



49. Österreichische Linguistiktagung

5.–8. Dezember 2025

Universität Klagenfurt / Celovec

English as a Cosmopolitan Language – Signifiers, Attitudes and Didactic Approaches

6. Dezember 2025 | Raum 13

ÖLT WORKSHOP: ENGLISH AS A COSMOPOLITAN LANGUAGE

(11.00h) Between resource and threat: English in the linguistic landscapes of Serbia and Croatia

(11.30h) English in Russia after 2022: From global tool to political instrument

LUNCH BREAK

(14.30h) Cosmopolitanization of English: Historical precedents and contemporary parallels

~~(15.00h) English and modern media: Project insight and case example~~ **CANCELLED**

(15.30h) English in China: Policy shifts, attitude changes, and the cosmopolitan turn (2000s-2010s)

COFFEE BREAK

(16.30h) When English is no longer foreign: Extramural exposure and classroom challenges in Austria

~~(17.00h) Teaching English in a cosmopolitan age: Evidence from Austrian Learners~~ **CANCELLED**

(17.30h) Comments on English as a Cosmopolitan Language from the perspective of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

(18.00h) General discussion

ABSTRACTS

(1) Cosmopolitanization of English: Historical precedents and contemporary parallels

Nikola Dobrić, University of Klagenfurt

Stephan Procházka, University of Vienna

Martin Korenjak, University of Innsbruck

Adriana Molina-Munoz, University of Oxford

Antonia Ruppel, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich

Research on World Englishes has typically assumed a shared trajectory of lingua franca uses of English, driven by local socio-cultural identification similar to that observed in post-colonial settings (cf. Llamzon 1986; Schmied 1991; Kachru 1992; Moag 1992; Mufwene 2001). Central to it is the process of nativization (Schneider 2003): the shift by which English, as an external language to a community of speakers, is localized in sound, structure, and use, gains community-specific norms, and is ultimately transmitted intergenerationally as an internal language. Yet not all lingua franca outcomes follow this nativization model. This paper situates English within a broader, historically attestable process of cosmopolitanization: the transformation of certain lingua franca uses of a language into a fully non-native, supra-national code. Sanskrit, Latin, and Classical Arabic prototypically exemplify this trajectory in earlier periods, having become lingua cosmopolitanas (Dobrić et al. 2025): languages whose authority rested on transregional prestige rather than native speech communities. This paper applies this framework to English, arguing that cosmopolitanization is not a speculative alternative but an observable reality shaping its most prominent contemporary uses. In domains where English operates under conditions of hypercentrality (de Swaan 2001) and transnational attraction (Schneider 2014), certain features of cosmopolitanization are evident: (i) the declining relevance of native speakers; (ii) stewardship through community-based infrastructures (i.e. future AI-mediated maintenance of English); and (iii) persistent ideological centrality detached from local nativization. English thus gradually emerges as the latest instance of a historically recurrent developmental pathway, rather than being a unique case of large-scale spread.

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(2) English and modern media: Project insight and case example

Tamara Urach, University of Klagenfurt

This paper examines how the media consumption among young and adolescent learners of English (aged 9 to 16) influences their language skills. The annually published JIM Studie (Jugend, Information, Medien) as well as the KIM Studie (Kindheit, Internet, Medien) both show that the use of digital media is rising sharply. For that reason, our project team conducted a study (involving both a questionnaire and the Oxford Placement Test) to investigate media usage in English, attitudes towards it, and students' language proficiency, with three key areas of media use being especially interesting for my research: movies and TV shows, video games, and social media content. We investigated both the amount of time students spend engaging with these media and the extent to which they do so in English. Preliminary findings indicate that almost 58% of participants watch shows and movies in English, around 61% play video games in English (with 35% additionally communicating with other players in English in-game), and roughly 69% consume English-language social media content. These results highlight the significant role of media as a major source of English input outside formal education. Importantly, this contact largely takes place in learners' free time, an informal and unsupervised environment where neither parents nor teachers guide or monitor their linguistic development. These initial results already hint at English no longer being a foreign language in Austria, but something that Dobrić et al. (2025) call a 'lingua cosmopolitana' or Dobrić and Jones (2025) describe to be an 'adopted language'. This raises the question of how educators might meaningfully embed media-based practices into classroom environments to build on learners' existing habits. The paper discusses possible strategies for integrating authentic media into English instruction in order to harness students' everyday engagement with digital content and foster more effective, relevant, and motivating language learning experiences.

