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## ELT Shift: Necessary Matters to be Taught Dealing with Pronunciation and Misunderstanding among NNS which Tend to Outnumber NS Relating to English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

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### Abstract

Considering historical 'superiority' and English as 'capital', non-native speakers (NNS) tend to outnumber native-speakers (NS), making English as a lingua franca (ELF). Jenkins (2006a) claims that with the large number of NNS, their pronunciation becomes potential characteristic. Non native-like is less of a sign of incompetence but more of a potential characteristics in its own. This paper discusses what ELF needs to change and adapt, namely 'teachable' and 'learnable' - as like pronunciation promoting 'global intelligibility' among all English speakers. Bearing in mind that mother tongue (L1) to some extent may impact NNS' English, therefore training is needed to avoid deviation which may impede understanding. Moreover, NNS are motivated to 'accommodate' and be 'tolerant' to their NNS interlocutors, which consequently promote 'no threat to intelligibility' for other NNS receivers. In addition to pronunciation, NNS' interaction and misunderstanding will also play worthwhile role to be included in ELF's consideration.

Keywords: ELF, ELT, pronunciation, misunderstanding

### Introduction

There is an increasing tendency that people around the world start to be more and more familiar with the term 'globalization'; in fact, some of them have really felt the impact in their daily life. This phenomenon is in line with the claim by Burridge and Mulder (1998) that the orientation of the world tends to become global, they assert the term 'global village' to represent world that has become globalised. What can be implied from the notion 'globalisation' can be perceived from Kubota's (2002) depiction that is 'local diversity' that tends to be more and more escalated as the impact of 'human contact' beyond 'cultural boundaries' and rapid reciprocity of 'commodities and information'. Therefore, globalization can be interpreted as increasing opportunities for worldwide contact.

The community in the 'global village' demands 'global communication' to stay connected; Block and Cameron (2002) note that 'global communication' needs a shared 'channel' as well as 'linguistic code' - they believe that the applicable code(s) will have been learned by many participants in order to play active role in the 'global village', for other members these codes can just be natively acquired. In terms of the shared 'channel', they argue that the advancement in technology application can support this need. For the shared 'linguistic code' according to Burridge and Mulder (1998) requires a "lingua franca" or "common language".

House (1999) points out that English is 'de facto' an international language (EIL). In terms of English speakers, Kachru (1992) classifies them into three categories: the 'inner circle', the 'outer circle', and the 'expanding circle'. Burridge and Mulder (1998) give the details: the 'inner circle' refers to English native-speakers (NSs), the 'outer circle' refers to countries where English is used as a second language (or ESL), the last circle - the 'expanding circle' refers to countries where English functions as a foreign language (or EFL). They point out that past colonial history plays role in influencing whether English then becomes ESL or EFL in some countries. They also believe that there is steady increase in the number of English speakers in the 'expanding circle'. The interpretation will be that English non-native speakers (NNSs) tend to increase.

In line with Burridge and Mulder (1998), Seidlhofer (2001) argues that use of English globally is "largely" among NNS (English as a lingua franca). Furthermore, she argues that in reality, the description of English does not involve NNSs very much (though they are becoming the majority of English speakers); its central focus is trying to get more and more precise of the description of NSs English. The tendency is still towards description of English as a native language (ENL). She claims that ELF is also worthwhile to have its own

description, especially to be used as a reference in approaching English spoken by ELF speakers – NNSs. Seidlhofer advocates the importance of having ENL corpus with ELF corpus as its companion. She claims that research and consideration in the study of English should invite more active role from NNSs. Most of the studies so far seem to neglect the ‘rights’ of NNSs as English users. Another fact about NNS is mentioned by Jenkins (2006a) in Jenkins, Cogo, and Dewey (2011) who claims that with the large number of NNS, their pronunciation is different (becomes potential characteristic) and the take-for-granted consideration that non native-like is a sign of incompetence.

