

Global Englishes Listening Activities In ELF Teaching Practice

ELF教育における国際英語の リスニング教材の使用について

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ABSTRACT

In the age when the English language is used as a contact language among speakers of diverse linguistic backgrounds around the world, the boundaries between ‘foreignness’ and ‘nativeness’ are being gradually blurred (Kavanagh, 2016). This situation should be reflected in the way we conduct our classes and introduce a variety of teaching methods and activities built on the understanding of English being a lingua franca rather than a foreign language (Galloway & Rose, 2014). The present paper discusses the practice of using authentic audio materials as the basis for in-class as well as at-home activities which respond to the need to recognise English as a global medium of communication characterised by linguistic and cultural fluidity.

KEYWORDS: English as a Lingua Franca, ELF, Global Englishes, Listening activities

1. INTRODUCTION

With non-native users of English staggeringly outnumbering those who were born and raised in English speaking countries, the chances of information exchange in English between two native speakers is estimated at a mere 4% (Yadav, 2018). The alluring image of prestige associated with the English language has not been reflecting reality for a number of years, and it is to be phased out from the English classroom. It is hardly just a matter of political correctness—the more our students realise that they also are the owners of English (Norton, 1997), the more liberated and confident they will feel about becoming its active users at relatively early stages of their learning process (Flowers & Kelsen, 2016).

However, changing the long-established discourse of the native-speaker being the ultimate role model in terms of language acquisition is not going to happen overnight and certainly not spontaneously. We as ELF teachers should make use of the tools we have at our disposal to slowly dissolve the clearly outdated native/non-native dichotomy

(Matikainen, 2018), with the ultimate goal of empowering our students.

2. EXPOSURE TO AUTHENTIC GLOBAL ENGLISHES

Those teachers who take an active part in course building are able to regulate to what extent their syllabi and course books assume the perspective of English used in global contexts. However, even if the course content and format are fixed, we can still provide our students with a regular exposure to the rich diversity of global manifestations of English whose common denominator is the pursuit of creation and transmission of meaning across borders and continents. This pedagogical goal can be achieved through a variety of teaching methods and implements (Hino, 2018) aimed at the learners' receptive, productive, and interactive skills (Hino, 2021). In this paper, I would like to introduce a set of activities based on authentic voice recordings of speakers of various geographical and linguistic backgrounds available from online resources. I have been producing and successfully using these teaching materials over the past several years of my English teaching practice.

The Internet-based resources I have been using and have good experience with are:

- (1) IDEA—International Dialects of English Archive (International Dialects of English Archive, 2021)
- (2) Audio Lingua (Academie of Versailles, 2021)
- (3) Spoken English (Bridge LCS, 2020)

The above websites contain collections of short speech recordings mostly based on informal, unstructured or semi-structured interviews with speakers of English from around the world. Rather than being treated as varieties of world Englishes, the linguistic samples selected for the teaching materials discussed in this article are seen as validations of the fluidity of the medium which is referred to by Jenkins as English as a Multilingua Franca (Jenkins, 2015). Quite legitimately so, this understanding of ELF includes “‘monolingual’ English speakers, so long as they are able to engage in the dynamic exploitation of previously unfamiliar linguistic resources by adapting to a multilingual environment.” (Ishikawa, 2017, p. 38)

On the whole, the interviewees' verbal constructions can be described as loosely based on, rather than strictly tied by, the kind of English students encounter in their textbooks. Their lexical choices are largely free from abstract concepts. The pronunciation often reflects the speakers' regional origin (in case of native dialects) or phonological features of their L1 (in case of non-native accents). Moreover, the speeches are interspersed with a variety of audible paralinguistic cues (laughter, pauses, non-verbal fillers, etc.)

3. MERIT FOR THE ELF CLASSROOM

The ad-hoc character and authenticity of the speakers' linguistic choices makes these

audio materials a valuable resource of English our learners will be coming across outside the classroom environment—in their professional as well as private lives.

Rather than teaching linguistic norms, the main objective of these activities is to expose the student to a variety of Englishes—with their culturally influenced lexical choices, as well as unique pronunciation and stress patterns and grammatical peculiarities often affected by the characteristics of the speakers' L1.

While the speakers are of different linguistic backgrounds, intentionally, they are never labelled as such. For some of them, English is their first language, for others second or a foreign language. In fact, some of the speakers selected for the comprehension exercises discussed here live abroad, in non-Anglophone countries, and English is purely their "contact language of choice" (Jenkins, 2015, p. 73). Each listening activity is titled as 'Speaker from (country)', often followed by a subheading specifying the content (e.g., 'on her hometown', 'on celebrating birthdays').

It needs to be noted that the audio materials available on the abovementioned web-based sources have not been collected specifically for pedagogical purposes. Therefore, when choosing audio contents suitable for processing into language comprehension materials, it is necessary for the teacher to take into careful consideration these following factors:

Length and suitability of content (ideally around one to three minutes of level-appropriate and engaging content)

Geographical variety (in concordance with the diversity of Global Englishes)

Gender, age and in some cases ethnicity (e.g., Singapore, South Africa)

Conversely, the following characteristics of a recording could render the content challenging and potentially demotivating, and therefore they should be approached with caution:

Amount of white noise (e.g., interviews which took place over the phone may cause strain to the listener)

Heavy dialect (e.g., Glaswegian), pidgins, creoles (e.g., Solomons)

Unintelligible grammar (Occasional grammatical slips are tolerable, but excessive mistakes could deter understanding. Thus, such materials might better be avoided.)

