

# An ELF-aware Approach to ELT

ESEA, KMUTT June 2017

Bangkok

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## Note

This talk is based on the concluding chapter of *ELF for EFL Contexts* edited by Nikos Sifakis and Natasha Tsantila to be published in 2017 by Multilingual Matters.

# Outline

Introduction

Corpora and the dynamic nature of ELF

Examples

Principles of the Lingua Franca Approach to ELT

Conclusion

‘The global learning of English needs to be based on its global use’ and ‘ELF corresponds more closely to what is real for learners, and is a more realistic objection for them to achieve’  
(Seidlhofer and Widdowson fc)

BUT

People have different motivations for using ELF so while ELF users 'certainly want to be understood, they may want their performance to be accurate and fluent, or an indicator of professional competence' (Kohn fc)

ELF Is not a variety. It is dynamic and depends on the context, the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of its users and the ways in which they negotiate meaning.

So, we can't teach ELF as a stable variety

We need to adopt an ELF-aware approach to ELT

And notwithstanding the point made above, this means that this approach recognises that it is not necessary to get learners to persist with attempts to conform to native speaker norms.

English taught as a foreign language (ETFL) (and which accords to English as a native language) is not the same as English learned as a foreign language (ELFL) (which often does not conform to ENL) (S&W ibid)

The dynamic nature of ELF

See, for example VOICE

<http://www.univie.ac.at/voice/> and

ACE

<http://corpus.ied.edu.hk/ace/>

From which these examples are drawn

...then he **said** erm if the if I **was** younger lah  
and then I **would** think about leaving school lah I  
say why give it to your mother or father to take  
care lah I **might have done** that lah cos my  
parents then he **said** then he **said** no lah the  
most important time for a child **is** four years  
mah and I want to bond with my child.

Where is the L1 (Malay) influence here?

Not in lack of tense marking as hypothesised

But in the transfer of LI discourse markers

(Kirkpatrick and Subhan 2014)

Use of Communicative Strategies

*Strategy type (Listener)*

Lexical anticipation

Lexical suggestion

Lexical correction

Don't give up

Request repetition

Request clarification

Let it pass

Listen to the message

Participant paraphrase

Participant prompt

## *Strategy type (Speaker)*

Spell out the word

Repeat the phrase

Be explicit

Paraphrase

Avoid local / idiomatic referents

(Kirkpatrick 2010: 141).

## What do they talk about?

- Islamic finance – how does lending and borrowing work in Islamic banks?
- Thai-Myanmar border issues – what is happening to the refugees stranded in Thai border areas?
- Who produces the best rice in Asia – is it from Southern Thailand or from Northern Malaysia?
- Contributing to arguments at ASEAN meetings.

- How important is coffee to the Vietnamese economy?
- The (mal) treatment of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong

What is my first language? Speakers' discuss the languages they learned as children, their parents' and grandparents' languages and how their use of language switches depending on contact and so forth. For example:

The speakers are a Filipina (S1), a Bruneian female (S2), a Thai male (S3) and a Vietnamese female (S4). The symbol 'SX-f' means it is not possible to determine which speaker is contributing at this point, only that she is female.

- S2: my first language when i fam- when i'm at home in the family are actually dialect chinese dialects i speak a few languages well i speak to my father (.) in a different dialect i speak to my mother (.) hh in a different dialect -kay so that is when i am at the age of one (.) one to three one to four
- SX-f: family
- S3: chinese dialect
- S1: growing
- S4: mhm

- S2: we live in an area where there were a lot of malays there were a lot of malays li- living in the area as well
- S1: your mother's chinese
- S2: my father's chinese my mother is chinese
- S4: mhm
- S2: erm so but we spo- i spoke dialect Chinese so i had so i grew up with a lot of languages around me
- S1: that's interesting
- S2: and i don't i don't actually remember
- SX-f: laughter
- S2: how i I only knew that i was drilled in grammar but erm i felt for a ve- very long time that even when i was i can still think back and i was in kindergarten i could understand the teacher
- SX-f: okay
- S1: uh-huh
- S4: hm

- S2: and she spoke erm english
- SX-f: hm
- S2: at that time so it wasn't a major difficulty because i was so small and so young
- S1: yeah yeah so what would you say is er what is your first language now
- S2: definitely english now i mean english has become i think in english i
- S3: English english
- SX-f: laughter
- S4: so you have so you have your mo- mother tongue father tongue
- SX-f: laughter
- S2: in the language i use most
- S1: neighbourhood tongue
- (Kirkpatrick, Patkin and Wu 2012:277)

These are just some examples of how ELF corpora can provide materials for an ELF-aware curriculum.

