

*A study of Taiwanese university students' English use,
learning goals and attitudes toward
English as a lingua franca*

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Abstract

This study investigates Taiwanese university students' experience of English use, aims of learning English and attitudes toward English as a lingua franca (ELF). The notion of ELF has been researched in the field of English language teaching. However, English teaching practice targeting native-speaker (NS) norms is still prevailing in English classrooms. To better respond to learner needs of using English in the age of globalization, this study explores learners' English learning and use in relation to their attitudes toward ELF. Research methods including interviewing and questionnaire survey were employed to collect data from English majors at a university in Taiwan. The study finds that the learners were aware of the communicative value of ELF and actually used ELF in intercultural communication. The learners' use of English in context affected their attitudes toward ELF and aims of learning English. It is found that the learners preferred English conforming to NS norms; yet, they wished to learn local variation of English concerning accents and word use. In light of the findings, the author suggests that English teachers incorporate an ELF perspective into English instruction and help learners develop intercultural awareness and competencies.

Keywords: English as a lingua franca; language attitude; language learning

1. Introduction

In the past decade, the notion of English as a lingua franca (ELF) has been discussed and researched (e.g., Baker, 2012; Cogo, 2012; Jenkins, 2009, 2012; Jenkins, Cogo, & Dewey, 2011; Murray, 2012; Park & Wee, 2011; Sowden, 2012). Due to the global spread of English, the majority of users of English for international communication are non-native speakers (non-NSs) (Crystal, 1997; Gradol, 1997; 2006). In the global context, English learners will mostly encounter non-NSs whose “Englishes” might deviate from NS English usage. Therefore, English teaching practices which privilege NS norms may not “adequately prepare” English learners for using English with people “from other English-speaking contexts” (Matsuda & Friedrich, 2011, p. 332).

In Taiwan, English has been traditionally taught in schools as a foreign language conforming to native norms, mostly American English. Although the importance of English for international communication has been widely recognized, the majority of English learners in Taiwan rarely use the target language outside the classroom. The notion of ELF for communication, of which the primary concern is English users’ intelligibility among NSs and non-NSs alike, has not as yet received due attention in Taiwan. As global realizations of English can only emerge from understandings of local contexts achieved by and for “the teachers and learners who constitute that context” (Young & Walsh, 2010, p. 136), it is important to examine the notion of ELF from the teacher and learner perspectives in the local context. Furthermore, to better respond to learner needs for English learning and use in the age of globalization and therefore to develop curricula and teaching materials accordingly, it is worthwhile exploring learners’ English learning and use in relation to their attitudes toward ELF. To meet this end, through interviews and a questionnaire survey, the present study investigated: (1) Taiwanese university students’ use of ELF for intercultural communication, (2) the students’ attitudes toward ELF, and (3) the students’ aims of learning English. In light of the findings, the author makes suggestions on English pedagogy and curriculum design.

2. Literature review

Studies investigating ELF from various perspectives have been published during the past decade (e.g., Burns, 2005; Jenkins, 2002, 2007a; Kirkpatrick & Sussex, 2012; Matsuda, 2012; Mauranen & Ranta, 2009; Seidlhofer, 2004, 2011; Sharifian, 2009), while a few studies have explored possible pedagogical approaches to ELF (e.g., Dewey, 2012; Galloway, 2013; Hino & Oda, 2015). In the present study, ELF is defined as “English being used as a lingua franca, the common language of choice, among speakers who come from different linguacultural backgrounds”

(Jenkins, 2009, p. 200). According to Jenkins (2009), ELF involves common ground, local variation and accommodation skills. She defined the common ground of ELF as linguistic forms shared with English as a native language (ENL) and forms that differ from ENL but have arisen through contact between ELF users. Although a definition of the common ground of ELF has been put forward, it is argued that ELF cannot be easily defined in terms of linguistic features and should not be viewed as a variety of English. ELF, like English for academic/specific purposes (EAP/ESP), should be realized as a functionally defined term (cf. Matsuda & Friedrich, 2011) or one perspective of English use (Luo, 2017). In addition to common ground and local variation, ELF involves "substantial potential for accommodation" (Jenkins 2009, p. 201). The accommodation strategies frequently used in an ELF context include repetition, paraphrasing, code-switching, clarification, self-repair, the avoidance of localized vocabulary and idioms, and "let it pass" strategy (see studies by Cogo, 2009; Cogo & Dewey, 2006; Firth, 1996; Kaur, 2009; Kirkpatrick, 2008; Mauranen, 2006).

