Learner Opportunities for Using English as a Lingua Franca with Other Plurilingual Speakers During Fieldwork in Cambodia

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Abstract
In this article I explore questions about English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) contact situations for Japanese university students during a short fieldwork trip in Cambodia. I report on a small study of Japanese students’ opportunities for using ELF with other non-native speakers (NNS), analysing the positive effects of those language-using episodes on students’ “willingness to communicate” in English (L2 WtC) (Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide & Shimizu, 2004). As the vast majority of English users are NNS in an Asian context, there are interesting questions about how Japanese students may shift their perspectives of ideal linguistic role models (Kosaka, 2014) such as: Do they stay with an idealised NS standard? Or do they shift to a position of competent plurilingual NNS user of English? To explore these questions, I surveyed the participants before, during and after the fieldwork trip, carried out interviews and did field observations. During intercultural exchanges with Cambodian university students, the students negotiated meaningful English (and Japanese) communication, despite frequent communication breakdowns. As a result of successful Lingua Franca episodes, students’ perspectives on ideal language models shifted from native speaker norms to include near-peer NNS role models. The students’ identities also changed from learners to users of English. This study indicates that learners’ confidence, motivation, agency for language learning and L2 WtC can be strengthened through different ELF interactions with plurilingual NNS in Asian contexts.

概要
本稿は、カンボジアでの短期フィールドワークに参加した日本人大学生の、共通語としての英語交流に関して考察する。小規模研究として、日本人学生の他の非英語母語話者との共通語として英語使用機会に焦点を当てながら、そした英語使用体験が「学習者の英語でコミュニケーションをしようとする気持ち」(Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide & Shimizu, 2004)にいかに良い影響を及ぼすのかを分析した。アジア諸国では大多数の英語使用者が非英語母語話者であることを鑑みると、日本人学生の理想的言語モデル（Kosaka，2014）の認識の変化に関していくつかの興味深い疑問が浮かび上がってくる。例えば、彼らはフィールドワーク終了後も理想化された英語母語話者基準を持ち続けるのか。もしくは、有能で複言語話せる非英語母語話者という姿勢を持つようになるのか。これらの問いを明らかにするために、本研究対象である日本人大学生にフィールドワーク参加前、参加中、そして参加後にアンケートを実施すると共に、インタビューや現地フィールドにおける観察を行った。カンボジア人大学生との交流中、やりとりが途中で中断してしまうことも度々あったが、日本人大学生たちは、英語（そして日本語）で意義のあるコミュニケーションを行い、共通語としての英語でのコミュニケーションの成功を積み重ねた結果、日本人大学生の理想的言語モデルは、ネイティブスピーカーを基準にしたものからノンネイティブスピーカーの自分に近い仲間をロールモデルとしたものへと変化した。また彼らのアイデンティティーも、英語学習者から英語使用者へと変化が見られた。本研究は、学習者の言語学習に対する自信、動機、主体性、そして、第二言語でコミュニケーションをしようという気持ちは、アジア諸国で複言語話す非英語母語話者と共通語としての英語でやりとりすることにより強化されることを示唆している。

Keywords
Lingua Franca, fieldwork trips, plurilingual speakers, near-peer role models, learner identity 共通語、フィールドワーク、複言語スピーカー、自分に近い仲間のロールモデル、学習者アイデンティティー
Introduction

English as a Lingua Franca communication amongst NNS and sometimes native speakers (NS) is currently the most common use of English worldwide (Seidlhofer, 2011), and as such learners of English as an additional language need to experience real-world situations where they can use “their English” to communicate with speakers of different first languages across cultures and in a range of contexts. As the vast majority of English users are NNS in an Asian context, there are interesting questions about how Japanese students may shift their perspectives of ideal linguistic role models (Kosaka, 2014). Do they stay with an idealised NS standard, or shift to a position of competent plurilingual NNS user of English? Do they continue to believe that they need to use NS levels of vocabulary, grammatical accuracy and pronunciation to be able to communicate effectively with other NNS? In so far as Japanese may also be used as a Lingua Franca among people from different countries in Asia, the mixing of English, Japanese and local languages in interactions with local people may challenge Japanese students to re-think what they had thought were “normal” or acceptable modes of language use and communication (e.g., monolingual and plurilingual communication). So, what kinds of linguistic and intercultural competences do learners actually need to achieve their communicative goals, deal with communication breakdown and negotiate meaning in real-life interactions? Finally, how can we language educators foster learner development by helping our learners to recognise and take up opportunities for ELF use in diverse NNS/plurilingual contexts? These are the kinds of puzzles I have been working on with learners who often struggle to see English study or English use as having much relevance in their current or future lives, and which were particularly salient in the fieldwork trip in Cambodia.

