

## **English as a Lingua Franca in the Asian Context: Indicating and Responding to Non-understanding in NNS Discourse\***

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**Kim, Yoon-Kyu, Chung, Hyunsong, and Lee, Sang-Ki. 2016. English as a Lingua Franca in the Asian Context: Indicating and Responding to Non-understanding in NNS Discourse. *Korean Journal of English Language and Linguistics* 16-2, 359-382.** To identify the features of ELF in the Asian context, this study examined how non-understanding in communication is indicated and responded to in Asian ELF speakers' discourse. Analysis of 34 pair conversations revealed relatively infrequent occurrences of communication breakdowns in need of a negotiation process. In moments of non-understanding, troubles in comprehension were indicated using the means of echoing, explicit indication, inappropriate response, and nonverbal response. The ELF speakers were also found to deploy a more proactive strategy of formulating specific clarification questions and statements to precisely articulate the matter causing the non-understanding. Responses offered to resolve the trouble sources took the forms of expansion, repetition, and rephrasing. Additionally, full explanation was adopted to elaborate on the information necessary to clarify the trouble point. Based on the findings of the study, some pedagogical suggestions are made with relevance to ELF.

**Key Words:** English as a lingua franca (ELF), non-understanding, NNS discourse, negotiation of meaning

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## 1. Introduction

Indisputably, English today occupies the status of an international language used for many, if not all, communicative purposes among speakers of varied first language (L1) backgrounds around the world. Partaking in the communication events are native speakers (NSs) and nonnative speakers (NNSs) of English alike. Yet as Crystal (2003) points out, the number of NS users has fallen behind that of NNS users, resulting in most communicative interactions in English as a Lingua Franca (henceforth ELF) contexts to ensue among NNSs (Seidlhofer, 2005).

Adopting verbal as well as nonverbal resources, interactions among NNSs proceed to accomplish exchanges of intended messages. In the course of the interactions, indeed, are also instances of non-understanding in which comprehension by the interlocutors is violated for various reasons. Such occasions of breakdown in communication may be more prominent in ELF settings, as the NNS participants from diverse language and cultural backgrounds bring to the exchange his/her own discourse patterns and practices. In any event, problems that arise in the midst of communicative interactions are indicated and brought to the fore, which are then resolved via attempts for clarification.

From early on, research on NNS discourse has attended to interactions between NSs and NNSs. How NSs modify their utterances (i.e., input to NNSs) to facilitate communication with NNSs comprised the focus of interest (e.g., Long, 1983a, 1983b; Nakahama, Tyler, & van Lier, 2001; Pica, 1988; Varonis & Gass, 1985a). With awareness of increased opportunities for NNSs to interact with other NNSs, meaning negotiation between the not-yet-competent interlocutors received the investigative spotlight (e.g., Gass & Varonis, 1985; Schwarts, 1980; Varonis & Gass,

1985b). This line of research, nonetheless, largely involved communication in English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) contexts often for instructional purposes.

Considering the prevailing role of ELF, it is not uncommon to find English used in the natural environment between NNSs of diverse L1s, as in Asia where English is often adopted as the medium of communicative interactions. Hence, how points of trouble get signalled in ELF communication and how the signals get responded to for negotiation of meaning are questions that deserve close investigation to better understand the nature of ELF discourse. More importantly, the answers to these questions can contribute to the call for a database on features of ELF in the Asian context (Min, 2015). The present study attempts to address these issues by analyzing the discourse of ELF interactions between Asian speakers. Specifically, features emerging in moments of indicating and responding to non-understanding in the flow of communication will be scrutinized. The present study is also expected to suggest helpful pedagogical implications for English language learning and teaching from the ELF perspective.

## **2. Background of Study**

### **2.1 English as a Lingua Franca**

English as a Lingua Franca is a concept that refers to English used as a medium of communication by speakers of different L1 backgrounds (Seidlhofer, 2011). The emergence of this idea is vivid evidence of the dominant status that English has come to occupy today, and communicative interactions in all sectors of the world are witnessed to occur in English. This prevalence of ELF has been described by the seminal model of Kachru (1997). In his model, English speakers are categorized into the three

groups of inner circle, outer circle, and expanding circle reflecting the geographical, historical, and societal influences. As Min (2015) put it, according to the model "ELF includes all English users" (p. 122).

