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## The Status of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and Implications for the Teaching of English in Japan

### Abstract

This article begins with background information on English language attitudes and education in the Japanese context, from both an historical and a present-day perspective. It then considers the value of ELF-informed views for the Japanese context: both from educational and business/professional perspectives. From the educational aspect, existing efforts to promote ELF-informed programs are investigated, with analysis of their success and future prospects for growth. Areas of continued resistance to ELF and other pluralistic paradigms in Japan are also explored. From a professional standpoint, the article will outline the actual need for ELF among Japanese working people, and the extent to which ELF comes into play in actual interactions, both in Japan and overseas. I will conclude with a consideration of challenges which remain to be faced for ELF in Japan.<sup>60</sup>

### 1. Introduction

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<sup>60</sup> Sections of this paper appeared in the author's chapter in: D'Angelo, James. 2018. "The Status of ELF in Japan." In *The Routledge Handbook of English as a Lingua Franca*, edited by Jennifer Jenkins, Will Baker and Martin Dewey, 165-175. London: Routledge. The author expresses his gratitude to the lead editor of that volume, J. Jenkins, for permission to reprint parts of that paper.

This article considers the status of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in Japan and its relevance for the teaching and using of English in that context. For the general reader who has not as yet delved into the ELF paradigm, it is important to realize that ELF is an extension of the various efforts to view English from a pluralistic point of view since the late 1970s, including work on English as an International Language (Smith 1983; McKay 2002) and World Englishes (Kachru 1985). A pluralistic view of English implies that English is no longer primarily owned by the native speaker countries, that there may be multiple ‘standard’ Englishes, and that in learning and using English, our teachers and interlocutors may not be mainly native speakers—and hence the model for our English, and the cultures we consider when learning English, are also not necessarily those of the native contexts. The article is hence more a survey on the status of ELF in Japan. For those interested in more empirical data on ELF usage in Japan, Konakahara and Tsuchiya (2020) is a new edited volume (for which the author contributed the Foreword, see D’Angelo 2020) which provides many empirically-oriented chapters on ELF practice in Japan.

Part I of this article begins with background information on English language attitudes and education in the Japanese context, from a historical and present-day perspective. Part II outlines the potential value of ELF-informed views to this context, in contrast to a more traditional native speakerist-informed paradigm—primarily in societal domains (Houghton and Rivers 2013). Parts III and IV then investigate actual efforts to document and describe ELF in Japan. Part III looks at several research-related initiatives—including work on the Japan component of the Asia Corpus of English (ACE) project led by the author, and work underway at Waseda University under the direction of Professor Kumiko Murata (2016). Part IV touches briefly on several ELT-related efforts, both at the institutional level, and by individual professors and

practitioners. Part V considers challenges which lie ahead regarding ELF in Japan, in an attempt to evaluate the long-term impact which ELF may have on the Japanese context, especially in light of future demographic changes in Japan's population composition and increasing need for English in various domains, in spite of Japan's position as an expanding circle context. The article closes with a Conclusion, and suggestions for further reading.

## 2. Background on English in Japan

This section provides an introduction to historical and present-day attitudes towards English and English language education/teaching (henceforth ELT) in the Japanese context, especially with regard to how these attitudes may lend perspective to the relevance of the English as a Lingua Franca (henceforth ELF) paradigm for Japan.

English came to Japan at various points during the era of exploration, but the major influence of English on the archipelago came with the opening of the country by Commodore Perry and his "black ships" at the beginning of the Meiji Era, in 1868. At this time Dutch was already influential, and German was widely studied for medical and scientific purposes. Mori Arinori, the first Japanese ambassador to the United States (1871-1873) and later Minister of Education, proposed abandoning the Japanese language in favor of English, and was an advocate of Westernization (Hall 1973). In general, Japanese people are known for valuing authenticity and perfectionism—that there is a certain "correct" way of doing most things<sup>61</sup>—and this has extended to their privileging of native, 'Inner Circle' English varieties and the resulting prescriptivist view of English: an entrenched influence which continues to this day (Reischauer 1995; Honna and Takeshita 1998; D'Angelo 2011).

