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English as a *Lingua Franca*: intercultural interaction in the context of Asian 'third space'

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ABSTRACT

Many studies on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) primarily focus on English for communication among speakers without English as their first language and recently emphasized intercultural communication within interactions. Nevertheless, the predominant emphasis remains primarily linguistic, concentrating on, for example, grammar or lexis. We complement this research, presenting vignettes arguing for shifting how ELF is understood, approached, and taught; advocating its recognition primarily as intercultural interaction, yet retaining linguistic aspects. Vignettes from ELF interactions in a Thai University English Conversation Club illustrate diverse and complex language practices. We show, through ELF interactions in this 'Third Space', how speakers of different Asian languages prioritize intercultural communication whilst retaining focus on English language accuracy. We discuss the advantages, possibilities, and implications of reorienting our perception of ELF interactions in this manner for students, instructors and researchers of Asian Englishes and Englishes worldwide.

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Introduction

English as a *Lingua Franca* (ELF) studies, and in ELF's initial avatar in the later twentieth century of being English as an International Language (EIL), primarily focused on linguistically related aspects in relation to how instructors and students can most effectively conceive of and approach it such as considering its grammar, pronunciation, sociolinguistic aspects and first language influence on the English used (e.g. Baldauf & Dawson, 1980, Clyne & Ball, 1990; Seidlhofer & Jenkins, 2003). More recent studies have focused on aspects related to ELF such as how ELF yields itself to being a suitable window through which to observe identity formation in intercultural communication (Baker, 2016), facilitate mutual understanding (Cogo & Pitzl, 2016) or how negotiation is discursively constructed (Hua, 2015). The need to understand more deeply the intercultural in any ELF encounters has also been emphasised, with a need to 'go beyond

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static, reified normative and discrete forms of language' (Holmes & Dervin, 2016, p. 3) to more deeply consider each individual interactant's background and historical context. Further, the field of interculturality has emerged, where the focus is on the process involved in any encounter between individuals from different cultures (Lavanchy, Gajardo, & Dervin, 2011, p. 14), rather than on the encounter itself as is the focus in the 'intercultural'.

A key consideration to any study of ELF communication, and a major reason why we argue more primary attention should be on a contextualised consideration of ELF encounters rather than only on linguistic aspects taught and studied outside this context, is the 'Third Space' where ELF communication occurs. In the twenty-first century, there has been a notable change in perspective, moving beyond mere linguistic proficiency to encompass both linguistic and cultural competence. It is recognized that it should include not only the four traditional competences (grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic) but also cultural competence (Tien, 2023, p. 250, cf. Swain & Canale, 1982; Canale, 1981).

Although ELF interaction has often been seen as involving interaction between individuals from different linguacultures (as has TESOL and TEFL), the primary focus of teaching and a key focus of research and data has been linguistic aspects. Critically, ELF itself tended not to be seen or approached as being intercultural interaction, with all the concomitant ramifications in terms of what is prioritized in materials, curricular content and approaches. In this paper, we argue that ELF interaction is fundamentally intercultural. Consequently, both research and pedagogy should prioritize this intercultural dimension, rather than merely increasing its focus, as some have suggested. However, our vignettes demonstrate that attention to linguistic aspects is also crucial. We outline what we consider the advantages of such a shift in primary focus. We draw on examples taken of ELF interaction in an English language only conversation club, where one of the researchers was present to observe and audio record interactions in this 'Third Space'.

The remainder of our article is structured as follows. First, we review key literature in relation to ELF, interculturality, and fluid 'Third Space'. Following this we describe our data set and approach to analysis. We then present and analyse this data to attempt to make a case for how these ELF interactions are primarily intercultural, and taking place in a fluid space. We then discuss these examples in light of their implications for approaching and researching ELF before drawing together conclusions and recommendations for researchers and teachers.

English as a Lingua Franca

English as a *Lingua Franca* has, over the past 30 years, become an established field (Baker, 2018). ELF is broadly defined as 'any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option' (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 7). Most ELF communication is between speakers who differ in linguistic and cultural backgrounds and some recent literature reflects this by considering ELF alongside aspects of intercultural communication such as identity formation and emphasising the need to consider the intercultural more (Baker, 2016; Holmes & Dervin, 2016). Earlier ELF literature (and in its earlier avatar of EIL) was primarily focused on linguistic aspects such as the influences of different first languages on aspects of

pronunciation or grammar and how to test ELF (e.g. Baldauf & Dawson, 1980, Clyne and Ball, 1990; Seidlhofer & Jenkins, 2003). Here the primary focus was on 'linguistic, syntactic, phonological and pragmatic elements of a language, as well as intelligibility and other sociolinguistic features' (Holmes & Dervin, 2016, p. 2).

With nearly one billion people learning English around the world (Dearden, 2015), much of this literature directly feeds into textbooks for the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and Teaching English as a Second or Other Language (TESOL). Indeed, the explosion in TEFL and TESOL teaching worldwide from the 1980s onwards has meant such linguistic focused research and literature from the world has been intrinsic to the production and direction of materials to both teach and test English. This continues apace today, catalysed by globalisation and internationalisation, with an exponential increase worldwide in Higher Education of English Medium Instruction (EMI).