The growing discussion on ELF has naturally directed research attentions to the features of ELF arising in its actual usage. The major inquiries, however, have pursued explaining the properties of English when used as a contact language among those whose native language is not English, such as speakers belonging to the expanding circle (Mackenzie, 2014). Along these lines, efforts have been made to construct a database of ELF interaction involving NNSs. The endeavors have led to the development of corpora such as the VOICE (Vienne-Oxford International Corpus of English) corpus and the ELFA (English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings) corpus. These databases are mostly examinations of ELF speakers in the European context, leaving ELF in the Asian settings in need of further investigation.

Moreover, studies have invested in uncovering the common features of ELF with pronunciation being the most fruitful area thus far (e.g., Jenkins, 2000, 2002). Taking into account that ELF is a contact language used for exchange of meaning, interactional features of how mutual understanding is achieved (or not achieved) and negotiated also call for careful consideration.

## **2.2 Indicating and Responding to Non-understanding**

ELF interactions, like other regular interactions, will also manifest dynamic aspects of communication. Therin are how exchanges between interlocutors proceed and how troubles are managed and negotiated when they arise. Management of communication problems has from early on been looked at in NS-NNS and NNS-NNS interactions in the ESL/EFL contexts. On the premise that negotiation promotes modified interaction, enhances comprehension, and eventually fosters acquisition

(Long, 1996; Pica, 1994), research has concentrated on ways to facilitate negotiation.

A classic study is by Varonis and Gass (1985b), which has expanded our understanding of the negotiation process. The study examined NNS-NNS interactions using the four-stage negotiation model of *trigger*, *indicator*, *response*, and *reaction to response* (optional). The categories of indicator and response were explained as the crucial steps in the negotiation cycle. According to the study, indicators signalled a problem in understanding through the means of explicit indication, echoing previous utterance, nonverbal response (silence, *mmmm*), summarizing, expressing surprise (*really?*), making an inappropriate response, and making an overt correction. Varonis and Gass also proposed repeating, expanding, rephrasing, acknowledging, and reducing as some response strategies applied to react to an indicator.

Dörnyei and Kormos (1998) analyzed Hungarian English learners' elicited speech and showed communication problem solving techniques of requesting repetition, clarifying, confirming, guessing, indicating non-understanding, and pretending to understand. In an attempt to explore the negotiation process in connection to the sources of trouble, Kim (2008) found lexical, discourse, and non-hearing problems were mostly perceived, subject to a negotiation process, and resolved in adult ESL learners' interactions. Interestingly, troubles at the lexical and discourse levels also comprised the most cases of unsuccessful negotiation.

The aforementioned studies discuss the mechanisms of meaning negotiation from a second language research tradition. With the growing interest, these issues have also been investigated in the realm of ELF research. Min (2015) found ELF speakers pursuing graduate studies in the US employed strategies of repeating, paraphrasing, confirming, and clarifying to achieve mutual understanding. Focusing on the repetition

strategy, Lee (2016) reported that Asian ELF speakers in academic settings in the UK adopted repetition to avoid potential problems and resolve vagueness in communication.

While approaches taken to resolve problems indeed need to be scrutinized, equally important prior to the resolution process is making the problem aware to the participants in the communicative event. Thus signalling a non-understanding also warrants careful investigation. One relevant study by Mauranen (2006) examined European ELF speakers in academic settings to find that specific question (*what is~?*), repetition, and indirect signalling were employed as techniques for indicating communication difficulty.

Often noticeable in ELF studies is the lack of attention to Asian speakers or the Asian setting. Despite the aggressively spreading role of ELF in Asia, the dynamics of Asian ELF remain a relatively untrodden area. It is the goal of the present study to narrow this gap in research by focusing on the features of how problems in communication get indicated and responded to by Asian ELF speakers in the Asian context.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Participants and Data

The data<sup>1</sup> for the present study were audio-recordings of 34 pair conversations produced by 35 ELF speakers from different L1 backgrounds in Asia. The participants spoke a range of L1s and belonged to diverse nationalities as shown in Table 1.