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<sup>61</sup> Whether this be the tea ceremony, flower arranging, judo, archery, auto production, or speaking English.

Since English education has been compulsory in Japan at the secondary level since the early postwar era, and has been extended progressively into lower levels of elementary school since 2007 (first as an “activity”—not to be evaluated on the student’s report card), with it becoming a compulsory subject from fifth grade in 2011 (The Guardian), there has also long been an active ELT research community in Japan. For example, the bimonthly Japanese magazine 英語教育 (English Education), is in 2020 in its 72<sup>nd</sup> volume, dating back to 1951! As a result, in spite of the mainly native orientation towards English, due to the widespread activities of the large research community one can find Japanese scholars working in every area of linguistics, applied linguistics, and English pedagogy.

Japan was thus one of the first Expanding Circle countries to be open to world Englishes (hereafter WE) and other pluralistic views (English as an International Language~EIL) of the English language, which are precursors to the ELF paradigm. WE is primarily concerned with documenting the linguistic and pragmatic features of new indigenized varieties of English, mainly in former colonial contexts such as India, Singapore and Nigeria, and how and in what domains English is used intranational in those contexts. ELF by contrast, reflects that English is now the most widely used common language across the globe, and is more concerned with how users from a wide range of countries and first language backgrounds manage to negotiate meaning between their varieties.

While the majority of Japanese scholars were influenced by mainstream cognitivist Second Language Acquisition Theory (Long 1990; Mackey and Gass 2005), those with an outward-looking attitude who attended international conferences and interacted with international scholars, inevitably became interested in less native-centric approaches to ELT. One of the first of these was Suzuki Takao (Suzuki 1973) who rejected placing America English ‘on a pedestal’ (Suzuki 2003), and he was soon followed by Yasukata Yano (2001),

Sanzo Sakai (2005), Nobuyuki Honna (2008), Hiroshi Yoshikawa (2005), Nobuyuki Hino (1988), Aya Matsuda (2017), Paul Matsuda (2005), and others. Several of these scholars studied in the 1970s with EIL founder Larry Smith at the East/West Center at the University of Hawaii/Manoa, and after his alignment with Braj Kachru in the mid-1980s, began to spread interest in WE in Japan.<sup>62</sup> This paper argues that having this key nucleus of WE/EIL/ELF-informed<sup>63</sup> domestic scholars provides the support mechanism for further growth in ELF research and its application in the Japanese context. Indeed, the majority of these scholars who have attended the World Englishes conference over the years are now regular attendees and presenters at ELF conferences. The reason for this is that while the World Englishes paradigm questions the primacy of the native speaker, it does not provide a rationale for how English is used in the non-post-colonial settings such as Japan. The ELF paradigm by contrast, addresses the kinds of issues faced by those who use English mainly in diverse international contexts.

## 2.1 Potential value of ELF-informed views for Japan

Many of the central concepts of ELF are well-suited to the Japanese context. As Japan is in the Kachruvian “Expanding Circle” (Kachru 1985), which includes countries which were never colonized, where English has no official status, and is used in comparatively few internal domains (i.e. media, government, judicial, education, commerce), there is less reason to claim an indigenized variety of

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<sup>62</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> IAWC Conferences were all held in Japan, between 1995 and 2012.

<sup>63</sup> While early work on ELF may have been more features-oriented and less cross-cultural communication oriented than traditional work in EIL, for the purposes of this paper they are considered very close in meaning. ELF does however, have the advantage of established corpora, and a more robust and evolving research agenda.

Japanese English (D'Angelo 2013), as there might be in Singapore, India or Nigeria. Since English is used to a very limited degree among Japanese when no non-Japanese are present, it is mainly used in situations in Japan which are multinational in nature, or in a wide range of overseas encounters. Thus, rather than focus on documenting the features of Japanese English (or looking at outdated WE-informed concepts such as 'international intelligibility' (Nelson 2011) which tends to look only at recorded one-way interaction, and mainly phonological aspects of communication), pluricentric-leaning scholars in Japan—those already having interest in WE—have for the past 10 years begun to show more interest in ELF as the most useful paradigm.

