Student and Educator Beliefs on an
English as a Lingua Franca Classroom Framework

By

Florence Pattee

A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in TESOL

University of Wisconsin- River Falls

2020
Abstract

The ways in which students use English to communicate has evolved. Many students around the world now use English to communicate as a lingua franca with other non-native speakers. In order to meet the needs of their students and help them achieve their goals, teachers need to be aware of not only how their students are using English but the beliefs about English language learning that they are bringing into the classroom. Further, teachers must be aware of the extent to which their own beliefs are aligned with those of their students. This study of 86 students at four language centers in Malaysia, along with their 18 instructors, investigated the extent to which student beliefs align with an English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) framework, and the degree to which teachers share those beliefs and are aware of them. Students were asked to respond to 15 statements about their beliefs on the role of culture in language learning, frequency of error correction, native-speaker models and interlocutor beliefs. The teacher survey similarly asked teachers to respond to 10 statements about their beliefs and their awareness of student beliefs, while setting up three direct comparisons between what the students believe and what the teachers think their students believe. The study found that teacher beliefs largely seemed supportive of an ELF approach. Student beliefs varied much more significantly, especially when it came to error correction and the pursuit of native-speaker accents, a fact which many teachers appeared not to be aware of. The results indicated a disconnect between the goals the students are setting for themselves, goals which are at odds with an ELF framework, and their teachers’ awareness of those goals.
Introduction

Class by class, student by student, teachers must make an enormous amount of curriculum choices. When should we correct student errors? Should we insist on the correct usage of the singular third person -s by our adult students in light of the fact that non-native speakers habitually do not use it, and the lack of its usage does not impede comprehension; do we teach idioms and fixed expressions that are only used by native speakers and which can lead to confusion when changed in any way; do we continue to set models of pronunciation based on native-speaker accents? The necessity and difficulty of making these choices has led to a wide variety of teaching philosophies which are able to help provide a lens through which to view and narrow one’s options.

This paper looks at one such teaching framework, one evolved around the global use of English as a lingua franca. Over the centuries, there have multiple languages that served the role of a lingua franca; notably in the middle ages, there was a trading language that mixed Arabic and Italian among others, and later Latin was used during the Roman Empire (Lingua Franca, 2020), so when this paper refers to the use of English in this capacity, it will not be capitalized. However, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), as an approach to teaching, will be capitalized.

ELF is a description of the features of an evolved English which reflects the way English is being used for a large number of people around the world. ELF is ultimately a guide for teachers and students as to what areas of English lexicon, grammar and phonology are most important to facilitate intelligible communication between speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds, and which are not. The goal of ELF is not for everyone to speak one variety of English; rather, ELF encourages speakers to use their local variety of English in local communicative contexts, while also being able to adjust their speech to be intelligible to speakers.
from a wide variety of other language backgrounds (Jenkins, 2006). The goal of an ELF framework is for teachers to become aware of the ways in which students are using English as a lingua franca and to enable teachers to use ELF insights to help inform their pedagogical choices and to help them present alternative models to students of what it looks like to be a speaker of English.

To do so, and in order to best serve a student needs, a teacher should be aware of the beliefs about language learning that their students are bringing into the classroom as these beliefs have the power to impact both a student’s actions and language learning experiences (Horwitz, 1999). Further, teachers need to know how and with whom their students are using English and what individual goals and expectations the students are bringing with them into their learning environment. Thus, the more informed a teacher is about their students’ beliefs, the better prepared they will be to use or adapt their teaching framework to their individual student’s needs. This paper investigates the extent to which students and teachers at four language centers in Malaysia hold core beliefs of an ELF framework. The unique requirements of students who are using English in its expanded capacity as a global language require us to question whether our curriculum and classroom choices are being made fully informed by our students’ evolving needs.

**Literature Review**

**Global Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca**

English has become a global language and in so doing, it has acquired a plural tense; Englishes. According to an April 23rd, 2015 article in The Washington Post, English is the official language of 35 countries (which does not include the United Kingdom, United States, or Australia where there is no de jure official language) and is spoken in 101 countries, each of
which has its own accents, dialects and unique lexical characteristics (Noack & Gamio, 2015). With so many speakers speaking so many different dialects of English, each with distinct phonological, lexical and grammatical characteristics, English language speakers have had to make accommodations and adaptations in order to successfully communicate. With this has come an emphasis on intelligibility over accuracy, especially with the now widespread use of World Englishes, as first coined and categorized by Braj Bihari Kachru in 1985, and later revised in 1992, and the use of English as a lingua franca.

Kachru divided the varieties of English into three categories; inner circle Englishes, consisting of countries where the primary language is English, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and New Zealand; outer circle Englishes, such as Singapore, India and Nigeria, where English is an official language often used as the medium of education and within government offices, often as a result of their having been colonized at some time in their past; and the expanding circle, with by far the greatest number of speakers, where English is a foreign language that is often used to facilitate communication between speakers of other languages, such as in China, Japan, Israel, Greece and Poland, among many others (Crystal, 1995). However, the model is not perfect, in part because it is not always easy to categorize some countries, as in the case of Malaysia, but also because it fails to take into account the use of English as a lingua franca or the use of English as connected to Internet use (Mauranen, 2015). English as a lingua franca (ELF) differs from World Englishes in that it is not a dialect or standard of English. Rather, it is a description and ultimately a guide for teachers and students as to what areas of English lexicon, grammar and phonology are most important to facilitate intelligible communication between speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds, and which are not.
English can be referred to as a contact language (Firth, 1996; Jenkins, 2014), one which is used when speakers do not share a first language. It is often used by speakers who have already acquired a local variety of English, which Mäuranen (2015, 2018) refers to as a ‘similect’ and which are often referred to by nicknames such as Spanglish (Spanish/English), Swinglish (Swahili/English), or Manglish (Bahasa Malaysia/English) and which are heavily influenced by the speakers’ first language. It is worth noting a few examples of how the similect Manglish differs from English while still being understandable to most English speakers. Manglish is often marked by the addition of the emphatic particle *lah* at the end of statements; the omission of the auxiliary in questions or statements, such as in *Where you going ah* or *Where you come from?*; the use of *can/can’t* alone to express ‘it’s possible/ it’s not possible’ and *got/don’t have* to express ‘I have it/ I don’t have something’; and the use of adverbs of time rather than marked tenses, such as in the example, “*Before I always go to that market*” (Preshous, 2001, p. 51).

ELF is a contact point between these similects and is used when certain situational needs arise (Mäuranen, 2015). Therefore, the goal of ELF is not for everyone to speak one variety of English; rather, ELF encourages speakers to use their local variety of English in local communicative contexts, while also being able to adjust their speech to be intelligible to speakers from a wide variety of other language backgrounds (Jenkins, 2006). As Mäuranen (2015) wrote, “Lingua francas are employed for communicating across linguistic diversity, not for replacing it” (p. 32). But in many language classrooms, there is little acknowledgement of the implications of the changes in the way English is being used by students. Jenkins (2006) writes:

There is still little if any awareness among TESOL practitioners and SLA researchers that learners may be producing forms characteristic of their own variety of English, which
reflect the sociolinguistic reality of their English use, whatever their circle, far better than either British or American norms are able to. (p. 168)

Malaysia is an excellent example of the sociolinguistic use of English. Malaysia is a multilingual, multicultural and multiethnic country which was under British rule from the late 18th century until their independence in 1957. According to the Department of Statistics, as quoted in “Reforms in the policy of English language teaching in Malaysia” (Rashid et al., 2017), in 2014, Malaysia had a population of 30, 274, 472, of whom 67.4 percent were identified as *bumiputera*, which literally translates to ‘son(s) of the soil’ and which includes both Malay and non-Malay indigenous people; 24.6 percent Chinese, and 7.3 percent Indian. The official language in Malaysia is Bahasa Malaysia with English as an official second language. However, while the majority of Chinese Malaysians mainly speak a dialect of Chinese found in the south of China, and Indian Malaysians mainly speak Tamil, middle and upper-middle class Malaysians most often speak English as their first language. Thus, there is a class divide within the use of English, with the majority of lower income and non-*bumiputera* students having a low level of English proficiency (Rashid et al., 2017). This class divide of English has its roots in Malaysia’s colonial past, and for many nationalists, English is viewed as a threat. There is no one Malaysian English, just as there is no one American English or British English. Within the use of Malaysian English, the age, education level and social level of the speakers, along with the region, level of formality and whether it is being spoken or written, all interact to impact the variety of Malaysian English employed (Preshous, 2001). Many of the characteristics of Malaysian English are reflective of the multiethnic makeup of Malaysia and the way in which English is used as a lingua franca between ethnicities.
The existence of these World Englishes, with their different lexicon and accents, as well as their use as a lingua franca, means that what is sometimes viewed as an error in an English as a Foreign Language classroom, could also be viewed as a characteristic of a learner’s particular dialect or variety of English. Curran & Chern (2017) write:

