Global citizenship education and English as a lingua franca

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Abstract
Currently, how English is being used as a lingua franca (ELF) has caused linguistic and cultural norms to be revisited in relation to language use. The issue of global citizenship has emerged when English is used as the main medium of instruction in higher education; as achieving global citizenship is a main goal of international universities, the ELF paradigm has assisted in the realization of this goal because English is used in a fluid and dynamic perspective. This paper uses interview data (N=6), which was collected from Chinese students from the Chaoshan area who obtained their master’s degrees abroad, to analyze how these students developed their senses of global citizenship. Although their ELF experiences play an important role in understanding global citizenship, many did not receive a formal education regarding global citizenship at home or abroad. This paper concludes by emphasizing how the ELF paradigm can aid higher education institutions raise people’s awareness of global citizenship.

Keywords: Chaoshan area, English as a lingua franca, global citizenship, higher education, study abroad

Introduction
This paper will argue the importance of global citizenship education from the paradigm of English as a lingua franca (ELF) and in consideration of the diversity and complexity of language contact and use throughout the world. English as a lingua franca refers to “any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option” (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 7). A recent update by Jenkins (2015) framed ELF from the perspective of multilingualism and argued that English is one of the language choice options.

From the perspective of multilingualism, another issue regarding global citizenship education has gradually become important when discussing the relationship between language and culture. Many universities, in particular, label themselves as “international” for various reasons, one of which is to attract more international students and promote English as the medium of instruction (EMI). Because the language-culture-nation correlation is no
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longer applicable from the ELF paradigm, this has raised the issue of how the relationship between language and culture should be updated. The significance of global citizenship education challenges the blind promotion of EMI in numerous contexts of higher education (HE).

Previous studies have discussed the issue of global citizenship education from the ELF paradigm, with both positive and reserved attitudes from students who have had experiences abroad (see Baker & Fang, 2019; Byram et al., 2017; Fang & Baker, 2018; Jackson, 2012). To gain an understanding of the extent to which students have developed a sense of global citizenship with ELF experiences, this paper echoes the studies related to global citizenship education and extends the conversation with a focus on students (from the Chaoshan area) who have pursued their master’s degree and returned to China. However, the focus of this paper resides in the scholarly discussion and debate on the relationship of language and culture with global citizenship education from an ELF paradigm.

Global citizenship education and English as a lingua franca

ELF and global citizenship education are both relevant to the recent development of HE, which is defined as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of HE at the institutional and national levels” (Knight, 2008, p. 21). To become global citizens, students in HE are frequently expected to develop both linguistic competence and intercultural communication skills. Therefore, the literature in this paper will focus on ELF and global citizenship.

The field of ELF developed in the early 2000s with the publication of Jenkins’s ground-breaking monograph (2000) and Seidlhofer’s paper (2001). While they challenge the native speaker norm in both language use and language teaching, the scholarship of ELF was developed from World Englishes. The ELF paradigm recognizes and validates the pluricentric nature of the English language as it flows across national boundaries (Cogo, 2012; Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011). Nonetheless, although it has been interpreted and reinterpreted through its plurilinguistic, hybrid, and fluid nature, ELF is not a variety of English (Jenkins, Cogo, & Dewey, 2011; Seidlhofer, 2011); consequently, it is relevant to how such a linguistic phenomenon would influence the issue of culture in the process of intercultural communication. ELF does not focus exclusively on the diversity and fluidity of the English language; it also values communication strategies adopted by interlocutors when encountering difficulties and communication barriers. Even though it is still regarded as a lingua franca in use, from the perspective of multilingualism, “English is often one of several languages available in the repertoires of the multilingual populations” (Jenkins, 2000, p. 8). Consequently, the multilingual landscape has put forward the importance of researching the relationship between language and culture from a post-native perspective. In a more recent discussion, Jenkins (2015) proposed the notion of English as a multilingual franca (EMF); here, the study of ELF was explored within the context of multilingualism (for the development of the third stage of ELF, see Jenkins, 2015).

