



## Korean Adult English Learners' Perceptions of the Common Grammatical Features of English as a Lingua Franca

**Injae Lim**

*Konkuk University*

**Jongbai Hwang**

*Konkuk University*

The present study examines Korean adult English learners' perceptions about English as a lingua franca (ELF) and the common grammatical features of ELF. 276 university students participated in this study through an online survey portal. The survey consists of two parts: part one asks participants' attitudes and perceptions about ELF statements, and part two is an acceptability judgement task for common grammatical features of ELF. Overall, the participants showed moderately positive attitude toward most ELF statements despite they manifested stronger preference for native speaker-oriented English learning on a few aspects. The results from the acceptability judgement task for 19 grammatical items consistently remained between neutral and slightly positive ranges. These results indicate that the participants already possess the concept of ELF, at least beyond a non-negative stance, and admit the features of ELF as acceptable forms of English for global communication. Participants' major, study abroad experiences, and experiences of communicating with foreign people did not cause consistent and significant difference in their attitude toward ELF, nor in their acceptability judgements. For timely and effective incorporation of ELF into English classrooms in Korea, further research need to be conducted with various learner groups regarding the perception about ELF, the development of teaching activities and materials, and the empirical data from on-site applications.

**Keywords:** English as a lingua franca, World Englishes, common grammatical features of ELF, Korean adult learners of English

### Introduction

In the field of English language teaching (ELT) in Korea, it has been assumed for a long time that English is owned by native speakers of English and that the utmost goal of ELT is to help learners acquire native-like proficiency. In reality, however, approximately only one fourth of English users worldwide are native speakers of English (Crystal, 2003). Most learners of English in non-English-speaking countries use the language for communication with speakers of other languages as well as with native speakers of English. English has gained the status as a lingua franca for those who do not share their first languages. The precise definition of English as a lingua franca (ELF) is given by Firth (1996):

A lingua franca is a 'contact language' between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication. (p. 240)

The recent wide spread of the concept of ELF has prompted a change in the field of English education, too. Many users of English as well as researchers admit that English is a communication tool for people from all around the world and that English is also owned by non-native speakers of English. Native-like proficiency is not any more their ultimate goal of English language learning; they believe their English would be acceptable as long as it is comprehensible and intelligible to their interlocutors. As such, in ELF interaction among non-native speakers (or sometimes even with native speakers) the use of terms such as ‘standard English’ or ‘native-like’ is not appropriate. As Seidlhofer (2005) argues, “in terms of numbers of speakers and domains of use, an insistence on standard English as the only option for all purpose ... is difficult to justify” (p. 159, cited in Jenkins, 2014).

During the past two decades, a good deal of studies on ELF have been carried out at different linguistic levels, including phonology (Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2005; Jenkins, 2000), pragmatics (House, 1999; Meierkrd, 1996), and lexicogrammar (Seidlhofer, 2004). Among these previous studies, Seidlhofer (2004) tried to lay out the common lexical and grammatical features of ELF, which are used “systematically and frequently, but differently from native speaker use and without causing communication problems, by expert speakers of English from a wide range of L1s” (cited in Jenkins, 2006, p. 169). With the VOICE (Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English) corpus as a criterion, which has been constructed to contain private and public dialogues, discussion, conversations, interviews, and so on among fairly fluent adult speakers with a wide variety of native languages, some ELT features were regarded as being erroneous. Yet, according to Seidlhofer (2004), the lexical and grammatical features of ELF (e.g., the use of the third person singular present tense without ‘-s’ marking in the verbs) rarely leads to any misunderstandings or communication breakdowns among non-native speakers of English.

... In particular, typical “errors” that most English teachers would consider in urgent need of correction and remediation, and that consequently often get allotted a great deal of time and effort in English lessons, appear to be generally unproblematic and no obstacles to communicative success. (p. 220)

Recently in Korea, there has been an increasing number of research on ELF as well. Most of the studies examined English teachers’ perceptions of or attitudes toward ELF, EIL, or World Englishes (Ahn, 2014; Byun, 2016; Kim, 2007; Lee et al., 2013; Shim, 2015; Sung, 2019; Yoon, 2007; etc.). For example, Ahn (2014) revealed high school teachers’ concern about the use of World Englishes or Korean English, and Shim (2015) reports young secondary English teachers’ high level preference toward native speakers of English. Lee (2010) also showed that elementary English teachers in Korea view American English as a standard English, supporting No (2005) which suggests that American English should be the target form for beginning or young learners in Korea.

Some other studies carried out in Korea have focused on linguistic features of ELF at different levels (e.g., Kang & Ahn (2013) and Chung (2010) on phonology; Kang & Lee (2012) and Hwang & Lee (2015) on lexico-grammar). Especially, both Kang and Lee (2012) and Hwang and Lee (2015) investigated Korean English teachers’ attitude toward and perceptions of common lexical and grammatical features of ELF identified by Seidlhofer (2004, 2007), rendering slightly different results. Although both commonly reported that the Korean English teachers’ attitude toward the ELF-specific features changed in a positive direction, the extent of acceptance level differed. The participants in Hwang et al. (2015) showed positive acceptance of the common features of ELF while those in Kang et al. (2012) were not as positive as the former.

