

The Global Talent Landscape and Role of English Language in Japan

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Abstract

In an increasingly interconnected world, universities play a crucial role in nurturing global talent. This presentation explores the foundational concepts of global human resources, the expanding influence of the English language, and effective strategies for teaching English within higher education institutions. To do this, this study delves into the definition of a global human resource, shedding light on the multifaceted qualities that make individuals valuable in a global context. Understanding the characteristics, competencies, and cultural awareness required for global success is essential in this era of multinational collaboration and mobility. In a global context, the pivotal role of the English language as a bridge between cultures and a tool for effective communication is recognized. The global expansion of English has made it a vital skill for professionals worldwide, underscoring its significance in shaping the global talent landscape. To answer the question of how to develop global talent, this study explores methods and practices for nurturing global competency within university settings, emphasizing the need for adaptable and culturally sensitive pedagogical approaches. The present study serves as a guide for educators and institutions navigating the dynamic terrain of global talent development within the academic sphere.

Keywords: Global Talent Landscape, Global Human Resources, English Language Expansion, Culturally Sensitivity, English Pedagogies

1. Introduction

Japan's business environment is rapidly changing due to globalization and advances in technology. This change has increased the demand for people with a global mindset, skills and insights from a global perspective, usually referred to as “global human resources” in Japan. Discussion and expectations are growing that one of the solutions to the global human resource shortage is to train such individuals in university education. Interestingly, however, the definition of what constitutes a true “global human resource” and what skills and competencies are required is still ambiguous. This ambiguity in definitions raises the question of how students should be nurtured and prepared to contribute to globalized society, especially at Japanese universities.

The primary objective of this study is to explore and provide solutions to issues related to the development of global human resources, with a focus on Japanese universities. Specifically, the study will focus on the following points. First, a comprehensive exploration and analysis of the definition and characteristics of global human resources will be conducted. Second, an examination of how universities can contribute to the development of global human resources will be undertaken. This includes improving educational curricula, developing international collaborative programs, and supporting student practical working experiences. In addition, the gap that exists between university education and practical work experience will be studied to determine ways to complement the skills and experience that students need to succeed in a global context. Through this research,

suggestions will be provided on how university curriculum can evolve and respond to society's need to develop global human resources.

2. Definition of global human resources

Global businesspeople are considered to have the skills needed to work globally. It is said that there is no clear definition of what a global human resource is (Ooki, 2014, Yabuta, 2016). When globalization is considered from the perspective of society as a whole, some have criticized the business-oriented approach to global human resources (Bosio, 2021). The government has repeatedly discussed global human resources with an emphasis on the perspective of economic activities. Industry defines global human resources as Japanese and non-Japanese human resources who are responsible for the globalization of Japanese companies' business activities and are active in global business (Keidanren, 2011).

The global Human Resource Development Committee was established in response to the proposal of the Industry-Academia Partnership for Human Resource Development in 2007. The committee aims to develop human resources who will be active in the global arena through cooperation between industry and academia, and the report examined factors that the human resource may have. To summarize the factors, global human resources are defined as those who possess 1) basic skills for working adults, 2) communication skills in foreign languages, 3) understanding of different cultures and Japanese identity, and in addition as 4) a wide range of education and in-depth expertise, problem-finding and problem-solving skills, teamwork and leadership, public and ethical awareness, and media literacy (Keidanren, 2011). Two of the three main factors involve foreign languages and cultures, intercultural communication are recognized as important, which has been widely studied from multiple perspectives internationally (Ooki, 2014; Fujio, 2016). Cross-cultural communication skills, which include knowledge, attitudes, and skills and overlap with many of the elements expected of global human resources (Fujio, 2016). Intercultural Interaction Competence is an umbrella term defined as the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds, both verbal and non-verbal, as well as to deal with the psychological situations and various consequences of communication (Spencer-Oatey and Franklin, 2009).

Byram (2009) states that in addition to intercultural competence, intercultural communication involves three components: language, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence. These are: openness and curiosity in understanding other cultures; socio-cultural knowledge of one's own and other cultures; the ability to interpret, explain, and connect other cultures to one's own; the skills of discovery and exchange; the ability to gain new knowledge about cultures; and skills to use one's knowledge and attitudes in actual communication in a different discourse (Byram, 2009). Ting-Toomey (1999) examined the ability to deal with conflicts that occur in communication different cultural background, Gudykunst (2004) studied anxiety and uncertainty management. From the viewpoint of international management, cross-cultural communication skills were examined as complex elements of competence including language as well as responsiveness in human relationships

and the skill of working in international teams with awareness of different culture (Barham and Devine 1991).

Global human resources are individuals with essential workplace skills, excellent foreign language communication skills, a clear sense of Japanese identity, and cultural sensitivity. In addition, they also have a diverse educational background and expertise, problem-solving skills, teamwork and leadership, a high sense of public ethics, and media literacy. Overarching factors can be definition proposed by the Economic Committee which reflects the consensus of the business community.

Therefore, in the context of the evolving global talent landscape, Japan's strategies for human resource development are becoming increasingly pivotal. This landscape is characterized by rapid technological advancements, a shift towards a knowledge-based economy, and the growing importance of digital and soft skills in the global workforce. These trends necessitate a reevaluation of Japan's educational and training programs to ensure they align with the global demand for diverse competencies. Additionally, the global talent landscape is marked by intense competition for highly skilled professionals.

3. Global human resource development in Japanese business corporation

The previous section discussed skills and competencies. How are global human resources developed in business corporations? Human resource development is generally conducted by each organization independently, providing their own training. The Japan Business Federation in 2013 proposed the following four measures for Japanese business corporations: 1) diversify recruitment activities, 2) strengthen employees' ability to cope with globalization, 3) standardize personnel evaluation systems globally, and 4) encourage employees to relearn at graduate schools and other institutions. Despite of supporting proposal and sequential argument for global human resources, as the following survey shows, the fact is that a shortage of global human resources in Japanese business corporations exists, yet the education system does not seem to have been established.

