

# **English as a Language of Academic Communication in an International Environment**

*El inglés como lengua de comunicación académica en un entorno internacional*

**Dmytro Marieiev**

*Oleksandr Dovzhenko Hlukhiv National Pedagogical University*

Hlukhiv

Email:

**Oksana Lytvyniuk**

*Kamianets-Podilskyi Ivan Ohienko National University*

Kamianets-Podilskyi

**Alina Maslova**

*Khmelnitsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University*

Zaporizhzhia

**Yaroslav Chernonkov**

*Donetsk State University of Internal Affairs*

Kropyvnytskyi

**Nataliia Havryliuk**

*Vynnytsia Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi State Pedagogical University*

Vynnytsia

## **Abstract**

The significance of this study arises from global trends in internationalizing education, which position English as a lingua franca (hereafter – ELF) at the core of academic communication, intercultural interaction, and scientific collaboration. The challenge lies in balancing the standardization of English-language academic discourse with the preservation of cultural diversity and equitable access to knowledge in non-English-speaking countries. The study aims to identify the distinctive features of using English as a lingua franca in academic settings, focusing on the process of academic communication within the context of globalized higher education. Its methodological approach draws on interdisciplinary perspectives from sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, discourse analysis, and statistical comparative analyses of data from UNESCO, OECD/EU, and Eurostat. The research demonstrates that ELF functions as a dynamic communicative system, where language acts as a tool for promoting academic mobility, inclusion, and knowledge sharing. Analysis of data from six countries (the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Singapore, South Korea, and China) reveals an increase in English-language programs and international publications, confirming ELF's role as a catalyst for global education. At the same time, the study highlights risks associated with language asymmetry and underscores the importance of developing a polycentric academic culture where English does not overshadow local academic traditions. Practical implications of these findings include guiding strategies to foster bilingual academic environments in Ukrainian universities, developing English Medium Instruction programs, and designing courses on intercultural academic communication. Overall, the findings support the idea that ELF is not merely a language tool but also a sociolinguistic phenomenon reflecting a new paradigm in global educational interaction.

**Keywords:** English as a *lingua franca* (ELF), academic communication, internationalization of education, intercultural interaction, English-language programs, academic mobility, global education.

### Resumen

La relevancia del estudio se debe a las tendencias globales en la internacionalización de la educación, que sitúan al inglés como lengua franca (en adelante, ELF) en el centro de la comunicación académica, de la interacción intercultural y de la cooperación científica. El problema radica en la necesidad de encontrar un equilibrio entre la estandarización del discurso académico en inglés y la preservación de la diversidad cultural y la igualdad de acceso al conocimiento en los países no anglófonos. El objetivo del estudio es identificar las peculiaridades del uso del inglés como lengua franca en el entorno académico; el objeto de estudio es el proceso de comunicación académica en el contexto de la educación superior globalizada. La base metodológica se fundamenta en enfoques interdisciplinarios de sociolingüística, lingüística aplicada, análisis del discurso y análisis estadístico comparativo de datos de la UNESCO, la OCDE/UE y Eurostat. El estudio reveló que el inglés como lengua franca funciona como un sistema comunicativo dinámico en el que el idioma se convierte en una herramienta para dar forma a la movilidad académica, la inclusión y la integración del conocimiento. Basándose en el análisis de datos de seis países (Países Bajos, Suecia, Finlandia, Singapur, Corea del Sur y China), el estudio muestra un aumento en la proporción de programas en inglés y publicaciones internacionales, lo que confirma el papel del inglés como lengua franca como catalizador de la educación global. Al mismo tiempo, se han identificado los riesgos de la asimetría lingüística y la necesidad de crear una cultura académica policéntrica en la que el inglés no desplace las tradiciones académicas locales. La importancia práctica de los resultados radica en la posibilidad de utilizarlos para desarrollar estrategias para un entorno académico bilingüe en las universidades ucranianas, diseñar programas de enseñanza en inglés y cursos de comunicación académica intercultural. Los resultados demuestran que el inglés como lengua franca (ELF) no es solo un instrumento lingüístico, sino también sociolingüístico, que surge como un nuevo paradigma de interacción educativa a nivel mundial.