The present study attempts to investigate Korean adult EFL learners’ perceptions and attitudes about ELF in the Korean English learning context, specifically about the common grammatical features of ELF. The previous studies, such as Kang et al. (2012) and Hwang et al. (2015), mostly focused on the Korean EFL teachers, but little is known about Korean EFL learners’ perceptions and attitudes of ELF. The present study targets adult Korean learners of English, who are university students having learned English only in an EFL context of Korea. It also investigates an expanded list of grammatical structures: in

addition to the 9 features from Seidlhofer (2007), 10 other grammatical structures that are known to cause learning problems for Korean learners of English were included for the total of 19 items. The study raises the following research questions:

1. How do Korean adult EFL learners perceive ELF?
2. What is Korean adult EFL learners' acceptability of the common grammatical features of ELF?

## Literature Review

### Linguistic Descriptions of ELF on Various Levels

For a better understanding of the nature of ELF, reliable descriptions of salient features of ELF are essential; without which the complete conceptualization of ELF would be impossible. Although there will be multiple aspects to be considered for an eventual codification of ELF, several empirical studies recently made attempts to describe some features of ELF on various linguistic levels. The early attempts focused mostly on two levels: phonology and pragmatics. As for the domain of phonology, Jenkins (2000, 2002) examined the data collected from interactions between advanced non-native users of English and proposed Lingua Franca Core (LFC), a list of core features of ELF pronunciation. These features were presumably the minimum requirement for non-native speakers of English to produce intelligible English to others. She also presented seven non-core features (e.g., the consonant sounds /ə/, /ð/, and the dark [ɪ]; weak forms, that is the use of schwa instead of the full vowel sound in words such as 'to', 'from', 'of'; stress-timed rhythm) which had traditionally been considered as phonological or phonetic error. Yet, those were not included in the LFC because they did not deter mutual intelligibility among speakers with different L1 backgrounds.

There have been several studies on the level of pragmatics (Firth, 1996; Meierkord, 1996, 2002; House, 2002; Lesznych, 2002, 2003, 2004; Wagner & Firth, 1997). However, as Seidlhofer (2004) pointed out, it is not easy to find out generalizable findings about the pragmatic features of ELF because of the less constrainedness and the less manageability of pragmatics. Seidlhofer (2004), nevertheless, presented some pragmatic features of ELF as follows (p. 218):

- Misunderstandings are not frequent in ELF interactions; when they do occur, they tend to be resolved either by topic change or, less often, by overt negotiation using communication strategies such as rephrasing and repetition.
- Interference from L1 interactional norms is very rare—a kind of suspension of expectations regarding norms seems to be in operation.
- As long as a certain threshold of understanding is obtained, interlocutors seem to adopt what Firth (1996) has termed the “let-it-pass principle,” which gives the impression of ELF talk being overtly consensus-oriented, cooperative and mutually supportive, and thus fairly robust.

In the meantime, Seidlhofer (2004) highlighted some features of ELF grammar and vocabulary which are “regarded as particularly central to language pedagogy” (p. 219). She tried to find out some lexicogrammatical items which are used systematically and frequently without causing communication problems between non-native speakers with a wide range of native language backgrounds. The attempt was based on Seidlhofer's (2002) corpus, VOICE, which is “a structured collection of language data ...” comprising “1 million words of transcribed spoken ELF from professional, educational and leisure domains” (from <http://www.univie.ac.at/voice>). Seidlhofer (2004) presented some typical “errors” found in non-native speakers' English. The following are such “errors”, or some of the potential salient features of ELF lexicogrammar identified in VOICE (p. 220):

- Dropping the third person present tense *-s* (e.g., “She look very sad”)
- Confusing the relative pronouns *who* and *which* (e.g., “a book who,” “a person which”)
- Omitting definite and indefinite articles where they are obligatory in ENL, and inserting them where *the* do not occur in ENL
- Failing to use correct forms in tag questions (e.g., “isn’t it?” or “no?” instead of “shouldn’t they?”)
- Inserting redundant prepositions (e.g., “We have to study about...”)
- Overusing certain verbs of high semantic generality, such as *do*, *have*, *make*, *put*, *take*
- Replacing infinitive-constructions with *that*-clauses (e.g., “I want that ...”)
- Overdoing explicitness (e.g., “black color” rather than just “black”)

More recently, Kirkpatrick (2008, 2010, 2011, 2012) has attempted to construct the Asian Corpus of English (ACE) which can be comparable with the VOICE, the European corpus of ELF. Kirkpatrick (2011), pointing out that there has been little research on ELF in Asia, proposed a project to compile a million-word corpus of naturally occurring spoken English as a lingua franca in Asia with the aim of enabling researchers to compare the features of Asian ELF with those of European ELF suggested by Seidlhofer (2004). Kirkpatrick (2011) introduced some examples of non-standard grammatical forms which are believed not to deter communication between non-native speakers in the Asian context. The examples include the following:

- the flexible use of definite and indefinite articles, e.g. *I know when we touch money issue it can be very controversial*
- absence of plural marking on nouns of measurement, e.g. *One three time or four time a years* (and note the use of the non-standard *-s* on *years*)
- morpheme-final consonant cluster deletion, e.g. *I check’ the placard*
- non-marking of past tense forms, e.g. *I couldn’t see, that’s why I just sit and take a rest*
- use of prepositions in different contexts, e.g. *and the second purpose is to seek for a discussion*
- copula absence or deletion, e.g. *once this blueprint adopted*