Some studies have explored ELF teaching from non-NS teachers' perspective and have revealed that while the teachers find the concept of ELF attractive, they are not clear about its nature (e.g., Luo, 2017; Sifakis, 2009; Sifakis & Sougari, 2005; Suzuki, 2011; Young & Walsh, 2010). Although English teachers acknowledge the use of ELF for intercultural communication, they consider it challenging to give ELF instruction in the local context (Luo, 2017). Echoing the previous research on teacher perceptions of ELF, Suzuki (2011) reported that student teachers in Japan were unwilling to include English varieties other than standard American or British English in their future teaching, even though they were aware of the importance of English language diversity. The above discussion indicates that non-native English teachers are ambivalent toward the teaching of ELF regardless of the fact that learners of English will likely become users of ELF for intercultural communication in the future. To better prepare learners of English to effectively communicate with other English speakers in the global context, the author argues that English curricula with an ELF perspective need to be in place for the learners. As previous research has suggested, English teachers should prepare learners for realistic situations, i.e., communication involving non-NSs (Sifakis, 2009) and take responsibility for developing content and methods that are appropriate to the local context (McKay, 2003). Additionally, to transform student teachers' view of ELF, teacher educators need to convey information on ELF in teacher preparation courses (Suzuki, 2011) and to raise student teachers' awareness of ELF.

A few studies have investigated ELF from university students' perspective (e.g., Borghetti & Beaven, 2017; Csizér & Kontra, 2012; Erling, 2007; Ke, 2009), and there seems to be a contradiction between the learners' attitudes and beliefs

regarding ELF (Borghetti & Beaven, 2017). The studies have found that while those who have used English in lingua franca situations are aware of the global use of English, most learners still consider English as a foreign language belonging to native speakers of English (Ke, 2009). Native norms have a strong effect on the learners regarding their beliefs toward English and their learning goals, even if the learners are aware of the need for ELF for intercultural communication with non-NSs (Csizér & Kontra, 2012). The previous studies show that English teachers and learners are aware of the value of ELF for intercultural communication in the global context; yet, ELT approaches and learner beliefs toward learning English are still affected by a native-language paradigm. It has been argued that teaching materials, teachers and testing practices are the reasons why NS norms continue to “exert a strong effect” on English learners (Csizér & Kontra, 2012, p. 7), and the current approaches to ELT ought to be re-examined to incorporate an ELF perspective (Dewey, 2012). In view of these findings, the author pondered on the following questions: (1) how do Taiwanese learners of English use ELF for intercultural communication in context? (2) what are the learners’ attitudes toward using ELF for intercultural communication, and (3) what “kind of English(es)” do the learners wish to learn in order to communicate effectively with their interlocutors in context? To answer these questions, the author was prompted to conduct the present study. Although this study focused on English learners at the university level in Taiwan, it is hoped that the findings may shed light on the understanding of ELF learners/users in general.

3. Research methods

In this study, the author employed research instruments consisting of a questionnaire survey and interviews, which allowed data triangulation and enabled the author to cast light on the conceptualization of ELF from the learner perspective (Johnson, 1992). The questionnaire survey was conducted to document learners’ use of English in relation to their learning goals and perceptions of ELF for communication, while interviews provided a detailed description of the issues being addressed. This study was conducted in a university located in the northern part of Taiwan. The students at this university, like most English learners in Taiwan, learned English as a school subject and rarely used English outside the classroom. A total of 140 undergraduate students of English major at this university, including 119 females (85%) and 21 males (15%), participated in the survey. The survey participants’ ages ranged from 19 to 21 years. It is argued that, compared to students of other majors, English-major students are more knowledgeable and informed about issues related to English. As well, it is likely that they have more opportunities to use ELF for communication in context, and therefore could be appropriate informants for the present study.