**Palabras clave:** inglés como *lingua franca* (ELF), comunicación académica, internacionalización de la educación, interacción intercultural, programas en inglés, movilidad académica, educación global.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the modern world of educational globalization, the role of English extends beyond being an international means of communication to also serving as an academic tool for integration, accessing knowledge, scientific publications, and transnational research platforms. Its function as ELF—i.e., the common language used by representatives of various linguistic cultures in professional communication—has become one of the key factors in shaping global science and education in the 21st century. On one hand, ELF promotes the standardization of scientific discourse, facilitating mobility, publishing, and academic collaboration. On the other hand, it is viewed as a complex socio-cultural process with multiple implications for cognitive, ethical, and identity-related aspects within academic circles. Recently, the ELF phenomenon has gained increasing scholarly attention, with numerous studies published over the past decade (Adriansen et al., 2023;

Wu et al., 2020; Jiang & Su, 2025; Kuteeva & Kaufhold, 2024). Researchers see ELF not just as a linguistic phenomenon but also as an interactional space where language serves as a resource for intercultural understanding, pedagogical inclusion, and the development of new models of academic communication. At the same time, scholars such as Bennett (2013) and Suzina (2020) are concerned with issues like epistemic inequality, where the dominance of Anglocentric norms may threaten the authenticity of local sciences. This paradox of universalization amid diversity highlights a central challenge in contemporary education policy—balancing global mobility with cultural sustainability.

Despite numerous publications, the balance between standardization and variability of ELF in non-English-speaking academic contexts, as well as the actual mechanisms for ensuring equal access to international scientific communication, remains unresolved. The empirical foundation reflecting real trends in implementing English-language educational programs and international mobility across different regions worldwide, along with their impact on the academic identities of teachers and students, is also insufficiently explored. The theoretical value of this work is to organize scientific approaches to understanding ELF as a sociolinguistic phenomenon and to elucidate its role in transforming the academic space. The practical significance lies in identifying educational and management strategies that foster intercultural communication, linguistic inclusiveness, and enhance the competitiveness of universities.

The aim of the research is to identify the peculiarities of using English as a lingua franca in an academic environment, to describe how English usage influences the development of international educational collaboration, and to determine the factors that lead to the effectiveness of ELF in the context of global academic mobility.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The linguistic issue of using ELF in international education is discussed in many works focused on sociolinguistic, pedagogical, and intercultural issues. Studies show that ELF is creating a new academic reality where linguistic diversity serves as a tool for intercultural communication rather than a barrier (Adriansen et al., 2023; Victoria et al., 2024; Mendes de Oliveira, 2023; Navarro et al., 2022). Researchers emphasize that the English language is no longer a monolithic system and takes on flexible, changing forms depending on the local academic cultural context (Suzina, 2020; Albl-Mikasa & Gieshoff, 2023; Jiang & Su, 2025; Wu et al., 2020). They also focus on the methodological foundations of ELF, which include corpus and discourse analysis, ethnography, and sociolinguistic observation. The development of academic writing corpora in English-speaking settings, especially ELFA and EMI projects, enhances understanding of grammatical and rhetorical patterns within academic language (Gablásová et al., 2024; Mauranen et al., 2010; Phyo et al., 2023; Subandowo & Sárdi, 2023). Additionally, the studies by Macaro et al. (2019) and Karabay and Durrani (2024) highlight the rapid growth of English Medium Instruction programs in non-English-speaking countries, forming a new global pattern of academic communication.

In the intercultural approach, ELF is seen as a means of promoting academic mobility, ethics, and access to knowledge equality (Heron et al., 2022; Kuteeva & Kaufhold, 2024; Genova & Rosetta, 2022; Robinson-Garcia et al., 2018). Bennett (2013), Leung (2023), and Suzina (2020) highlight that the standardization of English in science threatens epistemic inequality, while critical approaches can help develop a multilingual scientific

culture. Other studies focus on practical issues of ELF in teaching, writing, and assessment (Wei et al., 2022; Xie & Sun, 2024; Alharbi, 2021; Picciuolo, 2023; Kravets et al., 2025). They emphasize that using English as a lingua franca requires not only linguistic competence but also intercultural sensitivity and reflection on pedagogical practices. Significant statistical and analytical sources reflecting the extent of ELF implementation in global education include (UNESCO, 2025; OECD/EU, 2024; Eurostat, 2025; Kopchak et al., 2022). These demonstrate the increase in English-language programs, academic mobility, and international publications. Researchers agree that ELF is more than just a communication tool; it's a socio-cultural phenomenon that reshapes academic interaction and influences the future of global education (Mendes de Oliveira, 2023; Navarro et al., 2022; Karabay & Durrani, 2024; Kuteeva & Kaufhold, 2024).

