



universität
wien

DIPLOMARBEIT

Titel der Diplomarbeit

“English as a lingua franca between couples:
Motivations and limitations”

Verfasser

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angestrebter akademischer Grad

Magistra der Philosophie (Mag. Phil)

Wien, 2010

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt:

A 343

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt:

Anglistik und Amerikanistik

Betreuerin / Betreuer:

Univ. Prof. Dr. Barbara Seidlhofer

To
My mom and dad,
With love and gratitude

Words, like Nature, half reveal. And half conceal the Soul within.
~Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "Im memoriam A.H.H.," 1850

Acknowledgements

First of all I want to express my wholehearted thanks to my supervisor Prof. Barbara Seidlhofer for her patience, her competence and her encouragement in every respect. It was her who introduced me to and got me excited about the topic. Her devotion to and enthusiasm for ELF is absolutely contagious. I not only really appreciate her professional skills as an exemplary researcher and professor, but also her personal qualities as a guide and friend who listened to and supported me at any time.

I also want to thank Prof. Smit and Prof. Dalton-Puffer as well as my study colleagues from the 'DiplomandInnen Seminar' for their valuable input and advice; especially for sharing their fears and experiences with me.

Moreover, I sincerely want to express my gratitude to the ten participants of this study for their cooperation and willingness to share their innermost thoughts and feelings with me. Without them, this study would not have been possible.

Of course I must mention my friends; to whom I could not only talk when I was desperate and worried, but also distracted me whenever I needed. They were responsible for the fun and relaxed breaks I had while writing my thesis.

I am also indebted to my Australian and American friends who were so altruistically willing to proofread my thesis. I would especially like to thank Eli Dean for his devotion and unrelenting enthusiasm. Nothing I can write here could express my gratitude for what he has done for me.

And last but not least, I sincerely and with all my heart want to thank my whole family, who has supported me in every conceivable way. They made all my dreams come true. Special thanks goes to my parents, for whom I cannot even find the words to describe how much they have done for me and how much they mean to me.

THANK YOU ALL!!!

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Abstract

This thesis sets out to contribute to the interesting research area of English as a lingua franca (ELF), and aims to explore a field which has not been dealt with before. During recent decades, the use of ELF as the principal language of business, science and academia has been well observed. However, very little research has been done concerning the interesting development of ELF as the primary means of communication in interpersonal relationships.

This thesis stresses the growing importance of ELF as ‘the private lingua franca’ and it will focus on ELF as used for personal purposes. One of the most intimate uses of English is as a means of communication for couples. The major objective of this thesis is to investigate ELF as the language of couples. It rests on a qualitative study of five couples who use ELF as the language of their relationship, drawing on the data of interviews in which the participants exchanged perceptions of their language choice and how it affected their relationships. The findings provide insight into the couples’ motivations for choosing ELF, and raise other interesting issues like the extent to which ELF is an adequate means of expressing emotion and how far it might serve as a family language. These issues in turn raise questions about the possible limitations as well as the advantages and disadvantages of ELF.

The theoretical background of this thesis is provided by an overview of already existing ELF research. It concentrates on [ELF] language attitudes, and on [ELF] language choice and awareness. Furthermore, certain features of the language of couples in general are outlined. But more specifically, the theoretical part of the study delves into the matter of multilingual couple talk. Particular focus lies on multilinguals and their language choice when expressing emotions. The practical part of the thesis presents the results of a detailed analysis of the five interviews. The issues and points made are clarified by a description of the results and exemplified through extracts from the data. In a resume and discussion at the end, conclusions are drawn which are based on assumptions from the theoretical background.

List of abbreviations

EIL.....	English as an international language
ELF.....	English as a lingua franca
ELT.....	English language teaching
ENL.....	English as a native language
L1.....	First language (mother tongue)
L2.....	Second Language
LX.....	any language other than L1
NS(s).....	Native speaker(s)
NNS(s).....	Non-Native speaker(s)
SLA.....	Second language acquisition
I.....	Interviewer
I1, I2, I3, I4, I5.....	Interview 1-5
C1, C2, C3, C4, C5.....	Couple 1-5
S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10.....	Speaker 1-10

No one means all he says, and yet very few say all they mean, for words are slippery and thought is viscous. ~Henry Brooks Adams, The Education of Henry Adams, 1907

1. INTRODUCTION

As the world has rapidly turned into a global village, this has not only affected society at large, but has also shaped individuals and the way interpersonal relations are built. During the last seven years I have travelled all around the globe, met a diverse range of people and built all kinds of multilingual and multicultural relationships. I found great friends along the way and had many interesting and intense conversations. We laughed together, argued with each other, and expressed our happiness, sadness or any other emotional state. None of this could have happened without English. In the first place I would not have met these people and developed a friendship with them. Nor could I have experienced these relationships as intensely as I did when using and communicating in English. The fact that English has become the world language and that English as a lingua franca (ELF) is increasingly used for the diverse range of purposes has enabled experiences and opened doors for me and everybody else which otherwise would have been closed.

Despite the fact that ELF is the leading language of technological, scientific, and economic (etc.) developments and used as the language of communication in a plethora of other fields and interactions around the world, ELF is also most essential for the speakers' private lives. I have experienced it myself when ELF served me as a means of communication in very personal and intimate moments. The most private and intimate moments that can be shared are those experienced with a partner in a romantic relationship. The number of multilingual couples is rising and the use of ELF in romantic relationships is increasing. Yet, research into ELF as the private lingua franca has been neglected so far.

This thesis sets out to fill that gap. It is based on a qualitative study of five couples who use ELF as the language of their relationship, drawing on the data of interviews in which the participants exchanged perceptions of their language choice and how it affected their relationships. The findings provide insight into the couples' motivations for choosing ELF, and raise other interesting issues like the extent to which ELF is an adequate means of expressing emotion and how far it might serve as a family language. These issues in turn raise questions about the possible limitations as well as the advantages of ELF.

The thesis starts off by providing an overview of the topic *English as a lingua franca*. At first, some general terms are defined and explained; after which, the already existing linguistic research on ELF talk will be introduced. Chapter 2 continues with language attitudes and in this sense looks in particular at attitudes towards ELF and with what prejudices ELF is beset. Then, the issue of ELF as the private lingua franca is dealt with to a greater extent. This chapter concludes with providing information about ELF language choice and awareness and goes into detail about the choice of ELF as the language of couples and as a family language.

A theoretical background to the language of couples is given in chapter 3. At first there is an overall outline of the importance of language for relationships and then some characteristics of couple talk are presented. This chapter then deals with bilingual and multilingual couple talk in greater detail. After mentioning the already existing research in this field, the thesis probes into the matter of expressing emotions in various languages. Special focus is put on expressing love, anger and humor in multilingual settings.

Doing a qualitative study has advantages as well as disadvantages. The interviews done for this study were long, detailed and time consuming, but also very comprehensive and revealing. Chapter 4 deals with the research design, discusses the methodological considerations and describes the data of the project in detail. The participants of the study are presented, as is information about where and how the data were collected. Furthermore, the

roles of the interviewer and the interviewees are defined and the details about what the interviews consisted of are given. Last but not least, the approach to the analysis of the data is outlined and the way in which the results are presented is explained.

In the analysis part of the thesis, the results of the project are presented with exact definitions, descriptions and example data about the couples' perceptions of ELF as their means of communication. The findings provide information about the couples' motivations for choosing ELF and about the importance that ELF has for them as compared to that of their mother tongues. In this respect their attitudes and their language awareness of ELF are discussed as well. Chapter 6 focuses particularly on the advantages and disadvantages that ELF causes for their relationships and it considers how well ELF can serve as a family language. Additionally, the results provide insight into the similarities to and differences from mother tongue couple talk and shed light on the repercussions on the relationship. This thesis also explores how characteristics of L1 couple talk apply to ELF couple talk and compares the findings to Leisi's (1978) five characteristics of the language of couples. Last but not least, ELF as a means to express emotions is analyzed and the participants' perceptions of expressing love, anger and humor are presented.

In the resume the outcome is summarized and presented again, and I share and discuss my opinions on what ELF can do and what its limitations are. Existing assumptions stated in the theoretical part of the thesis are picked up again and are reconsidered with regard to the findings of this study.

The study provides insight into many interesting aspects of 'English as a private lingua franca' and thus hopefully adds new facets to ongoing ELF research.

2. ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA

English as a lingua franca (ELF) is an international language and holds great importance, especially in Europe. According to Seidlhofer, “the term ‘English as a lingua franca’ emerged as a reference to communication in English between speakers with different first languages” (Seidlhofer 2005: 339). Meierkord (2000: 112) says that lingua franca arises “when speakers by definition communicate via a language which is not their mother tongue”. English as a lingua franca is used for communicative purposes when speakers “do not share each other’s language but can resort to a third language” (Meierkord 2000: 112). In the majority of cases, when speakers need to resort to a third language, that language is English. English is being increasingly used for diverse purposes when communicating with different people from all over the world who hold different first languages.

More and more people are speaking English as a second or even first language. David Crystal states that only one out of four people who use English are native speakers (Crystal 2003: referred to in Seidlhofer 2005: 339). The importance of ELF is expanding enormously in every sector of the economy and for multiple purposes. English is the working (that is, functional) language of international organizations and conferences, of scientific publications, of international banking, economic affairs and trade, of internet communication, and it is used as a ‘relay’ language in interpretation and translation. Furthermore, English is used in the field of technology transfer, international law, international tourism, international safety, and in tertiary education. Advertisements for global brands and audio- visual cultural products are also made in English (Graddol 1997: 8). In the above situations, participants in the global economic climate have to communicate with each other to get their message across. In order to overcome certain language barriers, most people resort to English because it is the language most commonly understood.

European countries, as well as most countries worldwide, cannot ignore the rising numbers of ELF speakers and their importance for trans-national business. David Graddol (1997) says:

[...] as English is taken into the fabric of social life, it acquires a momentum and vitality of its own, developing in ways which reflect local culture and languages, while diverging increasingly from the kind of English spoken in Britain and North America. English is also used for more and more purposes than ever before [...]. (Graddol 1997: 2)

At present, it is estimated that English is spoken worldwide by between 700 million to 2 billion people. Compared to the year 1500, where most English speakers were native speakers, now more than half of those that speak English are employing it as a second foreign language (Pennycook 1994: 7). This seems to lead to Graddol's conclusion that at present, one can speak of a new or the 'fourth' period of English. According to Graddol, "after Modern English comes the period of 'Global English'" (Graddol 2006: 58-59)

According to Christopher Brumfit (1982: 1), the importance of the English language is due to the geographical spread and the high number of speakers, as well as the high number of non-native speakers whom use it day-to-day. Granger (1996: 13) foresees that the growth of non-native speakers will continue to increase in the future. Graddol (1997), has attempted to forecast the popularity of the English language in the 21st century and beyond. Results of his research show that there is a high usage of English for most areas of life and many different fields of research.

Since most countries in the world expanded into the global sphere, there is a great deal of intercultural communication going on. In the last few decades, the mobility of the general population has increased. Traveling around the world has become easier. For example, many borders are now more open (especially for members of the European Union); more and more companies are expanding internationally; and travel, in general, has become comparably cheap. Therefore, it is not surprising that the world is becoming increasingly global. Block (2004) discusses the repercussions of globalization and its

impact on the world. There numerous definitions of 'globalization', but Block refers to that used by Giddens (1990):

...the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa. (Giddens 1990: 64; quoted in Block 2004: 75)

As a result, the need for English as *the* principal lingua franca is increasing. If people use ELF when they meet for business, academic and teaching purposes, then they are likely to also use ELF when they meet privately. Multilingual relationships are becoming more and more popular. People work abroad, they travel abroad and also fall in love abroad. According to Edwards (2004: 79), there are many factors which have increased the probability of partnerships and marriages involving other languages. Many people who are in such relationships use English as a lingua franca as their main means of communication. They do this for various reasons, some of which will be discussed subsequently, in section XX. According to Edwards, "more and more people find themselves in relationships where their partner speaks another language" (Edwards 2004: 79). Very often ELF is their only solution for successful communication. Edwards (2004: 79) also says that many families decide to shift to English due to a cost-benefit analysis.

Five couples who use ELF as their main means of communication were interviewed for this diploma thesis. Throughout the project, I examined their perceptions of ELF in their relationship and attempted to discern why ELF was chosen and the advantages and disadvantages faced by couples when communicating in ELF. I have also sought to examine ELF more deeply and look at what ELF can do and what its limitations are.

2.1. Linguistic research on ELF talk

On the whole, discussions of various aspects of the global spread of English -as for example, publications by Cheshire (1991), Pennycook (1994, 2007), Crystal (1995, 1997, 2003), and Graddol (1997, 2006)- have increased over the last few years, but it had been lagging previously. Since the spread of the

English language has been very visible, more and more research fields and research areas have arisen. Whether this is due to various intercultural influences, or the effect of globalization is not altogether clear. In English Language teaching (ELT), a hyperglobalist position has dominated issues concerning the “spread of English as a benign outcome of global forces” (Block 2004: 76). However, Philippon (1992), Pennycook (1994) and Canagarajah (1999) and others have questioned this position. In their research, Pennycook (1994) and Canagarajah (1999) discuss the complexity of the discussions about English as an international language (EIL). They have, according to Block, begun “to see the spread of English as altogether too complicated to be considered benign or evil” (Block 2004: 76). Rischner says that “the investigation of ELF is a very young field of research with no homogeneous theoretical or methodological approach behind it” (Rischner 2006: 8). Since the second half of the twentieth century, when the English language became the most important international language, the field of ELF research field has become more and more important. According to Mukherjee (2007: 157), ELF is marked by the contrasting forces of global spread and by local differentiation, which is a central reason why ELF research has become immensely popular over the last few decades.

ELF has gained a lot of attention in specific fields of research, but it has been somewhat neglected in others. As mentioned in the introductory part of this chapter, ELF has become increasingly popular for academic, business and teaching purposes, but little research has been done regarding the use of ELF for private purposes, or in the private sphere. This study aims to rectify this gap in academic research by exploring the impact of English as a lingua franca on couples. To date, there has been research on ELF talk in the studies of Beneke (1991), House (1999; 2004), Jenkins (2001; 2007), Seidlhofer (2000; 2001; 2004) and Knapp and Meierkord (2002); research on couple talk in the studies of Dryden (1999), Fitzpatrick (1990), Leisi (1978) and Tannen (1986; 1990; 2007). Dewaele (2004; 2006), Pavlenko (2001; 2007) and Piller (2001; 2002b) have concentrated on bilingual and

multilingual couple hood and on expressing emotions across languages and cultures.

This study probes into a completely new field of research, combining the two fields of study of couple talk and English as a lingua franca, which, to the author's knowledge, have yet to be studied together. Since the issue of ELF couples has only recently become a pertinent issue, I will be investigating a new field of research that has yet to be dealt with in detail. I will investigate the use of ELF in multilingual relationships. Five couples provided insights into their relationships and discussed the advantages and disadvantages which, from their perspective, the use of English might entail.

Linguistic research on ELF has been relatively scarce in recent years because of the omnipresence and perceived significance of English as a native language (ENL). Owing to ENL's strong presence, it has been difficult for ELF to be considered as a language in its own right. Nevertheless, researchers such as Widdowson (1997), Brutt-Griffler (1998), Mc Arthur (2002) and Seidlhofer (2001) insist on a clear distinction between ELF and ENL. In ELT and English language learning, a degree of reconsideration has occurred with regard to the status of English as a native language. This reconsideration view has been gaining ground, even in the field of second language acquisition (SLA), which has normally been based upon traditional native speaker (NS) norms. Researchers such as Cook (1999) and Seidlhofer (2002) have put forward the view that "non-native speakers need to be regarded as language users in their own right" (Seidlhofer 2002: 271). In her thesis about *Communicative Cooperation in English as a Lingua Franca*, Rischner (2006) discusses the 'ownership' of ELF versus ENL. Since the number of non-native speakers (NNS) is increasing, the notion of 'ownership' has to be questioned. Rischner (2006: 14) says that there is a tendency that NS have ownership over the English language, and that non-natives should follow and adopt their standards. But since there are strong NNS influences and since English has become international, it is worth questioning whether this is still the case. Neither ELF nor ENL should be judged right or wrong, but the speakers of English should simply choose the

variety that suits their purposes best. Widdowson (2003) claims that generally speaking, it should be accepted that “communities or secondary cultures which are defined by shared professional concerns should be granted rights of ownership and allowed to fashion the language to meet their needs [and] their specific purposes” (Widdowson 2003: 41). In Graddol (2006), this topic is approached from a similar viewpoint. Supporters of teaching English as a lingua franca held the opinion that “the way English is taught and assessed should reflect the needs and aspirations of the ever-growing number of non-native speakers who use English to communicate with non-natives” (Graddol 2006: 87).

This study focuses on couples who have chosen English as their main means of communication. The couples have chosen English as a lingua franca and do, therefore, not expect to communicate in a form of English which is necessarily close to native English. For them, it is not important *how* they speak English; but that they speak a form of English. In the analysis chapter of this paper, I discuss this issue when I examine the interviewees’ priorities. I will explore whether they attribute more value to the communicative goal, than to the issue of correctness and adopting an English close to native standards.

ELF is characterized by specific features and described through particular descriptions. Jenkins (2007: 18-19) probes into the matter of what ELF is thought to be, and in this context she also discusses what ELF is not. Seidlhofer (2006) and Jenkins (2007) also broach the topic of misconceptions of ELF. They suggest that English learners should be made aware of the global role of English and the distinctions with regard to ELF and native English. ELF should be considered as a legitimate form of English in its own right. It is neither better than ENL, nor worse, but is simply different. In this thesis I will delve into what ELF in a relationship can do and what its limitations are. I will also look at how ELF is treated compared to ENL and the different mother tongues of the interviewees. For example, one of the couples interviewed stated that ‘English is good enough for them as a couple,

but not as a family language. They would not want their children to learn their English’.

2.2. Language Attitudes/ Attitude towards ELF

All people have certain attitudes towards a language, whether it is their mother tongue, a second language or simply a foreign language. For whatever reason, certain languages are beset with particular prejudices. Where these prejudices and misconceptions come from, who adopts them, and how one can get rid of them is a complex topic, which is extremely difficult to approach. The qualitative study of this thesis cannot provide answers to these questions, but simply makes this point to illustrate that everyone has certain attitudes towards a language. The following extract quotes one of the couples (C4) who were talking about their attitudes towards English. While one speaker (S7) values the norms of native English and does not feel comfortable with the way in which her way of speaking diverges from native standards, speaker 4 (S8) is happy with this situation and does not perceive it to be completely necessary to learn native English or to adapt to a native way of speaking.

S8: “Thanks to her my English become a little bit better. And thanks to me her English became crap.

S7: I’m happy with this situation. The only thing that I don’t like is that I adopt to his English and I pronounce English like him and I feel a bit I don’t know. Yeah. Really. I adopt his way of speaking English and this Italian accent. And now when I’m at university I’m afraid to say anything, because I think I’m talking I don’t want to say crap, but Italian, strange English.

S8: Eah what’s up-. Eah @@@

S5: @@@

S6: @@@

S7: @@@@

S8: @@@@@

S7: no well really I think this is a disadvantage

S8: It’s like you know. There is this forces. The people are trying to talk really perfect English. but you know I think sometimes it’s so ridiculous this force of the people. Because it’s like the Austrian. Niederösterreich has an accent, Vienna has another. I mean if you

try to masquerade your accent it is like XX to your personality. I mean I know in German I will never say this “ä” with two points on the top and I will never feel shy about it because it’s me. I mean some people like my sister. My grand sister. She is talking amazing English, She was living with me in England. she don’t want the people think she is from outside. And I always tell her “Come on, Puhh. where are you from”. And sometimes the people are trying to force themselves to talk different. And this is something I hate in myself. I can’t do it. I can’t stand this. Maybe in long long times I will talk perfect, but I don’t like it. It’s me.

(Extract 1: C4)

Throughout this study it turned out that the interviewees have quite different attitudes towards ELF. For some it is more important to speak English close to a native variety, and for some it is less important, but all of the couples assessed their English skills by comparing them to the English of native speakers. The interviewees who claimed to have a high level of proficiency in English spoke more like to native English than the others. This is evidence of a prevalent assumption that ENL is still perceived as the correct way to talk. In a study conducted by Piller (2002a), it was found that the people questioned for the study were proud if they passed as native speakers. In my own experience, I have felt something similar – when a U.S. citizen told me that I had a real American accent and that he thought I was American too, I was really happy and satisfied. I thought of myself as a highly proficient English speaker. Piller (2002a) refers in the abstract of her article to a study on cross-cultural marriage where “27 out of 73 second language (L2) users of English and German were found to claim that they had achieved high-level proficiency in their L2 and that they were passing for native speakers in some contexts”. Passing as a native speaker of English is generally perceived as a compliment, and for many L2 users it is the major goal. In my study, the majority of people also stated it as an advantage of their relationship that their English skills were improving day by day. However, as the above extract from Interview 3 shows, not all people want to pass for native speakers. S4 clearly states that he does not see why he should adapt his way of speaking to a native variety of English. He is Italian and not British, American or another English speaking origin, and he is proud of it. His ‘Italian English’ is

what makes him special. It makes him who he is. If he lost his Italian accent, he would feel that he was losing his origins, and he would not be himself anymore. Piller (2002a) refers to “passing” from a critical point of view. She says that:

Spying as passing prototype involves deceit: a person’s ‘true’ identity is hidden and a ‘fake’ identity is assumed. Like any other form of deceit, it is negatively evaluated: to be a ‘language cheat’ is morally wrong as putting credentials you do not have on your CV. (Piller 2002a: 198)

Since my study also focuses on the strengths as well as the limitations of ELF, it is important to raise the issue of what attitudes couples have towards English: In what way does their use of ELF impact upon their sense of identity and how does this interact with their mother tongue?. Throughout this research project many interesting questions have arisen regarding attitudes towards ELF. Do they lose their identity? Do they give it up? Do they feel that they lose it? Or does it add something new? Pavlenko (2007: 31) writes about language attitudes and what research has been done in this field.

2.3. The private lingua franca

The use and form of ELF as well as the speakers of ELF have changed in recent years. “As the world is in transition, [...] the English language is itself taking new forms” (Graddol 1997: 2). People care less about the British and American role models of English, but accept more the fact that English is a global language where the goal is communication, rather than correctness. Graddol also says that English is “used for more and more purposes than ever before” (Graddol 1997: 2). Since it is the leading language of technological, scientific, academic, economic and teaching developments, it is obvious that English is crucial for the speakers’ private life. Nowadays, the use of English for private purposes is increasing enormously, and it has become an interesting area of research. There has been a great deal of research conducted regarding ELF and its users, but mostly in the fields of ELF for technological, scientific, academic, economic and teaching purposes.

However, thus far, little has been done when it comes to English as the 'private lingua franca'. Smith discusses the "academic lingua franca" versus the "private lingua franca" (Smith 1987: 73). There are a plethora of situations where one has to use ELF to get the message across - not only for business, teaching or academic purposes, but also for private ones.

This thesis focuses on English as a lingua franca used for private purposes. One of the most private and intimate uses of English is to use it as means of communication in a relationship. As far as the language choice is concerned, the couples have decided -and also prefer - to use English as their principal means of communication over any other language. The motivation behind their choices differ, but the couples use English and will continue to speak English with their partners.

Successful communication is essential for a good and healthy relationship. According to Beck & Beck-Gernsheim (1990), Fitzpatrick (1990) and Piller (2002b), the study of private language is crucial for numerous reasons. Firstly, it is important because of "the importance couple relationships have for the individual; and second because communication is the sole major cause of marital happiness or marital failure in modern postindustrial societies" (Piller 2002b: 5). Thus, if two people with different first languages fall in love, it can be assumed that one of the major challenges for the relationship is successful communication. Very often such couples meet in English speaking surroundings, and then simply continue to communicate in English. Multilingual couples are no longer a rare occurrence. According to Edwards (2004: 79), conquest and marriage have always brought people with different first languages together. It had occasionally been the case in the past, but this need to speak other languages or to have one lingua franca to communicate is greater now than ever before. Edwards says that the number of couples with different first languages has been continually increasing due to the influence of urbanization and globalization. She says that "workers have become more mobile [...], making it possible to form relationships further and further afield" (Edwards 2004: 79). Additionally, tourism and the spread of tourist destinations have also enhanced the

probability of partnerships and marriages involving other languages. Hence, the need for a lingua franca for couples with different first languages is great.

For business as well as personal reasons, people have been increasingly choosing English as their lingua franca. There are many factors that determine whether couples choose English as their lingua franca or determine to use one and/or both of the mother tongues of the individuals to communicate. Due to its global significance, English is not only used as lingua franca for solely technological, scientific, academic, economic and teaching purposes, but it has also become important for couples.

2.4. Language choice and awareness

As ELF has become more and more important in the private sphere, it is interesting to consider the motivations behind people's choice to use ELF. I will now turn to the choice of ELF as the private lingua franca. I will consider why the individuals use ELF, why the couples choose ELF as their means of communication, and into why the parents choose ELF as family language. Generally speaking, there are many factors that influence the choice of one language over another. When speakers of different first languages come together, they have to decide on one common language. Normally, their language choice is simply dictated by the need to communicate and by which languages the individuals may or may not have in common. Since English is globally used as lingua franca and internationally the most common language spoken, the most obvious and frequent language choice is English. However, importantly, people's language choice may also be based upon their different perceptions and attitudes towards a language.

