Pedagogic Implications of a Reduced Model Lingua Franca Core in the EFL Classroom

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Abstract

Despite the undeniable growth of English as a lingua franca (ELF) during the last 20 years, it is the English native language (ENL) model that still provides English language learners (ELLs) with the most complete model for students of English. The codification of ELF by Jenkins in the form of the Lingua Franca Core (LFC), though of great interest to linguists, does not provide a substitute model for those intending to acquire key English language skills. With the LFC disregarding important aspects of phonology, and the practical but constrained goal of intelligibility which it entails, the needs and aspirations of ELLs are often ignored. This paper will present arguments against using the LFC as a language model for phonology, giving special attention to whether ELF intelligibility goals in the Japanese context are appropriate, and considering the needs and aims of Japanese university English students.

Introduction

Over the past 70 years the population of non-native English speakers (NNS) has increased exponentially. As of 2008, it was estimated that there were 2 billion NNSs (Crystal, 2008, cited online), far outstripping the number of native speaker (NS) users of English. It is therefore unsurprising that among the total sum of interactions in English around the world today, those involving NSs now represent a clear minority (Graddol, 2006). Accordingly, research into English as an International language (EIL), English as a lingua franca, and World Englishes (WE) has flourished over the past 20 years with profound effects on the field of applied linguistics and language teaching. One of the prominent issues that has emerged from this body of research is centered around which pedagogical model should be used in English language classrooms with a marked de-emphasis on the native speaker of English in terms of the general 'ownership' of the language, and in particular as an instructional classroom model. ELF research by Jenkins (2000) resulted in the development of the Lingua Franca Core, an alternative model of English phonology which some suggest is more suited to the international nature of English communication as it is used today by NNSs. In this paper I will present an argument that ELF is substandard as a pedagogic model as it relates to phonology instruction as a whole, but especially in terms of foreign language learning contexts like Japan where an emphasis on accuracy and correctness of language form in English pronunciation and grammar prevails at all levels of education from classroom instruction to entrance examinations to standardized testing. As a reduced model from which learners proceed on their language learning journey without the full grammatical and phonological repertoire that is still only available to them through a native speaker model, the ELF paradigm represents a collusion of sorts that deficit-positioning in both grammar and pronunciation is acceptable for EFL learners. I will

acknowledge that an awareness of the changing nature of English communication beyond the NS model is essential for English Language Learners, and suggest approaches that identify and celebrate English as a lingua franca as a phenomenon that can be described and analyzed as an English communication outcome, but not as a learner model. As a communicative outcome, ELF samples can be utilized in the foreign language (FL) classroom to help learners develop skills in adjusting the way they speak, and for training Japanese EFL learners to better understand people who speak English differently than they do, or as a native speaker does. It is in this intelligibility focus that ELF has great value as an instructional resource.

Background: EIL, ELF and World Englishes

In order to describe the spread of English, Kachru (1985) outlined his concept of the three concentric circles and, despite some shortcomings such as framing English in terms of where it is used instead of how it is used, it remains the most influential model for conceptualizing the extent to which English is used around the world. The three circles represent the movement of English from Britain in three stages. The "Inner Circle" is represented by ENL countries, namely the United Kingdom, Canada, America, New Zealand and Australia. The "Outer Circle" is represented by countries that have a history of British or American colonialism, therefore remaining relatively static, and where English is now used as a second language (ESL) in countries such as India, the Philippines, and Singapore. The "Expanding Circle" is represented by those other countries where English is used as a foreign language (EFL contexts). Expanding Circle countries would include Germany, China, Egypt, Korea and, most importantly for this paper, Japan. Although some controversy does exist regarding the English of Expanding Circle countries and whether they are varieties of World Englishes, this paper will adopt Jenkins' (2009) framework and consider Englishes from the countries of all Circles, including the Expanding Circle, as World Englishes.

