

## Bridging a Gap: Indonesian English Teachers' Views on ELF and Its Role in Workplace Communicaton

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### Article Information

### ABSTRACT

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*This study explores Indonesian English teachers' perspectives on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and its importance in workplace communication. Using grounded theory and narrative inquiry, the research investigates the experiences of four vocational English teachers to identify challenges, strategies, and suggestions for curriculum reform. The findings revealed that teachers frequently face psychological and linguistic obstacles, such as limited vocabulary and cultural differences, which hindered effective ELF communication. To address these issues, teachers employed pragmatic strategies and cultural adaptation techniques to facilitate workplace interactions. The study highlights the need to shift from traditional grammar-focused instruction toward ELF-informed methodologies that emphasize comprehensibility, intercultural competence, and practical communication skills. This approach aims to better prepare vocational Indonesian students for the complexities of global workplace environments. Overall, the research suggests for an inclusive and flexible English education system that strengthen intercultural understanding and communicative proficiency, essential for successful international collaboration and cross-cultural communication.*



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### 1. Introduction

English as a lingua franca (ELF) is vital for business communication in Indonesia, where English is a foreign language. To prepare vocational students for global job markets, it is crucial to develop effective teaching methods that reflect ELF principles. Jenkins & Panero (2024) notes that Global Englishes showcase the diverse practices of English across cultures, providing an opportunity to adopt inclusive teaching methodologies in vocational education.

Seidlhofer (2013) emphasizes that ELF serves as a common language among speakers from various linguistic backgrounds, enabling effective communication in Indonesia's multilingual context. Kachru (1992) and Crystal (2003) highlight how English has evolved into a global language adaptable to local contexts. Panggabean et al. (2023) argue that cultivating a supportive learning environment is key for L2 learners to build confidence in their non-native identities.

Vocational students must enhance their English proficiency for successful recruitment. However, their reliance on rote memorization and limited exposure to diverse dialects hampers their communication skills. Educators should promote linguistic diversity and adaptive speaking strategies for effective communication. Virkkula and Nikula (2010) demonstrate that ELF interactions shape vocational identity, indicating that successful communication relies more on adaptability than native-like proficiency. Topkaraoglu (2017) stresses the need for ELF instruction in multilingual settings.

Indonesia's current English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum is based on materials for native speakers, leading to a disconnect from ELF usage in professional contexts (Thongphut & Kaur, 2023). Institutional barriers to ELF pedagogies limit students' skills in adaptation and code-switching necessary for workplace communication (Kankaanranta et al., 2018).

Despite the relevance of ELF, research on Indonesian English teachers' perspectives regarding its integration into lesson plans remains limited. While teachers recognize the importance of ELF, vocational students lack essential strategies for negotiating meaning and linguistic flexibility in the workplace. To better prepare students for globalized sectors, teacher training should focus on these areas (Björkman, 2014; Kirkpatrick, 2012; Low & Pakir, 2017; Sifakis et al., 2018; Widodo, 2016).

This research aims to explore Indonesian English teachers' views on ELF's role in workplace communication, shedding light on their experiences and challenges while contributing to the broader discourse on language instruction in a globalized world.

### **The Importance of ELF in the Workplace**

Improving workers' performance in multicultural and multilingual environments relied critically on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). While globalization affected communication and business, ELF helped people from many linguistic backgrounds to interact effectively. It affected particularly the business sector, such as technology, finance, and international trade, in which clear communication is significant for successful projects and operational efficiency (Jenkins, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2011). It increased interaction, strengthened cooperation, and improved native language limitations (Cogo & Dewey, 2012).

Moreover, Sifakis (2014) highlighted that ELF could assist speakers in prioritizing intelligibility, which in turn helped them overcome anxiety and stimulated them to freely express ideas in English. This strategy addressed issues in conversations, strengthened creative ideas, and enhanced problem-solving. Björkman (2013) also noted that, particularly in globalized business communication, ELF could increase awareness of cultural background differences, language barriers, opportunities for career development. Applying ELF might help the workers to step up to the leadership positions and promotions. It also raised the worker's cultural awareness and sensitivity and improved communication strategies. This cultural sensitivity would improve workplace coordination as well as inclusive organizational culture.

In sum, ELF could help the workers to improve communication, encourage teamwork, advance their careers, and raise cultural awareness. ELF would be very important in providing efficient interactions and promoting organizational success as companies keep running in more globally diverse environment.