The questionnaire survey was conducted to obtain general information about the participants' experiences of English learning and use and their perceptions of ELF. In addition to demographic data, the questionnaire included 13 items using a 5-Likert scale (5 – strongly agree; 1 – strongly disagree) and two open-ended questions (see the questionnaire in Appendix A). The survey was administered after class time and it took approximately 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Before taking the survey, the participants were asked to read an article written by Jenkins (2007b) addressing issues concerning the use of English in lingua franca contexts. Through reading this article and discussing its content, the participants were able to get a basic idea about ELF before they answered the questions on the survey (cf. Young & Walsh, 2010). To explore the participants' experiences of English learning and use in relation to their attitudes toward ELF more in detail, group interviews were conducted following the survey. The author invited the survey participants to interview (see the interview protocol in Appendix B) and 15 students (ten females and five males) agreed to participate in the interviews on a voluntary basis. The interviews were conducted in groups to alleviate the stress which the students might otherwise have experienced if they were at an individual interview (Greenbaum, 1988). There were a total of three group interviews, in each of which five students participated. Each of the group interviews lasted approximately one-and-a-half to two hours. All of the interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and translated to English by the author.

Data collection included qualitative data (i.e., interview transcripts and comments written by the surveyed students) and quantitative survey data (i.e., the students' responses to the 13 items on the survey using a 5-Likert scale). The interviewed students were labeled from S1 to S15 and the survey questionnaires were numbered from R1 to R140 for the purpose of data analysis. Grounded Theory method (Glaser, 1998) was employed in analyzing the qualitative data. The author began the qualitative analysis with scrutinizing the data in an iterative and comparing process for themes that emerged. Next, the author compared these themes to arrive at a set of focused codes, which then were used in synthesizing, integrating, organizing and conceptualizing the large segments of the qualitative data (Charmaz, 2014). Finally, findings, which were grounded in the data and accounted for the data, were developed. Descriptive statistics and *t*-test analysis were used for analyzing the quantitative data. While data analysis of this study mainly focused on the qualitative information supplemented by the quantitative data, the author managed to compare and synthesize the qualitative and quantitative findings to gain a holistic understanding about the issues being studied (cf. Ke & Cahyani, 2014).

4. Findings and discussion

In this section, the findings are discussed in view of the research questions: (1) Taiwanese university students' experiences of using ELF for intercultural communication, (2) the students' attitudes toward ELF, and (3) the students' aims of learning English(es).

4.1. Students' use of ELF for intercultural communication

The survey (see Table 1) shows that 78.6% of the students had experiences of using English with foreigners (non-Taiwanese). The interview data and the comments written by the surveyed students reveal the contexts where they used ELF for intercultural communication. These contexts include: (1) on-line communication (e.g., on Facebook and in on-line chat rooms), (2) on trips abroad (e.g., asking local people for information), (3) in the workplace (e.g., working in a restaurant where there are many international customers), (4) on a short-term study abroad (e.g., attending a summer school in Canada), (5) on a working holiday program overseas (e.g., on a short-term working holiday program in Australia), (6) on a short-term visit to sister schools abroad (e.g., visiting a sister school in Korea), (7) talking with friends (e.g., talking with friends who do not speak Chinese), and (8) in classrooms (e.g., talking with foreign teachers in English). The examples listed above were taken from the comments written by the surveyed students when they described their experiences of using ELF for communication.

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of participants ($N = 140$)

Item	<i>n</i>	%*
<i>Sex</i>		
Male	21	15
Female	119	85
<i>Years of learning English</i>		
Less than 6 years	2	1.4
6-8 years	15	10.7
9-12 years	88	62.9
More than 12 years	35	25
<i>Experiences of using English with foreigners</i>		
Yes	110	78.6
No	30	21.4
<i>Experiences of being abroad</i>		
Yes	54	38.6
No	86	61.4

Note. *The percentage was rounded up from the second decimal point.

While the survey data reveals the contexts where the students used ELF for intercultural communication, the in-depth interviews provided details about how they used ELF in these contexts. Two major themes emerged from the interview data: (1) English use varied: oral communication vs. written form and NSs vs. non-NSs; and (2) using accommodation strategies.

The interview data reveals that the students' use of English for intercultural communication varied depending on whether they were using the language for written or oral communication. Namely, the students focused on the accuracy of language use (e.g., grammar correctness) in writing but cared less in oral communication. For instance, S2 and S6 thought spoken language was different from written language. With the former, they focused on information exchange, while with the latter on spelling and grammar. It is also found that the students were concerned about the accuracy of their use of English for communication when their interlocutors were native speakers or highly proficient English users. They would try to speak English as accurately as possible to indicate that they were as proficient in English as their interlocutors. In contrast, when talking with less proficient users of English, the students cared less about standards and rules and focused on getting their meaning across. As S3 commented, if she spoke English too fast or in standard forms, her interlocutors (who were less proficient) would probably not understand what she said.