ELF is centrally concerned with how users of English from different international backgrounds, each using their own idiolect (individual variety) of English, come together to negotiate meaning and accommodate to one another to reach mutual understanding. As Widdowson has posited (2014), when ELF users interact there is no common idiom, and Gricean maxims do not apply. As a result, the interlocutors are "languaging" or "idiomatizing" in a real-time fashion, developing a common idiom to reach common ground. Research findings have shown (Jenkins 2007; Seidlhofer 2009; 2011) that ELF users are eager to meet their interlocutors halfway (even perhaps more than halfway!) and have a strong ability to comprehend and interpret the intentions of other ELF users—mainly non-native speakers (NNS). Considering this reality, it is illogical to teach an American English model and an American idiom in Japan, since it is well-documented that NNS outnumber NS today (Graddol 2006; Crystal 2007; Eberhard et al 2019), and Japanese English speakers are more likely to come into contact with Chinese, Indians, Vietnamese and Germans than with Americans, Brits, or Canadians.

For Japanese users, the true key to proficiency in English is not having a high TOEFL or TOEIC score, but in developing a new kind of proficiency that draws on ELF and EIL as well. It is important to note, that whereas at one point EIL scholars drew a clear distinction between EIL and ELF (Sharifian 2009), there is today less claim of fundamental differences between the concepts of EIL and ELF. Even scholars such as Aya Matsuda (2017), doing work primarily on Japan, were initially somewhat skeptical of ELF—as were other WE scholars who tended to place too much emphasis on ELF claims of the future development of LFE (Lingua Franca English) as a *variety*, rather than a *function* of language, and it is true that ELF is mainly dealing with how English is used functionally in ELF settings. Yet more recently, Matsuda has attended ELF conferences, and was part of a panel devoted to ELF at the 21<sup>st</sup> IAWEL Conference in Istanbul, organized by Turkish scholar Yasemin Bayyurt. This further strengthens the evidence that for Expanding Circle scholars, ELF is arguably the most relevant paradigm

While in its early years ELF was mainly focused on syntactic modifications of ELF-speakers (e.g. Breiteneder’s 2005 work on the “dropping” of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular ‘s’), it increasingly looks at cultural factors—which has been a more prominent focus in EIL work—as well. EIL scholar Sharifian (2009) stresses that we each have our own “Cultural conceptualizations”, and that “Intercultural, or *meta*-cultural, competence needs to be viewed as a core element of proficiency in English used for intercultural communication” (2009, 249). To over-rely on grammatical accuracy (based on abstract NS norms), and to teach American or British pronunciation and culture, is to do a disservice to the real needs of Japanese ELF users, and in fact ELF users from any non-native context. As Widdowson (2011; 2012) perceptively points out, the speech and writing of most users of English around the world today will be filled

with what he terms “non-conformities.”<sup>64</sup> These are not errors *per se*, but forms of English that are influenced by a different reality from that of NS users. They have a different L1 and come from multilingual backgrounds. Their L1, their culture, their experiences all contribute to a new idiom.

My own doctoral thesis supports the complexity seen in this reality (D’Angelo 2016). Forty-four graduates of the Chukyo University College of World Englishes (CWE), graduating between 2006 and 2014, responded to a lengthy open-ended questionnaire, and confirmed that in their business and personal “transnational” interactions in English, they regularly come into contact with Vietnamese, Taiwanese, Singaporeans, Koreans, Chinese, Sri Lankans, Zambians, Germans, Brazilians, Italians, Australians and Indonesians. They expressed that grammatical accuracy is not vital, exposure to many varieties is essential, and that learning how to negotiate with people from other cultures is a crucial skill. One student mentioned how hard it is, in her job with a major Japanese spark-plug manufacturer, to deal effectively with German and French customers. They are forceful, and she has needed to learn how to stand her ground with them.