Although there are researchers such as Seidlhofer (2005) who distinguish between EIL and ELF, describing EIL as communication "within and across Kachru's 'Circles'" (p. 339), and ELF "among people from different first language backgrounds" (p. 339), there are others who use the two acronyms interchangeably. Jenkins (2009) describes ELF as "English being used as a lingua franca, the common language of choice, among speakers who come from different linguacultural backgrounds" (p. 200). Jenkins, however, does not exclude members of the Inner Circle from her ELF definition. She has also often used the term English as an International Language, especially in her earlier work, to describe ELF interactions, as she does in the title of her 2000 seminal work The Phonology of English as an International Language. For the purposes of this paper, I will use ELF as a term that encompasses all interactions of an international nature held between members within and across all three of Kachru's Circles, of course excluding NS-NS interactions within the Inner Circle, though one can make the case that some necessary negotiation of meaning might even occur between native English speakers from different countries where pronunciation and usage can impede communication.

Having established who is involved in interactions that could loosely be described as coming under the umbrella of ELF interactions, it is important to delve deeper into determining exactly what ELF is. ELF

is described in many ways, and not always with the precision one would expect of such an important phenomenon. Walker (2010) states "ELF is a community of users of English. The members of this community are predominantly non-native speakers" (p. 7). Walker then continues by adding that NSs are included in this community, but one must pose the question of whether it is really a community. Although there is a common thread in that all the members of this community speak English, the huge variety in linguistic backgrounds, cultures and contexts in which English is used make this common 'community' thread very faint indeed. Surely a consciousness of membership in this community is a prerequisite to using such a term, and if such a community does indeed exist, at what point does an ELL become a member? Seidlhofer (2004) disagrees with Walker here stating: "Belonging as they do to different primary lingua-cultural communities, ELF users do not themselves constitute a speech community as this is conventionally conceived in the sociolinguistics literature" (p. 28). Therefore, while terms such as 'community' describe ELF in a convenient fashion, the phenomenon of ELF requires a more in-depth examination. Alptekin (2007), in his description, has yet another sense of the ELF phenomenon: "…ELF is not a local language with a local culture. It is an international language with the world as its culture" (p.268). Seidlhofer (2004) shares Alptekin's view of ELF describing it as a 'natural language' (p. 222).

It must be asked, however, if ELF can be described as a language with a separate culture when it has only recently been codified with some very rudimentary phonological and lexico-grammatical features. The phenomenon described as ELF is only a very recent one and it has yet to develop the complexity and socio-cultural richness of languages that have evolved over hundreds of years. Perhaps a more realistic notion would be to see ELF as a context in which the English language is spoken and used, as opposed to a 'variety' (see, for example, Sung, 2013). Rather than being a separate language that both NSs and NNSs adopt in situations where another common language is unavailable, ELF is the circumstance in which English is used. Sung is not alone in his view that ELF is not a variety. Prodromou (2007) also shares this belief: "In nativized Englishes we see a broad consensus on which forms of the language are acceptable or represent a norm. Codification suggests the possibility that these forms and their meanings may be brought together in dictionaries and grammars. Clearly, it is premature to say this is the case with EIL" (p. 49). While there have been some attempts to codify ELF lexico-grammar (Seidlhofer, 2004) and phonology (Jenkins, 2000), what this codification amounts to is a far cry from what can be called a 'variety' or indeed even an 'international language'. The existence of this codification by Seidlhofer and Jenkins, while of great interest and helpful as descriptions of recent linguistic phenomena, are hardly comprehensive when one considers that only certain aspects of the phonology and grammar of the English language have been dealt with, and that there is no common thread among ELF users.

Codifying English as a Lingua Franca

Any discussion of a definition of ELF must also include a description of the LFC. Jenkins (2000), in her seminal and controversial work, outlines the features of English phonology which are necessary for intelligible communication ('core'), especially the communication that occurs between NNSs. Aspects that are not necessary to achieve intelligibility (i.e. 'non-core' features) are also listed. Non-core features are selected due

to their low functional load, the fact that they are not needed for the purposes of communication, or for their supposed inability to be taught. The LFC was created using empirical data of recorded interactions gathered by Jenkins. Data was collected over a three-year period from pairs and groups in classrooms, and groups involved in communicative tasks (Jenkins, 2000). To give a brief description of the LFC, here are some of the main features (see Appendix 1 for a more detailed description):

'Core' features

- Most of the 24 consonants in RP and GA
- Initial consonant clusters
- The length of vowels must be preserved (tense and lax vowels)
- Nuclear stress
- mid-central vowel /ɜ:/

'Non-core' features

- the interdental fricative pair /θ/ and /ð/ and [ɫ]
- lexical stress
- weak forms or reduced vowels
- stress-timed rhythm
- final consonant clusters
- individual vowel quality (except /ɜ:/)
- intonational tones