According to Herman (1961: 493) there are various overlapping psychological factors that have to be taken into consideration when discussing language choice. These factors include: the individual background of the speakers and the immediate environment with regard to their personal needs. These personal needs include numerous variables such as: the emotional attachment to a particular language, the level of aspiration with

regard to the use of the language and the proficiency in the language Herman (1961: 495). Since English is used as a lingua franca for private settings, it is particularly interesting to have a closer look at the reasons for this language choice.

People think carefully about when to use what language and in which context. Very often the language choice is context dependent and simply aims at successful communication. Whether or not people's language choice is conscious or unconscious, they are aware of their choice. This leads to another important issue connected to language choice, namely language awareness. Language plays an important role in all aspects of our lives. The better people understand the way they speak and why they speak, the better they understand the world around them (Eschholz et al. 1990) The introductory remark in Eschholz, Rosa and Clark's book *Language Awareness* deals mainly with this theme. They highlight ...

...the crucial role language plays in virtually every aspect of our lives. Most of us think of languages as we think of the air we breathe: we cannot survive without it, but we take it for granted nearly all of the time. Seldom are we conscious of language's real power to lead us (or mislead us) or of the effect our own language has on others. Even rarer is the recognition that our perceptions of the world are influenced, our very thoughts at least partially shaped, by language, it is also true that liberation begins with our awareness of that fact. (Eschholz, Rosa and Clark 1990: 1)

The more languages one speaks, the more aware of languages one becomes. Eschholz, Rosa and Clark focus on the language awareness of native speakers, but the fact that ELF is gaining more and more importance suggests that the language awareness of ELF speakers is also a crucial issue. The couples in my study generally perceive that they have obtained more language awareness since they have been communicating in ELF. The extract below, taken from the second interview, provides insight into the rising importance of ELF language awareness. It is an answer to the question in which situations ELF is used:

I: So in which situations do you use English and in which situations do you speak Spanish. Can you say a little bit about it?

S3: Well I don't think it's possible to really-

S4: Sometimes she changes to English if she thinks I'm not understanding or if she thinks she cannot express herself properly. It is difficult to say, because for each situation we use a specific language. We, we can't recall the situation. But this does NOT mean that we are not aware of the language we have chosen. We are aware of it, and we probably use it consciously.

S3: Yes, I think arguing is more in English than in Spanish. @@ (.) I mean we speak far more English than Spanish. Still. But it's not such certain situations where we speak Spanish or English.

S4: Yeah sometimes I find myself thinking about the language choice we have made. And I can't remember whether I just used Spanish or English. Then I ask Laura. Laura did we just talk English or Spanish. And she says I don't know.

S3: Yeah it is really interesting, well, I, actually, I never thought about this issue. But since I have been in this relationship, I am more aware of which language I use in what situation. I never had experienced this in another relationship.

(Extract 2: C2)

This extract illustrates that ELF couples are probably more aware of the language that they are using than couples communicating in their mother tongue. In other words, this lends support to the hypothesis that the fact couples are communicating in ELF raises the language awareness of these couples.

2.4.1. The choice of ELF as the language of couples

In many cases there is more than one important reason for a couple's language choice. In the analysis part of this thesis the couple's motivations behind their language choice will be outlined and discussed. According to Piller, a number of studies of language choice in international couples (Walters 1996; Yamamoto 1995) have shown that language proficiency is "the most basic constraint on language choice" (2002b: 75). In order for couples to even have a language choice they must have at least some proficiency in more than one language. Language choice is not always a conscious decision, but very often, the delivery of speech in a particular language simply happens in a particular way and people cannot really recall why it happened in such a way. The couples in my study have all picked

English as their language of choice. Most of the couples' language choices were either based on language proficiency, the linguistic environment where they met, or on fairness for the speakers. Since all of the participants in my study have a fairly good knowledge of English, the choice of using English as a lingua franca as a means of communication was self-evident.

The following extract consists of the statements of two participants (S9 and S10) regarding why their language choice has become English as a lingua franca.

I: Have you always communicated in English?

S10: mmh. Yeah

S9: Yes, we have been communicating in English since the beginning.

I: aha. Ok. So. Did you think of other languages?

S10: No, English was the logical choice for us.

I: ok, so, but why did you choose to use English as a means of communication?

S10: Well, as we met in the UK and we are both very comfortable with communicating in English. (.) it was, ahm. simply our first choice.

S9: My knowledge of German is insufficient and Philipp does not speak Polish at all.

I: Is it important for your relationship that you both can communicate in English?

S10: Of course! What do you think?

S9: Of course, English is the only foreign language we are most proficient in. Any other language would severely impair our means of communication.

I: so, I mean. would there be another possibility?

S10: No, for me, no English is the only possibility.

S9: I could learn German. It would be easier for me than for Philipp to learn Polish, but I guess it would seem unnatural to switch to another language now (.) even if we had such a possibility.

(Extract 3: C5)

This extract shows that the couple has, on the one hand, 'unconsciously' chosen English as a lingua franca, because they met in the United Kingdom and they have used English from the beginning of their relationship onwards without questioning it. On the other hand, they have consciously chosen English as a lingua franca because it is the language they are most proficient

in. This remark adds to the observations discussed by Piller (2002a), Walters (1996) and Yamamoto (1995) that language proficiency is the most important constraint on language choice.

All of the couples in this study claim that English is the logical choice for their relationship. Three out of the five couples interviewed said that their main language was English, but that they occasionally switch to another language (in all three cases it was Spanish) if it suited the purpose of the communication and the particular situation. None of the couples saw the switching of languages as problematic. They said that they felt quite comfortable switching back and forth. Nonetheless, all of the couples said that it would be a different matter when children are involved. In this situation, they would have to reconsider their language choice - the parents have to make up their mind according to the needs of their children. In Piller (2002b: 87) there is an extract from a bilingual parent. In the extract that follows, a father discusses the language choices of bilingual couples. He thinks that bilingual couples need to pay more attention to their language choices. Bilingual parents should make up their minds about when to use what language. In other words, a language choice should be made consciously rather than subconsciously.

Extract 21 (d21): *“Bilingual couples should make up their minds”*

Karl [...] the bilingual couples always have some problems coz they're mostly not consequent enough to: speak one language in a certain situation at certain places. Hh. They mostly mix up both languages and that causes problems for the children. For example to form grammatical correct sentences. And it causes a lot of problems at the very beginning. Hh. Kids sometimes can't erm realize what- erm recognize what kind of language is speaking at the time. Hh. Cause it ca- they do think in both languages. So it should be quite clever if we stay at home we just speak English, and if we're outside we just speak German, or erm agreement like this. Certainly would be helpful for bilingual couples. (Extract 21: In Piller 2002b: 87)

This extract highlights the importance of language choice. The fact that the interviewed couples all chose English as a lingua franca as their means of communication does not necessarily mean that they chose it as a family language. This disconnect – that is, why ELF is the language choice for couples, yet will not necessarily be the language choice for a future family, will be discussed in more detail in the analysis chapter of this thesis.

2.4.2. *The choice of ELF as family language*

Family conversations are probably the most important language use situations, but nonetheless, little research has been done in this field. According to Kendall (2007), the research area of family language planning has been neglected compared to research on language in formal institutions.

Families are the cradle of language, the original site of everyday discourse, and a touchstone for talk in other contexts. Families are created in part through talk: the daily management of a household, the intimate conversations that forge and maintain relationships, the site for the negotiation of values and beliefs. Yet there has been a greater focus on language in workplace and other formal institutions than on discourse in this first institution. (Kendall 2007: 3)

This thesis is an attempt to bring the topic of ELF as a family language to the consciousness of those in the field and consider it as the serious and interesting area of study that it is.

People choose English as family language for diverse reasons. They may do this out of a cost benefit analysis or for religious, intellectual or personal reasons. Whether families choose English as a lingua franca often depends upon the country where they are living and upon attitude towards a particular language in that country. Each European country (as each country worldwide) has a different ease of access to different languages. In some countries, it is prestigious to speak English, whereas in others it is not. In some countries it is easy to use ELF as a means of communication, whereas in others it is more difficult. For example, in some countries it is easy to find English language educational programs for children, whereas these are

scare in other countries. Why couples or families choose ELF as their family language, and why they want to raise their children in ELF is not always clear, but many people decide to do this.

Turning to the interviews and the data of this research paper, it was observed that all of the interviewed couples had already talked about their future family language before this interview question was put to them. Most had weighed the range of choices and language possibilities open to them. Whilst not all of the couples had decided to use ELF as a future family language, some had. The following extract from one of the interviews (C1) shows that S1 and S2 had already discussed the choice of their future family language. They have a clear idea of what their future family communication will look like.

I: So do you think that English as a lingua franca will stay your means of communication as family language?

S1: yeah

S2: yeah mostly I think so.

S1: yeah

S2: No I'm sure that English will stay the main language

S1: yeah definitely.

I: Why do you think so?

S2: Well, because until I learn German I think it will still be a very long time. At least for that

S1: well I think that first of all English is an really important language. And I think the sooner your kids start to learn English the better it is. And since we are already so used to English I think we cannot abandon it from our relationship.

S2: Yeah I don't think we could. Or we will

I: Ok. In what situations will you use English in the future.

S2: Well between us. It will always stay the one and only language. If we would have a family and everything. I think between us in more intimate times and when we are more private it will always be English.

S1: Yeah I also think so.

I: so would you say that it will become the future family language. Or will it be reduced to you two. As the language of couples.

S2: I think it will be the family language with a mixture of German.

S1: I mean think of your family. Sometimes you are speaking a few sentences in English, then your Granny speaks a few sentences in Portuguese and then there is someone who is speaking a few sentences in French. It's rarely in your family that you have a conversation in one language. (.)

[...]

I: Would there be any other solutions for you as family language.

S1: I don't think so. I don't think so

S2: Unless we could speak in secret German, or maybe if we could speak in some kinds of symbolisms.

S1: Well I couldn't think of a different language. Well the only possibility could be if our kid is deaf then we would use the sign language. Otherwise I can't imagine to abandon English.

S2: yeah, or if we would live in another country. Oh no. I think even so.

S1: yeah still we wouldn't abandon English. It is really essential

S2: yeah and maybe if my German will be so good we could abandon it

S1: No I don't think we would abandon it then. I can't imagine it.

(Extract 4: C1)

This extract illustrates that the couple made a pre-interview decision that English should be the primary means of communication for their family.

Edwards (2004) spends an entire chapter of her book *Multilingualism in the English-speaking world* on language in the family. She provides multiple reasons why couples shift to English rather than using their own mother tongues. The exemplar families she mentions in her book differ from the couples I have interviewed. Edwards is more concerned with families who do not have English as their mother tongues, but who live in an English speaking country. Hence, the concept of ELF does not really apply here. Parents are often plagued with doubts of which language choice to make when raising their children. Edwards (2004: 79 – 93) discussed examples including: parents with Gaelic backgrounds in Scotland, parents with a Spanish background in the United States and parents with a Inuktitut (Indigenous) background in Canada. All of these parents live in a community where their native language is a minority language and English is the majority language. They favor English to their mother tongues due to family relationships, for reasons linked to culture and identity, for religious observances and career advantages.

Families with parents of different native languages are no longer an exceptional occurrence. Yamamoto (2001, 2002, 2008) calls these types of

family structures interlingual families. Very often people find themselves in a union where their partners speak another language than their own. However, this is not necessarily an interlingual family - it is simply a partnership where more than one language is involved. Language choice, that is, which language to choose as a daily means of communication, very often happens automatically. Couples either choose the language they used when they first met, or the language that both are most familiar with. Increasingly, couples choose ELF, because it comes naturally most of the times for people all over the world.

As long as there are only two people, language choice is not considered a major issue, but as soon as a child or more children are involved, couples tend to pay more attention to their language choice. Parents seem to be aware of the fact that the family is often the most important institution in which a child acquires his or her parental native languages (Fishman 1965; referred to in Yamamoto 2008: 133). Yamamoto (2008: 133) argues that a child will acquire both or all of those parental native languages, if the parents do not share the same native language(s) and if they, therefore, provide the child with a bi- or multilingual milieu in some way. It is important to ask whether the use of different languages makes a difference to this hypothesis or not. To decide what language to use for what purposes and in which situation is very demanding for parents. Therefore, this decision is often very well analyzed and discussed by the parents. If parents opt for ELF as their choice of family language, then this decision is likely to have been based upon a multitude of rationales. One of the most popular rationales is that it is a language everyone can understand. Yamamoto says that "if some members of a family lack proficiency in the given languages for example, it is most likely that the family adopts a language comprehensible to everyone" (Yamamoto 2001; referred to in Yamamoto 2008: 134). If a couple decides to use ELF as the family language, then they have to be aware of the possible repercussions on their family communication and on their children's language identity. The couples I interviewed were also very well aware of the significant influence their future language choice will have on their children.

This and more reasons of their choices will be discussed in the analysis chapter of the project.

3. THE LANGUAGE OF COUPLES

The intimate relationship between a man and a woman is, without doubt, one of the most important relationships that human beings take part in. Nearly no other relationship arouses the creative powers of people to the heights inspired by an intimate relationship. Within such a relationship language plays an essential role, and the success or failure of an intimate relationship can depend largely on the language. A couple whose communication is restricted to areas in which language is not used is simply unimaginable. Not only is language essential to the viability of a relationship, but communication of the members of a couple is a very unique language use situation. And yet, it has only been in the last few years that the study of linguistics has ventured into the area of couple talk. Talk between men and women offers many interesting paths of research.

Deborah Tannen (1986, 1990, 2007), is a researcher in the study of sociolinguistics of gender, that is, the study of the linguistic differences between men and women when communicating. She argues that rather than different dialects, men and women have different “genderlects” when communicating together (Tannen 1990: 42). The differences between how males and females talk is given the contextual name of ‘couple talk’. She writes that male-female conversation in intimate relationships is ...

[...] cross-cultural communication.

Culture is simply a network of habits and patterns gleaned from past experience, and women and men have different past experiences. From the time they’re born, they’re treated differently, talked to differently, and talk differently as a result. Boys and girls grow up in different worlds, even if they grow up in the same house. And as a result they travel in different worlds, reinforcing patterns established in childhood. These cultural differences include differing excitations about the role of talk in relationships and how it fulfills that role. (Tannen 1986: 133)

According to Tannen (1986: 132- 133) the language of couples is special because of the different access men and women have to language usage.

She compares men and women talk to the talk of two people with different cultural backgrounds. Misunderstandings continually arise in the modern world due to different cultural backgrounds. People often perceive certain things differently simply because each culture has varying approaches towards and beliefs concerning any given situation. The difference between the cultures of men and women are readily apparent simply by looking at the aspects of a relationship which males and females tend to value.

Men as well as women seek and long for different things in a relationship. When human beings negotiate complex networks in a world of connection they need intimacy and independence. Yet, where women generally need more intimacy in a relationship, men tend to desire more independence. Tannen (1990: 26) compares it with their lifeblood which runs in two different directions and similarly, the way men and women approach language and the way they express themselves tends to differ greatly from each other. These differences are likely the reasons why men and women tend to have distinctly different views concerning the same issue. From the stand point that men and women have different cultures and hence different values concerning relationships; it follows directly that each would have different beliefs concerning the importance of language. In my study, I found that it was primarily women who complained about the language barrier. All of the five female participants claimed that they are sometimes frustrated because of the limitations put upon their self-expression, whereas the male participants tended to not perceive this as a problem. Therefore, women appear to place more importance on the use of language in a relationship and ELF seems to be no different from any other language in this regard

There will always be differences between men and women in the way they talk. Even if mother tongues are the same, they still have to face differences that can lead to misunderstandings and misconceptions. For example, in a tram in Vienna, I observed a couple which did not understand each other in spite of the fact that they both spoke perfect German. The man tried to explain something to the woman, and the woman did not (or pretended not to) understand it. At first, the man remained patient and tried to explain it to

her using different methods of explanation numerous times. But in the end, he got so frustrated that he gave up. Their conversation ended with the man saying *“Oh Gott, soll ich jetzt leicht Böhmisch weiterreden? Vielleicht verstehst du mich ja dann?”* [Oh my God, should I continue in Bohemian? Maybe you’d understand me then]. Therefore, differences between men and woman couple talk exist regardless of whether they speak the same language or not. Yet, this is not said to discredit the noble attempt of communication between these two cultures, but instead it must be understood that the relationship is more important than the troubles of communication. In Piller’s study, an English-speaking wife talked about her relationship with her German husband and said that “love should and must transcend all these differences” (Piller 2002b: 2).

This study aims to begin with this basic understanding of the cultural differences between men and women but explore how these differences are amplified or made more difficult to handle in the case of couples using ELF and how these differences in turn influence the relationship. Do they have to face differences due to their cultural backgrounds beyond those that arise between men and women? Do misunderstandings occur because of their different languages? Would certain situations be different if they spoke the same language? Why would they be different? This thesis attempts to distinguish amongst those misunderstandings of a relationship which are inherent in all relationships, those which are due to, as Tannen suggests (1986; 1990), the differences in gender and those misunderstandings which are due to the use of English as a Lingua Franca,

In the following extract, Rainer (S6), a participant of my study, talks about his experiences with relationships between men and women and the difficulties of couple talk. His comments illustrate the special characteristics of the language of couples as compared to that of professional or other types of relationships. I begin with S8’s opening remarks regarding the issue so as to give a better contextualization.

S8: A lot of time when you are in really high of tension and you try to explain what you really, really want to say and you say it so

fast, because you are just you just want to say it and then from your side comes like “You really think this” and then you think. Well wait what did I really want to say and then it’s like wow we have problem. I think when you are not talking your first language it’s really easy sometimes to get a problem. It’s really fast and more when you are used like talking English you just express yourself and sometimes you just don’t control the meaning 100 % what you want to say. Because language always has a second way and the other person thinks then the second way. And sometimes it can create lots of misunderstandings.

S6: I do think that, but I also think that the misunderstanding will be there whether you speak in Spanish or in English. Well here in this project you are dealing with couples as per se, there is a couple and you add an extra ingredient which is language. I think even with a girlfriend I had at some points she also spoke Spanish I had communications problems. (.) big communication problems. I would say stuff and she got it the wrong way. and that’s when I said. How come you don’t understand me, although we both spoke the same language. When we have miscommunications now I could blame it on English, but I don’t wanna do that. Both of us speak English in a way so that we can express ourselves properly. But the thing then is what the other person understand.

S5: That’ in any language

S6: That’s in every language. I mean that has really nothing to do with my English or my Spanish. If I had a girlfriend that speaks Spanish as mother language she wouldn’t understand it in some point. That’s not because I’m not saying it right, it’s just because she get it in a different way,

S8: Yeah but then in your mother language it is very easy to correct it, but in English then it’s more difficult. Lot of the times she understands it then better and you can explain it in another way. I think it’s a different matter

S6: Did you have a relationship in Spanish. Did you

S8: No, I didn’t

S6: I have and sometimes I would say stuff. My ex girlfriend got it wrong and then I tried to say it in a different way, and I thought GOD you just don’t understand m me. Did I have to say it in Chinese. I mean literary I would say it in Spanish. I mean GOD she was such a witch. She just didn’t speak the same Spanish as I did. And I mean what I’m trying to say is that I could have misunderstandings with Verena which I wouldn’t blame on English., I mean we both have the right level to express ourselves.

(Extract 5: C3 and C4)

This extract shows that Rainer believes that the misconceptions and interferences in his relationship cannot be blames on ELF, but rather, is attributable to gender differences that exist regardless of language choice.

3.1. The importance of language for relationships

“Language stands at the nexus of the individual, his/ her cultural heritage and society” (Phaahla 2006: 142). Without language, interpersonal interaction would hardly be possible. Due to language, worlds are organized, shaped, defined and communicated. Without language, any form of group interaction or human activities which go beyond instinct driven orientation, would not be possible (Al-Najim 1993: 24). Hertzler (1965) summarized the importance of language as follows:

(...) Language is fundamental to all social processes and to the processes and maintenance of all social structures; it is involved in almost every act of social behavior. It is the one institution that every human being must master in order to function in any of the other institutionalized areas of social life. (Hertzler 1965 in Badura 1971: 79)

MacMillan (1998: 18) argues for language as a human right. Based on the definition of human rights by Cranston (1967) a language should be:

a ‘universal moral right’, something which all men everywhere, at all times, ought to have, something of which no one may be deprived without grave affront to justice; something which is owed to every human simply because he is human.(Cranston 1967: referred to in MacMillan 1998: 17)

This argument for language as a basic human right gives great weight to the idea that language is a basic necessity to the ability of a human to function within societal situations. And in spite of the fact that each individual in a relationship which uses ELF is from a different society, their access to language based communication with each other is still an intrinsic part of their interactions with each other. Patrick (2005) considers this same concept from the differing but parallel perspective of language rights as a subset of cultural rights.

The notion of culture, especially ‘traditional’ culture, is sometimes considered as an obstacle to the spread or realisation of (universal) human rights, since ‘culture’ and ‘tradition’ can be

invoked by one group in order to uphold practices that infringe on another's rights. (Patrick 2005:) 18/8/2009
<<http://privatewww.essex.ac.uk/~patrickp/lhr/lhrwhysociolx.htm>>

Sapir (1933: referred to in MacMillan 1998: 17) emphasizes the enormous impact of language on group life. Culture and society interrelate and connect with language. To him, language is a code and sign of membership that becomes more significant as the boundaries between languages become stronger. It is used when expressing solidarity and it involves maintenance and evolution of both individual and group identities. According to Phaahla (2006: 142) "language is surrounded by an emotional intensity and an irreducible quality that signify its status as one of the 'primordial bonds' of group identity". Language is most essential when defining cultures and community memberships as well as individual identities. Since language is meant to define the identities of groups and individuals, it must necessarily also be important for establishing a couples' identity.

3.2. Characteristics of couple talk

The language of couples is a specific language use situation that is characterized by specific features such as private codes, intimate conversations and emotional talks. It might be the case that nobody beyond the two persons speaking understands what the couple is talking about. In most cases, people talk differently to their partners than to other interlocutors. A partner is not only a conversational partner but is also the person with whom shares intimate moments and one's innermost feelings. Thus, the language use will depend greatly on a person's language experience up any given moment. This also implies that the foundations upon which any conversation is built will vary from couple to couple yielding a unique method of communication within the couple.

Ernst Leisi (1978) has written an entire book about the characteristics and complexity of the language of couples. His desire was to approach this matter directly and in a clear and comprehensible way. He states that

although this issue is very important for linguistics and for gender studies, commentators have not addressed the issue in depth. Sociolinguistics, communication studies, applied psychologies and sex education have all dealt with the language of couples, but not to a detailed extent. Work focusing purely on the language of couples is rarely seen. Hence, Leisi (1978) raises basic questions such as 'how does a couple speak?', or 'which role does language play in the relationship?'. Since this topic is very broad in that it applies to human beings and the totality of their behavior, he restricts his research to five aspects of the language of couples: 'language as a private code', 'language as erotic stimulant', 'love according to texts', 'interferences and misconceptions' and 'language as a means of memories'. I will explain each of these five aspects of couple talk individually, since I also adopt some of these in my study.

Leisi (1978: 8- 9), writing about couples and language, argues that they have some kind of 'private code' when talking to each other. This private code is established throughout the relationship and develops continuously. People, things, actions and activities are referred to and named differently. Couples can be very inventive when it comes to creativity in their language use. They tend to give their partners nicknames. Very often they invent and use not only one nickname, but various different nicknames. These nicknames derive from the most diverse realms of everyday life. More than half of these nicknames are metaphors for the names of animals, items, parts of the body and food. Leisi (1973) writes about the metaphorical meanings of words and about the problems that can arise. The motivations behind new nicknames, and behind this wide variety of different nicknames is discussed by Leisi (1978: 23). A very general reason could be a "sprachschöpferischer Impuls" (*language-inventive impulse*) which is closely connected to couplehood (Leisi 1978: 23). Couples feel the need to call their partners an alternative name to clearly distinguish them and their names from something else. It can either be the case that the renaming of partners is done subconsciously at the beginning of their relationships, or consciously and emphatically (Leisi 1978: 25). Instead of asking 'why' the couples give each other nicknames, one

could, according to Leisi (1973: 23), also ask 'why not'. For this thesis, it is also not strictly important why they give each other nicknames, but significance lies in the fact that they give each other nicknames in various different languages. I am interested in whether couples give each other nicknames deriving from the English language or another language, how they came across these nicknames, and whether they like these nicknames or if they would prefer a nickname in their own language?