We live in an ELF world today, and the sooner Japan recognizes this, the better. A detailed investigation of the many ELT implications of this reality is not within the scope of this article (please see D’Angelo 2012; Bayyurt and Akcan 2015; Matsuda 2017), yet in brief, an ELF approach to ELT would involve a refocusing of the priorities of language learning away from mastery of native-like ‘accuracy’ in pronunciation, grammar, and idiom, and towards an ability to have mutual intelligibility and the skills needed to negotiate meaning among a wide array of interlocutors, coming from an equally wide range of L1 and cultural backgrounds. Creating

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<sup>64</sup> This term is perhaps more useful than the WE efforts to define non-native usages, such as ‘deviations’, ‘diversions’, etc.



opportunities through SKYPE and other online vehicles to interact with non-native speakers (and at times natives as well) on a regular basis, can go far towards realizing this goal. Taking advantage of something such as the EU-based ENRICH Project (Enrich 2020), which is supported by ELF scholars Nicos Safakis, Yasemin Bayyurt and others, is an excellent example.

### 3. Efforts to document, describe, and promote ELF in Japan

ELF was originally developed as a paradigm by various scholars in Europe. While we are all familiar with the work of Jenkins (2007), Seidlhofer (2009), Mauranen (2012), Cogo (2012), Ehrenreich (2009), Dewey (2009), Pitzl (2009) and others, as early as the mid-1990s scholars such as Firth (1996), Jenkins (1996) and Meierkord (1998) were beginning to use the term. At a panel which looked at ELF at the 2009 IAWWE Conference in Cebu (the Philippines) Kingsley Bolton<sup>65</sup> suggested why this may have been so. He indicated that there was an attempt to import the WE paradigm to Europe in the 1990s and it didn't fit the sociolinguistic context, where there was not significant need for *intra*-national use of English. Additionally, he pointed out that after September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, it became much more difficult to obtain student visas in the U.S., and there was a shift in international students from the U.S. to the U.K. and other European countries that offered EMI programs. Other factors, including the increase in cross-border students brought about by establishment of the EU, and the increase in Chinese students around the world thanks to their government's easing of travel restrictions in the early 2000s, may have further drawn attention to the need for research into ELF

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<sup>65</sup> Bolton, Kingsley, discussant. IAWWE 2009 Panel: Lingua Franca Communication in World Englishes. Parklane Hotel, Cebu Island, Philippines. October 24, 2009.

interaction. A similar phenomenon (on a smaller scale) occurred decades earlier for Larry Smith—when he first noticed Asians from 20 different countries interacting in English in Hawaii at the East/West Center—when first hand exposure provided the impetus for his pioneering work on EIL.

As use of English spread further into various domains around the world, scholars in Asia also began to show interest in ELF. Kirkpatrick (2010) was the key player in this effort. Through his work in Australia and at the Hong Kong Institute of Education, he came into contact with Japanese Professor N. Honna, one of the leading proponents of a pluralistic/multicultural approach to English in Asia. Honna developed wide-ranging contacts in the region among scholars in India, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Russia. He was also involved with important ELT-related organizations within Asia, such as RELC—the Regional Language Centre (RELC 2020). Set up by ASEAN's Ministers of Education Group (known as SEAMEO) in Singapore, with the blessing of Lee Kuan Yew. RELC remains an important icon for a non-native view of English for Asia—a confidence that an NNS context could provide expertise in English. Many early WE scholars such as Edwin Thumboo (2001), M.L. Tickoo (1988), and Anne Pakir (1991) provided a valuable forum via their contributions to the RELC Journal.

Honna was prescient in many ways; while a proponent of world Englishes, his main focus has been on 'English as a Multicultural Language' and he has served as past-President of the IAICS—The International Association of Intercultural Communication Studies. Like Hino, who has always portrayed himself as an EIL scholar more than a WE scholar (Hino 2018, 3-4), Honna (2008) also foresaw that for Japan, a paradigm such as ELF is a model which more closely portrays the international/intercultural uses of English which are important to the Japanese context.

Kirkpatrick majored in Chinese as an undergraduate, and his familiarity with Asia made him a logical choice to compile a corpus of English in Asia (Kirkpatrick 2010). The usefulness and prominence of the E.U.-focused VOICE project headed up by Seidlhofer at the University of Vienna led to a similar project for Asia. Originally entitled ELFiA (ELF in Asia), it was later renamed to “ACE”: The Asian Corpus of English (ACE 2020). ACE is composed of groups who gathered data in 10 different Asian contexts, with 10 hours of recorded interaction from each context. Kirkpatrick asked me to head up the Japanese component of the ACE corpus. The ten hours of recording has almost been completed as of this writing, but ACE Japan lags behind the other contexts in that only roughly two hours of the recording have been transcribed.

