this phenomenon (*This section of the platform had been cordoned off; Sorry we were closed; etc*.), arguing that this is an affordance of English which appears opaque to those unfamiliar with the very particular context it's used to invoke.

This example illustrates how a usage may be "a selective schematization of a concept – a schematization that is, in some way, dependent on the grammaticalized meanings of the speaker's particular language" (Slobin 1996: 75-76). It also prompts us to ask whether written texts are constrained to the extent that some thoughts are more readily expressed in the written code than others and, with pragmatics in mind, whether different cultural groups favour different pragmatic modulations.

This question was explored by Grundy (1998) and Cheng and Grundy (2007) in two studies which made use of parallel English/Modern Standard Chinese texts. In the first study, Grundy showed that a letter to the English-speaking customers of a Hong Kong bank encoded small Power/Distance and a more direct mode of communication (positive politeness) than the Chinese version of the same letter, which was also more nominal. In the same study, Grundy also showed that the Chinese version of a letter sent by the President of a university to staff members encoded larger Power in being more indirectly directive and smaller Distance in being more verbal than the English version of the same letter. In the second study, Cheng and Grundy chose a text addressing a lifestyle issue (saving for the education of one's children by means of an insurance policy) which they judged relevant to Chinese and English-speaking citizens of Hong Kong of similar ages and social backgrounds. They worked in the opposite direction to Grundy's earlier study, using the earlier study as the basis for a set of predictions about the pragmatic affordances that they expected to find in the different language versions of the same text. Of their seven predictions, only three were confirmed:

- The MSC text will exhibit greater encoding of power/distance than the English text
- The English text will be positioned nearer the implicature pole; the MSC text nearer the propositional meaning pole
- The MSC text will favour negative politeness; the English text will favour positive politeness.

Contrary to their expectations they also found that English text was more nominal than the MSC text.

Broadly, these findings suggest that the indexical and inferential affordances of the two languages do appear to differ, although at the same time it is possible that the results show merely that different characteristics of the social event are more readily encoded in the different pragmatic affordances of the two languages.

4 Thinking for writing

So the question to which we turn is whether selective pragmatic schematizations apply to academic writing, as is perhaps suggested by the parallel text analyses discussed in the previous section. Obviously enough, academic writing does not take the form of parallel texts, at least in the narrow sense. But in a broader sense, student assignments may be compared as though they were parallel texts, which is what I attempt in this section.

This was an assignment set on the Language Teaching Methodology module of a taught Masters course:

> Imagine you have been asked to put together a guide for newly qualified teachers. Formulate 4 or 5 methodology statements, such as *Language is more learnable than teachable*, and provide an explanation for each of them addressed to your apprentice teacher audience (1,000 words).

As a preliminary, we have to recognize that the analysis of academic writing is to some degree complicated by the issues connected with footing/ownership, such as voice, quotation and even plagiarism. How, for example, are we to evaluate the ELF utterance "What are we to say to the teacher who says, I have that many years of teaching experience and I don't need no development" which I heard at a recent conference? Is "I have that many years." a verbatim quotation or a relay in which the speaker paraphrases the teacher in his own words?

In the analysis that follows, I make some very tentative comments about a tiny sample of data collected from two native Chinese writers and one native English writer who submitted methodology statements on the same two topics and whose work was graded in the same band. In addition, all three students followed broadly similar rhetorical strategies, first explaining the existing situation, which was seen as implicitly unsatisfactory, and then making recommendations of their own.

Space permits me to comment only on only the recommendation sections of the methodology statements. Strikingly, the first word(s) of each functions as a metapragmatic constraint on interpretation.

Topic 1: Native vs. non-native use
C1: ***Therefore*** more attention should be paid to L2 users rather than native speakers.
E: ***However***, the most important point for teachers is to focus more on fluency.
Topic 2: The single method issue
C2: ***In conclusion***, due to the complexity of the language teaching classroom.
E: ***So*** exactly what changes can be made to the curriculum.

The use of these metapragmatic markers indicates that a new members' method is employed (a recommendation) which relates to the preceding text in a particular way, and indexes the skills of the writer in making use of a higher level editorial strategy.

In the comments that follow, I will use a small set of recognized pragmatic categories to draw attention to features of each of the texts in turn. In addition, I will use the term *virtual language* as a means of describing departures from standard native speaker usage that seem worth remarking on.

Topic 1: Native vs. non-native use

C1: Therefore more attention should be paid to L2 users rather than native speakers in the process of language teaching. It should be noticed that even the native speakers have various accents, why are non-native speakers' accents unacceptable? Based on these reasons, it can be seen that more dialogues between non-native speakers should be presented in the ELT classroom.

Indexicality: The absence of a definite article before "L2 users" and "native speakers" in the first sentence indexes a context in which these are general categories. But in the second sentence, the presence of the definite article ("the native speakers") constitutes an instance of what I earlier called the *otherness* of L2 writing and indexes a speaker-hearer shared set of native speakers to whom the writer defers.