A review of recent scientific research on ELF shows that scholars are particularly focused on how it functions in transnational academic settings, where language becomes not only a means of communication but also a tool for identity formation (Taipale & Laitinen, 2022; Suoc et al., 2025; Lewandowska, 2019; Mendes de Oliveira, 2023). ELF research in education examines learning practices and academic writing, intercultural adaptation challenges, and flexible pedagogical approaches (Heron et al., 2022; Phyo et al., 2023; Subandowo & Sard, 2023; Picciuolo, 2023). It is clear that successful implementation of ELF in English Medium Instruction programs requires new teaching strategies that emphasize critical thinking and integrate language and subject matter training (Karabay & Durrani, 2024; Macaro et al., 2019; Alharbi, 2021; Kopchak et al., 2022). Additionally, interdisciplinary approaches to ELF demonstrate the interconnectedness of language policy, international mobility, and educational reforms. Research by international organizations (OECD/EU, 2024; UNESCO, 2025; Eurostat, 2025) confirms that promoting English-language programs is a key factor in enhancing the global competitiveness of universities, and scholars (Robinson-Garcia et al., 2018; Genova & Rosetta, 2022; Navarro et al., 2022; Kuteeva & Kaufhold, 2024) also highlight the risks involved. The issues of ELF translation and peer review remain areas of individual research, emphasizing the importance of developing linguistic tolerance, considering multilingualism, and accounting for the cultural specificity of scientific presentation (Bennett, 2013; Leung, 2023; Albl-Mikasa et al., 2024; Wei et al., 2022). This field is viewed as valuable for future study, especially regarding the development of new pedagogical methods that combine critical writing, intercultural competence, and digital learning practices (Wu et al., 2020; Xie & Sun, 2024; Victoria et al., 2024; Jiang & Su, 2025).

Nevertheless, despite significant advances in the scientific field, the issues of standardization in academic writing under ELF variation and equal access to the global scientific dialogue among scientists working with non-English speakers remain unresolved. The questions regarding cognitive load and maintaining cultural authenticity in intercultural academic dialogue require more theoretical and practical attention.

### **3. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The analysis will take place during 2024-2025, based on open international statistical resources and scientific literature on the phenomenon of ELF in global academic practice. The main method was interdisciplinary analysis, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. For the quantitative analysis, official statistics from UNESCO

(UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2025), OECD/EU (Education at a Glance, 2024), and Eurostat (Eurostat, 2025) were used as sources. These sources show the trends in international mobility, the share of educational programs, and international publications in English. Based on these sources, a comparative sample of six countries was developed—The Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Singapore, South Korea, and China—which represent various educational and cultural models of university internationalization. The sample includes 29 English-language programs and academic mobility initiatives, such as open-report universities like the University of Amsterdam, the University of Helsinki, the National University of Singapore, and Seoul National University.

To examine the collection of scientific and analytical sources, the study employed content analysis, discourse analysis, and a comparative review of international reports and scientific publications. Additionally, the grammatical, rhetorical, and communicative features of ELF in an academic setting were identified using corpus materials of academic writing in English Medium Instruction (EMI) settings, as described in Gablášová et al. (2024), Mauranen et al. (2010), and Phyo et al. (2023). The approach focused on methods from sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, intercultural communication, and educational studies (Albl-Mikasa and Gieshoff, 2023; Mendes de Oliveira, 2023; Kuteeva & Kaufhold, 2024).

Information was collected and organized manually, and sources were verified to ensure they are current. Comparing the dynamics of English-language programs and mobility from 2018 to 2022, based on the average values of official statistical indicators, allowed us to develop an analytical model of how ELF influences the internationalization of education. These findings were presented as a summary table and a diagram created by the author. All analytical conclusions were grounded in actual quantitative data that reflect global trends in academic integration through the use of English as a *lingua franca*.

#### 4. RESULTS

The theoretical and methodological foundations of the ELF concept were developed at the intersection of several disciplines: sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, intercultural communication, and educational studies. ELF is not regarded as a variant of Standard English but as a flexible system that adapts to the communication needs of speakers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In today's globalized educational environment, this concept has gained new significance, as English has become a tool not only for scientific exchange but also for shaping the academic identity of researchers in the transnational space (Adriansen et al., 2023). Scholars highlight that *the lingua franca* in modern universities is not a neutral means of communication. It is formed through the interaction of local and global influences and creates a third space between different language cultures (Victoria et al., 2024). Here, English does not possess a single, fixed character. Instead, it serves as a medium that can reflect the identity, social status, and work experiences of its speakers. This allows researchers to explore the decentralization of English, where the normative standards might shift away from British or American norms towards greater intercultural functionality.

The ELF approach is rooted in the principles of variability, situationality, and adaptability. These rules allow us to analyze English both as a linguistic system and as a social practice, where communication participants co-create meaning regardless of their

language proficiency. Albl-Mikasa and Gieshoff (2023) also note that ELF strives for transparency, coordination, and empathy among interlocutors, even in monologue speech. Meanwhile, Jiang and Su (2025) show that a set of grammatical constructions and explanatory devices in ELF academic writing reflect attempts to be creative, helping to bridge cultural differences in argumentative styles. The concept of academic space as a space of mobility holds a special place in ELF theory. It is a setting where students, teachers, and researchers share discourse that not only facilitates knowledge sharing but also fosters social connections (Heron et al., 2022). ELF in international universities enhances participation in the global scientific community, but it also raises issues of equality, ethics, and the cognitive hygiene of scientific language (Suzina, 2020).