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(3) Between resource and threat: English in the linguistic landscapes of Serbia and Croatia

Eva Jakupčević, University of Split

Vesna Lazović, University of Ljubljana

Foreign languages have long played an important role in ex-Yugoslav countries such as Serbia and Croatia, with English emerging as the dominant one in recent decades (Ignjačević 2006; Mihaljević Djigunović 2013). Its prominence is linked to the central role in international communication, education, and digital media. A foreign language has been a compulsory subject from the first grade of primary school since 2004 in Croatia (Kapović 2022) and 2005 in Serbia (Filipović, Vučo and Đurić 2007), and the overwhelming majority of students learn English throughout their education. Despite this visibility, few studies have systematically compared the attitudes of L1 Croatian and L1 Serbian speakers toward English. The present paper draws on data collected within the SPEAKEng project in Croatia (N = 725) and Serbia (N = 1190). Participants were invited to respond to the question: "How would you describe your relationship to English and your native language?" The analysis focuses on responses that highlight two contrasting perspectives. On the one hand, English is perceived as an enabling resource that facilitates participation in global networks, access to information, and personal expression. On the other, it is viewed as a potential threat to local language, identity, and cultural continuity. By

comparing patterns emerging in the Croatian and Serbian data, the paper explores similarities and differences in how English is positioned within the two linguistic landscapes. The findings reveal both shared ambivalences and context-specific orientations, suggesting that educational policy, media exposure, and national language ideologies shape the way English is embraced or resisted. These insights contribute to ongoing debates about language policy and teaching in the region.

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(4) English in Russia after 2022: From global tool to political instrument

Iana Vainbender, University of Klagenfurt

Since 2022, Russian language policy has undergone a major shift. English, which had previously been valued as part of the global communicative space, began to be framed in official discourse as a symbol of Western influence. Drawing on the concepts of World Englishes (Bolton, Kachru, 2006), English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) (Seidlhofer, 2011), and critical language policy research (Proshina, 2006), this paper outlines the main trends in language policy for the period from 2022 to 2025. While the official agenda seeks to downplay the relevance of English, in everyday life and professional context it continues to serve as an essential resource. This reveals a growing gap between political discourse and the actual language practice. To show how the geopolitical divide is transforming the symbolic meanings attributed to English, Russia is placed in a comparative context with other Expanding-circle countries. The analysis demonstrates that, despite restrictive rhetoric, English remains embedded in education, business, and international mobility. This paper provides a theoretical reflection, identifies empirical gaps in sociolinguistic knowledge after 2022 and proposes a set of theoretical tools for studying attitudes towards English in Russia. These conclusions contribute to ongoing debate in WE and ELF, demonstrating how language attitudes are formed at the intersection of global communication and national policy.

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(5) English in China: Policy shifts, attitude changes, and the cosmopolitan turn (2000s-2010s)

Zhen Lee, University of Klagenfurt

The place of English in China has never been stable. Its status has shifted with policy and social change, moving from indifference to enthusiasm, and later to pressure, pride, and mixed views. These changes created both excitement and frustration across different groups and regions (Bolton & Graddol, 2012). This study examines how major policy shifts have shaped the role of English and influenced public attitudes. Over the past fifty years, from the early reform era to the recent Double-Reduction policy, English has been treated not only as a language skill but also as a social and ideological symbol (Pan, 2015). Special attention is given to the 2000s–2010s, when policies such as the 2008 Olympics and the spread of English medium instruction (EMI) linked English to modernity and national pride. Research shows that English was promoted as part of patriotic education and as a symbol of national identity (Gao, 2012). At the same time, EMI widened the gap between urban and rural schools, creating both enthusiasm and frustration towards English (Macaro, 2017). The findings indicate that English in China has moved from being useful, to valued, to debated, and now to a practical but unequal tool. This shift shows that its cosmopolitan role does not remain fixed but continues to change in practice (Pan, 2015).