Mitsubishi UFJ research and consulting conducted the survey in 2018, seventy percent of global Japanese companies mentioned lack of human resource who can manage operations overseas as top management. Respondents were in manager positions of human resource development in each company. 110 companies, 57 manufacturers and 53 non-manufacturers, participated in the survey. Respondents indicated shortage of global talent who equipes management skills, cross-cultural communication skills, language skills, and in addition, experience working abroad and in multiple operations which are also important (Nikkei, 2018). However, many business corporations are aware that they do not have the organizational systematic structure in place to develop global human resources (Keidairan, 2014; Ooki, 2014).

Although, the fact that different companies have different training methods following is some practice in Japanese business corporations for international personnel. Initial stage of development was the English training for employees and gradually shifted

focusing on communication (Nakatani, 2016). Later, cultural understanding was added to the content of the training, making language skills and cross-cultural understanding were two pillars of the program.

As with the notion of on-the-job training (OJT), which is a typical method of training in Japanese business corporations to nurture employees to work globally, sending early career employees overseas directly. The experience gives early career employees a sense of realities of the workplace overseas which might be completely different. Overseas' assignments require viewpoints to handle the situation and make decisions on their own practical situation. For example, when employees are sent to an emerging market country, the personal connections and relationships would be one of the keys for business in the context. Building rapport relationships is also important (Sojiz, 2023).

Some companies have changed their language policy to English to meet the expansion of business due to globalization. Japanese internet service company, Rakuten changed the corporate language to English in 2010 (The Japan Times, 2015). The company aimed at becoming the number one internet service company. Adopting English as an official language was one of the radical changes. Also, "English as a corporate language" has been gathering scholarly attention on the paradigm of sociolinguistics (Fairbrother, 2018; Mauranen, 2018; Kankaanranta *et al.*, 2018). However, the shift in language policy was limited to a few companies, and the number of candidates is quite limited when considering the requirements for hiring globally active personnel or nurture their own employees. Discussions about economic and industrial issues evolved into consideration at the national level (Yoshida, 2014). The government is now considering how to deal with this shortage of global human resources as well. The issue of human resource development in business corporations was mirrored in government policy.

4. Expectations for universities to produce global human resources

The discussion of development global human resources gradually involved universities (Yoshida, 2014). Industry's demand for human resource development from universities began in the 1990s (Iwawaki 2006) and was discussed as a global human resource issue in the 2000s. In response to the demand, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) announced the Action Plan in 2003. The Minister of Education, Toyama (2003) stated that to survive globalized competitive situations Japanese people need to acquire sufficient English ability which focused on practical communication. The Action Plan aims at cultivating 'Japanese with English Abilities' by providing international exchange programs for university students to study abroad. The objectives were emphasized to promote mutual understanding through exchanging programs and establishing a friendly relationship with foreign countries. Moreover, the students experienced intellectual exchange activities, and they are expected to become human resources playing an important role in international communities.

The government and economic organizations gradually developed a partnership. The Japan Association of Corporate Executives called on universities to contribute to

fostering talents in education by alliance of business-government-academics (Keizaidoyukai, 2007). Furthermore, creating opportunities to foster cooperation between industry, academia and government, the Committee of Promotion of Developing Global Human Resources by the Industry-Academia Cooperation was established in 2009. The Committee stressed that global human resource development is an issue facing Japanese society as a whole, and that it is important to maximize the use of resources (people, resources, and capital) from school education, industry, academia, and government, and to develop them in society for the entire society (Global Human Resource Development Committee, 2010). The 2013 proposal of the Japan Business Federation stated that the percentage of students who go on to university exceeds 50% as a reason for expecting university education should play an extremely important role in the development of human resources. Although, the report also noted that it is necessary for companies to strengthen training and education for new employees, it turned its attention to universities.

5. Japanese Universities' response to global human resource development discussion - critical view of human resource development in universities

The development of global human resources in Japan, which until now has been attempted in accordance with policies led by the government and economic organizations, has focused on producing human resources who can make full use of foreign languages and play an active role in global business arena. Japanese universities are also playing a supporting role in this effort. However, this situation is highly market-driven, and its cultivation is characterized by market democracy rather than moral democracy (Dill, 2012). Viewing Japan's current global human resource development, there is a critical argument that many universities have a neoliberal, market-oriented curriculum that stands out as developing career competencies for success in a globally competitive society (Basio, 2021).

Under the influence of globalization, the idea of global citizenship is expanding in education around the world (Giroux and Bosio, 2021). Global citizenship refers to a set of competences to act collaboratively and responsibly to find global solutions to challenges for the world (UNESCO, 2015). Education for global citizenship (GCE) is about developing the knowledge, skills, value and attitudes that learners need to be able to contribute to a more inclusive, peaceful world (Boiso, 2021). In Japan, Korea, England, Canada, the United States, Austria, Ireland, and Czech Republic there has been growing awareness about Global Citizenship Education to cultivate more globally oriented students (Ho, 2018; Moon and Koo, 2011; O'Connor and Faas, 2012; Tarozzi and Inguaggiato, 2018). Efforts are now underway to nurture global human resources through curriculum development from a post-neoliberal perspective (Bosio, 2021).

Neoliberal approach to global human resource development relates to linguistic ideology in Japan. Bosio (2021) also suggests the concept of an Anglo-centric approach to global human resource development, where English has been emphasized as the necessary and useful language to connect and participate in the global economy. The hegemony of the English language, also viewed as soft imperialism, exerts a powerful influence with western ways of thinking, doing, and acting (Marginson, 1999). Understanding this context is crucial

when considering the specific role and perception of the English language within Japan's educational and economic frameworks.

6. The Ideological Landscape of English Language Education in Japan

This section delves into the intricate interplay of social values, economic aspirations, and educational ideologies shaping English language policy and education in Japan. This chapter examines the collaborative dynamics between key ministries, such as the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), and their role in framing the discourse around global human resources.