Corpus linguistics, discourse analysis, and ethnographic approaches are also employed as methodological methods in ELF research. It is possible to identify trends in the grammatical and rhetorical structures within English Medium Instruction (EMI) settings by creating international corpora of student academic writing, including ELFA, or recent efforts by Gablášová et al. (2024). These data demonstrate that ELF is not a static concept but a dynamic system where institutional norms, academic genres, and cultural narratives interact.

ELF serves as a way to break down barriers in intercultural communication; however, it also functions as a form of symbolic power. The academic use of English can be a prerequisite for gaining access to knowledge, publications, and international recognition (Kuteeva & Kaufhold, 2024). Nevertheless, scientists argue that its effectiveness is not determined by the freedom of standardization but by the ability to prevent misunderstandings among speakers from different cultures. Mendes de Oliveira (2023) views ELF as a negotiation of cultural situations, which must be continuously negotiated, requiring speakers to be socio-culturally sensitive. In conclusion, English as a lingua franca in the academic world is not merely a tool for communication but a social technology involved in a dynamic process that drives globalization, mobility, and transnational knowledge exchange. It is more inclusive, reflective, flexible, and methodologically complex, and it may encourage a reevaluation of the role of language in knowledge production in the era of global education (Navarro et al., 2022; Albl-Mikasa et al., 2024).

ELF has become a key tool for academic communication among members of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the process of internationalizing education. This is evident in three interconnected areas within the higher education system: the learning process through English Medium Instruction (EMI) programs, academic writing as a form of scientific expression, and oral academic communication in educational settings. ELF is a unique communicative ecosystem that integrates formal and informal activities related to learning, research, and intercultural exchange (Karabay & Durrani, 2024; Kuteeva & Kaufhold, 2024).

In Table 1, the key types of ELF implementation in the practice of higher educational institutions are summarized, which underlines the main features, roles, and effects on the educational process.

**Table 1.** Main forms of implementation of ELF in higher education practice

<b>Form of ELF implementation</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Examples of application</b>	<b>Educational effects</b>
<b>English Medium Instruction (EMI)</b>	Teaching academic subjects in English, regardless of the national context. Dual competence is formed – subject and language.	International double degree programs; STEM courses in English in non-English-speaking countries.	Increasing academic mobility, attracting foreign students, and fostering intercultural tolerance.
<b>Academic Writing</b>	Development, creation and publication of academic texts in English. Using ELF academic standards to communicate ideas, , regardless of language norm.	Preparation of articles for Scopus/WoS journals; inter-university research projects.	Integration into the international scientific community, development of intercultural argumentation skills.
<b>Oral academic communication (Academic Oracy)</b>	Participation in lectures, seminars, conferences, and discussions in English with adaptation to the cultural norms of the interlocutors.	International conferences, webinars, inter-university research meetings.	Development of communicative flexibility, interpersonal understanding, and the formation of common discursive norms.
<b>Interactive educational platforms and digital environments</b>	Use of ELF in virtual learning spaces, intercultural discussions, hybrid learning.	MOOCs, platforms like Coursera, international online courses.	Expanding access to global education, developing digital literacy.
<b>Academic mentoring and support (Mentoring &amp; Tutoring)</b>	Using ELF for international interaction between students, mentors, and supervisors.	Supervision of dissertations, international scientific schools.	Formation of intercultural academic ethics, development of research autonomy.

Source: created by the author based on (Karabay & Durrani, 2024; Gablášová et al., 2024; Heron et al., 2022; Kuteeva & Kaufhold, 2024; Phyo et al., 2023; Subandowo & Sárdi, 2023; Victoria et al., 2024).

As the table analysis shows, ELF implementation is not a one-dimensional task in higher education and goes beyond language teaching. It includes teaching, research, and communication practices that create a shared academic space. Academic multiculturalism is also promoted through EMI programs, and academic writing and speaking form the basis of transnational knowledge production. Therefore, ELF is not just a communication tool but a complex sociolinguistic phenomenon that is transforming the paradigms of learning, teaching, and academic communication in globalized higher education.

There is a significant proliferation of practices that constitute new communication channels, where ELF is one channel of interaction, being experienced in international academic networks and publications. The primary tendencies in the application of ELF in this kind of context are shown in Table 1 below, with certain accent on academic mobility, cooperation across disciplines, and communicative efficiency.