The ACE corpus itself came online in 2014, and is a valuable resource for scholars looking to research ELF across Asia. While the Japan component may never be brought online, we are fortunate that there are Japanese participants in the recordings from other contexts, such as Brunei and the Philippines. Yet ultimately, to gain a deeper understanding of Japanese participants’ behavior and handling of ELF interactions, it is necessary to bring online a significant amount of Japan-based recordings. From its inception, ELF has been corpus-driven, and having a corpus of actual ELF usage is a great advantage which ELF holds over EIL research, and one of the reasons for ELF’s growth and interest: ELF usage is well-documented and its data can be studied from syntactic, phonetic, lexical, pragmatic, discourse, and intercultural perspectives to truly demonstrate linguistic practices across boundaries.

A more recent important development is the formation by Murata of Waseda University, of an ELF Special Interest Group (SIG) within JACET: The Japan Association of College English Teachers. (JACET 2016) JACET currently has over 2,700 members and has a huge reach and influence within Japan. Whereas it is commendable

that the above-mentioned JAFEA is completely dedicated to a pluralistic view of English, its reach is limited, with only 100~125 active members, and average attendance of only 35 participants at its two annual conferences. JACET by contrast, is a mainstream organization, and its impact is high. Every university in Japan has several members who belong to JACET. JACET has 60 different special interest groups<sup>66</sup>, which makes for much competition for members' attention. Still, every SIG meeting is advertised by e-mail to all JACET members, so the awareness-raising ability of a SIG is high. To demonstrate this, as host of the July 2016 ELF SIG meeting, I received inquiries from dozens of colleagues who are not normally in touch. The ELF SIG already has 50 members, and shows the potential to have an important impact on increasing ELF efforts in Japan.

Prior to this development, Murata has been the recipient of several ongoing major ELF-focused research grants by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), Grants in Aid for Scientific Research, Foundation B. She has hosted an annual "ELF International Workshop" the past seven years, which had been attended by the major founding figures of ELF including Jenkins, Seidlhofer, Widdowson, Pitzl and others.

These workshops are well-attended and further help to develop local scholars in Japan who are interested in conducting research into ELF topics. Again, starting with the April 2019 academic year, Murata has been awarded another multi-year JSPS grant, on which the author is a team-member. As part of this grant, the team is planning to record actual ELF interaction with Japanese business and professional participants in international settings, which may at last provide the type of corpus data used in the ACE corpus

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<sup>66</sup> It is perhaps a small triumph that ELF is JACET's 57<sup>th</sup> SIG, while one dedicated to CEFR (which might be considered less ELF-friendly, or more oriented towards "standard" English?) is the 58<sup>th</sup>.

mentioned above. The research group sponsored a visit and special lecture by Dr. Suzanne Ehrenreich of Dortmund in July 2019, in which she also met with grant-team members the following day, and stressed the importance of having actual interaction data as a key to studying the processes of how ELF interlocutors engage in, and negotiate meaning in, ELF. (Ehrenreich 2009) In addition, Professor Murata is retiring in March 2020, and a special *festschrift* volume with Palgrave is to be published that month, entitled *English as a Lingua Franca in Japan - Towards Multilingual Practices* with contributions from 18 leading ELF scholars based in Japan, plus several international ELF scholars. The volume promises to help further spread interest in ELF in Japan (Konakahara and Tsuchiya 2020).

In addition, in Murata's own PhD program, she has helped to develop an increasing number of PhD recipients whose main focus is ELF. It should be noted as well that Hino at Osaka University is co-founder of the ELF SIG, and has also developed a growing cadre of EFL/EIL-focused scholars. The CWE at Chukyo University currently only offers a masters' program but has also developed several young scholars who wrote their theses on ELF, and who are now teaching in local area high schools and universities.