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<sup>1</sup> The data for the present study are part a larger project, *English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in the Asian Context* conducted from September of 2012 to August of 2014. The project aimed at developing a database of ELF in the Asian setting. To elicit a range of language use, the project devised six topics with each topic formulated into four versions according to formal/informal and open/closed styles of questioning.

Varying from 18 to 33 in age, the ELF speakers had an average of 13 years of experience learning English. Conforming to the approach in lingua franca research that language use between speakers of different proficiency levels exhibits the everyday circumstances of lingua franca interactions, no particular measures were devised to note the English proficiency levels of the participants (Mauranen, Hynninen, & Ranta, 2010). All participants were attending universities in Hong Kong at the time of data collection, and thus were determined as being competent enough to take regular courses in English at the university level.

**Table 1. L1 and Nationality of Participants**

L1	Cantonese, Hokkien, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Malay, Mandarin, Punjabi, Putonghua, Sinhala
Nationality	China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Taiwan

In pairs, the participants engaged in casual conversations on one of the topics prepared for the study. As an assistance to stimulate talk, topics of ordinary and familiar matters likely to arise in regular conversations were developed. The selected topics were coping with stress, choosing a job, best movie, ideal spouse, best teacher, and sports activities. In keeping with the purposes of the present study to examine communication features in casually flowing discourse, language use from topic prompts of informal and open question formats (See Appendix 1 for topic prompts) was subject to analysis.

For the data recording, the pairs met in a quiet room provided by a university in Hong Kong. Once the basic directions were explained, the participants were presented a topic prompt on a piece of paper and were free to proceed with the talk on their own. Each conversation lasted about five to seven minutes and was recorded on a digital recorder with headsets.

As a result, 34 pair conversations lasting approximately 215 minutes in total comprised the data for the present study. All conversations were recorded with consent from the participants.

### 3.2 Analysis

The recordings of the ELF conversations were first organized and prepared for transcription and later transcribed<sup>2</sup> word for word by trained research assistants. The transcripts were then repeatedly reviewed with careful attention to the details by the researchers for a thorough transcription of the conversations. All transcripts followed the conventions adapted from Atkinson and Heritage (1984) (See Appendix 2 for transcription conventions).

In order to examine how troubles in understanding are indicated and responded to in the ELF interactions, analysis of the data initially focused on identifying occasions of non-understanding. For this process, Varonis and Gass' (1985b) negotiation model of *trigger-indicator-response-reaction to response* was adopted as reference, on grounds that the presence of this cycle would be evidence of a non-understanding occurring. An utterance functioning as a signal of a problem in understanding was first coded as an indicator. Then, the utterance subsequent to the indicator was traced as the response implemented in reaction to the indicator in efforts to resolve the source of the trouble (i.e., trigger). Coding of the indicators and responses referred to categories illustrated in the relevant literature with particular reference to Mauranen (2006) and Varonis and Gass (1985b). Consequently, analysis of the indicators and responses in the data concentrated on drawing out the emerging patterns characteristic of ELF discourse in the Asian context.

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<sup>2</sup> We would like to thank the research assistants for their assistance with the data collection procedure and preliminary transcription of the data recordings.



## 4. Results and Discussion

Analysis of the data revealed 64 instances of non-understanding unfolding in the Asian ELF speakers' interactions. The communication difficulties surfaced from sources as diverse as lexical, pronunciation, grammatical, discourse, factual knowledge, and non-hearing. While the number of incidents varied across the pair conversations, on average there were approximately two cases of non-understanding arising in each conversation. Such infrequent occurrences seem contrary to what may be expected given the interlocutors being both NNSs of English. Coinciding with research noting infrequent findings of comprehension problems in ELF discourse (Mauranen, 2006, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2011), presumably the participants in the present study invested mutual efforts to avoid uncomfortable situations and employed the resources available to get one's agenda across.

For those instances in which the efforts failed, it was found that a repertoire of mechanisms was put into practice to indicate the presence of a trouble and respond to the trouble put forward. The mechanisms emerging in these processes are discussed below with telling examples from the data.