While the traditional model of English as a foreign language views learner language that differs from the native-speaker norm as an error, an ELF orientation sees this as part of the natural process of language learning, and learners are not made to feel that the local variety of English should be avoided. (p. 138)

While a more standard dialect may still need to be acquired, as when a student is studying to take a standardized test, it is nonetheless helpful for a teacher to understand why the student is making what appears to be an error and to use that information when deciding which errors to correct. For many students, the ELF forms that a student may produce in a class are reinforced in social interactions in their home context, unlike grammatical and lexical errors which have no such social reinforcement. Teachers who treat ELF forms as the same as errors not only risk confusing students, but may in the students’ eyes lose credibility.

ELF learners are a diverse group of learners who do not form a single community (Hynninen, 2014). Because there is no one form of ELF, it is not possible to teach ‘ELF English’. Rather, by understanding some of the key features of the use of English as a lingua franca, it is possible to create a framework within which one may make informed curriculum choices. Grammatically this might lead teachers to choose to spend less classroom time on the accurate use of the singular third person marker –s; phonetically, this might mean focusing on word stress and pacing rather than on accent reduction; lexically, an ELF framework might help teachers to decide which idioms and phrasal verbs can be used cross-culturally; and culturally,
this could lead to the decision to supplement textbooks which often favor cultural content from inner circle English speaking countries (Rashidi & Meihami, 2016; Su, 2014; Pashmforoosh & Babaii, 2015) and to use input and listening samples from non-native speakers.

**Lexical Features of ELF as a Source of Student Errors**

One of the central features of ELF is the adaptation, and at times loss, of standard forms of English in order to speak cooperatively with other non-native speakers of English. These patterns in the ways in which non-native English speakers have adapted English to serve as a global language, along with the similarities in the methods through which non-native speakers accommodate their speech to become more intelligible to other non-native speakers, is what is often referred to as English as a Lingua Franca.

Many of the adaptations made by interlocutors are lexicogrammatical in nature. Jenkins (2006, p.170) listed the following lexicogrammar features, first identified by Seidlhofer (2004, p.200) as part of the compilation of the corpus VOICE (Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English); an eight year project that looked at the language used in ELF in professional, educational and leisure domains, which aimed to uncover which items are used “systematically and frequently, but differently from native speaker use and without causing communication problems” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 169) and which compiled over one million words through the recording of non-scripted face-to-face interactions (Walker, 2016). Seidlhofer, as cited in Jenkins, 2006, identified the following features:

- non-use of the third person present tense–s ("She look very sad")
- interchangeable use of the relative pronouns *who* and *which* ("a book who," “a person which")
• omission of the definite and indefinite articles where they are obligatory in native speaker English and insertion where they do not occur in native speaker English

• use of an all-purpose question tag such as *isn’t it?* or *no?* instead of *shouldn’t they?* (“They should arrive soon, isn’t it?”)

• increasing of redundancy by adding prepositions (“We have to study about . . .” and “can we discuss about . . .?”), or by increasing explicitness (“black colour” vs. “black” and “How long time?” vs. “How long?”)

• heavy reliance on certain verbs of high semantic generality, such as *do, have, make, put, take*

• pluralisation of nouns which are considered uncountable in native speaker English (“informations,” “staffs,” “advices”)

• use of that-clauses instead of infinitive constructions (“I want that we discuss about my dissertation”) (p.170)

One of the most common strategies employed in ELF is approximation, or the production of the rough equivalent of the target language or form. It is in part through the use of approximation, which may lead to the fixing of certain non-standard characteristics in the speech of a speaker or group of speakers, that many of the above mentioned lexical and grammatical characteristics have developed. According to Mauranen (2018), approximation occurs in ELF at all levels of language; in phonology, morphology, semantics, syntax, lexical choice, and in phraseological units of meaning as in the following examples from VOICE by Mauranen (2015):

…to *er throw some lights in* female deputies (‘throw light on’)

…can’t talk about content without talking of a process and *the same way around* (‘the other way around’)
…in fact *behind the lines* you could very well read that (‘between the lines/ behind the scenes’)

…*it has also sense* (‘it also makes sense’) (p.36)

These approximations rarely get in the way of comprehension, often due to the use of multi-word units. These multi-word combinations, as used in ELF, “contribute to fluency and predictability in ways that facilitate processing for both speakers and hearers” (Mauranen, 2015, p. 36) and are often very similar to those commonly employed in standard varieties of English. After comparing the 10 most frequent 3-word sequences used in the ELFA corpus with the 10 most common sequences in The Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE), Mauranen (p. 37) found that they are nearly identical.

Over time, as multi-word units become used by non-native speakers with other non-native speakers in non-standard ways through approximation, many of these expressions can become the preferred alternative; a tendency which has been referred to as ‘fixing’ (Mauranen, 2018). Fixing has been found on the individual level and in cross-individual use; for example in the expressions *let me say some words about it, on my point of view, on the other side, and at the same moment*, which have been found repeated in a wide variety of situations by speakers from a multitude of L1 backgrounds (Mauranen, 2015).

Idioms, or multi-word expressions which function as a single unit and whose meaning cannot be worked out from its separate parts, have the potential to cause confusion and are often one of the main causes of breakdowns in ELF communication (Jenkins, 2006). As English evolves, Mauranen (2015) believes that opaque idioms are likely to be one of the first language forms to disappear as a result of dialect levelling, or the loss of marked and minority forms. Pitzl (2016) writes that:
Viewed within a framework of language contact, idioms might thus be considered emblematic instances in which a conventionalized grouping of words represents and evokes a particular (cultural) concept, familiar to those ‘in the know’. (p. 299)

However, Pitzl goes on to write that the extent to which this is true varies from situation to situation and is not generalized. Rather, she finds that English speakers in ELF contexts often use non-English idioms not only through an unconscious transfer, but also as “explicitly signaled and flagged instances of multilingual creativity that function as representations of multilingual and multi/transcultural identities and repertoires” (p, 300). Idioms are thus an important resource of linguistic creativity whether they are non-English idioms shared across cultural and language boundaries or whether they are native-English idioms, whose attempted use may involve approximation on the part of the speaker or may require cooperative behavior on the part of the listener. Ultimately, as Mauranen (2018) writes:

It is important to maintain a clear conceptual distinction between using multi-word units in communication and using them according to a particular standard. Using multi-word units is a normal part of fluent language use (as for instance Wray (2002) shows), but it is a completely different matter to maintain that only certain, prescribed (Inner Circle) units are those that count. (p.112)

If adult students are predominantly using English to communicate with other non-native speakers of English, then the errors they make in class could have their roots in the type of communication that is occurring. And if these mistakes do not get in the way of intelligibility, then teachers may choose to use their class time focusing on other areas which do impede understanding. Further, the vocabulary we choose to teach, such as in the case of idioms, can be a tool by which students are allowed to express themselves creatively. The more we understand
which idioms exist cross-culturally and which are used predominantly in native speaker contexts, the better able we are to help students communicate authentically and individually while meeting their individual needs.

**Models for Input**

In *Teaching Pronunciation: A Course Book and Reference Guide* (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin, & Griner, 2010), comprehensibility is defined as a listener’s perception of how difficult it is to understand the utterance or message; intelligibility is defined as the degree to which the listener actually understands the intended message, and accentedness is defined as a listener’s perception of how different a speaker’s accent is from that of the L1 community (adapted from Derwing & Munro, 2005). Mutual comprehensibility and intelligibility, which can be more easily assessed, are the focus within classes that teach English as a lingua franca. In Derwing and Munro’s 2014 essay debunking the myth that once you have been speaking a second language for years, it’s too late to change your pronunciation, they make three compelling arguments as to why intelligibility and comprehensibility are more strongly connected to communicative success than achieving a native-like accent; namely:

1. The primary goal of most ELL’s is to be able to understand and to be understood by other language speakers.
2. It is possible to understand someone even if they have a strong accent.
3. And, as their previous research has shown (Munro & Derwing, 1995), it is possible to improve comprehensibility and intelligibility even when there is no improvement in the degree of accentedness.

