

## **Situating English as a Lingua Franca in Context: Narratives from Japanese and Chinese Classrooms**

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**Abstract:** It is acknowledged that English as a lingua franca is being appropriated for its use in intercultural communication rather than formally by its reference to native-speaker norms. However, there has been little discussion on the local contextual factors that may hinder or facilitate the teaching of English as a lingua franca. As Seidlhofer (2004, p. 209) explains, it would be premature to engage in a discussion of the teaching of English as a lingua franca (henceforth ELF) unless certain prerequisites are met. Through a narrative account of an EFL teacher and a Communication instructor, this paper examines some local contextual factors that impede the teaching of English as a lingua franca at two local universities in Japan and China, respectively. The paper first provides an account of the two teachers' teaching philosophies and explains their immediate teaching environment. It then discusses the challenges the teachers face in teaching ELF in their classroom instructions, and the strategies they use to encourage students to adopt a positive attitude towards ELF teaching pedagogy. This paper highlights three important factors in the teaching of ELF at their institutions: the sociolinguistic environment where English is learnt, the classroom culture, and students' orientations towards the learning of English.

**Keywords:** ELF, contextual classroom instructions, Japan, China

### **1. Introduction**

The term *lingua franca* has been defined in various ways by scholars in sociolinguistics. Samarin (1987) provides a comprehensible definition: A lingua franca is "any lingual medium of communication between people of different mother tongues, for whom it is a second language" (Samarin, 1987, p. 371). Firth (1996), however, defines ELF as English that is used as a 'contact language' between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication (Firth, 1996, p. 240). Kirkpatrick (2010) explains that the current spread of the lingua franca use of English is due to the adoption of English as a common language amongst multilingual speakers. In particular, there is a strong argument for the promotion of the lingua franca use of English to facilitate communication amongst community members in the Association of Southeast Asian (ASEAN) nations (Asean, 2013). Since English is currently adopted as the working language in a number of countries, there is a need to reflect on the local contextual realities for the teaching of ELF within higher institutions in Asia.

As Schon suggests (1983), narratives are a way to reflect on teaching experiences and are possibly transformative in nature. We adopt a narrative approach to explore our own teaching experiences via ELF and critical communication pedagogies. In addition, a narrative approach allows us to uncover students' attitudes and experiences in our classroom instruction, and thus helps to illuminate the limitations, challenges and tensions posed by our local teaching culture and the classroom realities in enacting our respective teaching pedagogies. In our study, we refer to journals, letters and class reflections that document individual students' learning experiences towards an ELF pedagogy. The first narrator, Patrick NG, is a Chinese male English teacher from Singapore currently teaching English at a Japanese university. The second narrator, Patrick Dodge (Patrick D. from here forward), is part Taiwanese-Chinese and part American (English, Irish, Scottish, and Czechoslovakian roots) currently teaching Communication at an American university's International College in Beijing. Both teachers are fluent ELF communicators and have been teaching at their respective institutions for more than 7 years.

In the following sections of our paper, we first provide an account of our teaching philosophy in ELF and explain our immediate teaching environment. Secondly, we discuss some challenges faced in teaching ELF in our classrooms and strategies to affect a positive attitude towards ELF teaching pedagogy. Then, we examine our narratives to draw out some common contextual factors that hinder the teaching of ELF in our teaching practice. Finally, we provide some implications for ELF teaching and research.

## **2. Our Teaching Philosophy**

The first author, NG, grew up in a multilingual society where English is used as a *lingua franca* in the local linguistic community. His linguistic and socialisation experiences have an impact on the teaching of ELF:

I grew up speaking English in Singapore and have used English to communicate with other ethnic communities (Malay, Indian, Eurasian, and Caucasians). During my overseas study in New Zealand, I had a lot of opportunities to interact in English with students from different countries. I am fully convinced that English is indispensable for communication in the globalised world. To motivate my students in their study of English, I often tell students that English is a *lingua franca* amongst people in Southeast Asia. My students are often surprised when they learn that English has been formally endorsed as a working and official language in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and about 750 million people speak English in Asia (Honna, 2008). During lessons, I have shown students videos of students from Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia communicating in fluent and intelligible English. I often remind my students that it is possible for them to acquire a high level of English communication skills even though it will take them several years to be fluent native English speakers. I was determined to expose my students to ELF as I was fully convinced that many of my students would use English in the Asian context because Japan is strategically located in Asia and students in China and Korea were also learning English as a *lingua franca* for communication with the international community.

