| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Authentic ELF Videos: Engaging Students via L2 Speaker Content in Japan

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| ABSTRACT

There is a growing shift in English language teaching that reflects English as a global lingua franca, moving away from standard native-speaker norms towards communication strategies, accommodation strategies and multilingualism in the classroom. Adopting methods and materials into courses that reflect the realities of English use around the world in the modern age is a challenge for educators. This study firstly examines the implementation of appropriate, authentic audio-visual ELF or L2 English materials in two university classes as homework assignments in Japan. It then analyses students' reactions to the content in terms of their comprehension of the interactions, perceived pronunciation clarity, whether this affects student interest, and if there is any relationship to self-efficacy. Results suggest a strong link between pronunciation and comprehensibility, and comprehensibility and interest. Results for self-efficacy are less clear. Results suggest that educators should consider using more authentic L2 English content as listening activities in their courses.

| KEYWORDS

English as a Lingua Franca, authentic materials, comprehension, student engagement

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

1. Introduction

The majority of spoken interactions around the world in English feature speakers who do not hail from Kachru's inner-circle, making the language fluid and ever-changing (Murata, 2019; Seidlhofer, 2011). In this paradigm where English is being used as a lingua franca to facilitate communication between people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, these interactions involve both accommodation and modification of English varieties on all sides (Jenkins, 2009). Whereas traditionalists and prescriptive grammarians would put forward a set of rules for the language, in reality English is dynamic and becomes a semiotic resource for speakers involved in interactions (Canagarajah, 2024).

This is where these reflections of the realities of English as it exists today intersect with theories on how best to advance pedagogical practices in terms of English language teaching. In many contexts, classroom content is still dominated by inner-circle varieties of English (Tajeddin et al., 2020) and in many cases students themselves still see the language from the point of view that the native speaker (representing Kachru's Inner-Circle) is the standard bearer and something to aspire towards (Yamada, 2018). However, in order to prepare students to be able to navigate future interactions in English, utilizing content that provides models of speech and interactions between L2 speakers of English is crucial.

Given the need to expose students to diverse varieties of English, the question becomes how to implement this in classrooms and on courses. Applying World Englishes-orientated pedagogy in the classroom is becoming a more widespread practice around the world, and the need to move from theory to practice is now well-recognised, especially in tertiary education (Marlina, 2017). Facilitating conversations between students designed to focus on themselves as being English speakers and their own self-efficacy is important. However, the conversation about what kind of content to use for language acquisition purposes is also

a conversation that needs to be had. This research aims to explore ways of incorporating modern, L2 English-speaker focused content into classrooms to fill that gap.

Listening and reading input are paramount in facilitating language acquisition (Krashen, 1982). On top of this, language is not just a grammatical system but also works pragmatically and in context. Therefore, the challenge beyond simply providing input for acquisition purposes is to also find content that is relevant to students' lives and future goals. In particular, using authentic audiovisual materials in language teaching not only has benefits in terms of language acquisition and improved receptive skills, but also in terms of cross-cultural understanding and navigating real-life situations (Karjo et al., 2025). Frameworks have been put forward to give teachers the tools to focus on examples of discourse in the classroom to enhance learners' real world application of English (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000). As the reality of English is global, featuring interactions between speakers from different linguistic backgrounds, examples of spoken discourse reflecting this reality then become important in classroom teaching. Another point worth exploring is the impact of such content on students' perceptions of themselves as English speakers.

1.1 Research aims and questions

This research aims to investigate how university students respond to authentic audiovisual materials featuring L2 English speakers in lingua franca interactions. It aims to explore possible relationships between comprehension, pronunciation clarity, and content engagement. This could guide future implementation of materials in the classroom that balance effective input with content that is relevant and motivating for students.

RQ1: How do students rate their comprehension of authentic audiovisual content featuring L2 speaker interactions, and how do they perceive the pronunciation clarity of the speakers in different interactions?
RQ2: Is there a relationship between students' comprehension levels, pronunciation clarity, and their interest in the content?
RQ3: Is there any link between students' interest and comprehension of successful ELF interactions and students' own self-efficacy?

2. Literature Review
English education is becoming less hegemonic and more representative in nature (Rose, Sahan, Zhou, 2022). Specifically, the pool of available listening content is widening, and resources are available reflecting authentic use of Global Englishes around the world, and these are starting to be incorporated into courses (Hanzlovska, 2022). However, Schildhauer et al. (2020) raise the problem that although textbooks are making strides towards including global varieties of English, the pace of adoption is slow. While resources such as elllo.org provide real-life listening examples of a large variety of Englishes along with activities, their use and implementation is often ad hoc or piecemeal. The challenge is to further implement this kind of content into courses.