6.1. English language in Japan

Building on this broader context, the social dimensions of language policy in Japan warrant further exploration. The coordination between the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), economic organizations, and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in the discourse on global human resources, as previously mentioned, provides a backdrop. Beyond this social context, perspectives on the English language exert a significant influence. As Irvine (1989) points out, perspectives aligned with social values of particular groups are often rooted in ideologies. These ideologies manifest in diverse views on English: some see it as the dominant global language, essential for international engagement, while others critique it as an extension of imperialist influence. This dichotomy, as Hotta (2015) notes, reflects ethical and political evaluations of English. This chapter delves into how these ideologies around the English language have shaped policies and practices in English education and learning in Japan, as evidenced by existing research.

English ideology in Japan refers to the widespread importance and influence of the English language in Japanese society, culture and education. Relationship with English and its role has evolved over time. Here are some key aspects of English ideology in Japan. The two ideas underpinning the importance of English are the recognition that English is a universal language and English language skills are socio-economically beneficial for both nation and the individual. English is widely recognized as a global lingua franca, and Japan, like many other countries, has acknowledged its significance in global communication (Marginson, 1999). The Japanese government and educational institutions have promoted the learning of English as a means to enhance Japan's global competitiveness. Views on the English language are sustained by neoliberal ideology, as seen in the criticism of Kubota (2015) and others. Anglo-centric and neoliberal approaches are generally adopted as a labor market strategy (Basio, 2021). The power of English as a symbolic system is significant in the global linguistic market, and its recognition tends to be uncritically accepted (Marginson, 1999).

Language ideology was also seen to influence education. English language education had been supported by two beliefs (Kubota, 2015). The first was the belief that the educational model should be taught by native speakers (Silverstein, 1979). The second was

that the learner's goal is to be able to manipulate English skills comparable to those of native speakers (Wooland and Schieffelin, 1994). Not only in terms of educational approach, but also in line with the learner's beliefs suggest that not few learners of English in Japan have a strong interest in language native speakers of English use, want to pronounce and use expressions like native speakers of English, and sometimes view English that Japanese speakers use as a mistake (Yamada 2013). These convictions helped strengthen English teaching policies and methods that prioritize the cultivation of precision in grammar and vocabulary, or narrowly defined English skills (Watts, 2011).

6.2. English language education reflected language ideology

The influence of native speaker-centered ideology in English language education policy is most clearly seen in the guidelines for high school studies and the use of external examinations for university entrance examinations (Mizukura, 2020). Since the 2013 academic year, a basic policy has been in force in upper secondary schools that “classes should be conducted in English”. Although educators have been discussing the use of learners’ mother tongue in the classroom from English pedagogy and applied linguistics perspective (Torikai, 2017). Moreover, the use of English as the sole language of instruction in English teaching has not yet been fully established in the field of language learning (Mizukura, 2020). The English-only approach, or monolingual approach, is strongly influenced by the field of second language acquisition, known as Second Language Acquisition (SLA) (Cook, 2001).

Monolingual instruction is based on four main core theories which included monolingualism, naturalism, native speaker-centeredness and absolutism (Cook, 2010). The four theories are interrelated and support the teaching of native speaker teachers and monolingual instruction (Lee, 2016). In monolingual instruction, the learner's first language is deemed to be of less pedagogical benefits and it is important to maximize the amount of second language input. Based on naturalistic ideas, the acquisition of a second language should also basically be traced to the process by which infants acquire their mother tongue. Therefore, when considering language acquisition through monolingual instruction, the educational usefulness of the learner's mother tongue is not valued (Cook, 2001). However, it is a fact that learners who have already mastered their own mother tongue have to learn grammar, learn vocabulary and expressions and practice using their acquired knowledge when learning a foreign language, unless the learners are infants (Mizukura, 2020).

Several issues have been identified with classes conducted using monolingual instruction (Macaro & Lee, 2013). Torikai (2017) noted that the problems included the teacher focusing solely on teaching in English without paying attention to the students. Children who did not understand English struggled to participate in activities and lost confidence. Additionally, simplistic explanations in English failed to deepen the content of the lessons. However, these criticisms, made without empirical data, should not be viewed as representative of the general situation.

Supporting English teaching through the monolingual method is expected to increase opportunities for English communication, which is considered a measure of educational reform (Mizukura, 2020). Traditional teaching methods, primarily focusing on vocabulary, grammar, and the translation of lengthy passages for university entrance exams, have highlighted deficiencies in speaking skills. The concept of 'four skills,' encompassing listening, speaking, reading, and writing, gained widespread use to effectively address these deficiencies, leading to the formulation of policies aimed at fostering a well-rounded proficiency.

Additionally, categorizing English language skills into four distinct areas has made it easier to identify deficiencies within these skills. This approach also stems from the concept of native speaker centrism, influencing the learning approach to resemble that of native speakers (Takano, 2004). Furthermore, this approach has been suggested to be linked to differences in the understanding of first language acquisition and second language acquisition, as well as to an ideology centered around native speakers of the language (Mizukura, 2020). The following section explores educational approaches based on the concept of the four English language skills.

6.3. The concept of English language four skills

In the modern realm of teaching second and foreign languages, the concept of the four skills is widely assumed by most experts that language education naturally breaks down into distinct areas of proficiency, often following the sequence of speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Language teaching, 2007). The four-skills focus of English language instruction suggests that it should follow the same language acquisition process as the acquisition of mother tongues, with the stages of speaking what is heard, reading what is heard or spoken, and finally writing what is heard, spoken or read.

Therefore, a primary goal of structurally dividing language teaching into the four skill areas is to aim for proficiency that mirrors that of a native speaker (Hinkel, 2010). The concept of the four skills significantly has influenced curriculum development and English language ability measurement. English language teaching using the four skills approach is similar to the audio-lingual approach (Holliday, 2007). The audio-lingual approach concentrates on the two skills of speaking and listening and is based on the oral presentation of correct English sentences, which are then imitated and recited by the learner. The use of the learner's mother tongue is considered to reduce educational effectiveness, as it is considered desirable to input more correct English expressions from the learner's ears.