Leisi (1978: 9) also talks about 'language as erotic stimulant'. He says that a language can, more than any other means, stimulate a relationship as well as cool it down. The Roman writer Ovid has highlighted the importance of language for a couple. In his book *Ars Amatoria* ('art of loving': *Liebeskunst*: translated into German by Holzberg), he provided instructions of how to increase erotic happiness with language for men as well as for women. Leisi (1978: 57) emphasizes the significance of language for a successful erotic relationship by saying that without it, such a relationship is unimaginable. Put another way, if a relationship is considered 'normal' as far as the erotic relationship between the couple is concerned, then language plays an essential role. This language use can occur in different forms and in diverse settings, but the couple mostly uses language instinctively. For the purposes of this thesis, it is particularly interesting which language the participants use instinctively. All of the participants shared (to some extent) their thoughts about language used as erotic stimulant. Although it is a very personal and intimate topic, most of the couples interviewed were willing to give some relevant information about this topic. They provided insights into how far they use language as an erotic stimulant, and more importantly, what language they use. The central issue here is - do they use ELF as the primary erotic stimulant, or do they switch to their mother tongues?

Another characteristic of couple talk according to Leisi (1978: 9) is 'love according to texts'. He says that loving someone, the feelings and actions, or moreover the 'love talk', is only partly something natural and specific to the individual. Very often, this so called 'love talk' leans on already existing linguistic patterns. Couples use existing texts and phrases from movies,

books, songs, poems and more to talk to their partners and express their love. Leisi (1978: 74) holds the opinion that couples usually assume that their love life, romance and love talk is something special, something exceptional and something individual that they initiate, create and produce themselves. Sometimes this is true, but very often the words and phrases they use relate and connect with already existing language clusters. Their language use also leans on existing patterns, models and paradigms. For this thesis I also asked the couples to recall certain language use situations. This study aims to find out upon what already existing language clusters the couples' love talk leans on. Where do the words and phrases they are using come from? Where did they acquire the English skills they need for a 'romantic talk' with their partners? Why do they think they use the language they are using?

'Couple talk' can additionally be characterized through 'interferences and misconceptions'. Every couple has to face numerous interferences and misconceptions in various different stages of their relationship (Leisi 1978: 9). A lot of these misunderstandings are related to language. Leisi (1978: 110) does not focus on language-based interferences for communication, but on language-based interferences for relationships. In particular, he looks at language-based reasons for possible miscommunication in a relationship. Interferences in communication can, but do not have to, lead to interferences in a couples' relationship and are very likely to cause problems. I also asked the couples of my study if there are some misconceptions and interferences that exist in their relationship due to linguistic problems. Furthermore, I am interested in whether these interferences are language related - in this case, whether they are ELF related, or not? Would it be necessary to improve their English skills, or is their command of the language good enough?

Last but not least, Leisi (1978: 9) describes language in 'couple talk' as a 'means of memories'. Language as a means of memories is important when the relationship spans a longer-term duration. There are certain linguistic formulations, words and phrases that are typical and very important for a couple's relationship. Very often these linguistic formulations are very specific and may also be created by the couple itself and can help to keep the

relationship fresh and lively. According to Leisi (1978: 145), language can also strengthen memories, and the more memories a couple has, the more intense the relationship is. He says that linguistic memories are more important for a relationship, because a couple is more aware of these memories, as they are recallable. Pursuant to Schrauf (2002) “memories of emotional events in the L1 have been reported as feeling more vivid and intense” (Schrauf 2000 in Dewaele 2004: 119). The present study also focuses on linguistic memories of couples. I am interested in how they recall memories and language. Are memories in the L1 more emotional than memories in ELF? Is the language important for them when they think back on situations that happened in the past? In what language do they think back?

3.3. Bilingual/multilingual couple talk

People’s understanding of intimate relationships has changed. Whereas it used to be the case that people married for political, economic, or financial reasons, they nowadays usually marry for romantic reasons. Since the late Middle Ages, during the regime of the Austrian Habsburg, people have dealt with multilingual relationships and have realized how useful intercultural relations can be. The Habsburgs made peaceful coalitions through marrying, and lived under the motto: “Bella gerant alii, tu felix Austria nube” (Kudla:172), which means ‘wars may be led by others - you, happy Austria, marry’. Nowadays, people tend not to marry out of convenience, but mostly do so out of love. Ingrid Piller (2002) writes about the shift of reasons for intimate relationships.

As people’s understanding of intimate relationships changes, spousal communication gains importance. While in former times couples mainly came together to form an economic unit and to raise a family, today they tend to come together for “romantic” reasons, to share their free time and be friends. A “good spouse” is no longer just a good housekeeper, breadwinner, or sexual partner but a good communicator. (Piller 2001: 199)

People travel or work in other countries and consequently, also fall in love abroad. Multilingual relationships are no longer exceptional. Very often, couples experience a language barrier that they have to overcome. This language barrier is often not a big issue, since people simply shift to English and make this their principal means of communication. English as a lingua franca has become increasingly important for partners with different first languages. If the language barrier cannot be overcome, then this can become problematic for the future of the relationship. A good and healthy communication basis is important for a successful relationship. According to Fitzpatrick (1990: 433), communication difficulties are primarily responsible for marital failure or marital unhappiness. Since communication is a constitutive factor in the make-up of modern romantic relationships, many interesting questions regarding multilingual couples who have different first languages arise. Piller (2002b) attempts to answer many of these interesting questions, such as “What does it mean for people to live in a relationship with a partner who has a different first language? How do they choose their language as a couple? What are the reasons behind these choices?” These questions are discussed (and a partial answer is provided) in her book *Bilingual couples Talk: The discursive construction of hybridity*. Piller’s study is a sociolinguistic and discourse-analytic exploration of the linguistic practices of cross-cultural and bilingual (German and English speaking) couples. The couples are two partners who live in a long-term committed relationship, but they are not necessarily legally bound as such (i.e. through marriage). Piller uses the terms ‘marriage’ and ‘couplehood’ interchangeably. In similarity, I would not seek to differentiate between these terms either, but since none of my interview partners are married, it has never been an issue.

For my study, I have also investigated couples who have different first languages, however, in contrast to Piller’s study, these couples use a lingua franca as a means of communication. They seek to overcome their language barrier not by learning their mate’s language, but through switching to English. None of the partners has English as a first language, but they use it as a means of communication in their relationship. For a variety of reasons,

they made the decision not to choose either partner's language, but to choose English. The analysis chapter of the paper will shed light on these reasons.

3.3.1. *Bilingual/ Multilingual couples in linguistic research*

Bilingual and multilingual couples in linguistic research have seldom been dealt with, but this is not a completely new field of research either. It is clear that multilingual couplehood has a rather extensive history as evidenced by the example of the Hapsburg Austrian Empire. According to Piller (2002b: 19), this field of linguistic research has burgeoned primarily within contexts where linguistic intermarriage is perceived as an issue within the broader societal context of language conflict. Social psychologists and feminist sociolinguists (Dryden 1999; Williams 1984) have, according to Piller (2002b: 4), often presented heterosexual marriage as a crossroads between private and public relationships. On the one hand, couplehood is public, because it is a relationship between members of different groups who find themselves in relationships in society at large, but on the other hand it is private, because it is a relationship between two unique, individual persons. The issue of marriage and relationships is already a complex one, but "add different languages and cultures to the relationship, and the crossroad becomes a busy intersection" (Piller 2002b: 5). Multilingualism makes a relationship more challenging, but, as remarked upon by the couples interviewed for this study, also more attractive. To date, only a few studies have explored the issue of cross-cultural couplehood. Piller (2001; 2002b) and De Klerk (2001) focus upon bi/multilingual couples and cross-cultural intermarriage and Yamamoto (1995; 2001; 2002; 2008) has examined bi/multilingualism in international families.

Linguistic research on bilingual and multilingual couple talk is also important because many families have cross-cultural family communication and this group is increasing (Piller 2002b: 5). The rising number of multilingual couples is illustrated by the fact that four out of eight of my friends who went on an exchange semester found a long-term partner. All of these couples are

still in a strong relationship and they have all found a solution to overcome language barriers and geographical distance.

Linguistic research on bi/multilingual couple talk is mostly concerned with the issues of language choice, language maintenance and language shift. According to Piller (2002b), most bilingual couples choose the “majority language and intermarriage equals language shift to the majority language” (Piller 2002b: 34). The majority language of the couple is an important factor as far as language choice is concerned, but the reasons upon which choice-of-language is based are not straightforward. One decisive factor is the language proficiency of the couple in question, and in this respect their language background also plays an essential role. Secondly, ideologies and identities are important to understanding the relationship between language choice and intermarriage. Furthermore, Piller (2002b: 35) draws an important distinction between the language choice of the children of these couples, which very often differs from that of their parents.

The language of couples is often tied up with the language of emotions. When couples communicate with each other, they express their innermost feelings and emotions. Throughout the 20th and 21st Century several commentators raised questions regarding emotions in a bi/ multilingual context. Aneta Pavlenko (2001; 2002, 2005: 2006a; 2006b; 2009) primarily deals with multilingualism and emotions as a new area of research. Her current research examines the relationship between emotions, language, and cognition in bilingualism and second language acquisition (SLA). However, at different points in time, many other researchers studying the field of bi-/multilingualism and emotions have raised similar questions. Arsenian (1945), Weinreich (1953), Vildomec (1963), and Ervin- Tripp (1964, 1967, 1968) have all argued “for the need to move beyond the issues of attitudes and motivation to the study of emotions and affective repertoires of bi- and multilingual speakers” (Pavlenko 2006: xii). But According to Pavlenko (2006), the questions and issues raised by one of them were not taken up by others. Hence there is a need to combine these issues.

For this thesis I looked at couple talk, men and women talk, the language of emotions and bi- and multilingualism. The present study aims to expand upon previous work by connecting and drawing links between the various areas of research discussed above - from ELF research to bi/ multilingualism research dealing with language choice, identity and code switching to expressing emotions in different languages.

3.3.2. *The language of emotions*

Multilingual intimate relationships have to face particular challenges. One of these challenges is expressing emotions. Emotions are central to human life and cannot be seen as something trivial that can be ignored during an interaction between two human beings. The growing importance of bi-/ multilingual issues provides us with new perspectives regarding the expression of emotions in different languages. Wierzbicka (2004: 94) stresses the importance of researching emotions and bilingualism, since more people worldwide are bilingual (rather than monolingual) and multilingualism is central to most people's lives.

Expressing one's emotions and feelings represents a particular language use situation. The speaker and the hearer have different shared concepts, which may lead to the decoding of problems and misconceptions. The expected discourse may vary from the actual words that are spoken. Before I engage in more detail concerning the expression of emotions in different languages, some definitions will be provided:

The terms 'emotions' and 'feelings' are sometimes used synonymously, but sometimes their meanings do differ. According to Peter Goldie (2002: 12), "an emotion-...- is typically complex, episodic, dynamic and structured". Five themes are important when explaining emotions. Before exploring these themes it must be noted that according to Goldie (2002), there is something people ought to think, which can be referred to as the norm. The first theme is that an emotion is a personal perspective or viewpoint of a person, and thus, very difficult to express. Secondly, the normative and differing from the

normative plays an important role. Thirdly, the notions of intelligibility, appropriateness and proportionality are important when discussing emotions – namely, that when expressing emotions people have different perceptions of intelligibility, appropriateness and proportionality. Fourthly, expressing emotions follows a mostly narrative structure. And finally, expressing emotions is always connected to feelings (Goldie 2002: 1-5). For Goldie (2002) emotions and feelings are related but different, and extremely difficult to describe and distinguish:

Feelings are an important and familiar part of emotional experience; without feelings, emotions would not be what they are. [...] It is hard both to describe feelings, and to capture their rightful place in the emotions and in explanation of how we act out of the emotions. (Goldie 2002: 50)

In my opinion, the best motivation for learning a foreign language is to be somehow emotionally attached to the target language. Being in a relationship where communication in a foreign language is required is one of the most direct ways to develop such an attachment. This new language may be very challenging when it comes to expressing emotions such as love, anger and humor. This increases the motivation of the user to improve upon and gain a better command of the language that is used as a means of communication. People want to and have to share their innermost feelings and emotions and may take their desire to share their emotions as a major reason to learn a language or to improve their proficiency in a particular language. Kinginger (2004: 160) says that the “study of a foreign language can be driven by emotional investment and by richly nuanced imagination”. If people, for whatever reason, fail to express their emotions, and therefore fail to communicate in the foreign language, then their language choice should be reconsidered.

Language choice in emotional expressions is an interesting aspect of bi-/multilingual couple talk (Pavlenko 2005: 131). However, there is a scarcity of information concerning the verbal expression of emotions. Some of the areas of emotional expression include speech acts such as quarrels, arguments and the expression of intimacy and love which are very difficult, if not

impossible, to record for the purposes of research (Piller 2002b). A great deal of research has been done in the field of bi/multilingualism that very broadly covers factors affecting language choice and code switching in multilingual contexts (Auer 1998; Heller 1988; Milroy and Muysken 1995). However, only select parts of these studies are relevant for bilingual emotional talk. Until recently, language choice and code switching in emotional expression have only been peripherally examined. According to Pavlenko (2005: 131) these studies offer an “oversimplified portrayal”. The assumptions are that speakers are very likely to use their first language (L1) with their interlocutors when they express their innermost feelings and emotions. In contrast, they use their second language (L2) when they express emotions in a more “detached way”. Speakers are posited to switch to their L2 when they mark distance, and to their L1 when they signal intimacy (Grosjean 1982; Gumperz 1982; Scheu 2000; Zentella 1997). “L2 is emotionally detached” (Kinging 2004: 160): This assumption is emphasized in much of the literature and research on multilingualism and emotions, and hence it is interesting to discuss how the participants of the present study perceive them.

Emotions can be expressed nonverbally and/or verbally. Nonverbal expressions such as laughing, smiling, crying, etc. may be the same or similar for people all over the world, but language can be a barrier to verbal communication between people of the same language background. Generally, being able to speak multiple languages equips speakers with all kinds of different strategies for expressing their emotions and feelings. In the English language, speakers can express their emotions literally and figuratively (Fussell 2002:1). Fussell (2001: 1) states that when speakers express their emotions verbally, they can provide quite exact descriptions of them. Nonetheless, this is a very specific language use which demands a careful choice of words. Fussell (2002: 2) also notes that one can get more detailed information through verbal communication than through nonverbal communication, but verbal communication also leads to more misconceptions and a decoding problem. This occurs when the expression of emotions results in imprecise and vague formulations that are very hard to

follow for the listener. Even though the listener pretends to understand, or even if s/he thinks they understand what the speaker wants to convey, they may miss the point. According to Goldie, every person has his or her own point of view when it comes to expressing emotions; which makes it difficult for somebody else to decode the expressed emotions (Goldie 2002: 2).

3.3.2.1. Expressing Love

“When I fall in love, I am seduced by language. When I get married, I am seduced by language” (Hoffman 1989: 219 in Pavlenko 2002: 49). It seems that language is needed to fall in love, and to continuously convey or express love. Being in a love relationship demands a particular repertoire to express love. Expressing one’s love to somebody is something so personal that it is almost impossible to research. It is only possible to ask couples about their perceptions of the ways in which they express their love for their partner. It is worth noting that the nonverbal expressions of love, such as smiling, kissing, hugging, etc., are easy to identify for NNS(s), but the verbal expressions may be more difficult. Since expressing love is something very personal and individual, the participants of my study also shared very different experiences concerning the expression of their love. This is demonstrated by three distinct extracts from my data, in which the participants talk about their perceptions of expressing love. The first extract illustrates that one of the interviewees has some trouble when it comes to verbally expressing his emotions. It appears to be difficult for him to express his love in English, since he has formulated the thoughts beforehand in another language (German).

I: so is it difficult for you to express your love in English?

S10: Well, no, not at all. I just have to kiss her, or hug her or caress her, and then she knows what I feel anyway.

S9: ok, yeah this is right but very often I want you to tell me what you feel. Feel about me and want you to express it, and then you have often said that you lack the words, and that you want to say so much, but it is just too much effort for you in English.

S10. Well. Hm I guess it is true. Well I wouldn’t say too much effort, it is just that I want to say it right away without thinking about it, and the words come to my mind in German, and then I just kiss you instead. (.) Well, I think it is just more complicated to

articulate yourself. But to be honest, when I think about it I would also have problems to articulate myself in German. When it comes to expressing love, it is complicated in any language. Maybe it is more complicated, but it is not a problem. It's just that I sometimes wished I could convey you that I love you right when I think about it, and I usually think about it in German and formulate it in German. But then I don't really wanna formulate and express it in English, because I fear it might sound stupid in English. And I don't wanna sound like a fool in love with you.

S9: haha, you wouldn't.

S10: Well but maybe, you never know.

(Extract 6: C5)

The extract that follows shows that it is easier for S6 to verbally express his love in English, because he does not think about its literal meaning. The literal translation would theoretically sound strange to him, whereas the English version of his thoughts does not:

I: So do you like telling each other what you feel in English?

S5: Well, I guess, yes, I haven't thought about it. (.). Hm.

I: Well, is it easier for you to express your love in English or in German?

S6: Well, I really prefer telling her how much I love her in English. I don't have to think about it. I can say whatever I want to and it doesn't sound stupid to me at all. Sometimes, words just come out and I don't even know exactly where they come from, or what they really mean. I mean I know what they mean, I know that I tell her that I love her and so on, but I think I would never be so emotional in Spanish.

S5: Well, sometimes your Spanish sounds more emotional to me than English.

S6: No my Spanish is more dramatic, but not more emotional. I would never express my love in Spanish in the same way as I do in English. I would feel much more inhibited to say something in fact. But in English I could say I love you all the time and make you compliments as much as I want. @@@

S5: aha @@, well then do so.

(Extract 7: C3)

Since the use of ELF in a relationship is a new language use situation for the couples of this study, it is interesting to look at the different perceptions they have of expressing love. This final example illustrates that expressing love in English is more attractive because it is something exciting and new but also that it has truly become the language of the couple.

S7: I love to express my love in English and in Spanish. In German I'm not a very romantic person, but in English and also in Spanish I am. I have no inhibitions to say anything. And the more I use it in an emotional way, like for instance expressing my love to him, the more I enjoy the language.

S8: She is right, sometimes I feel that English as a lingua franca, as you would call it @@, is our language, and just our language. And the more I use it with her, the more I like it.

(Extract 8: C4)

Hence, it might be said that speaking another language with a loved one increases the passion for this particular language. This view is also supported by Pavlenko (2002: 49), who argues the same not just for the language itself, but also for the speakers of the language. "At times, attraction to language may also lead to attraction to speakers of a particular language" (Pavlenko 2002: 49). The fact that speaking ELF to their partners instead of their mother tongues is attractive for all of the interviewees in my study will be discussed in the analysis chapter.

3.3.2.2. Expressing Anger

Keeping in mind arguments contained above about expressing love, expressing anger in a foreign language is also a very specific language use situation. It requires more than just a limited command of the language. It may be thought that it is easy to express anger in a foreign language, but it is generally accepted that this is not the case. One needs a high proficiency of the target language in order to effectively express anger. It is generally considered easy to use (or rather misuse) random swear words here and there in a foreign language, but the majority of speakers automatically switch to their L1 if they are spontaneously expressing their anger. Assuming that people feel more comfortable expressing their anger in a language they are highly proficient in, they feel most comfortable when expressing anger in their mother tongue. I experienced this myself once on a flight from Valencia to Vienna. Due to some technical problems with the aircraft, I missed my connecting flight in Madrid. The employees of the airline were unfriendly and

not very helpful. I became very frustrated and complained at the counter of the airline. At first I started in Spanish, but I could not express my anger properly, since I was lacking in the target language vocabulary. I then switched and expressed my anger in English. I had no problem expressing myself, but the staff pretended not to understand anything. In the end I ended up talking (or rather 'swearing') at them in German. Although I knew that they did not understand a word, and that switching to my mother tongue was not a solution, I could not resist expressing my anger in my mother tongue. Dewaele (2004; 2006) researched whether L2 users have a preferred language for 'outbursts' of anger. Taking my outburst at the airport as an example, the answer appears to be, yes. Nevertheless, it must be conceded that this issue is more complex. Indeed Dewaele's research has shown that the answer is definitely more nuanced.

Dewaele (2006) based his study of the expression of "anger in multiple languages" on a Web questionnaire (Dewaele; Pavlenko 2001) where a total of 1454 multilinguals contributed to the database. The findings of his study were that speakers generally preferred their L1 for expressing anger with a monotonic decline in preference of languages which are learned subsequently. Languages other than the mother tongue can become the preferred language to express anger after a longer period of socialization. Furthermore, his study showed that participants who have learned their LX in an instructed setting compared to those who have learned their LX in a naturalistic or mixed environment less frequently use their LX to express their anger. His research also seemed to indicate that participants who started learning a language at a younger age more frequently expressed their anger in that language. Finally, his research shows that participants feel more comfortable to express their anger in their LX, and therefore do so more frequently if they have a higher proficiency in the language (Dewaele 2006: 146). This present study will not go into detail about these findings, but it will briefly touch upon them only to the extent necessary to bring into focus the languages in which the participants express their anger to their partners and why they do so.

Research has shown that people view the L2 as being more detached than the L1. The analysis chapter of the thesis will illuminate whether this is also the case for the participants of this study. It is also interesting to consider whether the command of English was relevant for the participants of this study, and if detachment had something to do with the known amount of vocabulary. Kinginger (2004) examines Nancy Huston's life as a bilingual speaker and translates her experiences of expressing anger:

...there is always something ridiculous about getting carried away in a foreign language: the accent gets worse, the rhythm runs off and stumbles...you use wrong swearwords in the wrong way- and, as a result, you have to work at finding more refined ways to express your anger. (Nancy Huston, translated in Kinginger 2004: 172)

This quote is particularly relevant since it sheds light on the issue of the repercussions that arise when hesitating whilst speaking due to vocabulary deficit. Expressing anger in another language, often a difficult experience because many people lack a certain repertoire and fluency in the target language and thus they lose the upper hand. Losing the upper hand can lead to an emotional response that makes them even more angry. Dewaele (2006: 119) experienced this feeling numerous times and compares it to a beginner karate student facing a black belt. According to him, one needs to be sure of oneself in order to emotionally and successfully engage in a linguistic confrontation.

It is clear from above that anger is an emotional expression that demands a language to go into detail and express one's emotional state. Only with the help of language one can express one's anger to a concrete and significant extent. Wierzbicka and Harkins (2001: 2-3) note the importance of language for the expression of emotions by highlighting that:

[w]hatever the conditions that produce an emotion like anger, whether or not it is visibly expressed, and whatever physiological responses accompany it, it is only through language (if at all) that we can know that what is experienced *is* anger. (Wierzbicka and Harkins 2001: 2-3 in Dewaele 2006: 121)

The present study tries to shed light on the way in which its participants express anger towards their partners. It concludes that the language they have to use in order to be understood is ELF. This thesis also brings into focus the perceptions towards ELF when expressing anger.

3.3.2.3. Expressing Humor

People use humor or humorous language for various reasons. It might be used to loosen up a situation, to get some laughter, or to deny or disguise one's feelings. Very often even speakers of the same mother tongue misunderstand certain humorous expressions. One's communicational partner can easily get offended by sarcasm or may simply not understand the irony. Many couples say that they are more sensitive when talking to their life partners. The opinions, beliefs and attitudes of a partner are often valued more than those of anyone else. The possibility of misconceptions and misunderstandings when expressing humor is said to be even larger for multilingual couples. Hence, multilingual couples may have to face certain misunderstandings that would not have become an issue if they both spoke the same language, and some jokes would not have had to have been explained.

I: So would you say it is difficult for you to understand humor in English?

S1: Well, sometimes it takes me forever to understand a joke. So he gets frustrated with me because I don't laugh. @@@

S2: @@ I wouldn't say frustrated, but sometimes it takes you so long to get a joke that it is not funny anymore. No I'm just kidding.

S1: Well, it can be quite difficult, because sometimes I or also he is just lacking some knowledge about the country, the politics, and you know society and so. And you know sometimes it is then just too exhausting to, to translate or well rather to explain.

(Extract 9: C1)

Expressing humor in a foreign language may be considered to be one of the most difficult tasks in social interaction. Research has shown that humorous language and related speech acts, such as joking, demand a high proficiency in the language. Learners or users of a foreign language may be able to

communicate with little difficulty in their LX, but they often experience more difficulty in expressing themselves effectively through humor in that particular language (Vaid 2006: 155). Vaid (2006: 152) claims that “humor, a pervasive element of social interaction, expresses and elicits a variety of emotional states from joy and surprise to sarcasm and hostility”. This quote stresses not only the importance of language in this area, but also the importance of culture. In order to be able to understand sarcasm and irony, it is important to have some insight into the cultural background and habits of the communicational partner. For example, jokes are often related to cultural prejudices of different countries and people. Hence, it is important to know one’s interlocutor and his or her cultural heritage well enough to make adequate jokes. Moreover, it is important that the listener knows something about the joke-teller in order to truly understand the joke. For this study, it should be noted that on the one hand, the participants are of different cultural origin, but on the other, they are life partners and thus know each other extremely well. They are used to using ELF with each other in all areas of life; including humor.