### **Teacher's Belief on ELF to their teaching strategies**

Teachers who were aware of the importance of ELF would implement its principles into their teaching strategies and methods in the classroom. As Sifakis & Bayyurt (2016) stated, ELF would focus on teaching the communicative and interactive strategies to build effective communication in the students rather than traditional grammar-focused approaches. These perspectives have shifted the focus from maintaining native-like proficiency to intelligibility. ELF use expanded a wider understanding of English use in global contexts, which prepared students for the language requirements of multicultural environments.

However, it would be implemented differently for teachers who strictly hold on to the EFL curriculum. Seidlhofer (2013) pointed out that teachers with traditional EFL perspectives might struggle to adapt their teaching strategies because they believed the standard norm was the one that could support the students' credibility in the workplace environment. Baker (2015) supported this by arguing that teachers' beliefs on EFL could influence the integration of diverse linguistic resources in classrooms. This could lead the students to have linguistic insecurity and identity conflict when communicating in English. This highlighted the need for professional development training to provide ELF-informed teaching practices.

In summary, teachers' beliefs about ELF played a crucial role in shaping their teaching strategies. By involving an understanding of ELF, teachers could create more effective and relevant language learning experiences that prepared students for the demands of global communication.

## **2. Methodology**

This research used grounded theory and narrative inquiry to investigate the viewpoints of Indonesian English teachers on English as a lingua franca (ELF) and its importance in workplace communication within the Indonesian setting. The methodology used narrative inquiry to investigate the experiences of English teachers within their specific contexts (Clandinin et al., 2000). The grounded theory was employed to enhance the narrative inquiry by developing codes and themes that complement the participants' story (Charmaz, 2014). Participants were determined using purposive sampling to ensure a varied representation of Indonesian English teachers. The selection criteria were based on their experience in teaching English as a foreign language and their engagement in business communication utilizing ELF with foreigners. Table 1 presents the background information of these significant participants, who are referred to by pseudonyms to keep it confidential.

**Table 1. Key Participants' Background**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Years of Teaching Experience</b>	<b>Current Institution</b>	<b>Specialization</b>
Sasa	38	Female	20 years	Mulawarman University	English lecturer
Risa	33	Female	11 years	ACS Jakarta	History teacher
Sam	34	Male	10 years	Politeknik Negeri Medan	English for Professional
Luna	33	Female	1 year	Politeknik Negeri Medan	English for Professional

### **Data Collection**

This research investigated Indonesian English teachers' views on the role of ELF in workplace communication. The researchers utilized narrative and in-depth interviews based on questions derived from Clandinin et al. (2000). The interviews, which take 1-2 hours, are figured out to uncover teachers' ideas and experiences with ELF. Moreover, Aurini et al. (2021) asserted that conducting interviews facilitated the establishment of a strong rapport with participants and enabled the observation of both verbal and non-verbal communication, including physical and emotional responses that yielded significant insights. The interview guide had 16 questions that explored comprehensive knowledge and experiences concerning ELF workplace communication and the potential integration of ELF concepts into EFL teaching methodologies.

## **3. Results**

### **a. Participants' Stories**

#### **Teacher Sasa's Story**

Sasa, an experienced lecturer in the English Department with more than 20 years of teaching experience, is presently pursuing her PhD degree in applied linguistics. Her English proficiency apparently affects her workplace communication with her colleagues. In this case, she uses bilingualism with her students to enhance comprehension.

When asked about her experience communicating in English with foreign speakers, Sasa recalled a memorable encounter:

*"I once met a foreigner from Canada in an airport a long time ago; we got some conversation talking about Indonesia. There are some challenges in explaining something because I'm not really familiar with certain terms in English."*

In this case, Sasa resolved ELF vocabulary challenges by defining unfamiliar terms in long sentences. She utilized her creativity and intellectual decoding strategy to effectively address miscommunication in ELF workplaces.

When discussing the priorities of Indonesian speakers in workplace communication, Sasa stated the following excerpt.

*"I think both are important....Because non-native speakers, like Indonesians, treat English as a foreign language, we feel it's hard to*

*speak English with the correct grammar. Especially tenses, with the verbs, and so on. It affects the meaning for listeners, ..."*

This quotation reflected the dual focus to attribute the grammatical accuracy and intelligibility. Sasa's perspective revealed the intrinsic conflict between pursuing grammatical accuracy and a need to be understood. She recognized that efficient communication must take primary needs into account, but it could not avoid the importance of grammatical accuracy, especially in workplace communication where clarity should be a significant quality.