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(6) When English is no longer foreign: Extramural exposure and classroom challenges in Austria

Roger Dale Jones, Universität Klagenfurt

For decades, research has suggested that young people in continental Europe encounter English far more outside their classrooms than within them (Sundqvist & Sylvén 2016, Berns, Claes et al. 2007). Investigations into curricula, classroom practices, and teacher–student testimonies indicate that the proficiency gains resulting from this massive extramural exposure are often overlooked and remain unintegrated into formal education (Jones 2018, Uhl 2020). In most national contexts, English continues to be taught like any other foreign language, as if students were not immersed in it daily through media, gaming, online communication, and youth culture (cf. Jones in press). This situation creates both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, extramural English offers learners immersion, rapid vocabulary growth, development of receptive and productive skills, and intercultural engagement. On the other hand, student experiences with English vary widely, and teachers often lack both awareness of these experiences and strategies to incorporate them into instruction. As a result, classroom learning can appear redundant, underwhelming, or disconnected from students’ actual language practices (cf. Grau & Legutke 2015). Despite these tensions, systematic research remains sparse. Existing studies are small-scale, fragmented, or focus narrowly on exposure time without linking it sufficiently to proficiency (Smit & Schwarz 2020). Few have explored students’ attitudes towards English in relation to their native languages, youth culture, identity, or other foreign languages (Schneider, Boemmel et al. 2023). Even fewer have correlated massive extramural contact with measurable proficiency gains. This presentation addresses this gap with findings from a pilot project in Carinthia (N=177), examining 4th- and 9th-grade students’ extramural English use, proficiency levels, and attitudes. Results reveal marked differences between age groups in their engagement with English and a wide spectrum of proficiency within each class, presenting significant challenges for teachers in instruction and assessment. The study provides strong

evidence that for many students, English can no longer be considered a “foreign” language, and that classrooms require new approaches to address this reality.

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(7) Teaching English in a cosmopolitan age: Evidence from Austrian Learners

Iris Van der Horst, University of Klagenfurt

Ursula Posratschnig, University of Klagenfurt

This contribution engages with the theme of English as a cosmopolitan language by examining its implications for English language education. Didactics scholars have long argued that language teaching should extend beyond the functional uses of language to include critical reflection on identity, symbolic meaning, and the entanglement of language with power, culture, and history (Kramsch 1995). In a similar vein, Marxl and Römhild (2023: 80-82) highlight that the central goal of language education is to empower learners to participate in global discourses led between societies. Against this backdrop, global education and global citizenship education have introduced a cosmopolitan orientation that is increasingly visible in pedagogical discourse (cf. Lütge et al 2023; Römhild et al 2013) and even in the design of EFL textbooks, which frequently frame global challenges through a cosmopolitan lens (van der Horst 2025). Nevertheless, schools in Europe continue to classify English as a “foreign language” and often teach it accordingly. Teachers frequently assume that learners lack the proficiency to participate in global discourses, an assumption reinforced by heavily simplified textbook treatments of global issues. Drawing on quantitative data collected this year from Austrian schools, ranging from primary to upper-secondary levels, this paper disputes these assumptions. It demonstrates that young learners are highly proficient, regularly engage with English-language media, and actively participate in online global discourses, perceiving English as a cosmopolitan lingua franca. We believe that this data is imperative to initiate changes in educational policies and English-language teaching practice.

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(8) Comments on English as a Cosmopolitan Language from the perspective of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

Barbara Seidlhofer, University of Vienna

This contribution considers matters arising from this workshop from an ELF perspective. It will look at similarities and differences between the notions of English as a Cosmopolitan Language and English as a Lingua Franca from both conceptual and applied linguistic standpoints and explore their mutual relevance, asking what affordances and synergies could be achieved by teasing out the relationship between the two (and possibly other related) concepts. It is hoped that sharing reflections on these questions might give rise to further insights that help advance both the theorizing, and the practical engagement with, the realities of contemporary 'English'.

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