

Glenn Toh

Academic Writing in a Japanese Situation: Drawing on the *Design* Perspective towards an Affirmation of English as a Lingua Franca

Abstract

The contents of this article concern ELF 500, a course in graduate school academic writing that adopts an ELF-aware approach. In my discussion, I will first review the literature on language, ideology and power as it relates to Japanese cultural politics. Following this, I will draw on the notions of critique and design as described in Lillis (2003) as critical transformative strategies to encourage student academic writers to become more conscious of: (1) the constructed and situated nature of knowledge and meaning making as viewed by scholars in the area of academic literacies; (2) the importance of their own agency towards realizing their potential as academic thinkers and writers; and (3) the importance of understanding the fluid, dynamic and performative nature of English in its role as a lingua franca as a means towards constructing meanings that are valuable and unique to their own emergent ontologies as Japanese users of ELF. My discussion is, throughout, very much motivated by a professional concern that the teaching of academic writing should be carried out within an overall pedagogical framework that recognizes the importance of the humanizing and transformative role of language education.

Keywords: Critical Pedagogy, Locality, Identity and Meaning Making

要約

本論文では、ELF モデルを使用したアカデミック・ライティングの授業である ELF500 に関して論述する。始めに、言語・イデオロギー・権力と日本文化・政治との関係についての先攻研究に言及する。次に、Lillis (2003)による「批評 (critique)」と「デザイン (design)」の意味について説明する。それらは、次の事柄に対する学生の認識をより促進する戦略として述べられている。(1) アカデミックリテラシー研究者がみなしている、知識と意味形成が持つ建設的・状況的特徴 (2) 学術的思想家および書き手としての可能性を理解するための、自分自身の主体性の重要性 (3) 日本人英語話者にとって特有で価値のある比類ない意味を創造するために、ELF の動的性質を理解することの必要性。この議論は、アカデミック・ライティングの指導は、個性や言語の変容的役割の重要性を認める教育基盤において行われるべきであるという著者の関心に基づいたものである。

キーワード：批判的教育学、地域思想、地域アイデンティティ、意味形成

1. Introduction

This article focuses on ELF 500, a course in academic writing designed for students enrolled on a Master of Arts in English Language Education program at Tamagawa University, an established private university in Tokyo. In both planning and classroom processes, ELF 500 adopts an English as a Lingua Franca perspective and seeks to affirm and reinforce the belief that English is an international language used in a multiplicity of cultural and interactional contexts, as opposed to one that is affiliated merely (and monolingually) with its native speakers (Jenkins 2007; 2011; 2014; Seidlhofer 2011; Mauranen 2012). In terms of conceptualizing the nature of academic writing and curricular knowledge, ELF 500 follows thinkers writing in the area of academic literacies who take the view that academic knowledge and meanings are not static or pre-existent, but situated and discursively constructed (Lea and Street 2000;

Lillis and Turner 2001; Lillis 2003). In this way, ELF 500 is able to draw on important notions like emergence, performativity, negotiability, contingency and situatedness that are valued in both ELF and academic literacies towards giving students an understanding of their own role and agency in the creation, conceptualization and communication of academic meanings.

In terms of sequence of discussion, this article provides an overview of the literature on language and ideology as they relate to Japan, followed by a discussion of the content, processes and outcomes of ELF 500. In particular, prevailing (and also particularized) discourses concerning the English language as they relate to present-day Japan will be discussed vis-à-vis its role as an international lingua franca. The relevance of these discourses to the teaching of academic writing will also be examined together with the application of transformative pedagogies aimed at engendering critical perspectives to meaning making among student writers. The engendering of such critical perspectives is consistent with the aims of ELF 500 to: (1) foster confident and critically conscious student writers, through (2) the use of pedagogies that affirm the importance of student agency and ontologies towards humanizing and transformative educational outcomes (Freire 2000; Dale and Hylop-Margison 2010).

With regard to the significance of an ELF perspective towards these aims, the following attributes about academic writing and academic meaning making suggest their shared values with ELF. Firstly, academic knowledge and academic meanings are dynamic, contextualized and contingent rather than static or bounded in nature, in tandem with the varied, diverse and contextualized nature of ELF interactions and performative landscapes (Jenkins 2007; 2011; 2014; Seidlhofer 2011). Secondly, discursive spaces for the negotiation of writer subjectivities created through academic writing (Lillis 2003) can operate alongside similar opportunities for the negotiation of speaker identities and subjectivities in ELF interactions. Such negotiation stands in contrast to narrower assumptions that non-native speakers of English learn the language for communication with native speakers and for acculturation into a monolithic native speaker culture (Hulmbauer, Bohringer and Seidlhofer 2008).

Hence, although this article is not about the teaching of ELF per se (see Iino and Murata (2016) for a grounded practical rendition of this difficult notion, in a Japanese situation), but about the teaching of academic writing and 'how effectively [learners] *function* in meaning making' in academic situations (Seidlhofer 2011: 195, italics in original), my discussion shares Seidlhofer's concern about the importance of learners' realities and the contextualization of pedagogies to keep with the diversity of circumstances in which English is now taught and used. In this connection, I argue in Toh (forthcoming) that a post-method pedagogy (Kumaravadivelu, 2006) is supportive of contextuality, diversity and locality and therefore ELF-friendly, where 'template' methods borne of a unidirectional flow of ideas from native speaker centers to far flung peripheries invariably fall short (Kumaravadivelu 2006).