Other attempts have been made to codify ELF outside of Jenkins' LFC. Based on observations from the VOICE corpus data, Seidlhofer (2004) identified the following lexicogrammatical features considered important for ELF pedagogy. Her aim was to identify common items that were used repeatedly by different L1 speakers. There were, according to Seidlhofer, certain "regularities that at least point to some hypothesis, which in turn are proving useful for formulating more focused research questions" (p. 220). Seidlhofer framed these lexicogrammatical features as such: "…typical "errors" that most English teachers would consider in urgent need of correction and remediation, and that consequently often get allotted a great deal of time and effort in English lessons, appear to be generally unproblematic and no obstacle to communicative success" (p. 220). Listed below are the features that Seidlhofer identified:

- Dropping the third person present tense –s
- Confusing the relative pronouns who and which
- Omitting definite and indefinite articles where they are obligatory in ENL, and inserting them where they do not occur in ENL
- Failing to use correct forms in tag questions (e.g., isn't it? or no? instead of shouldn't they?)
- Inserting redundant prepositions, as in We have to study about…)

- Overusing certain verbs of high semantic generality, such as do, have, make, put, take

- Replacing infinitive-constructions with that-clauses, as in I want that

- Overdoing explicitness (e.g. black color rather than just black)

- Seidlhofer (2004, p. 220)

Beyond their grammatical importance, it is contentious as to whether or not these features are 'unproblematic' or 'no obstacle to communicative success'. For example, the omission of articles where they are necessary is a feature that is described above. Yet asking "Do you have a textbook?" and "Do you have the text book?" in a classroom situation would require different responses. Regardless of this, however, articles and other grammatical features that Seidlhofer describes are features of a language that the diligent student will be reluctant to omit from their studies. Seidlhofer does stop short of suggesting her ELF lexico-grammar descriptions be adopted as part of ELF pedagogy. However, she then lists McKay's (2002) teaching goals for EIL, one of which is "Ensuring intelligibility rather than insisting on correctness" (p. 226). Thus, at least from a pedagogical perspective, a common issue arises in both the grammar and the pronunciation ELF models.

Seidlhofer says of McKay's teaching goals for EIL, "McKay's proposals for "rethinking goals and approaches" (her subtitle) usefully present the state of the art of approaching EIL pedagogy" (p.226). If one is to 'ensure intelligibility rather than insist on correctness', as the first goal states, does that not entail ignoring grammatical features that are a part of the language (correctness), and as such, make the lexico-grammar descriptions a part of a broader ELF pedagogy? As with phonology and the LFC, most students are reluctant to disregard rules of the ENL model and instead settle for intelligibility. The definite and indefinite articles are a feature of English grammar, like the pronunciation of the interdental fricative, and the correct usage of them will, without doubt, elude many ELLs. This alone, however, does not provide a convincing motive to strike it from EFL pedagogy. The issue of the 'complete model' is then also raised as certain features of the ENL model are subtracted to achieve intelligibility rather than correctness. Yet students need to be equipped with a complete model if they are to be able to deal with the diverse range of grammar that they may be exposed to outside the classroom.

Problems with the Lingua Franca Core (LFC)

Until recently, the approach to English teaching has been predominantly one of teaching English as a foreign language, or English as a second language. The underlying assumption of this kind of teaching was that English skills were acquired for the purpose of speaking to a NS member of the Inner Circle. As such it was considered that the highest goal of learning was to attain native-like proficiency. This is what Levis (2005) has referred to as the 'Nativeness Principle'. It can then be assumed that a native-like accent would be the goal of instruction in English phonology. Research by Munro and Derwing (1995a) has been instrumental in shifting this goal to one of intelligibility. The advent of ELF has considerably furthered this shift to one of attaining intelligibility (Walker, 2010), as there is now growing consensus among researchers and practitioners that communication between NNSs does not require native-like pronunciation. Many proponents of ELF claim