When teaching pronunciation, if mutual intelligibility is the goal, then model accents need not be native-speaker accents as long as the model is intelligible. A 2013 study by John
Beliefs on an ELF Framework

Murphy cites two advantages to working with comprehensible non-native English speech: one, it can serve as an aspirational model to students; and two, it is meaningful and relevant to students’ needs. Murphy explores how realistic it would be to incorporate non-native English speaker models by having 34 specialists in pronunciation teaching evaluate a recorded speech sample by Javier Bardem, an award-winning film actor who speaks with a Spanish accent. The specialists completed questionnaires that included 16 core items asking respondents to rate on a 5-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree statements related to Javier Bardem’s speech such as: he uses ‘thought groups’ effectively; I found him very easy to understand; he uses ‘tones’ and ‘intonation’ effectively; his use of rhythm is effective; he uses contrastive stress effectively; and there were few, if any, segmental errors’ (Murphy, 2013, p.263).

The results indicated that Javier Bardem is an intelligible, comprehensible non-native English speaker; 100% of respondents stated that they agreed or strongly agreed that they found him very easy to understand. What is interesting is that this was despite the fact that 53% of respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement that there were few segmental errors; however, most of the questions about his use of suprasegmentals were favorable in at least 80% of answers. These results suggest that using Bardem’s speech sample as one of several models in and ESL/EFL setting could be helpful for many reasons, not least of which is as a model for students concerned that they must have perfect segmental pronunciation in order to be intelligible. Non-native English speech can help focus students on what makes speech intelligible and how best to use suprasegmental issues such as word stress, prominence and pacing.

Katy Simpson Davies and Laura Patsko in VOICES, an online magazine that is put out by the British Council, identified four principal areas that are thought to be essential for ELL intelligibility, many of which were adapted from Jennifer Jenkins’ 2000 book, The Phonology of
BELIEFS ON AN ELF FRAMEWORK

*English as an International Language*, and Robin Walker’s 2010 book, *Teaching the Pronunciation of English as a Lingua Franca*. They are:

1. Most consonant phonemes
2. Appropriate consonant cluster simplification (meaning that often adding a sound is more intelligible than deleting one)
3. Vowel length distinctions
4. Nuclear Stress

It is possible then to teach pronunciation and provide error correction in such a way that focuses on comprehensibility and intelligibility rather than the achievement of a perfect native speaker-like accent. One way of doing so is through the use of non-native models of input. Doing so has the potential to not only aid the listening comprehension of our students in meaningful and authentic ways, but might also help to transform the view that there is a hierarchy of accented English, one in which the non-native English student will inevitably find themselves to be at the bottom.

**Accent Attitudes**

Another issue when it comes to deciding on whether or not to provide alternative pronunciation models is the possibility of a link between accent and learner identity. While one student may like their accent because it shows where they are from, another may desire to get rid of it all-together by attaining a native-like accent. Recent research (Sung, 2016; McCrocklin & Link, 2016) is confirming that for some students, there is a link between accent and identity, while for others, there is not. Teachers, when deciding how to teach pronunciation and which accents will be provided as input, need to personalize their decisions to the students who are in their classes.
Sung (2016) found that for some students, the most pragmatic concern involved being intelligible with other non-native speakers. 18 Chinese undergraduate students (16 females and 2 males) majoring in English, completed in-depth semi-structured interviews. These interviews lasted between 45 and 75 minutes and were audio-recorded. Sung found that of the 18 participants, 13 expressed a desire to speak English with a native-speaker accent. The recurring reason amongst them was their perceived association of a positive self-image as an L2 speaker of English with having a native-like accent. In part, this seems to have been because a native speaker-like accent reflects their competence at speaking English and also because it is closely related to the participants’ perception that native-speaker English is the “best” English. One student is quoted as saying:

I want to sound like a native speaker instead of a Hong Kong … like a Hong Kong student. Because … I think it may …maybe … maybe because speaking in a … like with a native accent, people give you more superior feeling sometimes. (Sung, 2016; p. 59)

There also seemed to be a desire to avoid the negative judgements associated with having a local Hong Kong accent. One student stated, “If I have a very Hong Kong English accent, it is an insult and. It is quite embarrassing to have Hong Kong accent so.. And that’s why I really want to have … a very native accent” (Sung, 2016, p. 60).

Amongst those who preferred to have a local accent, the recurring reason was a perceived relationship between accent and identity. One example is from a female participant who stated:

I didn’t want to sound like the western people. I think it’s good for me to maybe keep my own identity but sometimes I may try to maybe polish my English and try to speak more fluently just like them. […] I just want to be myself, and yes, I want to be considered as a Hong Kong speaker to them. Because … because … even though I try to imitate their
accent, they may still consider me as a[n] outsider … maybe other than their own culture. So there is actually no point for me to try to follow every rules of the westerners, and actually I’m still a Hong Kong people. So.. maybe it’s better for me to speak in a Hong Kong style more. (Sung, 2016, p. 61)

Another reason given by students was that they did not find their accent to be problematic because it did not get in the way of effective communication. Additionally, as one student stated, “Also because you can’t really change that accent, so I just prefer okay” (Sung, 2016; p. 21).

This study illustrates the difficulty of including identity issues when making decisions related to the instructions of pronunciation and the importance of consulting students to determine their learning objectives. However, perhaps with more examples of intelligible non-native English accents in the classroom, students would expand their image of what a successful EFL student sounds like and would better understand the factors that most contribute to intelligibility.

A 2018 study by McCrocklin & Link found similar results. 78 primarily Chinese ESL university students completed a survey of 23 Likert-scale questions; 8 were also interviewed. In questions related to the students’ perceptions of their own accents, the results were fairly neutral, with neither very strong nor negative perceptions. What is interesting to note, however, was that 13 participants strongly agreed to the prompt, “I like it when people recognize my accent and native language when speaking English,” while only 5 students strongly disagreed (p.133). Again demonstrating, that for some students there is a link between identity and accent.

In the responses to questions related to students’ attitudes toward native-like accents, the highest mean score, of 4.08, was in response to the prompt, “It is important that my English pronunciation be easy to understand”. This is slightly higher than the mean response to the
prompt, “I want to have a native-like English accent” of 4.05 (p.134). However, with 21 students strongly agreeing to the statement, it is worth noting once again that for many students, despite the difficulty of succeeding, the goal is achieving a native-like accent, so the objectives of an ELF curriculum may not be consistent with students’ needs.

In terms of a connection between identity and accent, the results were again predominately neutral, with a 2.79 mean to the prompt, “I like my accent in English because it shows who I am and where I have come from”. Interview responses to the question, “Do you think that your accent in English reflects your cultural identity?” found that all 8 students said no. Rather, said one student, “the culture influence the accent, but accent not really reflect back to culture” (McCrocklin & Link, 2016, p. 138). Students showed no fear regarding a loss of identity were they to lose their L2 accent. Rather, students viewed achieving a native-like English accent as a valuable skill that would give them pride and feelings of excitement. It should be noted, however, that it is hard for students to recognize how losing an accent could contribute to a loss of identity, and this uncertainty could lead to results that would not reflect what the actual impact of losing ones’ accent would be on an individual.

The results of these two studies seem to show that teachers should not be overly concerned with damaging a student’s perception of their identity by focusing on accent reduction, and that for many students, accent reduction is still the goal. It remains to be seen if this would remain the case were students exposed to more examples of strong, intelligible non-native speakers rather than continually being exposed to examples of what the ‘best’ English sounds like, as spoken by a native-English speaker. Additionally, by bringing in multiple examples of intelligible non-native English speech, we can help students expand their definition of what the ‘best’ English sounds like and help them set realistic goals in terms of the need for
accent reduction. These possible curriculum choices may align with Malaysian student needs, but research is needed to assess the degree to which students are open to a framework in which native-speaker accents cease to be the target of instruction.