2. Literature Outlining Relevant Background: Japanese Perceptions of English

'The Japanese must free themselves from this 'native speaker syndrome'. They need to realize that they learn English not to communicate with native speakers of English alone but with people in Europe, South America, Asia, the Middle East and Africa. They must realize that if they have to use English in the future, the interlocutors will most likely be non-native speakers.' (Yano 2011: 134)

Observers of language and ideology have noted that oppression and inequality in power relations are closely implicated in 'the processes of standardization of language and culture' (Sato and Doerr 2014: 2). With regards to the Japan and the Japanese language, Sato and Doerr (2014) note that both 'language and culture have undergone extensive standardization' (2) under the auspices of a national system of education established during the Meiji period when the foundation of a Japanese 'centralized imperial state' was laid (Sato and Doerr 2014: 5). The Japanese language became the subject of standardization and centralized controls linked uniquely to a burgeoning Japanese nation-statism and to the reification of a primordial and homogenous Japanese 'race' (Befu 2001; Sato and Doerr 2014).

Needless to say, such centralized controls have powerful implications for a non-Japanese language such as English on which they continue to, ideologically speaking, cast a long shadow. Even while the Japanese language is subject to centralized nationalistic regulation, the English language is also subject to stereotyping and essentialization that place it in diametrical juxtaposition to its Japanese counterpart. If Japanese is local, then English must be alien. If Japanese represents a primordial Japanese race and culture, then English represents an essentialized English-speaking foreign Other (Kubota 2002; Rivers 2013). The (un)intended outcome of such stereotyping is the way English then becomes subject to different enactments of caricature or reductionism as an artefact of foreignness or non-Japaneseness (Kubota 2002; Rivers 2013). English is viewed putatively as a language of its white, principally Anglo-American, native speakers (Kubota 2002; Honna 2008). Speakers of African-American or Australian varieties have reportedly been asked whether they can speak like white Americans if they want employment as English teachers (Kubota 2002). English speakers are liable to be typecast as people with Caucasian features including high-bridge noses (Kubota and Fujimoto 2013). The consequence of such reductionism is that English is relegated to becoming the language of an alien and rarified Other (McVeigh 2002; Rivers 2013). Such a particularized view of English, if carried to the extreme, divests the language of its international relevance and pluralistic flavors (Jenkins 2007; 2011; 2014; Seidlhofer 2011).

To be sure, there is a political dimension to such circumscribed and narrow conceptualizations of English and English-speaker subjectivities. Japan's conservative politics and mercantilist economy entail essentialized conceptualizations of Japaneseness as part of an agenda of reifying (and protecting) an insular monocultural status quo (Willis 2008). Viewed in this way, Japaneseness becomes an important cog in the production and protection of a state-controlled capitalist-mercantilist political economy that requires the reification of a homogenous and compliant (if parochial) citizenry (McVeigh 2006). As part of legitimating such ideology, an essentialized version of Japaneseness is invariably placed in a cline of

comparison with essentialized versions of other cultures: 'If the Japanese felt lower than Westerners who happened to be white, by the same token, they felt superior toward the peoples of Southeast Asia and Africa ... who are not white' (Befu 2001: 75). Consequently, scholars have sought to examine the way such understandings have potentially influenced (infiltrated) Japanese beliefs in the superiority of English varieties affiliated to their white-native speakers (Kubota 2002; Honna 2008), with obvious detrimental implications for a perspective of English that aligns with ELF research.

A variant of the above situation is furthermore to be found in the way foreign language teaching is conceived of by policy makers. Kubota (2011) notes that both neoliberal and neoconservative discourses have come to bear on English language education in Japan. By this, she means the way that English is viewed as important for raising Japan's profile and competitive edge in the global and regional marketplace. This view, while appearing to be progressive and outward looking, is not without its inward looking and/or neoconservative dimensions, attributable to two reasons.

The first is that one of the important goals of teaching English is, ironically, to increase students' awareness of their Japaneseness, with materials supporting a homogenous and stereotypical view of Japanese society (McVeigh 2002; Kubota 2002; 2011). McVeigh (2002) makes the observation that 'English and the presence of foreigners – ironically builds national identity among students' (148). The second reason lies in the general failure to recognize the increasing role and presence of other foreign languages like Chinese, Portuguese and Korean within and beyond Japanese shores (Kubota 2011). Such a failure to acknowledge the role and occurrence of other languages ironically undermines English's putative international status. By blindsiding the fact that truly international spaces are, in reality, affirmed and enriched by a plethora of different languages, varieties and cultures which in turn help to validate English as one of its major players, the prevailing Japanese view of English as a language for communication in global market spaces is, paradoxically, both skewed and circumscribed. A shrewd observation by political linguist Mikhail Bakhtin is very useful here:

The world becomes polyglot, once and for all and irreversibly. The period of national languages coexisting, but closed and deaf to each other, comes to an end. Languages throw light on each other: one language can, after all, see itself only in the light of another. (Bakhtin 1981: 12)

Failure to see English in such a nuance is, by Bakhtinian perceptions, a form of impoverishment and hence, a serious omission. Such an omission is liable to subject Japanese English speakers to unnecessary parody and caricature, as captured in Kubota's (2011) vivid discussion of an English-speaking samurai, obviously an oddity in today's fast-hybridizing and fast-evolving global interactional spaces. Current discourses, unfortunately, continue to reify English as a foreign or alien language or even as a threat to Japaneseness (McVeigh 2002; Yamagami and Tollefson 2011), but one which the Japanese are generally obliged to learn owing to its perceived usefulness in helping them gain a share of the wheeling and dealing in the global marketplace.