### 4.1 Indicators of Non-understanding

As commonly accepted that non-understandings are not specific to ELF interactions, the indicators used by the present Asian ELF speakers corresponded to the tactics of echoing, explicit indication, inappropriate response, and nonverbal signal as identified in the literature (Varonis & Gass, 1985b). Yet, the ELF participants also skillfully managed to flag trouble spots in the course of the talk by employing strategies in combination and with elaboration. These indicators pertained to formulating specific clarification questions and statements.

## 1) Echoing

To signal that a prior utterance has created a problem in understanding, the participants opted for echoing the problematic words either in a rising or falling intonation, as in the case of Excerpt 1. Echoing or repetition has often been discussed in the context of strategies for resolving non-understanding (Kaur, 2010; Lee, 2016; Min, 2015). For the ELF speakers in the present data, repeating the troublesome part was a relied-on choice for indicating difficulties in understanding before any treatment for resolution.

## Excerpt 1 G23BD5B

- 01 D: Then how do you think about the course,  
 02 like cou:irse outlines and then the course contents?  
 03→ B: Course contents?=  
 04 D: =Do you think the: teacher should prepare  
 05 the perfect cou- course content?  
 06 B: Yes of course it's very important I think,

While talking about the best teacher during school days, participant D, an L1 speaker of Korean attempts to elicit B's (L1 speaker of Mandarin) views on the importance of teachers preparing a perfect course content. D's question in lines 01 and 02 unfortunately is formulated without the details of *teacher* and *prepare* eventually creating frustration, and thus invites B to echo the problematic part "Course contents?=" in a rising intonation (line 03). Realizing B's repetition as an indication of a trouble spot, D quickly expands the prior question and clarifies his inquiry (lines 04 and 05).

## 2) Explicit Indication

An efficient strategy for the ELF participants to signal non-understanding was resorting to explicit indication. By

directly expressing that a previous utterance has not been understood, the participants could conveniently secure the attention of the producer of the utterance and launch a negotiation process. *What?, sorry?, I don't understand, and pardon?* were the devices used by the participants to explicitly mark a difficulty in comprehension. Excerpt 2 demonstrates this case.

Excerpt 2 G13BC3B

- 01 C: Then I just watch all kinds of hero movies.  
 02→ B: What? k  
 03 C: Hero movies.  
 04 B: Hero movies ohh.

Excerpt 2 is on the topic of movies between B, a speaker of Mandarin and a Korean speaker C. C's comment that he enjoys all kinds of hero movies generates a problem for B, seemingly due to issues with pronunciation or mere non-hearing. B signals this situation with a "What?" making her non-understanding readily apparent. At last, C articulates once more the essential segment of his speech, "Hero movies" and B achieves understanding as shown in her reaction in line 04.

3) Inappropriate Response

A remark off-topic during the ELF participants' ongoing talk represented a clear indication of breakdown in comprehension. In any communicative interaction, it is mutually agreed upon that utterances are contributed according to the anticipated trajectory. When an inappropriate response pops up, such anticipation is breached and the response becomes a signal calling for a negotiation process. This situation was observed in Excerpt 3 between C, a speaker of Hokkien and a Korean speaker D.

## Excerpt 3 G15CD4B

- 01 C: Do you want do you want your boyfriend or  
 02 your husbands to sha:re the housework with you?  
 03→ D: House?  
 04 C: Housework  
 05 D: Housework? Yeah yeah. Should.

In talking about one's ideal spouse, C asks whether D would like her spouse to share the housework. D's incompetent understanding of the word *housework* leads her to respond as "House?" (line 03), an utterance irrelevant to the ongoing talk. Recognizing as a signal of non-understanding, C responds "Housework" clearly once more. C's help to resolve the trouble spot allows D to grasp the meaning and get back on track as seen in her turn in line 05.

## 4) Nonverbal Response

Nonverbal responses in the form of silence or *um* were also found in the Asian ELF speakers' interactional discourse. Because of its nonverbal nature, this strategy is accepted as an indirect technique (Mauranen, 2006) for showing problems in understanding. The indirectness renders these indicators to sometimes go unnoticed by the interlocutors. As a result, the indicating remark and the source of the problem signalled by the remark undergo no negotiation process, and hence no resolution takes place (Kim, 2008). Excerpt 4 illustrates this example.