Sasa noted common miscommunication issues arising from limited vocabulary:

*"Like I said earlier, due to limited vocabulary, it stuck the communication. I use code-switching sometimes with my colleagues to clarify something. I also applied translingual threefold."*

Her use of code-switching described a common strategy used by bilingual speakers to handle communication barriers on the spot. This method not only enhanced the understanding but also illustrates the fluidity of language in the ELF workplace environment. Sasa's reference to "translingual threefold" indicates a strong awareness of language adaptation to improve clarity and understanding.

Sasa elaborated on the strategies employed by Indonesian professionals when facing language barriers as follows.

*"I think switching is more often what I use rather than paraphrasing. The reason is to make it faster and less time-consuming. Because there are more Indonesian lecturers in our department, using Bahasa is sometimes needed."*

Her tendency to use code-switching rather than paraphrasing reflected the use of the pragmatic aspects of communication in ELF workplace communication. Sasa's observation indicated that efficiency and clarity frequently influence language choices in workplace contexts, especially in the fast-paced environment in which the speakers needed to use English naturally, spontaneously, and effortlessly. The adaptability in ELF communication was considered an important technique to reach a successful understanding.

Reflecting on her observations of foreign professionals, Sasa stated:

*"They just simplified their language to adjust to their fast English. Like what I always do, I ask the foreign speaker to repeat something like, What do you mean by this? Could you please explain what you mean by this?"*

Sasa's experiences demonstrated the turn-taking dynamics of communication in ELF contexts. Her proactive strategy in asking for clarification reached mutual understanding and prompted non-native speakers to modify

their language use. This conversation illustrated the significance of turn-taking adjustment in effective communication, especially in diverse work environments.

Sasa discussed her understanding of ELF as follows.

*"To my best understanding, ELF means both speaker and listener are on the same English level. Moreover, we understand each other; no matter the grammar or structure, meaning is more important."*

In this definition, Sasa's perspective relied on contemporary ideas on ELF that English communication should take mutual understanding as an important key. This would encourage building effective communication in nurturing working relationships and collaboration across ELF environments. Her belief regarding the significance of ELF in English instruction in Indonesia promoted educational practices that emphasize communicative competence in the workplace environment.

Regarding current English teaching practices, Sasa observed as indicated below.

*"From my experience, teachers strongly focus on grammar because it is written on the curriculum to be able to teach students to follow patterns and structure well. It makes the students feel not confident when speaking English because they think about making sentences with the correct grammar."*

Sasa's evaluation of the curriculum highlighted the possible disadvantages of a grammar-focused methodology in language education. She observed that strict adherence to grammatical rules was a common concern among teachers. These restrictions might impede the students' confidence and their willingness to communicate in English. This viewpoint demonstrated a more balanced method that strengthened both grammatical proficiency and conversational skills.

Sasa elaborated on her teaching methodologies as expressed below.

*"Yes, it depends on the lesson. In my department, lessons are taught on negotiation skills, how they maintain communication with others, and so on."*

Researchers identified Sasa's emphasis on integrating negotiation skills into the curriculum as a proactive approach to prepare students for real-world interactions. By focusing on practical communication strategies, Sasa could encourage the students to build ELF soft skills that were necessary for workplace communication. But it should be adaptive to the situational context represented by professional settings to equip the students with sensitivity toward the communication problem.



Sasa expressed her thoughts on the English curriculum's effectiveness as follows.

*"I think the current English curriculum is already set up well to prepare students for workplace communication. The lesson contents include the four skills in English."*

She reflected on her confidence in the quality of the current curriculum, which addresses four fundamental language skills in the workplace. However, her belief showed limited awareness of ELF communication needs on intercultural competence, pronunciation flexibility, and linguistic diversity that might be critical for supporting ELF context in her teaching. These factors might cause her to stick to a native-speaker-oriented model.

Lastly, Sasa suggested improving teacher training programs, as she stated as follows.

*"I think it needs more workshops or teacher training for English educators on how to create the lessons more focused on ELF skills."*

At the end, Sasa was aware that applying ELF context in the classroom needed targeted training. The teachers might understand ELF principles in theory, but they lack methodology. The findings suggested that bottom-up professional awareness was important to allow the institution to facilitate training and resources for curriculum reform.

