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# Signalling the loopholes and spreading the trampoline: a relevance-theoretic perspective on ELF communication

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**Abstract:** The paper examines English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) communication from a relevance-theoretic perspective. Communication in English as a Lingua Franca is a type of interaction in which multilingual speakers use a variety of linguistic and non-linguistic means to achieve mutual intelligibility and maximum communicative effectiveness. The interaction of the ad hoc and dynamic conditions results in the development of properties that become typical for communicative encounters, where successful communication and mutual intelligibility are the goals. ELF interaction is thus characterized by the presence of properties relating to communicative success and mutual understanding, often making these communicative encounters ‘distinct’. The paper argues, drawing on spontaneous spoken production of Ukrainian, Russian and Polish speakers of English, that ‘distinct’ properties of ELF interactions emerge due to the realization of the Principle of Relevance. If the Principle of Relevance guides speakers in their search for appropriate communicative strategies and means of expression, then this supports the view that communication in English as a Lingua Franca follows the principles of any human communication and contributes to conceptualizing ELF as natural human communication. As non-native speakers of English understand the nature of ELF interactions and its scope, namely participants’ limited communicative resources and mismatches in the common ground, they explicate and simplify their utterances, switch to other languages shared by the hearers, and accommodate to the hearers in terms of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. Doing so, speakers intuitively follow the Cognitive Principle of Relevance and the relevance-theoretic production strategy, allowing their interlocutors to process utterances and make inferences at low costs. The emergence of ELF-specific features, relating to achieving mutual intelligibility and maximum communicative effectiveness, such as the explicitness of proposition, accommodation, paraphrase and translanguaging are explained in terms of explicatures in the areas of free enrichment, reference

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assignment, disambiguation and ad hoc concept construction that contribute to providing a comprehensible input to the hearer. The paper is exploratory in suggesting directions that ELF research could further pursue.

**Keywords:** accommodation; ad hoc concept construction; expicature; (free) enrichment; Relevance Theory; translanguaging

**Аннотация:** В статье рассматривается коммуникация на английском языке как лингва-франка с точки зрения теории релевантности. Коммуникация на английском языке как лингва-франка – это тип взаимодействия, при котором многоязычные носители используют различные языковые и неязыковые средства для достижения взаимной понятности и максимальной коммуникативной эффективности. Взаимодействие спонтанных и динамических условий приводит к развитию свойств, которые становятся типичными для коммуникативных встреч, где целями являются успешная коммуникация и взаимная понятность. Таким образом, данное взаимодействие характеризуется наличием свойств, связанных с коммуникативным успехом и взаимопониманием, что часто делает эти коммуникативные встречи «особенными». В статье утверждается, опираясь на спонтанную устную речь украинских, русских и польских носителей английского языка, что «особенные» свойства взаимодействий в условиях лингва-франка возникают благодаря реализации принципа релевантности. Если принцип релевантности направляет говорящих в поиске соответствующих коммуникативных стратегий и средств выражения, то это подтверждает точку зрения, что общение на английском языке как лингва-франка следует принципам любого человеческого общения и способствует концептуализации английского языка в условиях лингва-франка как естественного человеческого общения. Поскольку люди, не являющиеся носителями английского языка, понимают природу общения в условиях лингва-франка и масштабы, а именно ограниченные коммуникативные ресурсы участников и несовпадения в мировоззрении, они объясняют и упрощают свои высказывания, переключаются на другие языки, которыми владеют слушатели, и приспосабливаются к слушателям с точки зрения лексики, грамматики и произношения. Поступая так, говорящие интуитивно следуют когнитивному принципу релевантности и релевантно-теоретической стратегии производства речи, позволяя своим собеседникам обрабатывать высказывания и делать выводы с низкими затратами. Появление особенностей, связанных с достижением взаимной понятности и максимальной коммуникативной эффективности, таких как ясность высказывания, аккомодация, парафраз и транслингвизм, объясняется с точки зрения экспликатур в областях свободного обогащения, формирования референции,

устранения неоднозначности и построения специальной концепции для данной цели способствуют предоставлению доступных входных данных слушателю. Статья является исследовательской и предлагает направления, в которых исследования английского языка как лингва-франка могли бы развиваться в дальнейшем.

**Ключевые слова:** теория релевантности; экспликатура; (свободное) обогащение; аккомодация; построение концепций; транслингвизм

## 1 Introduction

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) interaction is a communicative encounter that includes native and non-native speakers of English who use English as a common language. Reasons for using English are diverse and range from not sharing the first language with the interlocutor or deciding to use English as it better satisfies the requirements of a particular communicative encounter. Users of ELF are typically at least bilingual and quite often multilingual (see Jenkins [2015] on repositioning ELF within multilingualism). Users of ELF have different first languages, different levels of proficiency that vary from A2 to C2, different language learning histories, different degrees of motivation, and different performance requirements (Kohn 2018).<sup>1</sup> Users of ELF may share some aspects of common ground and culture, and at the same time may have aspects of common ground that are either not shared at all or only partially shared (Grundy 2007; Kecskes 2023; Moeschler 2007). ELF encounters are usually of a very diverse nature. They range from city tours to sales meetings and academic conferences. The common wish to communicate and be on equal footing with the interlocutor as well as a high degree of sensibility towards these communicative challenges motivates users of English to adjust their performance to the varying conditions (Filppula et al. 2017). The emerging English is thus the outcome of the interaction of these dynamic conditions that serves the purpose of a situation, and changes the form in the next encounter provided the conditions change, as well. This new English is not similar to the English of native speakers. It is the English full of creative construction that manifests in the collaborative use of communication strategies, as for example, accommodation to the communicative situation, paraphrase, and translanguaging to name a few. Given the heterogeneity among hearers, speakers find multiple ways of managing their performance and producing an output that is comprehensible to their hearers.

