Nicola Galloway and Heath Rose

"They envision going to New York, not Jakarta": the differing attitudes toward ELF of students, teaching assistants, and instructors in an English-medium business program in Japan

Abstract: This study examines attitudes in a bilingual business degree program at a Japanese university, where visiting senior and postgraduate international students are hired to assist sophomore students in the classroom. The visiting international students' role is to not only help students understand business concepts in the course, but to provide opportunity for real life English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) use as well as exposure to the English used by people from varied backgrounds. The study uses a mixed method of questionnaires with 120 students within the program, a focus group with the assistants, and a focus group with the course instructors. The study found that both the students and student assistants had largely positive attitudes to this classroom experience – both in terms of exposure to the diversity of English and the opportunity to use ELF. Furthermore, the study revealed students were acutely aware of their probable future usage of English in lingua franca settings – despite teachers' assumptions that the students would adhere to traditional native English speaker stereotypes, which are often promoted in Japanese language education.

Keywords: English a lingua franca; global Englishes; TESOL

学生はジャカルタではなく、ニューヨークに行くと思います。日本の大学の国際経営学部で、立場の異なる学生、学生アシスタントと英語講師のELFに向けての異なる態度について。

本論文は日本の4年制大学の国際経営学部で、教室内で２年生をサポートする為に採用された、学生アシスタントである先輩留学生と、２年生の態度を研究するものです。その留学生の役割は、学生にコースでの経営コンセプトを理解させるのみならず、様々なバックグラウンドから来た人たちと英語を通して触れ合う事はもちろん、共通語としての英語を使用した実生活の為の機会を提供する事にあります。この研究では、プログラム内で120人の学生達から集めたアンケート、アシスタントのフォーカスグループとコースインスト

ラクターのフォーカスグループと、複数の異なるメソッドを用いました。この研究で学生たちとアシスタントの双方がクラスでの経験から、ELFを使用する事に関して、非常にポジティブな態度を発見しました。英語講師はネイティブスピーカーのステレオタイプを支持する日本の英語教育の伝統的な規範に準拠することを、教師の仮定の設定にも関わらず強く認識していた事が明らかになりました。この研究で、先生達は生徒達がネイティブスピーカーのみに対して英語を使うという従来の概念を保つだろうと思っていたにも関わらず、生徒達が将来、どのようにELFを使うのか理解した事も発見できました。

英語教育、リンガフランカ、グローバル英語

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1 Introduction and background to the study

1.1 Introduction

This study examines attitudes toward ELF afforded in a bilingual business degree program at a Japanese university. In this program, visiting senior and postgraduate international students are hired to assist sophomore students in an International Business course taught through English. The visiting international students have a dual role in the program: to help students understand business concepts in the course; and to provide opportunity for real-life English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) use with people from varied linguistic backgrounds. As the background to the study will highlight, Japan makes an interesting context for ELF research, where emerging programs such as the one in this study challenge traditional approaches to ELT in Japan, which previous research has argued continue to promote Native English Speaker (NES) norms. Examples of the promotion of NES norms in Japan include educational policies that place ownership of English with the NES, the use of the NES as a measure of Non-Native English Speaker (NNES) proficiency, and the over-representation of NESs in ELT material, which positions the NES as the probable future interlocutor for English. The program in this study, however, aimed to promote exposure to NNESs, and thus move away from these traditional approaches to ELT, making for an interesting context to examine attitudes toward ELF. The study uses a mixed method of questionnaires

with 120 students within the program, a focus group with the international student assistants, and a focus group with the program instructors.

1.2 An increasing diversity of English speakers

English, as a globalized phenomenon, is currently used by diverse speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds around the globe. As a global language, English no longer has traditional assumed linguistic boundaries and functions as an international lingua franca. For example, in Asia and the Pacific about 90% of the international bodies carry out their work entirely in English (Crystal 2003: 88). Globalization has had a profound influence on the spread of English in the past twenty to thirty years and "[t]he result of this rapid spread has meant that speakers of English who learn and use it as an additional language to their own mother tongues now considerably outnumber those who speak English as their L1" (Alsagoff 2012: 109). The most dramatic rise of English speakers can be found in Kachru's (1992) "Expanding Circle," which includes countries such as China, Japan, France, Spain, and Germany. In these countries, English has few intra-national users and is often considered to be a foreign language. However, despite traditionally not having any internal functions, the role of English in these countries is changing. In the Gulf Corporation Council (GCC) (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and the Sultanate of Oman), for example, the official language is Arabic but English is widely spoken because of the presence of large expatriate communities and the importance of English as the language of business (Ali 2009). In fact, in most of the GCC countries, the expatriate population outnumbers the local population and, thus, English is used as a lingua franca alongside Urdu/Hindi and is clearly more than a "foreign" language. Furthermore, in South East Asia, English is the main language of intercultural communication and has been adopted as the working language of ASEAN and ASEAN + 3, which also includes China, Japan, and South Korea (Kirkpatrick 2007).

A further examination of the Japanese context reveals English education is the only foreign option in most schools (Kubota 2002; Suzuki 2006), and was introduced into primary schools in 2011. It is the only subject tested on all university entrance exams, which is significant considering nearly half of senior high school graduates continue their education in a four-year university or in a two-year college where they are mostly expected to study English for at least two years, even in unrelated majors.