In this context, it is worth exploring how authentic, rather than textbook, content can be utilized to serve the purpose of both raising awareness of Global Englishes but also serving as useful listening comprehension activities in their own right. Authentic materials are, among other definitions, "the use of materials that were not originally developed for pedagogical purposes" (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). While authentic materials may initially seem more challenging than simplified content for textbooks, they have potential to provide compelling, contextualized input (Krashen, 2013). The question then arises of how to carefully select ELF audiovisual content to achieve a balance between being comprehensible and being engaging enough to facilitate acquisition, particularly when introducing students to a wider variety of Englishes.

Therefore, appropriate selection of material is crucial. As Dumitrescu (2000) has outlined, effective selection of authentic listening materials helps to avoid "formulaic language learning" and connects language learning and real-life goals. There are now various guidelines being presented for choosing appropriate content (Wedlock et al., 2023; Mitrulescu et al., 2024) that include student relatability, comprehension, and relating to students' language goals. Students' attitudes to the effectiveness of authentic materials can be both positively and negatively impacted based on interest levels and comprehension levels, and difficulty seems to be a key factor (Hoang, 2022; Kim, 2015). This suggests that comprehensibility and student engagement may be connected and need further investigation.

Another key factor in overall comprehensibility of the content is perceived pronunciation clarity. Derwing & Munro (2015) assert that intelligibility is defined as the degree to which a listener actually understands a speaker's intended message. Jenkins's (2000) Lingua Franca Core identified specific phonological features critical for mutual intelligibility among L2 speakers. Understanding how students perceive pronunciation clarity in ELF videos could aid in more effective content selection, particularly when interactions demonstrate the principles of the Lingua Franca Core.

Given that carefully chosen authentic content, based on the guidelines outlined above, can benefit learners with their real-life linguistic needs and goals, such content should reflect the reality outlined in the introduction: learners are more likely to use English for cross-cultural communication in ELF contexts than with inner-circle speakers. Supporting this view, Taglialatela (2021) argues that, "Tasks should engage learners in authentic ELF use and foster their deeper appreciation of the function of English as an effective means of interaction involving native and L2 speakers". However, there is still a gap between theory and practice (Schildhauer et al., 2020).

Previous studies have shown that students react positively to listening activities representing "diverse lingua-cultural backgrounds", and prompted students to reflect on different varieties of English (Galloway & Rose, 2014). Although there were some downsides, such as some students seemingly comparing varieties on the basis of preference, the study showed that "more focus on ELF interactions" in listening activities would be beneficial. Furthermore, Arias & Rodriguez (2024) found that while students feel that listening to a wide variety of Englishes improves their listening skills, they tend to struggle with varieties that they have little exposure to. This suggests that English teaching should change to provide this exposure in order to facilitate better understanding of a range of Englishes.

Despite a wide variety of resources being available reflecting authentic use of Global Englishes around the world (Galloway and Rose, 2018; Jenkins, 2020; Lindqvist, 2022), there needs to be further exploration of how students respond to such materials in terms of comprehension, perceived pronunciation clarity, and engagement, and whether these factors are related. This study addresses this gap by investigating student responses to carefully selected authentic ELF video content, with the aim of informing evidence-based content selection practices that balance pedagogical effectiveness with learner engagement. When engagement and motivation are higher, and content is relatable, could that feed into students' self-confidence and belief in themselves as English speakers? Bandura (1997) argued that people learn through models of interactions, and their belief about whether they are capable of successfully performing the modelled interaction feeds into motivation and self-efficacy. Students are more likely to believe in themselves when they see peers successfully performing an action.

3. Methodology
In terms of choosing appropriate content for the listening assignments, the criteria were based on a mixture of guidelines outlined in previous research stressing relatability, relevance to student goals, topics that are easy to understand, and a length that does not overload students cognitively (Wedlock et al., 2023; Mitrulescu et al., 2024). With this in mind, videos of around one to four minutes were selected, featuring speakers talking about topics such as learning English, living abroad, and their own varieties of English. The aim of exposing students to interactions featuring L2 speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds satisfies previous research stressing the need for more exposure to World Englishes and authentic ELF interactions (Galloway & Rose, 2014; Taglialatela, 2021; Arias & Rodriguez, 2024). The videos featured seven interactions (interviews) and one monologue, with speakers from mainly Asian (particularly East Asian) backgrounds, but also featuring speakers from Europe and Africa. One speaker who featured more than once was from the USA, but the assignments focused on his interview subjects. Videos satisfying the above criteria were sourced from YouTube, and a full list can be found in the appendix.