On the other hand, the second author, Patrick D. believes that one of his learning objectives for students is to get them to practice critical thinking as an exercise for discovering new ways of thinking creatively so that they break through the constraints of rote memorization, simple reproduction, and mimicry of textbook ideas. Patrick D. makes it clear that his purpose in embracing an ELF teaching pedagogy is to persuade students not to agree with him on every issue but to make up their own minds after considering various perspectives.

One of the critiques we start off with is our use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) in the classroom. I ask students to critically examine how our use of ELF influences their learning, or the possibility that ELF can be colonizing their education and thinking. Although we collectively embody the space of an American University in an international program, we are physically located in Beijing, China. The number of Chinese speakers in our environment clearly outnumbers the English speakers so, why use ELF to communicate? Students reply that they are paying for the education, it is their choice, and that they want to think and understand in new ways that an American education can help them achieve. I share with them my belief that ELF is not neutral and cannot be void of or totally outside of culture, history, and power relations. The language we use to communicate is complicated by the power that oscillates through cultural and societal systems and structures (like education), or as Canagarajah (2006) explains, “The interests motivating a language are always contested by competing agencies and communities...English does come loaded with the associations from its imperialistic history” (pp. 201-202). Thus, while ELF can serve to open up new ways of seeing and thinking, it also needs to be critically examined in context.

### **3. Linguistic Environment**

As with the significance of the location where the teaching takes place, the linguistic environment can be a motivating or limiting factor in applying ELF pedagogy. However, when English as a lingua franca is a remote idea for EFL students, creating a learning context can be challenging. The pragmatic reality of ELF in certain contexts is revealing as is evident in Ng’s reflective notes:

In one of my lessons in my oral communication class, I discovered that a majority of my students are caught in the stranglehold of a monolingual learning environment, which provides little opportunity to communicate in English. On one particular lesson, I asked my class: Where and when do you currently use English? To my surprise, there was instant silence. After a while, a male student raised his hand and explained that he has had very few opportunities to travel beyond his hometown; other students also nodded in agreement. I then realized that although my students have acquired a wealth of English vocabulary and grammar skills in my class, English has no conceptual reality in their daily socialisation experiences. As one particular student put it: “I thank teacher for teaching us English and we have learnt a lot of good vocabulary from you. But who do we use English to communicate with? Everyday, I use Japanese with my friends in school and when I come home, I speak Japanese to my family.”

Although the necessity of cultivating Japanese students with communicative English abilities has been emphasized by the Ministry of Education in Japan (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2003), I observed that most of my students continue to spend many hours learning English vocabulary and phrases to pass various standardized examinations. There is a strong testing culture at my university. A certain percentage of course marks are pegged to students' performance in the various standardized tests such as CASEC (Computerized assessment system for English communication), TOEIC (Test of English for international communication) and EIKEN (Test in practical English proficiency). An examination of my students' priorities and needs in learning English indicates that the learning of vocabulary, reading comprehension and familiarisation with examination formats are far more important than being able to communicate in English. I began to realize why Japanese students were not able to make good progress in their spoken English. Few students find it necessary to speak English well but rather, they need English to obtain good scores in standardized examinations.