Following on from this, early ELF literature has seen an increasing focus on the consideration of other, more culturally related aspects of communication in the field of pragmatics such as accommodation, explicitness and approximation (Firth, 2009a; Jenkins, 2011; Mauranen, 2018) and also the creative ways in which linguistic forms are adapted to suit the demands of the ongoing talk (Baker, 2015). Furthermore, elements such as the importance of negotiation (Hua, 2015) in ELF, and the desire for social cohesion and consensus as a motivating factor to overcome potential linguistic barriers (Mauranen, 2006) have been highlighted. Yet, despite these developments, ELF research often prioritizes linguistic aspects. For example, research into how meaning is attained in ELF studies linguistic aspects in relation to situational co-membership (Georgieva, 2009), rapport building (Planken, 2005) reaching agreement (Firth, 2009b) or creatively fashioning English to suit the speaker's purpose (Cogo, 2010). This is not to say that recent research has not considered ELF as hybrid, complex, variable and emergent (Cogo & Dewey, 2012; Jenkins, 2015) but much research still often prioritizes the study of linguistic aspects. Indeed, the recent state of the art type publication the *Routledge Handbook of English as a Lingua Franca* (Jenkins, Baker, & Dewey, 2018) has 47 chapters, the foci of which are primarily linguistic, focusing on grammar, pronunciation, morphosyntactic variations, idioms and language norms. Concomitantly, this work is based on linguistic type data and analysis such as written text in the form of transcripts taken from sources such as corpora and collections and it commonly focuses on linguistic targets such as morphology and syntax (e.g. Björkman, 2018). In addition, where variations are seen in ELF the focus is very much on specific types of ELF according to regional languages and communication systems. Nevertheless, there is one chapter that explores the cross-over between ELF and intercultural communication and argues that:

> Given that English used as a lingua franca is presently likely to be the most common medium of intercultural communication, it is a concern that there has been so little uptake of ELF research in intercultural communication literature, and that where it has been discussed it has often been marginalised and misrepresented. (Baker, 2018, p. 26)

In addition, a collection published by Holmes and Dervin (2016) entitled *The Cultural and Intercultural Dimension of English as a Lingua Franca*, emphasises the important link between interculturality and lingua francas. Despite such work, it remains the case that much research into ELF prioritizes linguistic aspects

above intercultural communication. Here, we argue that a key question is that if ELF interaction is itself intercultural interaction, should ELF pedagogy and research prioritize intercultural interaction more? We do not think the current research into ELF that prioritizes linguistic aspects is not of significant value, and the participants whose interactions we relay below did indeed feel accuracy and linguistic ability was key and, as we argue here, it is essential to retain it. However, the priority of our participants, and ours here, is to front intercultural interaction in communication in this ELF 'Third Space', a key part of which was the aspect of interculturality.

Interculturality

Interculturality describes how participants from different cultures interact and is thus important to illustrate as occurring in any ELF interaction if ELF is to be considered as intercultural interaction in itself. Interculturality is often used synonymously with 'intercultural', although the two concepts differ. 'intercultural', in its adjectival use, refers to 'an encounter with otherness or a meeting of different cultures, themselves considered islands or distinct entities with clearly defined borders' (Lavanchy, Gajardo, & Dervin, 2011, p. 12). Comparatively, 'Interculturality' points to the processual aspect of such 'intercultural' encounters, recognising that these meetings of different cultures need to consider the multifaceted nature of individuals in relation to 'historicity, intersubjectivity and interactional context' (ibid). Interculturality has been described as being a 'dynamic process' (Young & Sercombe, 2010, p. 18) representing a 'way of being in the world' (Lavanchy, Gajardo, & Dervin, 2011, p. 12). It is considered an 'emerging paradigm' (Hua, 2015, p. 10) that advocates for the socially constructed nature of cultural differences. An interculturality paradigm therefore acknowledges that individuals belong to multiple and intersecting categories. It is through interaction between these individuals that sociocultural differences emerge and are discursively constructed, negotiated and made relevant (or not). Indeed, as Hua argues, 'being "culturally different" is a socially constructed phenomenon and needs to be studied through a fine-grained analysis of interaction on a case-by-case basis' (Hua, 2011, p. 259). Interculturality is thus characterised by dynamism and a particular worldview of approaching communication which has not yet been fully identified; or by approaching communication as continually emerging and developing. When communicating, individuals will arguably be doing so in a format that is itself continually developing and emerging, and see this communication as, 'transcending barriers of communication based on different ways of seeing, feeling, and understanding the world' (Parry, 2003, p.101). Importantly, when communication takes place between individuals from the perspective of interculturality, they are able to draw on multiple identities and, of these, not 'all the identities' may be 'salient or relevant in the same way at a given point in an interaction' (Hua, 2015, p. 10). Notably, when interacting, individuals may 'draw on and use the resources and processes of cultures with which they are familiar but also those they may not typically be associated with in their interactions with others' (Young & Sercombe, 2010, p. 181).