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<sup>1</sup> Performance requirements is a term proposed by Kohn (1990, 2018) to refer to learners' own goals in communication, such as being grammatically correct, fluent, or grammatically correct and fluent.

## 2 Relevance Theory and understanding utterances

Communication involves the interplay between production and comprehension. According to Relevance Theory, the Principle of Relevance (Sperber and Wilson 1995) guides speakers and hearers in producing utterances and recovering them. Relying on *the relevance-theoretic production strategy* (Zegarac 2007) that states that “[g]iven your preferences/goals, choose the least effort-demanding option” (Zegarac 2007: 46), a speaker selects an ostensive stimulus, i.e. an utterance, a gesture or a wink that poses no comprehension difficulties for the hearer. The speaker makes it *clear* and *transparent* to the hearer that he/she wants to communicate a message (Wilson and Sperber 2004). The hearer, in turn, relying on *the relevance-theoretic comprehension strategy* (Carston 2002: 380; Zegarac 2007: 46) draws on the new and old information available about the ostensive stimulus and constructs interpretations in order of accessibility, following a path of least effort and stops when his/her expectation of relevance is satisfied (Wilson and Sperber 2004). As a consequence, the speaker’s *informative*<sup>2</sup> and *communicative*<sup>3</sup> intentions are recognized. In the relevance-theoretic account of meaning negotiation, speakers and hearers are confronted with three levels of interpretation: (i) a logical form that contains logical properties of a conceptual representation, (ii) explication, an ostensively communicated assumption, inferentially developed from a logical form, and (iii) implicature, an ostensively communicated assumption that is derived solely by pragmatic inferences (Sperber and Wilson 1995). In any communicative encounter, the speaker produces a logical form; the hearer supplies missing information and enriches the logical form; on the basis of information supplied, the hearer finally makes inferences and recovers the speaker’s intended meaning. Hearers may supply missing information by the use of one or more explicating processes, such as (i) *reference resolution/reference assignment*, (ii) *enrichment*,<sup>4</sup> (iii) *disambiguation*, and (iv) *ad hoc concept construction* (Carston 2002).

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2 Informative intentions are intentions to inform an audience of something (Sperber and Wilson 1995: 611).

3 Communicative intentions are intentions by which the speaker manifests to the audience an ostensive stimulus that informs the audience of the speaker’s informative intentions (Sperber and Wilson 1995: 611).

4 Within enrichment, Carston differentiates between *free enrichment* and *saturation* (Carston 2002).

*Reference resolution* is a process of assigning an appropriate contextual value to the referential or anaphoric expression. The example below illustrates this:

- (1) *Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do. Once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading.* (Carrol 1993: 17)

In the passage the reader assigns a contextual value ‘Alice’ to the personal pronoun ‘she’ and the possessive pronoun ‘her’.

The explicating process of *enrichment* (Recanati 2004, 2010) involves the conceptual enrichment of a logical form by (i) specifying a lexical item or (ii) adding a specific constituent to the explicature or narrowing down the meaning. See the example below:

- (2) *Down, down, down. There was nothing else to do, so Alice soon began talking again.* (Carrol 1993: 6)

The direction of fit ‘down’ can be enriched by adding ‘down the rabbit hole’, and the proposition ‘there was nothing else to do’ can be modified by ‘there was nothing else that Alice could do while falling down the rabbit hole’. Explicatures supplied by the reader help them to reconstruct the intended meaning and arrive at the understanding of the intended meaning.

By means of *disambiguation* hearers and readers select one sense out of two potential senses. The example in (3) illustrates this:

- (3) *“You see the earth takes twenty-four hours to turn around of its axis”. “Talking of axes”, said the Duchess, “chop off her head!”* (Carrol 1993: 63)

In this conversational exchange, the reader has to resolve the lexical and phonetic ambiguity by choosing the correct meaning of ‘axes’ in the second utterance. Ambiguity initiated in the first utterance is resolved by the reader after reading the phrase ‘chop off the head’.

Finally, a process of *ad hoc concept construction* serves the purpose of the pragmatic adjustment of a lexical concept by narrowing, broadening or weakening the meaning of a lexical item. The example in (4) illustrates this:

- (4) *“I can’t explain myself, I am afraid, sir, because I am not myself, you see”.* (Carrol 1993: 60)

In this passage the reader narrows down the meaning of ‘to explain myself’ and ‘I am not myself’ and concludes that the speaker is confused and led down the garden path. Once the reader has supplied the missing information to the logical form, they may turn to the recovery of implicature.

In monolingual communication, explicatures are supplied by the hearers and readers, as usually there are no substantial differences in the speakers’ and hearers’

language skills, common ground and world knowledge. In multilingual communicative encounters that include non-native speakers, it is likely that the speakers' and hearers' language skills are not matching, some aspects of world knowledge are not shared, and common ground is not always established from the start. This paper proposes that in non-native language communication, the second level of interpretation, i.e. explication, falls within the domain of the speaker, and not the hearer, as it is usually the case in native speaker communication. Uncertain whether the hearer possesses the necessary instruments for utterance comprehension, the speaker, guided by the relevance-theoretic production strategy (Zegarac 2007), provides these instruments to the hearer in the form of explication, and by doing this, facilitates for the hearer the utterance comprehension procedure.