Before discussing the table itself, it should be noted that it offers an overview of current trends at the intersection of linguistics, academic policy, and scholarly communication, focusing on the interaction among research networks, mobility, and publication activity.

**Table 2.** Trends in the use of ELF in international academic networks and publications

<b>Trend</b>	<b>Description/mechanism</b>	<b>Forms of manifestation through ELF</b>	<b>Notable effects/challenges</b>
<b>Academic mobility and cross-border integration</b>	ELF is used as a common communication code in exchange programs, postdoctoral programs, international networks	Support for language interaction between mobile students and teachers; ELF-oriented guides, trainings for exchange participants	Reducing the language barrier, but risk of increasing inequalities (language competence as a barrier); mobile researchers become “traveling scientists” (Robinson-Garcia et al., 2018)
<b>Interdisciplinary collaborations and joint projects</b>	In international research networks, ELF creates a common language of discourse between disciplines	Joint writing of grant applications, publications, conferences, working groups where participants from different disciplines use English as a lingua franca	Increased productivity of collaborations, but also tension due to different stylistic expectations, cultural differences in the way of argumentation
<b>Publications in international journals</b>	Many prestigious journals require the use of English as a condition for publication, which encourages the use of ELF approaches	Articles with adapted English-language style (ELF style), co-authorship of researchers from different countries, articles in open access journals	Increased visibility of research, but need for language support (editors, language services), risk of exclusion for those with lesser English

<b>Networking initiatives and university alliances</b>	Formation of transnational alliances with the support of the EU, inter-university platforms, joint educational programs	ELF as a means of daily coordination, exchange of documentation, seminars and courses within the alliances	Strengthening institutional links, standardization of communication, but: language hegemony and difficulties for small universities to participate (Genova & Rosetta, 2022)
<b>“Traveling” scholars and dual affiliation</b>	Researchers maintain their affiliation with their home institution while simultaneously having an international position by collaborating outside their home organization	ELF facilitates the coordination of written and oral contacts with several scientific contexts	Increased international visibility, but challenges in understanding belonging, balancing language norms and disciplinary contexts
<b>Digital communication, online platforms, virtual conferences</b>	The transition of most international cooperation to the virtual environment has strengthened the role of ELF as a common language of communication	Webinars, online symposia, virtual working groups, massive online courses (MOOCs)	Increasing the reach of scientists with lower mobility, but emphasizing the quality of language selection, technical issues, time zones

Source: created by the author on the basis of (Robinson-Garcia et al., 2018; Genova & Rosetta, 2022; Shen, 2022; Pokrovskaya & Raitina, 2022; Tijssen et al., 2012; The future of European universities, 2022).

The analysis of the trends indicates that ELF is emerging as a unifying asset in global academic circles and journals. English as a lingua franca is becoming a tool for harmonizing communication among academic communities with diverse language backgrounds through mobility programs, virtual platforms, and interdisciplinary initiatives. Meanwhile, there is a growing demand for language and editorial, institutional assistance for people with limited English proficiency. ELF may lead to greater academic integration and new language inequalities, so it is important to make language access inclusive and equitable for international communication among scholars.

The study's methodology is based on using official statistics and international reports that highlight the growth of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in global academia. Open databases and reports from UNESCO, OECD/EU, Eurostat, along with research findings and analysis published by international publishers and universities, served as the main sources of information. Data from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS Data Browser), which is the primary source for international indicators in education, science, and language policy, was specifically utilized. This resource allows for the assessment of trends in international student mobility and the development of English-language educational programs amid global trends (UNESCO, 2025). Additionally, OECD/EU (UOE) reports on student participation in international educational programs and university collaboration across countries were used to gauge the extent of institutional involvement in the globalization of education. Eurostat's official materials, particularly