The study finds that the students attended to English standards concerning grammar and pronunciation when using English for communication in an ELF context. Yet, the degree of attention they paid to the standard language norms varied depending on the forms of language use (i.e., written or oral) and the native-likeness of the interlocutors (cf. Ke & Cahyani, 2014). The students (e.g., S2, S3 and S6) changed their use of lexis and grammar for the efficiency of communication (cf. Cogo & Dewey, 2006). The English language used by the students for communication with their interlocutors was arising through contact between the students and their interlocutors and was part of "the common ground" of ELF for the users (Jenkins, 2009). The students' report on how they used English in ELF interaction indicates that the use of ELF is not "the deployment of a particular set of language norms," but rather "a continually renewed, co-operatively modified, somewhat hybridised linguistic resource" (Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey, 2011, p. 303).

The students said that they employed various accommodation strategies, such as guessing, repetition, avoidance of difficult vocabulary and adjustment of speech speed, to make their speech intelligible for their interlocutors. The following excerpts from the students' comments during the interviews are some of the examples:

“當我用英文和外國人溝通時，如果我不確定他們的意思，我會用猜的或是重複他們所說的或是問清楚他們所說的事情。(When I use English for communication with foreigners...I will guess or repeat what they are saying or ask for clarification of what they are saying if I am not certain.)” (S2)

“...我用簡單的方式。對方可能不懂很難的字彙，所以我會用簡單的字去表達意思，我會用簡短的句子.... (...I used English in simple ways. My interlocutors may not be able to understand difficult vocabulary, so I used simple words to express myself...I used short sentences....)” (S4)

The students did not consider that it was necessary to speak like NSs when using ELF. They were less bounded by grammar rules and word use as long as they could communicate with their interlocutors effectively. They would adjust their English use, employing accommodation strategies at their disposal, in order to make themselves comprehensible to the interlocutors (cf. Cogo & Dewey, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2008).

4.2. Students' attitudes toward ELF

The quantitative data (see Table 2) shows that 91.4% of the students agreed (i.e., 31.4% strongly agreed and 60% agreed) that English teaching should emphasize the strengths of the communicative use of English (survey item 1; $M = 4.16$, $SD = 0.73$). Table 2 also shows that 60.7% of the students were aware of the notion of ELF for intercultural communication (item 3; $M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.78$), and 77.2% of them were aware of the communicative value of ELF (item 6; $M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.67$). It appears that the majority of the surveyed students acknowledged the notion of ELF and its value for intercultural communication, although less than one-third (i.e., 29.3%) of the students considered themselves as communicators of ELF (item 12; $M = 3.01$, $SD = 0.80$).

Table 2 Participants' opinions ($N = 140$)

Survey items	Strongly disagree $n(\%)*$	Disagree $n(\%)*$	Not applicable $n(\%)*$	Agree $n(\%)*$	Strongly agree $n(\%)*$	M	SD
Emphasize communicative value of ELF.	2 (1.4)	2 (1.4)	8 (5.7)	84 (60.0)	44 (31.4)	4.16	.73
Be aware of English varieties.	1 (.7)	11 (7.9)	43 (30.7)	66 (47.1)	19 (13.6)	3.65	.84
Be aware of ELF notion.	0 (0)	11 (7.9)	44 (31.4)	70 (50.0)	15 (10.7)	3.64	.78
Used to learn English NS norms.	3 (2.1)	37 (26.4)	46 (32.9)	48 (34.3)	6 (4.3)	3.12	.93
Want to learn Standard English.	1 (.7)	48 (34.3)	49 (35.0)	36 (25.7)	6 (4.3)	2.99	.90
Be aware of communicative value of ELF.	0 (0)	8 (5.7)	24 (17.1)	96 (68.6)	12 (8.6)	3.80	.67
Useful to learn ELF.	0 (0)	3 (2.1)	24 (17.1)	92 (65.7)	21 (15.0)	3.94	.64
Plausible to learn ELF.	1 (.7)	5 (3.6)	66 (47.1)	59 (42.1)	9 (6.4)	3.50	.70
Necessary to learn ELF.	0 (0)	9 (6.4)	34 (24.3)	78 (55.7)	19 (13.6)	3.76	.76
Want to learn ELF.	0 (0)	8 (5.7)	21 (15.0)	89 (63.6)	22 (15.7)	3.89	.73
Challenge to learn ELF.	1 (.7)	17 (12.1)	90 (64.3)	27 (19.3)	5 (3.6)	3.13	.69