Sasa's insights highlighted the complexities of teaching and using English in Indonesia, especially in an ELF context. Her reflections on vocabulary limitations and the importance of intelligibility over grammatical accuracy underscored the need for a more inclusive approach to language education. By focusing on effective communication and practical skills, Sasa contributed to the discourse on integrating ELF teaching strategies to prepare students for a multilingual and multicultural workplace.

### **Teacher Risa's Story**

Risa is a history teacher at an international school in Indonesia. She has been teaching for 11 years. She employs English as the medium of instruction in her classroom, which primarily consists of students from various international backgrounds. Her experience in this ELF workplace environment presents unique challenges and opportunities in communication.

Risa expressed her comfort in communicating with foreign teachers at her school, although she acknowledged some challenges related to her teaching materials. She stated,

*"I don't have any problems with talking to foreign teachers in her school.... But I do have some time problems in my teaching because there are a lot of words and terms that I think are hard to pronounce."*

This quotation asserted that successful communication in real-life interaction did not require native proficiency. This reflected on ELF core values in which Risa could rely on her intelligibility and mutual understanding as a more critical aspect in ELF communication. On the other hand, she admitted to the struggle with her confidence for a classroom performance since she needed to perform “native-like” pronunciation, which led her to feel under pressure. This created a tension between applying ELF principles and traditional teaching methods if the institution placed a higher expectation on emphasizing native norms.

When discussing the challenges faced by Indonesians in workplace communication, Risa noted:

*"I don't pay attention well to the grammar. That's my weakness..... But now I talk a lot; I read a lot; I feel like I'm improving myself.... But it's still kind of hard because the grammar is hard for everyone."*

This reflected Risa's improvement in her language learning that evolved over time, which was important to face the dynamics in ELF communication. She also highlighted the challenge of grammar as a universal problem for a non-native speaker. Despite her struggle with her grammar, she showed a broader engagement with ELF as a communication tool that led her to view grammar flexibility as more important than accuracy.

Risa reported experiencing some miscommunication issues with her Chinese coworkers.

*"When I talk to Indonesian co-workers, I don't really have problems because we feel it is easier to understand each other; we get familiar with their pronunciation. But I do have problems with the Chinese co-workers in our school because they have another accent."*

This described that ELF workplace communication could complicate her understanding due to her familiarity with specific accents. She felt more comfortable interacting with Indonesian colleagues than with Chinese colleagues. The experience emphasized the necessity for cultural awareness and adaptability to overcome communication barriers. This issue highlighted how greater the cultural and linguistic features might impact the effectiveness when performing ELF in the workplace communication.

Risa described her approach to overcoming language barriers as follows.

*"If I have problems, I will ask them, 'What do you mean? Can you explain again? to clarify something about our intention. Sometimes I use body language."*

This approach demonstrated that asking for clarification and using body language were typically beneficial in anticipating misunderstandings in ELF interactions. It strengthened evidence that speakers actively sought to use multimodal communication to prioritize the intentions of their co-workers over



perfect grammar and pronunciation. Thus, it pointed out the way Indonesian English teachers impacted her professional and cultural identities, which made her able to negotiate meaning and strengthen communication with colleagues.

This is how she describes her interactions with foreign coworkers in a professional setting.

*"Talking with UK people, I still can understand their English well. But for Irish people, it's too fast. And also with Vietnamese teachers, .... they have a heavy accent. But for Malaysian teachers, even Singaporean teachers, I think I have no problem with them."*

Here, Risa realized the nature of English accents across different regions could impact comprehension, and she did not anticipate it since EFL curriculum did not provide the exposure. Her competence to recognize UK English proved her familiarity with native standards following extensive learning through EFL teaching methodology. Meanwhile, the difficulty with Irish and Vietnamese accents highlighted the effects of inadequate exposure to English varieties in the EFL classroom.

Risa articulated her understanding of ELF.

*"....it is relevant to English teaching in Indonesia because Indonesia is so big and I live in the capital city. Because my school is an international school where most of the teachers are from abroad, ....it must be using English."*

This excerpt shaped Risa's understanding of Indonesia's diverse regional languages. She acknowledged the function of ELF, as it was presented as the global professional network in international education. Her experiences shaped her to respect ELF in education as a useful tool for facilitating communication with foreigners in the workplace.

Risa shared her methodology for teaching workplace English as follows.

*"In the history subject, my students have to write essays about the lesson, like summarizing the texts,... But when I do corrections, I need to give them some feedback....., 'What do you mean by this?.... I think it's also a part of clarification techniques."*

This excerpt identified her transition to adopting the ELF approach by addressing the students' needs for feedback and critical thinking through the writing task. Her creativity was demonstrated through feedback as a clarification strategy to enhance student participation in improving their comprehension and expression in both written and spoken communication. These activities facilitated the students' concentration on communication during the learning process, thereby improving the quality of their ELF skills.