## Excerpt 4 G15BC6B

- 01 B: Winter ah yeah. You can uh you can ride  
 02 a horse to go up some mountain  
 03 and uh ski heh (.) down.  
 04 C: Ohh heh. So how about the horse?

- 05        They come down by themselves?  
06    B: Ah no, yeah. The the some some people: uh  
07        buy the house and uh to (rent us).  
08→ C: Um (3.2). Sports I like I like football,  
09    B: Football. Wow, do you play football?

The above excerpt is part of a conversation on sports activities enjoyed by the two participants. The Mandarin speaker B explains that she enjoys riding horses up to a mountain and skiing down in winter. C, a speaker of Hokkien then inquires about the horse and whether it comes down the mountain on its own. B's answer to this question (lines 06 and 07) does not satisfy the inquiry and rather triggers comprehension difficulty as denoted by C's signal of *um* with a long 3.2 second pause (line 08). The *um* and lengthy silence function as signals inviting B to engage in negotiating the source of the trouble. Receiving no additional explanation, C goes on to talk about her preferred sports activity and B joins in (lines 08 and 09). Obviously, B does not recognize the silence as a signal of non-understanding. Therefore, B is not able to make any further contribution to remedy her former utterance, thus no resolution is achieved.

##### 5) Specific Clarification Question/Statement

In addition to the conventional means, the ELF participants in the present study revealed use of more proactive approaches to transparently flag the presence of a problem in their understanding. These instances seemed more proactive in that they involved formulating specific clarification questions and statements tailored to the particular troublesome utterance. This strategy may be similar to Mauranen's (2006) category of *specific question*, yet departs from it, for it is implemented in a more dynamic manner realized in variant forms according to the nature of the non-understanding. Excerpt 5 and Excerpt 6 below

exemplify these findings.

Excerpt 5 G19BC5B

- 01 C: Yes I agree. A:nd I think the teacher who care (.)  
 02 take care uh: (2.6) the stud<sup>↑</sup>ents all of the students  
 03 in the cl<sup>↑</sup>ass because the students (2.4) um:  
 04→ B: Do you mean like um personally or like um  
 05 just academically, uh take care of the students?=  
 06 C: =Uh both of them.  
 07 B: Both.  
 08 C: Yes.

In Excerpt 5, B, a Mandarin speaker and C, a Korean speaker are exchanging ideas on the qualities of a good teacher. C expresses her opinion that a good teacher needs to take care of all the students (lines 01 to 03). Judging the comment to be vague, B avoids conveniently deploying the methods of echoing, explicit indication, inappropriate response, or nonverbal response as they can rather bring about further complications. Instead, B chooses to signal the vagueness of the comment, and thus the barrier in comprehension with a precise clarification question. Combining the summary phrase *do you mean?* (Varonis & Gass, 1985b) with a question, B asks "Do you mean like um personally or like um just academically, uh take care of the students?=". C recognizes the problem in her prior utterance and immediately clarifies her intended meaning (line 06). Use of this mechanism is also shown in Excerpt 6.

Excerpt 6 G23BD6B

- 01 D: Uh the question is about the uh  
 02 the teacher who is really good (.) or like  
 03 the best teacher ever ever in your life.  
 04→ B: Um so we are talking about what's the characters

- 05        that a good teacher might be?  
06    D: Yeah.

Excerpt 6 depicts a Mandarin speaker B and a Korean speaker D talking about his/her best teacher and the reasons. D starts out by explaining the topic, which for B has become a source of non-understanding. To deal with the situation, B skillfully manipulates *so*, a discourse marker for summarizing or rewording (Müller, 2005) and formulates the specified question as "so we are talking about what's the characters that a good teacher might be?". Significant here is how B is able to tailor her indicator to exactly address what she is not clear about. D easily grasps B's clarification attempt and firmly acknowledges with a "Yeah."

The performances in these two instances require proficient use of the linguistic, discourse, and pragmatic resources. Had it been a NS-NNS dyad, such tailored questioning for clarification would probably have been the responsibility of the NS. Knowing that neither one owns English and not having to worry about the standards or being judged encouraged the ELF speakers to be more confident and proactive. This adept maneuver was made possible, presumably, from the speakers' constant exposure to and experiences with Asian ELF communicative interactions at the global level.