ELF in the 'third space'

The fluid space where ELF interactions occur has been theorised as a kind of 'Third Space' which has been the focus of much recent debate and discussion. This 'Third Space' has been considered from specifically physical and non-verbal angles (e.g. by swimmers; Collins & Pajak, 2019), from textual data such as students reflective journals (Zhou & Pilcher, 2019b) and biographies (Ros i Solé, 2019) and through interviews (Peck & Yates, 2019); and the importance of context is stressed (Najar, 2016). The 'Third Space' may involve significant unstated tensions with underlying political, hegemonic (Collins & Pajak, 2019; Zhou & Pilcher, 2019b) and emotional tensions (Peck & Yates, 2019). Such a space has been said to be an evolving and continually developing one that resists homogeneity and any attempt at a static definition (Ros i Solé, 2019). Despite many highlighting the challenging, emotional and hegemony fraught nature of such a space, some comment on the value of creating a 'comfortable space' to help promote intercultural encounters (McKinley et al, 2019). The complexity of the space is heightened by some key literature in the field such as work by Homi Bhabha (e.g. 2004) which arguably contains highly complex and extremely ambiguous jargon (cf. Fahlander, 2008), rendering it very hard to understand and at times impenetrable. The very notion of the usefulness of considering there to be a 'Third Space' has also been questioned as a consequence of the existence of a 'third' being implicitly grounded in reified quasi-essentialist notions of there needing to be a boundaried and delineated 'first' and a 'second' space (Holliday, cited in Zhou & Pilcher, 2019a). Rather, it can be considered more fruitful to see such a space as being 'open' and 'fluid' rather than numbered and fixed (ibid., cf. Ros i Sole, 2019).

Research into the fluid 'Third Space' has drawn on data based on a range of sources and approaches such as corpus linguistics (MacDonald, 2019), reflective journals of students (Zhou & Pilcher, 2019b), swimming pools (Collins & Hajak, 2019) and in contexts involving individuals such as learners of English as a Foreign Language (Peck & Yates, 2019). It has also drawn on online media such as studying identity construction on YouTube (Chang & Chang, 2019) and ELF communication on social networking sites (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019), the latter with the aim of studying intercultural communication.

This fluid space has been conceptualised as 'intermediary' type space whereby speakers of different native languages communicate in English in an 'intermediary positioning between two starting points orienting to, but not assimilating to, them both' (Liddicoat, 2015, p. 3) and as a point of 'language crossing', whereby communication between individuals involves the use of a language which is not generally thought to 'belong' to the speaker and 'involves a sense of movement across quite sharply felt social or ethnic boundaries' (Rampton, 1997b, n.p.). In order to not be impeded by confusing terminology, we have decided to use fluid to describe the space where ELF occurs. Our data analysis will show how fluidity is constructed in the moment to moment interaction of the interlocutors.

In terms of what ELF speakers do in this malleable space, it is generally agreed ELF speakers interact harmoniously and cooperatively (Firth, 2009b; Mauranen, 2006; Pölzl & Seidlhofer, 2006), assuming shared responsibility for meaning

making (Mauranen, 2006), adapting and accommodating (Firth, 2009b), and are more open to unexpected deviations (Canagarajah, 2007). In the space where ELF interactions take place, potential linguistic barriers are deemed to be overcome by the speakers' concern for face saving (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and a mutually supportive attitude (Meierkord, 1996), a strong desire for social cohesion and consensus (House, 2003), orientation towards amicable interpersonal relationship and 'situational co-membership' (Georgieva, 2009, p. 303), and rapport building (Planken, 2005). Although speakers of all languages tend to focus more on the negotiation of meaning (cf. Hua, 2015) rather than form, this emphasis is probably more pronounced in lingua franca interactions. In these contexts, speakers are inherently aware that they do not share a common first language and that they come from diverse communication backgrounds. In other words it is not just meaning that is being negotiated but, at the same time, differing world views and discourse conventions including turn-taking, marked collocations and non-standard pronunciations. Indeed, the shared goal of reaching agreements provides some sort of common ground which turns into an ideal context for organising the talks (Firth, 2009b). It would thus appear from the literature that the processes ELF participants draw on sacrifice linguistic accuracy for interactional harmony. We will show, however, that in our data and study, at least, this was not the case and that, although our participants did prioritize interculturality, linguistic accuracy remained key. This is understandable considering that language performs both transactional and relational/interactional functions (Brown & Yule, 1983).

Methods

The data presented and analysed here is from 22 hours of audio recordings of naturalistic ELF conversations taking place between 10 speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and observation notes collected via participant observation by one of the researchers. The conversations took place over 28 weeks at a Thai university. The participants, from Japan (2 males), China (2 females), Vietnam (2 females and 1 male), the Philippines (1 female) and Thailand (1 male and 1 female), were members of an English conversation club. The members were between 25 and 35 years old at the time of the data collection. They met once a week for at least an hour over a period of 7 months. The meetings took place on the university campus, in restaurants, coffee shops and floating markets. Naturalistic conversations constitute a productive site for analysing fluidity given the existence of negotiation of turn-taking and the discursive construction of face and identity they possess (Cheng, 2003). The audio recordings were transcribed by one of the conversation club members and the observing researcher to ensure that the context of the interactions were taken into consideration. The transcription conventions were adapted from the system developed by Gail Jefferson (1984) for the micro-structural analysis of naturally occurring conversations. What we have used here is a modified version which we feel is 'good enough for the purpose at hand' (Cameron, 2001, p. 39, cf Poland, 2001; see Appendix 1). The conventions we used for the transcription of talk helped present and acknowledge key factors such as intonation (Voloshinov, 1973), speech overlaps and turn-taking which

enable us to explicate meanings that could not be conveyed in any linguistic analysis without the transcription symbols. At the same time, as part of the analysis we conduct below, we draw on context-sensitive, pragmatically informed linguistic analytical techniques. All the research was approved by the relevant ethics committees. Presentation of the data is achieved pseudonymously in the form of five vignettes from the naturalistic verbal interactions between conversation club members. Such conversations can serve as a window into people's cultural world, and provide vantage points to observe the ways in which interlocutors enact identities and form social relationships (Carbaugh, 2005).