that rather than striving to perfectly imitate an ENL model such as Received Pronunciation (RP) or General American (GA), endeavoring to make oneself intelligible is by far the more practical and realistic goal. In the literature there are many who agree with the merits of intelligibility as a primary goal for language pedagogy (Hung 2014; Henderson 2008). However, the importance of the native model is not in acting as a goal by which students ascertain whether they have succeeded or failed but in acting as a reference point (Sung, 2013). Expectations of achieving goals, and how realistic those goals are, will vary among individual students. Student outcomes from learning experiences, even when using a native speaker model, may differ little from ELF 'norms' proposed by those endorsing ELF as a pedagogical model, but offering students higher targets to strive for is necessary to satisfy the ambitions of students with greater motivation and ability. Kuo (2006) notes in observations of her ESL students that while aspects of grammatical and phonological inaccuracy would be accepted by her students in their conversations with each other, a description of such language does not constitute a 'model' and it was to the NS teacher that students would turn when they had questions regarding pronunciation or grammar. She notes that for many students the stakes are high; certainly higher than making oneself minimally understood in casual conversation. Unless a certain degree of proficiency can be achieved, positions in education and employment can be jeopardized. Therefore, although intelligibility may suffice in some ELF communicative interactions, there are many for whom greater proficiency is specifically required as an outcome, or generally desired at an aesthetic level, and this can only be achieved through study with a NS model.

The great variation in language learning objectives among ELLs brings forth the question of student choice with regards to an English language learning model. Although the goal of intelligibility is undoubtedly important, when making decisions about the goals of students for teaching pronunciation, the wishes of ELLs must also be taken into consideration. If we are to do so, it would appear that language learners are overwhelming in favor of the ENL model, not only in EFL contexts like Japan but in ESL contexts as well. Derwing (2003) found that 95% of 100 Canadian immigrants surveyed said that they would prefer to speak like a native speaker if they could. Although as immigrants of Canada those surveyed would be just as likely to be speaking English to NSs as to NNSs, the percentage is remarkably high. Timmis (2002) also found in a survey of over 400 English students from 14 different countries that a majority (67%) chose to identify with the native speaker accent as their ideal rather than a speaker who speaks clearly but retains an accent from their native language. In the same survey, similar results were found pertaining to students' use of grammar. A majority of respondents answered that their preference would be to use grammar in the manner that a native speaker does.

Similarly, 'accent reduction', which could be seen as aspiring to a native-like ability with regards to pronunciation, appears to remain high among NNS priorities. Thompson (2014) shows that interest in "accent reduction", determined by Google hits, far exceeds interest in "pronunciation instruction". Hits for "accent reduction" reached 426,000 while hits for "pronunciation instruction" only reached 15,300. Also searches for "accent" far exceed searches for "pronunciation" with 134,000,000 hits for "accent" and 39,000,000 hits for pronunciation. Therefore, while it is undeniable that intelligibility is important, and that being understood is an important aspect of communication, a large majority of students, for a variety of reasons, want to associate

with the ENL model. If language learners desire to study an ENL model, whether that be RP, GA or another, it could be seen as over-zealous on the part of an LFC advocate to deny students this wish, or the prospective higher-level linguistic outcome that might potentially result from an ENL model over a reduced LFC model. Although as a trained instructor there are many curriculum decisions that need to be made without student consensus, the large majority of students in favor of the ENL model, as outlined above, would indicate that the use of the LFC model would be an unpopular imposition and, in theory, could limit the language abilities a student might acquire.

The goals that language learners set for themselves require closer examination and discussion. By using the LFC as a model for language learners in the classroom, it is rather like telling students not to set their goals high, and to be more 'realistic'. This is akin to suggesting to students that they need not learn certain phonemes or suprasegmental features, as they are too difficult, take too much time to teach, and can therefore be avoided. If a music teacher instructing an aspiring concert pianist told their student that certain scales or techniques were not necessary because they were too difficult, and not used much anyway (low functional load), would that teacher be considered to be doing their utmost to allow the student to achieve their full potential and goals? Although not all, perhaps even most, can achieve it, native-like pronunciation is not an unattainable goal. Achieving native-like pronunciation is very much like realizing one's goals to be a world-renowned professional musician or sportsperson. Only some are successful. Do we tell all students their goals are impossible and to settle for a more realistic second best, intelligibility? Kuo, in an interview by Holliday (2005), expresses her views on ELF, which are consistent with the idea above:

> "Although I did feel comfortable to be told that I did not have to be native speaker like, I would definitely feel upset if I could not reach my own expectation in pronunciation… If we take Jenkins's view and tell them to stay where they are - you don't need to twist your tongue this way and it's perfectly all right to keep your accent - at some point, we would terribly upset the learners because they might want to….It's been clear that I'm a language learner from the periphery and - listen to this - I prefer to speak for myself!" (p. 9).