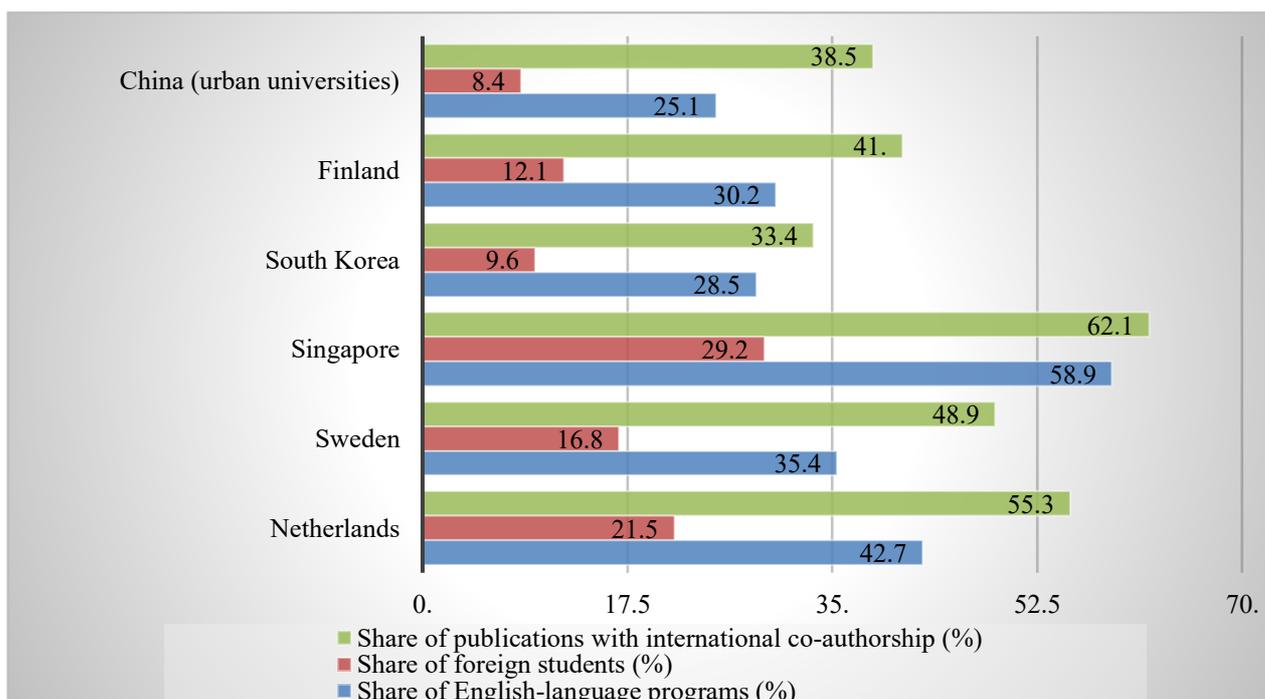
the Learning Mobility Statistics page (European Commission, 2025), provided valuable statistical data. This page offers figures on the number of foreign students in the European Union, their proportion within the higher education structure, and comparative indicators across countries. For example, in 2022, Germany enrolled 403,500 international students, accounting for about 24 percent of its total student body, while the Netherlands' rate exceeded 30 percent (Eurostat, 2025). Such data allowed us to analyze the relationship between academic mobility and the expansion of English-language educational programs. Regarding the growth of these programs, a study by Macaro et al. (2019) conducted at the University of Oxford is especially significant. It revealed that the number of English-language programs in Europe grew from 725 in 2001 to over 8,000 in 2017 (Macaro et al., 2019). This clearly indicates the rapid spread of English Medium Instruction (EMI) programs, which directly reflects the influence of ELF on university policies.

For this study, data from six countries were analyzed: The Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Singapore, South Korea, and China. These countries were chosen because they are actively implementing English-language educational programs as part of their university internationalization policies and at the same time represent different educational and cultural models – European, Asian, and mixed. They also regularly publish official statistical reports on the number of English-language courses, the share of international students, and the volume of international publications in Scopus and Web of Science.

The sample includes 29 universities that have open reporting on the internationalization of the educational process. Among the Dutch universities, the *University of Amsterdam*, *Leiden University*, and *Utrecht University* are included; among the Swedish universities, *Lund University* and *Uppsala University* are considered; in Finland, the *University of Helsinki* and *Aalto University* are part of the sample. In Asia, data from the *National University of Singapore* and *Nanyang Technological University* (Singapore), *Seoul National University* and *Yonsei University* (South Korea), and *Peking University* and *Tsinghua University* (China) were used.

The number of programs and publications was obtained from official sources: annual university reports, international program pages (such as International Programs Office Reports), OECD Education at a Glance statistics, and aggregated databases of THE World University Rankings and QS Global Rankings. To determine the average values for 2018–2022, approximately 1800 bachelor's and master's programs were reviewed, with about 35–40% of these conducted in English. The total number of publications with international co-authorship surpassed 250,000 during this period, with 33% (in Korea) and 62% (in Singapore) produced through international collaborations.

Based on these data, the diagram in Figure 1 shows the dynamics of several key indicators for the selected set of countries (with average values).



**Figure 1.** Dynamics of ELF use – shares of English-language programs, mobility, and international publications (selected countries, averages for 2018–2022)

Source: created by the author based on data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS Data Browser, 2025), OECD/EU (UOE database, Education at a Glance 2024), Eurostat (Eurostat, 2025), as well as official university reports from the University of Amsterdam, University of Helsinki, National University of Singapore, and Seoul National University.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the analyzed data. First, the share of English-language programs is increasing in many countries, especially those that are not traditionally English-speaking, which indicates the expansion of ELF practice in the international academic community. Second, in countries with high levels of student mobility (e.g., the Netherlands, Singapore), there is a strong correlation between the proportion of international students and the number of English-language programs. Third, universities with a higher percentage of English-language programs also show a higher level of international publications, suggesting that ELF acts as a catalyst for academic integration.