While English teaching methods based on the audio-lingual approach aim to master reading, listening, writing, and speaking, there is a natural emphasis on listening and speaking. In the following section, I will explore the government's policy, which promotes more communicative activities through group work (Mizukura, 2020). The components of competence are explained in terms of the discrete four skills; however, the ultimate goal is to acquire and effectively use all of them. The British Council (2023), an international cultural exchange organization and a proponent of the four skills, aims to develop

competence across all these skills, tailored to specific practical English usage. The four skills approach underscores not only the acquisition of knowledge and skills but also the fostering of critical thinking, sound judgment, and effective self-expression. These competencies are crucial for applying the acquired knowledge and skills in real communication scenarios and for proficient communication in a global context (British Council, 2023).

Developing multifaceted language skills is also said to improve one's ability to view situations critically and make thoughtful judgments, although the reasons for this connection may be subject to question. This is akin to the belief that proficiency in English equates to being a global human resource. It is likely that the ideology of English is deeply ingrained in what they assert to be global talent. The situation where the emphasis is on speaking, while the four skills are to be acquired comprehensively, has failed to show a clear direction, due to a mixture of the implementation of teaching methods that mirror attitudes towards English, the lack of human resources who can work globally as a social context, which is judged by the minimum language skills, and the reflection on teaching methods that focus on reading and writing in response to university entrance examination measures, which are inadequate in terms of English communication skills. As discussed above, the ideology surrounding the English language is closely related to the context of how English language education has evolved. The next section will explore the spread of English and its influence on changes in English education.

7. The spread of English

The spread of English to the present day is the result of colonial expansion, which was developed by the military power of the United Kingdom, a nation of native English speakers, and reached its peak at the end of the 19th century (Yukimori, 2017). This brought English to many countries in the American continent, Africa, Asia and Oceania and laid the foundations for English's status as an international language. Furthermore, the military, economic, scientific and technological power of another nation of native English speakers, the USA, based on its culture, which included entertainment, and its international influence, which has decisively boosted the status of English as a global language (Troike, 1977). Furthermore, the link with information systems, represented by the internet, has been added as a factor (Yukimori, 2017). This section provides an overview of two perspectives on English in terms of its diversity and commonalities. It will discuss the findings from the World Englishes field of research, which focuses on the diversity of English, as well as the field of research on English as a Lingua Franca, which explores English as a present-day global language.

7.1. World Englishes and English as a lingua franca

Honna (2008) argues that language expansion and diversification always occur simultaneously, and that the more expanded the English language becomes, the more diverse it inevitably. Such a phenomenon progressed worldwide. From around the 1960s, it was disputed whether regional varieties of English had developed independently that they hindered mutual understandability (Prator, 1968). However, Prator (1968) insisted on the legitimacy of native-speaker English and did not concede linguistic norms for such variants

of English as an independent variant model. Halliday et al. (1964) criticized a prejudicial view and argued that there was a range of English as a variant distinct from Anglo-American English and that it should be recognized as a model for language teaching.

In this context, the World Englishes approach was developed to recognize the diversity of English spoken in different countries and to explore the historical background of linguistic variations and characteristics of each (Kachru, 1992). Kachru's influential three-concentric-circle framework divides the English language into the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle. The "Inner Circle" refers to native English-speaking countries where English is learned as a mother tongue by most of the population and used in everyday life. The "Outer Circle" includes former British colonies such as India, Singapore, Nigeria, and Kenya. In these countries, English, while not the first language of the people, serves as an official or semi-official language, or plays an important role in the multilingual context of the country. Here, English is often acquired as a second language in daily life or through schooling. Japan falls into the "Expanding Circle", which comprises many non-English-speaking countries. A key characteristic of this circle is that English is taught as a foreign language in school education. In this group, English is treated as a language of learning and used as necessary for business or limited communication, rather than for everyday use (Yukimori, 2017). Kachru's model, by clarifying the position of ESL, promotes its legitimacy claims and has been cited by numerous researchers for its concise categorization of the diversity of the English language worldwide (Yukimori, 2017). However, some critics, such as Pennycook (2007), have pointed out that the model exclusively treats language in terms of national units.

Moreover, global mobility has become more flexible and fluid, leading to interactions that transcend singular national boundaries. This is particularly relevant when international aid volunteer staff need to understand the local language. An anthropological view of specific English variations becomes crucial to learning. Ethnographers need to be ready to immerse themselves in local situations.

A different perspective on dealing with the vast variety of English usage is essential, particularly in understanding how people from diverse language backgrounds use English as a means of communication. The array of varieties is vast; therefore, focusing on the actual use of language in situ is a crucial part of education. Merely categorizing varieties is not sufficient. There should be an emphasis on the concept of English as a lingua franca (ELF), which influences not only the situated use but also English pedagogy.

The use of English has expanded globally, with as many as 70% of its speakers being non-native. English is often used in contexts that do not involve native speakers (Crystal, 2003). Takeshita et al. argue that raising awareness of the cross-cultural characteristics of English as a global lingua franca should promote awareness of English as a global concern. The notion of ELF has gained traction among researchers. ELF encompasses three major aspects: as a phenomenon, as a language used in interaction, and as a research paradigm. The interpretation and analysis of the ELF phenomenon vary based

on each individual's perspective (Takino, 2016). ELF is described as a "contact language used by people from diverse linguistic backgrounds" (Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey, 2011; Jenkins, 2006), characterized as fluid, flexible, hybrid, and intercultural (Jenkins et al., 2011). Being less constrained by standard English, ELF users often negotiate and construct meaning to reach mutual understanding (Seidlhofer, 2011).

There has been a paradigm shift in English pedagogy, recognizing ELF users as legitimate English users, regardless of their ability, native language, or any other characteristic. Thus, ELF users should not be viewed as deficient or as learners aspiring to emulate native speakers (Jenkins et al., 2011; Seidlhofer, 2011). ELF is increasingly seen as a phenomenon dependent on individual circumstances and characteristics, leading to a paradigm shift that views learners as legitimate, developing language users. This paradigm shift's impact on the pedagogical approach warrants reflection.

