# JSPS Kakenhi Report on Developing Resources for Teaching and Assessing Communication Strategies in ELF-informed Pedagogy: An Empirical Approach Based on Learners' Communicative Capability

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## *ABSTRACT*

*The current paper reports on the authors' JSPS Kakenhi research activities and achievements, which is approaching the end of its second year of this four-year project. The project was born from our desire to better understand our students' communicative strengths and the challenges they experience as users of English as a lingua franca (ELF) in nonacademic settings. These insights, it is hoped, will enable us to better address our students' needs both in the classroom and ultimately beyond. Specifically in this report, we outline (1) the aims of our project, (2) the theoretical background, (3) the strides we have taken in collecting data, and (4) the knowledge we have gained from analyzing the data thus far. We end the report with a discussion of our future directions and ultimate goals.*

**KEYWORDS**: ELF, Communicative strategies, ELF-informed pedagogy, ELF corpus, ELF modules

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 The Project

The current four-year Kakenhi research project aims to develop a corpus of communication strategies (CSs) employed by Japanese university students in spoken and written interactions in English as a lingua franca (ELF) contexts. Insights gained from the corpus will guide our development of ELF-informed pedagogical resources consisting of the following components: (1) Raising language awareness: Introduction to ELF-informed pedagogy; (2) Teaching materials to develop CSs in spoken communication through explicit and implicit training; (3) Teaching materials to develop written communication through explicit and implicit training; (4) ELF-informed rubrics to assess both spoken and written communication; and (5) Integrating ELF into an existing course/program.

To determine the efficacy of the resources we develop, each of the components outlined above will be trialed using a mixed-methods approach and relevant findings will be presented and published. The end-goal of this project is to make all the resources we create accessible to other educators and researchers via a website and printed materials, which to the best of our knowledge, does not exist currently.

## 1.2 The Members

All the researchers in our team have previous experience in their assigned roles for the current project. They have also demonstrated their effectiveness in collaborative research through their participation in previous group-projects. Because we all belong to the same institution, being in close proximity enables us to work together in person on a regular basis. Also, our ELF-oriented work environment provides a vast and valuable source of potential participants for our research. Moreover, the required ELF classes we teach also provide unique opportunities to trial the materials we develop. Considering all these factors, we are confident in the feasibility of our study and in our ability to fulfill all our research objectives.

# 2. BACKGROUND

According to Graddol (2003), the number of non-native users of English worldwide vastly exceeds that of native speakers. What is more, this disparity is only expected to grow. In more practical terms, this phenomenon brings with it the reality that our students are more than likely to encounter English as a lingua franca (ELF) with other non-native speakers from outer or expanding-circles with whom they do not share a common first language (Seidlhofer, 2011). Although communication in ELF settings is typically ad hoc and variable, the efficacy of such interactions is high. This success is due, in large part, to interlocutors mutually co-constructing meaning through a process of adaptation and accommodation and being creative with the language, as opposed to strict adherence to 'native-speaker' linguistic norms and conventions (Seidlhofer, 2011; Björkman, 2014). Since CSs play a significant role in the success of such interactions, ELF researchers (Björkman, 2010; Kaur, 2014) call for opportunities in class for learners to use CSs proactively as a means of developing their ability to co-construct and negotiate meaning

effectively.

In stark contrast, views in mainstream ELT remain, by and large, oriented toward an English-speaking Western TESOL paradigm (Holliday, 2005), in which any deviation from such norms are regarded as 'errors'; something to be penalized. Even though ELF researchers have made great strides in demonstrating the relevance of ELF, further progress is needed in the way of developing practical ELF-informed teaching and assessment materials for classroom learning.

It is significant to note, however, that discussion of CSs in ELF research has focused primarily on adult ELF users (see Björkman, 2014; Burch, 2014; Cogo & Dewey, 2012; Kaur, 2016; Mauranen, 2012) in spoken interactions. Furthermore, as Choi and Jeon (2016) state, "ELF pedagogy has been mostly discussed at only a conceptual level and pedagogical research is scarce" (p. 1). Therefore, the current research will focus on ELF CSs used by university students in both spoken and written communication for ELT purposes.