### 3 Empirical data

The study draws on data from the Tübingen Corpus of Eastern European English (TCEEE) collected at the University of Tübingen with an objective to provide a descriptive account of the newly emerging variety of Eastern European English (Salakhyan 2012, 2014). A corpus of 60,000 words includes introspective and spontaneous spoken production data elicited by semi-structured video interviews with Slavic learners of English with first languages Russian, Ukrainian, Polish and Slovak. The Russian and Ukrainian data were collected in Ukraine in 2010–2012, and the Slovak and Polish data were collected in Germany in the same years. The participants' proficiency in English varies from B1 and C1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages classification. The data have now been re-examined in the light of an interplay between the relevance-theoretic account and properties of English as a *Lingua Franca*. Each of the extracts presented below is drawn from this corpus.

### 4 Lingua franca encounters and their properties

As stated before, *lingua franca* encounters are communicative situations in which native and non-native speakers communicate in English, typically because English is shared by all participants. Given that speakers come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and have various English proficiency levels, their communicative behaviour is defined by the intention to understand and be understood. As there is little control of who enters *lingua franca* encounters, it becomes difficult to speak of one homogeneous English, although some features of this type of communication become prominent. In what follows, I will give a brief sketch of features that emerge in ELF communication and processes that contribute to this. One of the most

outstanding features of ELF is clarity and explicitness of the proposition (Cogo and Dewey 2012). To achieve clarity of the proposition, speakers use emphatic reference through the frequent use of phrases, such as ‘*I think*’, ‘*right now*’, ‘*actually*’. The example below demonstrates this (see the appendix for transcription conventions):

- (5) *I think, actually, I am not interesting <break/> in my case, in our case, like for those who are just started to learn English maybe five years ago...* (L1 Ukrainian)

In addition to the use of these markers of emphatic reference, speakers supply their utterances with additional information that makes their input more informative than necessary, achieving through this a high degree of explicitness. In the following example, a Ukrainian speaker of English uses a noun phrase ‘*Post Soviet territory*’, which is immediately followed by another noun phrase ‘*the territory of so-called Soviet Union*’:

- (6) *The hypothesis of my thesis is that in twenty first century Post Soviet territory, the territory of so-called Soviet Union will be included into the into the so called Euro-Atlantic space, because for the west it will be vital important, because in some regions there are <break/>, some regions are rich of mineral resources, for example, oil and gas, and the territory of former Soviet Union is rather secure in comparison with some other regions of for example, in Persian Gulf or <unclear> </unclear>. (L1 Ukrainian)*

Another technique to ensure the explicitness of proposition and the maximization of comprehensibility is reiterating the message through the combination of synonyms. The use of synonyms is not obligatory, and may add little to the overall utterance meaning. See the example below:

- (7) *So, they <break/> to understand, but we had actually, the majority of professors teachers coming from Europe, from Brussels, from Netherlands, from Luxembourg, from Ireland, I already mentioned. (L1 Ukrainian)*

Here, a noun ‘*professors*’ is immediately modified by ‘*teachers*’ that makes the content more explicit to the hearer.

Another salient feature of ELF talk is the use of a pronoun in conjunction with a named subject (Cogo and Dewey 2012). This helps speakers to clarify their message and deliver the most comprehensible output to the hearer. In the following example, the noun ‘*the owners*’ is immediately followed by the pronoun ‘*they*’.

- (8) *I was something like organizing this is business, because the owners, they invited me and one person, one boy, and they said <quote> you will be here one month and after one month we'll <break/> <quote/>, it was one year ago, <quote> we'll decide whom of you we'll <quote/>, something like left. (L1 Ukrainian)*

Apart from maintaining the explicitness of proposition by various means, users of ELF develop other strategies to help them communicate. Such strategies of performance as accommodation, paraphrase, self-correction, awareness raising comments (Faerch and Kasper 1983), and translanguaging (Li 2018) help speakers to manage communication, establish common ground and minimize possible unclarities and communication breakdowns.

Accommodation or entrainment is a process of converging or diverging adaptation of one's own performance in relation to the performance of an interlocutor that occurs at the levels of phonetics (Piazza et al. 2023), lexis (Brennan and Clark 1996), syntax (Reitter et al. 2006), or pragmatics (Weise and Levitan 2018). Interestingly, accommodation is often characterized as “a salient phenomenon in ELF data” (Cogo and Dewey 2012: 110) and “a key to the successful accomplishment of ELF communication” (Cogo 2009: 269). Jenkins (2000) defines accommodation as a “key element in achieving mutual intelligibility”, and suggests that “speakers need to develop the ability to adjust their pronunciation according to the communicative situation in which they find themselves” (Jenkins 2000: 166). Not only do users of English accommodate to the interlocutor, they are also aware of this accommodative behaviour, as the example below illustrates:

- (9) *It is quite natural, you don't even realize it, but when I keep on talking with someone whose English is really low, I tend to speak in a different way, I don't speak long sentences, I choose very simple constructions, I speak very slowly, and I articulate. And when I speak to native speakers after a couple of hours or so, I tend to speed up a little bit.* (L1 Polish)

The following conversational exchange illustrates how speakers accommodate to each other on the basis of the input provided in the course of the exchange. See the example below:

- (10) I: *and at the same time being more or less correct.* (L1 Ukrainian)  
 N: *yes, if you have if you have basic basic knowledges.* (L1 Ukrainian)  
 I: *knowledge.*  
 N: *knowledge, you can do it.*

In this exchange, one of the speakers used the noun ‘*knowledge*’ in the plural. Hearing that the noun ‘*knowledge*’ was used in the singular by the interlocutor, the speaker entrains it, and uses it further in the exchange. This example illustrates that the user of English accommodates their performance in English in relation to the interlocutor, suggesting the hearer-oriented nature of lingua franca communication.