The Cambodia Fieldwork Course

In 2013, a Japanese professor with whom I shared an interest in global issues education invited me to accompany her and a group of International Communication major students to a new fieldwork destination, Cambodia. Cambodia was chosen for fieldwork as an emerging Asian economy with which Japan has links through trade agreements, government aid and development programmes, private companies, social businesses and NGO/NPO activities. The fieldwork aimed to help students understand the role of social businesses and NGOs in dealing with issues of poverty and sustainable development. Students would visit several social businesses and NGOs, and participate in two university exchange events. At the first event, both the visiting students and the host students (all Japanese language majors) gave presentations in Japanese at the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) in an event hosted by the Cambodia Japan Cooperation Centre (CJCC). For the second university exchange we joined with Paññāsāstra University’s English major students to participate in a “City Clean-Up Campaign” by picking up rubbish on streets in Siem Reap. As visitors to the World Heritage Site, Angkor Wat in Siem Reap, my colleague wanted the students to engage in activities with local people, and to think about the issues of “responsible tourism” and “ethical consumerism”.

Language Use in Cambodia

Alongside Cambodia’s official language, Khmer, Cambodian French retains historical significance in Cambodian education and diplomacy. However, Chinese and English are now seen as important international languages, and English particularly has a “special status” in Cambodian education and business spheres with many Cambodians now seeing it as a necessity for success in the world of international commerce and politics. So, knowing that opportunities for ELF would surely exist in the two major cities we would visit in Cambodia (Phnom Penh and Siem Reap), I conducted research to explore how my students could optimise ELF opportunities during their fieldwork activities and interactions with other NNS such as local service people, staff at social
businesses, and particularly with local university peers.

**Pre-departure Preparation**

The Cambodia fieldwork-seminar course was a semester-long course in Japanese, comprising preparation classes via group research and peer presentations, the eight-day fieldwork trip focusing on social businesses and NGOs, and assessment via learner reflections and reports. I informally collaborated with my Japanese colleague to define learner goals including:

- research and presentations in Japanese to learn and peer-teach about aspects of Cambodia and some specific social businesses working towards sustainable development;
- presentations (about university life and future dreams) in Japanese for university exchange events;
- practising communication English for daily use, and learning about English as a Lingua Franca opportunities in Cambodia.

I was invited to join the preparation classes early on in the semester and provided short language activities to prime students pre-departure for real-life English communication with local people, especially Cambodian students as near-peer role models. From my previous experiences of working with English language learners in Vietnam and China, I believed it was very likely that Cambodian students would be pretty motivated learners and users of English (and Japanese). I explained this belief and my research aims to the participants, and expressed my hope that they would indeed make use of opportunities to use English as a common language at times during their fieldwork.

Task-based language activities included icebreaker and mingle-type activities to encourage mixing between *sempai* and *kohai*, content-focused team quizzes based on the peer research presentations about Cambodia, and finally awareness-raising interview-discussions about perceptions of ELF and language diversity in Cambodia. These language tasks were aimed at increasing learners’ “willingness to communicate” in English (L2 WtC), and fostering a “community of practice” to ensure that the cultural exchange activities with two Cambodian university groups would be supportive, lively and productive.