This project is unique in several ways. First, there is currently no corpus (that we are aware of) based on Japanese university students' spoken and written communication in authentic ELF non-academic settings specifically. Hence, the proposed corpus will provide new and vital data, for Japanese contexts. Second, because of a shortage of teaching and assessment materials in ELF-informed pedagogy, the online resources we develop will also be unique. For all the above reasons, we firmly believe our project addresses, and hopefully will resolve, some of the current challenges we face in ELF-informed pedagogy, such as those highlighted by Toh (2016) and Robertson (2017).

## 3. ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS

### 3.1 Data Collection

As of the second year of this study, a total of 36 participants comprised of 18 students from our university and 18 overseas participants were recruited for online video conversations with Japanese students and interviews with researchers (see Table 1). Approximately 400 minutes, consisting of twenty conversations using online video-conferencing software (i.e., Zoom), were audio and video recorded. Another 500-600 minutes of recorded post-interviews with the participants were also collected. Written consent forms were signed and obtained from each participant prior to their participation.

Table 1

*Online video conversation participants: Chronologically from 2018 to 2019*

| Pair | Participant & Gender | Nationality | Background | *Proficiency of Spoken English |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | J1-Male<br>F1-Male | Japanese<br>Taiwanese | University student<br>Industrial designer | Beginner<br>Intermediate |
| 2 | J2-Male<br>F2-Male | Japanese<br>Taiwanese | University student<br>Product designer | Intermediate<br>Upper-intermediate |
| 3 | J3-Female<br>F3-Male | Japanese<br>Thai | University student<br>English teacher | Beginner<br>Advanced |
| 4 | J4-Male<br>F4-Male | Japanese<br>Thai | University student<br>English lecturer | Upper-intermediate<br>Advanced* |
| 5 | J5-Female<br>F5-Female | Japanese<br>Thai | University student<br>English teacher | Elementary<br>Advanced |
| 6 | J6-Female<br>F6-Male | Japanese<br>Taiwanese | University student<br>Industrial designer | Beginner<br>Beginner / Intermediate |
| 7 | J7-Female<br>F7-Female | Japanese<br>Brazilian | Graduate student<br>English teacher | Intermediate<br>Advanced |
| 8 | J8-Male<br>F8-Female | Japanese<br>Brazilian | University student<br>English teacher | Beginner<br>Advanced |
| 9 | J9-Female<br>F9-Male | Japanese<br>Brazilian | University student<br>Teacher | Beginner<br>Advanced |
| 10 | J10-Male<br>F10-Male | Japanese<br>Filipino | Graduate student<br>Management consultant | Intermediate<br>Advanced |
| 11 | J11-Male<br>F11-Female | Japanese<br>Filipino | University student<br>University student | Beginner<br>Intermediate / Upper-intermediate |
| 12 | J12-Male<br>F12-Female | Japanese<br>Filipino | University student<br>University student | Intermediate<br>Upper-intermediate |
| 13 | J13-Female<br>F13-Female | Japanese<br>Mexican | University student<br>Graduate student | Beginner<br>Advanced |
| 14 | J14-Male<br>F14-Female | Japanese<br>Malaysian | University student<br>University student | Intermediate<br>Intermediate |
| 15 | J15-Male<br>F15-Male | Japanese<br>Macedonian | University student<br>University student | Beginner<br>Advanced |
| 16 | J16-Male<br>F16-Male | Japanese<br>Macedonian | University student<br>High school student | Beginner<br>Advanced |
| 17 | J17-Female<br>F17-Female | Japanese<br>Brazilian | University student<br>Language teacher | Elementary<br>Advanced |
| 18 | J18-Male<br>F18-Male | Japanese<br>Brazilian | University student<br>Graduate student | Beginner<br>C2 (CEFR) |
| 19 | J19-Female<br>F19-Male | Japanese<br>Filipino | University student<br>Call center executive | Elementary<br>Advanced |
| 20 | J20-Female<br>F20-Female | Japanese<br>Chinese | University student<br>University student | Beginner<br>Upper-intermediate |

Note: *Self-evaluated; J = Japanese; F = Foreigner

## 3.2 Presentations

Since the commencement of this project, our team has made a total of eight presentations, both domestically and internationally, in relation to our project. In the following, we provide the relevant details and highlights of each presentation.

- Blagoja Dimoski (2018). Training for, simulating, and assessing ELF-type interactions in the classroom. *The 11th International Conference of English as a Lingua Franca. King's College*, London. United Kingdom. July 4, 2018.