What, for example, could you do with materials such as these?

## 5 Principles of the Lingua Franca Approach

- *Principle#1 Mutual intelligibility is the goal.*
- *Principle#2 Intercultural competence is the goal.*
- *Principle#3 ELF speakers make good ELF teachers*
- *Principle #4 ELF environments provide excellent ELF learning opportunities*
- *Principle #5 ELF aware teaching needs ELF Assessment*

# Principle#1

The goal is mutual intelligibility.

The primary role of English is as a lingua franca between multilinguals for whom English is an additional language.

Which accent? Whose identity? Whose grammar?

‘Every corner of the country displays a wide range of grammatically non-standard forms, reminding us that such forms are the rule rather than the exception in *spoken* English English’ (Britain 2010:53).

‘We eats there most Saturdays’; ‘she love going up the city’ (2010:40).

‘They peel and boils them’; ‘Birds sings’

The Asian Corpus of English (ACE) data suggests that the use of non-standard forms in spoken Asian ELF is less frequent than in vernacular varieties of British English.

The crucial influence of context and the level of formality.

First language speakers of Malay in subset of ACE (Kirkpatrick and Subhan 2014)

Use of marked vs unmarked present tense/simple past tense forms

306 marked versus 107 unmarked

Informal settings: 153 m v 100u/m

Formal settings: 152 v 7u/m

Adopting a mutual intelligibility/multilingual goal rather than a native speaker goal has important implications

1 The primary school can focus on the first language/mother tongue(s) of the children and the national language to give them a sense of cultural identity and self confidence

2 English can be delayed until children have fluency and literacy in the local /national language(s)

3 Local cultures and languages can become part of the school curriculum.

As an example, note the recent policy shifts in the Philippines away from the Bilingual Education Policy (BEP) to the Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education policy (MTBLE) where children have the right to learn in one of 19 nominated local languages for at least the first 3 years of primary school.

## Principle#2

The goal is intercultural competence.

The ELF-aware curriculum needs to inform learners about the cultures of likely interactants – for example in Asia: (and elsewhere)

Buddhism – Islam – Hinduism – Christianity

Local literatures in English

In Indonesia, for example, English is used to promote Islam

English and Islamic Values in *pesantren*  
(Fahrudin 2013)

‘it is also necessary for us to master English for proselytising’, ‘English can deliver information about my religion’ (Dewi 2012:22)

## Principle#3

ELF speakers make good ELF teachers

EL teachers with knowledge of their students' language(s) and who are familiar with the cultures of the region make ideal teachers for the lingua franca approach for at least 6 reasons.

- (i) they have empathy for their students;
- (ii) they are good role models;
- (iii) they are good *linguistic* models;
- (iv) they can instil/facilitate intercultural competence in their students;
- (v) they can exploit bilingual pedagogy;
- (vi) they can establish and promote a multilingual ethos.

## Principle#4

Lingua franca environments provide excellent learning opportunities

Lingua franca environments provide natural English speaking contexts, without the presence of native speaker 'experts'.

Lingua franca speakers are proficient at cross-cultural communication.

## Principle#5

ELF-aware teaching needs ELF –aware  
assessment

Measures of functional proficiency (how successfully can a person use the language in relevant contexts) need to be developed

Benchmarks must be relevant and appropriate,  
so that:

‘The candidate’s accent bears no trace of his or her first language’ is precisely the type of benchmark that needs to be discarded.

European Common Framework of Reference may offer some guide (e.g., Vietnam), but:

Local benchmarks and measures must be developed. In the context of SE Asia, ASEAN/SEAMEO need to take the lead here.

## A Caveat

We are dealing primarily with spoken English

There are no L1 writers

All writers have to learn, consciously, how to  
write

Different genres/rhetorical styles

## To conclude

Given that ELF is a dynamic construct and that ELF-users have different motivations, any ELF-aware approach must be sensitive to context and be open, inclusive and flexible.

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