Consider yourself as ELF users.	4 (2.9)	32 (22.9)	63 (45.0)	41 (29.3)	0 (0)	3.01	.80
English owned by NSs.	0 (0)	25 (17.9)	54 (38.6)	60 (42.9)	1 (.7)	3.26	.75

Note. *The percentage was rounded up from the second decimal point.

As shown in Table 2, 80.7% of the surveyed students agreed (i.e., 15% strongly agreed and 65.7% agreed) that learning ELF for intercultural communication was useful (item 7; $M = 3.94, SD = 0.64$), and 69.3% of them (13.6% strongly agreed and 55.7% agreed) agreed that it was necessary to learn about ELF for intercultural communication (item 9; $M = 3.76, SD = 0.76$). In this study, learning ELF is defined as learning about the use of English for communication in lingua franca contexts. Further *t*-test analysis (see Table 3) shows that the students' experiences of using ELF for intercultural communication had an impact on (a) their attitudes toward English teaching emphasizing the strengths of the communicative use of ELF (item 1; $t(138) = 2.78, p = 0.01$); (b) their awareness of the notion of ELF for intercultural communication (item 3; $t(138) = 2.16, p = 0.03$); and (c) their perceptions of "the usefulness" and "the plausibility" of learning ELF for intercultural communication (item 7; $t(138) = 2.67, p = 0.01$ and item 8; $t(138) = 2.51, p = 0.04$). A significant difference (see Table 4) is also noticed on the students' perceptions of "the necessity of learning ELF for intercultural communication" and their general "attitudes toward ELF" for groups which did or did not have experiences of going abroad (item 9; $t(138) = 2.73, p = 0.01$ and item 10; $t(138) = 2.13, p = 0.04$). The quantitative results suggest that the students' experiences of using English in an ELF context and spending some time abroad had an influence on their perceptions of and attitudes toward ELF for intercultural communication.

Table 3 Perception differences for groups that did or did not have experiences of using English with foreigners ($N = 140$)

Survey items	With experience		Without experience		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
Emphasize communicative value of ELF.	4.27	.72	3.87	.68	2.78	138	.01**	.57
Be aware of English varieties.	3.77	.83	3.23	.73	3.17	138	.00**	.69
Be aware of ELF notion.	3.71	.77	3.37	.76	2.16	138	.03*	.44
Used to learn English NS norms.	3.16	.94	2.97	.85	1.10	50.25	.28	.21
Want to learn Standard English.	2.98	.91	3.00	.87	-.10	138	.92	-.02
Be aware of communicative value of ELF.	3.82	.65	3.73	.74	.61	138	.54	.13
Useful to learn ELF.	4.01	.66	3.67	.48	2.67	138	.01**	.59
Plausible to learn ELF.	3.56	.74	3.27	.52	2.51	64.14	.04*	.45
Necessary to learn ELF.	3.81	.81	3.60	.56	1.33	138	.19	.30
Want to learn ELF.	3.96	.73	3.67	.66	1.94	138	.05	.42
Challenge to learn ELF.	3.10	.70	3.23	.63	-.94	138	.35	-.16
Consider yourself as ELF users.	2.97	.81	3.13	.78	-.97	138	.33	-.20
English owned by NSs.	3.20	.76	3.50	.68	-1.95	138	.05	-.42
Average	3.56	.35	3.40	.32	2.25	138	.02*	.48

Note. * $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 4 Perception differences for groups that did or did not have experience of being abroad ($N = 140$)

