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35 Why should we combine different communication strategies?

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Globalisation increases the frequency of contact with linguistic diversity, making multilingual and transnational communication strategies more relevant. One of these transnational communication strategies involves lingua franca communication. A lingua franca (LF) is a bridge language used by interlocutors for communicative purposes; traditionally, a lingua franca is the native language of none of the interlocutors. Many commentators observe that English is on the rise as a global lingua franca. However, this raises two types of problems:

- if the spread concerns a standard variant of English, we may be facing a case of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 2006) with detrimental effects on linguistic justice;
- if, on the contrary, we view this process as the dissemination of something radically *different* from English (something often referred to, by its proponents, as *English as a lingua franca* (ELF); see for example Hülmbauer, 2011), other types of problems arise. In the literature, *English as a lingua franca* is, indeed, sometimes used to refer to English as spoken by non-native speakers, and departing from the morphological and lexical features of standard English. ELF advocates claim that these non-standard characteristics should be accepted and that this would democratise international communication and strip English of its potentially imperialistic character. Such a view, however, does not adequately address concerns over the long-terms effects of its spread for linguistic diversity and linguistic justice (Gazzola and Grin, 2013).

If English is to be used, then, it must be part of a broader strategy.

What does research tell us?

Using English as a global language has ambivalent effects on mobility and inclusion (Gazzola & Grin, 2013). It is used effectively only by the higher echelons of society that have received an education allowing them to develop competence approximating native-speaker norm. In general, however, this is not accessible for the lower echelons of society, as shown by the *Adult Language and Literacy Survey* with almost 200,000 respondents (Gazzola, 2016). Conversely, promoting (possibly under the label of *English as a lingua franca*) several, non-standard or even idiosyncratic variants of English may hamper inclusion in global or local communities. Therefore, the use of a lingua franca (whether English or any other) should be combined with other multilingual or transnational communicative strategies.

Illustration and evidence

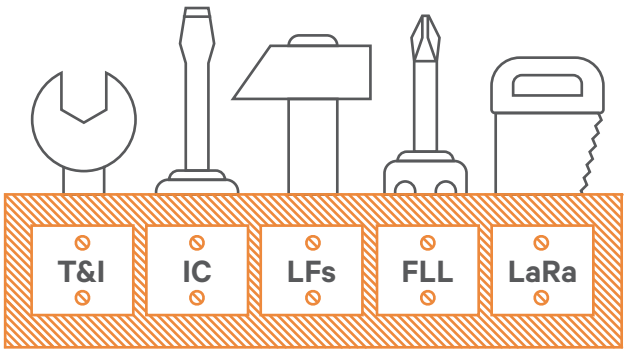
These other strategies include the following.

1. Using several languages of wider communication as alternatives to English or "ELF". Since languages with an ethnic base give rise, even to a lesser extent, to problems similar to those sketched above for English, the contribution of planned languages (e.g. Esperanto) (or even, in some contexts, of ancient languages such as Latin) should not be neglected.
2. Developing reciprocal *receptive* but not *productive* skills in the interlocutor's language. This strategy is known as *lingua receptiva* (LaRa). *Intercomprehension* (IC) can be seen as one form of the *lingua receptiva* strategy focusing on languages closely related to one's native language; it operates within language families such as Slavic, Germanic, or Romance languages.

3. Other strategies like translation and interpreting (T&I) are also part of the *toolkit* of communication strategies that can be used to favour mobility and inclusion in international communication. All of these communication strategies can be facilitated by ICT, such as machine translation.
4. Finally, people who need to engage in in-depth, sustained communication with people speaking another language will generally find that learning that language, though potentially costly in time and effort, remains an irreplaceable strategy, i.e. the strategy of *Foreign language learning* (FLL).

Policy implications

The challenges of communicating should be approached in the spirit of a 'Toolkit' for multilingual and transnational communication (Jørgensen 2011). Although English is an indisputably relevant tool in the kit, it is not the only one. The Toolkit can include all the other strategies just listed, with an emphasis on the mutual complementarity between them.



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