There are many different forms of humor and the humorous use of language. According to Vaid (2006: 154) humor can be divided into jests, quips, humorous anecdotes, and jokes - with these being only the most common forms. Jokes are said to be the most important form of humor and have therefore received particular attention. They “thrive on violations of the ordinary ways of seeing the world, violations of the ordinary ways of using language, and violations of the ordinary ways of expressing emotions” (Vaid 2006: 159). While people want to revolt against the ordinary way of seeing the world by using language and expressing emotion, they first have to know what the ‘ordinary way’ is. What is the ‘ordinary’ way of seeing the world, using language and expressing emotions for ELF users? It could be said that there is no ‘ordinary’ way of life, or to put it another way, no common way of life, because ELF users neither share a common L1, nor do they share the same culture. It is worth noting that couples who use ELF as a means of communication might not share the same L1 or the same cultural

background, but they share the fact that they use ELF. Thus, this commonality might assist them in building up their own ways of seeing the world, using language and expressing emotions in their 'ELF world'. If they have built up their own 'ELF world' and culture and what role humor plays for their relationship will be discussed in the analysis chapter of the paper.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN

The topic of my research project is quite fascinating and continues to increasingly catch my interests. The more I read and talk about it the more interested I get. I have also realized that my project focuses on a topic which not only interests many people, but to which many people can relate. I have met a large number of people who are either in a multilingual relationship or they know others who are in multilingual relationships. It is also interesting to highlight that most people I have talked to who are in a multilingual relationship use ELF with their partners. The others use their partner's mother tongue which in most cases was Spanish or Italian. (It must be mentioned that this information is simply based on conversations I have had with my friends and friends of my friends, and is therefore, by no means generally applicable.) Although this area has always interested me, I originally planned to research something different and it was my supervisor, Prof. Barbara Seidlhofer, who led me in this particular direction.

A friend of my family who lives in my village is married to a woman from Slovakia, and they use ELF as a means of communication. At first I was not only interested in their communication with each other, but in their family communication. They have two children who are raised in a multilingual environment where ELF is one of the languages used. Originally, I wanted to research ELF as a family language. To be more precise, I wanted to examine the language use of children of multilingual parents who use ELF as a family language. Since this particular family was the only accessible example of a multilingual family, I had to focus my research on something else. Thus, Prof. Barbara Seidlhofer encouraged me to research ELF as the language of couples. I have chosen this research area for various reasons: Firstly, it turned out that I could easily get a hold of data, and it did not take me very long to find five couples who fit the data profile I was looking for. Secondly, research has shown that ELF used in a private domain has not yet been much explored and thus this research can contribute to already existing ELF

research. Thirdly, the frequency of ELF used in couple talk is increasingly on the rise and therefore stimulates the interest of a large number of people.

The present study rests on the assumption that the language of couples is already a specific language use situation characterized through certain features and codes. When couples have to use ELF as a means of communication they are exposed to various difficulties due to language problems which may be complicated by the use of ELF, potentially yielding several repercussions on the development of the relationship. The objective of the study is to find out what these repercussions could be and how the use of ELF positively, as well as negatively, affects the relationship. To limit the broad scope of this linguistic research field, this study only focuses on the following research questions:

1. What are the motivations for couples who choose ELF and how important is ELF as the language of their relationship?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages for couples using ELF as a means of communication?
3. Why ELF can or cannot be considered as a future family language and what role would ELF play in such a situation?
4. What unique characteristics does ELF couple talk have as compared to mother tongue couple talk and how is it perceived as a means of expressing emotions?
5. What can ELF do, and what are its limitations?

5.1. Are there restrictions in the usage of ELF? (e.g. Is it only restricted to particular situations or areas of life?)

5.2. What can ELF do as compared to a mother tongue, and what is ELF unable to accomplish?

The exact formulation of the research questions have been developed after the process of collecting data was completed and after talking to various different people about the subject matter. The majority of people with whom I spoke were interested in the advantages and disadvantages that arise due to

the use of ELF as the means of communication in a relationship. It has turned out that this was also what most interested me.

It is crucial to emphasize that the answers to these research questions are fully dependent on the personal perceptions of the study's participants. Therefore, any answers, relations and/or conclusions drawn through the analysis of the interviews rely on the participants' attitudes, beliefs and perceptions. Since it is a study of ELF used in people's private domains, I raised questions about some of the most personal and emotional issues of their private lives. Therefore, their answers might vary a bit from their real and innermost perceptions. If their answers deviate a bit from their real perceptions, then it is not done so on purpose, but out of subconscious reactions due to the delicateness of the subject matter.

This study should shed light on particular issues which have not been dealt with before. It is meant to apply already existing assumptions from the study of ELF and it should illuminate whether or not the participants of my study perceive it similarly or differently.

4.1. Methodological considerations

In order for a research project to offer valuable information in the end, it is necessary to use effective research methods. According to Cohen (2000), by research methods, one means the range of approaches used in educational research to gather data "which is used as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanation and prediction" (Cohen 2000: 44). I chose interviews as a basis for inference and interpretation, and for explanation and prediction. I wanted to gain information which was as detailed as possible so as to interpret the perceptions of people towards using ELF as the language of their relationship.

Griffin (2005: 175) holds the opinion that one has to understand how the methods one uses impacts the results that are obtained. On purpose, I chose in-depth interviewing, because I wanted to apply my social and active

listening skills to get a large amount of detailed and especially true information. One of the most important reasons why I preferred qualitative data over quantitative data is because of the possibility of being able to go into great detail when required. It is not uncommon for interviewers as well as interviewees to lead the interview in a direction totally different from that which was originally planned. During the interview it might turn out that there is more to it than expected. One topic leads into another and more and more topics and questions arise in the course of the interview. Using interviews as a method of data collection enables the interviewer to immediately go back to a particular topic and get more detailed information from the interviewee. During the individual interviews for the present study, I realized that I neglected relevant topics. Since I interviewed the couples myself, I was able to redirect the interview as necessary so as to address the relevant issues which arose, unforeseen by me.

Before I started with my data collection I did not have many preconceptions about the outcomes. I did not expect anything in particular, and thus, I did not have any preconceived opinion about any answers to my questions nor the directions in which the interviews would go. I was open-minded about my participants' answers and always eager to hear them address new topics and issues. Additionally, I was prepared to build on certain statements and go into detail about the information provided by the interviewees. This approach about how to successfully collect spoken data is based on Cameron's (2001).

[I]f researchers have too many preconceptions about what they are going to find, the danger is that they will not attend closely enough to the subtleties of talk in a specific situation
(Cameron 2001: 22)

Another advantage of doing interviews is that the interviewees can be carefully chosen. Depending on the available number of people who fit the data profile, one can select the participants according to various criteria. The people participating in this study had to fulfill three criteria: Firstly, I wanted them to be interested in the topic, the research and the outcome, and to be willing to go into depth and detail no matter how long it might take. Secondly,

I expected them to be open-minded and not shy since the subject matter was extremely delicate and they were asked to share personal issues concerning their private lives. Thirdly, I needed participants who were reliable and easy-going and willing to provide more information if the data analysis required it.

Having considered the advantages of using interviews as a method for collecting data, one disadvantage has to be addressed too. This issue demands particular attention since it might have repercussions on the results of the project. Spoken discourse analysis enables researchers to get data which are as close to natural and objective as possible. The problem I was facing was that I set up an interview to generate talk for research purposes. Even though I tried not to influence the interviewees and I tried to stay as objective as possible, the interviews took place in a set-up situation and not in a 'natural' situation. According to Cameron, what is 'natural' and what is not is readily arguable. Researchers of talk "have to face what the Sociolinguist William Labov (1972a) called 'the Observer's paradox' " (Cameron 2001: 20). The participants of the present study were asked to speak about and provide insight concerning the private issues of their relationships to a stranger. Additionally, they knew that they were recorded. My interlocutors had of course agreed to be interviewed and seemed happy to talk about personal issues, but it is obvious that this somewhat 'unnatural' situation might have had an influence on what they were prepared to say and what they decided not to say.

Although it would have been better to analyze data where couples were talking about the advantages and disadvantages of using ELF in a situation where they were not being observed, I tried to establish as natural a situation as possible and wanted the participants to feel comfortable and free to say anything they wanted. I granted them autonomy, and promised that I would not include the full transcriptions of the interview in my thesis. Due to the delicateness of the subject matter, the participants preferred that only transcriptions relevant for the results should be included in the study.

The last essential methodological consideration for this study was the approach of the interview design. It must be noted that many different approaches exist as to how to do an interview effectively. Michael Patton (1980) lists four different types of interviews and argues their strengths and weaknesses. For gathering my data, I chose the "Interview Guide Approach". This means that the topics and issues which were to be covered were specified before in an outline form. This method enables the interviewer to decide on certain sequences and to work out questions in the course of the interview. One advantage of this approach is that the data is more comprehensive and the collection of data is more systematic for each respondent. Although those logical gaps can be anticipated and closed, the interviews remain "fairly conversational and situational" (Patton 1980: quoted in Cohen 2003: 271).

4.2. The data of the project

4.2.1. *The participants*

A total of ten people contributed to this study. To be more precise, five couples were intensively interviewed and asked to go into detail about their perceptions of ELF as the language for their relationship. The participants were carefully chosen according to the three criteria mentioned in the previous sections. Generally speaking I tried to find rather homogenous couples in order to create a more controlled experiment. All of the couples met abroad and fell in love there. Each of the five couples consists of one Austrian, four female and one male, who were all students who went abroad for various different reasons. Furthermore, they all are young couples, aged 23 to 33 who are neither married, nor engaged, but who have been in a serious relationship for more than one and a half years. All of the interviewees use ELF as their major means of communication, two couples solely use ELF, and the other three occasionally switch to their partner's mother tongues. Additionally, all couples more or less live in Austria, with the exception of one that switches back and forth between their home countries. Due to considerations of anonymity and integrity, their names have been

changed but their home countries, mother tongues, ages and cultural backgrounds are real.

The first participating couple (C1) consists of Sandra (S1), Austrian, 23 years old and her mother tongue is German, and Eric (S2), Portuguese, 29 years old and his mother tongue is Portuguese. He also speaks French and Spanish, whereas she does not speak any other language than English and German. Hence, they have always solely communicated in ELF with each other. For both of them it is the first serious relationship where they have used ELF as a means of communication. They live together in a rural area of Lower Austria and occasionally go to Portugal to spend some time with his family and friends.

The second participating couple (C2) is Laura (S3), Austrian, 25 years old and her mother tongue is German, and Pablo (S4), Spanish, 33 years old and his mother tongue is Spanish. Other than English, he also speaks Catalan and has basic knowledge of German and Italian, and she also speaks Spanish and French. In the majority of times their means of communication is ELF, but in certain situations they shift to his mother tongue Spanish. For Laura it is the first relationship where she uses ELF in a relationship, but Pablo had already been in one before. The couple met in Scotland, and is now living together in Vienna.

The third participating couple (C3) consists of Verena (S5), Austrian, 23 years old and her mother tongue is German, and Rainer (S6), Costa Rican, 24 years old and his mother tongue is Spanish. Besides English, she also speaks Spanish, and he speaks a little bit of Portuguese, French and German. The couple mainly uses ELF as a means of communication, but occasionally also speaks Spanish to each other. They met in Costa Rica, do not yet live together, but are now both living in Vienna. Using ELF as a major basis for communication is a first for Verena whereas Rainer had used English (not ELF) before.

The fourth couple (C4) participating in this study is Sarah (S7), Austrian, 24 years and her mother tongue is German, and Stefano (S8), Italian, 26 years and his mother tongues are Italian and Spanish. He grew up in Italy, but his father is from Argentina. Other than English, Sarah also speaks Italian, Spanish and French, and he speaks basic German. They use ELF as their predominant means of communication, but very rarely switch to Spanish or Italian. It is more likely that they switch to Spanish, because they met in Spain. Both of them are currently living in Vienna, but they do not live together.

The fifth couple (C5) consists of Andra (S9) and Philipp (S10). Andra is from Poland, 23 years old and her mother tongue is Polish. Philipp is from Austria, is 23 years old and his mother tongue is German. Besides English, Andra also speaks French and basic German and Philipp also speaks French and basic Spanish. The couple solely uses ELF as a means of communication. They met in London and are now traveling back and forth between Vienna and Warsaw.

4.2.2. Where and how the data were collected

Collecting the data for the project appeared at first sight to be really difficult. I did not know any couples who use ELF as a means of communication when first deciding on the topic. After some time without access to data, I spread the word and eventually found five couples. I talked to them a couple of times, told them about my research area and study field and how important their participation was. The schedules of my participants were very tight and it turned out that it was very difficult to find time when they both were available. It had to be considered that the participants' relationships of cross-cultural/national couples might deviate from those of 'ordinary' Austrian couples in terms of their time together. A lot of them were traveling back and forth between various different countries and the actual time they spent together in Austria, where I wanted to interview them, was limited. Nonetheless, everybody was very flexible and we agreed on a date, place

and time. For reasons of convenience I let them choose where they wanted to be interviewed. Three couples found it easier and felt more comfortable being interviewed at their home and two couples came to my apartment. I always made sure that the atmosphere was very relaxed through simple acts of hospitality such as bringing drinks and some snacks. The participants and I always spent some time together before the interview and after the interview. We chatted about a variety of things and sometimes the participants seemed to have forgotten that they were being recorded during the interviews.

I purposefully decided to interview the male and female participants together and not separately. After carefully considering the advantages and disadvantages, I decided that the outcome of a joint interview would be more intense, interesting and effective than that of separate interviews. I believed that they would feel more comfortable when together because in most cases I only communicated with one of the interviewees prior to the interview while their partner did not know anything about me or the purpose of the interview. Secondly, I thought if I interviewed them together then they could build on their partners' thoughts and maybe draw conclusions about their own and each others' opinions. Very often it turned out that one of them raised an interesting issue which the other did not even think of. Thirdly, the interviewees could comment on their partners' answers and verify or correct them if necessary. Fourthly, the interview could be lead more as a casual conversation than a strict interview with questions and answers. Last but not least, I decided to interview them together, because I could get a better insight into their relationship and the way they communicate with each other. It was extremely interesting to observe the time we spent together before the interview and after the interview. Although I did not record it, I could observe the way they were communicating with each other and got inspired to explore more and different issues of multilingual couple talk.

All the couples were interviewed separately with the exception of C3 and C4. Since the couples are befriended I decided to interview them together. The evening I spent with these two couples was probably the most revealing time

for my study. The interview was three times as long as the others and they all commented on each other's answers. They added information, denied or verified statements, corrected answers, and clarified thoughts. It was really casual and they went into significant depth when answering my questions. However, because of the participants' high level of comfort in the situation, I sometimes had to remind them that this was an interview and that they had to go back to the actual question.

Generally speaking, the interviews were really casual and there was a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. In order to overcome the observer's paradox, I tried to establish a situation which was as natural as possible. I wanted the interviewees not to feel observed and recorded, but to say whatever they wanted to say and however they wanted to say it. After the interviews the participants told me that they really enjoyed the interview and that it was very enlightening concerning their relationships. They talked about issues which they had never considered before, and viewed their means of communication from a new perspective. In retrospect, the "Interview Guide Approach" according to Patton (1980) suited my research and my collection of data best. Although it was essential for me to specify the topics before the interview, it was even more important to decide upon certain sequences and to work out questions in the course of the interview. This fairly conversational and situational set up enabled me to gather crucial information as far as the data of the study is concerned.

4.2.3. The roles of the interviewer and the interviewees

It is very significant for an effective and successful interview to establish the appropriate roles for the interviewer and the interviewees. The interviewer and the interviewees get or automatically adopt certain roles throughout an interview. For me it was particularly essential to determine these roles before the interview to get the best outcome. In the interviews done for this study, the interviewees were the experts and I, the interviewer, was the lay person. They are the ones in a multilingual relationship and not me. The present study is about the participants' perceptions, attitudes and beliefs, and it only

matters how they perceive their use of ELF in their relationships and not what my perceptions were.

After establishing the roles before the interview I made sure that they understood the importance of their expert knowledge for my study. During the interview I let them talk and never interrupted their flow of speech. I clarified questions when necessary, but never gave my opinion on any specific topics. I was always curious and interested and never imposed my subject knowledge on them, since I did not want them to feel judged.

4.2.4. *The Interview*

Each interview began and ended with a nice, relaxed chat. We talked casually while I tried to get to know the partners from abroad since I usually only knew the Austrian interviewee. Once the actual interview began, I told them the approximate duration of the interview and I referred to their rights as interviewees. I explained in detail why the data were needed, how I gathered the data and for what purposes. I made them aware of the fact that the interview would be recorded and that the data would be used for research purposes. To be more precise, I explained to them that I wanted to include the transcription of their spoken data in the study and that it might be published. Since the subject matter of this study is very delicate, I showed them the transcriptions before analyzing them.

As soon as the recording started, basic facts about the study were shared with the participants. I provided an overview of the topic and then gave them some details about the sub-categories I wanted to discuss. Since I established the roles of the interviewees and the interviewer beforehand, it was important to emphasize that they do not have to stick to the categories and that they are welcomed to add other relevant information. Generally speaking, I had 12 sub-topics I wanted to probe into. The first sub-topic dealt with information about the couple's cultural backgrounds. The second was to gather information about their relationship. The third was about ELF as the choice of their means of communication. In the fourth, I wanted to discuss the

influence of ELF. The fifth sub-topic dealt with advantages of ELF, whereas the sixth was about the disadvantages for their relationship. The seventh to the eleventh sub-topic all referred to Leisi's (1978) five aspects of couple talk. In this regard, I wanted to illustrate whether or not his theories were also relevant for the couples of my study. Therefore, the interview questions concerned 'language as a private code', 'language as erotic stimulant', 'love according to texts', 'interferences and misconceptions' and 'language as a means of memories'. The final sub-category dealt with ELF as a future family language.

I deliberately decided not to necessarily stick to the questions formulated on the guideline for each sub-category, but to be open to the discussion of other issues raised. It turned out that the participants answered all the questions of the guideline and all additional questions which came up during the course of the interview. (The detailed guideline of the interviews is presented in appendix 5).

4.3. The approach to data analysis

Due to the openness of the participants of this study the amount of data collected was enormously comprehensive and rich. The data contained a lot of revealing and insightful information and it turned out that the analysis of the data extended the expected results. Having mentioned the load of data, it is important to highlight the difficulties which the great amount of data means for the analysis. The approach chosen for this qualitative study was a content analysis of the interviews. In this respect, I had to read through the interviews very carefully to get a sense of the most relevant and interesting issues. I then grouped the statements of the interviewees, putting them into specific categories as based on the direction of my analysis. Finally, the contents of the various different categories were summarized and structured. The difficult task was to structure the contents so that they fit into one particular category. Occasionally, some contents fit into more than one category while in others they did not fit into any category. Due to the fact that the interviewees often

seemed to make jumbled or even contradictory statements, significant effort had to be put into analyzing the comments in great depth so as to get the essential and correct points without misrepresentation. The more often I read through the interviews the clearer the content analysis became and finally I found the best approach to the analysis for an effective representation of the results.

The results of this study are solely based on the perceptions, views and attitudes of the participants and they are highlighted through example data taken from the transcriptions. Overall, the study is based on eight major analysis sections. Some of these sections are divided into several analyses depending on whether or not the divisions are needed to clarify or delve into the results.

The first section of the analysis deals with the **motivations for choosing ELF**. The interviews aimed to explore the reasons for the participants to choose ELF as a means of communication and looks into their language choice. In this respect I probe into the matter of language choice, and present the motivation for switching to ELF instead of learning each other's mother tongues.

The second analysis section delves into the **importance of ELF**. To be more precise, it illuminates what ELF means to them compared to their mother tongues and what it means to them when using it as a private lingua franca in a private context. In this respect, I divided this analysis part into three sub sections. It is significantly important to highlight the 'attitudes towards ELF' and to probe into the matter of their identity and if they have the feeling that they are losing it to some extent. Also, it is interesting to look at the 'language awareness' of the couples. I will discuss whether or not ELF couples are more aware of the language they are using than couples communicating in their mother tongue. Last but not least, the importance of 'ELF versus the mother tongue' of the couples is thoroughly explored.

The third and the fourth analysis sections cover the **advantages and the disadvantages of using ELF** as the language of couples. These analyses are particularly important, since the data hold a great amount of information dealing with these issues. Including the advantages and disadvantages in the results is additionally justified because it turned out that these issues were also most interesting for the participants and for most of the people I spoke with about the study.

The fifth analysis section thoroughly describes why ELF might be considered as a **family language** or not. Although, none of my couples has children, this section is particularly relevant for me. I decided to include this topic in my analysis, because on the one hand it will become a big issue in the couples' future, and on the other hand it seems as if the couples had already talked about it and hypothetically discussed it. Hence, the results delve into 'the language choice for and against ELF as family language'.

The sixth section analyses the **similarities and differences to mother tongue couple talk**. Discussing the similarities in the results is relatively straightforward, but special emphasis has to be made on the differences from mother tongue couple talk. In this respect the analysis covers the consequences of the use of ELF on the couples' relationships.

The seventh analysis deals with Ernst **Leisi's (1978) five characteristics of couple talk**. The results of this study should probe into whether or not some of these characteristics can also be applied for ELF couples. The results will present the connection between language and relationship and in this respect look at 'language as private code', 'language as erotic stimulant', 'love according to texts', 'interferences and misconceptions' and 'language as a means of memories'.

In the eighth section of the analysis, **ELF as a means to express emotions** is discussed in greater detail. Since it is used for a private area in life, expressing emotions is essential for the couples and therefore it is explained to a greater degree in the interviews. Some examples of the areas

concerning the expression of emotions are 'expressing love, 'expressing anger' and 'expressing humor' in ELF. This section is titled "Approach of the analysis of the data" but seems only to list how one might present the data and not how one area leads into the analysis of another or how the areas are intertwined or not. In this section I hope to justify the reasoning behind the way I performed my analysis.

5. RESULTS

5.1. Motivations for choosing ELF

In contrast with other bilingual couples, my participants overcame the language barrier by switching to a lingua franca. All of them have more than one important reason for their language choice and they all have similar motivations. The most important reason for choosing ELF is that it is the most commonly understood language. English is not only understood by those within the relationship, but also by their friends as well. S2 talks about the choice of ELF in general and names some reasons for having chosen ELF.

S2: Well. (.) **English** has a kind of **international standard**¹, you know. Anywhere you go on the world, most places, the people have at least some notions of English. So, English is a pretty good language. It's also not so hard, pretty easy to learn. That's also, I guess, the reason why we communicate in English.

(Extract 10: C1)

According to my participants, this “international standard” is responsible for people’s high rate of proficiency the English language. The high rate proficiency is also a reason for choosing ELF. Although most of the participants speak other languages, they all use ELF; because in the other foreign languages they are not as proficient as in English. S9 and S10 make it unmistakably clear that English was their only choice as a lingua franca, and that due to the proficiency level they have not considered any other language at all. “English is the only foreign language we are most proficient in. Any other language would severely impair our means of communication (I5: C5: page 3)”. Furthermore, the high rate of people’s command of English worldwide is perceived as convenient for my participants. C3 and C4 gave the following answer to why they chose English as a means of communication:

S7: Yeah. because of **convenience**. That’s the language we both can speak.

¹ Words, phrases or sentences printed in **bold** are those referred to in the text surrounding them

S6: So. In Costa Rica. Ahm (.) Her Spanish was not as good. Her English was LITTLE bit better at the moment when we met. Costa Rica is a very touristy place and we do use English most of the times. You find many people who speak English. And here as well. Here it is just convenient. Well here most of her friends speak English and my German is not that great. And so well it's just convenient. (...)

S6: We would love to make more of our conversations in Spanish, but it's just convenient to use English. Well like Paulo and Connie said. I mean sometimes or very often you are surrounded by people that won't speak Spanish. And I can't speak German even though I want to, so we end up speaking in English just because it's so convenient.

(Extract 11: C3 and C4)

All of the participants of this study highlighted that one major motivation for their language choice is the reason of fairness. Since English is nobody's mother tongue, nobody is disadvantaged. It is almost impossible for the multilingual couples to learn their partner's mother tongue to an extent that would enable communication at the same level of proficiency. English has the advantage that it is 'only' the lingua franca and that both communicational partners have some distance from it. They all have a relatively similar command of English, and therefore perceive it as a neutral mutual language. In the third interview C3 and C4 intensely discuss the issue of distance, fairness and neutrality as one reason for their choice.

S5: Sometimes I would just like to speak German with him, but it wouldn't be **fair**.

S6: 'Cause I mean she speaks her mother language German, my mother language is Spanish. We will never be at the same level. And I do feel comfortable with English. So English is good. I need to learn German, I want to learn German, but unless I learn German as perfect as she can use it (.) English will remain my favorite. 'Cause in Spanish it's just not fair. I could carry on a conversation in Spanish and she could follow me, but it wouldn't be fair. I would be on top. I would be in command of the conversations and this is just not how it works. I would agree with what Stefano and Sarah said, it's just the most neutral and it helps a lot.

(Extract 12: C3)

ELF offers the couples the possibility of a fair conversation. It enables them to lead a conversation of which nobody is disadvantaged. All the communication partners are equal in their ability to use English. This issue of fairness also contributes to the fact that my participants simply feel comfortable when communicating in English. None of them would change to another language if they could. "As I said, I feel really comfortable with English, and for me it's not a problem to use it day by day" (C3: S6).