**Cultural Content**

Language is both a part of culture and a means of accessing culture (Hynninen, 2014), and therefore no language learning curriculum is complete without an exploration of culture. Kearney (2010) writes of the importance of identity and culture in understanding the process of language learning. Kearney writes that language learners bring their own unique motivations and histories into the classroom, fundamentally making “language learning as a process inherently enmeshed with the negotiation, exploration, and remaking of selves situated in real, imagined, and possible worlds” (p. 334). In order to undertake such a process, classroom curriculum needs to present opportunities for language learners to explore not only the culture of those to whom they will be engaging, but their own cultural narratives as well. Kearney writes of the possibility of engaging students in four significant ways; first, by helping them to create frames of reference through which to interpret and shape their experiences; secondly, by teaching them what a point of view is; third by examining cultural perspectives unfamiliar to them in order to help give them a new lens through which to look at culture; and finally, by encouraging students to see outside their own cultural perspective by attempting to see themselves as others outside their culture might.

By necessity ELF users demonstrate an ability to communicate across cultural boundaries. Successful communication between cultures requires an Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) on the part of the interlocutors. This entails not only linguistic knowledge but pragmatic and cultural knowledge in order to know how to act in a
variety of real-world situations with people from different cultures (Sadeghi & Sepahi, 2018). As Raigón-Rodríguez & Larrea-Espinar (2015) state:

The new intercultural speakers, therefore, are those who feel comfortable among people who have cultural baggage different to their own, who are capable of accepting the difference and do not feel threatened by it. Moreover, they are able to objectify their own beliefs, to negotiate, to make themselves understood and to make the effort to understand others. (p.7)

Cultural misunderstandings can impede the learning process and create conflict in and out of the classroom. Conversely, helping our students acquire a cross-cultural competency can preempt misunderstandings and can help students have more linguistic creativity, as in the case of idioms that are shared across cultures (Pitzel, 2016). Further, understanding the similarities and differences between cultures helps create an appreciation and tolerance when engaging with cultures different than one’s own.

Thus, one major implication of the global use of English involves expanding and/or replacing the native-speaker as the only model perspective that most classrooms and classroom materials either implicitly or explicitly encourage. We need to move beyond the native-speaker to non-native speaker model and the teaching of only native-speaker culture (Hynninnen, 2014). English language learners (ELL) come from a range of backgrounds and, as discussed in relation to accent, their cultural identity can often become tied up in language choice. This is particularly true in Malaysia where there is no one homogenous culture or ethnicity and where students are often multilingual. ELF allows students to establish their own norm; therefore, multiple models of what English proficiency looks like need to be presented in terms of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. This can be done implicitly, with curriculum content from outer circle and
expanding circle Englishes, and explicitly, by talking about these matters openly with students. As long as students continue to be encouraged to view English dialects in a hierarchical manner, wherein their own dialect or accent is viewed as inferior, they will continue to engage in unrealistic goal setting. In situations in which ELLs will be using English primarily as a lingua franca, intelligibility needs to become the goal, not native speaker proficiency. Thus, to inform curricular decisions for an ELF Framework in Malaysia, teachers need to know both how and with whom they will be using English but also how open students are to (a) non-standard lexical and grammatical forms, (b) non-native accents, and (c) cultural discussions that go beyond English L1 cultures.

**Teacher Beliefs**

Cultural misunderstandings are not limited to interactions outside of the classroom between non-native speakers. They are equally likely to occur within a classroom between student and teacher. These misunderstandings are often the result of teacher beliefs, both conscious and unconscious (Kumar, Karabenick, & Burgoon, 2015). Ham & Dekkers (2019) used Kagan (2010) to define teacher beliefs as the implicit and often unconscious assumptions teachers hold about their students, classroom and classroom materials. A 2015 survey of 241 white middle school teachers about their implicit and explicit beliefs about diversity, Kumar, Karabenick, & Burgoon, found “that teachers’ personal beliefs are instrumental in shaping their professional identity” (p. 542) and that it was crucial that preservice teachers reflect critically on their beliefs and attitudes and the ways these beliefs could affect their classroom practices; not once, but as part of an ongoing process of reflection.

This type of reflection is crucial because to be a teacher is to have power that directly impacts the lives of students. When and what a teacher chooses to correct has the ability to
impact a student’s language acquisition, and what a teacher chooses to correct may have roots in implicit biases that they hold. How much better would it be for a teacher to be motivated to correct their students out of a desire to help propel the students further towards the achievement of their own goals, rather than because the teacher has a bias towards or against a certain similect or dialect and the characteristics associated with it? Moreover, imagine the impact on a student whose teacher believes that communicating effectively means making no mistakes or who believes that their students should aim for a native-speaker accent if that is not what the student also believes or wants. Students bring their own set of beliefs and assumptions into the classroom with them, beliefs which do not always align with the beliefs of the teachers. Not only can this make error correction less effective in helping students achieve their goals, but it can lead to misunderstandings that can have a serious impact on student achievement.

Yan Guo (2012) provided first hand examples of this by drawing on in-depth interviews with thirty-eight immigrant parents from fifteen countries, Guo provides examples of the many ways in which teachers misinterpret student behaviors due to their own cultural biases. She quotes two parents from two very different cultures as saying:

You know how she (the teacher) started, ‘I think your son doesn’t respect women. He doesn’t look at me when I talk to him’ … In our culture, it is a sign of respect. When the children talk to their parents and elders, they look down. (Dae, 1 South Korea)

Recently I was talking to one of the ESL teachers. She said she had one student from Pakistan and he is always following the teachers. She said, “I’m annoyed because he is following me all the time.” I said, “It is not that he is following you, but it shows respect. You know in our culture you can’t walk in front of the teacher, so all he is doing is showing respect for you.” (Aneeka, Pakistan) (p.125)
In addition, misunderstandings can arise when classroom materials present only English language culture. This can be seen in classrooms where English language learners struggle to relate their life experiences to the assignments they are being given, or where individual achievement is emphasized over collective learning, or when students are denied permission to incorporate their native language into their learning because of an English only policy in the class (Lee, 2010). Thus, when a teacher teaches only through the lens of the dominant culture, English language learners can become excluded in unintended ways. And it is often not just the teacher who instructs through a cultural lens, it is also the textbooks and the school curriculum. Yoonjung Choi describes in her 2013 article the experiences of three Korean-American teachers of social studies. She writes:

Eight years of teaching ELLs had taught Mr. Moon that many of his ELL students distrust and attach little significance to school curriculum when their culture is misrepresented and Eurocentric worldviews are reinforced. (p.14)

When Mr. Moon revised the curriculum to include a more balanced and in-depth approach, especially as it related to his Hispanic and Middle Eastern students, he found that his students were more willing to take leading roles in the class discussion and were able to transform the content into meaningful education opportunities (Choi, 2013).

Throughout this discussion of ELF, the interplay of student beliefs about culture, accent, and identity, and the way these beliefs affect their language goals, makes it clear that the more aware a teacher is about those beliefs, the better able the teacher will be to make curriculum choices that help the students achieve their goals, or perhaps, better yet, to adapt their goals to ultimately better meet their needs. While there have been studies that looked at the use of English as a Lingua Franca (Dewey, 2013; Mauranen, 2015; Mauranen 2018); as well as studies
which looked at the beliefs of educators (Curran & Chern., 2017; Jenkins, 2016); and studies which looked at the beliefs of students on language learning, many of which were well inventoried and discussed by Horwitz (1999) in her review of studies which used the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), there have been very few studies directly contrasting the beliefs of educators with those of their students, particularly beliefs related to the emergence of English as a lingua franca. The purpose of this study is therefore to investigate how prevalent ELF beliefs are among adult English language learners, especially in terms of their expectations when it comes to what and how they will be taught in the classroom, and the extent to which their instructors are aware of and/or share these beliefs. The research questions which guided the study were:

1. To what extent do the beliefs of adult English language students align with a teaching curriculum that emphasizes an English as a Lingua Franca perspective?
2. To what extent do the beliefs of teachers of adult English language learners align with an ELF perspective?
3. To what extent are teachers aware of their students’ beliefs?

**Method**

**Research Participants**

This research was approved by the University of Wisconsin River Falls Institution Review Board to ensure the safety and protection of human participants. There were 86 English language learners all taking English courses at 4 language centers in Penang, Malaysia and 18 teachers from the same four centers participating in the project. Two of the centers were located on mainland Malaysia, one in Butterworth and one in Bukit Merdajam. Those centers offered evening adult classes that met once a week for an hour and a half and were focused on English
for life and work. According to the center’s website, the classes were designed to meet the needs of adult learners by helping them to improve their general knowledge of English and/or to learn how to use English in the workplace to communicate with friends and work colleagues more effectively.