Outside of the educational context, people are increasingly using English more with NNESs in the business arena (Morrow 2004) and since 2003, when

Nissan joined forces with Renault, many companies have been following suit by instigating English as the official working language, including *Rakuten*, *Uniqlo*, and Japanese branches of international companies from expanding circle countries such as the Danish shipping giant, Maersk. Thus, while some people in the expanding circle may never travel to a "traditional" English-speaking country, it is increasingly likely that they will need to write and carry out negotiations in English, particularly if they are working in the globalized business arena.

1.3 Preparing students for the use of English globally

With this global spread, the language is, therefore, changing and assuming distinct forms in different contexts. English cannot be associated purely with native-speaking nations, but with a global community of English users who utilize and own the language as global shareholders. However, despite the changing sociolinguistic landscape of English, it is well-known that the English Language Teaching (ELT) industry, particularly in expanding circle countries such as Japan, continues to place preference on NES norms. First, the NES continues to be used as a yardstick of competence and this has resulted in the NES ideal remaining a central part of the ELT profession. NESs continue to dominate ELT materials, proficiency tests, job advertisements, and so forth. As Ali (2009: 37) points out, "on a global level, the ELT profession is perhaps the world's only occupation in which the majority faces discrimination." The dominance of the NES episteme is particularly prevalent in places such as Japan, where NESs are recruited as Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) and employed in schools throughout the country, along with textbooks that include an over-representation (and almost exclusive representation) of American English (Matsuda 2002). Japan is clearly "still anchored in the old native speaker dominated framework [. . .] and native speakers are considered the ideal teachers" (Llurda 2004: 319). Hence, as Kubota (2002: 22) argues, "learning English, particularly with an emphasis on the inner circle white middle class varieties, does not lead to international understanding. Rather, it is likely to promote a narrow view of world cultures and, furthermore, produce essentialised images of both inner circle countries and Japan."

The irrelevance of the NES model is ever more apparent today with the flourishing research being published in the ELF research paradigm (see Jenkins et al. 2011; Mauranen 2012; Seidlhofer 2011) which is increasing awareness of how English is used as a global lingua franca in international contexts. As Jenkins et al. (2011: 304–305) point out, "[r]esearch findings in ELF have major im-

plications for a multitude of common beliefs and assumptions about what is sanctioned as good practice by the profession." Changes in the sociolinguistic landscape of English clearly present a dilemma for the traditional approach to ELT, despite some inclusion of the notion of "variation" in English in recent years.

1.4 Business English as a Lingua Franca

Another area of importance, and with implications for pedagogy in the business education field, is the use of English in the business arena. Today, this is known as BELF (Business English Lingua Franca), a term introduced by Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2005) as English increasingly became chosen as the working language of many international business firms. Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) found that in their study of European multinational companies, 70% of the English communication of internationally operating business professionals on average could be characterized as BELF. Like ELF researchers, BELF research acknowledges that the English used for international contexts is very different to the English used by NESs and, therefore, ownership of BELF is seen as a shared concept. BELF research is invaluable since "the realities of the business context are often considerably more complex than the simple label of English as a lingua franca would imply" (Nickerson 2005: 354). It complements ELF research, but with the focus on domain-specific English use in a specific community of practice, the international business arena, emphasized by the "B," it "will eventually contribute to a better understanding of the overall lingua franca phenomenon" (Ehrenreich 2010: 427).

In terms of the impact of BELF research on pedagogy, Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2005), in their study of the communicative practices of two international corporations, point out that in "BELF teaching, learners should be trained to see themselves as communicators, with real jobs to perform and needs to fulfil; it is these jobs and needs that should be emphasized, not the language they use to carry them out" (2005: 419). They also point out the need to focus on listening skills and make learners aware of their own, and of their interlocutors', discourse practices, conventions, and cultural preferences. This study also highlighted that phonemic and syntactic levels of communication, though sometimes clearly non-native speaker-like, rarely hindered communication, which has implications for those involved in education settings in business.

Louhiala-Salminen and Rogerson-Revell (2012) also point out that BELF communication functions well in its context of use, where its users are experts of their respective fields, but do not share any other language, and would thus not be able

to do their work without this common language. These authors also point out the need for NES training in BELF, for example, techniques to simplify idiomatic expressions and enhance their knowledge of the role of other languages. This was also a point stressed by Ehrenreich (2010) who, in her study of English and other languages in a German multinational corporation, noted that despite the need for English, other languages are still important and are used as a pragmatic or strategic resource. When discussing proficiency, her participants also referred to "pragmatic attitude," and conformity with Standard English was seen as fairly irrelevant. Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) reported a similar result, noting that participants did not feel that NES-like pronunciation was an essential element in effective communication and they hardly ever associated English with a specific native speaker model.

Ehrenreich (2010) also discussed the relevance of the notion of a business community of practice, which takes us beyond the learner–user distinction and enables us to view people in their appropriate interactional contexts. She notes that BELF skills can be developed through exposure and communication with members of this community, and also through language training provided by the company. In another study, Bjørge (2012) concludes that business communication coaches need to draw the students' attention to the appropriate use of mitigation strategies. Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) have also suggested that while BELF may have been a term originally developed to refer to NNESs' English usage, it could be argued that in today's global business it should be part of all internationally operating business professionals' competence, including NESs who also require training. Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) point out that while in business textbooks, the NES model is often used, for the participants in their study the model was a business professional. The participants also reported the importance of real-life practice to learn BELF.