Results: data presentation and analysis

The five vignettes are presented in the following way: first details of their content and context are provided for explanation; second the vignettes are presented, then thirdly they are analysed regarding what they show about the ELF interaction taking place and how they compare with the literature. Following this section, a discussion and conclusion section considers the implications for viewing, researching and teaching ELF. The pseudonyms used are outlined in Table 1:

Table 1. Pseudonyms used in the vignettes.

Vignette	Pseudonyms used
Vignette 1: Something like vampire	Jib, Huri, Luli, Fai, other Ss
Vignette 2: Pipe to Play Water	Luli, Jib,
Vignette 3: East, not drink, crocodile blood	Tha, Jib, Luli
Vignette 4: Nosey or curious?	Tu, Seri, Luli, Thy, other Ss
Vignette 5: Funny na!	Seri, Tu, Luli, Thy, Fa, Tai, other Ss

Vignette 1: Something like vampire

This vignette illustrates lengthy negotiation of meaning. In it, Jib (Thai) tells others about her weekend collecting soil samples as part of her Agriculture course. Jib attempts to describe what a 'leech' is (from line 1). She uses gestures (line 6) and appeals for help (line 10) by asking Huri (Japanese) to 'describe' leech. However, instead of describing leech, Huri spells 'leech' leading to more repair sequences and requests for clarification from Luli, from China (lines 15, 17, 22) and Fai (Chinese) (line 21). Despite having learnt to spell 'leech' correctly from Huri, the meaning of 'leech' still eludes both Luli and Fai, as Jib repeatedly attempts to use synonyms – blood, suck, jump, like worm – to describe what a 'leech' does. She even makes a sucking sound (line 28) to clarify 'sucking' and then more 'jumping' gestures (line 35) using her hands. Perhaps realizing how hard Jib has tried to describe leech, Fai says 'sorry' (line 29) she has not understood and uses 'go on'; then Luli also encourages Jib not to give up (line 30 – yes, go!). However, it took several turns of back-and-forth clarification before a breakthrough in meaning finally happens for Luli (line 40 – 'OKAY I KNOW!'; and 41 – 'something like VAMpire!'). Yet, after all the effort by Jib to convey 'leech', her utterance in line 43 of 'What? what are you talking about' indicates that she does not know what 'vampire' meant, a potential

signal for further negotiation of meaning, but Jib decides to continue with her story about the weekend (line 45) and decides to 'let it pass'.

1	Jib	leeches! do you know leeches? like a sucking [blood]
2	Luli	[no idea] (laughs)
3	Jib	Erm worm, worm, like jelly xxx (.) It can JUMP and you
4		(.) sucking of the (.) it can-
5	Luli	hmmmnnn (puzzled facial expression)
6	Jib	JUMP (.) yea:h!
7	Ss	(unclear multi-party talk)
8	Luli	(jump?)
9	Jib	Oh no, (. . .) (shaking her head)
10		Erm, Huri can you describe the leech? (turns towards Huri for help)
11	Huri	leech?
12	Jib	Yes, leech!
13	Huri	L-E-E-C-H? (spells out 'leech')//
14	Jib	//Yeah
15	Luli	L?
16	Huri	Double 'E' E-E-C-H! (spells out part of 'leech')
17	Luli	E?
18	Jib	E!
19	Huri	E!
20	Jib	C-H
21	Fai	E-E-C-H
22	Luli	E-E-C-H Oh LEECH!//
23	Jib	YEAH
24	Luli	Oka:y,
25	Ss	(multi-party) try erm erm different word,
26	Jib	Like a WO:RM? Like a WO:RM. It can SUCK//
27	Fai	//is it dangerous?
28	Jib	it can suck, sucking ha? [(makes a sucking sound)]
29	Fai	[so- sorry, (.) go on,//]
30	Luli	//Yes, go!
31	Jib	It can suck, erm erm (.) sucking of -
32	Luli	//BLOOD
33	Jib	I [mean-]
34	Luli	[blood]
35	Jib	and then it can [JUMP] (makes a 'jumping' gesture with her hand)
37	Luli	[OKAY] (.) is something like the erm, the- the
38		(.) colour is black? (.) erm, erm brown?
39	Jib	black (.) and brown?
40	Luli	OKAY, I KNOW! (.)
41		something like VAMpire! (laughs)
42	Ss	(laughter) (overlapping talk)
43	Jib	what? (laughs) what are you talking about?
44	Ss	(laughter)
45	Jib	So, I went to jungle, same previous term, last week.