Survey Items	Have been abroad		Never		$t(138)$	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Emphasize communicative value of ELF.	4.26	.73	4.14	.72	.95	.34	.16
Be aware of English varieties.	3.78	.88	3.57	.80	1.43	.15	.25
Be aware of ELF notion.	3.68	.82	3.60	.76	.59	.55	.10
Used to learn English NS norms.	3.37	.90	2.97	.91	2.58	.01*	.44
Want to learn Standard English.	3.06	.90	2.94	.90	.73	.47	.13
Be aware of communicative value of ELF.	3.93	.61	3.72	.70	1.78	.08	.32
Useful to learn ELF.	4.00	.70	3.90	.59	.95	.35	.15
Plausible to learn ELF.	3.59	.69	3.44	.71	1.23	.22	.23
Necessary to learn ELF.	3.98	.74	3.63	.75	2.73	.01*	.48
Want to learn ELF.	4.06	.66	3.79	.75	2.13	.04*	.38
Challenge to learn ELF.	3.13	.78	3.13	.63	.01	.99	.00
Consider yourself as ELF users.	3.02	.86	3.00	.77	.13	.90	.01
English owned by NSs.	3.30	.77	3.24	.75	.40	.69	.08
Average	3.63	.33	3.47	.35	2.68	.01*	.47

Note. * $p < .05$

Corroborating the quantitative findings, the interview participants acknowledged the importance of raising English learners' awareness of ELF for intercultural communication. S7 commented that if English learners were aware of ELF and realized that there was no so called right or wrong way of using English for communication, learners, even if with limited English, could try to communicate with foreigners in English. As well, S10 reported that the notion of ELF for intercultural communication should be promoted because, using English as a tool, ELF users could learn about other countries and cultures and view the world from a different perspective. This study shows that the students recognized the communicative value of ELF and considered that it was worthwhile raising English users' awareness of the notion of ELF, which might in turn encourage English learners to use the language for communication with people from other countries.

The above data analysis indicates that the majority of the students perceived it as useful and necessary to learn about ELF, whereas the interview data and the written comments from the survey reveal the challenges of learning about ELF. At the interviews, the students mentioned the challenges accompanying learning ELF for intercultural communication, such as difficulties of learning English variation concerning accents and word use, lack of intercultural understanding and lack of exposure to a context where English is used as a lingua franca. The comments written by the surveyed students also show the challenges that English learners might face when learning about ELF for intercultural communication; most of the learning challenges concerned accents/pronunciation, word use/forms and cultural understanding. The following written comments were some of the examples and were listed according to the types of learning challenges (the

comments were written in English by the survey participants and are reported here as they were):

Learning challenges concerning accents/pronunciation:

You have to be familiar with different accents from all over the world. It's hard to understand when you have little time experiencing. (R20)

You have to own the ability to recognize different accent and stress of English. (R45)

Because the variation of the pronunciation, sometime it is hard to understand the meaning people try to convey. (R68)

Learning challenges concerning word use/forms:

Sometimes there are some gaps. It is hard to understand some phrases or words. (R48)

There are too many different forms to study. It requires a lot of time and effort to study well. (R58)

Learning challenges concerning cultural understanding:

There are a lot of culture differences between Asia world and Western world. (R32)

It is hard to describe some cultural things in English within different norms. (R127)

4.3. Students' aims of learning English

It is shown that 38.6% of the surveyed students agreed that "the English language" they had learned was based on NS norms (see Table 2), while 28.5% of the students did not agree (item 4; $M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.93$). As shown in Table 2, 30% of the students thought that they would like to learn Standard English against 35% of the students who expressed a different opinion (item 5; $M = 2.99$, $SD = 0.90$). Intriguingly, a much higher percentage (i.e., 79.3%) of the students would like to learn ELF for intercultural communication (item 10; $M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.73$). While the quantitative data seems to indicate a contradiction in the students' attitudes toward Standard English and ELF, the interviews revealed in-depth information on the students' beliefs toward learning English. Two major themes emerged from the interview data: (1) learning Standard English and local variation, and (2) learning different accents and word use.

When asked what kind of English(es) they would like to learn, all of the interview participants unanimously reported that they preferred to learn Standard English, conforming to NS norms. S9 stated that he wanted to learn Standard English and to sound like a native speaker. S1 was in line with S9 and wanted to learn Standard English with the aim of achieving native-like competence in writing as well as in pronunciation. She said that it would be fine to be aware of local variation of English, and she added that the use of English variation was limited to the local context. Similarly, S2 commented that it was fine for English learners

to understand varieties of English because they might encounter people speaking in different kinds of English. Nevertheless, she aimed to learn English conforming to a norm that was understood by all of the English speakers.