### Previous Studies on ELF in the Korean Context

As mentioned earlier, two previous studies investigated Korean English teachers’ perceptions of common lexical and grammatical features of ELF in the Korean English learning and teaching context (Hwang & Lee, 2015; Kang & Lee, 2012). Kang and Lee’s (2012) study was the first attempt in Korea to explore the attitudes Korean English teachers have about the common lexical-grammatical features of ELF. 112 Korean English teachers participated in a survey in which they were asked to judge acceptability of 18 two-turn dialogues, each of which including one of the nine lexico-grammatical items of ELF suggested by Seidlhofer (2007). The results of the acceptability judgment revealed somewhat negative attitudes of the English teacher participants to all of the nine lexical and grammatical items regardless that the given dialogues were successful in communication. In other words, English teachers in Korea seemed to be reluctant to acknowledge the legitimacy of the common lexical and grammatical features of ELF. The participants’ acceptability, on the other hand, varied depending on the lexical or grammatical items as well as their age, working environment, and teaching career. The high acceptability was observed in their judgment about ‘omission of articles’ and ‘overuse of the plural marker *-s*’; the participants’ acceptability was low with ‘confusing use of relative pronouns’, ‘overuse of general verbs’, and ‘incorrect form of tag questions’. Despite the negative attitudes and perceptions the Korean English teachers showed, the researchers argued that the common features of ELF, whether lexical or grammatical, should be considered in classrooms, textbooks, and testing materials for English language teaching in Korea.

Hwang and Lee (2015) also investigated Korean pre- and in-service English teachers’ awareness and response to some common lexical and grammatical features of ELF. 109 participants, who had had 1 to 5

years of English teaching experience, were given a questionnaire about their attitudes toward the concept and use of ELF as well as their responses to 27 ungrammatical sentences including the 9 common lexical and grammatical features of ELF suggested by Seidlhofer (2007). The results showed that both Korean pre- and in-service English teachers were very positive about the use of English as a lingua franca. For example, more than 88% of the participants agreed that English belongs to everyone, not only to native speakers of English, and more than 70% were against the claim that we learn English to communicate only with native speakers of English. However, even if the participants were very receptive to the concept and use of ELF, most of them had preference for the Standard English spoken by native speakers from English speaking countries such as the US and UK. On the other hand, the results of the participants' responses to the common features of ELF are very similar to those of Kang and Lee (2012). Among the nine lexical and grammatical features, the acceptability of 'omission of articles' was the highest, and acceptability of 'incorrect use of relative pronouns' and 'replacing *to*-infinitives with *that*-clauses' were very low. The researchers of the study finally argued that Korean English teachers' attitudes and perceptions about the common features of ELF are changing positively and, accordingly, English language teaching in Korea should be reoriented to be more responsive to regional varieties of English around the world.

## Methods

### Participants

A total of 276 university students participated in this study. Among them were 42 freshmen (15.2%), 88 sophomores (31.9%), 89 juniors (32.2%), and 57 seniors (20.7%). The participants were recruited from more than 10 universities all around Korea. The majors of the participants varied, including English education, primary education, engineering, sociology, education, etc. About 50 percent of the participants (50.4%) majored in English education or English language and literature. Three fourths of the participants (75.4%) had never studied abroad; among those with study abroad experience, 36.8% stayed less than 6 months, 25% six to twelve months, and 23.5% more than two years. The foreign countries where the most students (48.5%) learned English were the USA and Canada (i.e., North America), and the other countries include South East Asian countries (16.2%), Australia and New Zealand (14.7%), European countries (14.7%), etc. 235 students (85.1%) had experiences in communicating with foreigners, and 74 percent of them had talked with native speakers of English from the USA or Canada (i.e., North America).

### Survey

The survey of the study was developed based on previous studies regarding the attitudes and perceptions about ELF and the core grammatical features of ELF (Byun, 2016; Kang & Lee, 2012; Kim, 2007; Hwang & Lee, 2015; No, 2006; Shim, 2015; Sung, 2019). The survey consisted of two parts. Part I included eight questions inquiring the participants' prior experience in learning English, and ten statements to draw their views on ELF or the use of diverse English by 5-point Likert scale. Table 1 shows examples of the statements in the survey:

Part II of the survey was an acceptability task, in which the participants were asked to judge the acceptability of 19 two-turn dialogues. Each dialogue included one target grammatical item, so 19 target grammatical items were included in the acceptability task. 9 items were from the common grammatical features of ELF suggested by Seidlhofer (2007), and the rest 10 items, which are believed to cause difficulty to Korean learners of English, were selected from a grammar textbook for English teachers<sup>1</sup>. Table 2 is the list of target grammar features and sample sentences.

<sup>1</sup> Cowan, R. (2008). *The teacher's grammar of English*. Cambridge.

TABLE 1  
Examples of the Statements Included in Part I of the Survey

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I'd like to acquire native speaker-like pronunciation and grammatical ability.					
2. Being fluent in English means talking like native speakers of English.					
3. I'd like to acquire American or British culture through learning English.					
4. I'm learning English to communicate with native speakers of English, not with non-native speakers.					