2 Research methodology

As a result of the rising importance of English in the business domain, universities in Asia have begun to offer business degrees taught in English to arm graduates with both business knowledge, and the needed English language skills to implement this knowledge in an international business environment where English is used as the lingua franca. With the globalization of English and the transfer of ownership of the language, it is clear that international business graduates in places such as Japan are likely to use English with a variety of people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The purpose of this study was to investigate attitudes of students learning in programs that incorporate ways of pre-

paring students for such use of English as well as increasing their awareness of the changing sociolinguistic landscape of the language and, therefore, exposing them to the diversity of English.

2.1 The setting

The study was conducted in a bilingual business program at a Japanese private university, where English is the dominant language of instruction alongside Japanese. The business department attracts a lot of international exchange students from business colleges around the world, due to its unique position to offer credit-bearing business courses taught in English.

In the first year of the program, students take English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in order to prepare for their second year of study, from which business content courses gradually switch into English. The EAP course, developed in-house, features a module on Global Englishes (GE), including ELF and World Englishes (WE) notions. The module introduces students to the worldwide spread of English, the number of speakers, and role of the language in different countries as well as the concept of a global lingua franca and attitudes toward it. In the students' second year of study they take the first business content course taught entirely in English by both NES and NNES business faculty. This course is coupled with a tutorial-style English for Specific Purposes (ESP) class, which offers language and content support to Japanese students in order to comprehend and discuss the business content in the international business course. The teachers of this course are language and business communication specialists, and comprise three NESs and one NNES. Students from the international student exchange body are hired as student assistants in the ESP classes, creating an environment for ELF usage in a usually monolingual and monocultural classroom. It is important to clarify that the program chooses the term student assistant rather than teaching assistant to emphasis that the position is not a teaching role, but one where they assist students in the classroom and act as peers. At the time of the study, seven student assistants were hired, of which five were NNESs and two were NESs (one from the United Kingdom, and the other from Singapore). These student assistants were hired by the college on the basis of their knowledge of business concepts and their experience using ELF, and therefore tended to be in their senior years of undergraduate study or postgraduate study, and had experience using English in higher education or work settings in multilingual environments. The rationale behind the recruitment of international students was threefold: first, to increase students' exposure to the diversity of English; second, to provide them with the opportunity to participate in ELF usage; and third, to

provide a real-life community of practice to simulate their future ELF use in the international business arena.

2.2 Research questions

The study aimed to investigate student attitudes to using ELF in an environment where international assistants were hired to assist in language support class-rooms. Specifically, the research questions of the study were:
1. Did the students see value in using ELF in this setting?
    a. How did the teachers and student assistants perceive this value?
    b. Was there a difference in value-based variables such as the nationality of the student assistant?
2. What characteristics did students value in a student assistant?
    a. Did these characteristics conform to traditional NES norms?
3. How did attitudes toward ELF usage compare between students, student assistants, and instructors?

2.3 Methods

In order to widen the scope of understanding and obtain rich data, a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative measures was employed. These measures included questionnaires, student assistant focus groups, and instructor focus groups. Thus, participants were business students taking an *ESP* course, *ESP* student assistants, and *ESP* teachers.

2.3.1 The questionnaires

The study used two questionnaires aimed at the student participants. The primary questionnaire, which focused on attitudes to ELF and the student assistants, was administered online and was provided in Japanese and English. The survey was divided into four sections. Section one included background information, section two included questions about students' English use and motivation to study, and section three included direct questions regarding attitudes toward the student assistants in ESP classes. The last section included an open question on their ultimate goals in learning, and they were also asked their opinion on whether their English education had prepared them to use English in the inter-

national business arena with people from around the world. Most questions involved a four-point Likert scale, and in all sections students were given space to write additional comments for qualitative analysis. Seventy-one out of a total of 121 students responded to the survey, which provided good descriptive statistical analysis. In addition to this primary questionnaire, one item was included on a compulsory end-of-term questionnaire for two ESP courses, giving a 98% response rate ($n = 236$). This item simply asked students to respond to the statement "The student assistants were helpful." Although this question did not investigate the issues surrounding the use of exchange students in the same depth as the primary questionnaire, the inclusion of this one item on the compulsory questionnaire completed by 235 students allowed for a more rigorous statistical analysis.

2.3.2 Focus groups

Qualitative methods were sought to elicit substantive information about participants' attitudes. A qualitative approach gave the participants a chance to clarify opinions, elaborate on points raised, and provide examples, thus providing a clearer illustration of attitudes. Focus Groups (FGs) have a number of advantages relevant to this study, which include the opportunity to yield high quality data and the reduction of acquiescence bias. FGs yield high-quality data through group interaction (Dörnyei 2007) and give participants the chance to listen to others before forming their opinions, unlike interviews (Krueger 1998). FGs also enable the researcher to take a less directive and dominating role and thus reduce the opportunity for acquiescence bias. The moderator for both focus groups was a peer, who was trained for effective and unbiased moderation.