In most cases the couple's motivations for using ELF can be explained and justified, but sometimes the decision to use ELF was made subconsciously. They simply did not think about their language choice and the issue of which language to use when and how has never been taken into consideration. The following extract illustrates C2's subconscious decision to speak English. It also illustrates the automatic use of English compared to the 'forced' use of their mother tongues.

I: But, why did you choose English as a means of communication?

S4: We met in the UK.

I: Ok

S3: so the whole surrounding was in English. It was not a decision. We just met each other in English. We lived in a flat with some other people and we spoke English all the time. So that's just the way we started and continued.

(...)

S4: yeah

S3: So yeah. I think English is what comes naturally most of the time. Spanish sometimes. And sometimes it's a conscious, a conscious decision that we speak in Spanish now. And I think German, well, it's when we are with my family or friends then we speak in German. But it's not like well let's speak in German now, that's just ok, because they speak German so we also try to speak German But I think most of the times English is what comes most naturally. (...)

(Extract 13: C2)

C2 met in the UK; they met in English and continued in English. The decision for their language choice was natural and to some extent it was made for them. Compared to C3 and C4 who had started in Spanish, because they met in Spain and Costa Rica, but they have then consciously decided to switch to English. The motivation behind this language shift was also the first

reason discussed in the analysis section. English is simply the language everybody understands and therefore makes life easier for the couple.

I: ok. So have you always communicated in English together?

S8: No we started in Spanish in Spain. But it was like I was playing with the advantage and then we decided in the summer in London to switch to English.

S7: Yeah. At the beginning we were just talking Spanish.

S8: Spanish always. Maybe a bit of Italian

S7: And then when he always came visiting me. And then with my friends. And that everyone can understand each other, we started to speak English

S8: It was a bit. Always playing with my advantage. Because I can use. So when there was a fight or something I was always talking Spanish. And she was not understanding.

S7: well, we switched to English on purpose. We talked about it, and well it just made life so much easier for us and others.

(Extract 14: C4)

Another relevant reason which must not be neglected when discussing the couples' language choices is the fact that they simply enjoy the English language. All of the couples perceive English as a prestigious language which they feel comfortable with and which they enjoy speaking. None of the couples would rather communicate in their mother tongues. This is illustrated by two statements of the participants.

S4: Well for me. I **enjoy speaking English**. I love the language.

S1: No, I really enjoy communicating in English with Eric. I wouldn't wanna communicate in German. I mean I wouldn't mind if he would learn German and if we could also communicate in German, but no, I'm perfectly fine with English.

S2: Well, same with me. I wouldn't wanna communicate in Portuguese with her. **I love English** and I have always wanted to have an English speaking girlfriend. This is hot. @@@

(Extract 15: C2 and C1)

All of the couples interviewed generally enjoyed the fact that they speak English with each other. They perceive ELF as something really special and

regard it as 'their' language instead of just 'a' language. My next chapter will shed light on the importance of ELF for the couples.

5.2. The importance of ELF

The importance of ELF is perceived differently not only by each couple, but also by each of the individuals. For some interviewees ELF turned out to be their "second life", for others it is restricted to being only the language of their relationship. For two couples it is the only way to communicate, whereas for the other three, it is only one more language that can be used for the purpose of communication. This is indicative of differences in the significance of language choice for each couple, ELF is generally perceived as being extremely crucial for the relationship. All the three couples who claimed that ELF is only one more 'way of communication' revealed that it is the most important 'way of communication'. ELF makes the couple's relationship. It is the foundation on which their relationship is built and the longer their relationship has lasted the more important ELF has become for them. Four out of five couples said that the importance of ELF is growing day by day and that the importance of ELF compared to their mother tongues is shifting as the relationship becomes deeper.

S9: English was never really important for me. I mean I had spent so much time learning it at school, but still it never meant anything. But then I went on this exchange semester to London and met Philipp there. Our relationship got more and more intense and English shifted from just a foreign language to my second language, or in these six months, to my first language. And the more I speak it with Philipp the more I like it.

S10. Well, I felt the same with her. I got used to her, I got used to English and I feel so much more comfortable now when using it. It definitely is extremely important for me, well for us, and it is getting more and more important.

(Extract 16: C5)

On the whole, the interviews revealed that the importance of ELF grows just as their relationship and feelings for each other grow and deepen. The section 5.2.3. *ELF versus the mother tongue* will shed light on the importance

of ELF compared to the importance of the participants' mother tongues and how the importance has shifted throughout their relationship.

5.2.1. Attitudes towards ELF

The participants of the present study have quite different attitudes towards ELF. Six out of ten participants truly love English as their means of communication, whereas the other four have a neutral attitude towards English. They neither like it nor dislike it. In the next two paragraphs, the participants' positive attitudes as well as the negative attitudes towards ELF will be stated.

One participant loves ELF because according to her, their relationship has more character. It makes it special and more interesting. Another participant likes it because it is, according to her, a prestigious language "which makes the relationship sound really sophisticated. @@@ (C1: S1). One male participant likes it, because he said that "English sounds tougher than Spanish" (C3: S6). Another frequently mentioned reason for the liking of ELF is that English is a world language. All of the participants perceive ELF as being so important because of the numerous situations where it can be used. ELF is not limited to just being the language of communication for these couples; it is a world language which a lot of people already speak, or in the participants' minds, should learn to speak. Furthermore, five participants mentioned the fact that English is so easy to learn and so easy to improve upon in terms of grammar and vocabulary.

S9: English is just so much easier than Polish or German. I mean it would be easier for me to learn Polish than for Philipp to learn German, because I already know a little bit of German, but still. It is so easy to speak English, to learn English and to improve it. It is an easy language and a good choice as a common language for everybody.

S10: Yeah, definitely a good choice as a worldwide lingua franca.
(Extract 17: C5)

All couples were aware of the fortunate coincidence that English has become the lingua franca worldwide, especially in Europe, and appreciate the fact

that they had the chance to learn it at school. One participant said “as much as I hated it at school, I appreciate it in retrospect. I’m glad that the Austrian school system forced us to take English and didn’t give us a choice” (C3: S5).

In stark contrast to the positive attitudes of ELF, the participants claimed by far to have less negative attitudes. Many of the negative attitudes stated by any participant were seemingly contradicted by his or her partner. When the interviewer explored the negative attitudes the participants admitted that ELF has to some extent the connotation of ‘Basic English’. Two interviewees spoke about a seemingly simplifying effect on their relationship. They perceive the use of ELF as their means of communication as a barrier to full and free communication within their relationship.

S8: You know, sometimes it just feels awkward when I pay attention to our conversations. They sound so **basic** and not very intelligent. When sometimes I really want to say something, but I’m getting tired of thinking about it and I don’t know the word I just express it in one or two sentences, instead of saying it in a long and nice way. And then the use of English seems restricted to me. I mean it seems as if it has restrictions on us. On our relationship.
(Extract 18: C4)

The other interviewee who claimed that ELF has the connotation of “Basic” English was concerned about the reputation of ELF. She was concerned that using ELF as a means of communication makes her relationship look basic from the outside. Although she does not really care how other people view it, she still does not wish the relationship to seem too basic or simple.

S1: Sometimes I feel so stupid when other people hear us communicating in English. I would just say some words and phrases and point at something and not use complicated language. It makes our relationship look so primitive. Which it isn’t. (.) But I mean actually I don’t really care what other people think anyway.
(Extract 19: C1)

Furthermore, one participant claimed that ELF is not a very sophisticated language when compared to native English standards. She perceives ELF as

being simple and raw. In her opinion it sometimes sounds like “learner talk” (I3: C4: S7). She sometimes wishes that they could have deeper and more philosophical conversations.

Having considered the positive attitudes as well as the negative ones, I will now come back to the question of identity. In the theory part of the project the questions of whether they lose or give up their identities, or are able to maintain them, were raised. As far as my participants were concerned, ELF made them acquire a new identity in addition to their old one. None of the interviewees perceived that using ELF has made them give up their identity. They claimed that it is rather an enrichment of who they are. S6 said, “there is no need to give up one’s identity, but there is room for both” (C3: S6). According to S6 the addition of this language only enhances one’s identity. He would have no problem with adding languages beyond English and Spanish to his repertoire.

5.2.2. Language awareness

All ten participants reported that their language awareness has risen due to the fact that they use ELF as the language of their relationship. Before having encountered a multilingual relationship they have taken it for granted that they would use their mother tongues with their life partners. Most of the interviewees expressed their gratitude that there exists “such a thing as lingua franca, because without it our relationship wouldn’t work.” The same interviewee goes on to elaborate.

S6:One day it hit me right into my face when I once in a sudden became **aware** of the fact that I can only have a relationship with Sarah because of English. Otherwise it would suck. I’m very well aware of the importance of English and I’m thankful for it.

S6: I’m living in Europe thanks to ELF: Period it. I came following her, because thanks to ELF. I got to know her enough so I felt comfortable enough to follow a dream. **Here I am. Thanks to ELF**

S7: @@@

S8: @@@@ ELF rules. Yeah. I want you to promote my X

S5: @@@@

S8: For us **ELF influences my life** a lot. The advantage is that I was living in London and my English was really lazy, I needed it for work for my relationship. My relationship was only professional, I never used personal English before. But now it becomes important. (...) and I'm getting more and more aware of the importance.

S6: But no, seriously. I'm **having a relationship thanks to ELF**.

(Extract 20: C3 and c4)

These extracts show the language awareness of using ELF in a relationship. The couples' awareness of languages has also been increased by the fact that they were switching back and forth between languages. It was particularly interesting for me to question them about different situations where they used different languages. The three couples of the study who are consistently switching back and forth between two or more languages all admitted that they are fully aware of the language choices they have. Interestingly, they all claim that they are aware but they all have trouble recalling particular situations in which they used English or another language. Most of the times they would simply use one language and then they would subconsciously switch to another. In spite of their inability to think of exact situations, their statements regarding the switch of languages were quite enlightening. Two such statements follow.

I: So in which situations do you use English and in which situations do you speak Spanish. Can you say a little bit about it?

S7: We just talk Spanish as I said before. (.) when we talk about private stuff and we don't want the others to understand us,

I: aha

S7: but in general English

S8: Yeah with lots of people around we would talk something stupid which each other we talk in Spanish or in Italian. But maybe if we fight and the fight is really going up up up, Maybe I talk Italian. And she starts talking German, but after half an hour we come back to the English.

(Extract 21: C4)

This extract shows that in 'normal' language use situations, C4 uses English. But in specific language use situations, they occasionally switch to their mother tongues. According to C4 these specific language use situations are

when they are surrounded by other people, but still wanted to have a private conversation, or when they have an intense argument. ELF is the 'ordinary way' of speaking, whereas their mother tongue is reserved for special moments. All the participants' answers clearly indicate that English is used as their 'normal' means of communication, whereas their mother tongues are used for exceptional language use situations. Although C2 cannot really specify certain situations their answer shows that they switch back to English when the conversations become serious and when it is important for everyone to understand.

S3: Well I don't think it's possible to really-

S4: Sometimes she changes to English if she thinks I'm not understanding or if she thinks she cannot express herself properly.

S3: Yes, I think arguing is more in English than in Spanish. @@ (.) I mean we speak far more English than Spanish. Still. But it's not such certain situations where we speak Spanish or English.

(Extract 22: C2)

For the other two couples it was easier to recall situations because they claimed to use English 95% to 99% of the time. If they do switch to German, it is only because they are surrounded by people who do not speak English or they do it on purpose for practicing their partners' German skills or for joking.

S2: I speak exclusively English.

S1: Me, I speak **95%** in English,

S2: No it's even **99%**.

S1: you know there are some terms in German like 'du bist schlimm' (*you are bad*), or 'Guten Morgen' (*Good morning*) or something like this but besides this it's always English. Sometimes we are trying to speak a bit more German so that he can learn it then you know we are kind of pushing ourselves to say something in German. But basically like yeah you said **it's not even 95% but it's 99 % in English.**

I: Ok

S1: So to speak German, so to answer your question. It's more to make a joke or be funny.

I: so you pick out certain phrases.

S1: yeah exactly

(Extract 23: C1)

The aim of this study is also to probe into the matters of communicative goals and correctness. The participants are aware that the use of ELF entails certain limitations as far as the articulation and expression of thoughts are concerned. All of the interviewees expressed their views on whether or not is important for them to speak 'proper' English. When discussing the issue of correctness in their way of speaking, 'proper' English has been measured by native English standards. The majority of the participants are aware that they speak ELF and not British, American or any other prestigious variety of English. They do not have a problem with it because they claim that ELF has become part of their identity and the way they speak English represents them as users of ELF in their relationships. They are aware of the doors which ELF might open for them and their partners, but they are also aware of the difficulties that might arise. Nonetheless, their overall perception of ELF is that it serves the communicative goal and whether or not they speak correctly is not important for them.

S1: I know that my English is far away from being perfect, but I don't care. All I care about is communicating with him. And that he understands me. Of course sometimes I wished that English would be my second mother tongue in which I would just (.) just be as as fluent as in German, but oh well (.) I don't care. These difficulties are challenges, but not problems.

S2: yeah, for me it is also not important how we say what we say. But we can talk to each other AND understand each other.

(Extract 24: C1)

As mentioned before, for the majority of participants the communicative goal was considered more important than correctness, but some participants have to struggle with the fact that they speak ELF. S7 has been learning English at school and at University and is used to being corrected when speaking English. She has acquired sensitivity for phonetically and grammatically correct English and has problems with the way English is spoke in her relationship. She is afraid of adopting her boyfriend's Italian English which, according to her, does not sound like proper or correct English. The fact that she uses ELF in her relationship has made her less secure when using the language. She said that she is now afraid of speaking English at University

because she finds herself using Italian English. In S7's opinion, speaking English according to native English standards is the appropriate use of the language, and therefore she experiences ELF as simply not correct.

S7: Well I know that English is not my mother tongue and that I don't have to speak it perfectly, but it is just that I'm so used to perfect it day by day. At first at school and now at University. Using it grammatically or phonetically wrong frustrates me sometimes. When I hear myself acquiring his accent I just think it's not right. I also realized that I've become more insecure when I have to say something at University in front of my professors and colleagues.

I: where do you think this insecurity comes from?

S7: well I think because I got so used to speaking English however I want to speak without paying attention to if it is correct or not.

(Extract 25: C4)

S3 also studies English and hence, tries to speak as native-like as possible. For S3 the communicative goal is more important than correctness, but nonetheless she considers native Englishes as being correct and certain ways of using ELF as incorrect. As discussed in the second chapter of this study, the more languages one speaks the more language awareness one gets. Bearing in mind the previous points, I will now turn to the awareness of ELF and their mother tongues and discuss the importance of ELF versus the other languages.

5.2.3. *ELF versus mother tongue*

As mentioned in the theory part of the project, this study tries to shed light on how important certain languages are for the couples. Are some languages considered as more important than others? If so; why? In this respect, this thesis probes the importance of ELF as compared to that of the mother tongues of the participants.

The majority of the people interviewed claimed that ELF is as important as their mother tongues. While it was generally agreed that ELF has become more important throughout their relationship, not all the answers of the participants are clear-cut. Three participants said that whether or not ELF is

more or less important totally depends on the situation. In some language use situations their mother tongue is more important and in some situations ELF is more important. Although it may be true that the importance depends on the situation, if one only looks at the couples and their relationships then ELF is definitely more important. The following extracts show the answers of five participants and explain why they consider it as important as their mother tongues and when they consider it as more important.

S10: For me, English is **as important as my mother tongue** and definitely **more important than any other foreign language** as it is the most commonly used language in the academic world.

S2: I think it is as important as my mother tongue because it gives you the opportunity to communicate with other people from other places, like with you for example.

I: But I mean for your relationship, do you think it became more important because you speak it with her and it's YOUR language so to say.

S2: In our relationship it's how we communicate,

S1: well for me it definitely became more important because before English was something we have been using once in a while. But basically yeah it became more important because now we speak it every day and I. There are days when I speak definitely more English than German. And that's also funny because at university when I have to do speeches I feel much more comfortable when I can do it in English than in German. It definitely became more important.

S3: I think. Well I think it is actually the same important. I mean of course my mother tongue is very important for me, but in English you can communicate with far more people than it is possible in in German. So for that it's it's the same important for me.

I: Ok.

S4: But I think this changes. Maybe for you not. But for many people. If your aren't familiar with a language it is not important , but then it changes the better you speak it. Because I remember at the beginning when I was studying English I always swap to Spanish, if I had the opportunity. And with the Spanish people or with any other nationalities it's probably the same. But especially for the Spanish. Since we are not so fluent with English when we studied at school and everything. And yes at the beginning we always we always changed to Spanish. But for me now I don't mind. If I'm in a group of people I do not mind what to speak. But at the beginning until I was some years in England and

surrounded in work environment and private life with English. Then slowly I didn't really care what language we spoke. And this is the same with the relationship.

I: So it also became more important then.

S4: I guess so. Yes (.) yes

(Extract 26: C1, C2 and C5)

Two participants clearly distinguished between communication in their relationships and communication outside their relationships, whereas for other participants it is more complex to label.

S5: In the **relationship English is really important**, but in my **daily life German is way more important**.

I: And what about you?

S7: Well I couldn't say one is more important than the other(.) 'Cause with him it's English and with others it's German. So it depends.

(Extract 27: C3 and C4)

Whereas for S5 and S7 their mother tongue still plays an essential role in their life, S6 and S8 consider it as less important. They both moved to Austria to live with their girlfriends and the importance of ELF compared to their mother tongues has been growing remarkably.

S6: Right now it's much more important than my mother tongue. Just because my mother tongue here is nothing. It's just an exotic language from across the ocean. A language everyone wants to learn as a hobby. English now it's something that gets me through day by day.

S8: Well for me yeah. But I was kind of lazy to talk English all the time. I was travelling and the more I left home I need to talk English for work and so. And I was kind of lazy. I was just shouting shit in Italian like XXXX and and all the people around XXX. But always was more important for my life here. And living outside of Italy was always talking with people in English and now to rule my life I use English. If you want to I could try to talk German. Like in my work when I talk German the people who depend on me are like HAHA. Let's see English for me is my rule. I'm so lazy and so bad talking English, but it's my rule and my first language now.

(Extract 28: C3 and C4)

These two extracts clearly show that ELF has become so remarkably important for them, because of the languages surrounding them. Since their local communicational environment does not speak their mother tongues, they have to rely on ELF to manage daily life. Whether this is an advantage or a disadvantage will be discussed in the next two chapters. The following chapter deals with the advantages for a relationship when using ELF.

5.3. The advantages of using ELF

As far as the participants of this study are concerned, using ELF as a means of communication has more advantages than disadvantages. Every participant could immediately come up with numerous advantages, whereas some of them had to think extremely hard when talking about the disadvantages. Since the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, none of the couples would elect to change their choice of communication.

One of the major advantages of using a lingua franca and not his or the partner's mother tongue is the fact that ELF is neutral. All of my participants really appreciate the equal and neutral access to the language. ELF enables the participants to communicate in a foreign language in which they feel comfortable, but to which they are still emotionally more detached than to their mother tongues. Since both use English as a language they can rely on and as a lingua franca, they can also understand each other and they are able to relate to what it means to communicate in ELF and what the use of ELF can do and what its limitations are. The fact that ELF is considered as neutral enables a fair communication for the couples. C4 addresses the fairness of English used as private lingua franca.

I: Well what would you say are the advantages of using ELF.

S3: Well, because **it's for both not the mother tongue** so that's an advantage of mine. (.) for me compared to speaking Spanish for example. Because it's his native language and for me it's not. So it's like (.)

S4: neutral

S3: Yeah it's neutral and we both have more or less the same language. So it's fair.

S4: hm. Yeah.

(Extract30: C2)

Besides the fact that ELF is considered as neutral and fair, all the participants also claimed that ELF has a simplifying effect on their communication. In the majority of cases, the participants perceived this simplifying effect as an advantage. They all asserted that they bring issues straight to the point and that they feel less shy to say something. Furthermore, the participants perceived to have fewer inhibitions to say something. Whereas they would hesitate to say something the way they do in English in their mother tongues, they feel comfortable when speaking ELF.

S1: I don't know. I also feel that I can speak you know. The boyfriend I had before with whom I was speaking German. (.) sometimes it's easier if you communicate in English. If it's not your mother tongue. I feel, I don't know, **more free** to say what I want. Well I think that since my English is also not that great I really have to bring things to the point. Well sometimes it's really, I can't make so much blabla like I would in German. I have to try to **bring it straight to the point**, and that's maybe also an advantage. And yeah, I feel more comfortable speaking English than German. I don't know why.

S2: You feel feel **less shy to say things**. For example something which maybe would sound a little bit more ridiculous in your own language and in English it can even be more cute or sweet or whatever. (.)

(Extract 31: C1)

These extracts clearly show that the participants enjoy communicating in ELF and that they make use of the advantages. It also shows that they care less about what to say and how to put it. They do not weigh words in the same way as they would in their mother tongues. In this respect, they are more likely to say what they think and what they really want to say instead of 'beating around the bush'. This also has the advantage that they care less about how it might sound to other people. Most of the participants stated that the use of ELF makes them concentrate and focus more on their relationship and on the communication with their partners. Furthermore, these extracts show that the illocutionary intent, meaning the way they perceive and

understand certain things their partners say, varies from the illocutionary goal. The participants sometimes play with the advantage that they communicate in ELF and not in their mother tongues. They are all fully aware of possible misconceptions and miscommunications that might arise and use this knowledge for their own benefits.

S4: You know sometimes you can just play that this is a misunderstanding. @@@

S3: What? @@@

S4: Just kidding.

(Extract 32: C2)

Although this statement of S4 was clearly meant as a joke it turned out that this was still true. Subconsciously, they make use of the fact that English is their foreign/second language and not their mother tongue. They all claim that certain misunderstandings occur because of ELF, but they also claim that certain misunderstandings are not taken seriously or do not cause problems because of the fact that they communicate in ELF. In addition, the majority of the participants also claim that their conversations seem to be more relaxed. S4 perceives it as an advantage that their communication gets 'diminished'. He said that the words do not lose meaning, but that they get softened.

Another big advantage of ELF is simply that English *IS* a lingua franca. All of the participants are aware of the fact that they can have a relationship only because of ELF. They all mentioned that ELF opens doors, which otherwise would be closed. The participants of this study do not only perceive it as an advantage for the communication in their relationship, but also for communicating outside their relationship. ELF enables the participants to travel and move around the world without worrying about the various different languages that are spoken. Since English is a lingua franca and people throughout the world have a good command of it, they cannot only communicate with their partners, but also with friends of their partners. ELF enables them to move to their partner's home country and to build up a life there. ELF helps them to get a job and to get to know people. They are able

to make friends and interact with the people in the country. Of course, it is not the same as being in one's own country and not everybody speaks English and is able to have a sophisticated conversation in ELF, but the majority of people have at least some command of English.

S6: Because of ELF we can have a relationship, **it opens doors**. It is an advantage for us in every aspect of life. In the relationship and out of the relationship. I can have a job, I can make friends and, and, I mean I can have a life pretty much (.) Thanks to ELF.
(Extract 33: C3)

All of the participants perceived it as a big advantage that due to ELF their partners are able to have a life outside their relationship. It would be constricting if they could only communicate with their partners. The participants who moved to their partner's country stressed the importance of ELF. Two of them claimed that they would feel extremely suffocated if English were not a major lingua franca.

Additionally, the participants perceived the use of ELF as an advantage for their relationship, because it is something special. Using ELF distinguishes them from other couples using their mother tongue. They perceive their relationship as being exotic and therefore more interesting. Six participants claim that ELF makes the relationship more exciting.

S2: I have always wanted to have an English speaking girlfriend. It is awesome. It is so much cooler than communicating in the mother language. I mean I LOVE English. I love the fact that we are able to use English as our language. (.) It's ahm. Well (.) I think it is so cool. It is exotic. And it's exciting. Not just sometimes, but every day. I have never experienced this before. Maybe it is not because of English. Or not only because of English. But. Oh. Ahm. I think English definitely helps.

S1: Well, this is also definitely the most exciting relationship I have ever been in too.

(Extract 34: C1)

Last but not least, I want to present another important advantage of using ELF, namely the steady improvements of the participants' English skills. All of the interviewed people mentioned the continuously growing importance of

English. They all perceive English as the most important international language which opens doors and makes certain things possible. Thus, the improvements of their English skills broaden one's mind and horizon. Improving their English skills is not only perceived as an advantage for their relationship and their private life, but also for their professional life outside their relationship. Due to the fact that they use it as a means of communication in their relationship, they become more confident when using the language in general.

S4: Well I mean the easiest thing is when you are. Well we are quite international. So when you are with all the people it's always.

S3: well ok. Yeah but that's not just for us. That's more in general

S4: Yeah, but I mean for all the people, I guess. As I told you I was in the UK for a long time and well many people that are not still not very fluent in English, but it's the only common language between them, and then obviously they are they keep practicing as you were saying before. So that if you **get better with a language because you have it in your relation**. I guess many people. I guess many people they, maybe they improve or not, but they get at least more confident. It's something normal then. They speak it with their partner. So I think this helps them as well. For work or if they were having international friends. And then I guess for such people this is an advantage I think.