In short, there is a shift in terms of the ownership of English from NS realm to NNS worldwide use. Many experts have pointed out the growing predisposition from native-like perfectness to ‘global intelligibility’, targeting on flourishing communicative competence in a dynamic worldwide contact. It is the part of English Language Teaching (ELT) to take more active role in promoting ‘global intelligibility’, bearing in mind that local condition affects a great deal of interferences which can somewhat impede understanding between participants of the talk (in English) from different parts of the world.

This paper discusses what ELT needs to change and adapt, especially in pronunciation and pragmatics (NNS’ accommodation amongst them). The focus is those that are ‘teachable’ and ‘learnable’ in terms of training both to the teachers and learners. In addition, many experts begin to agree with the adaption of ELF approaches in ELT worldwide.

### ELF pronunciation

Jenkins (1998) proposes that increasing usage of English as a means of communication worldwide has impact on pronunciation orientation. The ‘needs and goals’ of English learners tend to shift from being able to speak with a ‘native-like accent’ and to converse with native speakers (NSs), to using English as ELF. ELF is used for intelligible message-exchange among NNSs.

Jenkins (1998) claims that ‘clear-cut alternatives’ to current pronunciation teaching method (PTM), which tend to emphasise native-like ability, are lacking. In order to respond to the tendency of the function of English as EIL, Jenkins recommends that adaptation is needed to achieve more practical PTM. This is not easy, she argues that one of the reasons is that PTM gets less attention compared to ‘communicative approaches’ in English Language Teaching (ELT) curricula. The other ‘obstacles’ are in terms of the difficulty in trying to satisfactorily ‘harmonise’ pronunciation of the speakers who consider English as their L2 to promote ‘international intelligibility’.

In line with Jenkins (1998), Shibata, Taniguchi and Date (2015) also claim great impact of pronunciation to intelligibility in communication. They focus on ‘tonicity’ (‘nuclear tone placement’) which they believe to play significant role in delivering utterance meaning. They emphasise on the importance of mastery of ‘tonicity’ knowledge and practical ability to promote global understanding.

To facilitate their justification of pronunciation teaching, Jenkins (1998) proposes an EIL pronunciation syllabus which she believes can match the demand and need of EIL usage globally – promote intelligibility. She tries to adapt the approach used in majority published pronunciation textbooks, which she believes to be difficult to be totally and effectively taught in ELF context. These materials tend to teach the way NSs’ success in conveying the message through uttering – using the ‘suprasegmental system (stress, rhythm, and intonation)’; she claims that the suprasegmental’ contribution outweigh the one by the segmentals (sounds) to NSs intelligibility.

In order to teach interlanguage speakers, which is her main consideration, pronunciation that can promote intelligibility; then there should be a balance between the segmentals and suprasegmentals. She mentions the three areas of productive focus in teaching pronunciation that are salient to intelligibility in EIL, they are “certain segmentals, nuclear stress (the main stress in a word group), and the effective use of articulatory setting”.

In terms of segmentals, Jenkins mentions that emphasis should be given in teaching correct production of English ‘core’ sounds – this may become the tendency of NNSs’ deviation (which is varies based on their L1). In addition, non-core sounds can also be taught which in general are ‘vowel quality’ and to the consonants /T/ and /ʔ/ - the majority of world’s languages do not have them.

The next emphasis is teaching nuclear stress. Jenkins’ justification is that there is tendency that EIL learners are generally trained to focus on their ‘receptive’ goals within a short period; little time allocated to exercise their ‘productive’ ability. Therefore, EIL learners tend to have limited ability to perform what English fluent

speakers usually are able to do – moving nuclear stress from its common position; the aim is to highlights ‘extra’ meanings.

Jenkins claims that by doing frequent exercises in giving appropriate ‘nuclear stress’ and producing core sounds that do not deviant too far, EIL speakers are able to avoid potential ‘disastrous’ for EIL talk.

The last emphasis is ‘articulatory setting’. Trying to improve EIL learners’ ability in articulatory setting can promote learners’ core sounds-production and their ability to manipulate core sounds to generate nuclear stress.