7.2. ELF pedagogy

Corresponding to the increasing use of English in internationalized business and academic settings, the paradigm in English education has gradually shifted from English as a Native Language (ENL) to ELF (Firth, 1996; Canagarajah, 2006; Graddol, 2006; Mauranen et al., 2010; Murata and Jenkins, 2009; Seidlhofer, 2004). Several studies have highlighted the creative features of ELF (Cogo and Dewey, 2012; Dewey, 2007; Jenkins, 2000, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011). When English is taught under the assumption that students are aiming to learn it as native speakers do, learners often make numerous mistakes from the perspective of standard English (Widdowson, 2016).

In ELF pedagogy, the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of learners are acknowledged and accepted (House, 2016), leading to learners making creative use of English that might have been considered mistakes (Widdowson, 2016). Widdowson suggests that correctness is not always necessary for effective communication, proposing that teachers focus on communication value beyond conformity rather than making efforts to eliminate mistakes.

7.3. ELF and identity

In the ELF context, learners are recognized as legitimate English "users," yet it has been noted that many Japanese students still identify exclusively as English "learners," adhering to the native speaker norm and thus becoming reluctant to engage in cross-cultural communication (Saito, 2022). Identity in language learning is not a fixed attribute but a complex, dynamic, socially constructed concept (Norton, 2013), encompassing how individuals perceive themselves and are perceived by others in relation to language use. This is illustrated in Iino and Murata's (2016) study on Japanese university students in English-Medium Instruction (EMI) courses. These students, primarily graduates of Japanese secondary schools identifying as "pure Japanese," initially felt overwhelmed by their English fluency compared to international students and returnees. This feeling was due to initially being judged by standard English criteria. However, after four years in the EMI course and experience in ELF contexts, these "pure Japanese" participants became aware of their

communicative abilities beyond just language proficiency, eventually seeing themselves as English "users." This shift highlights the relevance of communicative ability, alongside language skills, in discussions about the qualities of global human resources.

8. Foundations in experiential learning

This section provides a comprehensive examination of the theoretical foundations and pedagogical approaches in experiential learning, specifically within the context of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). It delves into experiential learning as an active, experience-based educational method, contrasting it with traditional teaching approaches, and discusses the influence of sociocultural theory, emphasizing the role of social interactions and cultural context in learning. The section also explores Communities of Practice as dynamic models for collective learning and knowledge sharing and examines Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) to understand the interplay of individual, environmental, and behavioral factors in career development.

8.1. Experiential learning

Some approaches are particularly well-suited to using English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). Experiential learning, an educational approach that involves acquiring knowledge through direct experience, is one such method (Patrick, 2011). Engaging in hands-on, practical learning, a form of experiential learning, has significant advantages, including the motivation of learners (Senge, 1990). In contrast, memorization and traditional teaching methods, which often involve transferring knowledge from teachers to learners, tend to make learners more passive (Colin, 2010). There has been a significant shift in educational strategies, particularly in higher education. This includes an expanded discussion on how critical improvements in traditional teaching methods have led to the adoption of active learning approaches, which aim to increase student engagement. In the university context, where active learning is widely advocated across all courses, it represents a strategic approach (MEXT, 2017).

Experiential learning is often viewed as an individual learning process. Kolb (1984) developed a modern theory of experiential learning that focuses on the individual learning process, which has been widely adopted for employee education in corporate organizations, higher education, and international business settings (Shepherd *et al.*, 2019). As for the philosophical underpinnings of experiential learning, social constructivism has significantly influenced its principles and practices. These occur in social and cognitive activities involving social interaction and participation among learners (Vygotsky, 1980; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). More specifically, project-based learning is a practical opportunity for university education. Project Based Learning (PBL) is a learning method which is close to real-life business, intersection of education and business practice (Gonzalez-Perez, Lynden and Taras, 2019). Tertiary education draws attention to work integrated learning to increase preparedness of graduates as potential employees (Lowden, Hall & Elliot, 2011). In PBL, the participants are required to construct rapport and trust while the project aims to solve real-life issues. However, it should be noted that interaction in PBL sites are not exactly the same as interaction among business professionals. The participants

have identities as learners as well as practitioners. To optimize student learning, Shepherd *et al.* (2019) suggested that educators and researchers need a comprehensive foundation to effectively apply evidence-based practices through a theoretical framework, which in this case is the sociocultural theory, described next.

8.2. Sociocultural theory

Sociocultural theory is a framework for understanding human cognition and behavior, emphasizing the role of social interactions and cultural context in learning and development. I wish to reflect on the philosophical background of constructivism, utilizing the previously reviewed approaches to English education and cross-cultural understanding as exemplars. This shift towards theories emphasizing social, cultural, and historical aspects is sometimes referred to as the "social turn." The discourse progressed towards a social constructivist approach (Wertsch, 1997). The social constructivist perspective gained momentum when Firth critiqued the erstwhile predominant focus on individual cognition within the domain of second language acquisition (Firth & Wagner, 1997, 1998).

Unlike data analysis that controlled for subject factors in the laboratory, aiming for generalization, the social constructionist approach emphasizes the recognition of the diversity, fluidity, decidability, mutuality, and linearity inherent in the socio-cultural aspects of learners and the context of communication. Another distinction in methodology lies in terminology. In experimental second language acquisition research, the individuals under study are often referred to as "subjects." In contrast, the social constructionist approach regards them as "participants" (Wertsch, 1997).

8.3. Communities of practice

The following concepts can explain how the aforementioned 'participants' achieve their objectives. Communities of Practice (CoP) is a concept and a powerful framework for understanding how learning occurs in social contexts, particularly within organizations or groups sharing a common interest or profession (Wenger *et al.*, 2002). Communities of Practice (CoP) represent a unique and dynamic model of collective learning and knowledge sharing. As the core concept, CoPs are groups of individuals who share a common interest, concern, or passion in a specific domain (Wenger, 1998). These communities are not just about discussing a topic. The participants of CoPs are actively engaging in the pursuit of deeper knowledge and expertise through continuous interaction.