Similar to the challenges NG encountered in a monolingual learning environment, Patrick D's teaching experiences show that for ELF to flourish it is necessary to promote a sufficient space for students to practise their English skills. He explains that the lack of practice outside the classroom can hinder the ability of students to function in English and affect their understanding:

The possibilities and opportunities of ELF can be expanded by how it is used in a place but it can also be a hindrance to understanding if its function determines how it is practised regardless of the general context, place, and culture. Chinese students using English to study material (that is also in English) with their Chinese classmates can be one challenge that hinders students' potential and creativity in conceptualizing class materials. This topic usually comes up at the outset of each year when new faculty members are orienting to the intercultural context at our international college. A reoccurring question is, "Do you let your students communicate in Chinese during group time and group work?" At the heart of this question, no doubt, are the parameters defining how ELF is to be used in the classroom. Once students are out of class (oftentimes even during group time in class) and the context (people, place, environment) changes, they revert back to using Chinese to communicate. Thus, the classroom, at times, can feel like an 'ELF island' in the middle of a 'Chinese-speaking ocean'. We use English to communicate in class and students take four or five classes and spend an average of twelve to fifteen hours per week in the classroom. However, the problem is not the time they spend on the 'ELF island', but rather the time outside of the classroom when they venture out into the vastness of the ocean and their communication reverts back to the Chinese language. The lack of practice outside the classroom can hinder the ability of students to engage in English and affect their understanding (in the classroom).

#### **4. English as a Lingua Franca: Classroom Realities**

We find that as much as teachers want their students to be proficient and confident English users,

the contextual classroom realities can pose a challenge for teachers to enact an ELF teaching pedagogy. In the following paragraphs, we gain some insights to the classroom realities that hinder the teaching of ELF. NG's narrative of the classroom culture shows that a majority of students do not identify themselves as users of the English language due to their own prejudice towards accented Japanese English as a variety that lacks communicative valency.

*In the Japanese classroom:*

After teaching English for several months at my university, I observed that a number of students were reluctant to engage in class discussions because they felt embarrassed to speak accented Japanese English in class. I tried to develop confidence amongst my students by telling them not to underestimate their Japanese English, which can help to express their Japanese values in international communication (Hino, 2012). A particular student later wrote in his journal about his sense of shame towards his own Japanese English: I was always afraid to speak English. The reason is that I care that I am not a native speaker. My English is different from native speakers or someone who could speak English well. So when I speak English, I was very ashamed.

I was surprised that my students felt a deep sense of inadequacy in their own Japanese English. In their previous English learning experiences at the junior or senior high schools, most Japanese students were taught by native English teachers from America. American English is so prevalent in the Japanese educational context that a majority of my students tended to perceive English spoken only by Americans, and thus felt their own 'Japanese English' has no communicative viability. As Honna (2008) explains, the 'nativist' goal has resulted in many Japanese students feeling ashamed of their own English. One student confessed that her high school teachers and parents have 'indoctrinated' her with the idea that American English is the most 'powerful' variety she should acquire. She explained: *In Japan, only American English is taught to us. We have little opportunity to hear other Englishes. So, we usually are ashamed of using our own English.*

As a teacher of English, I was determined to help my students gain confidence in adopting Japanese English as a legitimate variety of English for international communication. With my students, I constantly discuss ELF from a constructivist perspective condition to help them develop an emancipatory awareness of "ownership". I am a firm believer that one's ownership in English is established through a process of individual construction, influenced and shaped by our own socialisation experiences. Through interactions with several Japanese students, I realised that a majority are reluctant to speak English in class because they felt ashamed of their accented Japanese English to be an acceptable variety of English for communication. I tried to develop an emancipatory awareness of 'linguistic ownership' by reminding my students: You have studied English for more than six years. Accept and value "your" English as something which is your own.

However, I realized that asking students to be proud of their accented Japanese English is like 'flogging a dead horse.' More often than not, the reality of the typical English classroom and of most educational teaching and learning settings is quite the opposite: The learner's creative construction achievements are only measured and evaluated with reference to an

exonormative Standard English role model (Gupta, 2010). The learner is ideally expected to meet exonormatively given target requirements. I sometimes wonder whether my students are not making real progress in their spoken English because they feel alienated from their ‘own’ English.