The ELF SIG, formed at the beginning of 2016, has not yet outlined its full research agenda, but promises to be the best vehicle to increase understanding of, appreciation for, and implementation of ELF-informed ideas across Japan in coming years. One of the research foci mentioned in the original proposal to create the SIG was the importance of the "Global 30" project (now renamed as the 'Top Global University Project')—an effort to create a network of world-class universities in Japan which also offer certain majors of study in English. English as a Medium of Instruction (heretofore EMI) is a challenge in Japan higher education since it is difficult to have enough Japanese students of a sufficiently high English

proficiency level to interact in the classroom with toe-to-toe with international students from various backgrounds (Murata and Iino 2014; D'Angelo 2019). EMI goes hand in hand with ELF in today's global education sector (Jenkins 2014), and ELF research can provide important insights into how Japanese university students can better cope with the reality of sharing an interactive, discussion-based classroom with an internationally-diverse student population. Japanese students are extremely reticent to speak out in front to others, and this is intensified when the others may have better English skills.

A final note on the importance of the SIG is that JACET also has several recent SIGs whose interests may dovetail with ELF. SIG #26 is on World Englishes and Cross-cultural Understanding (founded by former CWE Dean Hiroshi Yoshikawa), SIG #41 is on English Education in East Asia, and SIG #54 is devoted to English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Collaborative efforts among these SIGs could further strengthen the impact of ELF in Japan. While JACET membership is predominantly Japanese nationals, another large organization, The Japan Association of Language Teachers (JALT), has a mainly native-speaker membership and also boasts nearly three thousand members (JALT 2016). With its heavy NS orientation, JALT does not currently have SIGs on world Englishes, EIL or ELF, but has in the recent years hosted ELF-aware scholars such as A. Matsuda, N. Hino and S Canagarajah as plenary speakers, so there is a trend towards openness to pluralism in JALT, and the timing is right for an ELF scholar to step in to fill this role.

#### 4. ELT-related initiative vis-à-vis the reality in Japan

##### 4.1 ELF in Education

Regarding ELT efforts informed by ELF research and insights, there are several programs in place. In 2002 Chukyo University established the CWE as referenced above, with a goal of making students more aware of varieties of English around the world, and having less of a native speaker orientation. The CWE hosted a weekend workshop in cooperation with JAF AE in 2003 with talks by Larry Smith, Nobuyuki Hino and Nobuyuki Honna, Sanzo Sakai, Takao Suzuki, Yuko Takeshita, Paroo Nihalani, and Braj and Yamuna Kachru. The CWE also hosted the 2006 IAWWE Conference, part of which was a special panel dedicated to the work on EIL by Larry Smith. Over the years since then, the CWE has also hosted a series of annual lectures for students by leading WEs/EIL/ELF researchers including Shirley Dita, Isabel Pefianco Martin, Enric Llurda, Danilo Dayag, and Ahmar Mahboob. While the concept of EIL or ELF is not integral to the entire curriculum, all students take an Introduction to World Englishes class (the last three weeks of which covers ELF and EIL) as first-year students, and are required to visit Singapore for a 3-week study tour. These undergraduate students do not acquire a deep understanding of ELF, but their raised awareness makes the reality of ELF sink in later, either when they do a year abroad in Italy, Finland or Korea, or when they venture into the global working world (D'Angelo 2016). It is interesting to note that even when bound for the U.S., CWE year-abroad students find most of their friends are from Korea, Turkey and Brazil. Many CWE students expressed that they now see the reality of "world Englishes."

Hino has also made significant efforts at Osaka University to introduce ELF/EIL to his undergraduate and graduate students (Hino 2018). With his graduate students especially, they are mixed with a significant percentage of international students thanks to Osaka U. being one of the highly competitive imperial universities. In his classes in Osaka, he has developed the concept of CELFIL (Content and ELF Integrated Learning) whereby ELF and CLIL

(Content and Language Integrated Learning) are combined in an innovative way. His methodology shows ELF being truly integrated into other widely adopted approaches.