More recently, the development of ELF has been linked to intercultural communication (Baker, 2015) and global citizenship (Baker & Fang, 2019; Byram et al., 2017; Fang & Baker, 2018). Since culture is currently viewed as a process or a social practice, a traditional understanding of culture as knowledge or a cognitive notion has been challenged from a post-
structuralist perspective. Aspects of ELF and global citizenship education have been linked because of how the diversity of language use in relation to intercultural communication and global citizenship education has been an issue in both Anglophone and non-Anglophone HE when English is claimed as the de facto medium of instruction. This paper adopts Byram’s (2008) definition of intercultural citizenship:

1. Causing/facilitating intercultural citizenship experience, and analysis and reflection on it and on the possibility of further social and/or political activity, i.e., activity that involves working with others to achieve an agreed end.
2. Creating learning/change in the individual: cognitive, attitudinal, behavioral change; change in self-perception; change in relationships with Others (i.e., people of a different social group); change that is based in the particular but is related to the universal (p. 187).

From the definition, we see the importance of key components such as “activities” and “behavioral change” as compared with the idea of intercultural communication. This has made the notion of global citizenship significant as a process of development in HE. As Baker and Fang (2019) argue, global citizenship “is typically conceived as the extension of citizenship beyond national borders and recognition of the global scale of social relations, the need to respect and value diversity” (p. 7). Therefore, it is necessary to explore how HE would develop students’ global citizenship from an ELF perspective.

**Student responses on global citizenship education**

The study participants’ responses on their experiences studying abroad and to what extent they developed a sense of global citizenship during their postgraduate study abroad will be reported. These students were all from the Chaoshan area, which is the primary focus of the project.

![Figure 1. Map where the Chaoshan dialect is spoken (from Ethnologue).](image-url)
Method
The researcher collected data from postgraduates from the Chaoshan area (for the project) who had recently returned from abroad with a master’s degree from the UK, France, or Australia. Since the researcher is based in a university located in the Chaoshan area, he contacted the possible participants first. A former colleague of the researcher assisted in contacting and targeting more participants who expressed interest in the study. A total of six participants agreed to take part in this research. Qualitative face-to-face and online email interviews were used for data collection purposes. The researcher’s goal was to investigate the issue using two research questions:

- What were the participants’ experiences of intercultural communication in their study-abroad exchange programs?
- To what extent and in what ways, if any, did these experiences increase their awareness of intercultural citizenship after returning from their study-abroad master’s programs?

Table 1: Participant Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Where</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>The UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Public Administration</td>
<td>The UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>S3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>The UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>S4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Tourism Management</td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S6</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Translation</td>
<td>The UK</td>
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</tbody>
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Results
This section reports some key findings from the participants.

RQ1: The participants reported a range of different experiences during their study abroad. In particular, the participants expressed the difficulty of understanding their lecturers when studying abroad. S2 noted that some lecturers would use idioms during class, which could create a communication breakdown with some of the international students (cf. Jenkins, 2014). S3 chose to study in the UK because she wanted to “see the outside world” and gain more intercultural experiences. She had various intercultural experiences, such as traveling in France with her roommates and landlord. Although she addressed the issue of “culture shock,” she did not have much to say regarding intercultural citizenship, from her study abroad experiences. Because “every individual is an independent self,” she believed in the importance of “identity recognition” to the understanding of this concept (S3). S4 reported that she had difficulty with interactive discussions with local people when studying abroad. She believed that “English plays a key role for intercultural communication.” She also noted:

_During my stay in Australia, I spoke English with classmates, lecturers, tutors, and colleagues. Actually, I found it interesting to exchange different cultural customs and values. Meeting people from a different culture is the most direct way to know more about that culture, so I am grateful that I had such an intercultural experience._

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Interestingly, S5 shared her experience with other international students when she drank hot water, which shocked other people. Although she believed that it would be somewhat difficult if she had to live with those people all the time, she noted that, in some incidences, people would try hard to solve cultural conflicts. S6 talked about her experiences of communication breakdown simply because of the local Yorkshire accent of a bus driver. After that experience, she paid more attention to accent when communicating with other people. She also believed that “English is still a dominant language” and is important for intercultural communication and that her study abroad experience helped her to “increase her intercultural awareness” and “to be more tolerant to understand cultural differences. Although sometimes I have some disagreement, I tried to interpret certain behaviors from other perspectives.”