Different FG prompts were developed for both groups. Both began with an overall introduction to the study with some basic information. Both sets of participants were given four topics to discuss, each beginning with a statement and then a discussion topic. For the teachers, these included English in Japan, learning international business through English, working with exchange students, and English as a lingua franca. For the exchange students, "working with exchange students" was replaced with "your classroom role." The student assistant FG contained four assistants, whose names have all been replaced with pseudonyms:
–   Sam from Demark
–   Edgar from Singapore
–   Mark from France
–   Brent from the United Kingdom

The teacher FG contained four teachers, whose names have also been replaced with pseudonyms:
– Prof. Lani, an American national who specialized in language education
– Prof. Bertrum, an American national who specialized in language education
– Prof. Nagai, a Japanese national who specialized in communication studies
– Prof. Glass, an American national who specialized in communication studies

Research suggests that a single FG does not enable the researcher to confirm the initial group's responses (e.g., Dörnyei 2007; Morgan 1996). Unfortunately, due to the small-scale nature of this study, only one focus group with the student assistants and one focus group with the teachers were possible. Also, while six is the ideal number for FGs (Krueger 1998; Rabiee 2004) this was not possible with only four teachers on the course, and with the availability of the student assistants.

3 Results

3.1 Descriptive statistics of the student respondents

The primary questionnaire involved 71 students. Participants had an average TOEIC score of 770, with the highest possible score on the test being 990. The minimum score was 550, while the highest was 970, and the relatively high standard deviation (SD) in TOEIC score indicates a wide variation among the students in the study (Table 1).

Table 1: Students' TOEIC scores

	Number of students	Minimum score	Maximum score	Mean score	SD
TOEIC score	71	550	970	769.77	108.67

The students had an equal number of men (52%) and women (48%). Twenty-four percent of students had begun their English education before the age of seven, 28% during the ages of eight and eleven, and 48% after the age of twelve, which marks the beginning of compulsory junior high school English education in Japan.

All the student body had experience visiting a foreign country, and thus had some experience using ELF. For 48% of the students, this experience came solely in the form of a compulsory four-week intensive course attended at an overseas partner university during their first year. In addition to this shared experience, a further 18% had spent up to a year abroad, and 34% had spent more than a year in a foreign country. The most popular reasons given for learning English were to communicate with NESs (75%), to increase career prospects (68%), and personal interest in the language (56%). Forty-three percent of students indicated communication with NNESs as a reason to learn English, and although this is lower than the other responses, it is clear that students are aware that English is not only a language used with NESs.

Regarding English usage, students overwhelmingly used English most often to communicate with English-speaking teachers (82%), and with each other (44%). Interestingly, usage with non-native English-speaking exchange students (39.4%) was moderately higher than native English-speaking exchange students (36.6%) – perhaps due to the fact that NNES exchange students were well represented at the university as a whole.

Therefore, these results indicate a high degree of experience in using ELF in everyday life. However, the results also indicate that there was a large amount of variation in terms of English proficiency, length of study, purpose of learning, usage, and experience.

3.2 Research question 1: did the students see value in using ELF in this setting?

Students were mostly positive about the exchange student role in the classroom. Figure 1 shows student response to the statement, "having the exchange student in class was a good opportunity for me to use English as a lingua franca." There was a high consensus (82%) that valued the role of the student assistants, although 19% of students disagreed with this statement, indicating a slightly varied attitude toward the usefulness for ELF usage. FGs with both teachers and student assistants revealed that this may have been a misunderstanding of the role of the exchange student as a peer assistant, rather than a teacher. It was the impression of the student assistants and the teachers, that some students saw the assistant's role to teach business content and help students to understand, rather than viewing it as an opportunity to communicate and negotiate meaning and understanding together, which would be more reflective of an ELF environment and something likely to be beneficial for the future.
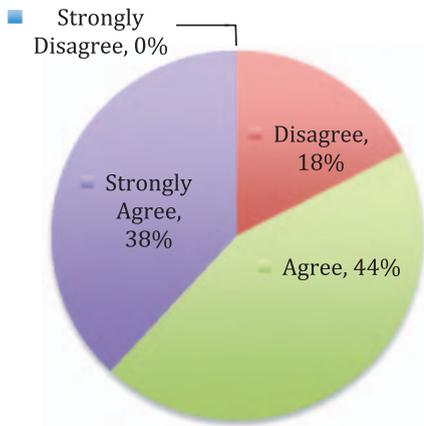
Fig. 1: Response to the statement "having the exchange student in class was a good opportunity for me to use ELF"

In order to examine variables connected to both the student and the student assistant, the larger survey was used ($n = 236$) in order to allow more accurate statistical analysis. ANOVA covariant analyses were conducted according to a number of criteria, such as gender of the student or whether the assistant was from an inner, outer, or expanding circle, and no statistically significant difference was found. However, respondents' proficiency appeared to play a huge part in the perceived usefulness of the assistant. Analysis was conducted according to four groups of proficiency (advanced, upper-intermediate, lower-intermediate, and general).[1] The analysis found the advanced and upper-intermediate proficiency student responses to be significantly more positive than the lower-intermediate and general proficiency level students, as shown in Appendix 1. That is, the more proficient learners found the student assistants more helpful than the lower proficiency students. FGs with both teachers and student assistants shed light on this result.

FGs with student assistants indicated difficulties in using ELF to discuss business concepts with lower proficiency students, as illustrated by the following excerpt from a student assistant from Denmark: "I felt the upper class was much

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1 These levels were determined by the university according to TOEIC scores. They are used in this analysis because they are the only measure of respondent proficiency on the course-wide compulsory survey, on which this questionnaire item was included. The advanced level indicates a TOEIC score above 835, upper-intermediate indicates 725–830, lower-intermediate indicates 615–720, and general indicates a score below 610.

easier than lower. In the upper it was more about opinions on content matter, with a class with a more worldly view. In the lower was more focused on content and vocabulary" (Sam, Assistant FG). The FGs also indicated a lack of understanding of business content in the lower groups, which resulted in numerous miscommunications and a general lack of two-way communication or negotiation of meaning – essential components of successful ELF interaction. FGs with teachers indicated they believed some students saw the exchange students as having expert knowledge, with one teacher arguing that students often confused expertise with language with expertise in understanding the business concepts. Prof. Nagai argued that this caused lower proficiency students to treat assistants like teachers, who culturally in Japan are there to be listened to and learned from, and this was not conducive to effective peer ELF interaction.