3.1 Research approach and design
Eight video listening assignments were administered to two classes of first year Japanese students as homework over the course of eight weeks. The assignments included a mix of top-down and bottom-up activities, as past research proposes that a combination is beneficial for achieving effective comprehension (Utomo et al., 2022). Assignments included, in order, a short summary of the content background, questions on macro-features, identifying discourse related lexical items, and a written self-reflection based on the topic and topic of the conversation in the video.

A Likert scale survey was administered to the students after the completion of these assignments, judging their attitudes and perceptions towards the content. To judge student attitudes towards the listening assignments, attitudes and perceptions have typically been measured using Likert scale questionnaires examining factors such as perceived difficulty, interest, clarity, and effectiveness of materials (Vandergrift et al., 2006; Hoang, 2022). For measuring attitudes toward specific listening materials, researchers have typically developed custom questionnaires incorporating ideas such as comprehensibility ratings, perceived pronunciation clarity, content interest, and relevance to learning goals (Flowerdew & Miller, 1992; Aryadoust & Goh, 2017). This study builds on this previous research, while also incorporating instruments to specifically address ELF contexts.

3.2 Participants and setting
The study was conducted at a private university in Japan. 53 students from two first year English for Communication classes were assigned the homework. Of those students, 49 responded to the survey. This included three overseas students, but the vast majority were Japanese. In this university students are divided into levels for their English classes based on TOEIC scores, and

both classes involved in this research were the highest proficiency levels for their respective majors; Foreign Studies and Engineering.

Data for this study was collected as part of a broader investigation of student reactions to authentic ELF video materials. A previous publication using this dataset examined mixed quantitative results and qualitative themes in students' perceptions of communicative effectiveness through thematic analysis of open-response questions (McTaggart, 2025).

3.3 Instruments
A 6-point Likert scale questionnaire was administered and students were asked to rate their agreement with a number of statements. Considering that research surveys must be clear, understandable and neutral (Bradburn et al., 2024; Krosnick et al., 2010), the assignments and questionnaire were tested in a pilot study featuring 18 students from one class in the same university. When tested for reliability using JASP software for Cronbach's alpha, the reliability scores ranged from 0.860 to 0.981, showing good to excellent internal reliability. However, some of the questions were deemed too leading or unclear by participants, so were refined. The edited questionnaire was then peer checked by an educator and researcher at another Japanese university and updated.

3.4 Data Analysis

For this research topic, four of the questions from the survey were analysed:

- Overall, the content was interesting. (1 = not interesting, 6 = interesting)
- The conversation was easy to understand. (1 = difficult, 6 = easy)
- The speakers' pronunciation was clear. (1 = not clear, 6 = clear)
- I believe I will be able to speak English to the level of the people in the videos one day. (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = agree).

The questions related to overall interest levels, comprehensibility of conversations as a whole (rated video-by-video with results aggregated for analysis), perceived pronunciation clarity (rated video-by-video with results aggregated for analysis), and self-efficacy. All questions were written in English and Japanese (double-checked by a fellow teacher of English from Japan). Questions 2 and 3 measure comprehensibility and perceived pronunciation clarity (RQ1), while Question1 examines interest/engagement (RQ2). Question 4 examines self-efficacy (RQ3). The data underwent a descriptive analysis, a correlation analysis using Spearman's rho, a linear regression analysis, and a reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha. JAMOVI 2.6.44 software was used for all data analysis.

4. Results
As mentioned earlier, the data represents Likert scale survey responses from 49 Japanese university students. All participants completed ratings for overall interest and self-efficacy, while video-by-video ratings (comprehension and pronunciation) were averaged across the eight videos. For the latter, a response option of "did not watch" was added for students to indicate if they had not watched specific videos. This missing data was excluded from calculations.

RQ1: Students' ratings of their comprehension and perceived pronunciation clarity of the speakers in the videos.

