

## ELF Appreciation for the Purposes of University Internationalization

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# **ELF Appreciation for the Purposes of University Internationalization**

Christopher G. HASWELL

## **Abstract**

As evidenced by ongoing academic interest in the topic, English as a lingua franca (ELF) is of increasing concern as English becomes more globalized, while communication strategies and negotiation become more localized and contextualized. This study will investigate how these concerns manifest in the use of English as an international lingua franca, both on and off campus, at Japanese universities and at comparison sites in the UK. Included here is the rationale for the study, the research background, preparations made prior to the study, and the 24-month plan for the study, starting in summer 2025. Also included are the research questions, the structure of the book, which will include the findings, and preparations to ensure an ethical and robust research environment.

## **1. Research background**

My research plan coincides with a spring/summer 2026 sabbatical, but has already begun with the Japanese section of the study, outlined below. The study is a wide-scale collaborative comparison investigation of how English is used for cross-cultural and intercultural communication in Japanese and UK universities. This does not necessarily involve how the language is taught, but rather how, in situations of the highest confidence-inspiring utility for students, having a shared knowledge of English assists them in presenting their ideas and clarifying the ideas of others. The overarching principle this project will investigate is English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), a mindset of English learning, teaching, and use that encompasses concepts such as World Englishes (WE), Global Englishes (GE), and English as an International Language (EIL).

In terms of a developmental timeline, the discipline's eras cannot be neatly divided. However, clear trends emerge. Rising academic interest within the An-

glosphere of English's diaspora in the 1960s and 1970s led to a coagulation of discourses in the 1980s. This, in turn, led to two forms of retaliation against academia: the recognition of the diasporic Englishes, yet rejection as a possible 'standard' by academics like Randolph Quirk (1990), and the resistance to English as a global language by Robert Philipson (1992) and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (1996). In this era, the field began to shift from WE to GE, recognizing that variety was not merely geographically anchored but also moved between contexts and formed international bonds between locations. Decentralization and appreciation of language development within the description of EIL proceeded in tandem with ELF in the 2000s, with the work of Schneider (2007), Meierkord (2008), Jenkins (2009), Seidlhofer (2009), and Matsuda (2010) driving the pluricentric narrative of English as the preeminent global language, a position that came with responsibilities: English needed to live not only in the world but in the real world. Linguistic ethnographers like Alistair Pennycook (2006) and his investigation of transnational and transcultural 'flows' begat the field of translanguage and the achievement of true pluricentricity. English, if it were to become the transnational and transcultural lingua franca, needed to be viewed from as many perspectives as possible.

## **2. Research rationale**

English as a Lingua Franca has become increasingly important in sociolinguistics and as an approach to language teaching and learning (Jenkins, Baker & Dewey, 2018; Illés & Bayyurt, 2023). As a result, it is necessary to examine how it is covered in various contexts. In Japan, the approach has been slowed by concerns that it needs improvement as a way of thinking about and approaching English for on-campus communication. This is a fundamental misunderstanding of ELF as being somehow indicative of English as a 'broken' linguistic medium.

ELF is not a variety of English but a way of thinking about English and language use in general, a sociolinguistic truth that has been recognized in academia for over 15 years (Jenkins, 2006, 2022). Varieties of languages create a space within a model of the language itself: there are grammatical, lexical, semantic, and form-use rules that are context-specific. The problem with consider-

ing communication from a variety-based approach is that it will always attempt to draw upon rules against which other varieties must be compared. Such an approach is indeed preferable when learning a language from the beginning. However, it fails to fully enable the user to communicate and express themselves in that language, particularly in cross-cultural or intercultural communication situations. ELF, on the other hand, approaches communication as requiring consideration of the mindset of the people involved, i.e., are they interested in what the person they are talking to wants to say rather than how they are expressing themselves?

The proposed study brings together these components for both quantitative and qualitative analysis and will build a robust repository of free-to-use, Creative Commons materials that will support the aims of internationally oriented Japanese universities. This project has already progressed through several successful stages:

- Stage One was the first five years of podcast interviews and their publication on the website “Lost in Citations.com.”
- Stage Two was the production of in-class and homework tasks on “ELF-Communication.com” used at Kyushu University and St. Andrews University in Scotland.
- Stage Three was the production of flipped classroom materials of summaries, transcriptions, and lesson materials based on the full interviews at “AuthenticAcademics.com.”
- The project being reported here is Stage Four, where ELF-related materials are trialed at six universities, three in Japan and three in the UK, while instructors and students share their opinions of internationalized English use to develop a model of international English for the purpose of successful integration of Japanese universities with their partner institutions around the world.

This has been supported by the “Lost in Citations” podcast series ([www.lostin-citations.com](http://www.lostin-citations.com)), featuring 180 interviews with educators from 28 countries. The research is further being expanded into a third stage, with the launch of the “Authentic Academics” website ([www.authenticacademics.com](http://www.authenticacademics.com)) for academic researchers in English. Through this project, I have come into contact with aca-

demics from across Japan and the world, specifically on EMI, ELF, and World Englishes. These websites are free to use, available on the internet in any context, and will form one of the components of the shared activities between the research locations.