The first research question also aimed to investigate whether a significant difference could be found in attitudes of students toward student assistants from different linguistic areas. When the data was analyzed according to each individual student helper (Appendix 2), the only significant differences could be found between student helpers Brent (from the United Kingdom), Marla (from Sweden, who did not take part in the FG), Sam (from Denmark), and Edgar (from Singapore). Brent (from the inner circle) rated significantly higher than both Sam (from the expanding circle) and Edgar (from the outer circle), which might at first indicate a bias toward the inner circle. However, Marla (from the expanding circle) also rated significantly higher than both Sam and Edgar. FGs revealed that these results were most probably due to the personality of these student helpers, rather than the nationality. FGs with teachers, for example, revealed that both Edgar and Sam were less engaging with the students than other student helpers and seemed to command less attention in group discussions. One teacher argued that students gave Edgar less attention because he was from Singapore and students may have valued his variety of English less; however, this statement was not supported in the survey data, which showed no bias toward Singaporean English. Therefore, data indicated that students may have valued the personal qualities of a student helper over their nationality or linguistic background – an issue that will be explored in research question 2.

3.3 Research question 2: what characteristics did students value in a student assistant?

The second research question aimed to investigate what characteristics the students valued in a student assistant, and whether these characteristics conformed to traditional NES norms. Students were asked to rate characteristics of an ideal

student assistant on the main survey, and teachers and student assistants were asked to elaborate on this question in the two FGs, generating some very interesting results.

In regard to the skills important for an exchange student, the survey showed that students saw the following as most important, with the strongly agree and disagree categories collapsed to show a consensus of agreement:

1. Clear explanations (98.4% strongly agree or agree)
2. Approachable (96.8%)
3. Kind (93.6%)
4. Knowledge of international business (91.8%)
5. Enthusiastic and motivating (90.4%)
6. Sensitive to student needs and problems (88.8%)
7. Ability to create interest (87.3%)

Interestingly, these top seven characteristics have no connection to linguistic knowledge or NES norms. Other responses indicated a higher value placed on communicative effectiveness over native-like ability. For example, "good pronunciation" garnered an 82.2% consensus, compared to a "native-like accent," which rated at 62.9%, which was the highest quality connected to NES norms. The students therefore display an awareness that good pronunciation does not necessarily equate with sounding like a native speaker. Thus, the survey results seem to represent a break from NES norms in this body of students – a point that is exemplified further in the FG data.

The most interesting theme to emerge from FG data indicated that teachers thought that students would be more sensitive and biased toward certain varieties of English than the survey data indicated. They believed students would value characteristics in a student assistant that perpetuated NES norms. Prof. Nagai, for example, commented that: "Sometimes people see exchange students as English-practicing machines, so these machines must work well in terms of using good standard English. They think it shouldn't be accented. It shouldn't sound like Chinese or other languages" (Prof. Nagai, Teacher FG). Prof. Nagai attributed these beliefs to the schooling system in Japan, where students "are drilled into them that there is a correct type of English – based on the entrance exam system where there is always a right and a wrong" (Prof. Nagai, Teacher FG). Another instructor, Prof. Bertrum, argued that students in his class had difficulty understanding one student assistant Mark's strong French accent, indicating issues with using students with strong accents or unfamiliar varieties of English. Survey data, on the other hand, highlighted no difference between attitudes toward the assistant in the classes that Mark taught and those of all other assistants (Appendix 2). Thus, it appeared teachers perceived a bias

of the students which simply was not supported by data from the students themselves.

Data from the student assistants indicated a more open attitude to varieties of English spoken in the classroom. Sam commented, "people have this same issue that having a dialect or speaking English in a Japanese way is bad and they think they need to speak American English. But reality is, as long as you can communicate in international business, that is all you need" (Sam, Assistant FG). Another student assistant from Singapore noted that he often encountered stereotypes that Singaporean English was not a "standard type of English", unlike "British English". He noted that he had difficulty understanding British varieties such as with his friend who spoke a variety of English from Newcastle in the United Kingdom, and posed the question, "is it really easier for students to understand?" (Edgar, Assistant FG).

3.4 Research question 3: how did attitudes toward ELF usage compare between students, student assistants, and teachers?

The final research question examined student attitudes toward ELF, and compared these with data from focus groups with the student assistants and the teachers.