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Risa emphasized the importance of communication skills over grammatical perfection.

*"I think building students' communication skills is needed rather than teaching them perfect grammar, because when they use English to communicate, grammar is not the highest priority as long as they can convey the meaning."*

In this statement, Risa declared for a pragmatic approach to language instruction to prioritize effective communication. She reflected that the primary function of English is to facilitate communication, with a general priority placed on fluency and clarity. Consequently, her reflection facilitated the refinement of her teaching strategy, wherein the teacher should enable the students to utilize English and engage with real-world interactions.

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Risa's perspectives provided a detailed understanding of the issues and techniques associated with teaching and utilizing English in an ELF context. Her insights on the significance of intelligibility, the need for effective communication, and the adaptation of teaching approaches emphasized the changing dynamics of English education in Indonesia. By emphasizing communication skills and recognizing the realities of ELF, Risa strengthened a more inclusive and successful language learning environment.

### **Teacher Sam's Story**

Sam, with 10 years of teaching experience, explains that Indonesia's EFL teaching methodology initially prioritized native-speaker models, influenced by the dominant position of native speakers in media and education, as he observed, "American English is clearer to me than British or Australian."

In Australia, he then experienced challenges in identifying English dialects from Asian nations, remarking, "I found it difficult interacting with Japanese, Chinese, and Taiwanese people." These challenges showed the necessity for mutual intelligibility, which might vary depending on the context.

Moreover, Sam emphasized the importance of ongoing effort in improving comprehension skills with diverse native language speakers, as he stated, "As time progressed, I tried to understand what they said." recommending active listening exercises to enhance awareness of English dialects in workplace communication.

The participants explained that a lack of confidence in a professional setting as a first-time experience was often due to misconceptions about the English used, which differs from the general English found in classrooms and textbooks. He indicated, "I found it very difficult because maybe I was not very confident and because I was thinking that the English that is being used is different from the general one."

Moreover, another problem commonly happened among non-native speakers when they faced pronunciation and culture barriers that led to miscommunication, as stated below.

*"I think it's just to do with the pronunciation sometimes because i'm not familiar with their pronunciation so there will be miscommunication..... the challenges with this kind of encounter have to do with the culture barriers."*

Different pronunciation might come with a strong regional accent that could complicate comprehension. In addition to cultural differences, the challenge was raised by Indonesia's tendency to communicate indirectly and enforce hierarchical workplace norms.

Moreover, he observed the influence of cultural distinctions on communication styles, especially when he pointed out Indonesian indirectness in contrast to Western directness. He recognized this as a significant challenge for Indonesians in the future. This indicated an essential need for cultural competence as an integral component of an ELF-oriented strategy.

*"High context culture means that indirectness... is a part of our life... When it comes to the low-context culture, let's say British, American, and Australian people. They belong to low-context culture. They want it to be very straightforward..."*

His awareness of Indonesia as a high-context culture that depended on indirect communication, particularly towards elders and superiors in the workplace, might conflict with the low-context cultures of Western nations in the workplace communication. This implied that EFL curriculum was suggested to integrate cultural training within the ELF environment to assist the students in managing these distinctions in the future.

He then expressed a critique of the Indonesian EFL curriculum for pointing out grammatical accuracy over successful communication skills, including negotiation skills and cultural understanding. He indicated that this emphasis could constrain the student's confidence and capacity to speak in practical scenarios.

*"They are talking specifically about grammar... and they are not talking heavily on the cultural differences or the ethics or how to negotiate with other people from around the world.... so I think that's the problem."*

He emphasized the importance of teaching students how to negotiate meaning and clarify misunderstandings. This indicated that these skills were crucial for successful communication so they could survive in facing the dynamic interaction in the workplace setting. This perspective also asserted a shift in teaching methods from rote memorization to practical communication strategies.

Furthermore, he expressed a positive view toward the ELF concept, arguing that it is essential for learners to adapt to different English varieties based on their specific communication needs (e.g., working in Singapore vs. the U.S.). He believed that understanding and respecting different English forms was necessary in the context of globalization.