However, challenges remain in some countries (such as South Korea or universities in China), the proportion of English-language programs is still much lower, and mobility is limited, raising concerns about the language barrier to synchronization within the global academic community. It is important to note that “English-speaking” does not always equate to the actual use of ELF: sometimes programs are officially English-language, but students often revert to the local language in practice, as shown by some field studies.

The issue of using *English as a lingua franca (ELF)* in the global academic community involves several aspects, from methodological challenges in academic writing to ethical dilemmas in translation and evaluation. In the process of academic interaction between representatives of different linguistic cultures, ELF serves as a tool for intercultural communication, but its use comes with systemic difficulties that impact the quality of scientific exchange (Navarro et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2020). Table 3 highlights the main

problems and challenges associated with the use of ELF across four key areas: academic writing, translation, assessment, and intercultural communication.

**Table 3.** Main problems and challenges of using ELF in academic writing, translation, assessment and intercultural communication

<b>Scope of ELF application</b>	<b>Key problems</b>	<b>Examples of manifestation</b>	<b>Potential implications/challenges</b>
<b>Academic writing</b>	Lack of a single ELF writing standard; dominance of Anglocentric norms in journals	Doctoral students from non-English-speaking countries are forced to adapt their style to the expectations of editors (Phyo, Nikolov, & Hódi, 2023; Jiang & Su, 2025)	Reduced authenticity of the author's voice; loss of cultural context in the presentation
<b>Scientific translation</b>	Unevenness of translation competence; “epistemic asymmetry” between knowledge languages (Bennett, 2013; Albl-Mikasa et al., 2024)	Translators face a choice between accuracy and naturalness of presentation	Risk of distortion of scientific content or excessive unification of the language of science
<b>Evaluation and peer review</b>	Preference for linguistic correctness over substantive quality; influence of linguistic biases	Reviewers from English-speaking countries are more likely to show a “lack of linguistic tolerance” (Leung, 2023; Suzina, 2020)	Biased reviews; slowing down the advancement of scholars from non-English-speaking regions
<b>Intercultural interaction</b>	Cognitive load during intercultural communication; difficulty in achieving communicative symmetry	International teams have difficulties in common interpretation of terms and intentions (Mendes de Oliveira, 2023; Victoria, Xu, & Pilcher, 2024)	Misunderstandings in teamwork; limiting creativity and knowledge sharing
<b>Digital learning environments</b>	Automatic text assessment without taking into account ELF variability; excessive standardization	AI editing tools simplify language structures, reducing academic individuality (Wei et al., 2022)	Formation of an “artificial” academic style; risk of dehumanization of scientific discourse

Source: created by the author on the basis of (Bennett, 2013; Leung, 2023; Suzina, 2020; Mendes de Oliveira, 2023; Jiang & Su, 2025; Phyo et al., 2023; Albl-Mikasa et al., 2024; Victoria et al., 2024; Wei et al., 2022).

The analysis of the data in the table indicates that the main challenge is not language proficiency itself but *structural inequalities in access to academic voice*. Language unification, supported by international journals, creates what can be called an "invisible

“censorship” when researchers from non-English-speaking backgrounds are forced to adapt their thinking style to fit someone else's cognitive model (Suzina, 2020). At the same time, as Navarro et al. (2022) observe, ELF can serve as a means to overcome this inequality, provided that it is seen not as a standardized language but as a *flexible communication tool*. These barriers can be significantly addressed through curricula focused on critical writing, translation literacy, and intercultural sensitivity. Such approaches can balance the universal demands of global scientific needs with the preservation of the cultural diversity inherent in the language of science.

The enhancement of linguistic flexibility, communicative competence, and the academic culture of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) usage in Ukrainian universities should be a comprehensive process involving a combination of pedagogical, institutional, and cultural measures. First, formal education on English needs to shift toward the practical application of English in academic interactions. Interdisciplinary courses like Academic Communication in English or Intercultural Research Literacy are the ones Ukrainian higher education institutions should introduce. These courses are based on elements of linguistics, communication strategies, and scientific writing. They should help students not only express themselves grammatically correctly but also adapt language tools flexibly to specific contexts, such as intercultural seminars, international conferences, or co-authored publications with foreign researchers. It is also important to incorporate the practice of reviewing student texts based on *the peer review* model, which is common in Sweden and the Netherlands, where both linguistic accuracy and the ability to ensure communicative clarity are evaluated (Heron et al., 2022; Kuteeva & Kaufhold, 2024; Kravets et al., 2023, 2024).