The discussion thus far has illustrated how problems in understanding are indicated by Asian ELF speakers. Following are the findings on how the indicators are responded to for resolving the trouble spots.

#### **4.2 Responses to Indicators of Non-understanding**

When an indicator is launched by a recipient of a message, the intuitive reaction of the speaker is to negotiate and clarify the meaning of his/her utterance. The ELF participants in the

current study exhibited interesting patterns for accomplishing this task.

### 1) Expansion

One salient choice for responding to signals of non-understanding was expanding the original utterance triggering the trouble. As seen in Excerpt 1 above, D responds to B's echoing of the words "Course contents?=" in the following turn by expanding and elaborating on the original question with additional information (lines 04 and 05).

### 2) Repetition

Repetition is a familiar communication strategy discussed in the context of achieving understanding (Lee, 2016; Min, 2015; Varonis & Gass, 1985b). More specifically, repetition can be adopted to indicate a problem in understanding, but also at the stage of resolving non-understanding. The responses provided by the speakers in Excerpt 2 and Excerpt 3 both demonstrate instances of repetition. To respond to the recipient's signal of a comprehension problem, the speakers select to reiterate the essential part of the prior utterance (line 03 in Excerpt 2 and line 04 in Excerpt 3), which is perceived to have generated the trigger and in turn is key to remedying the situation.

### 3) Rephrasing

Rephrasing, or reformulating a part of an utterance was another tactic employed by the participants to respond to an indicator and treat the trouble source, as described in Excerpt 7.

#### Excerpt 7 G09CD1B

- 01 C: Do you like- where do you go to jog?  
 02 D: Gym room heh.=  
 03 C: =Gym?



- 04→ D: The machine,  
 05 C: Mm[m  
 06 ((Korean vocalization for acknowledging as in *Ahi*))  
 07 D: [I use the machine.

The above is an interaction taking place between C, a Korean speaker and D, a speaker of Putonghua. The participants are on the topic of exercising for coping with stress. In line 02, D's reply "Gym room heh.=" to C's question seemingly has created confusion, since C did not expect jogging to be performed in an indoor gym room. C reacts with the signal "=Gym?" and D rephrases her prior answer from "Gym room" to a more reasonable expression "The machine," hinting "I jog on the machine in the gym room."

#### 4) Full Explanation

Apart from the clear-cut devices described above, the data revealed that the ELF speakers made efforts to construct a full explanation as a way of resolving the communication problem at hand. Excerpt 8 is a case in point.

#### Excerpt 8 G11BC6B

- 01 B: I don't like to get all wet  
 02 and okay swimming is yeah wet but still heh  
 03 and how about you? What kind of exercise? heh  
 04 C: Walking heh I think. [heh  
 05 B: [Walking?  
 06→ C: I mean like um: yeah I don't do regular spo ↑ rt  
 07 uh I did like some badmin ↑ ton

A Cantonese speaker B is talking about sports activities with an Indonesian speaker C. B utters that she tries swimming even though she is not fond of getting wet, then directs the question

to her interlocutor. Considering walking to be odd as an exercise, B repeats C's answer as "[Walking?" with a rising intonation to signal her frustration. Rather than to simply expand or rephrase her previous answer from line 04, C decides to provide a full explanation with the background for why she answered as such (lines 06 and 07). That is, she liked badminton in the past, but as she is not engaged in any regular sports activity currently, walking to her is taken as an exercise.

Full explanations also appeared in combination with other strategies as responses to indicators of trouble spots. The participants took advantage of adding a full explanation when it was judged that expanding, repeating, or rephrasing alone would not suffice as a response to treat the problem.

## 5. Conclusion

With an aim to identify the features of ELF discourse in the Asian context, this study examined how non-understanding is indicated and responded to in ELF speakers' conversational interactions. Adopting Varonis and Gass' (1985b) negotiation cycle as the frame of reference, the analysis located instances of negotiation of meaning processes and examined utterances pertaining to indicators and responses.