Deference: Following the analysis proposed by Kay (1990), the metapragmatic use of "even" before "the native speakers" points to a text proposition (*native speakers have various accents*) inconsistent with a supposed context proposition, thus elevating native speakers and reinforcing the deference noted above.

Negative politeness: The three agentless passive structures ("more attention should be paid to L2 users", "It should be noticed", "it can be seen that") have the effect of conveying what are instructions to apprentice teachers in the form of negatively polite general precepts, suggesting that an "apprentice teacher audience" may index cross-culturally variable contexts.

Explicitness: The text is strikingly explicit. "[T]he process of", "Based on these reasons", "in the ELT classroom" can readily be inferred and do not need to be stated, and the phrase "more dialogues between non-native speakers" might have been less explicitly stated in the form *more non-native speaker dialogues*. Such explicitness suggests that the writer doesn't trust the reader to infer these meanings as default I-implicatures and, unintentionally, invites a search for M-inferences.

Implicitness: The criticism of the prevailing position implicit in the question "why are non-native speakers' accents unacceptable?" has a marked politeness effect.

Genitive structure: The choice of the nominal S(axon)-gen(itive) "non-native speakers' accents" indexes a single concept, in contrast to the N(orman)-gen.

alternative *(the) accents of non-native speakers*, which links two arguments by means of the function word *of* and is consequentially both more explicit and more verbal.

Virtual language: The structure "more attention should be paid to L2 users rather than native speakers" appears to reduplicate the comparison conveyed in either *pay more attention to x than y* or *pay attention to x rather than y*. The excessively explicit, non-standard reduplication therefore invites a costly M-inference - costly because M-inferences are not readily recovered and result in marked or unexpected interpretations, thus interfering with readability.

Topic 1: Native vs. non-native use

E: However, the most important point for teachers is to focus more on fluency when teaching the language to the students, rather than aiming for them to pronounce their words like a native speaker. If the student has a desire to pronounce like a native speaker, then perhaps this is something they can work on in their own time. For the most part, the role of the teacher is to facilitate the student's language learning and ensure that they are intelligible, before attempting to make the L2 student 'sound' like an L1 speaker.

Indexicality: Each of the four mentions of "student/students" in the three sentences in this text is preceded by the definite article, indexing a closeness between the writer and reader who, the writer supposes, can both identify either a shared category (the generic reading of the NP) or a shared set (the specific reading).

Hedging: The uses of "perhaps" and "For the most part" as well as the quotation marks around "'sound'" indicate speaker attitudes to the propositional context and, as a higher-level meta-function, indexes the kind of editorial capacity associated with academic writing.

Explicitness: "When teaching the language to the students" and, arguably, "for teachers" and "their words" could all be recovered as default inferences and thus invite M-inferences.

Implicitness: The recommendation to the apprentice teacher "The role." is implicit, suggesting that the writer trusts the reader to draw the appropriate inference as to the function of this sentence.

Presupposition: "The most important point for teachers" and "the role of the teacher" both convey existential presuppositions, indicating that the writer has a taken-for-granted context to satisfy which pre-dates the arguments contained in the text, thus indexing the writer's planning capacity and editorial skill.

Genitive structure: The contrast between the more explicitly indexical N-gen. "the role of the teacher" and the holistic concept indexed by the S-gen. "the student's language learning" separated only by the words "is to facilitate" is striking and suggests that the teacher is an active agent.
Virtual language: It is tempting to ask whether E intends the pragmatic effect produced by "the role of the teacher is to facilitate the student's language learning and ensure that they are intelligible" since the absence of an expectable *to* before "ensure" causes us to infer that *facilitating learning* and *ensuring that students are intelligible* is a single concept. Since we are dealing with L1 writing, examples of virtual language are especially interesting. Relatedly, "the most important point … is to focus more on fluency … rather than aiming for …" blends the two default structures

- *is to focus (vb) on fluency rather than aim (vb) for* – I-inference: the single focus has two interdependent effects
- *is to focus more on fluency (n) than aiming (n) for* – I-inference: there is a choice to be made between two focuses.

Topic 2: The single method issue
C2: In conclusion, due to the complexity of the language teaching classroom and teacher's own concept and experience, only one method would fail to deal with every situation, so, teachers should learn to use different methods in different particular teaching context.

Negative politeness: As instances of negative politeness, the remote form "would", suggesting a hypothetical outcome, and the article-less general category "teachers" distance writer from reader and reduce the imposition of the recommendation.
Explicitness: The presence of the redundant "particular" invites an M-inference and perhaps sets us thinking that this writer does not necessarily want real differences to be indexed by "in different … teaching context[s]". "[O]nly one method" and, arguably, "[the] teacher's own concept" each invite different inferences from those invited by the more expectable "a single method" and "the teacher's concept".
Implicitness: We infer an item such as *adopting* before "only one method".
Virtual language: The absence of the definite article before "teacher's own concept" renders the noun phrase indexically problematic.