This vignette illustrates the use of different strategies and different 'starting points' (Liddicoat, 2015). Both Fai's and Luli's utterances seem to be intended as a face-saving device (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Fai's saying 'sorry' (line 29) that she has not understood and her use of 'go on' as a cajoler show empathy and support (Lee, 2013). Further, Luli's breakthrough in line 40 can be considered an instantiation of 'intermediary position' (Liddicoat, 2015) of fluidity. The shifting nature of the intermediary position is revealed through Jib's perplexed reaction in line 43 'what? what are you talking about?', which signals another round of negotiation because she does not know 'vampire'. But the continuation shows Jib lets it pass (Firth, 1996). Here then, there is clearly negotiation (cf. Hua, 2015), but not at the sacrifice of linguistic accuracy (cf. ELF literature, in contrast to e.g. Meierkord, 1996). Nevertheless, integral to this negotiation are many non-linguistic

areas of non-verbal language (the actions) and of intonation (cf. Voloshinov, 1973). Such areas are only revealed through the nature of the data itself and the collection and transcription through observation by one of the researchers.

Vignette 2: pipe to play water

In this vignette, Luli from China is asking Jib, a Thai, about *Songkran*, the Thai New Year festival, which involves throwing water at other people ostensibly to 'cleanse' them of the previous year's bad luck and sins. During the festival, people also dab white creamy chalk on themselves or each other to ward off evil. It is evident in the vignette below that Luli and Jib do not know the English word for 'cream' or 'paste, Jib calling '*din sor pong*' as 'the white particle with water'. In lines 96 and 97 Jib says she does not like applying *din sor pong* on her face, whereas Luli says she likes it because it's 'different cultures', and that 'most of the Thai people very friendly, too' (line 101). Luli's negative comment immediately following the compliment: 'but I don't like the pipe' (line 102), is softened by a brief pause and hesitation markers. Lines 102 to 103 reveal that Luli and Jib appear not to know the word 'hose' which Luli calls 'pipe'. Jib is quick to ask for clarification – she shows alignment to Luli by repeating the word 'pipe', adding her co-constructed definition 'the pipe to play water'. The overlapping speech (line 102 and 103) by the two speakers show that mutual understanding has been achieved.

89	Luli	Ohh really? Erm, what's the powder in your face? The white powder?
90	Jib	We call that *'din sor pong'*. We have like a small particle and then
91		put the water and then like we call *din sor pong* something like that
92		and we put on//
93	Luli	why, why why?
94	Jib	to prepre- I mean, to protect the skin
95	Luli	really?
96	Jib	there are times they put a lot on my face erm oh oh it's quite
97		white you know (.) but I don't like it//
98	Luli	ohhh you don't like it?
99	Jib	because it irritate with my eyes when we play the water//
100	Luli	but I LIKE IT! I love it very much because it's quite different,
101		different cultures for me. And most of the Thai people very friendly, too.
102		(.2) erm erm but I don't like the (.) pipe,//
103	Jib	//the pipe to play [water?]
104	Luli	[water, yes]

The utterances in lines 96 to 102 arguably illustrate Luli's attempt to mitigate threat to Jib's 'Thai' face (Brown & Levinson, 1987) considering Luli's positive comments on something Jib does not like, but followed by her negative comment immediately following the compliment: 'but I don't like the pipe' (line 102), softened by a brief pause and hesitation markers. The generated phrase, 'pipe to play water' is the product of the fluid space where the talk occurs. It is likely the phrase did not exist before Jib's and Luli's exchange. It emerged and was created *in-situ*, and can be seen as an *ad hoc* creation of moment to moment negotiation (Canagarajah, 2007; Firth, 2009a). Although the phrase 'pipe to play water' can be considered English to refer to a garden hose, the term would probably not be considered standard English, and would certainly be highlighted in any English tests. Since the speakers are not able to depend on a previously learnt common lexis, they seem to have 'activate[d] complex pragmatic strategies to help them negotiate

their variable form' (Firth, 2009b, p. 163), although the aim is still one of accurate understanding and not necessarily at the sacrifice of linguistic accuracy, rather, the language appears simply unknown. Here, the interaction takes on the quality of what Kecskes (2014, p. 100) calls 'intercultures' which 'come and go' and are 'neither stable nor permanent', 'synergistic and blended'. There was no other occurrence of the phrase in the recordings. In this vignette, the communication space continually shifts and is fluid (cf. Holliday, cited in Zhou & Pilcher, 2019a), the individuals are multifaceted (Lavanchy, Gajardo, & Dervin, 2011) and draw on a range of cultures (Young & Sercombe, 2010) to communicate. The language is not necessarily hybrid as such (in contrast to Mauranen, 2012) as it does not occur again, so is perhaps only transient.

Vignette 3: eat, not drink, crocodile blood

This third vignette is an exchange between Tha, a male PhD candidate, and Jib, a Master's student 10 years younger. Tha is a male PhD candidate and faculty member of the university and, by virtue of his educational achievement, university position and age, he can be considered to have more power than Jib. In the vignette below, the conversation club members were talking about a field trip to a crocodile farm. Tha talks of the medicinal properties of crocodile blood, and in line 23, talks about a neighbour who 'eats' crocodile blood as a cure for cancer. There are a few seconds of silence after this utterance and then Jib 'corrects' Tha in line 24 saying 'drink, drink'. Drink in most English varieties naturally collocates with something liquid. But Tha rejects the correction and before he could finish his sentence, Jib offers the work 'cook' (line 26). Tha continues his utterance by giving further explanation (line 27) indicating that the blood has to be taken in capsule form after being dried. Jib seems to agree with an 'o:h' receipt hearable as 'I see'. In line 29, Tha notes that eating the crocodile blood is easier in capsule form. His pronunciation of blood (which sounded like 'lud') was met with another round of correction from the other students emphasising the 'bl' consonant cluster in the word blood, thus illustrating the importance of linguistic accuracy. Line 33, when Tha gives the correct pronunciation, signals the end of the repair sequence. In other words, the group members seem to have accepted that it is fine to say 'eat, not drink, crocodile blood' if it is in capsule form.