Paraphrase is a strategic process widely observed in ELF interactions (Cogo and Dewey 2012). Speakers may attend to it when their linguistic resources are either limited or cannot be retrieved in due time, or when they notice their interlocutor has



not understood them (Cogo and Dewey 2012). Moreover, as multilingual speakers tend to be sensitive to differences in interlocutors' linguistic competence and mismatches in the common ground, and cooperative in delivering clear messages and avoiding misunderstandings, they can preemptively provide multiple possibilities of the output to the hearer by, for example, replacing or paraphrasing problematic words (Cogo and Dewey 2012; Kaur 2011; Thongphut and Kaur 2024). The exploratory nature of paraphrasing may lead to the creation of new lexical items and expressions as the following example illustrates:

- (11) *Mhm, I started to learn English at the university. It was the second the second subject, if <break/>, the second subject of my profession, and it was in the mhm in the fifth semester.* (L1 Ukrainian)

In (11), the English noun 'minor' has been paraphrased by the English expression 'the second subject of my profession'. As during the interview the speaker was studying at the German university and was exposed to German, it is possible that the German noun 'Nebenfach/Beifach' (Eng.: 'minor') rather than the English word 'minor' was paraphrased by the speaker. Additionally, this allowed the speaker to maintain fluency and avoid a communication breakdown. In the next example (12), we see a paraphrase of the expression 'to gain new knowledge' by 'to catch new knowledge', where the verb 'to catch' meaning 'to get hold of', 'to get into one's possession' is used with reference to 'knowledge'.

- (12) *We have to catch new knowledge, we have to rethink, we have to analyse them, and with such system we are actually not catching that.* (L1 Ukrainian)

Another possibility to maintain fluency is through practices of translanguaging (Baker 2001; Kimura and Canagarajah 2018; Li 2018). Switching back and forth between languages within the same conversation may serve the purpose of (i) illustrating the belonging to a particular speech community and constructing one's own identity (Bou-Franch and Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2019), (ii) filling a lexical gap, (iii) appealing for assistance (Klimpfinger 2010) or (iv) maintaining fluency, to name a few. The example below illustrates how a Ukrainian speaker switches to Ukrainian in the interview conducted in English:

- (13) *I was not like very how to say it very professional interpreter. I was working for, example, like a manager of some firm, and this firm has some international business, and that is why so, I was using my language like interpreter, but actually, I was, for example, manager of inter, how to say <NLU> zovnishne ekonomichne /external economic/ </NLU> trade, it's like, you understand me. (L1 Ukrainian)*

In this passage the speaker discusses the assignments at work and their connection to interpreting and translation. Because of the lexical gap for ‘*external economic*’, the speaker switches to Ukrainian. It is interesting that a speaker signals a switch to the hearer by a meta comment ‘*how to say*’. Translanguaging is completed by the affirmation from the speaker herself, i.e. ‘*you understand me*’ that the switch to another language has been understood by the hearer, taken the hearer’s common ground into account.

Additional or ‘available’ languages are often in competition with the speaker’s L1, and therefore, they offer a favourable ground for translanguaging. This is especially remarkable in the context of function words (De Angelis 2007; Dewaele 1998). This may be explained by the fact that the active language is the speaker’s preferred source of lexical information, as it receives the highest level of activation: “Access to lemmas of languages that have a lower level of activation is partially blocked. The L1 is not necessarily always the dominant active language, and the access to its lemmas could accordingly be limited” (Dewaele 1998: 488). The following example illustrates the use of German in the conversation in English:

- (14) *Yes, of course. Studying law law, it is it is so difficult, <FLG> weil </FLG> every month we bekom we bekom a new rules, new, which are we must know, and I need every day <FLG> schauen </FLG> every day looking for it, and every day studying what is new what is <break>.* (L1 Russian)

In this passage, we observe three instances of translanguaging, one in relation to the subordinating conjunction *weil*, and the other two in relation to the verbs *bekommen* (Eng. ‘to get’), and *schauen* (Eng. ‘to see’).

Another feature of ELF communication that contributes to the explicitness of proposition is the use of self-correction (Kaur 2011). Self-correction is an act of explicitly correcting one’s own utterance either at the level of grammar, lexis or phonetics. Speakers usually self-correct when the produced item or utterance does not satisfy their perception of appropriateness. Two examples (15) and (16), drawn from the spoken performance data of two Ukrainian speakers of English, illustrate this:

- (15) *One year ago, I graduated the Chernivtsi National University, Economical department and now I am working in the company, which handle which is handling whole sales of household appliances.* (L1 Ukrainian)

In this passage, having chosen the present simple to describe a daily task the speaker reconsiders her utterance and reselects the present progressive. The speaker either intends to highlight the fact that the company is involved with this activity at the moment or intends to render the Ukrainian imperfective by the use of the

progressive aspect. In the next example (16), the Ukrainian speaker changes a temporal plane from the present simple to the past simple.