The students and I talked about ELF perceptions and language use in Cambodia. I emphasized that the key goal in Lingua Franca communication is “mutual intelligibility” (Seidlhofer, 2009 cited in Kirkpatrick, 2011), conveying meaning and ideas with local people, and not getting stuck on “perfect” English. English development in itself was not the goal of the fieldwork but through shared projects and interactions with their Cambodian peers, we hoped that our students might be motivated to use ELF as a tool for intercultural communication and goal achievement. Even though we all enthusiastically learnt some basic Khmer phrases to be friendly and polite with locals, students knew that this would not go far. They would likely have to resort to using English on many occasions.

**Research Methods, Pre- and Post-surveys**

I carried out qualitative research with the 20 participants of the fieldwork-seminar course during the winter of 2013-2014, and specifically during the eight-day fieldwork trip to Cambodia. There was a fairly even mixture of 1st - 4th year students, six males and 14 females, who possessed a range of L2 English proficiency levels and L2-learning motivation levels from several fairly confident and motivated Study Abroad returnees to students who had very little interest in English study beyond their major’s requirements.

Pre-survey questions (Appendix 1) were aimed at finding out learner beliefs about the opportunities for English use in Cambodia, their current confidence with English, and whether English study/practice was among the goals or reasons for joining this fieldwork trip. Post-survey questions (Appendix 2) aimed at revealing the actual incidence of English use, and any changes in students’ self-belief or language confidence. While the pre- and post-survey questions were not exactly...
identical, there was some congruence that allowed for pre-departure and post-fieldwork comparisons. During the fieldwork trip I kept a “participant observation” journal with particular interest in instances of Lingua Franca communication in action, as well as student interactions during the intercultural exchange activities with two universities. I also gathered additional data from translations of students’ reflections and reports to develop more informed learner perspectives on ELF in the context of fieldwork (Morgan, 2016).

Results and Discussion

The Need or Opportunity for English Use

First, it appears that pre-departure most students recognised that they would (have to) use some degree of English whilst in Cambodia (as shown in Figure 1). Post-trip answers showed a definite shift where now more than half reported that they actually used “a lot of English” during the trip. It is unclear exactly what students perceived as “a lot”—is it a lot compared to what they had imagined they would use, or a lot compared to what they are able to use in Japan? No matter what, it is significant that students did take advantage of many chances to use English to communicate with other NNS whilst in Cambodia.

Some respondents including Chinatsu and Kouta commented:

“I communicated a lot in English even though I rarely use it in Japan. Even for people who are not native speakers, it is still pretty easy to communicate or listen and catch the meaning. When it’s hard to understand (each other) we can use gesture and simple English.” (Chinatsu, Post-survey, Q1b, January 10, 2014)

“Only RUPP students could speak Japanese, after this we had to use English. Even when we tried simple Khmer greetings, market sellers used English (or Japanese) phrases even though they never studied.” (Kouta, Post-survey, Q1b, January 10, 2014)

Chinatsu found that ELF was useful in Cambodia, even though English is not an official language there, and that a focus on the main meaning is more important than needing NS-level English. Kouta became aware that both ELF and JLF were used in some shops and tourist places where any common language is used for specific purposes to achieve certain (transactional) goals; Japanese students used Khmer to make an initial friendly connection, but then interlocutors instinctively switched to common languages. Among NNS, the students discovered that they could focus on intelligibility and intercultural understanding rather than grammatical accuracy.

ELF Opportunities with a Range of Interlocutors

Next, I asked participants to imagine who they would have the chance to speak English with (Appendix 1, Q2a), and all students listed a range of people with whom they perceived they would (have to) speak some English with during their trip, and most likely for transactional, tourism-related purposes (e.g., with hotel staff); already one quarter expected to use English with local students. I wanted learners to start thinking about the range of people they might use ELF with before they arrived in Cambodia (see Table 1).
Table 1. ELF Opportunities with a Range of Interlocutors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interlocutors mentioned by students</th>
<th>Pre-survey ( Q2a ) N = 20</th>
<th>Post-survey ( Q2b ) N = 18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hotel staff</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the airport (immigration); on the plane</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With local university students</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With local people (Cambodians), e.g., taking taxi or tuktuk/shop people/sellers</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other foreigners/tourists</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff at social businesses</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant staff</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour guide</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The police (if lost)</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local children</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local people walking past</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 reveals that students interacted with a wider range of people, and used a whole lot more English than they had imagined they would before the trip; student comments mentioned using English with “local children” and “local people walking past”.