Thanks to the Top Global University Project, Keio University, Waseda University, Hiroshima University, Nagoya University and others are wrestling with introducing EMI programs to their curriculum, where ELF issues are an everyday reality. One of the concerns for expanding ELF in such settings is the reluctance of many Japanese faculty members, in spite of their ability to write and deliver academic papers in English, to actually use English in the classroom. A foreign professor at Hiroshima University has administered an extensive questionnaire on attitudes of Japanese faculty towards teaching in English, and found considerable resistance to lecturing in English (Sponseller 2014) mainly due to the Japanese professors feeling that they did not have 'native like' English. Being exposed to ELF research could help such faculty overcome this native-centric view.

In one effort specifically given the ELF moniker, Masaki Oda at Tamagawa University has created a Center for English as a Lingua Franca. The Center has an office area and open space for teachers and students to use. While Tamagawa does not have an actual English major or EMI program, Oda has made an effort to bring in teachers with an ELF research background or from non-native contexts such as the Philippines. The Center is a resource for mainly part-time teachers who teach required English skills classes for other departments, but does not have a mandate to conduct teacher training in ELF-informed methods, so its impact may still be limited at this point. Oda currently serves on the Board of Asia TEFL, a very large ELT organization in this region, and his influence among Japanese academics could help to spread ELF efforts to other universities around Japan.



One final area in education to address is secondary education. While Japan is still very grammar and test-oriented at the secondary level, change is beginning to occur. Official English language textbooks are showing an increase in the number of characters who come from, and topics which relate to, non-native backgrounds (Kawashima 2009). There is also increased interest in “Active Learning” as teachers attempt to introduce more communicative methods into their classrooms. For over 27 years the JET program (Japanese English Teachers) has existed, which has imported mainly NS recent college graduates to Japan to serve as “assistant language teachers” at Japanese secondary schools, to give the students a feel for “living English”. Although this program has often been criticized as reinforcing an NS-bias (Kawami 2020), the number of NNS JETs has increased over the decades (Kawashima 2009), including those from Africa, the Bahamas, Singapore, The Philippines and India/Pakistan. In one recent example of the kind of grassroots change which is possible, an American former international student at CWE, now working as a JET, invited the author to give a keynote at the annual JET workshop held in Shizuoka, Japan in November 2016—an event to be attended by over 1,000 JETs and local teachers. This is the type of rare opportunity to reach a broader audience which can only occur once a critical mass of smaller efforts by individual ELF-aware scholars is made. I hope to see more such opportunities in the future.

#### 4.1.1. ELF and the CEFR

In a recent effort, the author, with his co-researcher Alexander Imig, has received a JSPS grant to investigate the implications of the academic writing descriptors of the Common European Frame of Reference (CEFR), in the Japanese context. CEFR is widely applied in Europe as well as increasingly across the globe. Imig is a scholar

from Germany who has worked closely over the past 10 years in conjunction with important Japanese scholars, on applying the CEFR to Japan. While some feel that the CEFR is a prescriptive type of influence, one must also note that references to native speakers have been largely eliminated in the CEFR Companion volume (CEFR 2018), and while descriptors related to academic writing are quite limited, the new introduction of the section related to language mediation provides an opportunity to investigate how Japanese writers of English mediate between their native language, and their English writing. For the 2018 and 2019 academic years, Imig has joined my 4<sup>th</sup> year seminar in which students write their graduation thesis. All students upload their work and various reflections on their writing to Chukyo's *Manabo* learning management system (LMS), which provides a wealth of data on the writing process, with students actively considering how they handle the process of language mediation. The outcome of this study could have a significant impact on providing a bridge between ELF and CEFR, resulting in a broader application of ELF into the written domain, which has to date been under-researched. Let us now look at an important sector which is dependent on the education sector, but involves a much wider and more high-stakes use of ELF.

## 4.2 ELF in Business

ELF is the reality for Japanese business people around the world today. While at one time much of Japanese trade was conducted with America and the West, Y. Kachru pointed out as early as 2003 that data from the Japanese Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Communications indicated that Japan's trade with non-Inner Circle countries "far exceeded that with native English speaking areas of the world." (Kachru 2003, 40) This trend has only increased, and Japanese business people have to be prepared to

interact in English with ELF users from all over the world on a regular basis (D'Angelo 2016). Educational programs at the secondary and university level should be preparing students for this reality, but it requires a consistent and sustained effort. Developments such as international discount clothing maker UNIQLO to make English its official language for all meetings, even among all Japanese participants, and the use of English as the official language at Nissan/Renault, show an increased commitment to ELF in business. It remains to be seen whether this trend will increase, but it should be followed with interest.