A key aspect of CoPs is following three elements. Wenger (1998) suggests the domain, which is the shared area of interest that defines the community's identity; the community itself, comprising individuals who build relationships and learn collaboratively and the practice, which is the collective body of knowledge, methodologies, tools, and experiences developed and shared among members. CoPs thrive on their informal nature, often emerging organically from shared interests, and are characterized by a diverse range of expertise levels, from novices to experts, which enriches the learning environment (Lave & Wenger, 1991). These communities are self-governing, with members driving the focus and activities, fostering a sense of ownership and active participation in the learning process.

The essence of CoPs lies in participants' ability to foster mutual engagement, solve problems, enhance practices, and lead to innovation and professional growth, making them an invaluable asset in both educational and professional settings. A key aspect of this learning method is the development of self-efficacy, a concept deeply rooted in Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT).

8.4. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) is a theory proposed by Bandura (1977) that explains the mechanisms that operate on career development based on the relationship among the three perspectives of individual, environment, and behavior (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994). Among the three perspectives, self-efficacy and outcome expectations, which are individual cognitions, play an important role in the formation of interest in work, and are essential concepts in the process of career development (Adachi, 2003). Self-efficacy is a self-evaluation of one's ability to successfully solve a task, while outcome expectation is a subjective prediction of what will be obtained as a result of performing a task.

9. Approach

This study attempted to analyze empirical data using an ethnographic approach in order to qualitatively examine the relationship between the effectiveness and issues of education provided at universities and the technical and psychological development of students. Ethnography is a research approach that explores the commonalities and similarities of cultures and has been adopted in many areas of research beyond the study of specific ethnic groups (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

By taking this approach, the researcher can describe and theorize everyday phenomena by conducting participant observation over a long period of time (Van Maanen, 1996). Ethnographic methods were applied to communication to analyze patterns of language use within speech communities (Hymes, 1976). Hymes (1976) attempted to reveal linguistic competence and linguistic performance. Ethnographic approaches evolved discourse analysis in linguistics within the wider context of the social and cultural practices and beliefs of the members of a particular culture or speech community (Cameron, 2001). A micro perspective analysis on conversation and discourse have also been adopted in business communication research (Fujio, 2017).

For data collection, I documented the students' behavior in field notes through long-term observation of the project and also collected recorded data during meetings and key events, such as presentations of the project results. Regarding ethical considerations, research participants were fully informed about the study and provided their consent. Data were depersonalized to ensure anonymity.

10. Data analysis and discussion

I combined multiple methods to study ethnographic data qualitatively. Multiple methods have their own advantages and disadvantages. By taking into account the strengths and limitations of each method, this study use (1) Narrative developed from observation and

interview data illustrated participants' growth and perception, (2) Conversation Analysis, which enable the researcher to accurately analyze the data, (3) Discourse analysis, interpreting the data presented in (1) and (2) in context and from an insider's perspective. Methods that have been used relatively separately until now by researchers with different ontological and epistemological views. Through a combination of methods, this study attempts a gradual, in-depth level of analysis, leading to a conceptualization of the global education in a university. Narrative draws the participants' subjective growth in university educational activities and their experiences. Participants' micro level conversations demonstrate their performance in society. Conversation Analysis reveals how specific participant behaviors appear by incorporating quantitative factors into the analysis. Quantitative analysis in this study helps to convince researchers who take statistical approaches by showing ethnographic data as an objective view with numbers. Furthermore, by interpreting the data from a discourse perspective, this study explores the relationship between discourses at the macro level and discourses as individuals and organizations.

10.1. English as a lingua franca—English is a tool, collaborative meaning making

A number of data show that viewing English as English as a lingua franca is important for becoming a real user of the language. This perspective diverges from the common view held by the study participants, which was characterized by a native-centric approach to English teaching, the use of the language primarily for testing purposes, and the absence of opportunities to engage actively with English. Another crucial aspect of English as a lingua franca, as indicated by the student data, is that the negotiation of meaning is a mutual process. Students often became dissatisfied with their ability to express their opinions fully and accurately, leading to a persistent sense of inadequacy in speaking. This frustration eventually escalated into an inability to speak. However, when students recognize that meaning-making is a collaborative effort among participants in a conversation, they can strategically support or compensate for their deficiencies or incomplete understanding through co-construction. I extract from narrative data and synthesize with recorded presentation in 2019 Fieldwork course when Natsu worked with her one year younger colleague.

Excerpt 1

One day there was a chance to present the final software product to the audience which included international participants in the university. It was difficult to present in English and in a way that was easy for everyone to understand the product. The software product technology, function and ideas which was expected to make users happy. Even after practicing, Natsu got stuck, and her presentation partner, Tomomi got lost. However, by following up and seeking others to help, Natsu and Tomomi were able to learn how to give a presentation of the product.

(Natsu, 2021)

(by showing visual images of projected kimono on the PowerPoint screen)

Natsu: What to. If your, if you want to. If you want to be. If you want to be pink.

Floor: If you wat to wear pink kimono.

Natsu: Yes. (looked audience, clapped her hands) If you want to wear pink your kimono.

What narrative tells is Natsu learned how to present the team's final product. By drawing extended sketch with conversation data. First, regarding English, the English was used as a tool to explain to the audience in the hall the function of using yukata and obi as a screen for projection mapping, where the viewer can choose the color and motif that best suits his or her taste. The presentation was not read from a prepared English script, but rather explained in a short, slow but concise way in English to make it easier for the audience to understand. This was evident in the use of English as a language tool, the use of gestures to show effective pictures, and the way the presentation alternated between looking at the audience.