4. OVERVIEW OF SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

4.1 In-class Activities

When used in class, the voice recordings can be used as a basis for comprehension exercises and speaking activities stimulating learners' critical thinking. As there are currently no similar ELF learning resources known to be freely available online, these teaching materials need to be developed by the teacher. On most occasions, my students first receive a worksheet with the 'primary' comprehension exercise. Once they get acquainted with the contents of the recording, they proceed to work on the 'secondary'

activities related to the topic discussed in the audio recording.

The in-class activities broadly fall into two categories:

(1) Listening comprehension—primary activities aimed at enhancement of students’ receptive skills, e.g., ‘true-false statement’ exercises, multiple choice exercises, and exercises involving filling in missing information (see Appendix A).

(2) Critical/analytical thinking—secondary activities designed with the view to improving the students’ productive and interactive skills; worksheets containing the transcript of the recording previously heard, a number of questions, and a “word-phrase ammunition box” of useful expressions and grammatical constructions (see Appendix B).

Students are encouraged to reflect on the central idea of the audio material. These activities are usually done as pair work or group discussion. For instance, if the speaker talks about the size of the family he/she comes from, the students are prompted to contemplate the size of a typical family in their country and whether/how it has changed over the years. When comparing their perspective to that of the speaker in the audio recording, the students are reminded that not only finding common ground but also acknowledging the differences in a positive light is very important.

4.2 Out-of-class Activities

The ‘primary’ listening comprehension is given as a home assignment only occasionally as the web-based audio files tend to contain the transcript. They are mostly done in class and serve as a foundation for tasks to be submitted in the form of short voice recordings (1-2 minutes) or in writing (up to 150 words). These at-home follow-up activities are particularly suitable for students with a lower proficiency level, as they allow them an abundance of preparation time.

These activities can be categorised followingly:

(1) Analysis, reflection, opinion—in terms of form and content, these activities largely resemble the above-mentioned in-class activities focusing on critical/analytical thinking (see Appendix B).

(2) Language analysis—students are asked to briefly reflect on the speaker’s language; answering questions, e.g., Did you find the speaker’s language easy or hard to understand? Did you notice any strange/unusual words? If so, can you give examples? Did you notice any ‘strange’ grammar? If so, can you specify it? Do you think the speaker has made a grammatical mistake? If so, what was it/were they?

5. CONCLUSION

The language practice based on authentic instances of Global Englishes which I have discussed in this article has proven to be effective in language instruction held both face-to-face and remotely during the past two academic years affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. I create each set of activities with the goal of dynamic alternation between receptive and productive language skills in mind. Students work on them individually, in pairs, and as a group. When selecting suitable audio resources and making the materials, I pay attention to my students' language proficiency (usually within the range of A2 - B1 on the CEFR scale) and always choose to cover topics I believe my students find easy to relate to. From my experience, these activities help facilitate a positive and proactive atmosphere in the classroom, and they have been found useful and rewarding by many of my students. Finally, it is perhaps needless to say that these activities are usually not designed for assessment purposes—their function is largely informative, and their main objective is to broaden the students' understanding of the role the English language plays in connecting people around the world. It is a modest, yet enjoyable step from TEFL to Teaching English as a Global Language (Crystal, 2003; Kavanagh, 2016).

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APPENDIX A
(‘Primary’ comprehension exercise)

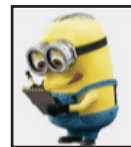
Speaker from India
The Indian Festival of Holi



Listen to Ulka speak about the Indian festival of Holi. Then look at the seven statements and choose a YES-answer or a NO-answer.

1.	<i>Apart from Holi, Ulka mentions two other Indian festivals.</i>	<i>Yes, she does. - No, she doesn't.</i>
2.	<i>Holi is Ulka's favourite Indian festival.</i>	<i>Yes, it is. - No, it isn't.</i>
3.	<i>People in India celebrate the arrival of spring on Holi.</i>	<i>Yes, they do. - No, they don't.</i>
4.	<i>People celebrate Holi in their homes.</i>	<i>Yes, they do. - No, they don't.</i>
5.	<i>Indian people do body painting on Holi.</i>	<i>Yes, they do. - No, they don't.</i>
6.	<i>Ulka mentions the colour 'orange' in her speech.</i>	<i>Yes, she does. - No, she doesn't.</i>
7.	<i>Ulka gives the listener a piece of advice in the end.</i>	<i>Yes, she does. - No, she doesn't.</i>

Is there anything else you heard Ulka say? (optional question)



APPENDIX B

(Secondary/Follow-up in class or out-of-class activity)

Holidays - traditions

1. Read the transcript of Ulka's speech about Holi

Hello, my name is Ulka. I come from India. There are lots of festivals in India, like Diwali, the festival of lights, the Ganesh Festival and Durga Puja. The festival that I like the best is Holi, the festival of colours. Holi marks the beginning of spring. We all come together on the streets and splash each other with water and colours. Wherever you go, people covered in red, yellow, blue and green will let you join in. A quick warning, if you don't like to play with water and colours, stay at home on Holi.

2. Think - write - speak

Answer these questions:

- A. What festivals are there in Japan?
- B. What is your favourite festival called?
- C. What is the idea of this festival? What is this festival about?
- D. What do people do on this day?
- E. Why is it your favourite festival?
- F. Optional question: Do you have any tips or warnings like Ulka had?



Your ammunition (helpful words and phrases):

- There are a lot of festivals in Japan, such as...
- Japan has many traditions. Some of the most famous/most popular festivals are
- My favourite festival is called... (in Japanese). It means ... in English.
- The festival I like most is...
- The main idea of this festival is...
- On this day, people usually (go, meet, wear, visit, pray, eat)...
- I like this festival a lot because...
- It is my favourite festival because...