*In the Chinese classroom:*

Up through high school Chinese students spend an extraordinary amount of their time in preparation for the *Gaokao* Examination (Chinese university entrance exam). Much of their educational use of English is geared toward the English section of the examination. This focus on ‘exam English’ and specifically, learning for the *Gaokao*, oftentimes is a setback to comprehension and overall understanding in comparison with the nuances of native speakers communicating in context and for understanding. Carried into a university setting, ‘exam English’ gains momentum with English language proficiency courses that focus on the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and IELTS (International English Language Testing System) examinations. Rather than raising levels of comprehension, students focus on raising their examination scores. Instead of overall understanding, students are preoccupied with getting into the best-ranked programs, overall. A key question here is how to supplement and use the ‘a priori’ focus on exam English (rather than unlearning it) for new uses and contexts. Patrick D. shares a tactic that deals with working in groups and teams.

I have floated around the classroom during teamwork and checked to make sure students were practicing English, here with the notion that through the performative power of repetition, students’ thinking and communicating in English can lead to new breakthroughs in ways of knowing. I come from the standpoint that at times it is more important for students to understand an idea, concept, or theory in Chinese if ELF itself is the obstruction. It starts off with students shooting for conceptual understanding. I hear students speaking Chinese, together talking their way through a concept, during teamwork time. When a team member understands the concept, they explain it to other members in Chinese. At this point the Chinese medium works to spread conceptual understanding throughout the team and shortly after, there is a point when the conversation shifts to translating that understanding over to English.

The tactic here is to specifically look for and capitalize on opportunities that supplement ELF to make advances toward and remove notions that obstruct understanding. In other words, in my specific classroom context – comprehension and overall understanding (in Chinese) – at times, can be the starting points that lead to the practice of ELF. My belief is that if students can get to the level of conceptual understanding in Chinese first, then I can shift my strategy to helping students connect that understanding back to the function of using English as a lingua franca and strengthen overall comprehension in English. I find that how we proceed in the classroom depends on the specific context where the negotiation happens at both the linguistic and conceptual levels, where either can trump either at times.

## **5. Motivating Students to Embrace ELF**

Although the teaching possibilities for ELF are rather restrictive in both teaching contexts, both teachers expressed a desire to engage in ELF teaching as shown in their teaching philosophies.

However, each teacher adopts different strategies to motivate students to implement an ELF curriculum in the classroom.

NG's strategies:

Although there is a strong 'native English' ideology amongst my students, I shared my experiences as an ELF speaker traversing various linguistic communities. As someone who has shuttled between different communities (Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, New Zealand, UK, USA), I often remind students that English is now a lingua franca connecting people from different parts of the world. One website that I often use for teaching materials is the ELLLO (English Listening Lesson Library Online; <http://www.elllo.org/>) website that features authentic conversations amongst various English speakers from different parts of the world. I also taped resources from TV media such as CCTV and Channel NewsAsia to expose my students to different varieties of English spoken by educated English speakers. I reminded my students that educated English speakers in *non-English speaking countries* such as Carlos Ghosn of Nissan, or Ban Ki-Moon have a different linguistic reality from those in native English speaking countries. Adopting an endonormative stance on language learning, I tried to change my students' attitudes towards their accented Japanese English. I realised Japanese EFL learners are like 'Faustian creatures' with two souls: one representing what they strive for in terms of an externally given Standard English role model, and the other representing their 'own' creatively constructed English. I reminded my students that ownership and a Standard English orientation can be smoothly reconciled – provided the constructivist and endonormative nature of both "my" English and 'my' Standard English role model – are understood and acknowledged. My status as a 'learner of English' provided an intimate knowledge of my students' functional needs and progress in their learning journey. I constantly reminded my students not to view language as a stable, standard, monolithic discrete entity but rather as a fluid resource for situated social practice (Hornberger, 2003). To help my students conceptualise the use of ELF, I asked the following questions: In the future, who are the people you will speak English with? How should English be spoken by Japanese people? I expected my students to tell me that Japanese people should speak English with a Japanese accent just like the way people in Singapore speak an accented Singaporean English. I reminded my students that language can be used as an identity marker, and as Japanese, they should feel proud to use English to signal their national identity as Japanese. In my classroom instruction, I align myself with Lin's (2013) affirmation of plurilingualism as a potential resource rather than necessarily a barrier to language and content learning. Being aware that a number of Japanese learners experience anxiety in speaking English, I encourage translanguaging in class to create a safe and inclusive learning environment. Recognising that language cannot be taught and learned as a static, monolithic entity with solid boundaries (Pennycook, 1994), I would often tell students: *Speak as much English as possible but if you cannot say it in English, use some Japanese. You should gradually try to speak less Japanese as you develop confidence in your spoken English.*