3. Literature Relevant to the Planning of ELF 500

'Education that ignores the condition of students' lives and simply focuses on transferring knowledge denies students their humanity.' (Benesch 2001: 52)

From the outset, the conceptualization and planning for ELF 500 were guided by: (1) the need to expose students to enactments of difference and diversity so that any particularized, reductionist or essentialist beliefs, orientations or impressions might be dialogized by more inclusive and transformative counter-discourses (Lillis 2003); in order to (2) prepare students for the plurality of discursive, interactive and contact situations made available by the use of English in multilingual lingua franca contexts (Hulmbauer, Bohringer and Seidlhofer 2008).

By way of history, the university had piloted an ELF program at undergraduate level in 2012, which was a refreshing change to what often is otherwise an 'uncritical tendency' among universities 'to persist in traditional ways of thinking about English'

(Jenkins 2014: 18). This pilot program was a precursor to the launching of the university's Center for English as a Lingua Franca (CELF) which was set up in 2014 to be responsible for a campus-wide English program for all the colleges within the university. In envisaging a centralized campus-wide English language program, the university administrators accorded due diligence to the need for the new center to embrace a more current paradigm to English teaching (Jenkins 2011) rather than one that deferred to what Holliday (2005) calls English-speaking Western TESOL, burdened with a history of premising English teaching on static understandings of native speaker 'norms' (Menard-Warwick 2014). Although the ELF 500 program is run separately by the Graduate School of Humanities, it shares the same beliefs about ELF as described in Jenkins (2011; 2014), which are that ELF approaches: (1) adopt a *difference* perspective which regards variations from native speaker varieties as innovations rather than as aberrations; (2) are enacted and sustained in dynamic and ever-changing situations of contact and hybridity; (3) are not confined by fixed or monolithic notions of bounded speech communities (see Pennycook 2007, Pennycook 2010; Mauranten 2012; Jenkins 2014) or what Seidlhofer (2011) calls 'code fixation'. As a staff member of both the Graduate School as well as CELF, I have been able to capitalize on the creative energies from both domains in my planning and teaching of ELF 500.

Concerning my own approach to teaching of ELF 500, ELF's post-modern orientation has allowed me the critical space to 'expose the cognitive and ideological mechanisms' which often legitimate 'a monocultural, "one-truth" epistemology that erases difference', following the work of critical educators, Dale and Hyslop-Margison (2010: 97). As part of exposing such ideological strategies, and in keeping with a reflexive practice which treats meaning as something that is never truly fixed or static (Williams, 2010), I have found the notions of (1) *critique* and *design* as described in Lillis (2003); and (2) *critical praxis* and *conscientization* (Freire 2000; Dale and Hyslop-Margison 2010), to be much in tandem with ELF's concerns for contingency, transformation and diversity. In terms of professional conviction, my affinities with ELF and the transformative notions articulated in Freire (2000), Lillis (2003) and Dale and Hyslop-Margison (2010) stem from my nearly three decades as an EFL and EAP

teacher and TESOL teacher-trainer, grounded particularly in my experiences teaching in Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, Laos, New Zealand, Thailand and my native Singapore.

In the following sections, I will explain the notions of *critique*, *design*, *critical praxis* and *conscientization* as they relate to the present discussion before providing an account of ELF 500 and its foundation on ELF epistemologies.

3.1 Critique and Design

Lillis (2003) argues for the importance of recognizing the reflexive nature of student subjectivities in the teaching of academic writing. In her paper on academic literacies and student empowerment, she describes the academic writing experiences of two students, Mary, coming from a Black working-class background, and Sara, a Pakistani-British Muslim.

Mary was asked to write about whether she thought the term 'underclass' adequately described the social position of ethnic minorities in Britain for a 'Society and Politics' assignment. In her essay, Mary acknowledged that Britain's ethnic minorities did represent an underclass. However, she also added a section where she wanted to demonstrate that Britain's ethnic minorities had also made a significant contribution to British society through, for example, the 'flower power' movement, Asian philosophy and the music of Black youth. Lillis (2003) relates how Mary's tutor wrote 'Not really relevant' by the margin of this particular portion of Mary's essay. She notes that the tutor's comment was tantamount to a denial of the subjectivities and ontologies inherent of Mary's minority Black working-class background, while arguing that her realities and feelings did 'not remain separate from specific acts of writing' and decisions about what could (or could not) be written (202). Hence, the tutor's categorical pronouncement in the 'Not really relevant' comment about what Mary had written in her academic essay strongly suggested a disjunction between 'the centrality of [Mary's] identity in academic writing' on the one hand and institutionally sanctioned knowledge on the other (Lillis 2003: 195). The same disjunction is expressed in Sara's

experience of not being able to draw on the realities and specificities of her background in her academic writing, where there seemed 'to be no space for connection between the academic world and her interests' as a Pakistani-British Muslim (203).

Following the experiences of Mary and Sara, Lillis (2003) uses the notion of *critique* as a way to uncover: (1) the nature and impact of unequal power relations on student writing, and (2) 'academic writing as [an] ideologically inscribed knowledge construction' (p. 195). Furthermore, Lillis (2003) describes the notion of *design*, as a pedagogical strategy that facilitates students': (1) exploration of different and mutable rather than single unified unchanging versions of truths; (2) contribution to fresh ways of meaning making with regard to student ontologies; (3) imagination of new possibilities for self-assertion and self-reification by attending to (4) the importance of students' histories and perspectives (Lillis 2003).