The interview participants stated that English learners could learn local variation at a later stage depending on their levels of English. S6 made comments that English learners should learn standards or basics of English at the beginning and then they could move on to learn local variation of English use after becoming more proficient in English. S8 also remarked that teachers could help students to become aware of varieties of English other than American/British English by introducing the notion of ELF for intercultural communication in classes. In comparison, S12 reported that she would like to learn English conforming to NS models, but might learn English variation in the future if she needed to communicate with international co-workers in the workplace.

The study indicates that the students aimed to acquire Standard English before they considered learning local variation of English (cf. Galloway, 2013). It shows that the English language that the students would like to learn at a later stage is in accord with Jenkins' definition of ELF, which involves common ground and local variation (Jenkins, 2009). In other words, Standard English serves as common ground for the learners when they communicate in ELF contexts, whereas knowledge about local variation of English seems to become secondary.

The interview data shows that the students wished to learn local variation of English concerning different accents and word use. For instance, S7 remarked that due to globalization, English users would encounter people speaking English in different accents, and they might be able to communicate more efficiently if they could understand their interlocutors' accents. Differently, S11 and S13 reported that English learners needed to be aware of language use in relation to culture and they could learn different uses of words such as ways of greetings and slang used in the local context.

5. Conclusions and implications

The study reveals that although the students did not consider themselves as intercultural communicators of ELF, they in practice used ELF for communication outside classrooms (e.g., on-line communication) and declared to employ accommodation skills to make their use of English comprehensible to their interlocutors. Furthermore, the students who had experiences of using English in an ELF context were better aware of the concept of ELF. This is also true with the students who had been abroad. As a result of the rapid development of internet communication and globalization, Taiwanese learners of English are likely to have increasing opportunities to use ELF for intercultural communication in the global context.

It is important that these learners develop intercultural awareness and competences, which may enable them to successfully negotiate and mediate between “culturally and contextually grounded communication modes” in an ELF context (Baker, 2011, p. 203). Although the discussion of developing intercultural competences in English learners is beyond the scope of this study, the author suggests that ELF pedagogy should be developed to account for learners’ language use (cf. Erling, 2007). With ELF pedagogy, ELT practitioners engage learners in meaningful use of English in contexts where they communicate with NSs and non-NSs alike. For instance, English teachers may create an on-line discussion forum, in which the learners exchange their opinions and experiences with their counterparts in other countries in real time (e.g., Ke & Cahyani, 2014; Kohn, 2015; Kohn & Hoffstaedter, 2015). Through encouraging English use for intercultural communication with NSs and non-NSs, teachers can promote intercultural awareness among the learners as well as help them to develop intercultural competences. It is argued that ELF-oriented pedagogy, which exposes English learners to a range of Englishes and focuses on communicative practices and strategies, would better prepare the learners to use English in intercultural communication (see Ke, 2009; Kirkpatrick, 2008).

Concerning the aims of learning English, the study shows that there seemed to be a contradiction of the learners’ attitudes toward Standard English and ELF (cf. Borghetti & Beaven, 2017). It also indicates that the learners’ use of English for intercultural communication varied depending on language forms (written or oral) and the native-likeness of the interlocutors. The students in this study would like to learn about ELF for intercultural communication on the one hand. On the other hand, they preferred Standard English, and local variation of English (such as different accents) became secondary. It is understandable that the students cared less about accuracy and standard forms when they used English in verbal communication or when their interlocutors were less proficient because they were in pressing needs of communicating and negotiating meaning. As Jenkins (2012) states, the decision about “whether/to what extent ELF is relevant” to the learners in context should be made by ELT practitioners, while the learners’ choice is endorsed regarding “which kind of English to aim for” (p. 492). The learners’ choice should be “made in full knowledge of the sociolinguistic facts and without pressure from the dominant NS community” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 155). To enable English learners to make informed choices as such and to meet their needs as future users of ELF, the author suggests that English teachers design an ELF-oriented curriculum including instruction on NS norms, which can be regarded as common ground of ELF for the learners. As well, teachers could introduce varieties of English and accommodation skills using ELF-oriented materials, which might enhance English learners’ intelligibility among their interlocutors in intercultural communication (cf. Hino and Oda, 2015).