TABLE 2  
Target Grammar Items Used in Part II of the Survey

Grammar item	Sample sentence
Dropping the third person present tense -s	My brother get up late in the morning.
Confusing the relative pronouns	I like his shirts who are red.
Omission of articles	My brother is kind boy.
Incorrect use of tag questions	You're leaving soon, isn't it?
Redundant use of prepositions	I don't want to go to there.
Incorrect use of plural forms	I don't like the furnitures.
Incorrect use of demonstrative adjectives	Have you been to that countries?
Incorrect use of <i>that</i> -clauses instead of <i>to</i> -infinitives	Do you want that you eat pizza?
Overuse of general verbs like <i>do, make, get, etc.</i>	Will you please do a reservation for me?
Double negatives	You've never seen nothing like it.
Incorrect Dative-movement	He gave a hint the readers.
Lack of backshifting in complements	He knew that John has been working since five o'clock.
<i>Wh</i> -questions with no auxiliaries	What Nicole Kidman said?
Non-referential <i>there</i> with no relative pronoun	There are many people live across the river.
Ungrammatical passives with ergatives	The accident was occurred late last night.
Wrong reflexivization	Mary thinks that Tom likes herself.
Incorrect pseudo-tough movement	He is very difficult to learn English.
Wrong forms of adverbial relative clauses	This is the house which Shakespeare was born.
Embedded <i>wh</i> -questions with no inversion	Do you know how much is it?

The participants were instructed to read the dialogues and choose the naturalness of each dialogue from 1 (very unnatural) to 5 (very natural). Figure 1 shows an example of the acceptability task in the survey:

**Assume that you're Speaker A. Read the dialogue and check how natural the dialogue is.**

A: Juan, what happened to your coffee machine?  
 B: It is broken again but I need one by tomorrow morning.  
 A: Why do you need one so fast?  
 B: I want to serve hot coffee for my guests which are very important.

Very unnatural                  Unnatural                  Neutral                  Natural                  Very natural

Figure 1. An example of the acceptability task in Part II.

The survey was developed and administered using an online survey portal. The URL of the survey site was sent to the participants, and after they completed the survey, a mobile gifticon was sent to each participant.

## Analysis

Data collected through the survey were analyzed by statistical analyses of frequency analyses and independent samples t-tests by variables of the participants. The participants' responses to Part I of the survey were analyzed by comparing means for each statement, and the results were further analyzed using independent samples t-test by the participants' variables related to their prior experiences of learning English: major (English vs. non-English), study abroad experiences (Yes vs. No), and experiences of communicating with foreign people (Yes vs. No). The participants' judgment of acceptability in Part II was also analyzed by mean scores for each dialogue (i.e., each target grammatical feature), and then was further analyzed using independent samples t-test by the same variables related to the participants' prior English learning experiences.

## Results

### Korean EFL Learners' Attitudes to ELF

Figure 2 shows the means of the participants' attitude responses for the 10 statements regarding the use of ELF. Higher mean scores indicate that the participants had more positive attitudes or perceptions about the statement. The results displayed in Figure 2 indicates that the participants of the study were the most positive about the ELF statement saying that it is important to try to deliver meaning with confidence even though there are some grammatical errors ( $M = 4.34$ ). The next highest mean score ( $M = 4.17$ ) was found for the statement saying "I'd like to acquire native speaker-like pronunciation and grammatical ability." The third highest mean score ( $M = 4.02$ ) was for the statement saying "I'd like to acquire American or British culture while learning English." The participants' least positive or the most negative ( $M = 2.63$ ) attitudes were found for the statement that grammatical ability rather than correct pronunciation is required for speaking English fluently. The second lowest mean score ( $M = 3.07$ ) was about "Native speaker-like pronunciation is more important than grammatical accuracy for fluent English." The overall responses of the participants indicate that Korean college-level learners of English strongly acknowledge the importance of meaning in using ELF but at the same time, they also have very positive attitude toward the native speakerism or the World Standard English.

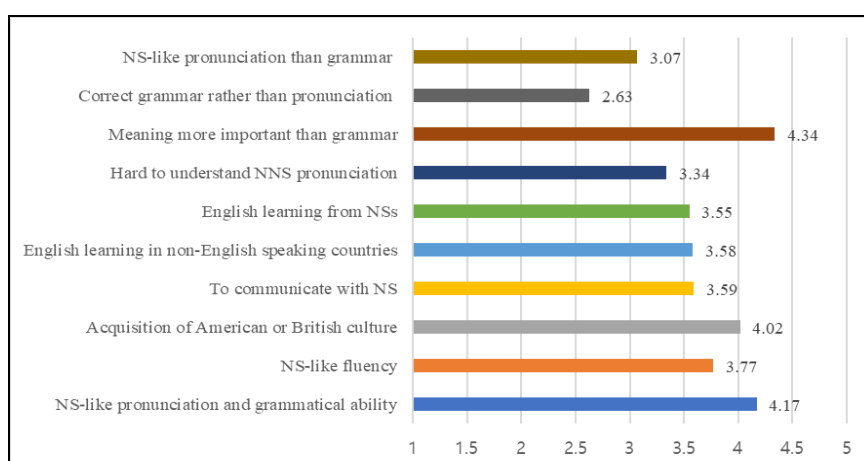


Figure 2. Comparison of the participants' attitude responses for each statement of ELF.