The two other centers were located on the island of Penang, Malaysia, with one center on in Bayan Lepas on the Southern more industrialized part of the island and one center in the Northern part of the island in Tanjung Tokong where more expats live and where English is widely spoken. The center in the South offered similar classes to those on the mainland which met once a week in the evening for an hour and a half and had the added focus of using English for professional purposes. In contrast, the classes held at the center in the Northern part of the island met in the morning for two hours twice a week and were advertised as conversation classes. They explicitly focused more on social English and improving oral fluency and confidence.

**Students**

All students at all four centers ranged in age from 18 to 70 with the majority of students between the ages of 18-40 (Figure 1). Proficiency levels ranged from Elementary to Upper

**Figure 1**

*Student Ages across the Four Centers*
Intermediate. Students were surveyed from three different course types; conversation classes which met twice a week for 2 hours each class; English for Life and Work, in which students met for one and a half hours once a week; and Enhance English for Adults, which also met once a week for one and a half hours (Figure 2). Table 1 provides a complete breakdown of the levels and classes of the students.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Class and Levels</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class and Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation Classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Intermediate</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate Plus</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English for Life and Work Classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELW2: Pre-Intermediate</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELW3: Intermediate</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance English for Adults</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEA2: Elementary</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEA3: Pre-Intermediate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEA4: Intermediate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEA5: Intermediate Plus</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear level/No answer</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students were asked how many years they had studied English, with over half of the students (n=46) reporting more than 10 years-experience learning English; however, it became clear that many students did not know if this question was referring to their time studying at the language center or in general. Students were also asked to identify their first language; 54 students reported Mandarin as their first language; 9 reported Tamil; 5 reported Bahasa Malaysia; 5 identified Korean as their first language; 4 reported Japanese; German and Hokkien
each had two speakers; and Spanish, Thai, Burmese and Persian/Farsi each had one native speaking student (Figure 3).

Figure 3

First Language of Students

Teachers

18 teachers from 4 connected language centers chose to take part in the survey, with a return rate of 100%. All the teachers were experienced teachers, with 4 teachers having 2-5 years teaching experience, 4 having 6-10 years, 7 having 11-15 years, and 3 having 20 or more years of teaching experience (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Years of Teaching Experience
All 18 teachers identified English as their first language, with one teacher adding Afrikaans as an additional first language. Five teachers reported that they spoke zero other languages, 8 teachers reported speaking one other language, and 5 teachers identified as being able to speak 2 other languages (Figure 5). Table 2 breaks down which languages the teachers speak other than English. All of the teachers surveyed are immigrants to Malaysia; however, there is a wide range in the number of years spent within Malaysia, from only a few months to over 10 years, with 3 of the senior teachers being married to Malaysian spouses.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Languages Spoken</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahasa Indonesian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both the students and teachers involved in this study are representative of students and language instructors in Malaysia. The students at the language centers in this research are a mix of Malay students and immigrants to Malaysia, all of whom are able to afford the cost of tuition. Teachers, in order to qualify for a work visa in Malaysia, must have a university degree, a recognized TESOL/TEFL certification and at least 2 years of experience.
BELIEFS ON AN ELF FRAMEWORK

Research Design

Data Collection Tools

Student Survey

A primary goal of the research was to discover what students believe about language learning and what their expectations are when it comes to language learning in the classroom. More specifically, the goal was to investigate the extent to which those beliefs align with the beliefs of English as a Lingua Franca. Thus, to begin, 3 core ELF beliefs were identified and isolated. Then 3-4 correlating statements were written to identify the students’ beliefs on that topic; beliefs one and two each had 4 correlating statements, and belief 3 had 3 correlating statements. The 3 core beliefs, along with the survey questions meant to address them, are:

1. A large percentage of adult English language learners use English as a second language to communicate with other non-native speakers; as such, they should be exposed to input that uses intelligible non-native speakers as models (Q2, Q7, Q11, Q13).

2. It is not necessary for effective communication to have a perfect native-speaker accent. Inaccuracies in both grammar and accent which do not impede intelligibility should not be a major focus of error correction or class time (Q5, Q9, Q10, Q15).

3. Cultural understanding plays an important role in pragmatic competency, which in turn plays a crucial role in effective communication; as such, ESL students should be exposed to cultural content from other non-native speaker cultures with whom they may attempt to communicate (Q4, Q6, Q12).

Additionally, four statements related to the amount of anxiety students feel in the classroom or when speaking to native versus non-native speakers were included. The rationale being that understanding how often and when students feel anxiety can help teachers mitigate those feelings
through teaching practices in the same way that understanding student beliefs can be used for curriculum development. The four statements were Q1, Q3, Q8, and Q14.

The survey language was then simplified as much as possible due to the inclusion of lower level students, and during the survey students were free to use translators or to ask fellow students or their teacher for assistance. Ultimately, the survey for the students consisted of 15 statements which asked the student to rank the extent to which they agreed or disagreed, with 1 representing strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 don’t know, 4 agree, and 5 strongly agree. The students were also asked for demographic data including their first language, age, number of years studying English and the level of their class. The full survey can be found in Appendix A.

**Teacher Survey**

The teacher survey was designed to identify teacher awareness of student beliefs as well as their own beliefs on what effective teaching and curriculum development should look like. Seven statements were written to access the extent to which they identify with the core beliefs of ELF and 3 statements were written to identify the extent to which they were aware of both student expectations as well as how their students were using English. Those 3 statements, numbers 1, 7, and 9, allowed for a direct comparison between student beliefs and teacher awareness. Teachers were also asked ‘what is your first language’, ‘what other languages can you communicate in’, and ‘how many years have you taught English’. The full survey can be found in Appendix B.

**Data Collection Procedures**

**Student Procedures**

Teachers were allowed some discretion on when to hand out the surveys. Students were first given a consent form after which time was given for any questions they might have. They
were told that they could ask the other students for help or use a translator if they felt it was necessary. No inducements were offered, and students were told they could decline or stop taking the survey at any time. Students were given 10-20 minutes to complete the survey, but there was no time pressure. In some cases, the teachers chose to allow the students to take the surveys home in order to not utilize undue amounts of class time. When finished, the completed surveys were collected by the teacher and given to a member of the front of house staff who took them to the main office where they were compiled together. A copy of the consent form can be found in Appendix C.

**Teacher Procedures**

At a staff meeting for all 4 centers, the teachers were first given a voluntary consent form and were informed that the survey was completely voluntary, and they could decline or quit at any time. The purpose for the survey was explained and time allowed for questions. The teachers were then given 10 minutes to complete the survey which was then placed in a brown envelope and given to the researcher. After completion of the teacher part of the survey, the teachers were given the student portion to hand out to their respective classes and the procedures on how to do so were explained as outlined above.

**Data analysis**

Once compiled, the data from both the student surveys and teacher surveys were assigned numerical values which was then quantitatively analyzed. For the student surveys, a composite score was also created to address research question 1, interlocutor beliefs. This involved reverse coding the questionnaire statements 5, 6, 7, and 9 and analyzing them with statements 4, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 15. Additionally, a second composite was created using statements 10 and 15 to appraise how open students are to an ELF approach.
Results

Research question 1: To what extent do the beliefs of adult English language students align with a teaching curriculum that emphasizes an English as a lingua franca perspective?

To address Research Question 1, the survey asked students three sets of questions that assessed their beliefs regarding who they perceive to be their most likely interlocutor in English (native speakers or other non-native speakers) and thus, how they should be prepared to communicate with said interlocutor (Q2, 7, 11, and 13); their tolerance for accent and deviation from native speaker norms and the use of error correction (Q5, 9, 10, and 15); and their perspectives on the cultural content of the lesson (whether it should be native English culture or a more diverse range of cultures) (Q4, 6, and 12).

Interlocutor Beliefs

Four questions specifically investigated student attitudes toward native speaker and non-native speaker interlocutors. Figure 6 visually demonstrates the responses to the four questions.