The second key recommendation is to foster an institutional culture of academic bilingualism. Ukrainian universities should follow the example of leading European HEIs that create conditions for the natural use of ELF in research and daily educational activities. This involves establishing bilingual research centers where English is used not as a language of “foreign” communication but as a platform for professional collaboration. It is crucial for Ukrainian teachers and students to participate in internships that focus on the practical application of ELF, such as Erasmus+ programs or English-language master's courses (EMI) in Finland or Singapore. Enhancing language flexibility requires systematic development of teaching methods based on reflection, empathy, and communicative equality. This approach prevents over-standardization of English and transforms ELF into a tool for academic partnership, where the main value is not linguistic perfection but intercultural understanding (Mendes de Oliveira, 2023; Victoria et al., 2024).

## **5. DISCUSSION**

The results obtained confirm that ELF in the modern academic environment serves not only an instrumental role but also a socio-cultural one – it creates a space for the internationalization of knowledge and interaction among scientific communities. These findings align with the positions of Adriansen et al. (2023) and Heron et al. (2022), who see ELF as a mechanism for creating a “third space” of academic communication, where linguistic diversity acts as a factor of integration. However, other researchers, such as Suzina (2020) and Bennett (2013), highlight that such universalization may lead to the

“sterilization” of scientific discourse and epistemic inequality, as the dominance of Anglocentric norms diminishes the cultural authenticity of academic writing.

Based on data from UNESCO (2025), OECD/EU (2024), and Eurostat (2025), there is an increase in English-language educational programs and international mobility, which supports the findings of Macaro et al. (2019) and Karabay & Durrani (2024) regarding the global growth of English Medium Instruction (EMI). At the same time, this trend creates some contradictions: on one side, ELF ensures the openness of the academic space (Kuteeva and Kaufhold, 2024); on the other, it forces scholars from non-English speaking countries to adapt to the language's academic standards, which may not always align with their national academic cultures (Leung, 2023; Phyo et al., 2023).

The analysis of the findings compared to the works of Albl-Mikasa et al. (2024) and Mendes de Oliveira (2023) reveals an interesting trend: the effectiveness of ELF is determined not by the degree of standardization but by the level of intercultural sensitivity and empathy in communication. This can be attributed to the fact that ELF, according to Wu et al. (2020) and Jiang and Su (2025), is characterized by the flexibility of syntactic and rhetorical arrangements that bridge the gap between academic traditions. Therefore, the diversification of ELF can be viewed as an advantage rather than a drawback, fostering cross-cultural understanding in multilingual contexts.

At the same time, some authors (Genova & Rosetta, 2022; Robinson-Garcia et al., 2018) worry that the rise of ELF in foreign universities creates new forms of language inequality when knowledge depends on English proficiency. The comparison of Chinese and South Korean educational systems partially supports this idea, as although the number of English-language programs has increased, academic mobility remains relatively low due to cultural and language barriers. Therefore, ELF does not become globalized evenly—it depends on internationalization policies, economic strength, and institutional readiness to promote language inclusiveness.

In short, the results of this research confirm the hypothesis that ELF is a key component of global university integration, but it also requires a balance between standardization and cultural diversity. The weakness of the study is that it relied solely on official statistical sources and did not explore the personal experiences of teachers and students. Therefore, future research should focus on qualitative studies of academic communication practices in real educational settings, including digital platforms and intercultural writing, which will help us better understand ELF's role as a sociolinguistic tool and educational innovation in a globalized world.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

The paper has demonstrated that English as a lingua franca (ELF) in the modern academic setting is not only a tool for intercultural communication but also a dynamic sociolinguistic process that creates a new paradigm for international learning. Based on statistical and analytical data, it is clear that the spread of English-language educational programs directly correlates with the growth of international student mobility and levels of scientific collaboration, confirming the strategic role of ELF in the internationalization of universities. The novelty of these findings lies in the integration of corpus, discourse, and statistical approaches to analyzing ELF, which reveals it as a living ecosystem of educational interaction where balancing standardization and cultural diversity is crucial

for effectiveness. The practical significance is that these results can inform strategies for establishing a bilingual academic environment in Ukrainian universities, particularly in *courses on Academic Communication in English* and *English Medium Instruction* programs. Limitations include the absence of an in-depth analysis of individual experiences of teachers and students and the uneven development of academic policies across different countries. Future research should focus on qualitative studies of ELF communication practices in digital environments, analyze how academic writing transforms with artificial intelligence, and develop pedagogical models that foster critical thinking and intercultural sensitivity. Ultimately, ELF has the potential to become not just a tool for academic mobility but also a catalyst for creating a truly polycentric, inclusive system of knowledge production in the globalized educational landscape.

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