Given below is a proposed table of contents for the book to be published from this sabbatical-facilitated research project, featuring interviews already conducted as part of the above-mentioned research project (the research during the sabbatical will form the second half of the proposed text).

Note: # indicates the number of the interview in the series of 200 interviews (others may be added later). The interviews on which the study is based feature the proposed data-collection locations, highlighted in **bold**.

### **Chapter 1:** *History of WE and ELF*

#14 - Jennifer Jenkins (**University of Southampton**)

#24 - Ahmar Mahboob (University of Sydney)

#70 - Ishamina Athirah Gardiner (University of Brunei Darussalam)

### **Chapter 2:** *Language policies of WE and ELF*

#12 - Aya Matsuda: curriculum blueprint (Arizona State University)

#31 - Nobuyuki Hino (**Osaka University**)

#45 - Ana Sofia Hofmeyr (**Kansai University**)

#65 - James D'Angelo (Chukyo University)

#84- Nicola Galloway (University of Glasgow)

### **Chapter 3:** *Appreciation of ELF*

#18 - Mahboobeh Rakhshanderoo (**Osaka University**)

#42 - C. Bruce Lawrence (Ajou University)

#98 - Nicos Sifakis (University of Athens)

#124 - Sarah Hopkyns (**University of St. Andrews**)

#150 - Robert J. Lowe (Ochanomizu University)

#179 - Sarah Hopkyns (**University of St. Andrews**)

**Chapter 4: Outcomes of ELF research**

#52 - Naoko Kojima (Ritsumeikan University)

#54- Kevin Browne (Yamanashi Prefectural University)

#154 - Eoin Jordan (**University of St. Andrews**)

**Chapters 5-8:** 2026 Sabbatical research project (Rationale, Methodology, Findings, Discussion & Future Policy Recommendations)

**3. Preparations**

This project was always intended to be a Kakenhi project regarding on-campus cross-cultural communication starting in April 2020. However, due to the pandemic lockdowns and the fact that our students were off-campus for most of the project's first two years, my contact with students has been limited to only my classes and those of Aaron Hahn. Through this project, I intend to build more numerous and more substantial connections with universities inside and outside Japan.

See Appendix 1 for the ethical statement concerning this research project.

**3.1 Contacts**

I am in contact with two educators from the University of St. Andrews, one from the University of Southampton, and one from Cambridge University in the UK, who have committed themselves to the Global English community and ELF-related research projects. The University of St. Andrews was voted the number one university in the UK in 2022, and I have personal and professional contacts in its Language & Linguistics faculty.

I have also received positive responses from our Kyushu University colleagues, Kansai University, and Lakeland University faculty members regarding facilitating student surveys and interviews. These interviews and surveys are contingent on passing ethical review and receiving agreement from both students and other faculty members to participate.

Contacts expressing support (this list is subject to change, and interviewees will

be added later):

Japan

- Kansai University: Dr. Ana Sofia Hofmeyr (Associate Professor)
- Lakeland University: Roger Grabowski (Professor)

United Kingdom

- St. Andrews University: Dr. Eoin Jordan (Director; Professor)
- Southampton University: Dr. Will Baker (Director; Associate Professor)
- Cambridge University: Dr. Paul Elliott (Associate Professor)

### 3.2 Internet materials and software

In addition to the three websites mentioned above (elfcommunication.com, lostincitations.com, and authenticacademics.com), I have long-standing subscriptions to surveying software (surveymonkey.com) and data analysis software (MaxQDA) for data collection and analysis. Using the transcripts from the interviews listed in the proposed book's table of contents, I have begun building an analytical model for use with the qualitative instruments using MaxQDA. Once it is finalized and trialed, this analytical model can be applied to focus group and one-on-one interview transcripts.

## 4. Proposed study

The study has two specific research questions:

- How is the use of English encouraged for intercultural communication?
- What are the incidences of ELF that the study participants have experienced?

This will cover the following sub-categories and sub-questions:

University policy

- How has the university interpreted the need for cross-cultural communication using shared linguistic resources?
- How have instructors and students received these policies?

Instructor concerns

- Have any issues related to ELF arisen in classrooms?
- How have any concerns been addressed?

### Student concerns

- Have any issues related to ELF arisen in classrooms?
- How have any concerns been addressed?

The outcome of the study has two questions:

- What are the successful strategies instructors and students use for inter-cultural communication?
- How can they be replicated and encouraged in future programs at Kyushu University?

The study will have three main instruments:

- Quantitative survey of students

The survey will include 15-20 Likert-scale statements that grade students' agreement or disagreement with elements of ELF-related propositions.

- Qualitative focus group interviews of students

These are follow-up interviews with students who have offered to participate in a follow-up on the survey findings. An honorarium will be provided.

- Qualitative one-on-one interviews with faculty members.

These are follow-up interviews with faculty members who have offered to participate in a follow-up on the survey findings. An honorarium will be provided.

## 5. Time Plan

The suggested dates have been selected so as not to interfere with the instructors' and students' end-of-year exam preparations.