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for all four variables. Students' comprehension ratings averaged 3.88 (SD = 1.31) across all eight videos on a 6-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree). This indicates that students found the authentic ELF interactions reasonably comprehensible, with a mean slightly above the scale midpoint of 3.5. Pronunciation clarity ratings showed a similar pattern (M = 3.94, SD = 1.21). This shows that students generally perceived the speakers' pronunciation as somewhat clear. Individual video ratings for comprehension ranged from M = 3.55 (Video 7) to M = 4.18 (Video 1), while pronunciation ratings ranged from M = 3.64 (Video 7) to M = 4.18 (Video 1). This shows that there was a variation across videos, and once again a full list of the videos used can be found in the appendix.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

Variable	*N*	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*	Min	Max
Comprehension (average)	44	3.88	3.69	1.31	1.00	6.00
Pronunciation (average)	44	3.94	4.00	1.21	1.00	6.00

Overall Interest	49	4.12	4.00	1.11	2.00	6.00
Self-Efficacy	49	3.63	4.00	1.07	1.00	5.00

Note. Comprehension and pronunciation were rated on 6-point scales (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree). Interest was rated on a 6-point scale. Self-efficacy was rated on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = agree). N = 44 for comprehension and pronunciation due to listwise deletion of cases with missing video ratings.

RQ2: Possible relationship between students' comprehension levels, pronunciation clarity, and their interest in the content.

Spearman's rho correlations were computed to examine relationships between the study variables (Table 2). Results showed a strong positive correlation between comprehension and pronunciation clarity (ρ = .875, p < .001). This indicates that students who found speakers' pronunciation clear also found the conversations highly comprehensible. Comprehension correlated with interest strongly (ρ = .517, p < .001), whereas pronunciation showed a less strong but reasonable positive correlation with interest (ρ = .428, p = .004).

Table 2
Spearman Correlations Among Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Comprehension	—			
2. Pronunciation	.88***	—		
3. Interest	.52***	.43**	—	
4. Self-Efficacy	.28	.32*	.28	—

*Note. N = 44 for correlations involving comprehension and pronunciation; N = 49 for correlations with interest and self-efficacy only. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.*

A multiple linear regression analysis was also conducted to further explore predictors of interest, with comprehension and pronunciation as predictors (Table 3). The overall model was significant, $F(2, 41)$ = 7.99, p = .001, explaining 28.0% of the variance in interest (R^2 = .280, adjusted R^2 = .245). Comprehension was a significant predictor (β = 0.564, p = .024). However, pronunciation did not significantly contribute to the model when controlling for comprehension (β = -0.166, p = .528). This suggests that pronunciation clarity's influence on overall comprehensibility is its most significant contribution to interest

Table 3

Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Interest from Comprehension and Pronunciation

	B	SE	95% CI		β	t	p
			LL	UL			
Constant	2.69	0.49	1.71	3.67	—	5.56	<.001
Comprehension	0.56	0.24	0.08	1.05	.69	2.35	.024
Pronunciation	-0.17	0.26	-0.69	0.36	-.19	-0.64	.528

Note. N = 44. R^2 = .28, Adjusted R^2 = .25, $F(2, 41)$ = 7.99, p = .001. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

Internal consistency reliability for the multi-item scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Both the comprehension scale (α = .971) and pronunciation scale (α = .966) demonstrated excellent reliability. This shows that students' judgment was consistent across all eight videos.

5. Conclusion

This study examined Japanese university students' reactions to authentic audiovisual ELF content in terms of comprehensibility, pronunciation clarity, and interest. It also attempted to gauge those three dimensions' possible relationship to self-efficacy. Students generally found the listening content easy to understand, with mean scores from the Likert scale data for comprehensibility and perceived pronunciation clarity at (3.88/6) and (3.94/6) respectively. This supports previous research suggesting that students have positive reactions to content from diverse linguistic backgrounds, and do not need to rely on Inner-Circle norms for learning English (Galloway & Rose, 2014) implying that educators should not shy away from using authentic ELF content due to worries about comprehension.

However, the data did reveal that some videos were rated lower than others, especially video 7 which was focused solely on Singaporean English. Given that the study was conducted in a Japanese context, this would support the view that students need to be exposed to a wider variety of Englishes (Arias & Rodriguez, 2024). Also, there were relatively high SD values (1.21-1.31) showing individual variation in reactions, which is another variable that could be explored. Going forward, educators should think about how to scaffold more challenging content, or content that is not as familiar to students' experiences.