Patrick D's strategies:

During a class lesson, I asked the question, "How important is English to "The China Dream", or China's rejuvenation to greatness?" A student shared her belief that China needs to educate its masses in English so that they can communicate

with the world, and ELF is crucial to the rejuvenation project. I asked if the class thought Chinese should be a lingua franca, considering the rise of Confucian Institutes around the world and the soft power they afford to China's rise. In fact, it already has been argued that Putonghua Chinese is a lingua franca in China (Li, 2006). The student I asked did not understand the question at first. I was excited at this point and talking in an impassioned blaze where my words were coming out so fast they were slurring together. The student turned to a Chinese classmate and asked (in Chinese), what did he just ask? I jumped in, "hold on for a moment. Let me slow down and ask the question another way". I reiterated the question, this time speaking slower and adding in a little more, "How important is English to China's rejuvenation to greatness? Is English important for China to be a world superpower?" The student still did not understand so I proceeded to ask the student the question in Chinese. At this point, I felt that conceptual understanding was more important than staying within the parameters of English. The class erupted in laughter at my code-switching move to Chinese. I saw 'the light bulb' turn on in the student's eyes once I got through that first question in Chinese. She practically sprinted into her answer with a bright smile on her face as she squeezed out the first words of her response in Chinese, then immediately caught herself. Once again the class burst into jubilation-laced laughter. They were immersed in the excitement she performed at that moment and that had propelled her into responding in Chinese. She regained composure and answered the question in flawless English, "Just as we are using English to communicate in class, China needs English to communicate with the world. But, it would be nice if the rest of the world also learned Chinese". Laughter once again filled the room.

I see this exchange as a success even though for a brief moment we traveled outside the parameters of ELF in the classroom. As an instructor, when I feel I am 'losing' student comprehension and understanding, I may 'slide in' a word, sentence, or question in Chinese to reconnect with students and gain their attention. Once again, understanding the idea in Chinese may serve as a starting point that sparks comprehension in English. It is those brief moments that can serve as rallying points to strengthen the use of ELF and overall comprehension and understanding in English.

## **6. Discussion: Local Contextual Factors Hindering the Teaching of English as a Lingua Franca**

Our study adds support to the literature that the physical location and environment, or the practiced spaces and places (de Certeau, 1984) that make up the classroom and teaching context are crucial to the ELF status in the classroom. Thus, it is imperative that educators (and administrators) involved in ELF turn the lens around on their own practices at the local level and, "acknowledge that the character and effects of language practices cannot be described universally or absolutely. We need to consider them in specific social and historical contexts" (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 201).

We highlight three important factors that hinder the teaching of ELF at our immediate

teaching environment: the sociolinguistic environment where English is learnt, the classroom culture, and students' orientations towards the learning of English.

NG's narrative shows that ELF has no conceptual reality for many students in the Japanese institutions because Japanese EFL learners are trapped in a stranglehold of a monolingual environment. As Seargeant (2009) observes, Japanese are not good at learning English because few people need to speak English. Similarly, Patrick D's narrative shows the difficulties of applying an ELF approach to teaching when English is not extensively used outside the classroom. Both teachers highlighted the challenge of getting students to conceptualise English as contact language in hybrid, fluid and heterogeneous ways when English is not a reality in an individual's socialization experiences. Although Japanese students have a strong fascination for English, English has no official status in the country. There is no necessity for a majority of Japanese ELF learners to acquire fluency in the language for use in their daily lives (Yano, 2008). Seargeant (2009) cogently argues that despite government rhetoric to cultivate Japanese with communicative English skills, English is not a major passport for career advancement in Japan. Instead, other factors such as age, gender and university of graduation exert a more important role in job security and advancement. As a Japanese student explains:

"...few people have much necessity to speak English well. We might need to be good at exams and might need a good TOEIC score, [but] few really find them in need to communicate in business level English...when we go sightseeing, we don't need to be fluent, and don't need to use precisely appropriate words" (as cited in Seargeant, 2009, p.127).