20	Tha	the, the one person behind my house,
21		she, she has a problem with cancer//
22	Jib	//yes, cancer,
23	Tha	after that she, eat this (.) crocodile blood (. . .)
24	Jib	erm, DRINK, DRINK
25	Tha	NO, not drink, it's make-
26	Jib	[COOK?]
27	Tha	[make it DRY] and take erm in (.) cap-capsule
28	Ss	O:h,
29	Tha	In the capsule it's easy for eat the crocodile [(b)lood]
30	Jib	[BL.BLood]
31	Luli	BL.Blood!
32	Ss	Blood!
33	Tha	Blood!

The interaction above arguably shows how English language ideology and past socialisation experience exert an influence on the ongoing interaction, yet the goal remains language accuracy both in terms of semantic meaning and pronunciation, even if these

are inaccurate (perhaps 'take' rather than 'eat' being the appropriate word). Critically, context remains paramount. In the vignette here, the focus was on getting the language 'right' and politeness norms that dictate use of face-saving strategy to speak to someone perceived to have more authority due to age and institutional authority (Tha) took a back seat (in contrast to Brown & Levinson, 1987; Meierkord, 1996). The liminal space between 'classroom' English and 'real-life' English seems to be in interplay. The above perhaps illustrates how people always say more than they think because part of the meaning of what they say is already given by their *position* in the social structure, by their *relative power* and by the *subject position* they occupy in social encounters (Kramsch, 2009). Further, perhaps that people might not be conscious of their interpretative strategies, yet they practise those strategies (Bhabha, 2004). Yet, whether these individuals are conscious or not of the strategies they use is arguably of little relevance, moreover, the social positions are not considered relevant when the focus is on the language. Yet, although some textbook norms of English are met here (e.g. in the pronunciation of blood) others are perhaps not (maybe to use 'take' rather than 'eat') and it is possible the participants would want to know this and, yet, the communication was successful, so such elements were not key here, even if they may be to a test such as IELTS.

Vignette 4: nosey or curious?

In this vignette, Tu, from Vietnam, is the only member of the group who was married and the other students – Seri, Luli, Jib, Phuc, Thy – keep cajoling him to tell them his 'love story'. In the excerpt below, Seri asks to see a picture of his wife in lines 102 to 103. Seri's utterance 'you have a picture of her?' (line 102) has the illocutionary force of a request to see the picture, but Tu seems to have interpreted it as a yes–no question with a simple reply in the affirmative (line 103). However, Seri emphatically says 'now' (line 104) to signal to Tu that she would like to see his wife's photo, but does not make a direct request until line 107 followed by an apology for being 'nosey', but then Luli interjects with the more positive 'CURIOUS!' which Seri takes up.

102	Seri	you have a picture of her?//
103	Tu	//Yeah,
104	Seri	(. . .) erm, NO:w?
105	Tu	I have, [yes, I have!]
106	Thy	[let's see?]
107	Seri	can we, (.) (laughs) Sorry, I'm so sorry (.) my gosh
108		[so, NOSEY (.) (laughs)] we're just interested!
109	Ss	[(laughter)]
110	Luli	CURIOUS!//
111	Seri	//curious, yeah!

In the above vignette, it is possible Tu felt uncomfortable about the intrusion and so hesitated to show his wife's picture. Feigning misunderstanding might have been an attempt to preserve harmony or save face as saying 'no' might be seen as face-threatening (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Luli's recast of the word 'nosey' as used by Seri (line 108) into 'curious' reframes the interaction into something more positive. 'Nosey' connotes intrusiveness in prying into Tu's personal life

whereas 'curious' connotes eagerness to know more information. What is perhaps noteworthy is that in the short snippet of talk, any pragmatic danger was swiftly corrected (lines 102 to 106) and then a more sophisticated level of nuanced vocabulary knowledge (lines 107 to 111) was co-constructed. Here, a juxtaposition of fluid and shifting identities as friends, language learners and language teachers (Lavanchy, Gajardo, & Dervin, 2011) are brought in interplay in this intercultural interaction, and yet the focus of the negotiation is underpinned by accurate semantic usage.

Vignette 5: funny na!