The significance of *critique* and *design* vis-à-vis understandings made possible by an ELF perspective will become clearer in subsequent discussion of ELF 500. Suffice to say at this point that an ELF approach, while consonant with the plurality of meanings and realities communicable through the English language, can be used complementarily to accommodate learner realities and facilitate the fresh ways of meaning making that the *critique* and *design* modes encourage (Lillis 2003; Seidlhofer 2011). In the meantime, the next section establishes important practical linkages between the *critique* and *design* modes and Freire's (2000) notions of critical *praxis* and *conscientization*.

3.2 Linking *Critique* and *Design* with *Conscientization* and *Critical Praxis*

In this section, I will examine the way in which *critique* and *design* can be thought of as an integral part of engendering what noted critical educator, Paulo Freire, recognizes as conscientized ontological beings (Freire 2000; Dale and Hyslop-Margison 2010).

Long time Freire scholars, Dale and Hyslop-Margison (2010), describe *conscientization* (or *conscientizacao* in Freire's original) as the transformation of people, their 'consciousness and social awareness ... from that of [being] passive information processors to reflective and active subjects' (154). Through *conscientization*, students undergo a consciousness raising experience, a 'transformation of consciousness' (133), regaining 'their subjectivity as agents' of change (143), by taking active roles in conceptualizing and designing (to use Lillis' term) their lived realities. Contrasting transformation and *conscientization* with what he calls a 'banking' form of education where students are fed with non-negotiable (and totalizing) knowledge forms, Freire argues that liberation from 'banking' is possible through a *praxis* of reflective action. *Praxis* therefore involves both critical reflection as well as a conscious choice to act upon present realities with a view towards actualizing divergent and expansive worldviews (Dale and Hyslop-Margison 2010). As part of a long process of 'constant becoming' (Freire 2000: 108), *conscientization* requires determined efforts at a critical form of *praxis* to overcome persistent oppressor ideologies that find their way into the consciousness of both students and teachers.

With the above understandings of *critique*, *design*, *conscientization* and *critical praxis* in mind, I will explore practical ways in which *critique* and *design* can be applied alongside Freire's notions of *conscientization* and *praxis* to create new opportunities for students and teachers to imagine fresh possibilities for the generation of meaning in academic writing.

4. ELF 500 and ELF

'To think of a speech or discourse community as other than constantly in the making is to distort what we know to be the nature of language and language use.' (Blanton 1998: 221)

ELF 500 is a semester-long 15-week course in academic writing, premised on the belief that English is an international lingua franca that represents and enacts a plurality of cultural, exigent and existential realities when used in a wide variety of

global and regional settings. As noted in the introduction, ELF 500 is also premised on the understanding that academic meaning making is contingent and contextual rather than absolute or static in nature (Lea and Street 2000; Lillis 2003; Lillis and Turner 2001) and hence dependent on writer agency and subjective ontology (Lillis 2003; Lillis and Turner 2001). In the remaining discussion, I will first outline the relevance of the abovementioned understandings to my practice as an academic writing teacher before describing ELF 500's processes and outcomes.

Concerning my own subjectivity and practice, apart from the fact that the course code itself (*ELF500*) reveals its philosophical orientation toward English as a lingua franca, my own inclination towards ELF as a paradigm was borne of professional convictions as an English teacher. Previous experience as both teacher and teacher trainer exposed me early on to the oppressiveness of unequal power relations and inequitable practices, whether it was the urban rural divide that brought about glaring inequalities of access to resources in my experience of elitist and exclusionary aspects of ELT in Thailand, or the culturally damaging effects of Third World ELT 'aid' projects infused with the totalizing ideologies of neo-colonial linguistic imperialism (e.g. Phillipson 1992; Toh 2000, Toh 2003; Widin 2010). From my time in various parts of the Asia-Pacific and now in Japan (Toh 2012, Toh 2014), I have keenly observed the way monolithic beliefs and practices operate to hinder design, individual agency and self-determination, thereby restricting teaching and learning, which in reality, are undertakings that are contextual, contingent and dynamic (Kumaravadivelu 2006; Seidlhofer 2011; Toh 2012). In recent years, such monolithic beliefs and practices in ELT have been the subject of critical scrutiny in published works questioning: (1) native-speakerism and the way both native speaker and non-native speaker teachers are stereotyped and deployed (Holliday 2005; Rivers and Houghton 2013a); (2) circumscribed understandings of curriculum and methodology in ELT (Benesch 2001; Kumaravadivelu 2006) including the "code fixation" of much current language pedagogy that tends to be focused on developing proficiency in language forms rather than an awareness of the [performative] nature of language itself" (Seidlhofer 2011: 205); (3) the failure of many quarters in ELT to account for the dynamics of negotiated and emerging identities, cultural hybridities and cultural Othering in places where

English is taught (Jenkins 2007; Seidlhofer 2011; Rivers and Houghton 2013b, Rivers and Houghton 2013c); and (4) the tardiness of ELT to react to the fast-growing variety of real-world situations that affirm the pluricentricity of English (Seidlhofer 2011; Jenkins 2014; Giri and Marlina 2014). Indeed, the monolithic ideologies problematized in these works are rightly to be scrutinized for reasons to do with the ways they blindside the evolution or negotiation of new ontologies, identities and subjectivities that take place as students engage with different varieties and enactments of English, its diversity of users and the pluricentric nature of its evolving cultural (non)affiliations.