(Extract 35: C2)

ELF as the language of couples has many advantages for the participants' relationship and for the individual participants in general. But having considered the advantages of using ELF, it is also essential to take the disadvantages into consideration. My next analysis chapter will shed light on some negative aspects and negative repercussions which the participants have to face.

5.4. The disadvantages of using ELF

As noted in the previous section, the number of advantages outweighs the number of disadvantages. When considering the positive aspects for their relationship, it is important to look at them from a different angle. Very often it turned out that the participants perceived certain advantages also as

disadvantages. For example when looking at the fact that ELF distinguishes their relationship from an ordinary relationship using the mother tongue. My participants claimed that ELF is an advantage, because it is different and it makes the relationship special. On the other hand, they also claimed that sometimes they have no desire to be different; sometimes they do not want to have an exotic relationship; sometimes they simply wished they could have a relationship like anybody else.

S6: Well, the only disadvantage I could think of right now is. Sometimes, well sometimes I'm just sick of it. **Sometimes I just don't wanna speak English.** I would just like to shout stuff in Spanish. From the top of my lungs. Sometimes I hate it. But again. This is only sometimes.

(Extract 36: C3)

S6 makes clear that using ELF can be frustrating and tiring. Feeling frustration and exhaustion of using ELF is one of the major disadvantages mentioned by the participants of this study. According to the participants there are various different aspects which can make ELF tiring. All of the participants complained about the fact that they occasionally lack vocabulary for particular situations. In some situations they cannot express themselves properly in English. This leads to an emotional state of frustration. Whereas they would be able to express themselves in various different ways in their mother tongues, the participants have to face limited ways of expression in ELF. S3 talks about this frustrating feeling when lacking vocabulary. It makes her feel helpless and inferior. From time to time this limited way of expression in ELF makes her angry, even furious and sad.

S3: Yeah, because it's sometimes. Sometimes the **words are just missing** and I would like to explain something in really great detail or like specific moods or and so on, where in German I have a huge pool of words to choose from and in English my vocabulary is limited. It's sometimes harder to explain things properly.

I: ahhm. And how does this make you feel.

S3: It makes me feel frustrated. Really, really frustrated. Sometimes I get so mad at myself. Or mad at the fact that I have to speak English. I'm like. Ahm. Just SO frustrated. I mean this is

really rare. Most of the times I love it as I said, but sometimes it makes me mad.

(Extract 37: C2)

S1 also gets frustrated, but because of a slightly different reason. It bothers her that her partner's English is better than hers. Sometimes he is in command of the conversation and dominates her verbally. Thus, S1 feels helpless, like S3, and inferior due to the limited ways of expression in ELF.

S1: I think for me and our relationship a disadvantage is that his English is better than mine and he is kind of dominating me verbally. Sometimes he is just speaking and speaking and I can't say a word, because I don't know the word so I have to use other terms. And I have to kind of explain.

(Extract 38: C1)

Frustration caused by limited ways of expression in ELF is not something extremely striking, but occasionally there occur situations where S9 would prefer to resort to her mother tongue. The simplifying effect of ELF that had been mentioned as an advantage can occasionally turn out to be a disadvantage. Sometimes the participants do not want to bring certain things straight to the point. Sometimes they simply want to express them in a complicated way and sometimes they simply want to 'beat around the bush'. The following extract shows that as much of an advantage the simplifying effect of ELF can be, it can also be a disadvantage.

S9: It seems to me that **English has a simplifying effect** on the way I speak in comparison to Polish. Most of the times I like it. I don't have to bother about how to say certain things, but sometimes I just hate it. Sometimes I regret that it is impossible to express some things in exactly the same way as I can do it in my mother tongue. Probably this is mostly the effect of my insufficient knowledge of English. (.) and it only rarely occurs when I want to express things that are really important for me. But sometimes, Oh my gosh. Sometimes I just wanna speak Polish. So badly.

(Extract 39: C5)

The only time when using ELF is frustrating for S10 is when talking about unusual topics. He claimed that both he and his partner have a great and

sufficient knowledge of English. He is of the opinion that they can talk about almost everything without getting frustrated or without getting tired of the fact that they have to use ELF. According to him, it happened extremely rarely that he got frustrated and if he did, then it was because of a topic they had never dealt with before. He mentioned topics such as explaining certain illnesses or certain technical instructions, where English for specific purpose skills were required. In such situations it was either the case that he was lacking the subject knowledge, or his partner was, and resultantly it was tiring for either him to explain it to her, or for his partner to explain it to him. These situations made S10 feel disadvantaged when communicating in ELF.

Four participants of the present study do not only perceive it as a disadvantage that they cannot always express themselves in the way they would like to, but they also get frustrated when their partners have difficulties expressing what they really want to say.

S4: Yeah, well, sometimes when she speaks on the phone she is really loud. @@

S3: And this is only in English?

S4: Well I don't know on the phone we don't speak another language.

I: And this is a disadvantage? @@

S4: she gets angry with me because I make her repeat.

S3: Well, sometimes it's just so annoying if you only quickly want to say something. Fix a date or time, or I don't know. Anything. And you need an hour for a phone call which you could also make in a minute.

(Extract 40: C2)

For S6 it is frustrating that sometimes his partner does not even try to express herself, because she is not precisely sure of how to do so. S6 said of himself that he is really patient and that he does not mind helping her out with vocabulary or guidelines, but she sometimes simply does not want any help. Therefore, she sometimes refuses to say what she wants to say, because of missing vocabulary or a missing command of English.

S6: Sometimes she doesn't even try. And this is what I don't like. I could help her out with words and so on, but she is so stubborn sometimes.

S5: well, your English is better than mine. You don't know how it feels to really want to say something, but you just don't know how.

S6: but still, it is just so sad for me to know that you want to say something, but you don't because you don't know how. (.) . I just wished you would try.

(Extract 41: C3)

ELF can occasionally be a disadvantage for C5 because, due to certain limitations, details can get lost. Most of the time details are not important for them, but occasionally details are essential for a successful relationship.

S10: Sometimes, you express something in a simplified way and then the **details get lost**. Well (.) in most cases I don't care. I I don't have to know them. You know. All the details, but sometimes I NEED to know them.

S9: Yeah sometimes, it's so frustrating to know. When you realize that your partner wants to say more or different things than he says.

(Extract 42: C5)

As far as the limited ways of expression in ELF and the disadvantages for the relationship are concerned it is significant to mention the expression of emotions. All of the interviewed couples perceived to be disadvantaged when talking about emotions. Most of the participants did not refer to it as a major problem, but rather as a challenge, but still they felt disadvantaged. Since the expression of emotions is a delicate and interesting topic, which was discussed in great detail in the theory part. It will also be discussed in greater detail in a separate section of the analysis part.

The fact that the participants can communicate in ELF without learning the partner's language has been discussed as a major advantage. Nonetheless, it is also a big disadvantage for their relationship, because they do not have to learn the other one's language anymore. With the exception of the fifth couple, all couples have the desire to learn their partner's language. Unfortunately, they do not have the need to learn his or her language, because they can rely on a lingua franca. This slows down the learning

process enormously and can have negative repercussions on their relationship. Especially the participants who moved to their partner's country are disadvantaged, because their communication is restricted to people who speak English. Furthermore, their professional life is restricted to jobs where one does not necessarily have to speak the country's official language.

S8: For me it's like. Not this really big, but this. The problem is talking English with her. My life around is usually in English than if I maybe don't talk English with her she can't talk English than I'm forced to learn German. So now my learning German is getting really slow. I can talk in English outside in the work. It's not important with me in my life to talk, but with my partner it's important and since she speaks English so well, my German is not improving. My German is like comic German.

S6: Yeah that could be a disadvantage. **It stops me from learning German. Yeah you always recur to the English**

S7: And for me it's the same with Spanish.

S6: Instead of making an effort to go through it in German you just end up in-

S5: -You get lazy

S6: Yeah, well (.) Not really lazy. Oh yeah lazy. You always go for the easiest way.

S8: In the moment you really need to talk is when you need to talk with your couple. And if you are doing it in English. The moment you are out on the street you really don't need to talk German

(Extract 43: C3 and C4)

This conversation between the third and fourth couples clearly indicates that the participants have the desire to learn their partner's language, but since English is a worldwide lingua franca this is no longer required. Nonetheless, in some situations it would be essential for the participants and for their relationship to communicate in their partner's language. S2 sometimes feels neglected and left out in conversations when S1 and her family are communicating together. S1 sometimes thinks that ELF makes him lonely.

S2: Mostly, that I am here and everybody speaks German and I don't.

S1: Sometimes Patrick feels a bit lonely because he can't speak to anyone else except of me.

S2: Especially when we have dinner with the whole family. It sucks. Although that very often I don't mind just to zone out, it can be frustrating sometimes.

Bearing in mind the advantages and disadvantages of using ELF the language in one's relationship, my next chapter will delve into the topic of ELF as a future family language.

5.5. ELF as a future family language

The decision (conscious or subconscious) to use ELF as the language of couples is already quite complex. But, incorporating possible children into the decision is a lot more demanding. All of the interviewed couples have already discussed this issue with their partners before. However, the majority of people have not come up with a final and definite answer. The couples are all fully aware of the possible repercussions which ELF might have on their family communication and on their children's language identity. Furthermore, they are aware of the big influence their future language choice will have on the children. The next section will probe into the matter of reasons for as well as against using ELF as a family language. None of the couples were completely for or against ELF as a family language. The participants only shared their thoughts concerning why they would or would not consider it.

5.5.1. *Couple 1*

The first couple would choose English as a family language. Momentarily, their future plans are to live in Austria and to raise their children in Austria. Since S2 does not speak German yet, they predict that they will continue speaking English most of the time. They want their children to grow up bilingual in English and German. If they only spoke German to S1 and to the surrounding environment, S1 would not be able to follow them. He would be excluded from their conversations and eventually he would feel neglected. Since they do not want to change ELF as their means of communication, they think that their children would automatically pick up English. Additionally, it is essential for them that their children speak English, because they do not

want to keep them ignorant. C1 wants their children to be able to take part and be part of their conversations. Another reason why English would be their choice of family language is the fact that it is a lingua franca worldwide. C1 are of the opinion that the sooner their children learn it, the better it will be for their future lives and careers. Furthermore, they claim that they would simply choose ELF as a family language out of habit. Since they are so used to speaking English all the time, they think that they would not be able to speak any other language. Their plan is that S1 will speak German to the kids when she is alone with them, or when German speaking people are around them, but that they will speak English with S2 and as family language in general.

S2: I think it will be the family language with a mixture of German.

S1: I mean think of your family. Sometimes you are speaking a few sentences in English, then your Granny speaks a few sentences in Portuguese and then there is someone who is speaking a few sentences in French. It's rarely in your family that you have a conversation in one language. (.)

S2: English will definitely continue to be THE language. At least partially. I mean if we stay here, if we have kids here we wouldn't want them to learn English before German. This wouldn't make sense.

(Extract 45: C1)

5.5.2. Couple 2

The second couple would not consider ELF as family language. They are against the choice of ELF for various reasons. Most importantly, C2 would not take ELF into consideration, because they perceive it as being inappropriate. They are of the opinion that ELF, meaning the way they speak English, deviates from the way English should be spoken. Hence, they would not want their children to acquire 'their' wrong, non-native English. C2 claimed that they would use their mother tongues with their children. S3 would speak German and S4 would speak Spanish. The only situation where they would hypothetically switch to English would be if they lived in an English speaking country or if they were surrounded by English speaking people. If they would live in an English speaking country, they would be

determined to speak as little English as possible and to use their mother tongues. Conveying a multilingual identity and raising their children's language awareness is the primary goal for S3 and S4. Having said that, it is important to stress the fact that C2 would not totally abandon English. It would be essential for them that they speak English really well and that they would not have a problem switching back and forth between German, Spanish and English.

S4: Yeah I think not. I think. If I. If we are living in an English speaking country then yes, but although otherwise I would like to speak with my children and so in Spanish.

S3: That's what I meant. As long as it is just the two of us it will stay English. With children. It's a yeah. Continue.

S4: Yeah **I would like to speak in Spanish.** I would like that Spanish my children like. Yeah it should be really Spanish. Yeah and for example you **would speak real German to them. But I wouldn't like that they learn how I speak.**

S3: yeah our English.

S4: But if we would be living in the UK. Which I think maybe at some point for some time. Maybe. It would also be good for them. So that they will learn proper English-. So actually if I'm with her and we have children I wouldn't like we speak English between each other. I would prefer we speak Spanish or German.

S3: Yeah it's the same with me.

I: So that they are not exposed to.

S4: I don't like that they would learn my English. No.

I: Ok, well I think you've answered all my questions. So, you wouldn't use English as your family language.

S3: [No

S4: No]

I: You would either speak Spanish or German

S3: Yes and also like living in the UK. **I would prefer to speak with them in Spanish or German at home.** Unless there were other people around. And then. Yes. But if we are living there I expect they go to an English school and they have English speaking friends and they learn the language outside anyway. And with two languages I think it's ok. So early for them. To have the two languages and then they could learn English obviously.

I: Yes. Ok. Ahm. (...) Yeah so you said you would only talk English with your kids if there were other people around.

S4: Yeah the thing is that with all the people. Ok first **I would like English as a language they can switch to quite easily** and maybe it's not a mother tongue language, but that they have no problems to switch. So that they are in an environment, where they are used to. Maybe to say one sentence in Spanish. And

maybe continue the same conversation in English. Which I do at work all the time. And for example. Ahh. As I said before. Most of my friends they are not. They speak English. So with. I'm with all my friends or with I'm abroad I expect that these situations arise, where I maybe speak with all the people and my children are there and they want to speak as well and participate and understand everything and maybe I turn to them and continue speaking Spanish. **So this should be something very normal.**

S3: yeah.

(Extract 46: C2)

5.5.3. Couples 3 and 4

The third and fourth couples were not always of the same opinion during the interview. Whereas the third couple would like to raise their children trilingual, the fourth couple would want to raise their children bilingual in their own mother tongues. C4 is of the same opinion as C2, namely that the children should not be exposed to "wrong" English. They would not want their children to hear them speaking English all the time and as a result eventually pick up their accent. One solution for them would be to reduce the use of ELF as the language of couples and not to use it as family language.

S7: We would keep English for us as a couple yeah, as a family no

S8: Yeah language of couples. We already talked a lot about families and it's a matter of.

S7: Yeah we think it's dumb to speak English with your child if it's not your mother tongue.

S8 So **we decided that one talks one language and the other one talks one language and the child will learn the mother language at school.** I know a lot of couples who already did this. We were talking like she talking English to her child and I'm talking Spanish and the German will arrive

S7: But **I don't think it will be good if I talk English with my child. I don't want my child to learn my English.**

S8: we would then maybe not speak English that often. It. Maybe it wouldn't be a real good idea.

S7: well, we just said that it would maybe help if we reduce speaking English, so that the children are not exposed to it all the time, but I mean, we don't know if it would work.

(Extract 47: C4)

C3, on the other hand, thinks that children are perfectly capable of dealing with three languages. S5 studies educational science and has often dealt with the issue of multilingualism. S6 stressed that the use of English in the family is particularly important because their children will be born with a multilingual identity, they will grow up in a multilingual surrounding and they will be raised in an international environment. Thus, S6 thinks that it is his duty as a father to provide them with all the tools and skills necessary to cope with this situation. It is important for him that his children not only cope with this situation, but that they like it and perceive it as 'normal'.

S6: I would really like to talk English with my children. I mean if I'll be a father **I want to provide them with every possible tool to make life easy for them.** Having said that, how could I then not speak English to them. I mean it is the most important international language. My Spanish, they won't need. Nobody speaks Spanish here. Nobody. Why would I only talk Spanish. English is what rules my life right now and if our situation doesn't change I can't imagine to abandon English. No.

S5: Yeah, and we have also talked about it before. **We think that the children are capable of dealing with three languages at the same time.** There are a lot of different theories about bilingual education and it's not. They always say like you should not speak in different languages to the kids. So when I'm the German one I should speak always German to them and he should always be speaking Spanish, but I think that a child is so able to, so open to everything. **I would like to raise them in German and Spanish, but to give them an English input if it's possible.** So it could take 3 languages then.

(Extract 48: C3)

5.5.4. Couple 5

The fifth couple has not really talked about their future yet, but nonetheless, they considered their choice of ELF as family language during the interview. Since they solely speak English with each other now, they claimed that it would be very likely that they retained ELF as their family language. Having said that it is important to note that they would make their decision dependent on the country where they lived and where they raised their children. But generally speaking, they really enjoy English and they do not have a problem with the fact that it is not their mother tongue. They also do not believe in a

'right or wrong' English and therefore, they would have no problem with speaking English to their children. C5 also claimed that they are proud of communicating in a lingua franca. Due to ELF they have acquired a different language awareness and language identity and they would neither want to give this up because of their children, nor would they want their children to be different. Additionally, they stressed the importance of one common family language. They want to have one language where they are all equally fluent and comfortable in, and that everybody can follow every conversation.

S10: I really enjoy speaking English with her, why would I wanna change it? And plus, I mean I don't speak Polish and I think that in the near future I won't be able to learn it so I would totally feel left out when she and my future kids, you know would talk and communicate.

S9: Ha. I never thought about that. So we could spy on you and talk behind your back. @@@@

S10: Haha. Funny. No but seriously would you want to change it?

S9: Well, no **I really like English. this is what makes us up and what's so special about us.**

(Extract 49: C5)

Having looked at the advantages and disadvantages which ELF create for a relationship and having taken the future family language into consideration, it is particularly interesting to look at the differences between using ELF as the language of the relationship as compared to the use of a mother tongue. The next chapter will shed light on the similarities and differences between ELF and mother tongue couple talk.

5.6. Similarities and differences to mother tongue couple talk - Repercussions on the relationship

Although the couples emphasized that there are differences for their relationship which are caused by the use of ELF, they could not really define any in particular. They also contradicted themselves several times. Therefore it is extremely difficult to present exact results. Sometimes they claimed that their relationship is the same or similar to any other relationship they have had with somebody speaking the same mother tongue, but then they

introduced certain differences. In my opinion they contradicted themselves numerous times because their relationship has many of the basic attributes of any relationship, but those attributes are affected by the added complexity of the relationship taking place in a second language. The following extract should illustrate the couples' indecisiveness and inconclusiveness.

S9: No our relationship does not differ from any other relationship I had with somebody else. We talk about the same stuff, we do the same things and we have the same worries. (..) no. well. I guess this is not true. In my past relationship my boyfriend lived in the same town, spoke the same language and things that we have to deal with now, we took for granted. Like what language will our children speak, where should we live, how will our future look like. And so on. (.) . You understand.

I: hm. Yeah.

S9: So, I guess there are a lot of differences. Well, but they are not important. They do not change my feelings for him.

(Extract 50: C5)

This extract is only one out of many examples where the participants contradicted themselves to some extent. To be more precise, she did not necessarily contradict herself, but she was recognizing a certain amount of complexity that is added to the relationship due to the fact that their language is not the first language for either partner. As she said, the basic principles and attributes of the relationship are the same as those of the relationships she has had with others, but there are added issues and complexities due to the fact that they speak this second language.

Generally speaking one could say that an 'ELF relationship' is similar to a 'mother tongue relationship' in terms of the feelings and emotions towards each other, but it is different in terms of accomplishment. To be more precise, the way they have to manage their lives, and the way they have to deal with everyday issues are different.

All couples reported that their relationships are the same regarding the emotions they feel for their partners. They experience love in the same way as well as feeling anger and dealing with fears that might come up. According to the couples they talk about similar topics and the seriousness and intensity

of their conversations are also perceived as similar to couple talk in the mother tongue. They also mentioned that they do similar things and that the courses of their days do not differ considerably. Several participants admitted that the way they organize their future would also be similar if they spoke their mother tongues. They make plans about the future and talk about it as much as any other couple. The only thing that differs regarding outlook on the future is that it is more unpredictable. Since the couples have to face language barriers and cultural barriers, there are differences they have to be aware of and overcome.

C1 saw the similarities especially in intimate situations. S2 says that there is “a universal language of love that everybody understands”. The way one touches, hugs and kisses a person does not differ. This also applies to the love one feels for a person. The feelings do not differ only because the person speaks another mother tongue and one has to use a lingua franca. S1 says that ELF does not change the personality.

The majority of the participants who described differences also emphasized that these differences are not worth mentioning. They claim that there are differences, and maybe even challenges, but not obstacles or problems.

S4: Of course, there are differences to. Ahm. When I would speak my mother tongue, but the differences just make it more interesting. **It's not an obstacle or a problem, it's just a challenge.** I love it, and I wouldn't want these differences not to be there.

(Extract 51: C2)

The differences that most couples mentioned were differences in their ways of expression. S1 says that words do not mean that much anymore. She said that words simply loose meaning. They are not that loaded anymore. S1 also stressed that this is neither an advantage nor a disadvantage, it is simply different. According to her, the only time this could be a disadvantage is when she feels inferior because she cannot express herself properly. Unlike in mother tongue couple talk, all the participants speak a different level of English. No couple has the exact same level of command of the language.

The English of some of the partners is better than that of others. Sometimes it cannot be said that one partner's English skills are better than the other's, but the way their knowledge is distributed differs. In other words, the participants claim to have different areas of expertise. Whereas for one it is easy to talk about academic English, for the other it is easy to talk about specific English. S8 says that...

S8: ...] while she can talk about complex stuff, about economy and politics, I can talk about cooking. You know all the utensils. And so. She didn't know what a whisk was, what a ladle was and so on. Everybody has a different access to vocabulary. So, I mean. You know. She can talk about music while I can talk about sport.

(Extract 52: C4)

Other differences from mother tongue couple talk are that they are more aware of their conversations and of the words they use and the language they use together. Furthermore, all the couples emphasized that ELF makes their language more exciting and interesting. Two out of the ten participants discussed that planning things are different to relationships they had with somebody living in the same country and speaking the same language. Repercussions for the relationship are that certain things are more expensive. (E.g. they have to fly to other countries to see their families). Furthermore, they have to manage unusual duties and businesses. (E.g. they have to deal with the embassy and visa regulations).

5.7. Leisi's five characteristics (- my findings)

5.7.1. *Language as private code*

It was extremely interesting to hear the participants' comments about their private and intimate use of language, and in particular their comments about their nicknames. In general, their nicknames derive from English, their mother tongues and from a mixture of the three languages. Some participants are more creative and innovative when it comes to choosing nicknames, and some participants are less creative and more solid.

The first couple claimed to choose extraordinary nicknames deriving from German, Portuguese and English. They were also very proud of the fact that they consistently invent new nicknames for each other. One reason for inventing nicknames is the way the words sound to them. They perceive nicknames in a different language or invented nicknames as funny and they like them a lot. They also think that ordinary (meaning traditional) nicknames in their mother tongue would not suit them, because they are also not an ordinary couple.

The second couple claimed not to use many nicknames, but if they did they used common nicknames deriving from the English language. They have not invented new or special nicknames and S3 and S4 are satisfied with English nicknames. Nonetheless, they really like the fact that they speak in ELF and use nicknames derived from ELF. Yet, S3 did share that she would really like to get Spanish nicknames. Spanish is S4's mother tongue and it means a lot to him, and resultantly, also to her.

The third couple stated that they use nicknames deriving from English, Spanish and German. Occasionally they find themselves blending words. According to C3, English nicknames are the most frequently used ones, because first of all they learned them, and secondly, their surrounding is in English as well.

S6: @@@ Ahm I use nicknames in three different languages at the moment. Spanish, English and German. So real preference. Ahm. I would say the English nicknames I know are learned from. You know. Like my surroundings as well as the Spanish, and as well as the German. And I use them just because right now reality has expanded a little bit and before it was mostly Spanish and English. Right now it is also German. And I just use whatever feels comfortable. Well right now I can use 3 different nicknames in 3 different languages.

S5: What about the three nicknames. Ah I know. Oh

S8: ohhhhhh

S7: @@@@

S5: Yeah well sometimes he uses mixtures between German and Spanish. So to say blended words.

S6: Yeah we mix them. We have word games.

S5: yeah we are using them since we know each other. Yeah we come to the point where we are playing with words. **Like German words with the grammar of Spanish and then they become**

new words which you don't really understand. Yeah. You see the point. So yeah. We do have nicknames. I mean 3 of them have taken a very important place in our life. Always with English leading.

(Extract 53: C3 and C4)

This extract also shows how they invent their nicknames, namely that they adapt for example Spanish grammar to German words and the other way round.

C4 also claimed that they use a mixture of nicknames from a mixture of languages. In my opinion, it was particularly interesting to hear S8 explain when they use which nickname and why. He said that he had a different nickname for her in a different moment. Resultantly, their nicknames change continuously.

S7: well we **also use all languages mixed**. And they change.

S8: **And we invent words. And they change per month, per moment. Each moment has a different nicknames**, I mean it's depending what she is doing, but she has a nickname for all the moments.

S7: @@@

S8: If she is in the kitchen she has a nickname and if she is somewhere else she would have another different. It all depends on what you think in the specific situation. It all depends. Sometimes it's just something funny, maybe when you listen at the streets and so.