- (16) *We do not, it happens, and actually we do not we did not have actually teacher, good teacher, teacher of English.* (L1 Ukrainian)

Another feature of ELF often observed in ELF interactions is the use of awareness-raising comments (Kaur 2017; Mauranen 2006; Pietikäinen 2018). Awareness-raising comments demonstrate that a speaker is aware of a potential problem or communication breakdown and signals it in order to prevent it. Awareness-raising comments can be manifested either by an overt asking for assistance or using a hedge demonstrating one's uncertainty. The example below illustrates this:

- (17) *I think when I speak with native speakers, I try that my language <break/> maybe I am not using too much different construction with which I am not sure, you know. I'd like to say maybe more more poor, not poor language, but how to say it, more clear. Something like this.* (L1 Ukrainian)

In this example, a Ukrainian speaker uses hedges 'how to say it' and 'something like this'. Doing this, the speaker raises awareness of the hearer and signals that what was said or will be said should be interpreted with caution. The speaker, therefore, attempts to establish a good ground for utterance interpretation.

We have seen above that ELF performance is characterized by the development of such features as explicitness of proposition and the maximization of comprehensibility afforded by the use of certain communicative strategies. By prioritizing the delivery of a comprehensible output users of English accommodate to the interlocutor, paraphrase utterances, 'correct' themselves and switch to additionally available languages. The question that may arise now is whether the emergence of these features is especially prevalent in English as a Lingua Franca communication or whether the production of a comprehensible output is a typical feature of human cognition and language production.

## 5 ELF communication from a relevance-theoretic perspective

In what follows, I suggest considering typical features of ELF communication from a relevance-theoretic perspective. The ELF interactions briefly discussed above entail: (i) explicitness and clarity of the proposition through emphatic reference and the use of synonyms, (ii) strategies of accommodation, paraphrase, practices of

translanguaging and self-correction, and (iii) the use of awareness-raising comments. *The relevance-theoretic production strategy* claims that in delivering their output to the hearers, speakers should choose the least-demanding option (Zegarac 2007). In particular, speakers should choose such linguistic means of expression that will demand little effort and processing cost from the hearer. In a relevance-theoretic account of utterance comprehension, which has conventionally assumed a monolingual bias, three levels of meaning construction can be distinguished. First, a speaker delivers a logical form to the hearer. Next, by means of available explicating processes, the hearer enriches a logical form by adding missing information to facilitate the processing of the utterance. Finally, the hearer constructs possible interpretations of the utterance in order of accessibility, and stops when their expectation of relevance is satisfied (Sperber and Wilson 1995). Should the implicature or another additional meaning be intended, the hearer should ideally succeed in recovering it. Does the utterance comprehension in ELF communication that includes speakers of different first languages, different English learning histories and levels of proficiency, different cultural backgrounds and sometimes mismatching common ground follow the same scheme? Do hearers supply missing information to the speakers' utterances to recover the intended meaning?

Considering the documented properties of ELF communication – the explicitness of proposition, the use of communication strategies and awareness raising comments – it becomes clear that these 'distinct' features of ELF communication are natural properties of human communication. In particular, these features help speakers to maximize relevance of an output to the hearer. The explicitness of proposition, the use of performance strategies, such as accommodation, paraphrase, translanguaging, self-correction and the use of awareness-raising comments are in fact the realization of explicature, and a way of entrainment to the hearer's language proficiency and cultural background. The enrichment of a proposition, i.e. explicature, supplied by the hearer in monolingual communication, is supplied by the speaker in ELF communication.

In what follows, I consider a number of excerpts from the spoken performance of Slavic speakers of English, which demonstrate that explicitness of proposition, immensely fostered in ELF communication, is achieved through different areas of explicature. The next passage illustrates how reference resolution is used to enrich a conceptual representation.

- (18) *Okay I work with German teachers and English teachers, and the English of my colleagues who teach English is excellent, and our English, so the English of us, German teacher, Italian teacher is not so bad, not so good.* (L1 Polish)

In this passage, the speaker assigns reference to the pronoun ‘us’ by providing the following explicatures ‘*German teacher*’, ‘*Italian teacher*’. The speaker appears to be concerned about the meaningful delivery of the message and attempts to provide contextual cues that may facilitate utterance comprehension. Similarly, in the next example a chain of referring expressions ensures the flow of speech and helps to maintain comprehensibility. See the passage below:

- (19) *I can divide all persons who speak English in two like in two parts. First part it is people, who know English, who know English very well, but their pronunciation and their <break/> the way they speak is like <break/>, it's very traditional and you can definitely see that this person is from like USSR, this is Russian or Ukrainian school in language skills. So, it's easy to hear this kind of language.* (L1 Ukrainian)

A chain of referring expressions including nouns like ‘*persons*’, ‘*people*’, ‘*this person*’, and personal pronouns like ‘*they*’, and the possessive pronoun ‘*their*’ allow the hearer to recover what is being talked about in the passage. The next piece of data from the performance of a Ukrainian speaker illustrates how the speaker constructs the message, and explicating it in the area of free enrichment delivers a comprehensible output for the listener:

- (20) *If you are at the exam, I think, it's very important to be correct, I think so. But exams, they have some stricts, some borders, there definite numbers of assignments, you know that you have for example, thirty English texts, some grammar assignment and after that free talk in English on definite topic, I think. And I think that it is possible to prepare for exam and to pass it, pass it successfully, I think so.* (L1 Ukrainian)

Here, the speaker uses a newly coined expression ‘*exams have some stricts*’. A chain of explicitness triggers that immediately follow suggest that a speaker may not be fully convinced about the appropriateness of the newly coined expression. To avoid a potential misunderstanding on the part of the hearer, the speaker uses a chain of synonyms, i.e. ‘*borders*’, ‘*definite numbers of assignments*’, to clarify the message. Thus, explicature in the area of free enrichment allows the speaker to deliver the most comprehensible output to the hearer.