3.4.1 Attitudes toward future English usage

In regard to attitudes of students and their perceived usage of English in the future, each student was asked on the survey to describe their ultimate goal in English study. Only five of the 71 students described a goal that included native-level fluency or communication with NESs, such as, "I hope to be a person who can communicate well with native speakers at work place or in daily life", or "To become like native speakers (to be able to speak English without thinking about grammars and words)". The remaining students described a goal where the focus was on successful communication for business or social purposes, such as the following, "My goal is becoming businessperson who works in the world business place", "To be able to use English as a tool at business level", and "My ultimate goal for using English is to be able to use English as a tool for business and communication. I aim at becoming a participant in the global business society and in order to accomplish this task, I see that English is the basic necessity to be

on the starting block". From these comments it is clear that the majority of students viewed English as a tool for communication, rather than a language that needed to be mastered to a native level. Many respondents displayed quite a sophisticated understanding of the use of English in the world today. Furthermore, the perceived future interlocutor for English usage was only highlighted as a NES by two of the 71 respondents. This is in opposition to 45 comments that labeled a future interlocutor as being "people around the world", "international people", and so forth. In fact, some students even emphasized the fact that they hoped to be using English with both NNESs and NESs, such as illustrated in the following comments: "To communicate and share ideas with people (non-native and native) in business occasions"; and "To communicate people around the world. Now English is the best common language. If I can speak, I can make friend in the UK, America, even South East Asian countries. I want to see and listen everything in the world". Thus, these responses reflected a sophisticated understanding that English would be used as a communication tool with people from all over the world. This is in stark contrast to a number of previous studies that show a tendency for Japanese English education to be anchored to NES norms (Llurda 2004), to over-emphasize the importance of standard "American" Englishes (Matsuda 2002), and to produce students who are motivated to learn English to speak with the NESs (Kubota 2002).

The FGs with teachers, however, presented a different set of perceived attitudes. Teachers explained that NES stereotypes were strong in Japan, and that it gave students a false sense of their future English usage:

> We are going up against an old prejudice in Japan that English is white. It's American. It's male. It hasn't waned as much as people thought it would have done by now. But the reality they [our students] will face when they graduate and will go to work or study overseas, is that they will be in the midst of international English. (Prof. Bertrum, Teacher FG)

This comment echoes Kubuto's (2002) assertion that in Japan, the middle-class, white NES stereotype prevails. However, the survey data for the students were in stark contrast with these beliefs. Thus, the FGs presented a split in the teachers' perceived attitudes of students, and the attitudes of the students themselves. The teachers seemed to be unaware of the worldly view taken by the majority of their students, who had broken free of NES biases.

3.4.2 Attitudes toward the native English speaker as a yardstick

A second split in attitudes of teachers, student assistants, and students was regarding the ability of the students to function in an ELF environment. The two

language teachers (Prof. Lani and Prof. Bertrum) used the NES as a yardstick to highlight an inability for their students to function in an ELF business environment. The NES yardstick was used to judge the difficulty of a course, arguing that the courses offered at the university "were too easy for a native speaker", or "a joke" to the exchange students. All four teachers used the NES as a yardstick for assessment, including unchallenged arguments that a student's academic paper needed to be at a grammatical standard that would pass at an "American university", and that students needed to be at a proficiency level necessary to study business at an overseas university, even though this goal was not mentioned by a single student in the survey data. The teachers unanimously felt the curriculum had failed to prepare the majority of students for future ELF usage. On the other hand, when examining student attitudes of their own preparedness to use ELF in the future, the results were very positive, with 91% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement, "my English education has prepared me to use English as lingua franca with people from around the world" (Figure 2).
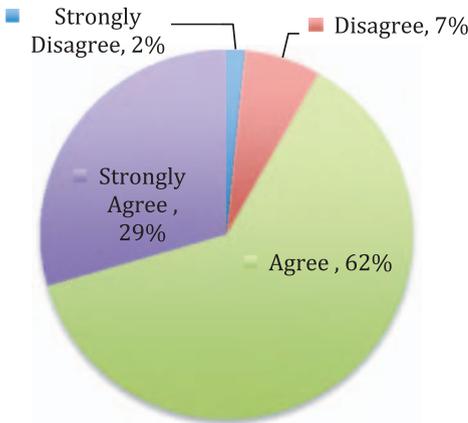

Fig. 2: Response to the statement "my English education has prepared me to use English as a lingua franca with people from around the world"

In summary, there was a distinct division in attitude between the language teachers and students regarding comparisons between the NNES students' English abilities and future ELF usage. The language teachers used the NES as a benchmark for proficiency to highlight insufficiencies in student ability to function in an ELF environment. Even though the two communication teachers saw language as a tool for communication, they also agreed the students were unprepared to engage in ELF. Meanwhile, the vast majority of students rejected the

NES model and argued they were already capable of functioning successfully in an ELF environment.

3.4.3 Attitudes toward speakers and ELF exposure

Finally, the FGs revealed an interesting division in attitudes in regard to WE and ELF exposure. In general it was found that all assistant and teacher participants recognized the value in exposing students to a wide variety of WE and ELF, but there was particular debate among the teachers over when this exposure should occur.

First, student assistants widely acknowledged the benefits of exposure to Englishes. The student assistant Brent from the United Kingdom argued exposure was especially important in business schools as they could be microcosms for future business environments: "Exposure to varieties of English is important in IB. Even in business schools the intake is of students from around the globe, and thus this alone is a great practice for the real world and a truer representation of the global business" (Brent, Assistant FG). The two communication teachers called for more exposure, as illustrated by the following comment from Prof. Glass, who argued that students "definitely need to be exposed to as many different varieties of English as possible. Learning English language is not enough – they need to understand a variety of Englishes" (Prof. Glass, Teacher FG).