The participants' attitude results were further analyzed by their three personal variables: major, study abroad experiences, and experiences of communicating with foreign people. First, comparison results of the participants' responses for each statement between English majors and non-English majors is

represented in Table 3. Table 3 also includes the results of statistical analyses of independent samples t-test, of which the significance is displayed by the asterisk (\*) on the mean difference. Significant differences were found between English-major participants and non-English-major participants in their responses to only two statements: (1) “I’d like to acquire native speaker-like pronunciation and grammatical ability” ( $t(274) = 3.157, p = .002$ ), and (9) “Grammatical ability is more important than correct pronunciation for fluent English” ( $t(274) = 2.454, p = .015$ ). For both statements, the mean scores of the participants majoring in English were significantly higher than those who do not belong to English-related departments. The results indicate, first of all, that native speaker-like pronunciation and grammatical ability are preferred by English major students ( $M = 4.37$ ) more than non-English major students ( $M = 3.97$ ). The results also showed that, even though both English major and non-English major participants were negative to the idea that grammar is more important than pronunciation for fluent English, non-English major participants were significantly more negative ( $M = 2.49$ ) than English major participants ( $M = 2.78$ ). The two groups of participants showed no significant difference in all other statements regarding the use of ELF or English diversification.

TABLE 3

*Comparison of the Participants’ Attitude toward ELF Statement by Major*

ELF statement	Major	N	Mean	Mean diff.
1. I’d like to acquire native speaker-like pronunciation and grammatical ability.	English	139	4.37	.403*
	Non-English	137	3.97	
2. Being fluent in English means talking like native speakers of English.	English	139	3.77	.004
	Non-English	137	3.77	
3. I’d like to acquire American or British culture while learning English.	English	139	4.09	.145
	Non-English	137	3.95	
4. I’m learning English to communicate with native speakers of English, not with non-native speakers.	English	139	3.55	.074
	Non-English	137	3.63	
5. English can be learned even in non-English speaking countries.	English	139	3.55	.066
	Non-English	137	3.61	
6. I’d like to learn English from non-native speakers of English rather than native speakers.	English	139	3.59	.079
	Non-English	137	3.51	
7. It is hard to understand pronunciation of non-native speakers who are not from the US or the UK (e.g., the Philippines, India, etc.)	English	139	3.37	.060
	Non-English	137	3.31	
8. It is important to try to deliver meaning with confidence even though there are some grammatical errors.	English	139	4.38	.075
	Non-English	137	4.31	
9. Grammatical ability is more important than correct pronunciation for fluent English.	English	139	2.78	.288*
	Non-English	137	2.49	
10. Native speaker-like pronunciation is more important than grammatical accuracy for fluent English	English	139	2.99	.160
	Non-English	137	3.15	

Note. \* < .05

The participants’ responses were also analyzed comparing between the participants who had studied abroad and those who had not. The comparison results are given in Table 4, which also includes the results of statistical analyses of independent samples t-test in the same way as in Table 3. Significant differences were found for three statements: (3) “I’d like to acquire American or British culture while learning English” ( $t(274) = 2.661, p = .008$ ), (6) “I’d like to learn English from non-native speakers of English rather than native speakers” ( $t(274) = 2.669, p = .008$ ), and (7) “It is hard to understand pronunciation of non-native speakers who are not from the US or the UK (e.g., the Philippines, India, etc.)” ( $t(274) = -2.524, p = .012$ ). The results indicate that Korean learners of English who have studied abroad are significantly more receptive to learning of American or British culture through learning English ( $M = 4.28$ ) than those who have no experience of studying abroad ( $M = 3.94$ ). Also, it seems that the learners with study abroad experience are more open to non-native speakers of English as their English teacher ( $M = 3.84$ ) compared to those who had no experiences ( $M = 3.46$ ). Likewise, the study abroad group were more receptive to the pronunciation of non-native speakers from the Philippines or India ( $M = 3.09$ ), whereas those with no study abroad experiences would feel significantly more difficulty



in understanding Filipinos and Indians speaking English ( $M = 3.42$ ).

TABLE 4

*Comparison of the Participants' Attitude toward ELF Statement by Study Abroad Experiences*

ELF statement	Study abroad	N	Mean	Mean diff.
1. I'd like to acquire native speaker-like pronunciation and grammatical ability.	Yes	68	4.35	.238
	No	208	4.12	
2. Being fluent in English means talking like native speakers of English.	Yes	68	3.91	.186
	No	208	3.73	
3. I'd like to acquire American or British culture while learning English.	Yes	68	4.28	.342*
	No	208	3.94	
4. I'm learning English to communicate with native speakers of English, not with non-native speakers.	Yes	68	3.68	.114
	No	208	3.56	
5. English can be learned even in non-English speaking countries.	Yes	68	3.62	.050
	No	208	3.57	
6. I'd like to learn English from non-native speakers of English rather than native speakers.	Yes	68	3.84	.382*
	No	208	3.46	
7. It is hard to understand pronunciation of non-native speakers who are not from the US or the UK (e.g., the Philippines, India, etc.)	Yes	68	3.09	.330*
	No	208	3.42	
8. It is important to try to deliver meaning with confidence even though there are some grammatical errors.	Yes	68	4.37	.031
	No	208	4.34	
9. Grammatical ability rather than correct pronunciation is required for speak English fluently.	Yes	68	2.72	.115
	No	208	2.61	
10. Native speaker-like pronunciation is more important than grammatical accuracy for fluent English	Yes	68	3.10	.040
	No	208	3.06	