“When talking to the RUPP students in Japanese I thought about how it was the same as if I was speaking English to a native speaker. I noticed that when I’m ever conversing with an English native speaker, I was (only) able to converse because the other person naturally understood where the conversation was going and helped me out. But when we were discussing with the RUPP students, now we are native speaker... so, we tried to speak slower and simple Japanese... or we switched to using English when they couldn’t understand. I want to be able to skillfully switch between two languages ...and help us each to understand the other.” (Naoki, reflection, January 10, 2014)

Taking the Native Speaker Role and Using Japanese as a Lingua Franca

At the first intercultural exchange event with RUPP Japanese major students, our students were in the “native speaker” role with their Cambodian counterparts (see Figure 2). From participant data, this seemed to be a powerful experience for the Japanese students—for once they were the confident speakers, the linguistic models; they were proactive and showed leadership in the discussions which followed the peer presentations. I felt moved observing them being flexible, empathetic and accommodating for the users of L2 Japanese.

The experience of being the “native speaker role model” with their peers was valuable, and somehow connected the students to developing their identities as plurilingual speakers and users of English.

Later, during a visit to a social business (Friends International Romdeng Restaurant), I observed a younger Cambodian shop assistant using a number of Japanese phrases to joke with two of my students who were buying souvenirs. This sent the Japanese students into fits of surprised laughter which then turned into a lively interchange switching between Khmer, Japanese and English. The students successfully completed their purchases and obtained information about the products made by former street children. Here, participants...
experienced plurilingualism in action where users calls on whatever linguistic and pragmatic resources they have in order to achieve their communicative goals (Bernaus et al., 2007).

I further noticed that, as time went on, the more the Japanese students had successful ELF interactions (peppered with Khmer or Japanese from both sides) with local people and with the local university groups, the more they wanted to interact which led to increased confidence and L2 WtC. From comments during reflections, some students expressed surprise and delight that local sellers in the market and some shops could often speak English and/or a little Japanese (see Figure 3). Clearly, when plurilingual users interact, it is not just English as a Lingua Franca that speakers turn to, but it could be Japanese or any other common languages. Thus, Lingua Franca conditions catalyse multiple Lingua Franca use.

Q3a and Q3b elicited changes in students’ confidence with English after the fieldwork experience where they had been communicating in English and using ELF in varying amounts every day. Pre-departure more than half the participants felt “not at all confident” about speaking English. In contrast, the post-trip results show a slight positive shift in L2 confidence (see Figure 4). More students now said they felt “confident speaking English” or “a little confident. Somewhat fewer students now felt “not at all confident” using English.

From this small sample it is not possible to make any absolute claims about the positive effects of ELF-using experiences on students’ L2 confidence, but certainly when delving deeper into the students’ final-night reflections and their fieldwork reports it does appear that many did come to feel more confident about using English/ELF, they felt a heightened WtC in English, and expressed strengthened identities as users of English. This increased L2 WtC during ELF interactions is exemplified in Nanami’s comment:

“We met many people and I felt frustrated so many times because I wanted to be able to speak more… for the first time I felt a hunger to learn more English grow inside of me.”
(Nanami, reflection, January 10, 2014)

As a result of frequent authentic English communicative episodes with their plurilingual peers, participants’ confidence with English grew, along with their sense of ownership of English (Widdowson, 1994). At the same time, the students’ identities developed into rightful users of English and no longer just learners of English (Norton, 1997). One student in particular, Chihoko, evaluated herself as “not confident at all with English” pre-survey and post-survey, but in her final-night reflections Chihoko described at some length her use of English and the “good experience” she had had, particularly during the City Clean-up event in Siem Reap (see Figure 5):

“I could use English positively during the ‘clean-up’ activity”. (This time) students
couldn’t speak Japanese so we had to use English, gestures and smiles. Their English was really smooth, maybe I couldn’t understand half of English they were saying... but they were very kind and they tried to find easy words. Finally, we could say many things and get to know (each other) deeply. I felt refreshed because both of us used language (English) which is not mother tongue and we could understand each other.”