We posit that unlike English speakers in native-English speaking countries a majority of students' contact with English in non-native English speaking countries is usually a reflection of the English taught in EFL classes, as oftentimes it is the case, that this is where students have most intensive contact with the language. Thus, students may find it difficult to conceptualise ELF as communication amongst highly variable sociolinguistic cultural groups (Cogo, 2012). Consequently, students may not be able to apply accommodation strategies (repairs, paraphrase, etc.) and code-switching to signal solidarity and promote intelligibility when communicating in English. There is still a huge challenge for teachers and students to create an inclusive learning space for students to experience ELF communication in an authentic environment. In addition, although most students profess that their ultimate goal in learning English is to acquire skills for cross-cultural communication, they seem to focus more on the process of acquisition of English in the classroom rather than finding opportunities to communicate with other users of English outside the classroom.

Thus, the classroom culture plays a significant role when negotiating an ELF teaching pedagogy. However, NG's narrative reveals the difficulties of implementing an ELF curriculum in the Japanese classroom due to a pervasive Americentric view of English at the institutional level. As a result of their previous learning experiences with native-English speaking teachers, there is a prevailing attitude amongst Japanese EFL learners that their own Japanese accented English has little communicative valency and status. A similar situation is occurring in Korea where there is a deep sense of anxiety and lack of confidence in the use of English (Park, 2012). A majority of Koreans still consider that Korean English, or 'Konglish', is an inadequate variety of English. Further, this sense of inferiority in English is preventing the nation from truly "plugging" into the global economy where Koreans could be enjoying the benefits of English.

There is no doubt that different languages and different varieties of the same language are valued differently in linguistic communities. Those who have gained access to a dominant language will be rewarded with greater linguistic capital. However, the 'access paradox' proposed by Janks (1995) states that access to the dominant language will perpetuate a situation of increasing returns and thereby contribute to maintaining the language's dominance. On the other hand, a lack of access to the dominant language will result in marginalisation in a society that continues to recognise the value and importance of the dominant language. Thus if English were to become a dominant language in non-English speaking countries such as Japan and China, there is a strong possibility it would also deny students (and arguably, various publics) with little command of English access to extensive resources in English, thereby constraining or marginalizing them in local communities.

On the other hand, there is a tendency for learners to view integration of the prestigious North American variety of English as the ultimate goal in learning English. Japanese EFL learners have expressed a desire to be taught by native English speaking teachers, to learn a 'genuine English' accent, to use grammar correctly, and to speak with Americans (D'Angelo, 2012). As a result, students may not be easily persuaded to embrace an ELF teaching pedagogy that emphasizes a pluricentric view of English. Although scholars have pointed out that native English is not the most relevant for non-English speaking countries where speakers learn English for international uses rather than to communicate with native speakers of English (such as Japan) (Honna, 2008), there is still an exonormative orientation towards the learning of English in Japanese institutions. In addition, students' chauvinism and pride in their own mother tongue may be an obstacle in effecting a switch to ELF teaching pedagogy. Evidence of language superiority is a 'real' issue in the Chinese classroom as English teachers are oftentimes viewed as instruments of ideological domination and linguistic imperialism in the classroom (Canagarajah, 2006). Pennycook (1994) reminds us that English is not a neutral language and lists several negative outcomes associated with the use of English: becoming a language of threat to other languages, acting as a crucial gatekeeper to social and economic progress, and exacerbating different power relationships. While it is important to harness the use of English for international communication, there is a danger that the dominance of English could result in a stigmatization of the local language leading to 'linguicism', defined by Skutnabb-Kangas (1988) as "ideologies, structures and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language" (p. 13). Tsuda (1997) observed there is a tendency for the Japanese people to glorify the English language and culture. As she explains:

"...faced with the hegemony of English, you become willing to use English and tend to keep yourself away from your own language. In other words, you tend to identify with English and dissociate from your own language. You glorify English and its culture while stigmatizing and devaluing your own language and culture" (pp. 24-25).