Figure 6

Student Interlocutor Beliefs
Question 2 asked students to respond to the statement, ‘Most of the people I use English with are native speakers of English’. Out of 86 students, slightly more than half (n=46) disagreed that native speakers of English were their most likely interlocutors when using English. This suggests that while half of all the students do interact more with non-native speakers of English than native speakers, it is not the case for every student. Rather, a third of students reported that they do use English most often with native speakers. Question 7 asked students to respond to the statement, ‘It is important for listening exercises to only use native-speaker accents’. 62% of students agreed to this statement (44 agreed and 9 strongly agreed), 16% were unsure, and 23% disagreed. This does not suggest that the majority of students are open to non-native speaker models as would be found in an ELF classroom. Question 11 also dealt with listening in the classroom. It asked students to express agreement or disagreement on the statement, ‘I want more listening exercises with speakers who have non-native English accents. 4 students strongly disagreed, 21 disagreed, 27 were unsure, 28 agreed and 7 strongly agreed. For an ELF classroom, these results are slightly more promising, with 41% aligning to an ELF framework with an additional 31% unsure. Question 13 gave the prompt, ‘English class should help prepare students to communicate in English with other people who are not native speakers’. This is a core tenant of ELF and overwhelmingly 76% of students agreed; 1 student strongly disagreed, 9 disagreed, 12 were unsure, 53 agreed and 12 strongly agreed. Thus, the survey answers suggest that while students agree that it is important to gain the skills necessary to communicate with other non-native speakers, many are resistant to teaching practices which aim to do so through exposure to non-native accents.

**Beliefs on Error Correction and Native Speaker Models**
To address student beliefs on native-speaker accents as well as their opinions on accuracy versus intelligibility, students were asked to respond to four statements (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7**

*Student Beliefs on Native Speaker Models*

The first, question 5, stated, ‘It is important to have a perfect native speaker accent’. A significant majority, 73%, of students, strongly agreed (21 students) or agreed (42 students) with the statement, 5 were unsure, 18 disagreed, and one strongly disagreed. This does not align with an ELF framework which would encourage students to focus on intelligibility rather than a native-speaker accent. Question 9 asks students to respond to the statement, ‘The teacher should correct me every time I make a mistake’. 86% of students agreed (25 strongly agreed, 49 agreed) with only 5 unsure, 7 who disagreed, and 1 who strongly disagreed. This is not aligned with an ELF classroom framework, nor with most classrooms as they currently exist. Question 10 stated,
‘It is okay if I have an accent as long as other people can understand me’. 8 students strongly agreed, 52 agreed, 13 were unsure, 13 disagreed and 1 strongly disagreed. This is the first result in this group of questions to align with an ELF perspective. The final question was question 15 which stated, ‘I don’t have to speak perfect English to communicate with other people’. The results were almost perfectly split with 7 students strongly agreeing, 31 agreeing, 12 unsure, 30 disagreeing and 7 strongly disagreeing. The survey answers suggest that many student beliefs related to non-native speaker accents do not align with ELF classroom framework. However, the results also appear to show some openness to an ELF classroom framework which emphasized intelligibility over accent reduction.

**Beliefs on the Role of Culture**

Three statements were written to investigate the students’ beliefs towards the role of culture in effective communication. Question 4 stated, ‘Knowing about a person’s culture is an important part of communicating. 87% of students strongly agreed (29 students) or agreed (46 students), 8 were unsure, and only 4 students disagreed, with zero students strongly disagreeing. This is strongly aligned with an ELF perspective. Conversely, question 6 stated, ‘Classroom materials should only teach about English native-speaker cultures’. 10 students strongly disagreed, 38 disagreed, 22 were unsure, 16 agreed, and 1 strongly agreed. Thus, 56% of students were aligned to an ELF framework with only 20% non-aligned. Finally, question 12 stated that ‘Classroom materials should teach about my culture and the cultures of other non-native speakers’. 36 agreed or strongly agreed (5 strongly agreed, 31 agreed), 28 were unsure, 23 disagreed or strongly disagreed (5 strongly disagreed, 18 disagreed). One third of the students were unsure how to respond to this statement which suggests room for growth towards an ELF perspective, one to which 42% of students are already aligned. Overall, respondents in this area
were the most aligned with ELF beliefs (Figure 8). This suggests that students are open to being taught about non-native cultures, which would be a necessary component of any curriculum built around an English as a Lingua Franca perspective.

**Figure 8**

*Student Beliefs on the Role of Culture*

To further quantify the data related to Research Question 1, two composite variables were created. The first composite included responses to all the statements designed to investigate student beliefs related to core components of an ELF classroom framework (Q 4, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 15) except Q2 which asked how English is being used and is not therefore a belief. All statements were coded to show how closely the response was aligned to an ELF statement with 5 strongly aligned and 1 strongly non-aligned. When averaged, only 8% were strongly aligned with an additional 28% aligned, for a total of 36% of students aligned to an ELF framework.
This compared to nearly half (48%) who were either in disagreement (38%) or strong disagreement (10%). 17% of students fell into the unsure category (Figure 9).

**Figure 9**

*Student Beliefs Composite Score*

![Pie chart showing student beliefs composite scores](image)

These composite results were then broken down even further into the three different types of classes; the conversation class, which had 26 students spread across its levels, the Enhance English for Adults (EEA) which had 34 students, including one private student, and English for Life and Work (ELW), with 26 students spread across the levels. Figures 10-18 were created to show the degree to which student beliefs were either not-aligned (scores of 1 or 2), unsure (scores of 3) or aligned (scores of 4 and 5) within each class type; with the thought that classes which had a conversation focus may be more likely to be aligned with an ELF framework than professional courses. As can be seen in Figures 10-12 which show interlocutor beliefs (Q7, 11, 13); Figures 13-15, beliefs about models (Q 5, 9, 10, 15); and Figures 16-18: cultural beliefs (Q4, 6, 12), this was most often not the case.
As can be seen in Figures 10, 11 and 12, none of the classes were aligned with Q7, the desire for listening exercises with only native models, with the conversations students being the most for the idea (76%); likewise, the conversation students were the least aligned on Q11, with only 16% wanting more listening exercises with non-native speakers, compared to 46% of EEA students and 56% of ELW students. All of the classes were aligned with Q13 which stated that English class should help prepare students to communicate with non-native speakers, with 89% of EEA students being aligned compared to 64% of conversation students and 67% of ELW.

Figures 13, 14 and 15, visibly demonstrate the lack of alignment with Q5, a desire for a native speaker-like accent, or Q11, a desire for constant error correction by any class; while all were aligned with Q10. For Q15, which stated that perfect English is not necessary to communicate, EEA students were aligned while neither the conversation students nor the ELW were.
There was little difference amongst class alignment when it came to cultural beliefs as evidenced by Figures 16, 17 and 18. Classes aligned favorably to both Q4, which stated that knowing about a person’s culture is an important part of language learning, with 92% of conversation students aligned, 80% of EEA and 89% of ELW students, and Q6, about the sole use of native speaker culture content. All three were aligned against the idea with just over half of EEA (51%) students, 56% of conversation students and 59% of ELW students. None of the classes were aligned with Q12 which said that classroom materials should teach content related to their own culture or that of other non-native speakers.

The second composite variable is comprised of only two statements, Q10 and Q15. These two statements, ‘It is okay if I have an accent as long as other people can understand me’, and ‘I don’t have to speak perfect English to communicate with other people’ comprise the heart of an ELF framework from which classroom decisions would be made. While many of the other statements dealt with specific aspects of curriculum design, these two statements only ask students to respond to how they feel about the accuracy of their English compared to their intelligibility. The scores were then added together and placed on a scale where a score of 9-10 is highly open to an ELF approach, 6-8 open, 3-5 not open, and 0-2 strongly closed to an ELF.
approach. The results indicated that only 17% were not open to an ELF approach while 10% were highly open and 73% were open (Figure 19).

**Figure 19**

*Student Openness to an ELF approach*

![Pie chart showing percentages of students' openness to an ELF approach.](chart.png)

The survey results suggest that Research Question 1 should be answered as follows. Students are open to an EFL framework which emphasizes intelligibility over accuracy, although they still believe strongly that they should be corrected every time they make a mistake and that having a perfect native-speaker accent is a worthwhile goal. When asked about the use of non-native speaker models in listening exercises, students often expressed a belief in the default model of language instruction wherein native speakers are the sole models for what an English speaker should sound like; however, the majority of students are open to learning about non-native speaker cultures. Overall, there was little difference according to the type of class.