### *Summer 2025*

- Contact plans for what is possible in various locations, including:
- Agree on acceptable data-collection processes.
- Finalize ethics protocols, on and off-site (Japan and UK)
- Communicate the research instruments, both qualitative (interviews and

focus groups) and quantitative (survey)

*Fall/Winter 2025*

- Survey of expected study sites
- Travel within Japan for focus group interviews
- Submit 1st Ronkyu Paper (Research Report) for consideration.

*Early 2026*

- Finalize travel plans with both the finance office in Ito and the travel company.

*April 2026*

- Arrive in the UK - Using Sheffield/Doncaster as the central accommodation/travel hub.
- Visit the main study sites, St. Andrews University and the University of Southampton. Conduct focus group interviews with students and one-on-one discussions with course instructors:
- St. Andrews University (International Education and Lifelong Learning Institute) 4/7 ~ 4/10
- Southampton University (Center for Global Englishes) - 4/14 ~ 4/17
- Write up the sections from the investigations at the two research sites.

*May 2026*

- Visit another study site, Cambridge University.
- Conduct focus group interviews with students and one-on-one discussions with course instructors.
- Cambridge - Homerton College 5/5 ~ 5/8 (or earlier)
- Continue the write-up of all research activities.

*Early July 2026*

- Interviews (conducted via email or Zoom) with instructors re. Early report of findings for their feedback
- Submit my book proposal to Ethic Press.

*September 2026*

- Return to Japan
- Submit draft of book to Ethics Press.

*October 2026*

- Return to Kyushu University's regular schedule.
- Submit the 2nd Ronkyu Paper (Research Report) for consideration.

*Early - Mid 2027*

- Publish the finished book manuscript.
- Present an FD session on the findings to provide feedback to our university on the activities of other universities concerning ELF and intercultural communication on campus in both Japan and the UK.

**6. Expected outcomes**

The 1999 Bologna Process, enacted in Europe, is similar to the programs of the Global 30 Project in 2008 and the Top Global University Project in 2014, both enacted in Japan. Although the rationale for these projects is identical, to improve communication of students of university age in study abroad programs, and both focus almost exclusively on English as the medium of interaction, the Bologna Process was intended to work within the EU with students of various first languages. In contrast, Global 30 and Top Global University had Anglophone countries (UK, USA, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand) in mind as the target for Japanese students to study abroad; international students encouraged to study in Japan could come from non-Anglophone countries. Although no longer a part of the EU, UK university policies are deeply influenced by their time under EU protocols in the 2000s and 2010s.

For this reason, I expect the experiences of international students in the UK and those in Japan to reflect the policy objectives of the respective locations. That is to say, the expectation is:

- International students studying in Japan will receive greater linguistic accommodation than UK students, reflecting ELF on Japanese campuses.
- Japanese students studying in Japan will have gained more experience in

a foreign language (i.e., English) than UK students studying in the UK. These are expected to be self-reported findings from a quantitative survey, supported by focus group interviews with students and one-on-one interviews with course teachers, which will provide rich detail about the experiences with on-campus communication opportunities.

Based on the study's findings, in addition to the research reports and book, I intend to submit proposals to assist with future course design and material selection. These research efforts will also strengthen the ties between Kyushu University and other major international universities.

## **7. Relevant bibliography of materials reviewed in preparation for the book chapters outlined in Section 2**

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## **Appendix I – Ethical Statement**

All activities undertaken in the study will comply with the ethical research standards of Kyushu University and the institutions participating in Japan and the UK. The proposal for this integrated project with St. Andrews University has already been referred to the ethics review board for preliminary screening.

### **Research Ethics Statement:**

- 1) This project will always maintain the principles of informed consent. Participants will be informed orally and in writing before any data is collected. Field notes or audio recordings will be taken only when the research activities are conducted in full view of the participant. Any in-room interviews will be audio- and video-recorded, with access to the recordings provided to participants before any analysis or publication.
- 2) The anonymity of the online survey data collection subjects will be stringently protected by ensuring that their names are never made public, nor will any list of participants be made available to their respective universities. Any identifying details about them will not be included in any published work. Participants in any qualitative interview or those who provide spoken or written testimony will be provided with a written statement to the same effect, informing them of these measures to protect their identity. The electronic devices used in the study will be reset to factory settings after each student uses them.
- 3) Those whose status must be identified to verify the veracity of the research, such as people in public offices and university officials, will have any published comments limited to those related to the research questions and aims of this research project. They will be allowed to sign privacy agreements limiting their privacy in this regard.
- 4) All participants in this research will be allowed to withdraw their consent for their comments to be used in this research, which will include the

complete withdrawal of their comments or the removal of specific remarks with which they no longer agree. This opportunity to withdraw consent is not limited to the project term, and participants retain the right to have their words redacted at a later time.

- 5) Participants in any audio or video materials will be afforded the most significant degree of protection possible, with no identifying information included nor personal data attached to the publicly released material.
- 6) As principal investigator, I am responsible for adhering to all my university's codes of research ethics and ensuring that any co-investigator also follows these procedures.