The notion that ELLs need only achieve intelligibility, while admittedly having a positive impact on the confidence of many students of English, fails to take into account the ambitions and goals of the many NNSs, such as Kuo, who wish to excel. It ignores the fundamental quality of many humans to be ambitious and to aim higher. It is also, as Van den Doel (2009) observes, a 'non-target' as NNSs are, in effect, setting the goal of pronouncing English in the manner that they already do; that is, in the manner of NNSs.

Another point that needs to be considered with regards to this goal of intelligibility is related to the aesthetics of a language. Kuo makes an important point with regards to the overly pragmatic approach to language learning that the LFC promotes when she states: "The description of English as a lingua franca has, from the outset, restricted its focus down to the very instrumental function of English as the language for international communication" (p. 215). She continues by listing areas that descriptions of ELF neglect such as literacy, register, style and various aesthetic concerns. While the addition of a more clinical form of language, focusing

only on communication, may be appealing to some, it is not difficult to see why a native model with its many dimensions and complexities is attractive to the majority of ELLs. Carruthers (2019) highlights this when discussing the substitution of other phonemes for the interdental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ as outlined by Jenkins (2002). The acquisition of language is not something that is solely a practical exercise tied to employment or efficient communication and intelligibility, but has a 'uniqueness' all of its own. Although Carruthers acknowledges that the interdental fricative may not be essential for communication, and that intelligibility can be achieved without it, such pragmatic considerations are not the whole essence of language learning. Of the interdental fricative he states, "the interdental fricative is a miracle of existence in the ecology of human phonology, an object with profound beauty and originality" (p. 51). Neither the interdental fricative, nor other suprasegmental aspects of English should be reduced to the scrap heap of phonology merely because they are 'too hard' or have low functional load. It is these challenges that bring out the best in language learners and make language learning the joy that it is. Teachers who avoid these features are denying their students the opportunity to engage with the language on a higher level and to connect with the aesthetic beauty of language.

There is also the issue of completeness. If the LFC were to be used as a pedagogic model for language learners, as is suggested by some proponents of the LFC (Jenkins, 2000; Walker, 2010; Davis, 2012) it would be a reduced model when compared with RP or GA and deny those who use it as a model of the features of English that are vital for both productive and receptive English skills. This is obvious from the fact that there are 'non-core' features, or features of English phonology that are considered unnecessary or 'unteachable'. Of these, one of the most important areas that has been neglected is suprasegmentals. Although, fortunately, nuclear stress has been included in the 'core' features, many key suprasegemental aspects have been disregarded by Jenkins. Examples of such are connected speech, word stress, and intonation. There are many proponents of suprasegmental instruction taken from a NS perspective (Derwing et al., 1998; Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Such proponents have shown improvement in ELL intelligibility as a result of instruction in suprasegmentals, which highlights a need for suprasegmental instruction. Jenkins (2000) makes the point that NNSs may process language differently and therefore research results from NS listeners showing the importance of suprasegmentals may not be applicable. While this may be true, ELF does not exclude NSs from interactions. Indeed, although the majority of interactions are thought to be between NNSs, much of ELL communication will consist primarily of NS-NNS interactions. One must then ask whether or not the subtraction of many suprasegmental aspects from the LFC disadvantages speakers in these interactions that include native speakers. The desire to emulate the speech of a native speaker may also come less from ideology and more from, as Van den Doel (2009) states "the fact that non-natives may just want to come across as clearly as possible not only to native speakers, but also to those millions of non-natives who have made the same choice" (p. 24). Van den Doel also makes the salient point that it may actually be more important for NNSs to have instruction in a full repertoire of suprasegmentals and segmentals. He states: "Native speakers (like Jenkins) are better able to use contextual information, whereas non-native speakers of English (like me) find it tougher to process another speaker merging minimal pairs. As such, it is essential, if one wishes to improve learners' ability to understand other speakers, to instruct them in making all crucial phoneme contrasts" (pp. 24-25).