(Extract 54: C4)

C3 and C4 also shared the opinion that the language of the nicknames is not important. But rather, it is the feelings toward the nicknames that matter.

S5: Honestly, all the typical German nicknames I really think they are stupid. I prefer a nickname from a different language.

S6: **For me nicknames come out spontaneously**, so they just come out **because you feel to say it. That means the language has nothing to do**. If I feel like calling you 'Schatzi' I call you 'Schatzi', if I feel like calling you "my treasure" I call you 'my treasure', or 'Corazon'. It's not the language that is important.

S8: Yeah it's because of the moment. One moment you feel this and the other moment you feel that.

S6: Yeah they come out spontaneously. You don't even have to think about it.

S8: **It's the feeling that is important.** It's the sentiment.

(Extract 55: C3 and C4)

The fifth couple perceived that they tended to give each other nicknames derived from the English language and occasionally, but very rarely, from the Polish language. As they are only communicating in English, it seemed logical and natural for them to give each other nicknames in English and not mix them. Both participants claimed that they really like these nicknames and would not want one in their mother tongue. According to C5, some of the nicknames were invented, and some of them are commonly used by English native speakers.

5.7.2. *Language as erotic stimulant*

Since this topic is very delicate some of the participants did not feel comfortable talking about it. For most of the participants it was really difficult to talk openly about it and to share their thoughts regarding this topic. S2 says that he thinks it more stimulating if she speaks English than German, but he did not explain it in more detail. C3 and C4 talked more openly about this topic than the other couples. They perceived that in intimate and very intense moments they often use their mother tongue, because they are emotionally most attached to it.

S8: I think that **I feel like in the really intimate moments it's only the feeling.**

S7: Yeah **and then it's in the mother language.**

S8: Yeah it's the feeling. You just say it in the language that is crossing your mind. Or you say it in which language you are thinking at. Like for me I have a chaos between Spanish, English and Italian. Sometimes I have sex in English, sometimes in Spanish and sometimes in Italian. @ It's not the language, but more the meaning what you are saying.

S7: The English is not stimulating, but neither is another language @@

S6: Again I think it's another very emotional situation. In my case I follow more the emotions either the pre-moment or the post-moment or during the moment. I will say whatever comes to my head. What just feels like popping out. I might say something in English as I might say something in Spanish. It depends on how it

comes out. Now I'm at a point where I really can't control it. If it really comes to something much more personal, I wouldn't speak German, because I simply don't know it that well, but when it comes to Spanish or English I let it flow. It just comes naturally. I could say 'you are beautiful' in English or I could say 'que bonita' in Spanish. I never really plan saying ok at 2 o'clock I will speak English and at 3 o'clock I will speak Spanish. **No it's something that, erotically speaking, romantically speaking that just comes out of the moment.** For me at least.

(Extract 56: C3 and C4)

This extract also shows that the language they use in intimate situations naturally comes to their mind. They do not plan on using a particular language for a particular moment. Thus, it is also not the case that one language is more stimulating than another one. Whatever language, the use for it in a given situation is stimulating because it fits the situation and the purpose.

5.7.3. Love according to texts

The participants recalled certain language use situations to explain if and on what already existing language clusters their 'love talk' leans. C1 is the only couple who claimed that they are more creative than "stealing somebody else's words". They highlighted that they invent new words and phrases, but they did admit that their talk is also based on 'love talk' they hear on television.

Overall, the interviews revealed that for most of the couples' 'love talk', 'romantic talk' or their private and intimate conversations lean on words, phrases or clusters they have heard from somewhere else or from somebody else. Furthermore, they claimed that they built their way of speaking on previous experiences where they were forced to speak English. One of the participants had already had a relationship where he had to use ELF as a means of communication. He said that he based his talk on that experience or he adopted this so called 'love talk' when listening to friends communicating in English. S6 also claimed that his way of speaking, and in general their way, is constantly changing.

S6: Ok. In my case. My daily life conversation basis comes from previous experiences. My language has been molded to situations (.). X. Well **the way I speak English right now is mix between different previous and past experiences.** So, well how we talk to the partner (.). Hm the way I talk to you is pretty much a a the result of previous experiences. Like I said before, this is not my first relationship where I have to use English. So it's a little bit of everything. I'm just taking words out of everywhere. We expand the way we are communicating day by day. We learn new words, new ways to say things we feel. Especially in a second language like this. Like English. I mean at some point it will be German as well. So the way I talk to you at the moment is just way of previous experiences. I've heard, I've seen, I've read. **Things I got from my surroundings.** It's just that. Who I am and what I say is the result of previous experiences. **I have learned it from TV** for example I have learned some, from **previous relationships** I have learned from. **from friends**, that also speak English or **maybe I have just listen to a private conversation.**

(Extract 57: C3)

C3 and C4 were also discussing that the acquisition of the English they need for private and intimate conversations comes from outside. They admitted to exploiting every possible opportunity to learn new words and improve their vocabularies. Very often the words and phrases used in intimate conversations are based on movies, songs or poems.

S7: Yeah I would also say televisions and maybe songs. From love songs you can also catch words.

S8: And sentences.

S7: Yes

S8: a lot come from outside. You are just adapting. when you listens to something like in a songs and you really think that's fit. You know 80 % of the songs are about love and you listen a lot to it then you take these words and you try to express this feeling.

Since it is not this language you use the words from movies, songs or

S6: Which also happens in your own languages, but in English specifically in English you know. Sometimes you just need a better way to express than movies, songs and books

S8: poems

S6: yeah **poems. Whatever gives you a lot of tools you can use in the moments with your partner.** I mean I use many cheesy stuff with Claudia I got from cheesy moments.

(Extract 58: C3 and C4)

C2 also revealed that watching movies definitely influenced their way of talking to each other in private conversations. At first S3 denied the fact that movies influence their speech, but then she admitted that it is one of the most important influences, and her partner agreed that especially their word choice gets influenced by television.

S3: I don't really think they are much influenced from movies.

Or at least not consciously. I wouldn't be able to really (.)

I: But did living in another country influence it?

S3: Yeah definitely, living there. Ok. and also from earlier times while studying it. from books. And so on. And ok. Obviously living in another country and probably also watching movies.

S4: Yeah watching movie definitely influences the word choice.

S3: Yeah probably movies and so.

(Extract 59: C2)

C5 emphasized the fact that one does not necessarily have to acquire particular skills to be able to have a 'romantic talk' with the partner. S9 expressed that no matter how well one speaks one can have an intimate conversation and one can express one's love, because there are no official requirements for a 'romantic love talk'. She also claimed that the counterpart usually understand it no matter in what ways their love is expressed, as they have mutual intentions.

5.7.4. Interferences and misconceptions

With the exception of C5, all the participants perceived that there are interferences and misconceptions in their relationship due to linguistic problems. Some of these misconceptions can be blamed on ELF, since they are not as good and as fluent as they would be in their mother tongues. C1, C2, C3 and C4 claim that it would be an advantage to improve their English skills, because certain misunderstandings and misconceptions could be avoided. Only C5 perceived that the use of ELF does not cause any confusions and misconceptions. They were also of the opinion that their English skills will improve in any case due to their extensive use of the

language. To put it in other words, they claimed that there was no need for them to enhance their English as it is going to progress automatically.

For C1 one of the biggest problems is that they both have different definitions of certain words. This can, among other things, lead to misconceptions and internal struggles and might end up in a fight.

S2: well sometimes she has a definition of a word and I have another definition of a word. We are communicating but we mean basically different things. So I understand it differently than what she wants to transmit to me and vice versa. **And then we have to fight.**

(Extract 60: C1)

C2 also agreed that there are situations where the use of ELF causes misconceptions and interferences, and that it would be good to improve the English skills, but they also claimed that they would have other misconceptions if they spoke the same language.

S3: I think there have been some situations where we misunderstood each other because of the language. Yeah I think there were some situations.

S4: yeah. Yes.

S3: that wouldn't have (.)

S4: Yeah, but I think if it was in your language there would have been other-

S3: Yeah absolutely-

S4: - you would get other kinds of problems or interferences how you would call them.

(Extract 61: C2)

The remaining two couples, C3 and C4, also admitted that some misunderstandings are based on linguistic issues, but some of these misconceptions can also be blamed on gender. Some of the situations where ELF causes misunderstandings are those which are loaded with lots of emotions and situations of high tension.

S8: A lot of time when you are in really high of tension and you try to explain what you really, really want to say and you say it so fast, because you are just you just want to say it and then from your side comes like "You really think this" and then you think. Well. Wait what did I really want to say and then it's like wow we

have problem. I think when you are not talking your first language it's really easy sometimes to get a problem. It's really fast and more when you are used like talking English you just express yourself and sometimes you just don't control the meaning 100 % what you want to say. Because language always has a second way and the other person thinks then the second way. And sometimes it can create lot's of misunderstandings.

(Extract 62: C4)

Expressing their emotions in ELF is particularly challenging for the participants of this study. In really intimate situations, especially situations with lots of tension, this is where most interferences and misconceptions occur in their relationship and for their relationship. Section 6.8 will focus on expressing emotions in ELF and what difficulties and challenges it might impose on the participants.

5.7.5. *Language as a means of memories*

Most of the participants had problems talking about linguistic memories and talking about how they recall memories and language. The majority claimed that they are not aware of the particular language in which they spoke when they think back and remember a language use situation. Furthermore, the participants are aware of the automatic language choice without thinking about it consciously. As their language choice is subconscious it is also difficult for them to recall the language in which they think back, in which they memorize things and in which they talk about past experiences.

C1 reported that they connect language with a person. To be more precise, they claimed that they associate ELF with their partners. If they talk about their partner or think about him or her, then they recall situations, think back and memorize in ELF. This is also very important for them, because they live and lead their lives in ELF. Using German to recall a situation that had happened in English is sometimes rather difficult for S1.

S2: Well I think that when you wanna learn a language well you have to think in this language. This is the starter. And I think there is a kind of **memory connected to the language**.

S1: Yeah I totally agree. When I think back about certain situations I definitely think in English. Also when I'm thinking at school and speaking German all day long. And when I think that I have to tell Eric something I'm thinking in English.

I: and when you talk to somebody else about your partner is it difficult to switch to another language.

S1: Well sometimes it happens to me that I mix the languages. Or I start in German and then switch to English. Or subconsciously I say some English phrases although I wanna speak German. Sometimes I'm just telling someone, and then suddenly during the conversation I don't know the word in German, because I'm so used to the English one.

(Extract 63: C1)

S3 perceived language as a means of memory in a way similar to that of S1. She remembers situations in the language she had used in that particular situation, and therefore, translating or recalling language situations in a different language can be challenging. S4 on the other hand, claimed that he has a better visual memory and therefore, he does not really use language as a means of memory. But if he did, he would probably use English.

S3: Well I think I **remember situations in the language which was used in this situations**. Most of the times. And also if I tell other people about it then it's mostly people who also speak English and then sometimes I incorporate English words which just come naturally then.

I: So you also think in English?

S3: Yes sometimes I do. Well sometimes when I think when I'm thinking about something I want to tell him later on. Sometimes these thoughts come either in English or in Spanish.

S4: Usually there is a bit of English there, but normally I have a better **visual memory**. So I mostly remember pictures, things and situations and (X) all of these, but they are. they don't have (X). Yes I can think or I think a bit in English maybe, because it's the language I use most. Not because all the things are attached to the English. But still there are more images than (X).

(Extract 64: C2)

S5 and S7 also considered it as extremely difficult to recall situations they had experienced in one language in a different language. It is also difficult to translate conversations they had with their partner in ELF into the mother tongue and vice versa.

S5: Yeah or for instance the last few days I did all the governmental stuff. I did the university stuff, and then I told my mum and then it was really heavy for me to tell her in German, because I told him in English and then I had to think about the German stuff and about the English stuff. So it is very difficult for me to recall stuff in German I said before in English. I keep finding myself speaking English when I actually should speak German. I'm just so used to certain phrases in a particular language....

S7: No I know what you mean. Sometimes when I was with him all the time it's sometimes so difficult to reproduce something he was saying in German. Sometimes I can't think of the German side.

S5: Yeah when I'm on the countryside on a table with my parents then I find myself talking in English with my parents and in German with him. Yeah

(Extract 65: C3 and C4)

S8 agreed to their view of language as a means of memories and added that he connects an experience with a language. S6, S9 and S10 have no problems with switching back and forth between languages and translating situations and memories they had experienced in ELF into their mother tongue or vice versa. The only time S9 and S10 have problems when it comes to translating situations and memories, is when it comes to language specific jokes. They said that it is difficult for them to recall funny language use situations in a different language. Having said that, I want to present the last section of results which deals with ELF as a means of expression of emotions; concentrating on love, anger and humor.

5.8. ELF as means to express emotions

In any relationship, the expression of emotions will be present to a certain degree. However, where the ability to express emotions is likely most important is in the case of an intimate relationship as with those experienced by my couples. As mentioned, the participants are all relatively excited about using ELF as their means of communication because of their interest in English as well as the novelty and excitement of the experience. However, for some of the participants, the challenge of expressing their emotions seems rather significant and is a reason for concern.

For some participants expressing emotions in ELF is a lot more difficult than for others. It was particularly interesting to hear that all the female participants claimed and complained about the difficulty of expressing their innermost feelings and emotions, but the male participants seemed not to have a problem with it. Three of the male participants revealed that there had been situations where it was challenging for them to express their emotions in ELF, but unlike the female participants, they did not perceive it as a problem or difficulty. Whereas all of the female participants wished that they could occasionally switch to their mother tongues when expressing emotions, the male participants have never felt the need to use their mother tongues. Furthermore, the majority of the female participants admitted that they long for more intimate and emotional conversations, whereas the male participants reported to be happy and satisfied with their emotional talk. Interestingly, the gender specific perceptions towards expressing emotions changed when talking about expressing specific emotions. The female participants claimed to have comparably less problems when expressing their love while the male participants perceived it as easier to express anger and humor. The next three sections will shed light on the different attitudes towards expressing emotions, with the focus of expressing love, anger and humor.

5.8.1. *Expressing love*

Fully all of the participants reported that expressing their love in ELF to their partners instead of in their mother tongues is challenging, but really exciting. Although none of the participants could really define a reason, they confirmed numerous times, that it is not only more attractive for them, but the female participants also perceived it as easier. What makes expressing love in ELF easier than in their mother tongues is, according to the female participants, the fact that they are not as emotionally attached to the language as they are to their mother tongue and words are not as loaded as they are in the mother tongue. Most of the female participants highlighted that they are especially more detached to the word 'love' and to the phrase 'I love you'. Hence, they

say these words and phrases more often than they would use them in their mother tongues. The following example illustrates how easy it is for S7 to express her love.

S7: I have never really said. Well. I have never really told anyone how much, or that I loved him. I remember I maybe told my ex boyfriend twice 'Ich liebe dich'. I mean I used other expressions like 'ich hab dich lieb' or you know something like this, but I never really said 'Ich liebe dich'. And now, I find myself saying 'I love you' all the time. I don't know why, but **it is just easier in English**. I could say 'I love you' all the time without getting embarrassed. I guess it just doesn't mean that much to me. Because 'Ich liebe dich' for me is really, really strong whereas 'I love you'. No it's not.
(Extract 66: C4)

This extract clearly shows that expressing love in ELF is easier for S7. Interestingly, some of the participants claimed that they are emotionally less attached to the language, and therefore, saying 'I love you' does not mean as much to them but when hearing and receiving the message this is different. S7 admitted that although expressing her love in English is easier, because the words do not mean the same, hearing her partner expressing his love means even more to her than in her mother tongue. According to S7, the words become even more loaded then. In the following extract she explained why hearing her partner expressing his feelings for her means more to her, and why the words are more loaded or, possibly, why they are maybe less loaded. The fact that she is contradicting herself to some extent at the end of the quotation shows that it is not clear cut but rather a delicate topic; about which it is difficult for the participants to make up their minds.

S7: Well, when he tells me that he loves me. It is so much cooler and so much better to hear it than when my ex boyfriend told me that he was in love with me. I don't know why. It's just more exciting. It's just. Well. It means more to me. A lot more. So I guess, hearing 'I love you' is different to saying 'I love you'.
I: I see. But would you say that that when hearing it, it means more because your emotions are stronger in English than in German.
S7: hm. Well. No. I just think that. Maybe I prefer to hear it in English than in German, because I get less embarrassed in English. Hm. I don't know.

(Extract 67: C4)

Two of the male participants were stressing the fact that expressing their love can be difficult in English, because they do not “want to sound stupid”, whereas the other three revealed that they prefer it in English, because in English it “does not sound stupid”.

Presenting the results of this topic of discussion is extremely difficult, because the participants occasionally contradicted themselves. I got the impression that it was difficult for the participants to talk about it in front of me and in front of their partners, and hence, their answers might not have always been completely open or honest.

5.8.2. Expressing anger

In the theory chapter on expressing anger I explained why it was particularly frustrating for me to express my anger in a foreign language. I got the feeling that I had lost the upper hand and then I was in an emotional state that made me even more frustrated. The participants of this study felt similar in certain situations. The female participants especially seemed to feel that occasionally they would simply like to switch to their mother tongue when it comes to expressing their anger. The male participants perceived it differently, but they claimed not to get as frustrated as their female counterparts. S4 said that S3...

S4: [...] always gets **really frustrated when she can't tell me her anger**. Well, she gets. At first she gets frustrated with herself, and then frustrated with me. For me. I don't see it as a big problem. I'm more. Or maybe I'm just. I'm more patient than she is. I don't know.

(Extract 68: C2)

Especially the last statement shows that expressing anger in ELF can be frustrating for the participants for various reasons. On the one hand, they may get frustrated because they cannot express themselves accordingly, but on the other hand they get frustrated because their partners cannot understand everything, or they at least have the feeling that their partners

cannot understand them. S8 explained that sometimes he simply zones out when they are fighting. He admitted to be tired of speaking English with her and so he either switches to his mother tongue or he zones out. In this respect it is important to mention that he perceived it as a positive side effect, because their fights tend not to last as long.

For three of the male participants expressing their anger in ELF is particularly challenging, because they cannot simply express their anger, but they have to think about it beforehand. They perceived it as an advantage, because they can actually think before speaking. S2 claimed that the fact that they have to use ELF when arguing had often prevented them from a serious fight.

S2: I often thought: “Man, she is a bitch”. @@@

S1: haha. Babe. You are so funny. @@

S2: No seriously. Often she goes blablabla, but instead of yelling at her in Portuguese, I think about how to answer. And while thinking I calm down and then we can talk about it when we are both relaxed again. Yeah. I really think that **ELF slows fighting down**. You know. It’s just easier.

(Extract 69: C1)

The interviews also revealed that most of the participants perceived expressing their anger in ELF as more serious. Some of the participants claimed that they mostly fight and argue about serious matters in ELF. They bring things straight to the point and talk about certain issues more than they would do in their mother tongues. One participant also claimed that she is more aware of the seriousness of the subject matter. To be more precise, she was of the opinion that they only fight about important issues.

S5: Well, we always bring things straight to the point when we fight. And well. We don’t argue about stupid stuff, but really about serious things.

(Extract 70: C3)

S7 had a different experience in this respect. She said that her and her partner’s fights in ELF do not differ from any fights she had in her relationship with a German native speaker. They also fight about who left the butter out and who has to do the dishes. But she did affirm some of S5’s point of view

in that the way they fight differs from the way she argued with her ex boyfriend. Unfortunately, she could not explain the differences.

As mentioned in the previous section on expressing love, expressing anger is also a very delicate topic. The participants again contradicted themselves a couple of times and therefore it was extremely difficult to analyze the results. The next section on expressing humor was comparably easier to analyze because all of the participants agreed on the difficulty of telling, understanding and translating jokes.

5.8.3. Expressing humor

The interviews revealed that when it comes to expressing emotions in ELF, the participants perceived it as most difficult to express humor. One of the most important reasons which makes it so hard for the participants to express and understand humor in ELF are the cultural differences between partners. The participants claimed not to know enough about their significant other's cultural background to understand certain humor. Especially when it comes to humor built on one's society, economy, politics etc.

S8: Sometimes, I would joke around with Sarah. And would say something about the corruptness of Italian politics. Politicians. And I start. I'm cracking up. And she looks at me like. Like this. @@@

S7: well, yeah. The same things happened to me. I would make jokes now before the elections and he doesn't think they are funny.

I: So would you say then that it is so difficult for you to (.) to understand the jokes because of the different cultural background of your partner?

S7: yeah for sure. The **cultural differences is what makes it so hard to understand his humor**. Well at least sometimes.

(Extract 71: C4)

Another cause for this challenge is the different language background of the partner. Every language has words, phrases and idioms which only 'work' in this particular language and which, in a way, cannot be translated in order to make sense. The participants claimed that when they joke around with their partners, they very often build their jokes on words, phrases and idioms in

their mother tongue. For example, the literal translation of jokes from their mother tongues does not work in ELF.

S3: Oh I remember this one time, when we were joking about something, I don't really know what it was anymore. Oh. Yeah, because he is always afraid that he doesn't get enough to eat. So anyway. **We were joking about it and I wanted to say so badly 'Die Gier ist ein Luder', but I just couldn't think of a translations.** And I figured the literal translation wouldn't have worked. Well, I wouldn't even know how to translate it. To be honest. @@ but anyway, it was just kind of. Well I was stumbling and were like. 'ahm ahm'. But it was just. You know it wouldn't have been funny anymore. I mean the situation would have lost it's fun, if I had tried to explain it to him.

(Extract 72: C2)

Moreover, the participants perceived that the jokes lose the meaning if they get translated. It can be really exhausting for the participants to translate and explain the jokes. As a result, they simply do not tell this joke or do not bother to explain it to their partners because it can be extremely frustrating if they try to explain it in a couple of different ways, but their partners still do not understand them.

S6: Sometimes, I explain her three, four or five times why I'm laughing so hard in a particular situation, but she still doesn't get it. I mean. I can't blame her, I wouldn't get it either, because mostly my sense of humor is not funny. But anyway, sometimes I just don't want to translate it and explain it to her, because it can be so exhausting. Not because her English is not good enough, but just because my sense of humor is weird. And is maybe based on my home country, far far away.

(Extract 73: C3)

In spite of the difficulty of expressing humor in English, many of the participants acknowledged the accumulation of their own couple specific sense of humor based on shared experiences. This is no doubt due to the plain fact that they have spent so much of their lives together during which time they spoke ELF. Having developed this repertoire, there are now many occasions where they 'successfully' joke around in ELF. The couples perceived that the better they got to know each other the easier it became for them to understand their partners' humor.

6. RESUME

6.1. The outcome: summary

The objective of the present study was to find answers to the research questions listed in chapter 4. When presenting the outcome, it must be noted that the questions cannot be answered definitively, finally nor completely, but that the answers only rest on the perceptions of the ten participants. This study set out to assess their perceptions of the importance of ELF and the motivations for them as a couple to choose ELF as the language of their relationship. It illuminates their perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages for couples and it considers their views and expectations concerning the future use of ELF as a family language. Additionally, the study aimed to describe the characteristics of ELF couple talk and compare it to mother tongue couple talk according to the perceptions of the participants. Detailed information about their perceptions is presented in the chapter of the analysis of the results, so here I just want to briefly present the outcome of the study and summarize the answers to the research questions:

→ The **motivations** for my participants to choose ELF are: the fact that ELF is an international language; the fact that most people have a high proficiency in speaking and understanding ELF; the fact that ELF is considered to be the fairest choice; the fact that it is neutral; and the fact that they simply enjoy ELF.

→ The **importance of ELF** differs from participant to participant, but ELF is generally perceived as being highly important, and the importance is growing day by day along with their relationships and the feelings.

→ The **advantages of ELF** are: that in the first place, it enables the couples to have a relationship; it is neutral; it is fair; it opens doors for the future; it makes the relationship easier and less complicated; it helps improve their English skills; and it raises language awareness.

→ The **disadvantages of ELF** are: that it can be restrictive of their conversations; their English skills are unequal; that the participants have a limited ability of expression; details of their conversations can get lost; emotions are more difficult to express, and that it slows down the participants' process of learning their partner's language.

→ **Arguments for considering ELF as a family language** are: its rise in importance as world language; the importance of one common family language so that nobody gets neglected; the future advantages for their children's lives and careers and because children are quite capable of acquiring two or more languages at the same time.

→ **Reasons for not considering ELF as family language** are: the children would speak ELF instead of ENL; ELF is not a language with its own rights; three languages would confuse the children and because it might not be the language of the country they would be living in.

→ **ELF couple talk is similar to mother tongue couple talk** in terms of the associated feelings and emotions that come as a part of any relationship. The passion and feelings of those involved are much the same just as are the intimate situations in which the participants are involved within their relationships.

→ **ELF couple talk is different** in terms of how the couple does communicate, or talk to each other, and how their abilities to express themselves are affected. The ways in which they communicate are directly affected by the fact that neither member of the couple has the exact same command of the language nor do they have the same vocabularies and in many cases even the meaning or weight of chosen words can vary greatly. This unique actualization of their couple talk which comes from the pairing of very unique and often distinct vocabularies also directly affects the couples' abilities to express themselves in any given situation.

