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# Editorial: Transactional and transnational contact within World Englishes: the Gulf region and beyond

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## Editorial on the Research Topic

[Transactional and transnational contact within World Englishes: the Gulf region and beyond](#)

## Introduction

Among the more visible aspects of globalization is the increased mobility of labor. Such migrations, whether permanent or transitory, have linguistic consequences, which have helped cement the role of English as a global lingua franca (Mauranen, 2019). Of particular interest are the interactions between different (post-colonial) varieties of English and the role of English within local multilingual ecologies in language-contact scenarios worldwide. The spaces and contexts within which such language contact occurs are plentiful and spread around the globe (Siemund and Leimgruber, 2021; Siemund et al., 2025).

This Research Topic zooms in on specific and characteristic contexts of transactional and transnational contact of World Englishes. One such area is the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where Arabic is the official language, but English plays an important role in day-to-day interactions and represents the de facto lingua franca (Al-Issa, 2021; Zogbhor, 2023). In the Gulf region, a high influx of skilled labor from a range of language backgrounds (Sadek, 2020) has given rise to a melting pot of different forms of English (Siemund, 2023), resulting in speakers of different World Englishes (e.g., Indian English, Sri Lankan English, Pakistani English, and American English) being in contact with speakers of English as a second and foreign language. Beyond the Gulf area, this Research Topic also includes two multilingual European settings (Belgium & Croatia) characterized by language contact, although for different mobility reasons. By investigating transactional and transnational contact situations from a sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic perspective within emerging local multilingualism, we can get a better understanding of language contact phenomena within the World Englishes paradigm and its impact on the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF). Such insights will additionally allow for implications for its speakers as well as policymakers.

The six studies are located within multilingual contexts where ELF is in contact with numerous languages, including different varieties of English. They highlight the complexities of navigating language usage within multilingual contexts with the dominating presence of English as the global lingua franca.

## Overview of studies

[Al-Issa and Sulieman](#) explore automated teller machine (ATM) transactions in the UAE and assess the users' choice between Arabic and English. Through post-use, in-person questionnaires collected in Dubai, the authors investigate which language was selected, the motivations for this choice, and how the respondents' social backgrounds shape their decision. They find that non-Arabs prefer English, irrespective of their length of residence in the UAE or proficiency level of English, whereas Arabs use Arabic more frequently. Moreover, Emirati citizens less often select Arabic, compared to other Arab speakers. Overall, their study shows that English continues to play a prominent role in the UAE's linguistic landscape, but that Arabic is also frequently selected by citizens with an Arabic background.

The contribution by [Gallagher](#) employs narrative inquiry to get detailed insights into the acquisition of English, its role and importance in people's private and professional lives, alongside other languages. The study is based in the tourism industry in the UAE and builds on three participants characterized as multilingual, transnationally mobile managers who do not hold permanent residency rights in the UAE. The interviews reveal that English is an essential and useful instrument, which ensures upward mobility. Nevertheless, multilingualism is part of their identities, meaning that the other languages available to the participants remain to be used in different parts of their lives. These findings have current relevance for comparable contexts of temporary employment in the Gulf area and beyond.

[Lanteigne and Najafi](#) explore the use of English as a lingua franca in the UAE via spoken (utterances) and written (public signs) transactional English communication. Geosemiotic and linguistic analyses are employed to contextualize the information transmitted in the utterances and public signs. The authors find that both spoken and written communication rely on prior communication or additional visuals. Moreover, given the linguistically and culturally heterogeneous context, hearers and readers tend to rely on contextual knowledge to select the semantically appropriate meaning. In addition, the public signs are generally considered more explicit, arguably due to their planned and possible revised nature.

[Parra-Guinaldo](#) employs a corpus of first-year university students' writing in the UAE. This qualitative study provides a rich description of morphosyntactic features of ELF use, such as varied uses of tenses, prepositions, and determiners. Some of the identified features support previous findings in other ELF contexts. Others, however, appear to be novel and particular to the Middle East and North Africa region. Therefore, the author concludes his study with a careful claim that there is evidence of a new, emerging variety of ELF within the Gulf area which could be called Gulf English.

The study by [De Malsche et al.](#) analyzes English as a business lingua franca interactions within a small yet multilingual and global company located in Belgium, focusing on video-taped performance appraisal interviews of locally based employees and sales agents all around the world. The lack of a shared first language (Dutch vs. non-Dutch) results in three different multilingual strategies: English language use, receptive multilingualism, and the use of a lay interpreter. English is used in all interviews, albeit to differing degrees, demonstrating the global presence and function of English. Overall, they find that the general language management strategy's aim for the future is to implement English as a common company language for communication among local and global employees.

Finally, [Vida-Mannl](#) considers tourism interactions in Croatia and investigates the pragmatic strategies employed between international tourists and local employees. Recordings of English conversations held at the Visitor Center at the airport in Zagreb form the basis of the analysis. She identifies pragmatic strategies, e.g., discourse, solidarity, and hesitation markers, that had previously been described to be features of ELF conversations. More specifically, she finds a usage cline of pragmatic features within conversations asking for directions to the city center. In conclusion, the local employees show variable uses of pragmatic markers, signaling their linguistic sensitivity to the varying levels of proficiency of the tourists.

## Author contributions

EL: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. JL: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. MV-M: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

## Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared that this work was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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