When considering the challenges of learning about ELF, the students in this study mainly focused on difficulties of learning accents and use of lexical items and did not include accommodation skills in their learning agenda. However, the communicative value of accommodation skills related to ELF, which could increase English users' intelligibility for their interlocutors, should be emphasized (Sifakis, 2009). To shed light on how ELF users employ accommodation strategies to effectively communicate and negotiate meaning in context, the author suggests future research on English learners' development of the repertoire of accommodation strategies related to ELF. Furthermore, it is worthwhile exploring possible instruction of these accommodation strategies for the learners. Finally, given the small scale of the study, the research findings might not be fairly generalized to a larger student population. To better present students' perspective on the notion of ELF in relation to their aims of learning English, large-scale studies (for instance, involving multiple research settings) are suggested. Research into students of various academic majors is also proposed for future investigation. The author wishes to call for more data-based studies of ELF-related issues such as those mentioned above.

In conclusion, this study explored Taiwanese university students' English use, learning goals and perceptions of ELF for intercultural communication. The findings show that the students were aware of the communicative value of ELF and in practice used ELF for intercultural communication. Additionally, the challenges of learning ELF were revealed. Due to the development of globalization, English learners will likely become ELF users in the future; an ELF-oriented curriculum is believed to better prepare the learners for the tasks of becoming competent ELF users. The focus of an ELF-oriented curriculum in Taiwan should be on helping English learners to acknowledge the strengths of English as used by intercultural communities without compromising learners' aims of learning Standard English as chosen by them. As Oanh (2012) suggested, English as a lingua franca in Asia "should ensure a high level of comprehension and a standard form" and "be responsive to the context of use" in individual countries (p. 128). Although the scope of this study focuses on Taiwan, the findings may carry possible implications for inquiries into ELF in other similar contexts. It is hoped that through this study the author has managed to shed light on the conceptualization of ELF for intercultural communication from the learner perspective.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire

- I. Demographic data. Please circle the following items that apply to you.
- A. I am Male Female
 - B. Years of learning English
 Less than 6 years 6-8 years 9-12 years more than 12 years
 - C. Experiences of using English with foreigners: Yes No
 If your answer is 'Yes,' please describe the experience(s):
 - D. Experiences of being abroad: Yes No
 If your answer is 'Yes,' please describe the experience(s):
- II. Please circle the number that most applies to you in the following statements and answer the questions provided.

5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-not applicable 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
 NS= native speaker ELF= English as a lingua franca EFL= English as a foreign language

Source: Question items 1, 6, 12 and 13 are adapted from Sifakis, N. (2009). Challenges in teaching ELF in the periphery: The Greek context. *ELT Journal*, 63(3), 230-237.

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| 1. English teaching should emphasize the strengths of the communicative use of English. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 2. You are aware of different varieties of English other than American English and British English. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 3. You are aware of the notion of ELF for intercultural communication. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 4. The "English" you learned as a learner was based on NS norms, i.e., learning a standard that would conform to NS norms. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 5. You would like to learn Standard English that conforms to NS norms. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 6. You are aware of the communicative value of ELF. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 7. Learning ELF for intercultural communication is useful. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 8. Learning ELF for intercultural communication is plausible. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 9. Learning ELF for intercultural communication is necessary. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 10. You would like to learn ELF for intercultural communication. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 11. Learning ELF for intercultural communication is challenging.
If you circle 5 or 4, please describe the challenges: | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 12. You consider yourself as an intercultural communicator of ELF. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 13. You consider EFL learners as users of English that is owned by its native speakers. | 5 4 3 2 1 |

Please write down any comments on the teaching and learning of ELF for intercultural communication:

APPENDIX B

Interview protocol

1. Please describe your experience of learning English.
2. Please describe your experience of using English for intercultural communication.
3. Please describe the kind of English you would like to learn.
4. Do you think learning ELF for intercultural communication useful? Why or why not? Please give examples.
5. Do you think learning ELF for intercultural communication plausible? Why or why not? Please give examples.
6. Do you think learning ELF for intercultural communication necessary? Why or why not? Please give examples.
7. Do you think learning ELF for intercultural communication challenging? Why or why not? Please give examples.