The findings showed relatively infrequent occurrences of communication breakdowns in need of a negotiation process. Coinciding with the results in ELF research (Mauranen, 2006, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2011), this outcome can be seen as reflecting the active and dynamic work invested by the Asian ELF speakers to obtain mutual understanding and accomplish the communicative intent. In moments of non-understanding, troubles in comprehension were signalled with the conventional means of echoing, explicit indication, inappropriate response, and nonverbal

response. Notably yet, the ELF participants were also found to deploy a more proactive strategy of formulating specific clarification questions and statements to precisely articulate the part disturbing comprehension.

Once an indicator of non-understanding was produced, a response was offered to resolve the problem. In addition to adopting the strategies of expansion, repetition, and rephrasing, the ELF speakers were observed to devise a full explanation as a way of elaborating on the information necessary to resolve the source of the trouble.

The features revealed from the Asian ELF speakers in the present study share many characteristics discussed in previous research. At the same time, the active measures taken to secure indicating and responding to non-understandings are positive aspects showing the Asian speakers to possess a confident and active attitude towards ELF. ELF inevitably is "a hybrid language used by a heterogeneous speech community" (Mackenzie, 2014, p. 30). There is no need to be concerned about the authority of the language or meeting the standards. The ELF speakers in this study seemed to concentrate more on the functions of English in the given context and utilized the language to pursue the ultimate goal of communication, that is, exchange of their intended messages.

The findings from this study suggest some pedagogical implications for research and practice in the area of ELF and for English language learning and teaching as well. First, English language learners can benefit from being more tolerant of non-understanding as a natural component of communication and learn to manipulate the relevant tactics for indicating and responding to occurrences of troubles.

Additionally, research has reported learners and teachers of English to display a mismatch between the views towards ELF and the features of ELF that may be accepted (Choi, 2007; Kang

& Lee, 2012). The Asian ELF speakers in the present study were less concerned about complying with native speaker standards and more devoted to expressing meaning in English as the medium. Likewise, learners need to be afforded more opportunities to rethink the role of English in today's world and develop a more receptive attitude towards ELF. Chances for exposure to and contact with ELF and its users should be encouraged, especially in EFL settings as Korea. This way, learners will be able to move away from the native-nonnative discrimination and become more empowered as legitimate users of the English language (Choi, 2011). Finally, at a more macro-level, the goal of English language education should be carefully re-examined with ELF put into perspective.

Research on ELF and ELF in the Asian context in particular is still at its incipency, and the dynamic features of this communicative medium await many more investigative pursuits. It is hoped that the compilation of research efforts including the present study will help demystify the complexities of ELF in Asia as well as at the global level.

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### Appendix 1. Topic Prompts

- How can you cope with stress when you are under stress?
- What is the most valuable factor when choosing your future job and why?
- What is the best movie in your life and why?
- Who is your ideal spouse and why?
- Who was your best teacher during your school days? Share your ideas with your partner why you remember her or him as the best teacher.
- Keeping in shape is a common issue for many people these days. What sports do you usually enjoy to stay in shape? Share your ideas with your partner about the sports you're interested in.

### Appendix 2. Transcription Conventions

(Adapted from Atkinson & Heritage, 1984)

- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| [     | utterances starting simultaneously, a single bracket is placed in front of each of the two lines that start simultaneously |
| [ ]   | indicates the beginning and end part of overlapping utterances that do not start simultaneously                            |
| =     | indicates no interval between adjacent utterances, the second being latched immediately to the first                       |
| :     | indicates an extension of the sound or syllable it follows   |
| .     | shows a stopping fall in tone, not necessarily the end of a sentence   |
| ,     | represents a continuing intonation, not necessarily between clauses of sentences   |
| ?     | indicates a rising inflection, not necessarily a question  |
| ↑ ↓   | indicates rising or falling shifts in intonation and is placed prior to the shift  |
| -     | indicates a halting, abrupt cutoff   |
| —     | indicates emphasis or stress   |
| (0.5) | represents length of pauses timed in tenths of a second  |
| (.)   | micropause   |
| (( )) | items in double parentheses describe some phenomenon of the talk   |

- such as details of the conversation or setting
- ( ) items enclosed in single parentheses are in doubt
- indicates occurrence of the phenomenon under discussion