Another problem is the assertion by those, such as Walker (2010), that the ELF approach to pronunciation is an approach that is not imposed on others. He states that rather it is the native speaker models that have been imposed. However, there appears to be some contradiction here. With respect to native speakers he states "but if they wish to join the ELF community, they can only do this by respecting ELF norms" (p. 7). It can only be assumed from this that 'ELF norms' are the LFC and rules of lexico-grammar set down, respectively, by Jenkins and Seidlhofer, and that native speakers must 'respect' these rules during interactions with NNSs. It is unclear if this also entails interactions between NS teachers and NNS students, but it is disturbing to imagine that it does. Does this not then amount to imposing one's views upon another? Jenkins (2000) takes this view a step further when she states: "In these areas (phonological 'core' and 'non-core' areas) it is L1 speakers who will be obliged to make productive and receptive adjustments if they, too, wish to interact in English internationally" (p. 135). While it seems reasonable for NSs to show caution with regards to idiomatic speech or what Seidlhofer (2004) refers to as "unilateral idiomaticity" (p. 220), it is dubious at best to expect NSs to adjust phonological production of phonemes such as the interdental fricatives from their own native versions of English as a prerequisite for inclusion in ELF interactions. One must also question whether it is even possible for NSs to make the productive adjustments suggested by Jenkins. Holliday (2005) goes as far as to say that Jenkins is advocating "yet another 'centre' plot to control what English people should speak" (p. 164).

The Japanese Context

Having established that any attempt to use the LFC as a model may lead to an incomplete although 'intelligible' phonological knowledge of English, we must now look at how this affects the Japanese learner. When observed from the Japanese context, the number of students who aspire to speak like a NS is considered high. Murata (2007) in a survey of 134 English major students at a Japanese university found that 98% of students wanted their pronunciation to be close to that of a native speaker. This is typical of attitudes in tertiary education in Japan where ELT is still largely dominated by NS English (Suzuki et al, 2020). This may lead one to question why ENL is so formidably established in Japan. One theory put forward is that the ENL model is one that holds prestige in Japan and is perpetuated by programs such as the Japan Exchange Teacher (JET) program that employ mostly NS teachers from Inner Circle countries. This concept of 'prestige' is exemplified by Sutherland's (2012) findings when respondents in his survey speak of "real English" in reference to NS English. While this obsession with 'getting the right brand' that also occupies the minds of Japanese consumers may contribute to learners gravitating towards the ENL model, it might also be explained by the Japanese trait of thoroughness and perfection, so often seen in Japanese crafts and industry, that motivates language learners. That the Japanese student of English would reject a model that has 'non-core' features that can be passed over, and instead choose to aspire to a model that has the complete range of English phonemes and suprasegmental features, would appear to be logical given the cultural proclivity for precision and attention to form and correctness. This manifests itself in the aversion to mistakes of any kind in the high-stakes English examination culture, and the focus-on-form pedagogy that feeds into this.

Further, it is also the case that the ENL model is preferred by those who make curriculum decisions in the

Ministry of Culture, Education, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (MEXT). In MEXT's outline of "Five Proposals and Specific Measures for Developing Proficiency in English for International Communication," the introduction is titled "Society-wide Efforts toward Developing Japanese Proficiency in English as Lingua Franca" (sic). Yet while the term 'English as a Lingua Franca' is specifically used here, there appears to be very little in the content of the proposals that would indicate ELF is being promoted in Japanese schools. Indeed, NS English, in the form of Assistant Language Teachers (ALT) participating on the JET program, is a major part of the "specific measures". In 2019-20, 4,815 of 5,235 ALTs participating in the JET program were from Inner Circle countries (JET Programme: Participating Countries, 2019, pp. 1-4). The proposals also specifically express the importance of ALTs for Japanese students. The proposals state, "ALTs are a valuable asset increasing opportunities for students to come across practical English, and to actually use English by themselves, in the course of team teaching and other activities. In this country, there are few opportunities, other than classes, for students to communicate in English; hence it is important to efficiently utilize ALTs" (MEXT, p. 7). This emphasis, correct or not, on 'utilizing' ALTs who are predominantly from Inner Circle countries and the description of them as 'valuable assets' highlights the emphasis placed on native speaker English. It is also interesting to note that 2,958, of the ALTs participating in the JET program, well over half, were from the United States, indicating a preference for GA.