In the same passage (20), there is another explicitness trigger ‘*to pass it successfully*’ that modifies the verb ‘*to pass*’. By modifying the verb, the speaker intends to clarify to the hearer that verb ‘*to pass*’ does not presuppose ‘*with success*’. The adverb added, therefore, explicates how exactly the exam should be passed. Another example that demonstrates the speaker’s wish to make an appropriate and clear contribution to the discussion is given below:

- (21) *Now I am working as a manager of accounting in net of household appliances, trading company Foxtrot, and my daily duties include such duties as work with different goods: acception of these goods and distribution them among our department stores. After that the control under our sales and also I control the money, control money which we accept from our customers, and then pay them to our Kiev control office. (L1 Ukrainian)*

Here, using the noun ‘money’, the speaker modified it by adding the noun phrase ‘money, which we accept from our customers’. Previous two passages have demonstrated that speakers aim at clarifying the intended meaning and making the proposition more explicit. In cases above, the explicitness of proposition and enrichment of a logical form were maintained by the explicating process of free enrichment, in particular by (i) adding specific details of the event, and (ii) modifying nouns.

Another possibility to deliver the most comprehensible input to ensure the explicitness of the message is through the disambiguation of one’s own utterance. In monolingual communication, the explicating process of disambiguation is often executed by the hearer. In ELF communication, this task appears to fall within the competence of the speaker, considering *the relevance-theoretic production strategy*. The example below illustrates how the speaker solves created ambiguity:

- (22) *It was not actually idea, it was, I had to do that, because, firstly, I went to the evening department, where we had lowest lowest com comp competition I can say, lowest, the people who didn’t have enough marks to go to the morning department were welcome to go to the evening department, when mark is higher than some, but they decided average mark, and eh I went there eh for <break/> to study for person who planning eh social socialism economy but after one year, I had a baby, and I had two chances to go to international department, which was new. (L1 Russian)*

In this passage, a native speaker of Russian describes two forms of education, well-known in the Soviet and Post-Soviet space. The forms of education described by the speaker as ‘*the evening department*’, and ‘*the morning department*’ are two instances of lexical transfer from the first language Russian. ‘*The morning department*’ is a form of education taken in the morning by full-time students, and ‘*the evening department*’ is a form of education taken by the part-time students in the evening. Aware that these region-specific forms of education together with their newly coined names may be unknown to the hearer due to the lack of common ground, and therefore, likely to cause misunderstanding, the speaker explains to her best knowledge the difference between these two forms of education. The mention of the study programmes is immediately followed by the description of the admission requirements for a particular study programme. The speaker, thus, clarifies the proposition by disambiguating her own utterance.

The explicitness of proposition may also be achieved by pragmatic adjustment of a lexical concept, captured by the explicating processes of an ad hoc concept construction. In the following passage, the speaker refers to himself as ‘an active boy’ and immediately clarifies it:

- (23) *I can only say that when I studied at school, one of the Chernivtsi schools, I've I've, I was ery <break/> how do you say active boy, I mean, I often had some problems with teachers, mostly concerning history, because when I studied at school it was just was the time when Ukraine got its independent, so you know, it was very romantic, it was maybe such an independent movement, so I was re-patriot, that is why I had argued argued with teachers from my school, who were communists in the ideological thinking. (L1 Ukrainian)*

To clarify which areas of personality, life style and school life interact with an adjective ‘active’, the speaker provides a description of the area at which he had been active in school. The noun phrase ‘an active boy’, is followed by a clause ‘I often had some problems, I often had some problems with teachers, mostly concerning history’. By adding this clause, the speaker conveys to the hearer that the adjective ‘active’ is used in the sense of ‘involved’ or ‘standing in opposition to the teachers’ rather than ‘being fast’, and ‘having the power to act’. The hearer, in turn, constructs an interpretation of a noun phrase ‘an active boy’, based on the description provided. The explicating process of ad hoc concept construction performed by the speaker helps the hearer to construct an appropriate interpretation.

Above, we have seen that explicitness of communication, often attributed to ELF communication, is manifested in the explicatures supplied by the speaker in the areas of reference resolution, free enrichment and ad hoc concept construction. Explicatures help the speaker to provide a comprehensible output and help the hearer to process this as meaningful input.

Similarly, communicative strategies, such as accommodation, paraphrase, translanguaging and self-correction that are often attributed to ELF communication are also realizations of explicatures within different areas.

The following conversational exchange (24) demonstrates how a conversational partner accommodates to the interlocutor by using lexical items introduced earlier in the exchange.

- (24) I: *And when you see the person for the first time, can you judge his or her English, and what do you base your judgment on? (L1 Ukrainian)*  
 T: *What do you mean judge English? She knows English? (L1 Ukrainian)*  
 I: *How he or she knows English, and whether he or she speaks good English, proper English.*

The chunk used by the Speaker T in the question is picked by the Speaker I and, in addition to repeating the chunk, the speaker explicates it by assigning reference ‘*he*’ or ‘*she*’ to the personal pronoun ‘*she*’, used by the Speaker T. The entrained chunk, initially explicated by reference assignment is additionally narrowed down by the ad hoc concept construction of ‘*to know English*’ meaning ‘*to speak good English, proper English*’. The entrained question ‘*she knows English*’ is thus enriched through reference assignment and ad hoc concept construction performed by the speaker.