Note. \* < .05

Another analysis of the participants' responses to the ELF statements was comparing the results between the participants who had experienced communicating with foreigners and those who had not. The comparison results are given in Table 5, which also includes the results of statistical analyses of independent samples t-test in the same way as in Table 3. Significant differences were found between those who had experiences of communicating with foreigners and those who did not in their responses to four statements: (1) "I'd like to acquire native speaker-like pronunciation and grammatical ability" ( $t(274) = 2.884, p = .004$ ), (3) "I'd like to acquire American or British culture while learning English" ( $t(274) = 3.314, p = .001$ ), (4) "I'm learning English to communicate with native speakers of English, not with non-native speakers" ( $t(274) = 1.985, p = .048$ ), and (6) "I'd like to learn English from non-native speakers of English rather than native speakers" ( $t(274) = 2.745, p = .006$ ). For all the four statements, the participants with the experiences of communicating with foreign people showed significantly higher scores than those who did not. Especially, the participants who had experienced communicating with foreigners showed much more positive attitudes than those who did not toward the statements regarding native speaker-like pronunciation or grammatical ability ( $M = 4.25$  vs.  $M = 3.73$ ) and the acquisition of American or British culture ( $M = 4.10$  vs.  $M = 3.59$ ). Although not as positive as shown in two statements above, the participants who had experienced communicating with foreigners exhibited more positive attitudes again toward the idea of learning English from non-native speakers, not from native speakers of English ( $M = 3.62$  vs.  $M = 3.15$ ). Regarding the goal of learning English to communicate with native speakers, the participants who had communicated with foreigners ( $M = 3.65$ ) showed marginally higher mean score than those who did not ( $M = 3.27$ ).

### Acceptability Judgment about Common Grammatical Features of ELF

The second part of the survey was designed to explore the participants' acceptability for some grammatical features which are regarded as being erroneous but not deterring successful communication between non-native speakers of English. As mentioned earlier, 9 out of 19 grammatical items are

borrowed from Seidlhofer (2004, 2007), and the rests were selected from a coursebook for teaching English grammar written for English teachers. Figure 3 shows the mean scores of the participants' judgments of naturalness for the 19 grammatical features of ELF. Higher mean scores indicate that the participants thought the dialogues sounded natural in spite of a grammatical error in one of the utterances of the dialogue.

TABLE 5

*Comparison of the Participants' Attitude toward ELF Statement by Foreign Communication Experience*

ELF statement	Comm with foreigners	N	Mean	Mean diff.
1. I'd like to acquire native speaker-like pronunciation and grammatical ability.	Yes	235	4.25	.519*
	No	41	3.73	
2. Being fluent in English means talking like native speakers of English.	Yes	235	3.77	.010
	No	41	3.78	
3. I'd like to acquire American or British culture while learning English.	Yes	235	4.10	.513*
	No	41	3.59	
4. I'm learning English to communicate with native speakers of English, not with non-native speakers.	Yes	235	3.65	.379*
	No	41	3.27	
5. English can be learned even in non-English speaking countries.	Yes	235	3.62	.251
	No	41	3.37	
6. I'd like to learn English from non-native speakers of English rather than native speakers.	Yes	235	3.62	.475*
	No	41	3.15	
7. It is hard to understand pronunciation of non-native speakers who are not from the US or the UK (e.g., the Philippines, India, etc.)	Yes	235	3.31	.149
	No	41	3.46	
8. It is important to try to deliver meaning with confidence even though there are some grammatical errors.	Yes	235	4.37	.204
	No	41	4.17	
9. Grammatical ability rather than correct pronunciation is required for speak English fluently.	Yes	235	2.66	.200
	No	41	2.46	
10. Native speaker-like pronunciation is more important than grammatical accuracy for fluent English	Yes	235	3.07	.029
	No	41	3.10	

Note. \* < .05

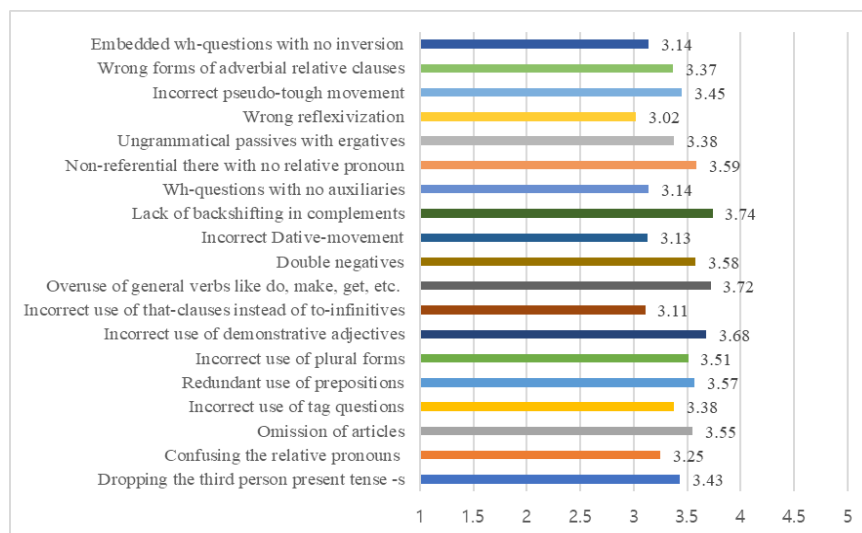


Figure 3. Comparison of the participants' acceptability for common grammatical features of ELF.