Taking all three areas into consideration, interlocutor beliefs, tolerance for non-native speaker deviations, and choice of culture, it seems likely that students welcome an ELF approach but may still hold beliefs that inhibit their full outright support of it. It is possible that students may be less inclined toward non-native speaker models for listening because they are already exposed to a great deal of non-native English input through their interactions with their peers.
Research Question 2: To what extent do teachers of adult English language learners align with an ELF perspective?

To address Research Question 2, the survey asked teachers seven similar questions as asked to their students, organized to fit into 3 sets related to the core ELF beliefs previously identified. The first set, which included questions 2 and 4, assessed their beliefs regarding the type of input students should be exposed to in light of their most likely interlocutor in English; the second set (Q3, 6, and 10) related to intelligibility versus accuracy, especially as it relates to native speaker models; and the final set (Q5 and 8) addressed the role of culture in the classroom.

Interlocutor Beliefs

In Q2, teachers were asked to respond to the statement, ‘Listening exercises should only use native-English accents as models’. 94% of teachers disagreed. The second question in the set asked teachers to rate their belief that ‘English class should help prepare students to communicate with people who are not native English speakers’. One teacher disagreed and 3 were unsure; on the other hand, 10 teachers agreed and 4 strongly agreed. Both results are very closely aligned (see Figure 20) with an ELF framework which seeks to provide students with input models which will help prepare them to use English with other non-native interlocutors.

Figure 20

Teacher Interlocutor Beliefs
Beliefs on Native Speaker Models

Three questions specifically investigated teacher beliefs toward the goal of native-English speaker accents, as well as accuracy versus intelligibility in the choice of when to error correct. Question 3 stated, ‘Communicating effectively means making no grammar or pronunciation mistakes’. 18 teachers disagreed. This is closely aligned with an ELF perspective and was the only question so universally agreed upon. Question 6 asked teachers to respond to the statement that ‘Students should aim for a perfect native speaker-like accent’. 16 teachers disagreed and 2 were unsure. This too is in close alignment with ELF beliefs. Finally, Question 10 stated that ‘Grammar and pronunciation errors which do not impact effective communication should not be a major focus of error correction’. This statement resulted in a near equal division, with 9 teachers disagreeing and 8 agreeing, with one teacher writing in the answer ‘depends’ (see figure 21). This suggests that while teachers strongly agree that it is not always necessary to be accurate in terms of accent or grammar in order to effectively communicate, they are divided on whether to ignore such errors in the classroom.

Figure 21

Teachers Beliefs on Native Speaker Models
Beliefs on the Role of Culture

Teachers were asked two questions which related to their beliefs on the role of culture in the classroom. Question 5 asked them to respond to the statement, ‘Learning about other cultures is an important part of learning a language’. 5 teachers strongly agreed, 11 agreed and 2 disagreed. Question 8 stated that ‘It is important that classroom materials should teach about non-native speaker cultures’. 1 teacher strongly agreed, 11 agreed, 2 were unsure and 3 disagreed. These results, when taken together, show that while the majority of teacher believe that culture is an important part of language learning, they are less sure whether non-native cultures should be included in the conversation (see Figure 22). While the majority of teachers’ beliefs in the role of culture align with an ELF perspective, a significant portion, nearly 30% were either unsure or disagreed that non-native cultures should be included, a belief that stands in stark contrast to a core ELF belief.

Figure 22

Teacher Beliefs on the Role of Culture

![Bar chart showing teacher responses to questions 5 and 8. Questions 5 and 8 are:]

- **Q5**: Learning about other cultures is an important part of learning a language.
- **Q8**: It is important that classroom materials should teach about non-native speaker cultures.

- **Strongly Agree**: 5
- **Agree**: 11
- **Unsure**: 2
- **Disagree**: 3
- **Strongly Disagree**: 0
The survey results therefore suggest that Research Question 2 should be answered as follows. After considering all three areas, interlocutor beliefs, intelligibility versus accuracy and the role of culture, teacher beliefs were aligned with an ELF philosophy, much more so than the students were. With the exception of whether or not to correct errors which do not impede intelligibility, the majority of the teachers’ beliefs aligned with an ELF framework in every case.

**Research Question 3: To what extent are teachers aware of their students’ beliefs?**

To address Research Question 3, three questions were asked in order to create three direct comparisons between what the students believe and what the teachers think their students believe. The first contrasted student Q2 and teacher Q7 and investigated who teachers and students perceive to be the students’ most likely interlocutors in English (native speakers or other non-native speakers). The second contrasted student Q9 and teacher Q9 and looked at the extent and frequency that students desire error correction. The final contrast investigated the desire of students to have a perfect native speaker accent, as stated in student Q5 and teacher Q1.

**Student Interlocutor Contrast**

The first contrast, student Q2 and teacher Q7, concerned who the students were speaking English with outside the classroom. Students were asked in question 2 whether they agreed with the statement, ‘Most of the people I use English with are native speakers of English’. Teachers were asked to respond to question 7, ‘When my students use English outside the classroom, it is to communicate with native speakers’. It should be noted that a few teachers had difficulty answering this question, and there were only 16 total responses. Those teachers expressed an inability to group all of their students, past and present, into one blanket statement and felt that
the question needed to be rephrased to be more specific. Nonetheless, overall, the students and teachers were in agreement as can be seen in Figures 23 and 24.

**Figure 23**

*Student Use of English with Native Speakers*

**Figure 24**

*Teacher Beliefs about Student Use of English*

53% of students either strongly disagreed (10 students) or disagreed (36); 33% of students agreed (21 students) or strongly agreed (7). While 4 teachers were unsure, no teacher disagreed with the statement; rather, 67% of teachers either agreed (9 teachers) or strongly agreed (3 teachers).

Thus, while it could be said that teachers are generally aware of who their students are speaking English with, they should not overly generalize about whom individual students are using English with.

**Error Correction Contrast**

The second direct comparison asked students to respond to Q9, ‘The teacher should correct me every time I make a mistake’. Teachers were asked if they agreed or disagreed that ‘Students want to be corrected every time they make a mistake’. Students overwhelmingly (85%) reported a desire to be corrected every time they made a mistake, with 29% of students strongly agreeing, 56% of students agreeing, and only 9% showing any disagreement. Teachers on the
other hand disagreed with the statement, with 72% reporting that they do not think that students want to be corrected every time and only 17% agreeing (see Figures 25 and 26).

Figure 25

Student Desire for Error Correction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disagree</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don’t know</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agree</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 26

Teacher Belief on Student Wants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disagree</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don’t know</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agree</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, when taken in conjunction with the previously reported composite variable 1 results identified in Research Question 1, which found 47% of students not aligned with ELF beliefs, and contrasted with the fact that teachers were found to be significantly more aligned to ELF beliefs, this discrepancy might be related to a significant difference in perspective; one in which students are focused on a native speaker norm while the teachers share a perspective much more closely aligned to an ELF framework.

The Goal of a Native Speaker Accent Contrast

The final direct comparison concerned students’ desire to speak with native-speaker accents. The students were asked to respond to the statement, ‘It is important to have a perfect native-speaker accent’, while teachers were given the statement, ‘It is important to most of my students to have a native-speaker accent’. 56% of teachers disagreed with the statement, 22% were unsure and 22% agreed. In this case, the majority of the teachers were wrong. Students reported placing a strong importance on having a perfect native-speaker accent. 73% of students
agreed that it was important (24% strongly agreed and 49% agreed), while only 6% were unsure and 22% disagreed (21% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed) (see Figures 27 and 28).

The results here clearly indicate a disconnect between the goals the students are setting for themselves, goals which are at odds with an ELF framework, and their teacher’s awareness of those goals.

The survey results therefore indicate that Research Question 3 should be answered as follows. Teachers are largely incorrect in their assumptions about what students believe and expect from their education. While teachers were correct that students are using English to speak with other non-native interlocutors, their responses did not take into account the number of students for whom this statement was not true. Further, teachers were incorrect in their assessment of student desire for being corrected every time they make a mistake and of their desire to have a native English speaker accent.