In the MEXT's section on "Improvement of Academic Abilities (Courses of Study)" for Junior High Schools, more specific details are provided as to how English is to be taught. Although there is no particular mention of which model is to be used, RP or GA, it is clear that the NS model is to be used as the basis for instruction. For listening, "Listening Instruction should be given mainly on the following items: (a) To follow the basic characteristics of English sounds such as stress, intonation and pauses and listen to English sounds correctly" (p. 1). As intonation and lexical stress are 'non-core' elements of the LFC it is obvious that the NS model is being adhered to in the area of prosody. This is similar for speaking: "Speech sounds (a) Contemporary standard pronunciation (b) Sound changes that result from the linking of words (c) Basic stresses in words, phrases and sentences (d) Basic sentence intonations" (pp. 1-2). Although the term "Contemporary standard pronunciation" might be considered ambiguous, it is clear from the other listed aspects of speech that this diverges significantly from the LFC. Linking, lexical stress, and intonation are all 'non-core' elements of the LFC. Adherence to NS models is evident when referring to grammar aims also: "Restrictive use of the relative pronouns "that," "which" and "who" used in the nominative case, and "that" and "which" used in the objective case" (p. 5) is in contrast to Seidlhofer's ELF grammar which states that confusing the relative pronouns who and which to be no obstruction to comprehension.

Contexts within which Kochi University students use English

The student population of Kochi University is approximately 5,000. Despite its setting in a rural area of Japan, the university has seen an increase in the number of Japanese students studying abroad, and students from abroad studying in Kochi. As such, situations where students will require English skills to communicate outside the boundaries of normal EFL contexts have risen significantly. Although some student exchange programs exist with Inner Circle countries such as the United States and Australia, where it can be assumed

that much of the necessary communication will be with NSs, relationships with Scandinavian universities in Sweden and Norway require the students to speak English largely in ELF contexts. It should be noted, however, that even the experiences of KU students at Inner Circle country universities involve many NNS-NNS interactions in the form of communication with other international students. In recent years private language courses in Outer Circle countries such as Malaysia and the Philippines have also increased in popularity. Yet, although the incidences of Kochi University students using English in ELF contexts has increased, it is not necessary to make pedagogical adjustments in the fields of phonology or grammar to accommodate for this. In fact, in these fields, in order to better prepare students for both the formal and informal settings in which they will be required to communicate in English, whether in an Inner Circle setting or an Outer/Expanding Circle country, instruction using a complete model, rather than an incomplete model, will better equip them for the situations in which they will find themselves. As Prodromou (2007) states, "In the end, ELF risks sending the student stuttering on to the world stage, with limited resources" (p. 52). With regards to awareness of ELF, however, exposure to proficient NNS models of English, through the use of media or NNS instructors, serves as both a motivation and confidence builder for Japanese students of English. Although instructors in the Kochi University English Conversation Course and English Lecture series are predominantly NS instructors, present and past instructors have included NNSs from both Outer Circle and Expanding Circle countries. As proficient NNSs of English, such teachers provide Kochi University students with a most appropriate role model.

Pedagogical Approach

Disagreeing that the LFC can be used as a pedagogical model does not mean that all aspects of ELF should be rejected from the English classroom. The changing nature of global communication involving English within and across countries of all three of Kachru's circles provides a rich resource for both language teachers and learners. Therefore, creating an awareness of the ELF phenomenon, using good examples of World Englishes and ELF interactions, can all be valuably integrated into the modern English classroom. As I have argued, it is premature to describe ELF as a 'variety' or a 'language', or to treat it as such when modeling language, but the reality of its existence warrants recognition by English instructors, both NS and NNS. Mompean (2008) also shares this view that World Englishes should be included when he states, "...it is always recommendable to regularly expose students to varieties other than the reference model. Choosing a given pronunciation model should never mean being against diversity: exposure to different accents in teaching materials is more than acceptable as long as the core elements are observed" (p. 963).