The results displayed in Figure 3 report that the participants' judgment were fairly neutral, with the means ranging from 3.02 (the lowest) to 3.74 (the highest). High acceptability scores were found in the dialogues with the lack of backshifting in a complement clause ( $M = 3.74$ ) (e.g., He knew that John *has been* working since five o'clock) as well as in the dialogues including an overuse of general verbs like *do*, *make*, *get*, etc. ( $M = 3.72$ ) (e.g., Will you please *do* a reservation for me?). On the other hand, the

dialogues with wrong reflexivization ( $M = 3.02$ ) (e.g., Mary thinks that Tom likes *herself*) and the ones with an incorrect use of that-clause instead of to-infinitive ( $M = 3.11$ ) (e.g., Do you want *that* you eat pizza?) marked the lowest acceptability (i.e., sounded the least natural among 19 dialogues).

The participants' acceptability judgments for each grammatical item were also analyzed by their three personal variables: major, study abroad experiences, and experiences of communicating with foreign people. As was shown in Table 6, the mean scores of the English major participants are higher in almost all of the grammatical features, but the differences are very small except the incorrect drop of the third person present tense marker *-s*. The statistical analyses of independent samples t-test revealed that the difference between the English majors and the non-English majors in the acceptability judgment on the non-use of the third person present tense marker *-s* was significant ( $t(24) = 2.548, p = .011$ ). The results indicate that Korean learners of English who major in English or English-related disciplines may be more tolerant of the apparent error of dropping the third person present tense marker. In the acceptability judgments for the other 18 grammatical features, no statistically significant difference was found.

TABLE 6

*Comparison of the Participants' Acceptability of the Grammatical Features by Major*

Grammar items included in the dialogue	Major	N	Mean	Mean diff.
Dropping the third person present tense <i>-s</i>	English	139	3.61	.356*
	Non-English	137	3.26	
Confusing the relative pronouns	English	139	3.29	.083
	Non-English	137	3.21	
Omission of articles	English	139	3.66	.217
	Non-English	137	3.45	
Incorrect use of tag questions	English	139	3.46	.154
	Non-English	137	3.31	
Redundant use of prepositions	English	139	3.68	.209
	Non-English	137	3.47	
Incorrect use of demonstrative adjectives	English	139	3.73	.113
	Non-English	137	3.62	
Incorrect use of plural forms	English	139	3.62	.210
	Non-English	137	3.41	
Overuse of general verbs like <i>do, make, get</i> , etc.	English	139	3.83	.207
	Non-English	137	3.62	
Incorrect use of <i>that</i> -clauses instead of <i>to</i> -infinitives	English	139	3.17	.122
	Non-English	137	3.05	
<i>Wh</i> -questions with no auxiliaries	English	139	3.17	.056
	Non-English	137	3.12	
Embedded <i>wh</i> -questions with no inversion	English	139	3.70	.092
	Non-English	137	3.61	
Double negatives	English	139	3.68	.216
	Non-English	137	3.47	
Non-referential <i>there</i> with no relative pronoun	English	139	3.60	.020
	Non-English	137	3.58	
Incorrect Dative-movement	English	139	3.14	.034
	Non-English	137	3.11	
Lack of backshifting in complements	English	139	3.85	.221
	Non-English	137	3.63	
Ungrammatical passives with ergatives	English	139	3.31	.151
	Non-English	137	3.46	
Wrong forms of adverbial relative clauses	English	139	3.39	.031
	Non-English	137	3.36	
Wrong reflexivization	English	139	3.01	.029
	Non-English	137	3.04	
Incorrect pseudo-tough movement	English	139	3.49	.088
	Non-English	137	3.40	

Note. \* < .05

Next, the participants' responses to the target grammatical items were analyzed according to their experiences of studying abroad. Similarly with the results of the analysis by the participants' major, Table 7 shows that the mean scores of the participants who studied abroad are higher in almost all of the grammatical features and the differences are very small, which are not statistically significant. The only difference that is statistically significant exists in the participants' judgment on the incorrect use of ergative verbs in the passive form. The mean scores of both groups (i.e., those who studied abroad and those who did not) seem to be very low, but the participants who did not study abroad scored significantly higher ( $M = 3.47$ ) than those who had experiences of studying abroad ( $M = 3.13$ ) ( $t(274) = 2.167$ ,  $p = .031$ ). This means that the participants who studied abroad were more sensitive to the wrong use of ergative verbs in the passive form than those who did not. The statistical analyses of independent samples t-test revealed that, in the acceptability judgments for the other 18 grammatical features, no statistically significant difference was found, as shown in Table 7.

TABLE 7

*Comparison of the Participants' Acceptability of the Grammatical Features by Study Abroad Experiences*

