

# The Role of English as a Lingua Franca in Teacher Talk: Pedagogical Beliefs and Practices

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## Abstract:

English as a lingua franca (ELF) has become an increasingly prominent part of English as a foreign language teaching contexts such as Japan. However, considering that 99% of the population in Japan share the same L1, is ELF a relevant concept? This mixed methods study investigated how teachers modify student-directed speech and whether they follow ELF principles of communicative accommodation and translanguaging. Through examining the teacher talk of experienced educators, best teaching practices can be established. In this study, 19 public junior high school teachers and 19 English speaking non-teachers recorded dialogues in scripted, free-structured, and free-response scenarios to examine how teaching experience affects teacher talk. First, the speech rate of the participants was measured across the three types of recordings. Next, a text coverage percentage was calculated by comparing the texts to a list of vocabulary the target learners would have been exposed to in compulsory English classes. Participants also completed a Likert scale questionnaire with 14 speech modification strategies (e.g., the use of repetition, stressing intonation patterns, avoiding assimilations and contractions) to gauge how willing they would be to make adjustments to their natural way of speaking in order to be better understood by L2 learners. The results of the teachers and non-teachers were compared across these three measurements. Teachers spoke significantly slower, and while the rate of speech of non-teachers increased the less structured the dialogue was, it slowed the more unstructured the dialogue was in the case of the teachers. Teachers made lexical choices fine-tuned to the English proficiency of their learners, giving their speech a 97.6% lexical coverage compared to the 92.5% of the non-teachers' speech. The results of the Likert scale questionnaire showed no significant difference in the willingness of both teachers and non-teachers to accommodate L2 learners using speech modification strategies, suggesting that teachers are better able to control their output to reflect their willingness to accommodate. Semi-structured interviews with the teachers revealed the speech modifications they made were based on their teaching experience and knowledge of their learners' proficiency. Teachers prioritized intelligibility over native-like pronunciation, and made use of linguistic, semiotic, strategic, and material resources to facilitate communication in line with ELF principles. Although Japan's government prescribed an all-English classroom policy, the teachers used the students' L1 strategically to ensure that the learners were exposed to level-appropriate comprehensible input. The session includes suggestions for how to incorporate ELF principles into teacher-training programs.

**Keywords:** English as a lingua franca, teacher beliefs and practices, speech modification, willingness to accommodate