As part of my role as teacher, I have found it important to resist beliefs, behaviors and controlling forces that diminish or deny any discursive space that may be available for the negotiation of identities and meanings and to pass on the benefits of such resistance to my students, in this case, my graduate school students in ELF 500.

5. The Relevance of *Critique, Design, Conscientization* and *Critical Praxis* to ELF 500

'Critical pedagogy is a dialogue about emergent themes that leads to greater understanding of their contradictions and their historical context, and formulation of ways to respond to them.' (Benesch 2001: 52)

In ELF 500, I sought to *conscientize* my students into a *design* mode, through the enabling processes facilitated by *critique* as well as active and reflective *praxis*. Towards this end, I planned the scaffolding activities described in sections 5.1 and 5.2, directed at raising students' consciousness of critical issues.

5.1 Personal Narratives about *Conscientization* and *Design*

I have found personal narratives to be useful for introducing students to the benefits of *critique, praxis* and *conscientization*, with the aim of encouraging them into a *design* mode towards becoming good academic writers. The auto-ethnographic narratives of Lin (2010) and Taniguchi (2010) have proven to be particularly evocative

in their reflection of *conscientization* and *design*, where both writers clearly display a 'transformation of consciousness' (Dale and Hyslop-Margison 2010: 133) while asserting themselves as agents for their own change.

Lin (2010) presents narrative of a primary school girl growing up in the outer reaches of Hong Kong's New Territories in the 1970's. The prevailing circumstances of rural primary schools at that time meant that she was not exposed to the educated varieties of English available to children in the affluent and privileged urban centers of Kowloon and Hong Kong island. In the face of challenging family circumstances, she takes the initiative of familiarizing herself with the phonetic alphabet she first learnt at school. Through the phonetic alphabet, learning English began to take on a new dimension. She started experimenting with different combinations of phonetic symbols. She went to the public library to borrow English story books and kept a record of the meaning and pronunciation of new words. Later on, in high school, apart from faithfully keeping her own diary, she joined a group of schoolmates who corresponded in English with pen-pals from different countries. Writing in English took on new personal meaning and significance. She came to realize that, through English, she could 'express her feelings more freely', discovering a tool that gave her more freedom to express 'her innermost fears, worries, anger, conflict or excitement' than Chinese which involved writing difficult characters (Lin 2010: 121). Through these initiatives and discoveries, this 'foreign language had opened up a new, personal space (a "third space", so to speak)', and in so doing, was creating for her 'an expanded self in English' (Lin 2010: 121). Demonstrating the workings of *critical praxis* and *design*, Lin shows how the writer was able to use the additional resources she found in English to explore herself 'in a somewhat different manner, in a somewhat different value system, one that appeared to be less prohibiting' than her native language (2010: 121-122). She was, moreover, able to broaden herself by inventing and recreating 'a somewhat different self' from what her surrounding people knew of her, besides forming friendships 'across cultural and geographical boundaries' (2010: 122).

Taniguchi (2010) tells of a Japanese teenager who learned English in high school. On her study abroad experience in America, she found herself in an overwhelmingly

monocultural suburban situation 'with a population of 30,000 people almost all white middle-class' (2010: 209). The experience of being away from home in a situation where, despite having learnt English diligently at school, the socio-cultural differences which made it very difficult for her to communicate freely compelled her to evaluate her classroom language learning experiences critically. As someone who felt both alien and different, she began to put unreasonable expectations on herself to adapt to an unfamiliar environment, all the time perceiving herself negatively. The dilemmas she faced, however, led her into powerful autoethnographic reflections on her own constructions of herself as a user of English as second language. Entering into a *design* mode when she subsequently finds herself in cosmopolitan multicultural Sydney, she discovers that she had become much more sensitized to the dynamic and evolving nature of identity formation. She became more confident in engaging with new or unfamiliar situations, for example, taking it upon herself to understand more about Australian rock music after being taken to a rock concert. She began to realize that the development of her identity as an effective user of English in dynamic and multicultural contexts was both critical and historic in nature, requiring her to re-write or re-story her own personal narrative for the better (Taniguchi 2010). Very consistent with the *design* mode, she was able to expand beyond single unified versions of truths to explore new 'relations among language, culture, and identity' (2010: 212). She was able to make the most of the 'socio-cultural and socio-historical context of a multicultural city' like Sydney to create new meanings and connections for herself as an English user (2010: 213).

5.2 A Narrative Reflecting Hybridity and New Meanings

Apart from reading works like Lin (2010) and Taniguchi (2010), ELF 500 students also watched a TBS (Tokyo Broadcasting System) drama series '99-Years of Love' (99年の愛) which is a story about Chokichi Hiramatsu who leaves Japan for America in the Taisho period. After suffering both racial discrimination and deprivation, Chokichi marries, makes good in America, and has four children. When war breaks out, the Japanese-Americans are sent to an internment camp. Chokichi's eldest son, Ichiro, decides to show his loyalty to America and join the American army. Ichiro's battalion is

sent to the frontline in France where he eventually falls in battle. After the war, the Hiramatsus do very well for themselves and are accepted into American society. '99-Years of Love' gives students a glimpse of the lives, narratives, identities and subjectivities of people of Japanese heritage struggling and eventually thriving in an at times hostile non-Japanese environment. Essentialisms to do with reductionist views of Japaneseness (Befu 2001) are destabilized through this story. People in the story are forced to write and re-write their ontologies and existential positionings. Students watching the drama get to understand that their own identities, subjectivities and narratives as Japanese young people and as Japanese users of English are discursive areas where performance, negotiation and imagination are only to be encouraged.