Those three phonological areas above are claimed by Jenkins to be useful and beneficial for teaching pronunciation to EIL learners. Moreover, Jenkins(1998) advocates that EIL should pay more attention to NNSs local norms, than to NSs norms - which she believes to have ‘no threat to intelligibility’ for other NNS receivers. Such NSs norms are at least in areas: ‘word stress’, even to formulate reliable rules is not easy – therefore it is not easily learnt; ‘features of connected speech’ – particularly weak forms, Jenkins notes that lack of weak forms only gives impact to NSs – unlikely to other NNSs; the last are is rhythm, Jenkins argues that stress-timing in English does not need to be done rigidly.

Jenkins (2007) in Deterding (2010) display what ‘features of pronunciation’ that do not need to be taught, namely “dental fricatives, final consonant clusters, vowel quality (apart from the midcentral vowel), reduced vowels in unstressed syllables, stress-based rhythm, and the pitch movements associated with intonation” (pp 5-6).

In relation to pronunciation pedagogy, Deterding (2010) states the proposals for ELF-based teaching in China, he finds out that the teachers are attracted to it because it is ‘practical’, ‘achievable’, and ‘fun’.

However, he reminds of possible alert in terms of prioritising which pronunciation features are more important. Moreover Nikbakht (2010) state current pronunciation teaching with ‘interdisciplinary’ approach connecting to ‘sociopsychological’ issues.

Shibata, Taniguchi and Date (2015) propose interactive treatment to make the teaching of pronunciation becomes more attractive by using hand gestures to demonstrate tonicity accompanied with powerpoint slides projecting the ‘location’ and ‘movement’ of the ‘nuclear tones’.

### Misunderstanding among ELF Speakers

House (1999) conducts a review of the literature on misunderstanding in ELF communication. Her small empirical study shows that its hypothesis is not true; that ‘differences in interactants’ pragmatic-cultural norms’ does not cause misunderstanding in ELF talk. Seidlhofer (2001) asserts that House’ main aim is to emphasise the importance of NNSs’ pragmatics skills in communicating in English.

House (1999) summarises that some of the articles about misunderstanding reviewed tend to describe the following characteristics of ELF talk. First, that ELF talk is short; the reason is that conversation participants feel ‘insecure’ about their choice of the appropriate norms. It seems that they have no choice but to involve in attempts to adjust their talk.

The other characteristic, which House believes more salient, is that participants in ELF talk tend to adopt a ‘Let-it-Pass’ principle – they do not have to understand the whole messages that are intended to be conveyed, they only prioritise ‘sufficient’ understanding which is enough for their current goal of the chat. Explicit efforts to clarify ambiguous utterances seem to be rarely conducted. She points out that this behaviour can conceal the possible sources of misunderstanding. If ELF participants are asked to exchange the exact meaning of the intended message, then House believes this activities can break the commonly taken-for-granted- believed that there is ‘mutual intelligibility’ in ELF talk. Adding House’s ‘Let-it-Pass’ principle, Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey (2011) mention that ‘making it normal’ strategies also takes place forming ‘mutual cooperation’ in communication among ELF with less consideration on being correct. The possible cause of ‘misunderstanding’ in ELF talk is clarified by House (1999) that is ‘knowledge frames and interactional norms’ of their L1 culture. Moreover, According to her, communication between participants with different cultural background, misunderstanding can be considered as inherent and become an integrated part – inseparable from the communication. Moreover, she acknowledges that the other feature is the tendency that ELF interactants prefer to ‘waffle’ – trying to convey their intended message by uttering ‘too many words’. They feel insecure to chat with more fluent interactants, especially with NSs; they feel that their proficiency is lacking. By being accompanied with other NNSs with ‘equal’ ability, they have less feeling of being intimidated. In relation to this reality, House claims that the source is ELF interactants’ lack of ‘discourse attuning’ or in her term ‘pragmatic fluency’.



The third feature is that ELF interactants' turntaking management tend to be not efficient – their ability to acknowledge clear transition points seem lacking and also no clear job description of how to play role as a addresser or addressee. The result is lack of 'mutual responsibility' as conversations participants. Not understanding of the whole messages that is emphasised but merely to get sufficient understanding is considered adequate.