The role of JICA – The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA 2016) should also not be underplayed, as Japan is one of the largest providers of international aid projects, and there is a strong need for ELF among JICA representatives.

Yamami (2015) demonstrates that among parents with work experience in Singapore and elsewhere in Asia, and also among those with higher levels of English proficiency, there is much more appreciation of ELF, and less of an NS proclivity. One positive sign of an increased openness to the reality of ELF in Japan among business people is the recent demand for books on Indian and other varieties of English in Japanese bookstore chains. Professor Enokizono of CWE, a fluent Hindi and Urdu speaker, and expert on the subcontinent, has authored a recent book on developing listening comprehension skills for Indian English (Enokizono 2016), which is selling briskly, indicating that Japanese business people are eager to adapt to ELF-like settings.

## 5. Future challenges for ELF in Japan

ELF faces a more difficult context in Japan (and elsewhere in Asia) than in EU countries. English is certainly used widely in business in Asia, but the majority of Japanese may still believe that the goal of

studying English is to reach native-like proficiency. Japan does not possess the depth of penetration of internationalization of its population as one might find in Europe, and on university campuses in Austria, The Netherlands, Sweden and even Italy and France.

Whereas in Europe a large percentage of research is conducted in English, in Japan almost every field of inquiry still has much of its fundamental research written in Japanese—even if later, key studies are then published in English. Japan has powerful translation abilities, and most of the best known texts in various fields are translated in Japanese. In contrast, the University of Helsinki project “WRELFA”: The Written Corpus of Academic ELF (WRELFA 2015), draws on 372,000 words of academic research blogs, 330 PhD examiner reports in English, and a Scientific ELF Corpus of 759,000 total words with writers from 10 different first language backgrounds. This fascinating compilation of ELF data would be unconscionable in Japan.

An important step to increase the status of ELF in Japan would be for the small but growing ranks of academics committed to ELF to join hands with leading business professionals who see the need for ELF, to launch projects to promote understanding of the paradigm. For example, the inadequacy of traditional measures of testing English proficiency, such as the TOEIC or TOEFL, has been repeatedly pointed out by EIL and ELF scholars (Shohamy 2014; Lowenberg 2012). In terms of business leaders, K. Ito, a CWE professor who was formerly managing director of Toyota India, in a recent plenary address (Ito 2016) mentioned that for personnel officers in Japan, the TOEIC test is not a good indicator of an employee’s ability to succeed when sent overseas to Delhi. Perhaps such scholars and business leaders could join together to develop a more valuable form of testing.

## 6. Conclusion

ELF has made rapid inroads into Japan over just the past five years, demonstrating the great vitality and usefulness of the paradigm. ELF makes more sense for Japan than world Englishes, since in Japan the main uses of English are in international, rather than intra-national domains. ELF can provide Japanese users with more confidence in their English-medium interactions, since it does not privilege native speakers, and can raise awareness that each user's unique "idiolect" is what they naturally bring to any ELF situation. ELF can be a significant help to implementing a more effective ELT in Japan, as well as a paradigm to help Japanese business/science/medical professionals be more effective in their use of English.

While Japan is not yet as fertile a ground for ELF as continental Europe, efforts such as the "Top Global University Project" have brought young scholars from Nigeria, Uganda, Indonesia, Vietnam and countless other contexts to the campuses of the top Japanese graduate programs. In addition, efforts of JICA to help developing nations, Japan's increased focus on business in Asia and South Asia, and its role in ASEAN plus 3 (ASEAN plus Japan, Korea and China), all make it beneficial for Japanese users of English to become effective ELF users. The status of ELF is rising in Japan, but the progress of this increase in status requires considerable effort from the ELF-committed academic community to take full advantage of what ELF has to offer, lest Japan revert to more NS, prescriptivist paradigms.

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