6. Design Initiatives for Meaning Making in Academic Writing

'People are fulfilled only to the extent that they create their world which is a human world, and create it with their transforming labor' (Freire, 2000: 145)

Through detailed analyses and discussion of Lin (2010), Taniguchi (2010) and the subjective experiences portrayed in '99-Years of Love', students were encouraged to draw out useful corollaries and guidelines that would help them position themselves as users of ELF and as budding writers in academic English. In terms of the approach I took to help students draw out these corollaries and guidelines, I provide in sections 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3, information that helped mark the way I sought to achieve my aim as well as some student journal reflections about what they had gained from thinking more reflexively about academic writing. As a caveat, I hasten to note that what I report here is *not* a full-scale evaluative study of ELF 500 or of all the students' experience. My purpose, rather, is to illustrate the potential of the approach I describe here.

6.1 Exploring Student Perspectives in Academic Writing Class

My students, doing ELF 500 as part of the coursework for their Master of Arts in English Language Education program, participated in classroom discussions and wrote

journal reflections about the (situated) nature of meaning making, how they viewed themselves as budding writers and researchers, or in Freirean terms, writers in the process of 'becom[ing] "beings for themselves"' (Freire 2000: 74). These discussions and journal entries were part of fulfilling the objective of fostering confident and critically conscious student writers through exposing students to enactments of diversity and difference (see Section 3) while affirming student agency and ontologies (see Section 1). By way of compliance, due permission was sought through university protocols for students' journal reflections to be appropriated for an exploration into the way design initiatives could be useful in enhancing the confidence and agency of student writers.

In the following sections, it will be seen that like in Taniguchi (2010), my students were able to cast their thoughts to their own experiences to re-write or re-story their own subjectivities and narratives, as well as draw from their *praxis* towards *design* for their futures as teachers and users of English. Being able to do so is important because academic writing entails an awareness of one's own histories and how these histories can be harnessed towards the construction and formulation of knowledge and meaning (Lillis 2003) within the contexts in which one operates as writer and researcher.

6.2 New Found Inspiration and Aspiration

One student, an aspiring English teacher in his own right, wrote about his years growing up in a small town in Niigata Prefecture adjacent to the Sea of Japan. His parents' love for travel meant that, as their child, he too had the opportunity to travel to Australia and other English-speaking countries. He observed at first hand his parents' struggles with English and how they felt a sense of accomplishment each time they managed to communicate successfully in their Japanese-accented English. Eventually, they decided that he should spend three years in a New Zealand high school. In his first weeks in the new country, he was intimidated by his feelings of difference from the local New Zealand students. There were 200 New Zealand students in his school and about 50 international students from Asia, Europe and

South America. His first friend was a classmate from Hong Kong. Subsequently, he made friends with other international students. Noticing that his international student friends spoke differently, he wrote: 'Perhaps, I unconsciously recognized that the accents of English were different from Kiwi students' accents ... I gradually did not feel that my English was strange ... I did not need to feel shy if the accent of English was not English native speakers' accent'. Through repeated reflection and introspection, this student was able to translate this multicultural experience into a deeper conviction that he could write and deliver academic papers in English on an equal footing with other users of English. At an ELT conference in Malaysia, he noted that the common lingua franca was English. 'All speakers spoke their own English,' realizing too that he could use English towards his own aims and ends. In terms of *design*, this student said that these experiences strengthened his resolve to conduct his research on the feasibility of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in Japanese high schools for his masters dissertation, which he admitted to be a difficult topic because it touched on sensitive areas such as the cultural and political dimension of language policy in Japan. His own ontological *praxis* proved to be an important enabling factor towards confidence and *design*.

Another student, another aspiring English teacher, attributed his new found confidence to the values of openness and accommodation promoted in ELF 500. This student told the story of being brought up in a very strict family where his opinions were not valued. His father had high expectations of him becoming a successful sportsperson, resulting in a strained relationship which meant that he had to leave home and stay in the dormitory. Dormitory life meant that he had to become more disciplined and decisive in the way he managed his life and future. As an aspiring English teacher, this student said that taking ELF 500 in his first year at graduate school helped him to gather together his prior experiences and to 'write' his life as a graduate student. As a graduate student, he had to make crucial decisions about research and also present and defend his work in front of his dissertation advisor and peers. He also discovered that his early experiences helped him to appreciate the importance of negotiating educational outcomes as opposed to remaining a passive consumer of ideas and outcomes laid on him by the system (or for that matter, his

father). This student's experience is reminiscent again of Dale and Hyslop-Margison's (2010: 133) point about a 'transformation of consciousness' achieved through the regaining of his subjectivity as an agent of his own change. Moreover, having previously learnt English in a system that advocated native speaker norms, such a transformation of consciousness allowed him to be more ready to embrace ELF-related values like accommodation, difference and negotiability, which he said were very applicable when he attended overseas conferences where participants were predominantly lingua franca users.