In terms of 'awareness', Deterding (2010) describes this is central to successful accommodation, that in class activities do no limit itself on NS idioms rather dealing with varies idioms from ESL as well as EFL or ELF countries. Moreover Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey (2011) mention that ELF speakers in their interactions employ varied linguistic features, the purpose is relating to 'cultural identity' and 'solidarity' as well as 'humour' and not to promote understanding among interlocutors.

### ELT with ELF Teachable and Learnable Approach

Jenkins (1998) tries to prompt several reminders to the importance of placing pronunciation at more proper place in English language teaching – not marginalized like in common English teaching curriculum.

However, Jenkins, Cogo, and Dewey (2011) postulate that teaching pronunciation with accommodation skills involves considerably more work. Moreover, Deterding (2010) adds that the other rationale is that huge materials are already made available in native-speaker ones.

There are three phonological areas, namely segmentals, nuclear stress (the main stress in a word group), and the effective use of articulatory setting which are claimed by Jenkins (1998) to be useful and beneficial for teaching pronunciation to EIL learners. The rationale is that they are 'teachable' and also 'learnable'. They are different from most other phonological areas which have complex exceptions and 'fine distinction' – thus not easily learnable and do not have advantaging impact for most EIL contexts. In addition, those three areas proposed by Jenkins can be applied to any learners and contexts.

Additional focus in this paper is pragmatics approach, Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey (2011) exemplify such approach as 'signaling of non-understanding' that is how ELF interlocutors 'respond' and 'negotiate' towards 'non-understanding'. They portray strategies employed i.e. 'repetition', 'clarification', 'paraphrasing' and 'self-repair'. In addition to those strategies, there is a strategy which taking the advantage of NNS characteristics that is 'exploitation of plurilingual resources'. As NNS, they have 'plurilingual resources' which are shared among them.

Jenkins (1998) notes that the implications of her proposal to teacher education are: in terms of a model and a norm, and L2 sociolinguistic variation. For the first she recommends that a native norm, what NS English is, should not be treated as the teaching aim; it is 'unrealistic'. In teaching EIL, teachers should position NS English as a model – 'points of reference' and guidance. The purpose is to show students, who may be from different L1 background, that they should try not to diverge too far. In macro level, NNS students are encouraged not to move too far apart from each other; this can result in 'international unintelligibility'. While for the teachers, they need to be able to satisfy many of her/his students who are willing to have proficiency which has close proximity with NS norms.

Jenkins, Cogo, and Dewey (2011) clearly depict ELF that those NNS in EFL who 'failed native speakers' do possess excellent communication skill by employing their 'multilingual resources' (not available in 'monolingual' NS) to give more emphasis on 'successful communication' than the state of being 'correct' (native-like).

In relation to being teachable and learnable, Jenkins (1998) points out that it is necessary to set pronunciation goals which are the best for both teaching and learning; emphasis should be given to matters that are universal, realistically teachable and learnable core, and based on the native model. This is in line with Shibata, Taniguchi and Date (2015) who claim that in Japan 'tonicity' is 'teachable' and 'learnable', further work needs to be carried on training teachers to do the teaching.

In the practice of teaching and learning, Gilakjani (2012) suggests that it is needed active participation from both the teacher and learner by setting 'individual teaching' and 'learning goals', by integrating class communication with the course content which promote 'meaningful pronunciation practice'. He suggests that "With this in mind, the teacher must then set obtainable aims that are applicable and suitable for the communication needs of the learner. The learner must also become part of the learning process, actively involved in their own learning." (p. 127).

## Conclusion

As far as ELF pronunciation is concerned, Jenkins (1998) postulates three main areas focus:

“certain segmentals, nuclear stress (the main stress in a word group), and the effective use of articulatory setting”. While for pragmatics, House (1999) states characteristics ‘ELF interactants’: ‘ELF talk is short’ (feel ‘insecure’ and just take part in the talk), ‘Let-it-Pass’ principle (‘sufficient’ understanding for the current talk), preference to ‘waffle’ (uttering ‘too many words’), and inefficient ‘turntaking management’ (‘unclear transition points’ and ‘job description’) resulting in short of ‘mutual responsibility’.

Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey (2011) conclude that ELF main center of attention is on ‘miscommunication’ and ‘the negotiation and resolution’ of being unintelligible (‘NON-UNDERSTANDING’). They claim that in doing so, EFL interlocutors involve in ‘a joint effort’ to mutually avoid ‘nonunderstanding’ among them. NNS also ‘constructs identity’ by making use of ‘resources’ attached to certain group and ‘not known’ to other group.

ELT with EFL approach is a shift in time allotment, as postulated by Deterding (2010) that teaching time allocation is not condensed but the time is better spent to do ‘alternative’ activities which are more ‘productive’. For example time spent on pronunciation drills can be better spent on more ‘productive’ tasks. His justification is that most learners cannot reach NS pronunciation, and too much drilling can be unbelievably ‘demotivating’, ‘frustrating’ and ‘boring’. He proposes alternate approach by developing ‘accommodation skills’, because it is attainable, ‘practical’, ‘productive’ and bring tremendous joy.

Moreover, Wach (2011) asserts although native speaker pronunciation is somewhat ‘unnecessary’ and ‘unattainable’, for some L2 learners it still is a ‘priority’. For teachers, awareness and sensitivity of varieties of choices of ‘pronunciation instruction’ is valuable to facilitate them in doing adequate preparation.

Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey (2011) are in line with statement of Deterding (2010) related to ‘alternative’ activities, they mention that there is growing interest in determining the features taken place in EFL interaction and growing evidence of the ‘fluidity’ and ‘flexibility’ of ELF communication. According to Jenkins, Cogo, and Dewey (2011), features that NNS prefer to do ‘code-switch’ in ‘promoting solidarity’ and ‘projecting cultural identity’, in addition they also ‘accommodate’ vast L1 backgrounds interlocutors which may result in ‘error’ in native-like domain.

House (1999) claims further that NNSs are lacking ‘introductory lubricating element’ that the interactants are not capable to do the appropriate commonly-used-way to acknowledge the closing of the talk. In conversation between NSs as well as advanced NNSs, usually the participants prefer to choose the most friendly and polite way in trying to end their chat.

To successfully incorporate this pronunciation and pragmatics matter, Jenkins (1998) proposes doing training to NNSs so they become aware of tolerance to possible L2 variation. By doing so, teachers and students get suitable attitudes to tolerate those variation. Being not native-like is just a characteristic for being the member of global English users. This is further supported by Shibata, Taniguchi, and Date (2015) who state possible drawbacks of doing such training, namely lacking teachers’ confidence and not yet available teaching ‘guidelines’ dealing with ‘what and how to teach’.

According to Gilakjani (2012), positioning as a ‘speech coach’ is much preferable than being a checker for correct pronunciation which in the long run will encourage students to improve further. By doing so, learners with own ‘unique aims’ can manage to do pronunciation learning better.

Relating to the application, Deterding (2010) reveals assessment implementation problem. According to him, a fixed target is not yet available, especially what pronunciation features need to be emphasised. Above all, he succinctly gives better solution by considering the intelligibility of speakers in possible global context that those of being native like correctness.

To sum up, Shibata, Taniguchi and Date (2015) believe that elements of intonation is worthwhile in determining meaning and this becomes the lack of proficiency amongst ‘foreign learners of English’.

Deterding (2010) adds that accommodating listeners need is also worthwhile, and it is ‘practical’, ‘attainable’, and ‘fun’ to teach ‘accommodation skills’. The main aim is to be understood in ‘global village’. Last but not least, he portrays current presentation using recordings from speakers worldwide, by this then global familiarity of different ways in speaking can be achieved.

ELT needs to adapt ELF approach to the teaching and learning process and adopt ELF emphasis more on understanding and successful communication. ELF interlocutors need to be aware and sensitive to mutually interact and cooperate in order not to deviate too far from the shared norms of being globally understood. Failing to do so can impede understanding and end up in communication problem even breakdown.

### Bio Data

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