**Discussion**

**Research Question 1**
The conditions for an English as a Lingua Franca classroom framework are mixed. The results of the first research question seem to caution teachers about the need to perform needs analyses with their students as well as offering an opportunity for teachers to help shape their students’ beliefs. While students do appear to be using English with non-native speakers more often than with native speakers, it is by no means all of the students, with only 53% students indicating that they do not use English primarily with native speakers and a third of students indicating that they do. For these students a teaching strategy that relied exclusively on the assumption that most students are using English as a lingua franca would not meet their needs. Yet no teachers said that they agreed with the statement that most students are using English to communicate with native speakers although this question did pose problems for some of the teachers surveyed. Nonetheless, the fact that no teachers agreed, may indicate that teachers are unaware that a significant portion of their students are using English to communicate with native speakers. However, students also expressed a strong desire for English class to help prepare them to communicate with non-native speakers.

This then seems to be one of the core takeaways from the results. Teachers need to be explicit about the reasons behind their approaches and classroom choices. Many students are unsure of how to respond or perhaps even what to believe. Teachers are in a unique position to help shape those beliefs to better help their students meet their goals. Students are often more sure of what their goals are then how to achieve those goals. Questions that asked them to have an opinion of what should happen in class, such as in listening exercises or in the cultural content of classroom materials, were much more likely to have a large number of students respond with ‘unsure’. By explaining curriculum decisions, teachers have the potential to sway many of those who are unsure onto a path that will best help them meet their individual goals.
Research Question 2

To design curriculum and make the choices about what to focus on in class, teachers need to be aware of the beliefs underlying their choices. The more they understand why they are making the choices they make, the better they can explain to their students how these choices will benefit them. Teachers seem to support an ELF approach, but are also hesitant, perhaps recognizing student ambiguity to it. By understanding how these beliefs might be used to help their students meet their goals, teachers will be more prepared to explain how the choices they make in the classroom are directly related to the ways students are using English in the real world.

Research Question 3

This survey found a serious discrepancy between teachers and students regarding error correction and the ultimate pronunciation goal students aspire to. The lack of congruity between student and teacher beliefs occurred mainly in areas where there is now a significant amount of data which has been able to inform teacher opinion. Teachers are aware that correcting every mistake by a student is both impractical and discouraging, yet students were also clear in their desire for rigorous error correction from their teachers, something which appears to be a surprise to some teachers. Yet even if teachers are aware of the impracticality and impossibility of truly correcting every error, perhaps this indicates a need to explain the way error correction is prioritized. If students could be made to understand that not all errors are equal in the effect they have on communication, nor is native English speech devoid of errors on the part of native speakers, perhaps students might develop more realistic expectations about error correction.

Additionally, the fact that students continue to set the goal of having a perfect native-speaker accent for themselves, despite there being no one uniform and thus perfect accent, also
seems to be something which teachers were not aware. Teachers either need to be prepared to help their students meet that herculean goal or help train them to focus on intelligibility rather than a native-speaker norm. Using non-native speaker accents and models, while explaining how their use can further the students own progress, will benefit students in more ways than one. By helping students adjust their focus, when appropriate, teachers might lessen the distance between their beliefs and student beliefs.

**Limitations**

Malaysia’s unique relationship to the English language, one in which ethnicity and class play a large role, caution researchers from overextending the implications of these results to other countries which may have a much different relationship to the English language. Further, while the 4 language centers at the heart of the study adequately represent a diverse selection of language learners in the area by being located in diverse areas from each other, both on the mainland peninsula and on the island of Penang, this area of Malaysia is very distinct from other parts of Malaysia. This study was limited in the number of students and educators surveyed, and a survey conducted with larger numbers would be beneficial in expanding our knowledge of the beliefs held by both teachers and students as well as their receptiveness to an English as a Lingua Franca approach. Another limitation of this study, based on teacher comments reported above, is that teachers may have been responding to the survey based on their experiences with students in general throughout their teaching experiences rather than the specific students taking the survey. This could explain some of the discrepancy between the students and their instructors.

**Conclusion and Implications**

Teacher beliefs largely seemed supportive of an ELF approach, meaning teachers seem willing to tolerate deviant language forms, focus on diverse cultures, and acknowledge that their
learners would more likely have non-native speaker interlocutors than native speakers. Student beliefs varied much more significantly, especially when it came to error correction and the pursuit of native-speaker accents. It is also clear that many of the beliefs about language use and learning that students hold are not beliefs shared by their teachers. However, many students appear open to the same goals shared by an ELF approach; namely, that English classes should help prepare students to communicate with non-native speakers.

Ultimately, these results indicate the necessity for teachers to do needs analyses on their students and classes as often as possible. Teachers are unlikely to encounter truly uniform groups of students who all share the same goals and beliefs. A simple survey such as the one used in this research, done at the beginning of a class, would immediately identify differences in expectations or needs and could help guide the teacher to make classroom decisions that not only conform to a framework of beliefs but which also help students’ adapt their beliefs to best help them meet their goals.
References


Derwing, T., & Munro, M.J. (2014). Once you have been speaking a second language for years, it’s too late to change your pronunciation. In L.J. Grant, & D. Brinton (Eds.), *Pronunciation myths: Applying second language research to classroom teaching*. 4-25. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press


Reynolds, B., & Yu, M. (2018). Addressing the language needs of administrative staff in Taiwan's internationalised higher education: Call for an English as a lingua franca curriculum to increase communicative competence and willingness to communicate. *Language and Education, 32*(2), 147-166.


Appendix A

**Student Information**
Please write in your answers.

1. What is your first language? ______________________________________________________

2. How many years have you studied English? __________________________________________

3. What level is your class? _________________________________________________________

4. How old are you? Please put an X in the box that corresponds to your age.

- □ 18 - 29  □ 30 - 39  □ 40 - 49  □ 50 - 59  □ 60 - 69

Please answer the following questions by providing the number that best describes your opinions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I worry about making mistakes when speaking English to native speakers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Most of the people I use English with are native speakers of English.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>When having a conversation, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Knowing about a person’s culture is an important part of communicating.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>It is important to have a perfect native-speaker accent.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Classroom materials should only teach about native-speaker cultures.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>It is important for listening exercises to only use native-speak accents.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I get nervous when I don’t understand every word during listening exercises.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The teacher should correct me every time I make a mistake.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>It is okay if I have an accent as long as other people can understand me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I want more listening exercises with speakers who have non-native English accents.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Classroom materials should teach about my culture and the cultures of other non-native speakers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>English class should help prepare students to communicate in English with other people who are not native English speakers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I worry about making mistakes when speaking to other non-native speakers in English.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I don’t have to speak perfect English to communicate with other people.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Teacher Questionnaire
Please write in your answers.

1. What is your first language? _____________________________________________

2. What other languages can you communicate in? _____________________________

3. How many years have you taught English? ________________________________

Please answer the following questions by providing the number that best describes your opinion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. It is important to most of my students to have a native-speaker English accent.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Listening exercises should only use native-English accents as models.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Communicating effectively means making no grammar or pronunciation mistakes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. English class should help prepare students to communicate with people who are not native English speakers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Learning about other cultures is an important part of learning a language.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Students should aim for a perfect native speaker-like accent.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. When my students use English outside the classroom, it is to communicate with native speakers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. It is important that classroom materials should teach about non-native speaker cultures.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Students want to be corrected every time they make a mistake.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Grammar and pronunciation errors which do not impact effective communication should not be a major focus of error correction.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Subject Consent Form for Participation of Human Subjects in Research
University of Wisconsin-River Falls

PLEASE DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ANYWHERE ON THIS SURVEY.

You are being asked to complete this survey to help researchers better understand some of the beliefs and goals of adult English language learners. Our goal is to learn if certain beliefs lead to less speaking anxiety. Once the study is completed, a summary of the results will be made available to you from your teacher.

Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. By completing this survey, you are giving your consent to be involved in the research. You may stop taking the survey at any time if you decide that you don’t want to continue.

Please feel free to ask any questions you may have to the person who is giving you this survey or to any of your classmates, especially if there is a word or phrase you do not understand. You should also feel free to use your phone to translate any of the questions.

Thank you for your cooperation and your time. We hope what we learn will enable us to better help you to meet your language goals in the future.

If you have concerns about how you were treated in this study, please contact: Dr. Diane Bennett, Director of Grants and Research, 101 North Hall, UWR, diane.bennett@uwrf.edu, 715-425-3195

This research project has been approved by the UW-River Falls Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, IRB-FY2019-75.

Again, please do not put your name anywhere on this survey.

Thank you,

Florence Pattee
Straits Quay Centre
014-930-3249