The data revealed a very strong relationship between comprehension and pronunciation clarity (ρ = .88, p < .001). This shows that students perceived the two as closely linked. However, pronunciation showed only a moderate correlation with interest (ρ = .43, p = .004), and when controlled for comprehension in regression analysis (B = -0.17, p = .528) did not significantly predict interest. This pattern suggests that pronunciation clarity influences interest indirectly, by enabling comprehension, rather than as an independent factor. Therefore, pronunciation does matter, but mainly because it makes content understandable. If authentic materials can be sourced that are comprehensible, this would feed into student motivation, not only supporting Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985), but also supporting later findings that input from various varieties of English can be intelligible, comprehensible, and ultimately interesting for students (Krashen, 2013; Jenkins, 2000; Seidlhofer, 2011). Further research should focus more on the sourcing of such materials, and how to structure lessons around them to maximize the input, as well as to conduct discussion and self-reflective activities.

Despite these strong links, it was harder to prove a relationship between the three previously mentioned measurements and self-efficacy. Notably, self-efficacy was measured on a 5-point scale compared to the 6-point scales for other variables, and showed only a weak correlation with pronunciation clarity (ρ = .32, p = .034) as well as not reaching significance with comprehension (ρ = .28, p = .067) and interest (ρ = .28, p = .053). Although the videos show successful interactions, students may not feel that they could produce such language themselves due to their longer-term perceptions of themselves and experience learning English. However, a longer-term course built around such materials should be explored, featuring warm-ups, output activities and self-reflection activities, and this more holistic approach could show stronger outcomes in terms of self-efficacy. As Bandura (1997) argues, people learn from observing others in social interactions (models), and self-efficacy is related to whether or not people believe they will be able to execute the models. So, when learners see speakers as similar to themselves, such as in ELF interactions talking about topics relatable to students, it is worth exploring how this could enhance their self-belief and confidence.

5.1 Limitations
The research was conducted in one Japanese university, and was therefore context specific. The sample size was relatively small (44-49), and was focused on higher proficiency learners. The research survey also focused on self-reporting rather than outcomes. Also, there was no control group comparing reactions to more traditional, Inner-Cricle focused classroom content. Further research could make use of a broader range of students and contexts, as well as introducing a control group.

5.2 Discussion
This study aimed to bring a number of concepts together. Firstly, rather than focusing on Inner Circle varieties of English for listening content in the classroom, listening content featuring ELF interactions and speakers from multiple linguistic backgrounds should be explored. Secondly, in order to align with students' language learning goals and in order to be relatable, authentic materials featuring interactions that students would realistically be involved in should be sourced. The results showed that educators need not shy away from this kind of content as it can be comprehensible. Comprehensibility then does feed into interest, which can be a source of motivation for students. However, it is harder to prove a link to self-efficacy, probably as there are a lot of variables involved. Future research could make use of qualitative data such as interviews to explore this in depth, and ask students how viewing successful ELF interactions makes them feel about themselves as English speakers. Another consideration is that as the content for this research was sourced from YouTube, future research could also explore the impact of this on the speakers' pronunciation. Do the speakers not only adjust their speech due to the interactions being primarily ELF context (Jenkins, 2009), but also for the perceived intelligibility of the video's viewers? Despite the strong links shown in this research supporting the use of authentic listening content featuring speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds for English learning, there are a number of directions in which future research could go.

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Appendix
Video Assignment List

All videos were clipped, using only segments and not the whole video.
SEO = Speaker of English

Week 1: Ahiyatokyo (Russian SEO) featuring Takashii from Japan (Japanese SEO) – Interview TAKASHii from Japan! How did you learn English? Why did you start making YouTube videos? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-vDHJZzW7A&t=10s
Week 2: Ruri Ohama (Turkish SEO) – How I Learned a Language by Myself without Studying It
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7YX7PAdo4B0
Week 3: Jin's Street Interview (Various SEO) – Things You Shouldn't Do in Korea
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gkwwHlhJ0_c
Week 4: Asian Boss (Indian SEO) – Do Indians Know How Their English Accent Sounds?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJgoTcyrFZ4
Week 5: Max D. Capo (Japanese SEO) – How Japan's Gen Z is Changing Japan and Why You Should Go to the Countryside
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8M57uJbVZo
Week 6: Takashii from Japan (Japanese SEO and German SEO) – What's it like being Half Japanese Raised outside Japan?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v0dosbVFZSs&t=6s
Week 7: Asian Boss (Singaporean SEO) – Do Singaporeans Know How Their English Sounds?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8M57uJbVZo
Week 8: Max D. Capo (Japanese SEO) – Being a "Foreigner" English Girl Born in Japan
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9AwPUy7a_8