Chihoko was very engaged in the fieldwork objectives and the issues the social businesses were dealing with. Despite her low L2 confidence, she demonstrated agency to communicate with Cambodian peers and NGO staff and successfully negotiated interactions using ELF.

Reasons for Participating in Fieldwork in Cambodia

I was keen to find out whether English study figured among the reasons for joining the Cambodia fieldwork trip or future fieldwork activities (see Q4a, Q4b). Some students felt English study/practice or ELF was “no reason” for joining the fieldwork trip, but more than half the group cited English as “a small reason”. In contrast, post-trip and with some successful ELF experiences behind them, a clear shift could be recognized among students with a majority now saying that English practice would be an item for consideration when choosing future fieldwork trips. Now, more than half the respondents said that English would be “a very big reason” or “a reason”, and significantly fewer students now said “English would not be a reason” in their decisions (as shown in Figure 6). Perhaps now, these learners recognize valuable opportunities for English use in NNS countries and contexts, and not just in NS country destinations.

Pre-survey: % n = 20

Post-survey: % n = 18

The final pre-trip question Q5a aimed to draw out their general reasons for choosing the Cambodia seminar course and fieldwork trip. More than half the students had some prior knowledge or experience of the destination country, Cambodia:

“When I was elementary school student, our volunteer club gave books to a Cambodian school.” (Yuka, Pre-survey, Q5a, November 22, 2013).

About two thirds of the class expressed interest in foreigners or a foreign culture, with Minami, for example, now turning her orientation away from Europe towards Asia as a potentially rich site for cultural commonality, intercultural learning, and near-peer language role models.

“I was previously interested only in European countries because I like that culture or history, but now I’m interested in learning about Asian neighbor countries... closer cultures. I felt closeness to the girls at Kamonobashi.” (Minami, Pre-survey, Q5a, November 22, 2013).
Perceived Language Gaps and Future Learning Goals

The post-survey question (Q5b: Now, what English language skills do you wish you had so that you could communicate better with local students and local people?) was of great interest to me as I hoped that through reflection about language gaps the students might identify and develop their future language learning goals. When recalling communication breakdowns caused by language gaps, participants identified various English skills they wished for in order to connect more deeply with Cambodian peers and local people. Some talked about gaps in listening skills, difficulty with Cambodian accents, the high level of English proficiency shown by the Cambodian students, and a need for more vocabulary to be able to both hear and understand what was being said, and to then be able to respond in detail: “I have always thought about speaking English (production) but I should have studied more listening in class (in Japan). I really enjoyed communicating with local people but sometimes I couldn’t hear (understand) their English very well.” (Anonymous). Although some participants felt stuck with limited vocabulary and wished they could express themselves more clearly and with interesting details, they had now understood that the main goal was to “just say your ideas.” Moreover, despite communication difficulties, most students realized that non-standard grammar and accents did not seem to stop them from understanding one another—they just needed to be flexible, accommodating, and adaptable: “If we listen carefully, or repeat again, we can usually catch meaning” and “Even with (my) poor English vocabulary, (I could) make many mistakes…often (using) gestures and body language” (Field note, Yuko, December 2013).

A number of participants expressed regret that they had not applied themselves more in past English classes, and then talked about goals for the coming year: “I should practise easy conversation more” and “I discovered that big vocabulary is more important than grammar so this year I need to study more vocabulary and communication ability so I can understand new friends better.” Finally, nearly all the students specifically expressed huge respect for, and surprise at, just how well many of the Cambodian students could speak Japanese or English depending on their major, how much language study they do alone every day, and the Cambodians’ positive view of higher education and their ambitions after graduation: “I want to speak English like (Nary)...be so fluent and relaxed speaker. He told (me) he studies a lot and talks English with anyone he can.” Several Japanese participants still keep in touch with Cambodian students, communicating in English and/or Japanese in their expanded online community. Within many negotiated ELF-using episodes, learners find more accessible role models, expand their “imagined communities”, and develop their “English-using selves” (Yashima, 2009).