    In this talk, the author presented three pedagogical approaches he designed to develop students' communicative capability. Specifically, the materials related to (a) the explicit teaching of CSs, (b) the implicit teaching of CSs through pro-active listening (PAL) comprehension, and (c) the use of role plays to simulate ELF interactions and assess students' ability to co-construct meaning, was presented within a framework. The author also provided student-feedback, as well as his own reflections, concerning the approaches and materials presented.

- Tricia Okada (2018). Migrant voices of Filipinos teaching English in Japan. *4th Philippine Studies Conference in Japan*. Hiroshima University. Hiroshima. November 17, 2018.

    This presentation examined how Filipinos of diverse backgrounds teaching English language develop their teacher identity and how their migration is relevant to ELF.

- Blagoja Dimoski, Satomi Kuroshima, Tricia Okada, Rasami Chaikul, & Yuri Jody Yujobo (2019). The initial stages of developing resources for teaching and assessing communication strategies in ELF-informed pedagogy. *8th Waseda ELF International Workshop & Symposium*. Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan. January 28, 2019.

    At this workshop, we introduced a summary of our research project on Japanese students' communication strategies in ELF interactions using three online ELF conversations we recorded and analyzed. We focused on two types of strategies: other-repetition and gestures. The participants displayed their orientation to the norm of how ordinary actions are accomplished (e.g., answering questions); thereby, they were able to produce meaningful actions with the exploitation of various encoding resources. The results have been confirmed with the participants' reflections obtained from the pre- and post-task interviews.

- Blagoja Dimoski, Tricia Okada, Satomi Kuroshima, Rasami Chaikul, & Yuri Jody Yujobo (2019). Conforming to native speaker norms?: An initial investigation of Japanese learners' communicative capability in ELF interactions. *The 12th International Conference of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF 12)*. The University of Antioquia. Medellin, Colombia. July 5, 2019.

    This presentation discussed preliminary findings by introducing communication strategies effectively used to negotiate meaning and mutual understanding in ELF interactions. In preparation for ELF 12, we coded six conversations with varied fluency based on Björkman (2014) and other studies on ELF communication strategies. Our results

show high frequency for both Japanese and foreign speakers in the use of strategies to pursue mutual understanding, e.g., clarification requests, non-verbal resources, but different frequency in an appeal for assistance, comprehension checks. The difference is implicated by their level of proficiency – i.e., some strategies require more linguistic control, such as comprehension check, repetition. Also, foreign speakers have more frequently used the strategies for enhancing communicative clarity, i.e., repetition and paraphrasing, than Japanese interlocutors. Overall, compared to foreign speakers, Japanese speakers have used the limited variety of communication strategies to achieve mutual understanding so that the progression of the interaction meets a minimal disruption.

In spite of the linguistic challenges, the Japanese interlocutors co-construct and negotiate in ELF interactions by taking advantage of communication strategies (CS) to achieve mutual understanding. Based on the transcription coding, the most utilized interactional CSs from highest to lowest were backchanneling, non-linguistic means, clarification request, appeal for assistance, and repetition. The identified CSs to enhance clarity and listening comprehension were repetition, self-initiated repair, rephrasing, and lexical insertion. Code-switching, translanguaging, and let it pass were interactional resources used effectively to keep the conversation going. Our findings and analysis imply that to achieve greater communicative capability, we need to raise ELF awareness and promote explicit teaching of CS as well as international communication knowledge.

- Blagoja Dimoski, Satomi Kuroshima, Rasami Chaikul, & Yuri Jody Yujobo (2019). ELF型学習モジュール: ELFコミュニケーションのために Preparing learners for ELF encounters through ELF-aware pedagogical modules. *JACET Summer Seminar*. Tamagawa University. Tokyo, Japan. August 22, 2019.

We showcased our original ELF-aware modules: communication strategies, intercultural communication, critical literacy, and 21st-century skills through project-based learning. Each presentation introduced the teaching materials we developed and discussed tips and ideas for adaptation to one's own language classes.

- Blagoja Dimoski, Satomi Kuroshima, & Rasami Chaikul (2019). 'Borderless' online ELF spoken interactions: Participants' views and perspectives through 'accommodation' strategies. *The 58th JACET International Convention*. Nagoya Institute of Technology. Nagoya, Japan. August 29, 2019.