*"I'm now an embracer of the theory... because it's quite important....when you study English, you need to know your purpose. Like, if you just want to work in Singapore,...., I don't think you have to bother learning American culture."*

This excerpt indicated that the students should take pride in their English, regardless of accent or grammatical perfection. This reflected applying a supportive approach that could enhance the students' confidence when they communicated with the foreigners.

Furthermore, he underscored the concern about improving the current curriculum, as indicated in the following excerpt.

*"I would prefer that these Indonesian students learn how to effectively communicate, not focusing on accuracy... it because it's not very important ...we are just training them to be able to communicate with people from overseas."*

He also proposed reforming the curriculum to better align with the realities of workplace communication. Additionally, it argued that cases and real-world applications, not just grammar, should be the main emphasis of the current curriculum.

Overall, the discussion summarized the needs for curriculum transformation from EFL context in Indonesia to ELF principles in English teaching strategies. He recognized the challenges posed by cultural differences, accent variations, and curriculum limitations while recommending a more practical, culturally aware approach to English language teaching. His perspectives declared the importance of strengthening confidence and effective communication skills among the students. Such initiatives could support EFL education in Indonesia to prepare the students for the realities of globalized interactions.

### **Teacher Luna's Story**

Luna has been teaching English for almost ten months professionally. Her working experiences were varied before; most of them were in a professional field, not a teaching field. She has worked as a student exchange participant, research assistant, content writer, and interpreter, preparing her to reach an excellent English level. Her English grew with a native speakerism orientation that was strengthened with the first exposure by having an exchange student experience in Canada and a professional work experience with German people as a research assistant, as is indicated below.

*"My very first exposure to interacting with the Canadians was because I lived there for, like, six months. Then, Germany, because I work with the University of Göttingen in Germany. Then mostly with Australians because I lived there for almost three years."*

Her awareness of English diversity grew through interactions with colleagues from various countries, reinforcing her preference for native English. She stated, "My English grew with the native English." This reflects Indonesians' reliance on the native-speaker model, especially American English, due to dominant EFL policies. This reliance enhanced her proficiency, leading to numerous professional opportunities.

Since her English learning was affected by the American English norm, she encountered several challenges in different accents, especially UK and German, that triggered her understanding. This advanced her thinking creatively and critically in clarifying the statement to avoid misunderstanding. In

this case, the real interaction between non-native speakers required the meaning negotiation to run the conversation effectively, as it is identified in the following excerpt:

*"I encounter some kind of difficulty understanding people,...I got an expert from Britain; I often help him to speak. At the beginning his English is very bold,... with German, it's also kind of a very thick language.... I clarify what I mean."*

The working environment required her to showcase her ability to face the language barriers by doing clarification. This situation might give her a threat if she could not facilitate the communication well, so to save her face, she needed to be creative and critical. This might not get learned in the traditional English classroom that focuses on linguistic competence and rote memorization.

The EFL teaching method inhibited her from recalling all grammar rules, which made her hesitate to express her ideas. Self-monitoring disrupted her mind, which prevented her from producing a natural flow of speech. The fear of making a mistake led her to feel chaotic, which could reduce her confidence, as indicated in the following excerpt.

*"When I'm speaking, sometimes it's not really smooth because I'm recalling whether I'm saying it right or if I missed something. When I speak, I miss S, or I miss -ing,... I feel chaotic, you know, like I need to fix it."*

As time went by, her professional experience shaped her mindset to shift her focus to intelligibility over accuracy and gave her tolerance for English variations. This applied to her teaching strategies, in which the ELF-based strategies were applied to allow the students to speak freely, as indicated in the following excerpt.

*"They are reluctant to speak; they become passive and not really active in speaking. I encourage them: no, you have to speak; don't care about grammar. I encourage them to speak even though it's broken English."*

By applying this strategy, it could help the students to lower the students' affective filter on their anxiety, enhance effective communication strategy, and also accept their English varieties.

She realized that the problem of misunderstanding English occurred because the native English speakers' speed rate was running too fast. This led her to adjust the interaction by accommodating her English by independently learning to increase her English varieties awareness.

*"We need to deal with many kinds of exposure. Like dealing with people from Germany, England, India, Singapore, and Taiwan. So, I think we ourselves have to improve our flight hours, rather than expecting them to change."*



She believed that the responsibility for comprehension should lie with the listener, as she could not expect foreigners to adapt to their level of understanding. Therefore, she believed that adapting to the understanding problem by exploring English diversities was a key strategy to improve comprehension in real-world ELF interaction.