Yet another student noted that values like negotiability and transformation became very important in her situation. Having been on study-abroad programs in various English speaking countries, she had encountered upon her return to Japan difficulties re-adapting back into a system where what she believed to be creative ideas were not easily accepted by both mentors and peers. Her intention was to write her dissertation on how Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) could be applied to the teaching of art and aesthetics in high school. As CLIL remains very new in Japanese high schools where the paraphernalia of Western TESOL-inspired native speakerism and 'four skills' methodology (Holliday 2005) remain strongly rooted, she repeatedly encountered difficulties in convincing people around her of the feasibility of her research topic. As she spoke to decision makers about her area of interest, she became more socially aware (*conscientized*) of people's mindsets, which led her to make conscious choices to act upon (*design*) the present realities that were challenging her.

6.3 Re-Positioning, Re-Storying, Re-Designing

In their journal reflections, my students often included their experiences presenting academic papers in English at conferences in East and Southeast Asia. They noted that these conferences were appropriate not only as opportunities for them to write and present papers in English but also as fine exemplars of ELF at work among speakers of English from all over the Asia-Pacific including the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand and beyond. While reductionist representations of English in

Japan treat the language as the language of its white native-speakers and an artefact of non-Japaneseness (Kubota 2002; Honna 2008), its widespread use for interaction in international and multi-lingual contexts enabled my students to re-story and re-position themselves (Taniguchi, 2010) as active participants in the creation of new (professional and academic) meanings among their peers at international conferences. English for them became a lingua franca for the exchange and negotiation of ideas rather than a matter of 'correctness' in grammar and pronunciation or approximation to native speaker norms. Their experiences interacting with speakers in an international context were very useful in helping them break out of essentialized views of English as a language of its white native-speakers (Kubota 2002; Honna 2008) much like how the captivating narratives of Japanese-Americans in '99-years of Love' were useful in relativizing (and problematizing) essentialist notions of Japaneseness (Befu 2001).

In terms of research and the writing up of their masters dissertations, the *design* mode proved to be helpful for my students to become more independent thinkers who are aware of the reflexive and situated nature of knowledge, human narrative and human interaction, very much in keeping with the values of contact, accommodation, contingency and locality in ELF (Seidlhofer 2011). In their discussions of their research topics and approaches, they were able to demonstrate reflexive *praxis* as well as the benefits of entering into a *design* mode. In different ways too, they were able to refashion or *re/design* their past experiences for the benefit of their present desires and future aspirations. The ability to narrate, reflect, interpret and re-interpret their past and present histories illustrates the potential of *critique, design, conscientization* and *critical praxis* towards enhancing students' awareness of the reflexive nature of academic writing and thinking, once again consistent with ELF 500 as a course in graduate school academic writing.

7. Conclusion

I began this discussion with a description of the way language and culture in Japan has undergone extensive standardization under the influence of nationalistic and

neoliberal ideological forces and how this translated into narrow and reductionists understandings of English as being a language of its white native speakers. I then discussed the value of encouraging students to view knowledge and meaning through epistemological and ontological lenses by way of processes involving *critique*, *design*, *conscientization* and *critical praxis*, with a view to enabling them to be conscious of the situated and dynamic nature of academic knowledge and the importance of writer subjectivities in the construction of such knowledge. Alongside an ELF that affirms and embraces a diversity of values, cultures and the new energies thereof in international exchanges, I have argued that the teaching of academic writing should rightly capitalize on these opportunities to enable students to explore meanings that are important to them. The dynamic (as opposed to static) nature of academic knowledge works complementarily with understandings that English in its lingua franca role can be mobilized to represent a variety of fresh ideas important to students and the many people they interact with. One trusts that students so *conscientized* and equipped in the strategies of *critical praxis* and *design* will be all the more effective as academic thinkers, writers and contributors to the (re)writing of academic knowledge.

References:

- Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1981. Discourse in the novel. In Michael Holquist (ed.), *The dialogic imagination: four essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, 259-422. Austin: University of Texas.
- Blanton, Linda. 1998. Discourse, artifacts, and the Ozarks: understanding academic literacy. In Vivian Zamel & Ruth Spack (eds.), *Negotiating academic literacies: teaching and learning across languages and cultures*, 219-235. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Befu, Harumi. 2001. *Hegemony of homogeneity*. Melbourne: Transpacific Press.
- Benesch, Sarah. 2001. *Critical English for academic purposes: theory, politics, and practice*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Dale, John & Emery Hyslop-Margison. 2010. *Paulo Freire: teaching for freedom and transformation*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Freire, Paulo. 2000. *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniversary edition). New York: Bloomsbury.

Giri, Ram & Roby Marlina. eds. 2014. *The pedagogy of English as an international language: perspectives from scholars, teachers and students*. Heidelberg: Springer.
Holliday, Adrian. 2005. *The struggle to teach English as an international language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Honna, Nobuyuki. 2008. *English as a multicultural language in Asian contexts: issues and ideas*. Tokyo: Kuroshio.

Hulmbauer, Cornelia, Bohringer, Heike & Barbara Seidlhofer. 2008. Introducing English as a lingua franca: precursor and partner in intercultural communication. *Synergies Europe* 3, 25-36.

Iino, Masakazu. & Kumiko Murata. 2016. Dynamics of ELF communication in an English-medium academic context in Japan: from EFL learners to ELF users. In Kumiko Murata (ed.), *Exploring ELF in Japanese academic and business contexts: conceptualization, research and pedagogic implications*, 111-131. London: Routledge.

Jenkins, Jennifer. 2007. *English as a lingua franca: attitude and identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jenkins, Jennifer. 2011. Accomodating (to) ELF in the international university. *Journal of Pragmatics* 43(4), 926-936.

Jenkins, Jennifer. 2014. *English as a lingua franca in the international university: the politics of academic English language policy*. London: Routledge.