**RQ2**: The extent to which and how intercultural citizenship was raised depends: As S1 expressed, “it is important that my study abroad experiences helped me to develop intercultural citizenship.” However, since the concept of intercultural citizenship was not introduced to many people during their undergraduate study, this concept was not easy to develop during their study abroad experience. For example, after study abroad, S4 and S5 did not seem to distinguish the difference between “intercultural communication” and “intercultural citizenship.” For instance, S4 believed that intercultural citizenship “is about sharing different culture, especially the good things of the certain culture. And people from different cultural backgrounds can learn from each other.” Nonetheless, the study abroad experience was important for S4:

*After the study-abroad experience, I feel that I am more open-minded than before. I also think that keeping yourself updated with intercultural awareness will bring many benefits to your personal development. You will have more profound and comprehensive thoughts, and you will become more creative. Studying abroad not only broadened my horizon, it also changed my way of thinking, which makes me more open-minded and easier to accept different cultures. My stay in Australia provided me with a chance to understand multicultural societies, which enables me to develop the skills of international citizenship."

In contrast, S3 was quite negative regarding her study abroad experience in relation to intercultural citizenship, as she answered, “No, study abroad does not help.” We indeed see the various perspectives when discussing such an issue.

**Discussion**

The findings of this study echo some previous research (Baker & Fang, 2019; Han et al., 2017; Fang & Baker, 2018) with more positive attitudes toward the development of intercultural citizenship. They also feel that such a notion is an identity that should be developed through their study abroad experiences. Although this paper only reports some key findings from a large scale of research, it is clear from these findings that the notion of global citizenship education should be regarded as pivotal from the ELF paradigm.

The participants reported various intercultural communication experiences when studying abroad; these experiences are essential to developing their global/intercultural
citizenship. However, they also reported the lack of global citizenship education during their undergraduate study. Regardless of whether they will pursue further studies or enter the job market after graduation, this gap should be recognized in more contexts when designing the various curricula to prepare for the students’ future development. Compared to some negative experiences when studying abroad (Baker & Fang, 2019), the participants reported their study abroad experiences in a more positive perspective. Nonetheless, the question remains regarding whether a positive study abroad experience would generate positive global citizenship education (Fang & Baker, 2018; Jackson, 2012; Killick, 2013). Such a relationship will need further investigation. From the data reported above, we need to ascertain whether the study abroad experience indeed provides a channel for students to develop their intercultural awareness; nonetheless, the path from “intercultural awareness” to “intercultural citizenship” education requires a lengthy process (given the definition of activities and cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral change). Since a short-term sojourn abroad might not be sufficient for people to develop global/intercultural citizenship, a more systematic curriculum to develop students’ global citizenship education is essential.

In terms of the linguistic issue, EMI has not proved the most efficient means of education. In numerous contexts, the “E” in EMI does not reflect the current linguistic landscape of the complexity of language use. As reported above, students encountered some difficulties in both understanding their lecturers in academic settings and in understanding their interlocutors in daily communication, such as with the unfamiliarity of different local accents. The linguistic issue should also be discussed when addressing the issue of global citizenship. Since English functions as a lingua franca, it is used both as the key (and often the only) medium of instruction as well as for communication purposes, it is necessary to take a step back to challenge the dominance of English in intercultural communication. We additionally need to understand how English is used in various contexts and how other languages are in contact in various communication settings from the multilingual paradigm. A critical perspective to language use should also be understood in global citizenship education and the study abroad experience will potentially increase people’s awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity.

Conclusion

This paper discusses the issue of global citizenship education from the ELF paradigm. The study participants were postgraduate returnees from the Chaoshan area. Using empirical data, we addressed the necessity and complexity of the study abroad experience with global citizenship education. However, before we make any conclusion, we need to understand the importance of intercultural citizenship education in today’s multilingual world. Byram et al. (2017: xxviii), for example, addressed the use of intercultural citizenship projects that do the following:

- Create a sense of international identification with learners in the international project.
- Challenge the “common sense” of each national group within the international project.
- Develop a new “international” way of thinking and acting.
- Apply that new way to “knowledge,” to “self,” and to “the world.”
This paper addressed the importance of intercultural/global citizenship education from an ELF framework. Although many participants reported positive experiences during their study abroad experiences, they did not have a well-developed sense of global citizenship and global citizenship education was not included in their undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Incorporating intercultural/global citizenship education in HE was argued from the intercultural literacy aspect and the understanding of ELF was promoted from the linguistic aspect.

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References