*"I teach them listening... I took from YouTube open source, which has several English sources, not just one source like English from America and England.... I changed to hear different English. How people in Malaysia speak. How people in Thailand speak."*

It directed her to accommodate her students in her teaching strategies by training them with various open sources to familiarize them with English diversity, such as from Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, and so on. She also used a film that featured natural interactions with multiple accents to provide a high level of exposure to real-world communication. She believed that this teaching strategy helped the students in promoting listening endurance.

However, she then realized that teachers could not apply a fully ELF context for a communication teaching approach because it could impact their credibility as professionals, as indicated in the following excerpt.

*"I agree on the lingua franca, but the other side,..... it affects this person in the professional workplace,... if you speak without good grammar,..... You know, people will assume that you're not equipped."*

This highlighted the dominance of the native speakerism model in formal workplace settings. She believed that the lack of standardization in ELF-based teaching could affect professional image. Therefore, she proposed a balanced approach that combines ELF teaching strategies with a strong grammatical foundation, preparing students to meet professional expectations while maintaining flexibility in workplace communication.

Afterwards, she suggested applying a strategy to build effective communication by highlighting the importance of making clarity in speech and building confidence in speaking. As it is indicated in the following excerpt.

*"Firstly, one must speak clearly. A person must know what they want to say. They have an idea in mind, so they have to know what they want to say. Secondly, one must speak clearly without difficulty..."*

Her suggestions focused on the teacher's role in prioritizing the cognitive aspect of speaking, helping students develop and structure their ideas for clarity. She stated, "The first one is encouragement from teachers and friends to speak safely, even if it's wrong." Additionally, she emphasized the need for a supportive classroom environment that reduces anxiety and fosters error tolerance, boosting students' confidence.

When giving recommendations to the current English curriculum, she indicated as follows.

*"We have to improve the curriculum. Because we don't find it, we have to do a survey, find out what we need, and not just use a translator in the classroom. So, the way of teaching will be more real and contextual."*

This indicated an urgency to improve the existing curriculum because it had not provided support for ELF communication needs. The curriculum needed to be modified for something relevant to the industry needs so that the students could fulfill the real-world expectation of their communication skills. Other than that, the curriculum should include reliable and authentic learning resources to prepare the students for actual communication scenarios.

Luna's insights highlighted a dynamic, context-sensitive approach to English teaching that prioritized effective communication. Her recommendations asserted the importance of teacher adaptability, student-centered learning, and curriculum innovation to prepare the students for global interactions while maintaining clarity and professionalism. This balanced perspective bridged the gap between traditional EFL methods and the realities of ELF communication.

#### **4. Discussions**

This study identified three main themes regarding the future English curriculum based on participants' insights about ELF in vocational classrooms which emphasizes the need for students to be exposed to English diversity in the workplace.

##### **a. ELF as a Tool in Workplace Pragmatics**

A lot of English teachers learned and practiced the language through EFL methodologies, which resulted in limited exposure to its diversity. The homogeneity in the curriculum resulted in an unexpected experience regarding English variants that made them unprepared. Sasa noted, "Teachers strongly focus on grammar because it is written on the curriculum to teach students to follow patterns and structures well." Luna expressed a similar experience as she said, "When I speak, I miss S or -ing, but I feel chaotic." Both noted that the EFL curriculum insufficiently prepared Indonesian teachers for the reality of ELF communication, which strengthened their concern.

Medgynyes (1994) noted that non-native teachers frequently experienced insecurity about their grammar as a result of strict teaching instruction that focused on grammatical standards. Krashen (1982) and Macintyre et al. (1998) also asserted that the effort for grammatical perfection might erode learners' confidence when they strictly conform to "native-like" criteria. Panggabean et al. (2023) emphasized that strict adherence to the native-speaker model might discourage non-native speakers, further diminishing their confidence in utilizing

This disconnection became evident in the workplace environments in which practical cues were crucial for efficient communication. Major participants used ELF strategies to resolve misunderstandings. Sasa, for example, often used code-switching, which stated, "I use code-switching sometimes with my

colleagues to clarify something." Luna employed clarification techniques, asking, "Can you repeat that?" Is this what you mean?" Meanwhile, Risa highlighted the need for preparation and honesty about her boundaries, which reflected, "I talk a lot; I read a lot; I'm improving my formal language." On the other hand, Sam focused on cultural adaptability, which stated, "I'm not familiar with their pronunciation, leading to miscommunication... the challenges come from cultural barriers."