Through recalling and reflecting, participants consolidated the positive ELF interactions and language-using episodes they had had with their Cambodian peers and with local people they had encountered each day, learned useful lessons from the communication breakdowns, and set future learning goals. Thus, it appears that the participants’ confidence, motivation, agency for language learning and L2 WtC were strengthened as a result of these different ELF interactions with plurilingual NNS in Cambodia.

Concluding Thoughts

As a language teacher I learnt a huge amount about my students and our learning-teaching processes during this fieldtrip. It appears that as a result of their uptake of ELF opportunities, learners’ confidence in using English and their motivation for English study changed in positive ways. Furthermore, students gained a broader and deeper understanding of issues facing developing countries, and began to make connections with these in their own lives. In exposing our learners to ELF models, ownership for English shifts to include all users—students, educators, and other world citizens alike (Rajagopalan, 2004). Ultimately, ELF perspectives in language learning-teaching can improve and sustain learner
motivation and confidence towards not just their own language learning and using, but also foster openness to language diversity and other world views throughout our students’ lives.

Now that I have expanded my own views of language diversity and use, perhaps I am more able to help my learners to become aware of multiple Lingua Franca use and to view plurilingualism as a common or normal practice. The fieldwork students experienced the mixing of English, Japanese and local languages in their interactions with local people. We can help students shift their focus from NS norms and ideals to look around themselves, and find their own near-peer role models who are using language to communicate successfully in creative and relevant ways. As educators, we can raise learners’ awareness about the diverse opportunities to use English as a Lingua Franca with both NNS (and NS) in their classrooms (Jenkins, 2012), on campus, in intercultural clubs and events, in Japan, and in fieldwork trips in other countries and so on. We can help motivate our learners by finding out what issues they are interested in, what experiences they have already had (in their other university classes and in their majors); we can also bring in content-based learning about real world issues that they as young people can engage with while using their English.

Collaborating with other teachers to help students connect learning across classrooms is also worthwhile. I am aware it is not always easy to develop collegiality; there are sometimes intercultural and/or administrative barriers to this, and it can take a long while to develop professional trust with other faculty members. But it is worth the effort for our learners, and when we provide “rich, situated learning opportunities” (Jones, 2013) through fieldwork projects and other activities about global issues, we can expose learners to language use in the real world. This can help our students develop their identities as language users and world citizens beyond the classroom.

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I am grateful to Professors Mouri, Fukada and Kawamata (Meisei University) for useful discussions about learner engagement with English as a Lingua Franca, and Tammy Isobe (Tokai University) for translation work.

References
Appendix 1: Pre-Trip Survey

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) During Cambodia Fieldwork

Q1a. Do you think you will speak, or will have to speak any English in Cambodia?


Q2a. Right now, who do you imagine (think) you will have the chance to speak English with?

Q3a. Right now, how confident do you feel speaking English?


Q4a. Was English study a reason for joining the Cambodia fieldwork trip?


Q5a. What are your main goals or reasons for joining the Cambodia fieldwork trip?

Appendix 2: Post-Trip Survey

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) During Cambodia Fieldwork

Q1b. Did you speak any English while you were in Cambodia?


Q2b. Who did you speak English with during the fieldwork trip?

Circle as many words below as you like, and write your own ideas:

- Other foreigners/ other tourists/ hotel staff/ restaurant staff/ street sellers/ market/ shop sellers/ other people:

Q3b. Right now, how confident do you feel speaking English?


Q4b. In the future, do you think that English study or English practice will be a reason for joining other fieldwork trips in foreign countries?


Q5b. Now, what English communication skills do you wish you had so that you could communicate better with local students and local people?

(日本語または英語で回答ができます。)