A strategy of paraphrase is often used by non-native speakers to help them execute their plan and convey their message to the hearer when appropriate vocabulary may not be retrieved. In the following two passages (25) and (26), we observe a number of collocations with the verb ‘*to catch*’, i.e. ‘*to catch someone’s English*’, and ‘*to catch world*’:

- (25) *That was actually time when I had to catch my English, I have to improve, actually.* (L1 Russian)

In this passage, the speaker uses the phrase ‘*to catch my English*’, and, immediately after clarifies her point by saying ‘*I have to improve*’. This again demonstrates that a speaker, guided by the relevance-theoretic production strategy, aims at delivering the most comprehensible output to the hearer. In a monolingual communication, explicatures in the area of free enrichment tend to be supplied by the hearer. In the following excerpt, the explicature ‘*to improve*’ precedes the newly created paraphrase ‘*to catch world*’ and, therefore, it preemptively disambiguates and explicates it.

- (26) *But times changed and it’s not at all Soviet Union, and we have to improve, and we should not live with that glory of past we have to catch world.* (L1 Ukrainian)

In the following example, a Russian native speaker paraphrases, perhaps as she cannot retrieve the noun ‘*accent*’:

- (27) *I have one native speaker in my class. She comes from Canada, and she has very specific pronounce, way of pronouncing words. And in the beginning it was very difficult for me to understand her, like I couldn’t understand any word, any.* (L1 Russian)

Using a paraphrase ‘*a very specific pronounce*’, and aware that the newly created chunk may not be appropriate and may cause misunderstanding, the speaker explains her paraphrase by providing additional information and clarification as ‘*way of pronouncing words*’. Explicature in the area of free enrichment makes it clear to the hearer what is meant by the phrase ‘*a very specific pronounce*’.

As previously documented in literature and illustrated with examples above, users of ELF draw on various linguistic resources available to them to ensure



interlocutors can comprehend the intended meaning (Cogo and Dewey 2012). Switching to a common language may suffice, when there is indeed a ‘common’ language. In scenarios where English is the only common language, practices of translanguaging may be followed by paraphrase and repair, including repetition and lexical replacement to ensure the meaning is understood (Batziakas 2016; Cogo and Dewey 2012). However, speakers do not only switch because of their linguistic need; they may switch to other languages ‘available’ to them due to sociocultural and identification related motives (Cogo and Dewey 2012; Li 2018). One of the possible explanations for the practice of translanguaging is that communicating in a non-native language, the speaker, guided by the relevance-theoretic production strategy, intends to deliver the most comprehensible output to the hearer. In the following example the speaker switches to Ukrainian, the language shared by the interlocutor. See below:

- (28) *I was travelling to Pakistan and <NLU>Арабські Емірати/Arabski Emiraty, Dubai</NLU>. (L1 Ukrainian)*

In (28) a Ukrainian speaker uses a Ukrainian name ‘Арабські Емірати/Arabski Emiraty’ for the United Arab Emirates. The reason for switching to Ukrainian, however, remains unclear, as the speaker either had a linguistic need or was guided by some sociocultural and identification-related motives, i.e. saying the country name in Ukrainian. She subsequently enriches the utterance, by adding the name of the emirate ‘Dubai’, hence, enriching the propositional content by free enrichment.

In the following example, the speaker intentionally switches to German to convey to the hearer the name of the institution in the most accessible way. This linguistic behaviour appears to be in line with the relevance-theoretic production strategy:

- (29) *The centre is called <FLG>Angewandte Geowissenschaften</FLG> so Applied Geosciences, and mostly it's Geology, but applied sciences in the concept of geology and environment as well. (L1 Russian)*

The English translation follows the German name of the department so that the hearer receives a comprehensible input. This is achieved by free enrichment, as well. Unlike in example (29), where the English translation immediately follows the German translation, in the next piece of data (30), the English translation is replaced by additional information about the venue of the event.

- (30) S: *It was Erasmus, Erasmus scholarship, so I had to come here, and before I came I've heard that Tübingen is called German Oxford or German Cambridge something like this, because of this <FLG> Stoherkahnfest</FLG>. (L1 Ukrainian)*

I: *punting*. (L1 Ukrainian)

S: *That takes every year here, that take place every year here, so I came to Tübingen one year ago, and at the beginning, and still is the city is too little for me, but I've used to, I used to I used to Tübingen, yeah.*

On the assumption that common ground is shared, and the hearer is able to understand the German noun '*Stoherkahnfest*' used for the '*the punting festival*', the Speaker S does not attend to the translation provided by Speaker I and continues speaking to provide more details to the event.

The examples above have illustrated that instances of translanguaging in ELF communication are often accompanied by contextual enrichments to the proposition either preceding or following language switch. This again suggests that the speaker's behaviour follows the relevance-theoretic production strategy and takes account of the speaker's common ground.

Self-correction as strategy is common in ELF communication. This can indicate that: (a) a speaker wants to be 'correct' because of their perceived requirement for correctness, i.e. self-perception (Kohn 1990) and (b) a speaker wants to deliver the most comprehensible output to the hearer, in order to be understood. In the following data sample, the speaker changes the present temporal plane to the past temporal plane:

(31) *Ah, when I come here, when I came here I am, had problems a little bit maybe because I was not used to it, and then with time, it started to be easier.* (L1 Russian)

Realizing the mismatch between the time of utterance and the time of the situation (Klein and Li 2009), the speaker reselects the tense and anchors the event into the past. By correcting the initial output, the speaker avoids ambiguity and makes this output easier for the hearer to process, i.e. preventing the hearer from putting additional efforts to test hypotheses about the time of the situation. Disambiguation in the sense of tense reselection from '*when I come here*', '*to when I came here*', is a step done by the hearer to provide comfortable grounds for building up further communication.