One area in which the awareness of ELF and its prevalence in the world can have a positive impact on students is in its potential in building learner confidence. Although students should be exposed to the full spectrum of English grammar and phonology, an understanding that achievement that falls short of perfection does not spell outright failure is important for learners. Kuo, although expressing a desire to strive higher, expressed 'comfort' at knowing the level of a native was not required (Holliday 2005). It is, however, important to select models of NNS English carefully, only choosing those models that display strong proficiency. Internet sites such as English Listening Lesson Library Online (ELLLO) and International Dialects

of English Archive (IDEA) provide samples of NS and NNS interactions for these purposes. One method of exposing students to high-level speakers of NNS English is through analysis of speech samples from NNS of different regions, transcribing them to practice listening skills, and highlighting a speaker's phonological features. IDEA, with both extemporaneous and scripted samples of speech from almost any country in the world, offers teachers a rich resource to study NNS Englishes. It is important, however, that such exercises are preceded by some form of instruction in English phonology. This is especially so for suprasegmentals, in which the average student with no previous experience studying English phonology will have little knowledge. The teacher should also vet speech samples chosen by students to ensure they are appropriate. Students can present on the phonological features that they have discovered in the speech samples and, at a later stage, comparisons can be made with NS speech samples from the same site. Examples where there is the same set script are ideal for such comparisons. As both ELLLO and IDEA have transcripts of their respective conversations/speech samples, students can check their own transcribing efforts and use the transcriptions to highlight where points of phonological interest occur. Some speech samples on IDEA even contain "key features" which include notes on a speaker's phonological features to assist students.

Although such activities undoubtedly lead to greater confidence amongst students involved in this kind of study, another benefit is greater familiarity with accents that come outside the 'normal' range of accents, usually NS, that are offered in standard English textbooks. This is especially the case when there are particular accents that a student is more likely to come into contact with. For example, in the Japanese context, it would be advantageous to expose the students to NNS Englishes coming from areas in close proximity to Japan such as Chinese or Korean, as there is a greater likelihood of students encountering English speakers from these countries. Jenkins (2000) deals with this issue by listing the conditions for "receptive convergence" noting that it is necessary "the receiver has had prior exposure to the speaker's accent" and "the receiver has had prior exposure to a range of L2 accents and has developed a tolerance of difference" (p. 183). The means by which she feels are the most efficient way of achieving this familiarity is through "repeated pedagogic exposure" (p. 184). The activities described above provide a valuable means of attaining such "pedagogic exposure" by offering students an opportunity to listen to, analyze and explain NNS Englishes in the classroom. This use of ELF material, which develops accommodation skills, is essential for contemporary ELLs.

Conclusion

The academic trajectory or discourse among applied linguistics has unequivocally moved in the direction of ELF. This is clearly shown in the sheer volume of publications dedicated to ELF. However, the LFC is a long way from being in a position to replace the ENL model. Not only is it an incomplete model that neglects important areas of English phonology, it ignores the aesthetics of the language and sets low goals for ELLs who may wish to aim higher. It is perhaps for these reasons that it has not filtered down to teacher practices, and certainly not to the classroom settings where teachers and policymakers still refer to, and students still expect, a native speaker model. This is especially the case in Japan where curriculum guidelines prepared by MEXT stipulate that significant aspects of the ENL model be included in classroom instruction, in

many instances focusing on non-core features of the LFC. While knowledge and awareness of the changes occurring in global communication can lead to greater confidence for language learners, the reality is that striving for intelligibility alone may not meet the needs of all ELLs. The LFC and other ELF descriptions are yet to provide ELLs with a standard that approximates the ENL model.

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Appendix 1: Differences between NS and EIL phonology targets

	NS target	EIL target
1. The consonantal inventory	• all sounds	• all sounds except /θ/, /ð/ and [ɫ]
	• RP non-rhotic /r/ GA rhotic /r/	• rhotic /r/ only
	• RP intervocalic [t] GA intervocalic [ɾ]	• intervocalic [t] only
2. Phonetic requirements	• rarely specified	• aspiration after /p/ /t/ /k/
		• appropriate vowel length before fortis/lenis consonants
3. Consonant clusters	• all word positions	• word initially, word medially
4. Vowel quantity	• long-short contrast	• long-short contrast
5. Vowel quality	• close to RP or GA	• L2 (consistent) regional qualities
6. Weak forms	• essential	• unhelpful to intelligibility
7. Features of connected speech	• all	• inconsequential or unhelpful
8. Stress-timed rhythm	• important	• does not exist
9. Word stress	• critical	• unteachable/can reduce flexibility
10. Pitch movement	• essential for indicating attitudes and grammar	• unteachable/incorrectly linked to NS attitudes/grammar
11. Nuclear (tonic) stress	• important	• critical

Source: Jenkins (2002, p. 99)