The two language teachers (Prof. Bertrum and Prof. Lani) were more apprehensive about the amount and timing of exposure to give students in the English language classroom. Prof. Lani argued that sometimes exposing them to Englishes such as an Indian variety of English in a documentary shown in class "made students reassess their goals, in that to reach their goal of communicativeness just became a whole lot more complicated". Thus, Prof. Lani argued exposure had both negative and positive aspects, as illustrated in her following comment.

> I worry that initial exposure after learning a standard English in high school is too much of a shock and can have a negative or stressful effect on them. I think exposing them in their freshman year to a variety of Englishes is too soon, and should wait until they have the language basis to build on. Part of me is saying the sooner the better, the other part of me says it is too much too soon. (Prof. Lani, Teacher FG)

The other language instructor, Prof. Bertrum, agreed with Prof. Lani, and argued that exposure to varieties of English should be "gradual". Prof. Lani suggested students be introduced to small portions of non-standard varieties of English at the word or sentence-level, rather than full exposure through a video or guest

speaker. They both argued against using a teacher in the students' freshman year that did not speak a "standard" variety of English. Prof. Nagai, on the other hand, argued that without exposure to varieties of English, students would have a false sense of the English that is used in the world. He also argued that hiring practices needed to represent ELF usage and English varieties from the outset and strongly argued for the hiring of more non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) – an argument supported by many ELF and WE researchers. He argued, "I don't think most students realize that majority of their careers they will be engaged in a variety of Englishes. They envision going to New York, not Jakarta. That's why they don't feel the need to be exposed" (Prof. Nagai, Teacher FG).

In the end, Prof. Nagai sums up the importance of exposure for students and the importance of breaking free of the NES episteme. However, he underestimates the attitudes of students in the study, who, according to survey data, did envision going to Jakarta and not New York, and who did understand that they would be engaged in ELF usage with a variety of English speakers and thus valued the importance of ELF exposure. It was perhaps the language teachers that were reluctant to move away from traditional practices and ideologies that sheltered students from exposure and envisioned future English usage within native contexts (such as studying or working in NES countries), and evaluated proficiency according to NES yardsticks. In the end, it appeared that the students had developed a positive attitude to ELF usage, in spite of teachers' insistence to the contrary.

4 Conclusion

The findings of the study indicate that student attitudes at this particular university in Japan are adapting quickly to the changing needs of ELF usage in a globalized society. In recent years researchers have argued that the hybrid and fluid nature of ELF makes it undesirable to teach one fixed cultural model, and that English learners are "shuttling between communities" (Canagarajah 2005: xxvi), between the local and the global, where a variety of norms and a repertoire of codes are to be expected. BELF research (Bjørge 2012; Ehrenreich 2010; Louhiala-Salminen 2002) has also highlighted the need for a more pragmatic approach to ELF education and Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2005) also highlight the need for flexibility of ELF interaction in the business community.

The attitudes of the students, student assistants, and communication teachers in the study supported these observations and arguments. The students in the study highly valued communication and negotiation strategies over native-like linguistic competence, which concurs with previous BELF research (e.g.,

Ehrenreich 2010; Kankaanranta and Planken 2010). Both students and student assistants viewed English as a tool of communication in the business world, and had more ELF-oriented perceptions of how they would use and need English in their futures than the instructors had realized. In fact, findings indicated that the majority of these students fully understood they were more likely to use English to communicate in business with their Asian neighbors in places like Jakarta than with NESs in places like New York. Indeed, this dichotomy in attitude between perceived student opinion and actual opinion was one of the more interesting findings of the study. Likewise, the dichotomy between instructor assertions that students move away from NES-centric views of English usage, while still clinging to NES norms such as using the NES as a yardstick for performance was also interesting. Kirkpatrick (2012: 131) points out in ASEAN that "in terms of language learning goals, English could be presented as an 'Asian' lingua franca, as a language spoken by multilinguals, for whom the acquisition of idealized native speaker norms would have little relevance" and suggests measuring learners against the norms of successful Asian multilinguals (Kirkpatrick 2007). If teachers in this study could shift their perceptions and expectations of their student goals, they may avoid pitfalls of using the NES as a yardstick – a measure that all teachers, but only five students, used.

Not only have the merits of NNESTs been widely documented since the 1990s, but Kirkpatrick (2009) suggested moves toward Multilingual English Teachers (METs) should be considered. Phillipson (2009: 22) notes, "One wonders how it can be that monolinguals are seen as experts in second language acquisition." In the FG with the teachers, even though Prof. Nagai advocated to actively employ more NNESTs in traditional NEST roles, his idea was less enthusiastically received by others. While teachers saw value in exposure to non-native English speaking role models and different varieties of English, they advocated the importance of learning a standard and more "intelligible" variety of English first. They also thought students should be introduced to varieties of English and the concept of ELF in a controlled way, such as the module on ELF in the English for Academic Purposes course. However, as Mastuda and Friedrich note:

> Shifting from the traditional way of teaching English with an exclusive focus on American and/or British English to an EIL curriculum cannot be accomplished by merely adding a new lesson or component on EIL to an existing program. What is needed is a complete revision of the entire program, using one's understanding of the use of English in international contexts as a foundation that influences every single aspect of the curriculum. It entails a major overhaul, but a much-needed one if we are seriously concerned with addressing the needs of future users of English as an international language. (Mastuda and Friedrich 2012: 25–26)

Framed in this paradigm of thought, the program at this university had definitely shown aspects of introducing GE within various aspects of its curriculum – from a GE module to the hiring of NNESTs or "ELF experts" as business content teachers and incorporating NNES student assistants, who were also ELF experts in the classrooms. Certainly such moves are in line with recent BELF research, which suggests that ELF experts could serve as positive role models for learners in the business arena.