In this final vignette, Seri is talking about her boyfriend, Huri, a member of the conversation club, but not present here. The interaction is characterised by playful banter, teasing and intimate gossip. Seri describes her boyfriend's facial expression (or lack thereof) in lines 465 to 466, and that 'he makes funny faces'. But Tu swiftly offers a recast of 'funny faces' starting with' an emphatic 'NOT funny, LOVELY'. This utterance surfaces Tu's close friendship with Huri. It is not clear what meanings he associates with 'funny' but from his insistence on 'lovely' to describe his friend's face leads us to infer that 'funny' is negatively correlated. But, in line 468, Seri disagrees with Tu and insists on her original choice of word by restating it, but adding the Thai particle 'na'; saying 'funny, na!' which was echoed by Luli in line 470, followed by Tu himself in line 471 with emphatic stress on the Thai particle 'na'. Speakers of native Thai consulted about this say that the insertion of 'na' mitigates Seri's disagreement with Tu on the use of 'lovely' instead of 'funny', making it less face-threatening and can be taken as an appeal to rapport. In lines 474 and 482, Seri again inserts Thai words in her utterances (kha and chai chai). Thai speakers' use of 'kha' when speaking English (e.g. 'thank you for the nice gift, kha') is sometimes considered L1 interference. 'kha' is a politeness particle and here adds a note of friendliness to the exchange. 'Chai chai' is used as a back channeling device to express agreement, (e.g. when English speakers say 'yeah, yeah' or 'I see' to signal to the speaker they are listening). But the possibility of L1 interference is not possible in this vignette because Seri herself speaks very little Thai and her native language is Filipino. Notably, none of the members present during this particular interaction have good knowledge of the Thai language.

465	Seri	Actually his face is like poker face, no facial expression
466		He makes, like, he makes funny faces//
467	Tu	//NOT funny, LOVELY.
468	Seri	Funny, na! (smiley voice)
469	Ss	[(laugh)]
470	Luli	[Funny NA!]
471	Tu	Funny NA!
472	Seri	Funny face xxx
473	Tu	You're very lucky
474	Seri	Lucky, kha!
475	Thy	Yes
476	Fa	YES, very lucky
477	Seri	Really?
478	Tai	Sure!
479	Seri	Why, why, why (laughs)
480	Thy	Because you look so happy, yes, yes

(*Continued*)

465	Seri	Actually his face is like poker face, no facial expression
466		He makes, like, he makes funny faces//
467	Tu	//NOT funny, LOVELY.
468	Seri	Funny, na! (smiley voice)
469	Ss	[(laugh)]
470	Luli	[Funny NA!]
471	Tu	Funny NA!
472	Seri	Funny face xxx
473	Tu	You're very lucky
474	Seri	Lucky, kha!
475	Thy	Yes
476	Fa	YES, very lucky
477	Seri	Really?
478	Tai	Sure!
479	Seri	Why, why, why (laughs)
480	Thy	Because you look so happy, yes, yes
481	Fa	When you talk about him
482	Seri	Happy chai, chai

'Funny na' arguably resonates with a notion thirdness in what Oldenburg (1996) refers to as a 'third place' which emphasises the friendliness and 'entertaining' quality of 'third places' created by the people themselves through their 'passionate and light-hearted, serious and witty, informative and silly' conversation, which brings individuals 'nearer and dearer' to each other (Oldenburg, 1996, p. 9). The use of Thai words can on the one hand be read linguistically as an instance of 'language crossing' whereby a language that does not typically 'belong' to the speaker is deployed in interaction (Rampton, 1997a). Yet, it is possible their use is influenced by the place of the interaction (Thailand) for the participants from China, Vietnam and the Philippines, recognizing the setting as their own (Pölzl & Seidlhofer, 2006). The ELF participants all come from different socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds so they might see Thai communication norms as a 'kind of *ad hoc* negotiated presumed shared ground' (ibid, 173). In other words, despite their lack of knowledge of the Thai language, the cultural shared points and aspects function here in this fluid space, showing that the language does in fact belong to the speakers (in contrast to Rampton, 1997a) and is representative of a way of being in the world (Parry, 2003). Again, however, although pragmatically the above vignette is exemplary of correct usage, how much would be accorded to such usage in a test such as IELTS is highly questionable. The interaction itself is intercultural in nature, in a highly fluid space, drawing on specific instances that have been picked up from Thai, even if little is known of the language.

Discussion

The above vignettes of ELF encounters show how ELF interaction is itself primarily intercultural, and how it takes place in a space, a 'Third Space', that continually changes. Nevertheless, they also show that the focus also remains very much on linguistic accuracy for participants. Undeniably, as much of the literature on the processes of ELF communication show, face saving takes place, and there are also many instances where 'standard' English is not adhered to. Nevertheless, for these participants the focus remains very much so on linguistic accuracy. Ironically, the vignettes perhaps show this more simply because they are not based on traditional ELF approaches of studying linguistic data (e.g.

a written corpus (Hua, 2015) and thus can show more that, despite linguistic 'inaccuracies', the target and goal always remains linguistic accuracy of pronunciation (Vignette 3) or spelling (Vignette 1), even if such accuracy is not always attained (e.g. Vignette 2). Often, as shown in Vignette 3, this target of linguistic accuracy is pursued at the expense of maintaining social conventions (in contrast to Kramsch, 2009) and it is unclear whether such negotiation is conscious or not, although the use of 'curious' over 'nosey' in Vignette 4 suggests it is conscious (in contrast to Bhabha, 2012) and also semantically and linguistically accurate.

The space where ELF interaction occurs is highly fluid and resists any form of tangible reification (cf. Holliday, cited in Zhou & Pilcher, 2019a) or a justification that it can be described as being hybrid (in contrast to Mauranen, 2012). Often phrases are constructed for specific contexts that never arise again and, despite the focus on linguistic accuracy, items from the Thai language such as 'na' and 'chai chai' are used for effect that are highly specific to context and would not be considered favorably in any international tests such as IELTS.