What ELF can do and what its limitations are has not always been answered by the participants directly but often rather indirectly. To answer these

research questions I had to look at the underlying meanings and interpret their answers. In the next chapter I will comment on the outcome and I will interpret the analyzed results and discuss the limitations of ELF.

6.2. Comment on the outcome

6.2.1. *What ELF can do/ cannot do*

This study has shown that ELF CAN be used as a means of communication in a love relationship. People with different cultural backgrounds and different mother tongues can have a relationship *because of* the common language they can speak. In my opinion, the couples really appreciated the fact that they can use ELF as their means of communication. They all seemed to be aware of the fact that they can have a relationship only through ELF and that without ELF a relationship would not be an option for them. Superficially, I got the impression that ELF can do everything for a couple that the mother tongue could do. They can communicate, they can have fun, they can fight, they can laugh together, they can be sad together, they can make plans, they can be jealous, they can express emotions and feelings, they can have insider jokes and they can develop a personal way to communicate with each other. At first glance, there is no evidence that there are any limitations for the couples' relationships caused by the use of ELF. At first it seemed that there was nothing that ELF could not accomplish when considered as an alternative to speaking in mother tongue couple talk, but after thoroughly analyzing the data, I identified certain limitations of ELF.

The first and most obvious limitations to be considered are those already explored quite in depth though out this thesis. These limitations concern the differing levels of proficiency in ELF of the members of the couple, the varying associations and meanings for words that both members do know and the simple lack of an equivalent vocabulary for both members of the couple. These differences in the mastery of ELF by the members of a couple when paired with the fact that many words and phrases must be translated from the mother tongue to English gives cause for a great many

misunderstandings and other issues discussed which create a language deficit. However, these weaknesses of the language are not the only issues that cause the couple to face diversity due to their choice of ELF.

Even if the couples are able to communicate with their partners in ELF more or less in the same way and to the same extent as they would in their mother tongues, there are restrictions in the use of English with other people in that not all the people surrounding the couple speak the language. Some of them do not speak English at all, some of them do not speak English well enough to have longer conversations, and some of them simply do not like and do not want to communicate in English. Hence, ELF can be the language of couples and the language for their relationship, but it cannot be guaranteed that it will be the language for their social life. ELF might be spoken by a lot of people (family members, friends, colleagues), but it cannot be automatically assumed that everybody speaks English in the country they are living and that everybody is willing to communicate in ELF. Thus, ELF is sometimes limited to the communication between the two of them. In other words, ELF can also serve to separate the couple from the world surrounding them in spite of how much of an international language it may be. Considering what I discussed in the previous paragraph and what is explored here, I came to the conclusion that ELF cannot be put on the same level as the participants' mother tongue.

Having said that, I want to emphasize that in my mind these limitations of ELF are not a critique or a disadvantage. I simply want to mention that there are limitations and that the participants are aware of these limitations. This is also illustrated by the fact that all of the participants talked about ELF as a future family language. When talking about their language planning for the future, they took the limitations of ELF into consideration. Whether these limitations will disappear in the long run, and what they could do to overcome these limitations could not be dealt with in this study and for this thesis, but it would be interesting to do further research into it.

6.2.2. The language choice: ELF in Austria

In my opinion, a couple's language choice also depends on the country in which they live. Whether or not they use ELF with each other or switch to one of the partners' mother tongues is affected by their social, cultural and linguistic surroundings. Four out of the five couples are living in Austria at the moment, and the fifth couple is moving back and forth between Poland and Austria. All of the couples mentioned at some point during the interview that they speak ELF and that they like to speak ELF because "everybody can understand it". This statement indicates that they appreciate the factor that English is treated as a world language in the countries they live or travel.

Apparently, it is possible in Austria to live a life in ELF without speaking German, at least for certain groups such as students. This was proven in a small-scale study² of whether or not it is possible to use English as a general means of communication in Austria. The study investigated exchange students' perceptions of ELF in everyday life. In general, exchange students perceive that it is easy for them to use English as a lingua franca and as a means of communication in Austria. Austrians are, according to the 51 exchange students I asked, in the majority of cases not reluctant to use 'their English' (ELF). Generally speaking, the exchange students perceived that English can be regarded as a lingua franca in everyday life, although in some language contact situations it is more widely spread than in others. In some situations, it was impossible for the students to use English, but such situations were rare and only the minority of students had experiences in which English could not be used as a means of communication.

The fact that all of the participants like to communicate in ELF and that they all held the opinion that they would continue to use ELF in the future is very likely dependent on the fact that they CAN, with some exceptions, use ELF in Austria. To my mind, their perceptions of ELF and their language choice would change if they lived in a country where English is not accepted as a

² Gundacker, Julia. winter term 07/08. *English as a Lingua Franca in Austria*. Seminar Paper for Seminar "English in Europe" led by Barbara Seidlhofer

world language. It would be interesting to build on this assumption and to do future studies in this intriguing area of research.

6.2.3. *Different languages/ Different gender*

In my opinion, the couples have to face miscommunications that can be blamed on the differences of gender AND misunderstandings that can be blamed on different languages. The differences in gender are there in any relationship, no matter if they speak ELF or their mother tongues, but the participants of my study, in addition, have to face language differences. I also think that the gender differences influence the couples' perceptions of ELF. As the example shows that only the five female participants are sometimes frustrated because of the limits of their expression, whereas this was not perceived as a problem by the male participants. Especially when it comes to expressing emotions, the male participants hardly complained about a lack of expression. It can only be guessed what exactly these differences in gender are and why they influence the couples' perceptions on ELF. From personal experiences, I can imagine that the women, generally speaking, like to talk more about their emotions than the men do. To be more precise, women may be more sensitive in the way they express their emotions, but also in the way they receive and understand them.

I agree with Tannen (1990) that male-female conversation is always cross-cultural. The way men and women are raised and their values and beliefs, are different. I also got the impression that this was the case with my participants. It seemed as if the female interviewees regard different things as important for their relationship than the male interviewees. Hence, they also perceived the fact that they are using ELF differently as a means of communication. In my view, ELF, or language in general, is more important for the women than it is for the men. The men approach language and the way they express themselves differently. I believe that they care less about what language they speak and why they speak that particular language than the women. The women, on the other hand, seemed to care and think about their means of communication more than the men. They also seemed more

aware of the possible disadvantages and consequences for their relationships.

Although I hold the opinion that there are differences and difficulties in their relationship caused by language AND by gender, I cannot really specify and describe these differences as this study did not go into great detail concerning couple talk in general but only concentrated on ELF couple talk. It is beyond the scope of my investigation to analyze and thoroughly comment on gender differences. For future research it would be interesting to look at the extent of how language differences and gender differences combine to influence a relationship.

6.2.4. *Emotional detachment in ELF?*

As mentioned in the theory part of this project, the most widespread assumptions of bilingual speakers are that they are very likely to use their L1 with their interlocutors when they express their innermost feelings and emotions and that they use their L2 when they express emotions in a more “detached way”. According to Grosjean (1982), Gumperz (1982), Scheu (2000) Zentella (1997) and Kinginger (2004), speakers tend to switch to the L2 when they mark distance and to the L1 when they signal intimacy. The findings of my study were not as clear cut and hence I can only partly agree with these assumptions. Some of the participants claimed that they either switch to their L1 or that they would like to switch to their L1 when they express emotions, but that it also depends on the emotions they want to express. It was interesting to observe that some of the participants prefer ELF to express their love, but they would prefer their L1 to express anger or humor.

After interviewing and also observing the participants I came to the personal conclusion that the participants of this study might, to some extent, be emotionally detached from ELF, but not in a way that it would affect their relationship. They mentioned some situations where they either used their mother tongues or where they wanted to use their mother tongues, but they

also explained numerous situations where they preferred to use ELF. A few participants also mentioned that they get emotionally more attached to ELF than to their mother tongues because they use it every day and all the time.

Another observation I made during the interviews and during the analysis was that emotional detachment might have something to do with the command of English and the amount of vocabulary available. It appeared that the participants felt very comfortable or even more comfortable when expressing emotions when they actually know how to express themselves in ELF. The more words they know and the more ways they know how to express emotions, the more secure they feel. This leads me to the assumption that, on the one hand, the couples were possibly emotionally more detached from ELF at the beginning phase of their romantic relationship. On the other hand, I am assuming that they will get emotionally less detached in the course of their relationship. The longer their romantic relationship will last, the more new words they will learn, the more comfortable with expressing their emotions in ELF they will get and the more attached to English they will become. Of course, this is only an assumption, but it might be an avenue of exploration for future research.

7. CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to qualify the reasons for people's language choice of ELF as a means of communication in their relationship and to find out about how choosing ELF affected their relationship. The participants' perceptions have generated the insight that there are numerous different reasons for choosing ELF as the language of couples, such as fairness, neutrality and comfort. The main issues that emerge from the present study are that ELF can serve as the language of couples just as any other language can. The reported advantages for their relationship outnumber the disadvantages and negative consequences for their relationship by far. On the whole, the results indicate that ELF is an adequate means of expressing emotions, although the language use in this area is most challenging one for the participants. The differences from speaking in the mother tongue are not profound. And, according to some participants ELF might also be a viable option as a family language in the future. However, the extent to which it might be used as a family language varies and some of the participants held a skeptical view of it.

The qualitative perspective taken in this study has shed new light on already existing ELF research. Compared to the broad databases of previous studies, the present study delves into one small area of research and delicately deals with a personal and complex topic which is extremely difficult to approach. Hence, the focus of this thesis is different in the treatment of ELF as the private lingua franca as opposed to other studies that discussed ELF used for business, technical or scientific purposes.

However, the findings of this study were at some point very general and superficial and imply many open questions. The participants frequently contradicted themselves to some extent and it was very hard to interpret their perceptions and the underlying messages from their statements. It should be pointed out that this study has mainly examined the participants' perceptions of the advantages, disadvantages of the use of ELF as well as possible future developments of ELF. The similarities and differences of ELF talk to

speaking in their mother tongues that were mentioned by the participants were occasionally extremely ambiguous and not very explicit. The results suggest that these differences from mother tongue couple talk should be reconceptualized and future research in this area should produce more detailed and defined answers.

Despite its limited scope this study has interesting implications for conducting more academic research concerning interpersonal communication in ELF. It is evident that many issues remain unsolved, such as the development and interplay of languages, cultures and identities and the forms which linguistic hybridity takes in ELF couple talk. One may observe how the ways in which couples use ELF as it relates to the shifting and contested relationships between different languages, cultures, and ideologies in their everyday private communication.

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9. Appendices

Appendix 1

Information on Interview 1:

Interview:	Abbreviations:	Duration:	Date:	Time:
First Interview	I1	41:48	February, 2 nd 2009	~14:30 – 16:30

Interviewer:	Abbreviations	Gender	Nationality	Age
Julia Gundacker	I	female	Austrian	23

Participants:	Abbreviations:	Gender:	Nationality:	Age
<i>First Couple:</i>	<i>C1</i>			
Sandra	S1	female	Austrian	23
Eric	S2	male	Portuguese	29

Appendix 2

Information on Interview 2:

Interview:	Abbreviations:	Duration:	Date:	Time:
Second Interview	I2	39:49	February, 11 th 2009	~19:30 – 21:00

Interviewer:	Abbreviations	Gender	Nationality	Age
Julia Gundacker	I	female	Austrian	23

Participants:	Abbreviations:	Gender:	Nationality:	Age
<i>Second Couple:</i>	C2			
Laura	S3	female	Austrian	25
Pedro	S4	male	Spanish	32

Appendix 3

Information on Interview 3:

Interview:	Abbreviations:	Duration:	Date:	Time:
Third Interview	I3	01:34:51	March, 8 th 2009	~19:30 – 23:30

Interviewer:	Abbreviations	Gender	Nationality	Age
Julia Gundacker	I	female	Austrian	23

Participants:	Abbreviations:	Gender:	Nationality:	Age
<i>Third Couple:</i>	<i>C3</i>			
Verena	S5	female	Austrian	23
Rainer	S6	male	Costa Rican	24
<i>Fourth Couple:</i>	<i>C4</i>			
Sarah	S7	female	Austrian	24
Francesco	S8	male	Italian	26

Appendix 4

Information on Interview 4:

Interview:	Abbreviations:	Duration:	Date:	Time:
Fourth Interview	I4	35:23	March, 24 th 2009	~11:30 – 13:00

Interviewer:	Abbreviations	Gender	Nationality	Age
Julia Gundacker	I	female	Austrian	23

Participants:	Abbreviations:	Gender:	Nationality:	Age
<i>Fifth Couple:</i>	C5			
Andra	S9	female	Polish	23
Philipp	S10	male	Austrian	23

Appendix 5

Interview Guideline:

Main topic of the project: The perceptions and attitudes of couples who use English as a lingua franca as a means of communication. It is a project about the advantages and disadvantages of using ELF and what ELF can do and what ELF cannot do.

Sub-topics:

1. Information about the couple's cultural backgrounds
2. Information about their relationship
3. ELF as the choice of their means of communication
 4. The influence of ELF
 5. The advantages of ELF
 6. The disadvantages of ELF
 7. Language as private code
 8. Language as erotic stimulant
 9. Love according to texts
10. Interferences and misconceptions
11. Language as a means of memories
12. ELF as a future family language

1. Information about the couple's cultural backgrounds

- Where are you from and what's your mother tongue?
- Do you speak any other languages?
- Where do you live? At the moment? Usually?
- How long have you lived in Austria?
- Why did you decide to live in Austria?
- Do you like it here?
- Is Austria the first foreign country where you have lived?
- Would there be any other possibilities?

2. Information about their relationship

- How long have you been together?
- Where did you meet?
- Is this your first relationship where you use English or another foreign language as means of communication?
- Have you always communicated in English?
- Did you think of other languages?
- Why did you choose to use English as a means of communication?
- Is it important for your relationship that you both can communicate in English?
- Would there be another possibility?

3. ELF as the choice of their means of communication

- What perceptions do you have towards English?
- Is it only a means of communication, or is it more?
- What does English mean to you? (Is it more/less important than your mother tongue or an other foreign language?)
- In which situations do you use English with your partner?
- Do you use English outside your relationship as well? Or is it reduced as the language of couples?
- Why do you prefer English as the language of your relationship to any other languages?
- Would you prefer to communicate in your mother tongue?
- Do you like English as the language of your relationship or what would you hypothetically change?

4. The influence of ELF

- How would you say English influences your relationship?
- How would you say it has influenced it in the past?
- How do you think it will influence it in the future?

- Would you think your relationship would be different if your partner spoke the same language? Why would it be different? And how?

5. The advantages of ELF

- What would you say are the advantages of using ELF?
- Can you think of some situations where using ELF was an advantage for your relationship?

6. The disadvantages of ELF

- What language based problems occur in your relationship?
- Can you think of situations where English caused problems?
- What could you do to prevent such problems?

7. Language as private code (Every couple has some kind of a private code which develops during the course of the relationship: e.g. nicknames)

- Have you given each other nicknames deriving from the English language or an other language?
- Why do you think you gave your partner nicknames in this language?
- How did you come across these nicknames?
- Do you like these nicknames or would you prefer a nickname in your language?

8. Language as erotic stimulant (It can stimulate your relationship, as well as it can cool it down)

- Have you experienced anything of this kind?
- Do you think there would be any differences if you spoke in your mother tongue?

9. Love according to texts (Very often it focuses on already existing language clusters: e.g. novels, poems, songs,...)

- Where do the words and phrases you are using come from?
- Where did you acquire the English skills you need for a 'romantic talk' with your partner?
- Why do you think you use the language you are using?

10. Interferences and misconceptions

- Would you say that some misconceptions and interferences of your relationship are due to linguistic problems?
- Can you describe situations in which arose misconceptions due to language problems?
- Do you think it would be important to improve your English skills?

11. Language as a means of memories

- Is the language important for you when you think back of situations that happened in the past?
- When you want to tell somebody else what you have experienced with your partner, is it difficult to translate it into your mother tongue?

12. ELF as a future family language

- Do you think that ELF will stay for you as a couple your means of communication?
- Why do you think it will stay/ change?
- In what situations will you use English in the future?
- Would you use English as your family language? Or is it reduced as your language of couples?
- Would you talk English with your kids? Why would you talk English with your kids? Why your mother tongue?
- Would there be any other solutions for you?

Appendix 6

Transcription Conventions:

[It is important to bear in mind that this study is based on a case study and that a content analysis was made for the analysis of the results. Since it was only important *what* the participants said and not *how* they said it, very basic transcription conventions were applied. With the exception of two additional conventions, which are marked in blue, they are based on the transcription conventions of Galasiński (2004: ix)]

[beginning of overlapping speech
=	latching (no gap or no overlap between stretches of talk)
.	falling intonation
?	rising intonation
-	self-interruption
(.)	short pause
(..)	longer pause
wo:rd	lengthening
WORD	emphasis
(word)	word unclear
((word))	transcriber's comment (e.g. ((clears throat)), ((name))
X	word unclear
@	laughing

Abstract in German

Diese Diplomarbeit ist ein kleiner Beitrag zu der interessanten Forschung, die im Bereich English als Verkehrssprache (ELF) betrieben wird, und konzentriert sich auf einen Forschungsbereich, der bis jetzt ignoriert wurde. In den letzten Jahrzehnten wurde besonderes Augenmerk auf die Verwendung von ELF als wichtigste Sprache für Business, Wissenschaft und Akademie gelegt. Hingegen wurde verhältnismäßig wenig im Bezug auf die Verwendung von ELF als primäres Kommunikationsmittel in zwischenmenschlichen Beziehungen erforscht.

Das Ziel dieser Diplomarbeit ist die Wichtigkeit von ELF als ‚private Verkehrssprache‘ hervorzuheben und besonderen Fokus auf die Entwicklung von ELF für private Zwecke zu legen. Einer der privatesten und vertrautesten Verwendungszwecke ist English als Kommunikationsmittel für Lebenspartner. Das Hauptziel dieser Diplomarbeit ist es ELF als Paarsprache zu untersuchen. Die Arbeit basiert auf einer qualitativen Studie von fünf Paaren, die ELF als Sprache in ihrer Beziehung gewählt haben und bezieht sich auf die Daten der Interviews, in welchen die befragten Personen ihre Wahrnehmungen bezüglich ihrer Sprachwahl und die Auswirkungen auf ihre Beziehung erläuterten. Die Ergebnisse bieten Einblick in die Beweggründe ihrer Sprachwahl und regt andere interessante Themenbereiche an, wie etwa ELF als Kommunikationsmittel um Emotionen auszudrücken und in welchem Ausmaß es zur Familiensprache werden kann.

Der theoretische Hintergrund dieser Diplomarbeit basiert auf einem Überblick von bereits existierender Forschung im Bereich von ELF. Er konzentriert sich auf [ELF] Sprachhaltung, sowie auf [ELF] Sprachbewusstsein und Sprachwahl. Zusätzlich, werden besondere Eigenschaften von Paarsprache im Allgemeinen erwähnt, und im Besonderen werden die Eigenschaften von mehrsprachigen Pärchen diskutiert. Ein Hauptaugenmerk liegt vor allem auf mehrsprachigen Paaren und ihrer Sprachwahl wenn sie Emotionen ausdrücken.

Der praktische Teil der Diplomarbeit präsentiert die Resultate der detaillierten Analyse der Interviews. Die aufkommenden Fragen- und Problembereiche werden durch genaue Beschreibungen der Ergebnisse klargestellt und durch Beispieldaten erläutert. Im Resümee, werden Schlussfolgerungen gezogen, welche auf Annahmen aus dem theoretischen Teil stammend basieren.

Appendix 8

EUROPEAN CURRICULUM VITAE



PERSONAL INFORMATION

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WORK EXPERIENCE

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dates (from-to)• Name and address of employer• Type of business or sector• Occupation or position held• Main activities and responsibilities | <p>OCTOBER 2009 -
KINDERGARTEN TÜRNITZ
Waldstraße 12, 3184 Türnitz, Austria
Child care sector- education
Leading manager of the project "Learning by playing"
English and German Education and child-rearing of 3 to 6 year old children</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dates (from-to)• Name and address of employer• Type of business or sector• Occupation or position held• Main activities and responsibilities | <p>JUNE 2008 -
BIKU - LERNZENTRUM
Kremser Gasse 41, 3100 St. Pölten, Austria
Education and Training
Language teacher for people of all ages
Organization and Teaching of English and German classes</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dates (from-to)• Name and address of employer• Type of business or sector• Occupation or position held• Main activities and responsibilities | <p>JUNE 2009 – JULY 2009
PDM (EUROPE)- PEOPLE TO PEOPLE (USA)
Neubeugasse 68/2/20, 1060 Wien, Austria
Tourism
Travel Guide- guiding, assisting and main source of information
Leading groups of American student ambassadors through Europe</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dates (from-to)• Name and address of employer• Type of business or sector• Occupation or position held• Main activities and responsibilities | <p>OCTOBER 2007 – JUNE 2009
URSULA WAGNER
Penzinger Straße 35/1/13, 1140 Wien, Austria
Child care- education (private sector)
Organizer and leading manager of the project "Learning by playing"
English Education and child-rearing of 8 to 9 year old children</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dates (from-to) | <p>OCTOBER 2006 - SEPTEMBER 2007</p> |

- Name and address of employer
 - Type of business or sector
 - Occupation or position held
- Main activities and responsibilities
 - Dates (from-to)
- Name and address of employer
 - Type of business or sector
 - Occupation or position held
- Main activities and responsibilities
 - Dates
- Name and address of employer
 - Type of business or sector
 - Occupation or position held
- Main activities and responsibilities
 - Dates
- Name and address of employer
 - Type of business or sector
 - Occupation or position held
- Main activities and responsibilities

KINDERGARTEN GÖBLASBRUCK

Anzengruberstraße 26, 3150 Wilhelmsburg, Austria

Child care sector- education

Leading manager of the project "Learning by playing"

English and German Education and child-rearing of 3 to 6 year old children

MAY 2005 - JUNE 2005

MAGIC LIFE - CRETE

Club Lyktos, Crete

Child care sector- education

Leading manager of children's entertainment team

Entertainment for children between the age of 6 to 15

JULY 2007 AND JULY 2004

GEORGE FISCHER FITTINGS LTD

Mariazellerstraße 75, 3160 Traisen, Austria

Manufacture-Piping systems

Internship in the field of Manufacturing

Machinist

JULY 2006 AND AUGUST 2001, 2002, 2003

TELEHAUS ESCHENAU

Inzenreithstraße 1, 3153 Eschenau, Austria

Agricultural

Internship in the Sales Department

All kinds of bureaucratic, financial and business affairs

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- Dates (from – to)
- Name and type of organization providing education and training
- Principal subjects/occupational skills covered
- Title of qualification awarded
- Level in national classification

SEPTEMBER 2004 –

UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA - DEPARTMENT OF BRITISH AND AMERICAN STUDIES

(language of instruction: English)

Specialization: Literature, Linguistics, Cultural Studies and Gender Studies

30% Linguistics

20% Study of literature

20 % Cultural and regional Studies

20% Teaching English

10 % Gender Studies

Master's Degree

Magistra (Mag.)

- Dates (from – to)
- Name and type of organization providing education and training
- Title of qualification awarded
- Level in national classification

SEPTEMBER 2004 – JANUARY 2009

UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA –

DEPARTMENT GERMAN FOR FOREIGNERS AND GENERAL PEDAGOGIC

(language of instruction: German)

Specialization: Teaching German to non-German Speaking People

and a special educational training in migration politics

DaF- Diplom (comparable to a Bachelor's Degree)

DaF-Diplom

- Dates (from – to)
- Name and type of organization

JANUARY 2008 JUNE 2008

UNIVERSITY OF BANGOR – SCHOOL OF ENGLISH AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE

providing education and training

(language of instruction: English)
Specialization: Literature, Linguistics and Cultural Studies.
Special concentration on Welsh minority politics.

- Dates (from – to)
- Name and type of organization providing education and training
- Principal subjects/occupational skills covered
- Title of qualification awarded

SEPTEMBER 1996 – JUNE 2004

GRAMMAR SCHOOL LILIENFELD

(language of instruction: German, partly English)
Specialization: Languages and Natural Sciences
Natural Sciences, mathematics and languages (English, Spanish, Latin)

A-levels (passed with distinction)

PERSONAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCES

MOTHER TONGUE

GERMAN

OTHER LANGUAGES

- Reading, writing and verbal skills
- Reading, writing and verbal skills
- Reading, writing and verbal skills

ENGLISH
EXCELLENT
SPANISH
BASIC
GREEK
VERY BASIC

SOCIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

- INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE
 - acquired during numerous trips through countries all around the world, in particular English speaking countries
 - two study trips (Excursion to the Canadian West: September 2008, British Summer School in Sidmouth: May 2003)
- TEAMWORK, TEAMPLAYER
 - projects at university and internships
 - member of the volleyball and tennis club
- SCOUTS
 - organization of summer-camps, events etc.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

DRIVING LICENSE B
FIRST CERTIFICATE OF ENGLISH (FCE)
ENGLISH CERTIFICATE (SIDMOUTH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL)

PERSONAL INTERESTS

SPORTS, TRAVELING (America and Europe), GUITAR