Despite reservations from language teachers about integrating a GE perspective further into the curriculum, it was clear the students had developed a positive attitude to GE ideals. The study, therefore, has highlighted the successes of the curriculum in adapting to students' future ELF needs in an ever-changing globalized business world, but has also highlighted areas where teachers and curriculum are still playing catch-up to students who are striving to meet these future needs, despite teachers' claims that they are not linguistically ready to do so. Thus, this study serves as a useful case to show success in nurturing positive attitudes to GE in a country whose English education system traditionally upholds NES norms, but also shows segments of the Japanese youth population, such as the students in this study, who are surpassing the changes in the curriculum and are meeting the changing demands of ELF head-on. This study also acts as a platform for further research, which aims to track the students involved in this study and many of their peers in their future international business careers to not only examine the effectiveness of their university education in preparing them for English in use, but also to fill the gap in BELF research and perceptions toward ELF in the Asian workplace.

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Appendix 1: results of a multiple comparison of student responses to a statement according to level of proficiency

Statement: The student assistants were helpful

(I) 1	(J) 1	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. error	Sig.	95% Confidence interval	
					Lower bound	Upper bound
Adv	Up-Int	−0.051	0.164	0.992	−0.51	0.41
	Low-Int	−0.514*	0.165	0.024	−0.98	−0.05
	Gen	−0.455*	0.159	0.044	−0.90	−0.01
Up-Int	Adv	0.051	0.164	0.992	−0.41	0.51
	Low-Int	−0.463*	0.141	0.014	−0.86	−0.07
	Gen	−0.405*	0.133	0.028	−0.78	−0.03
Low-Int	Adv	0.514*	0.165	0.024	0.05	0.98
	Up-Int	0.463*	0.141	0.014	0.07	0.86
	Gen	0.059	0.134	0.979	−0.32	0.44
Gen	Adv	0.455*	0.159	0.044	0.01	0.90
	Up-Int	0.405*	0.133	0.028	0.03	0.78
	Low-Int	−0.059	0.134	0.979	−0.44	0.32

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Appendix 2: results of a multiple comparison of student responses to a statement according to the student assistant in their class (pseudonyms have replaced actual names)

Multiple comparison
Statement: The student assistants were helpful

(I) Exchange student	(J) Exchange student	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. error	Sig.	95% Confidence interval	
					Lower bound	Upper bound
Brent	Max	−0.262	0.159	0.843	−0.83	0.31
	Edgar	−0.702*	0.178	0.019	−1.34	−0.06
	Mark	−0.255	0.211	0.962	−1.01	0.50
	Marla	−0.067	0.175	1.000	−0.69	0.56
	Lisbeth	−0.167	0.227	0.997	−0.98	0.65
	Sam	−0.767*	0.152	0.000	−1.31	−0.22
Max	Brent	0.262	0.159	0.843	−0.31	0.83
	Edgar	−0.440	0.181	0.434	−1.09	0.21
	Mark	0.007	0.213	1.000	−0.76	0.77
	Marla	0.195	0.177	0.976	−0.44	0.83
	Lisbeth	0.095	0.229	1.000	−0.72	0.92
	Sam	−0.505	0.155	0.108	−1.06	0.05
Edgar	Brent	0.702*	0.178	0.019	0.06	1.34
	Max	0.440	0.181	0.434	−0.21	1.09
	Mark	0.447	0.228	0.696	−0.37	1.26
	Marla	0.636	0.195	0.105	−0.06	1.33
	Lisbeth	0.536	0.243	0.562	−0.33	1.41
	Sam	−0.064	0.175	1.000	−0.69	0.56
Mark	Brent	0.255	0.211	0.962	−0.50	1.01
	Max	−0.007	0.213	1.000	−0.77	0.76
	Edgar	−0.447	0.228	0.696	−1.26	0.37
	Marla	0.188	0.225	0.994	−0.62	0.99
	Lisbeth	0.088	0.268	1.000	−0.87	1.05
	Sam	−0.512	0.208	0.421	−1.26	0.23
Marla	Brent	0.067	0.175	1.000	−0.56	0.69
	Max	−0.195	0.177	0.976	−0.83	0.44
	Edgar	−0.636	0.195	0.105	−1.33	0.06
	Mark	−0.188	0.225	0.994	−0.99	0.62
	Lisbeth	−0.100	0.240	1.000	−0.96	0.76
	Sam	−0.700*	0.171	0.012	−1.31	−0.09

Lisbeth	Brent	0.167	0.227	0.997	−0.65	0.98
	Max	−0.095	0.229	1.000	−0.92	0.72
	Edgar	−0.536	0.243	0.562	−1.41	0.33
	Mark	−0.088	0.268	1.000	−1.05	0.87
	Marla	0.100	0.240	1.000	−0.76	0.96
	Sam	−0.600	0.224	0.311	−1.40	0.20
Sam	Brent	0.767*	0.152	0.000	0.22	1.31
	Max	0.505	0.155	0.108	−0.05	1.06
	Edgar	0.064	0.175	1.000	−0.56	0.69
	Mark	0.512	0.208	0.421	−0.23	1.26
	Marla	0.700*	0.171	0.012	0.09	1.31
	Lisbeth	0.600	0.224	0.311	−0.20	1.40

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Bionotes

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