

ICC Task 3: ELF (English as a Lingua Franca)

ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) is now widely recognized as a variety of English, used in communicative contexts by speakers who have different first languages. Speakers exploit and adapt the English language in different ways to suit communicative needs, and this often leads to the use of non-standard forms. Understandably, this Task also relates to PTCL.

Jenkins (2009) lists some commonly used ELF lexis and grammar features in an online resource (http://www.jacet.org/2008convention/JACET2008_keynote_jenkins.pdf). A few of these are shown below, together with some questions for you to consider – from the perspectives of both English user and teacher of English.

- A shift towards common meanings of false friends, e.g., “actually” (meaning “in fact” in BrE) being used to mean “currently” in ELF
- Novel use of morphemes, e.g., “angriness,” “touristic,” “importancy,” “smoothfully”
- The use of invariant question tags, e.g., “isn’t it?” at the end of a sentence to confirm or emphasise what is being said
- A shift in preposition use, e.g., “discuss about” instead of the standard without a preposition
- The transformation of uncountable nouns to countable, e.g., “informations,” “advices,” “staffs,” etc.

Individual reflection

1. Do you recognize any of these features in your own use of English?
2. Would you consider these features errors or skilful use of linguistic resources?
3. Which, if any, would you correct, if used by your learners?