Self-correction in connection with the use of articles problematic for Slavic speakers is illustrated below:

(32) *And after year, I decided I should go to study that at the college, at an college, in English college so, I had to go to go to study at the college.* (L1 Ukrainian)

The speaker is struggling with finding the most appropriate article that gives rise to the following self-correction chain: (i) ‘*at the college*’, (ii) ‘*at an college*’, (iii) ‘*in English college*’, (iv) ‘*at the college*’, changing the definite article into the indefinite, then into the zero article, and, finally, returning to the article initially used. By correcting their own utterance, the speaker intends to meet their own requirements of perceived correctness and appropriateness and deliver the comprehensible input to the hearer.

Awareness-raising comments are used by the speakers to prepare the ground for clarification. In line with the relevance-theoretic production strategy, the speaker makes their interlocutor aware that what has been said or will be said may deviate from Standard English and the hearer’s expectations. The example below illustrates this:

- (33) *I have a couple of courses for the students of Political Science department and for the students of department College of Economics and College of Law, but for the students of College of Law and Economics, I only have one course, it’s political politology or there is no word like that in English. We say <NLU>нолітологія/politologiya</NLU>. (L1 Ukrainian)*

In this passage, through the process of morphological modification, adding the noun-forming suffix ‘*ology*’, the speaker creates a new word to refer to ‘*the political science*’, aware that the subject name ‘*politology*’ is not a viable English name for the subject. The speaker explicitly states this by ‘*there is no word like that in English*’, and provides the Ukrainian translation to reinforce her lexical choice.

By using awareness-raising comments speakers make their hearers aware that the new input may in some way be novel or idiosyncratic. This may in turn minimize misunderstandings. The explicitness of communication, often regarded as a prominent feature of ELF interactions, appears to be realization of explicatures within the following areas: (i) reference resolution, (ii) (free) enrichment by adding specific constituents to the utterance or specifying a verb, (iii) disambiguation of a particular lexical item or event, (iv) ad hoc concept construction, i.e. pragmatic adjustment of a lexical concept. Where the use of ELF strategies is concerned, these, in the same way, are ways of contextual enrichment. Strategies of entrainment/accommodation and paraphrase so often used by the non-native users of English in multicultural settings are often explicatures in the areas of (free) enrichment. Translanguaging when exploited by the speaker is either followed by an additional explanation or translation to other languages, known by the hearer, or left unchanged, provided the hearer and speaker share the common ground. In the latter case, the speaker may provide more details to the concept discussed. By supplying additional information to the utterance, the speaker makes their utterance clearer to the hearer and easier to process; thus, making their communicative and informative intentions evident

and more transparent for the hearer. The strategy of self-correction is often a way of preventing ambiguity and providing an easily accessible output to the hearer. The awareness-raising comments, finally, demonstrate that speakers of English are aware of challenges of ELF communication and are ready to face them by signalling possible loopholes to the hearer.

## 6 Conclusions

In this paper, I have tried to show by applying a relevance-theoretic account of cognition and communication to the analysis of ELF interactions that properties and features of ELF communication, such as explicitness and clarity of the proposition are indeed natural phenomena in human interaction, as the delivery of a comprehensible output is geared by human cognition. The recurrent additional explicitness of the proposition in ELF interactions is the speaker's willingness and intention to communicate effectively and a way of accommodating to the hearer's linguistic abilities and skills, world knowledge and common ground. Exploring the ELF data, it is possible to observe the following. First, the speaker is aware of the hearer's linguistic abilities and a possible mismatch in cognitive environments. Second, the speaker formulates utterances and adjusts their utterances, taking the hearer's linguistic abilities, common ground, world knowledge into account. By contextually enriching their own utterances – *accommodating* to the interlocutor, *paraphrasing* the initially planned utterance relying on the lexical choices the speaker shares with the hearer, *switching* to other languages, shared by the interlocutors, and *correcting* oneself, the speaker fleshes out *explicatures* for the hearer to facilitate comprehension. The different linguistic profiles of speakers and hearers, loopholes in the common ground and cultural differences are the reasons for this adaptive linguistic behaviour.

It thus appears that processes attributed to ELF communication may be accounted for by the Principle of Relevance and the relevance-theoretic production strategy. If Relevance Theory and the Principle of Relevance can account for the emerging processes in ELF communication, then this offers additional evidence for conceptualizing ELF as interactional encounters in which natural strategies of human communication are commonplace and may be enhanced due to the speakers' multilingual and intercultural diversity (Mauranen 2018; Seidlhofer 2009; Widdowson 2018). 'Distinct' properties of ELF, emerging due to the search for the most appropriate output for the maximization of communicative effectiveness and mutual intelligibility, appear to be grounded in human cognition. Relevance Theory thus seems to be helpful in accounting for the emergence of ELF features and processes, and in

understanding the role of the speaker in the co-construction and negotiation of meaning.

What may be interesting to investigate in further work is how Relevance Theory can explain literal creativity in ELF communication and how the relevance-theoretic production strategy can explain the creation of metaphors and idiomatic expressions in ELF (Pitzl 2018) communicative encounters.

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## Appendix: Transcription conventions

<break/>	short pause (unmeasured)
<unclear>	unintelligible passage
<quote>	reported speech
<u>underlining</u>	used to highlight parts of the transcript discussed in the text
<NLU>	native/first language Ukrainian
<FLG>	foreign language German
L1	first language

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