Second, the recognition of co-constructed meaning. Natsu was presenting while sensing cognitively the junior students who were presenting together, the Informatics students who developed the software application even they were not in. The point of proceeding while checking the understanding and reactions of the listeners can be considered as the fact that Natsu understood the meaning was co constructed with those who shared space together. Excerpt 1 indicated that Natsu did not come up with the phrases to explain how viewer of the projection mapping can choose kimono color, 'if you want to wear pink kimono'. The floor gave the exact expression that Natsu tried to say. Natsu successfully caught the reply from the floor to continue their presentation. The presenters and audience were working together to move towards everyone's understanding of the presentation content, using the tool of English.

This phenomenon appeared in other participants and was recurrent in different project participants as well. This phenomenon was not only apparent in Miho but also recurred among other project participants. In the conversation data, Miho was a second-year student. Excerpt 2 provides insights into Miho's experiences with a different project during her freshman year in her narrative. The narrative describes how Miho, who is naturally introverted, overcame her challenges to take on an active role. Then, I insert the conversation data from one year later when Miho was part of a group consisting of five Japanese students and one Georgian student. This group, occasionally joined by other observers, simultaneously promoted Georgian wine and a restaurant in Tokyo. The conversation data illustrates Miho's improvements. Her participation in the discussions was co-constructed with her international teammate, aiming for a mutual understanding of the team's ideas. Together, they developed software that applied virtual reality to captivate users' attention aiming revitalize the restaurant.

Excerpt 2

Working in the Meisei Summer School Project (MSSP) was challenging for Miho. It was serendipity choice. She didn't consider herself sociable or adept at communicating with others. Additionally, Miho was concerned about the seniority dynamics among the team members. Essentially, Miho lacked confidence in her speaking abilities and had to confront and overcome these challenges. However, at some point, Miho decided to stop being an introvert and chose to be more active. Until July, she had always waited to be prompted with 'What do you think, Miho?' by others. The teaching team consisted of three third-year students, one second-year student, and Miho. During discussions to select the main teacher, the one who would take charge of teaching, only one senior student seemed to offer opinions actively, while the others appeared unmotivated to her. Miho realized that if she didn't volunteer, the discussion might never conclude. Once she declared that she would assume the role of the main teacher for some of the lessons, she found herself initiating conversations. When the project began to involve real participants from outside the university, Miho started to find enjoyment in teaching within the MSSP.

(Miho narrative, 2023)

The narrative of Miho in the Meisei Summer School Project (MSSP) is a classic example of personal growth and transformation, particularly in the context of overcoming introversion and developing communication skills. Several key aspects stand out in this analysis, a significant shift occurs when Miho decides to change her approach from being introverted to becoming more active. This decision is pivotal as it indicates her willingness to step out of her comfort zone. It suggests an internal realization or motivation that propels her to take on a more participative role.

Team discussion for visual content of virtual reality

1. Miho: so, now we cannot abroad and travel because of corona, so
(2.3) Nannte? Nannte?(How do I say?) (1.3) So (1.7) ...ah ann ↑ [an
umm] (smile and laugh kick back)

2. Misha: [Don't worry] Don't worry. Say
it... you say [it].

3: Miho:
[So], so (3.6) I er:::: (5.8) [I °think°]

4: Alessandros: [so maybe we could tell you] the story that you
thought what you [are asking.]

5. Miho: [OK,] so I think, story, so:::,person , main character, is
walking ([the, unnn(look up) the station]. Station.

6. Misha: [Georgian vineyard ↑] (gesture with two hands,)
7. Miho: No!!! Japanese station ↑ .
8. Misha: =Yes.
9. Miho: Main character (.) is walking main station, ah (1.4) Japanese station ↑ (.) [So:::] main he is, he find a (.) paper ↑ , travel paper, (0.8)so:::
10. Misha: [airport?]
11. Miho: travel paper ummm write (1.2) so Georgian wine and Georgian city scape of Georgia ↑ something like that (1.2) [so]
12. Misha: [°yes°]
13. Miho: person (.) touch (.) person::: touch the (2.3) paper ↑ ,>touch the paper ↑ , so jump to [next]
14. Misha: [Georgian airport ↑]
15. Miho: =Jump to the Georgia Airport. [So:::]
16. Misha: =Yes [Good idea, Yes]

Miho initiated the conversation (line 1) and persisted despite initial hesitations and language difficulties “Nante? Nante?” (How do I say?). Other instances of language struggle, Miho's extended pauses and filler words in lines 3 and 5). However, Miho's perseverance in expressing her ideas, despite these challenges, illustrated her growing confidence in participating in an ELF setting. This shows her willingness to step forward and take charge, which is a significant shift from her previously introverted approach.

The interaction with Misha, who encouraged and supported Miho (“Don't worry,” “Yes”), created a positive environment for Miho to express her ideas. This supportive atmosphere was also crucial for facilitating the active participation of individuals who are gaining confidence in their language abilities. Collaborative nature of ELF Communication encouraged her to act comfortably. The interaction is a clear example of the constructive nature of ELF communication. Miho's counterpart, particularly Misha, provided support and prompts (lines 2, 6, 10, 14), which helped Miho articulate her ideas. This collaborative dynamic is integral to ELF interactions, where mutual understanding and co-construction of meaning are key.

Moreover, Miho displayed assertiveness in line by correcting Misha's misunderstanding. This moment reflects her active engagement in the conversation and her role in shaping the narrative of the discussion. Throughout the conversation, Miho contributed substantive ideas to the project, outlining a story concept involving a Japanese station, a travel paper (brochure) and a trip to Georgia (lines 5, 9, 11, 13, 15). This indicates

her active role in the creative process and her ability to articulate complex ideas in a second language using ELF.

The conversation not only showcases an exchange of cultural references, with Miho introducing Japanese elements and Misha bringing in Georgian aspects, but also highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity in ELF communication. This interplay, a hallmark of ELF, demonstrates how awareness and respect for diverse cultural backgrounds are essential in enriching the dialogue and facilitating effective co-construction of meaning. In this setting, understanding and acknowledging different cultural perspectives become crucial in creating a collaborative and inclusive communication environment, where participants feel valued and understood. Miho's engagement within the Meisei Summer School Project and her subsequent involvement in the fieldwork's team discussion for virtual reality content represent a remarkable trajectory of personal and communicative growth. Initially hindered by her introversion and language apprehensions, Miho's transformation into an assertive, confident participant in ELF settings is a testament to her resilience and adaptability. Her active engagement, despite linguistic challenges, underscores the dynamic nature of language learning and the role of perseverance in overcoming communication barriers.