Topic 2: The single method issue

E: So exactly what changes can be made to the curriculum and what is to be done? Over 20 years ago David Nunan himself noticed how the search for one right method ought to be discarded and that teachers be supported to 'Develop, select or adapt tasks which are appropriate in terms of goals, input, activities, roles and settings, and difficulty' (1987: 2, quoted in Kumaravadivelu 2002). Alterations to a syllabus or task should be made in the best interests of the student, not the teacher.

Indexicality: Once again the determiners in "the student, not the teacher" index either a shared category or a shared set and imply a writer/reader common perspective.

Negative politeness: Alongside the assumed writer-reader common perspective, the agentless passive "Alterations to a syllabus or task should be made" and the impersonal general precept are negative politeness strategies which encode the respect of the writer for the reader.

Explicitness: "Exactly" in "So exactly", "himself" in "David Nunan himself" and "best" in "in the best interests" all invite M-inferences. In addition to being costly, such inferences also prompt the reader to consider whether they are truly intended.

Presupposition: "What changes can be made to the curriculum and what is to be done?" presupposes that changes can be made to the curriculum and that there is something that can be done, again suggesting that writer and reader share a common perspective.

Genitive structures: The N-gen. "the best interests of the student" indexes two distinct concepts rather than the single concept associated with the S-gen. nominal equivalent.

Virtual language: "David Nunan himself noticed how the search for one right method ought to be discarded and that teachers be supported … " appears to blend the default structures *noticed how A ought to be (vb) and (vb)* and *noticed how A ought to be (vb) and that B ought to be (vb).*

Obviously enough, no conclusions can be drawn from such a small amount of data obtained from just three participants, tempting as it is to note how the L1 writer makes significant use of hedges and presupposition as well as sophisticated use of genitive structures, making him in one way a better writer than the L2 writers who also make more use of negative politeness strategies. More importantly, the parallel text method of analysis and the categories discussed may be useful ways of identifying *thinking for writing*, selective schematizations of a pragmatic kind.

5 Teaching academic writing

The literature generally contends that pragmatics is teachable (e.g. Ishihara & Cohen 2010, Roever 2009, Rose 2005, Rose & Kasper 2001). However, the majority of the research involves studies of the learnability of the pragmalinguistic formulas associated with particular speech acts. This paper focuses not on formulaic language of this kind but rather on pragmatic strengthening and indexicality, where explicit teaching seems more problematic. For that reason, it may be useful to identify areas where awareness raising has a role to play, on the assumption that although we cannot teach anyone to be a good writer by providing imitable models, we can help them to think through pragmatic effects as part of the composing process.

In particular, we should draw our students' attention to the role of metapragmatic constraints on interpretation since these reflect the writer's awareness of the indexicality of instances of language use. In doing this, we also help our students to develop higher level editing techniques. Similarly, the use of presupposition also shows how a readership can be indexed and included in a taken-for-granted background world in which a written text is set.

Pragmatic strengthening is another area which poses difficulties for L2 writers, so it is worth spending time considering the default I- and M-inferences associated with different ways of expressing what may appear to naïve writers unfamiliar with the concept of pragmatic strengthening to be merely alternative ways of expressing propositions. As teachers, we should be unhappy with the notion that it's acceptable for an ELF writer to be more explicit than an L1 writer is since, as the *drink alcohol* example shows and as Levinson points out, "the more explicit I try to be, the more unintended implicatures I will generate" (1997: 18).

Similarly, and *contra* the opinion sometimes expressed in ELF circles, articles do matter since they operate as quantifiers over pragmatic domains, either including all the members of a writer/reader shared set (the definite article) or excluding one or more members of such a set (the indefinite article), and hence index propositions in the relevant world of the text.

Even decisions between which of the two genitive structures of English to use give rise to nominal and verbal effects which place writer and reader in different relations to each other. And although both structures may appear to the naïve writer to convey the same proposition, as this paper shows, they invite pragmatic strengthening of a kind which places writer and reader in quite different relations to the text. Once our students become aware of such effects, in some sense at least they cease to be apprentice writers.

6 A provocative conclusion

It seems to me that there is an inherent contradiction in accepting the notion of a speech community in a definition such as "English as a lingua franca is a language of *secondary socialization*, a means of wider communication to conduct transactions outside one's primary social space and speech community" (Seidlhofer 2011: 86) and at the same time rejecting the notion of a variety as a "convenient fiction" (ibid.: 72). To my mind, a speech community is a much more problematic notion than a variety such as academic English, and I doubt that we do our students any favours by treating academic writing as *virtual*. After all, English isn't a pidgin, but rather a systematic linguistic code with taken-for-granted indexical and inferential effects, and for that reason, as well as obvious syntactic and phonological reasons, cannot be adapted willy-nilly.

Endnote

[1] It is interesting to note the parallel between Slobin's concept of the "semanticization of thought" and the relevance theoretic position which also recognizes the limited extent to which "the conceptual repertoire is lexicalised" (Sperber & Wilson 2011: 150).

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