In the same vein, Cogo and Dewey (2012) stated that ELF approaches enable L2 users to negotiate meaning. Meanwhile, Jenkins & Panero (2024) and Seidlhofer (2013) observed that ELF engagement facilitated speakers in employing cooperative strategies to address and resolve misunderstandings by using pragmatic strategies. The study emphasized that ELF had a function as both a linguistic instrument and a pragmatic strategy for efficiently managing workplace communication.

#### **b. Cultural and Contextual Adaptation in ELF Communication**

In response to the demand for ELF principles in business communication, most of the participants supported its integration into Indonesia's English curriculum. The hierarchical framework and communication styles differ, which required culturally and contextually specific understanding for successful interactions with foreigners. Sam acknowledged the difficulties presented by Indonesia's high-context culture in interactions with individuals from low-context cultures such as Americans and Brits. He suggested revising the curriculum to include cultural training. This concept was supported by Baker (2015), who highlighted the significance of conforming to cultural norms in building professional relationships.

Luna emphasized the need for a balanced approach in ELF instruction, which allowed the students to perform imperfect English while prioritizing professional language and grammar. This was in line with Kirkpatrick (2010) which noted that although ELF encouraged adaptability, certain professional fields required standard forms. In addition, Risa and Sasa also called for exposure to numerous accent variations, which was consistent with Jenkins (2000), who found that familiarity with diverse accents could lower misinterpretation. Rzońca (2021) pointed out that the need for teaching materials that represent "global English varieties" was a strategy that Sasa implemented by utilizing YouTube resources that featured Malaysian and Thai English.

The study demonstrated how cultural norms on Indonesian indirectness, in contrast to Western directness, could impact ELF interactions. Moreover, performing ELF adaptability with professionalism was important for increasing the credibility of the workplace interactions. This also supported Kachru's (1992) World Englishes framework, which asserted the importance of cultural competency and sensitivity in ELF teaching instruction, especially in ELF working contexts.

### **c. Teacher Training and Curriculum Reform for ELF Integration**

Participants evaluated the current EFL program for its excessive focus on grammar and pronunciation modeled after native speakers. This critique was in line with Seidlhofer (2013) who illustrated that "ELF's legitimacy needs redefining 'proficiency' as contextually appropriate communication." Sasa and Sam suggested that teacher training should prioritize negotiation skills by using "all resources the students have." This perspective aligned with Cogo & Dewey (2012) and Sifakis et al. (2018) who highlighted that educators should promote intercultural negotiation and adjust their teaching to prioritize meaning rather than strict grammatical structures.

Meanwhile, Luna proposed conducting surveys to gather authentic materials that correspond with industry needs. Therefore, it could facilitate English students' exposure to real-world experiences. In the same vein, Rzońca (2021) pointed out that using resources that linked asserted that the significance of practical writing skills was also important to prepare students for workplace requirements, which was in line with Kirkpatrick's (2010) concept of a "multilingual model for ASEAN workplaces."

Overall, most of the participants collectively criticized the traditional EFL curriculum for its excessive emphasis on grammar and native-speaker norms. The research suggested a shift toward ELF-informed courses that prioritized communicative skills with the purpose of better preparing the students for the practical application of English in varied professional environments.

### **d. Implications**

This research implies on the importance of integrating ELF into the Indonesia curriculum. It could start from balancing the grammar-focused model with the practical communication skills, cultural competence, and exposure to English diversity, thus helps the students to adjust and adapt for English workplace communication. Moreover, it is suggested to conduct teacher's training that include ELF-informed principles by covering negotiation skills, intercultural communication and addressing linguistic diversity. Other than that, the instruction could focus on mastering communicative competence over grammatical perfection so that it builds the students' confidence when facing real-world communication.

In addition the material on cultural sensitivity is also important as a guidance interaction with colleagues from diverse backgrounds. The teachers should be able to provide authentic materials that represent global Englishes. Lastly, providing a positive learning atmosphere in the classroom which lies on giving continuous feedback will help the students learn from mistakes and improve their communicative abilities. In conclusion, integrating ELF principles into Indonesia's English teaching framework will be useful to prepare the students for multicultural, multilingual workplaces.

## 5. Conclusion

The study used grounded theory and narrative inquiry to conceptualize ELF as a dynamic, context-dependent instrument in Indonesian vocational education. The novelty consisted of linking teachers' pragmatic strategies, cultural adaptations, and curriculum transformation to prepare students for workplace communication. Future study should focus on integrating these findings into practical English curriculum that prepare vocational students for workplace communication contexts.

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