We presented our preliminary findings on translanguaging and transculturality phenomena observed in our data. Through detailed analyses of our corpus of online ELF conversations, we were able to show how the participants displayed orientation and sensitivity to the owner of a named cultural domain of knowledge and experience. In particular, in their interactions, the knowledge and experience of the named culture have been intertwined with the locally contingent action formation, for instance, by using a Japanese term (e.g., "*neko*") to inform Japanese interlocutors of their daily life, or vice versa. The participants are able to convey an affiliative stance through claiming to have such knowledge and experience. In this way, we demonstrated that the phenomenon of translanguaging and transculturality can be described as a means not only for mutual intelligibility but also for affiliative and accommodative interactional moves, which can

promote their ELF communication.

- Rasami Chaikul (2019). Engaging in diversity and transcultural exchanges in online English as a lingua franca (ELF) communication. *The 5th VietTESOL International Convention*. University of Foreign Languages - Hue University, Hue City, Vietnam. October 11, 2019.

   This presentation provided an overview of transcultural exchanges seen in online communication between Japanese university students and non-native English speakers from the expanding circle. Significant findings were discussed along with insights into the characteristics of communication strategies used during ELF interactions and transcultural exchanges.

- Yuri Jody Yujobo (2019). Blending English as a lingua franca and interdisciplinary STEAM education. *The 16th Annual CamTESOL*. Institute of Technology of Cambodia. Phnom Penh, Cambodia. February 8, 2019.

   The focus of this presentation was to introduce how research findings could be transferred into a creation of ELF-aware pedagogical modules.

## 3.3 Publication

Based on the findings from our initial round of data collection, our paper, titled 'The Initial Stages of Developing Resources for Teaching Communication Strategies in ELF-informed Pedagogy', was peer-reviewed and published in the 8th volume of the Waseda Working Papers in ELF (Dimoski, Kuroshima, Okada, Chaikul, & Yujobo, 2019).

   In this study, we analyzed the spoken interactions of three Tamagawa University students with their foreign interlocutors (i.e., two in Taiwan and one in Thailand) using online video-conferencing software. Our findings showed that, despite our students' relatively low (self-assessed) level of English proficiency (i.e., from beginner to intermediate), they were able to make effective use of various communication strategies to co-construct and negotiate meaning during their twenty-minute conversations. Our findings thus preliminarily confirm that they are able to employ the norms of how an ordinary interaction works (i.e., how the sequence of actions is organized).

   In addition, we observed that our university students struggled to cope with non-understanding in interactions, as well as their self-reported lack of confidence in their communicative capability. Therefore, pedagogical interventions, whether through explicit or implicit means, can address these issues in the classroom and may be of benefit.

## 4. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In the 2020 academic year, we will begin our second round of data collection by expanding our investigation to writing in ELF contexts. This will include a new phase of data collection of written texts (i.e., real-time messaging) in ELF settings. Data on ELF writing will be collected with the collaboration between our university students in Japan and ELF learners and users from different countries especially those from the outer circle. Based on the data of written communication in ELF, we will begin coding for the written

data using the CSs and framework to create an original corpus of ELF-informed written communication. The ELF corpus can be a rich resource for researchers on authentic data of ELF spoken and written communication.

During the latter half of 2020 and 2021, our focus entails transferring our analysis of students' CS use to developing appropriate teaching and assessment materials which combine explicit and implicit teaching of CSs. The researchers plan to do extensive trials in our university English language classrooms and collect feedback using a mixed-methods approach.

Moreover, one of our final studies is to develop approaches to ELF-informed assessment. For this purpose, we will stage a series of ELF-informed assessment workshops for both pre-service and in-service teachers, as well as people who are interested in the topic, in order to explore and further understand attitudes toward non-traditional style assessment. Data and feedback will be collected and analyzed for further development of ELF-informed assessment tools. We hope this workshop will create a better understanding of approaches to ELF assessment (e.g., the creation of ELF-informed rubrics) to solve the difficulties at hand.

This will lead us into our final project, an ELF-informed website where the ELF pedagogical modules take form as online resources for educators and complete an original ELF corpus on specific CSs used in spoken and written ELF communications. The website will be made available to the public to implement the ELF-informed modules into their curriculum. The website will be trialed by other ELF practitioners for feedback to improve the website. The researchers will present the process and development of these online resources at conferences and in publications.

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