The analysis reveals that recognizing ELF as a tool for co-constructing meaning and engaging with diverse cultural perspectives is crucial in developing real-world language proficiency. Miho's experiences underscored that effective communication in ELF settings goes beyond linguistic accuracy; it involved negotiating meaning, understanding cultural nuances, and adapting to the communicative needs of the situation. Her ability to contribute actively, seek clarification, and incorporate feedback from others in the conversation demonstrated a high level of linguistic adaptability and cultural awareness. Furthermore, Miho's narrative highlights the importance of a supportive and inclusive communication environment in ELF settings. The encouragement and collaboration from her peers, particularly in moments of linguistic struggle, played a vital role in her development. This support not only helped her overcome language barriers but also contributed to building her confidence and willingness to engage more fully in the communicative process. Miho's narrative and actual record of behavior can be said of a testament to the empowering nature of ELF as a means of personal development. It illustrates how individuals can leverage ELF to overcome personal challenges, engage effectively in multicultural interactions, and grow as confident, competent communicators. Miho's transformation, therefore, serves as an inspiring example for learners and educators, highlighting the potential of ELF to facilitate not just language learning, but also intercultural understanding and personal growth.

The experiences of Natsu and Miho, as participants in the fieldwork and the Meisei Summer School Project, respectively, provide compelling evidence of the transformative impact of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in educational and multicultural settings. Both narratives vividly illustrate the journey from initial challenges in communication to achieving a level of proficiency that encompasses more than just linguistic accuracy. Miho's evolution from an introverted individual with linguistic self-doubt to a confident, assertive communicator demonstrates the empowering role of ELF in fostering personal growth and

effective, culturally sensitive communication. Her story highlights the importance of a supportive communicative environment and the role of collaborative meaning-making in overcoming language barriers.

Similarly, Natsu's experience underscores the transformative potential of adopting an ELF perspective in academic contexts. Her progress from struggling to express her ideas to successfully engaging with an international audience exemplifies the shift from a native-centric approach to one that values English as a versatile tool for mutual understanding. Natsu's description showcased how proficiency in ELF involves adaptability, negotiation, and co-creation of meaning, emphasizing the role of ELF in bridging cultural and linguistic gaps. Together, these narratives reinforce the idea that embracing ELF can profoundly enrich the learning experience. It opens up opportunities for broader perspectives, fosters global understanding, and cultivates an inclusive environment where diverse voices are heard and valued. Therefore, the stories of Natsu and Miho not only highlight the individual benefits of mastering ELF but also underscore its significance in fostering intercultural communication and collaboration in a globalized world.

11. Conclusion

In conclusion, the data from Natsu and Miho's experiences vividly demonstrate the potential of university education in harnessing English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) to cultivate global competence among students. Integrating ELF into their curricula allows educational institutions to create learning environments that emphasize not only linguistic proficiency but also adaptability, cultural awareness, and the ability to effectively engage with diverse perspectives. This approach is particularly relevant in the context of contemporary global human resource development, which increasingly demands individuals who are not only proficient in language use but also competent and empathetic communicators in multicultural settings. The narratives of Natsu and Miho serve as compelling examples of how language learning is intertwined with personal growth, intercultural communication, and the development of a global perspective. Their stories highlight the transformative impact of ELF on individual learners, underscoring its value in shaping effective global human resources. This growth was repeatedly shown to influence the career choices of participants. Unfortunately, due to space constraints, I was unable to include narratives from individuals such as Miho, Tomomi, Moe, and Sachi. One of the factors is that the experience can be viewed favorably in terms of the expectations that result in future choices (Bandura, 1977). Working together with students from different specializations to develop software also led to the creation of cross-disciplinary knowledge: the Community of Practice (Wenger, 1998) of International Studies students and that of Informatics students overlapped and developed. While students in International Studies were eager to generate multiple options for product images, those in Informatics consistently focused on the technology aspect. Both groups faced limitations in some areas. In the process of overlapping and merging the two CoPs in software production, the participants, including those who were not initially interested in IT, found their interest in this field increasing.

The narratives of these individuals serve as compelling examples of how language learning is intertwined with personal growth, intercultural communication, and the development of a global perspective. The transformative impact of ELF on individual learners underscores its value in shaping effective global human resources. This growth influences career choices, with experiences often viewed favorably in terms of future expectations. Collaborative projects, such as those combining International Studies and Informatics students, highlight the creation of cross-disciplinary knowledge and the expansion of interests beyond initial specializations.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study, including its focus on a small, specific sample and the degree of subjectivity inherent in qualitative analysis. These limitations suggest the need for caution in extrapolating the findings and underscore the potential value of incorporating a wider range of participants and methodological approaches in future research.

Building on these insights, the study extends its relevance beyond the individual narratives of Natsu and Miho, shedding light on broader educational practices. These insights can be adapted and applied in diverse educational contexts and with different student demographics, highlighting the versatility and relevance of ELF in global talent development. By situating these findings within current trends in global education, our study aligns with the growing emphasis on developing global competencies and communication skills in a multilingual world, while also advocating for a more inclusive, flexible approach to language education.

Educators and institutions looking to implement these insights can develop programs that emphasize real-world language use, cultural immersion, and interdisciplinary projects. Curriculum design should consider the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of students, ensuring that ELF learning is accessible, inclusive, and relevant. Specific strategies might involve project-based learning, technology integration for global collaboration, and training in cultural sensitivity and adaptability. In essence, the journey of these students serves as a microcosm of the transformative potential of ELF in global education. As we move forward, it is crucial to adapt educational practices to foster not only linguistic proficiency but also the broader competencies needed for success in a diverse, interconnected global landscape.

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