Is this therefore a problem? In other words, is it an issue that the participants in these interactions used 'na' and 'chai chai', and that they used the word 'eat' when 'take' may be more appropriate? We argue that, for communicative purposes (cf. Swain & Canale, 1982) it is not, even though an underlying and integral goal of all the vignettes was linguistic accuracy. True, this may not always have been achieved and arguments could be made that fossilisation of errors may occur, but given that this was the goal it is concomitantly arguable that participants would be aware that such usage of Thai language would not be looked favourably upon in the context of a formal speaking test like IELTS or TOEFL. The other reason why we do not see this as a problem is the context of the interactions themselves, and how such usage facilitated more animated and genuine communication. The key goal was to attain meaning in this specific context and, arguably, if the context was to negotiate a business deal, the focus would be on the deal itself and, where there was a focus on linguistic accuracy, it would be subservient to attaining this goal. Similarly, if the participants were focusing on a task for a university assignment, the focus would be on that. As the context here was a conversation club to practice English, the focus was on language accuracy and also on conversation, and the interaction may have been ELF in its medium but in its nature it was intercultural and the space in which it occurred was fluid. Thus, interculturality and interaction took priority, although linguistic accuracy remained key. This priority can be sensed from each illustrative vignette we analysed in the previous section, for instance, a discursively constructed negotiation (Vignette 1), in-situ and transient meaning co-creation (Vignette 2), fluid and shifting identities (Vignette 4), etc.

Conclusion

We have argued that the vast majority of ELF research and studies tended to be linguistic in nature and focus and the textbooks English is taught from are similarly so. Our study has highlighted the importance of considering intercultural aspects further, either as part of a particular aspect of the intercultural such as identity (Baker, 2016) or as an addition in itself (Holmes & Dervin, 2016). Thus, we suggest that this should take a further step to prioritize ELF interaction as intercultural

interaction in itself, and as intercultural interaction that occurs in a space that resists definition and is fluid and continually changing, yet which retains a focus on linguistic accuracy in specific contexts As noted earlier, the nature of the English Conversation club and the identity of the participants as L2 learners necessarily influence the context of interaction.

Such a recalibration and shift in how ELF is conceived inevitably has huge ramifications for its research and approaches to its pedagogy. It would mean the research into ELF needs to cast its gaze far more holistically and to study ELF not from data removed from its context of use in written textual format alone. It would mean for the pedagogy of ELF that textbooks should include far more in addition to linguistic elements on approaches to analysing interculturality, to the shifting contexts including the ever-changing nature of the goals of interaction and the unique spaces in which the encounters occur. Changes to materials could prioritize the promotion of intercultural interaction in the contexts where students are communicating and secondly retain a focus on linguistic accuracy. We would argue that an interculturality paradigm enables the analyst to explore, through fine-grained analysis, the ephemeral nature of intercultural interactions. As we have demonstrated in Vignette 1, it is through adopting an interculturality paradigm (Hua, 2011) that our analytic sensitivity to the dynamism of the unfolding and developing moment-to-moment exchange between interlocutors was heightened.

Therefore, it would require a recognition that such awareness of content and processes need to be included in training of teachers also, and that such expertise would arguably need to be acknowledged far more in aspects such as time and remuneration, and also in perceived value, perhaps not only for ELF teaching, but perhaps for language teaching as a whole.

In light of the study's findings, we propose actionable recommendations for classroom activities and teacher training. Classroom activities can include role-playing intercultural scenarios, using case studies to solve communication challenges and incorporating authentic materials like videos and recordings of natural conversations. Encouraging reflective learning through journals and class discussions will help students understand cultural nuances, while lessons on pragmatic strategies can enhance real-world interactions. Project work comparing cultural practices, such as ordering food or using public transport, can further enrich students' understanding.

Teacher training programs should emphasize intercultural communication competence through workshops on intercultural theories and cultural awareness activities (see for example Victoria & Sangiamchit, 2021). Teachers should be trained in developing curricula that integrate these skills and in assessment techniques for both linguistic and intercultural competencies. Guidance on sourcing and creating authentic L2 teaching materials, along with adapting existing textbooks, will ensure pedagogical resources are engaging. Establishing professional learning communities and encouraging continuous professional development will keep teachers updated on best practices. Incorporating modules on intercultural communication in English courses and fostering a multicultural classroom environment will better prepare students for effective communication in a globalized world, enhancing both linguistic skills and intercultural competence. Future studies could focus on adapting existing materials to better incorporate these elements.

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Appendix 1 Transcription Conventions (adapted from Jefferson, 1984)

(.)	a brief pause of less than 5 seconds
(. . .)	pause of more than 5 seconds
.	falling intonation at end of tone unit
?	high rising intonation at end of tone unit
	slightly rising intonation at end of tone unit
!	animated intonation
-	unfinished utterance, e.g. false start, self-correction
WORD	Words written in capitals to indicate emphatic stress, e.g. VERY
xxx	unintelligible text
(word?)	guess at unclear text, e.g. I (apologise?) for the delay in shipment
::	noticeable lengthening of a vowel
	A: o:h, I'm sorry
[words]	
[words]	simultaneous speech indicated in brackets, e.g.
	A: mm//Did you [read the]
	B: [didn't have the] time
//	latching, no perceptible pause after a turn
	A: I'm going to be late//
	B//me too
(laughs)	description of current action, transcriber's comments
[/ . . . /]	some text has been deleted