On the other hand, Patrick D's narrative shows that Chinese students have a desire to resist the hegemony of English in order to maintain their own language superiority against the powerful American English variety. Thus, there is a strong possibility that not all students will readily embrace an ELF orientation due to their sense of pride in their mother tongue as a language of solidarity and identity.

Finally, students' orientations towards English learning have an impact in the teaching of ELF. There are local 'forces' at work shaping a learner's agency and investment in the learning of English. As Lin et al (2005) explain, students may learn English to make grades, pass exams, enjoy hip-hop music or play games on the Internet. Both narratives show that the majority of EFL learners at the two institutions still consider the learning of English to obtain high scores in school examinations as paramount importance; students are heavily penalized in English examinations if their use of English does not conform to a standard native-English. Thus, students may find it difficult to consider themselves as 'users of English' despite studying English for many years. Research has shown that there is a relationship between ownership and language acquisition. As Norton (1997) explains, speakers' investment in the language leads to a 'right to speak' the language. However, ownership in English can be cultivated with greater exposure and use of English. In countries such as Singapore, English is used as a language for interethnic communication. Thus, Singaporeans take pride in claiming ownership of the local variety of English, 'Singlish', as it is vociferously defended as an icon of national identity (Rubdy, 2001). However, in countries such as Japan or China, the local variety of English may not enjoy such strong covert prestige and students may not attain confidence in English due to their limited use of the language in their daily socialization experiences. As Bokhorst-Heng et al (2010) observe, unless students continue to use English in their daily lives, they may not be able to acquire ownership in English. We maintain that perceived ownership in English is a necessary condition to 'feel at home' with one's English. However, being able to 'feel at home' in one's English is contingent on a variety of factors, such as motivation in learning the language, opportunity to use the language and a desire to communicate in the language. Thus to consider the pedagogical application of ELF, English teachers in various situated contexts will have to ask a hard question: How are speakers of different varieties of English positioned and represented? (Bokhorst-Heng, et al, 2010, p.133).

## **7. Implications for Teaching ELF in the EFL/ESL Context**

The narrative accounts of our teaching contexts are certainly not representative of the status of ELF in higher education institutions in Asia. However, we argue that certain contextual factors - the sociolinguistic environment where English is learnt, the classroom culture, and students' orientations towards the learning of English - must be taken into consideration when expectations for ELF use are formed.

We have highlighted that one of the greatest challenges in getting students to accept the use of English as a lingua franca is the difficulty faced in redefining the use of English as an opportunity for real-life communication in the second language teaching context. We suggest that teachers who are highly proficient and have experience interacting with other users of English serve as good models for students in ELF communication. In addition, to help students overcome their own bias towards their own local variety of English, it is important for teachers to help students recognise the localized and educated forms of English spoken by non-native speaking leaders (D'Angelo, 2012). It is also necessary for teachers to emphasize in class that proficient ELF speakers are skilled users of English who are able to 'exploit the English language in more flexible and resourceful ways, responding to the demands of the particular

situation' (Jenkins, 2009, p.47).

To help spread the teaching of ELF, we suggest that more workshops on the teaching of ELF will need to address issues of student agency in using English to assert their cultural identity and creative appropriation of English use in specific contexts. As Hino (2012) suggests, there is a need to cultivate a local variety of English that reflects 'Japanese values' to free learners from the conventional Anglo-American framework of ELF. In this regard, we believe that educated speakers of English are acceptable as models for ELF communication.

To motivate students to develop a 'healthy' orientation towards ELF, we believe the teaching of English should be framed within a 'pluricentric approach' where the goal is to empower English-speaking multi-lingual students. Although both teachers are highly proficient in English, they chose to affirm students' use of their first language and identities while at the same time helping them to gain English as a global resource. Thus, ELF scholars should consider the implications of the use of translanguaging, or code switching, in class to allow students to engage in the fluid co-creation of diverse language resources appropriate for situated social practice. For ELF to flourish in the classroom, there is a need for teachers to focus on the learning of English for intercultural communication. Students should experience English not as a standard language but rather as a fluid, dynamic range of different accents, styles and registers (Lin, 2013) necessary for intercultural communication.

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