Kubota, Ryuko. 2002. The impact of globalisation on language teaching in Japan. In David Block & Deborah Cameron (eds.), *Globalisation and language teaching*, 13-28. London: Routledge.

Kubota, Ryuko. 2011. The politics of school curriculum and assessment in Japan. In Yong Zhao (ed.), *Handbook of Asian education: a cultural perspective*, 214-229. New York: Routledge.

Kubota, Ryuko & Donna Fujimoto. 2013. Racialized native speakers: voices of Japanese American English language professionals. In Stephanie Houghton & Damian Rivers (eds.), *Native-speakerism in foreign language education: Intergroup dynamics in Japan*, 196-206. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Kumaravadivelu, B. 2006. *Understanding language teaching: From method to postmethod*. New York: Routledge.

Lea, Mary & Brian Street. 2000. Student writing and staff feedback in higher education: An academic literacies approach. In Mary Lea & Barry Stierer (eds.), *Student writing in higher education*, 32-46. Buckingham: Open University.

Lillis, Theresa. 2003. Student writing as academic literacies: Drawing from Bakhtin to move from critique to design. *Language and Education* 17(3), 192-207.

Lillis, Theresa & Joan Turner. 2001. Student writing in higher education: contemporary confusion, traditional concerns. *Teaching in Higher Education* 6(11), 57-68.

Lin, Angel Mei Yee. 2010. English and me: my language learning journey. In David Nunan & Julie Choi (eds.), *Language and culture: reflective narratives and the emergence of identity*, 118-124. New York: Routledge.

Mauranen, Anna. 2012. *Exploring ELF: Academic English shaped by non-native speakers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McVeigh, Brian. 2002. *Japanese higher education as myth*. New York: M. E. Sharpe.

McVeigh, Brian. 2006. *The state bearing gifts: deception and disaffection in Japanese higher education*. Lanham: Lexington.

Menard-Warwick, Julia. 2014. *English language teachers on the discursive faultlines: identities, ideologies and pedagogies*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Pennycook, Alastair. 2007. *Global Englishes and transcultural flows*. London: Routledge.

Pennycook, Alastair. 2010. *Language as a local practice*. London: Routledge.

Phillipson, Robert. 1992. *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rivers, Damian. 2013. Institutionalized native-speakerism: Voices of dissent and acts of resistance. In Stephanie Houghton & Damian Rivers (eds.), *Native-speakerism in foreign language education: Intergroup dynamics in Japan*, 75-91. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Rivers, Damian & Stephanie Houghton. eds. 2013a. *Native-speakerism in foreign language education: Intergroup dynamics in Japan*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Rivers, Damian & Stephanie Houghton. eds. 2013b. *Social identities and multiple selves in foreign language education*. London: Bloomsbury.

Rivers, Damian & Stephanie Houghton. 2013c. Introduction: identities in foreign language education. In Damian Rivers & Stephanie Houghton (eds.), *Social identities and multiple selves in foreign language education*, 1-12. London: Bloomsbury.

Sato, Shinji & Neriko, Doerr. 2014. Introduction. In Shinji Sato & Neriko Doerr (eds.) *Rethinking language and culture in Japanese education: beyond the standard*, 1-18. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Seidlhofer, Barbara. 2011. *Understanding English as a lingua franca*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Taniguchi, Sumiko. 2010. Transforming identities in and through narratives. In David Nunan & Julie Choi (eds.), *Language and culture: reflective narratives and the emergence of identity* (pp. 208-214). New York: Routledge.

Toh, Glenn. 2000. Teaching writing in rural Thailand: considering new perspectives, *TESL Canada Journal* 17(2), 101-109.

Toh, Glenn. 2003. A case for having a more critical orientation to ELT in Southeast Asia, *World Englishes* 22(4), 531-538.

Toh, Glenn. 2012. Having English as a resource for multicultural understanding:

exploring possibilities in Japanese ELT. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 33 (3), 301-311.

Toh, Glenn. 2014. English for content instruction in a Japanese higher education setting: examining challenges, contradictions and anomalies. *Language and Education* 28(4), 299-318.

Toh, Glenn. forthcoming. Doing justice to an English as a Lingua Franca paradigm. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*.

Williams, Glyn. 2010. *The knowledge economy, language and culture*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Yamagami, Mai & James Tollefson. 2011. Elite discourses of globalization in Japan: the role of English. In Philip Seargeant (ed.), *English in Japan in the era of globalization* (pp. 15-37). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Yano, Yasutaka. 2011. English as an international language and 'Japanese English'. In Philip Seargeant (ed.), *English in Japan in the era of globalization* (pp. 125-142). Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Widin, Jacqueline. 2010. *Illegitimate practices: global English education*. Bristol: Multilingual Matter.

Willis, David Blake. 2008. Dejima: creolization and enclaves of difference in transnational Japan. In David Blake Willis & Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu (eds.), *Transcultural Japan: at the borderlands of race, gender and identity* (pp. 239-263). Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Author biodata:

Glenn Toh teaches at the Center of English as a Lingua Franca and the Graduate School of Humanities (English Language Education), Tamagawa University, Tokyo. He maintains a keen interest in developments in language, ideology and power.

Center of English as a Lingua Franca (CELF)

Tamagawa University

6-1-1 Tamagawa Gakuen

Machida, Tokyo, Japan 194-8610

Email: glenn@lit.tamagawa.ac.jp; glenn_toh2005@yahoo.com