Grammar items included in the dialogue	Study abroad	N	Mean	Mean diff.
Dropping the third person present tense -s	Yes	68	3.57	.184
	No	208	3.39	
Confusing the relative pronouns	Yes	68	3.37	.151
	No	208	3.22	
Omission of articles	Yes	68	3.74	.240
	No	208	3.50	
Incorrect use of tag questions	Yes	68	3.57	.251
	No	208	3.32	
Redundant use of prepositions	Yes	68	3.63	.079
	No	208	3.55	
Incorrect use of demonstrative adjectives	Yes	68	3.74	.077
	No	208	3.66	
Incorrect use of plural forms	Yes	68	3.60	.117
	No	208	3.49	
Overuse of general verbs like <i>do</i> , <i>make</i> , <i>get</i> , etc.	Yes	68	3.87	.190
	No	208	3.68	
Incorrect use of <i>that</i> -clauses instead of <i>to</i> -infinitives	Yes	68	3.15	.046
	No	208	3.10	
<i>Wh</i> -questions with no auxiliaries	Yes	68	3.16	.022
	No	208	3.14	
Embedded <i>wh</i> -questions with no inversion	Yes	68	3.57	.104
	No	208	3.68	
Double negatives	Yes	68	3.63	.075
	No	208	3.56	
Non-referential <i>there</i> with no relative pronoun	Yes	68	3.60	.012
	No	208	3.59	
Incorrect Dative-movement	Yes	68	3.09	.051
	No	208	3.14	
Lack of backshifting in complements	Yes	68	3.87	.171
	No	208	3.70	
Ungrammatical passives with ergatives	Yes	68	3.13	.334*
	No	208	3.47	
Wrong forms of adverbial relative clauses	Yes	68	3.41	.051
	No	208	3.36	
Wrong reflexivization	Yes	68	3.04	.030
	No	208	3.01	
Incorrect pseudo-tough movement	Yes	68	3.43	.025
	No	208	3.45	

The results of the analyses of the participants' responses to the target grammatical items according to their experiences of communication with foreign people are presented in Table 8. Similarly with the previous results of the analysis by the participants' major and experiences of studying abroad, the mean scores of the participants who experienced communicating with foreign people are higher in almost all of the grammatical features and the differences are very small, which are not statistically significant. Statistically significant differences between the two groups were found in the participants' judgment on the incorrect dropping of the third person present tense marker *-s* ( $t(274) = 2.601, p = .010$ ) and in the lack of backshifting in the complement clause ( $t(274) = 2.079, p = .039$ ). In the judgments on both of the two grammatical features, the participants who had experiences of communicating with foreign people ( $M = 3.51$  &  $3.79$ ) scored higher than those who did not ( $M = 3.00$  &  $3.44$ ), indicating that the former group was more tolerant to grammatical errors in ELF. The statistical analyses of independent samples *t*-test for the other grammatical features revealed that no statistically significant difference was found, as shown in Table 8.

TABLE 8

*Comparison of the Participants' Acceptability of the Grammatical Features by Experiences of Foreign Communication*

Grammar items included in the dialogue	Comm. with NS	N	Mean	Mean diff.
Dropping the third person present tense <i>-s</i>	Yes	235	3.51	.511*
	No	41	3.00	
Confusing the relative pronouns	Yes	235	3.27	.097
	No	41	3.17	
Omission of articles	Yes	235	3.60	.336
	No	41	3.27	
Incorrect use of tag questions	Yes	235	3.39	.021
	No	41	3.37	
Redundant use of prepositions	Yes	235	3.59	.128
	No	41	3.46	
Incorrect use of demonstrative adjectives	Yes	235	3.71	.251
	No	41	3.46	
Incorrect use of plural forms	Yes	235	3.54	.203
	No	41	3.34	
Overuse of general verbs like <i>do, make, get, etc.</i>	Yes	235	3.74	.135
	No	41	3.61	
Incorrect use of <i>that</i> -clauses instead of <i>to</i> -infinitives	Yes	235	3.09	.126
	No	41	3.22	
<i>Wh</i> -questions with no auxiliaries	Yes	235	3.12	.145
	No	41	3.27	
Embedded <i>wh</i> -questions with no inversion	Yes	235	3.69	.279
	No	41	3.41	
Double negatives	Yes	235	3.62	.304
	No	41	3.32	
Non-referential <i>there</i> with no relative pronoun	Yes	235	3.60	.010
	No	41	3.59	
Incorrect Dative-movement	Yes	235	3.13	.034
	No	41	3.10	
Lack of backshifting in complements	Yes	235	3.79	.352*
	No	41	3.44	
Ungrammatical passives with ergatives	Yes	235	3.36	.179
	No	41	3.54	
Wrong forms of adverbial relative clauses	Yes	235	3.38	.066
	No	41	3.32	
Wrong reflexivization	Yes	235	3.03	.026
	No	41	3.00	
Incorrect pseudo-tough movement	Yes	235	3.46	.122
	No	41	3.34	

## Discussion and Conclusion

For a long time, the goal of learning English has been to acquire native speaker-like fluency and to communicate fluently with native speakers of English. However, with a growing awareness of English as an international language, Korean teachers of English have recently begun to consider English as “a contact language” for a communication with both native and other non-native speakers of English. In the same vein, some grammatical errors occurring in EFL classrooms, which appear to be unproblematic for successful communication, are not necessarily called for immediate correction while more emphasis is placed on the delivery of meaning. As such, this study set off to examine the plausibility of ELF in the Korean context, specifically from learners' perspectives by investigating Korean adult EFL learners' attitude and perception about ELF as well as their acceptability of some common grammatical features of ELF.

The first part of the survey in the present study attempted to reveal Korean university students' attitudes or perceptions of ELF, focusing on the ownership of English, the acquisition of native speaker-like pronunciation or grammatical ability, ELF features of pronunciation and grammar, and the acquisition of American or British culture. Native speakerism was evident in the participants' responses to some statements of the survey; their perceptions were very positive to the acquisition of native speaker-like pronunciation and grammatical ability, and the acquisition of American or British culture. On the other hand, the participants' perceptions of other statements about ELF generally appeared between neutral and slightly positive. Even though they acknowledged meaning delivery to be more important than grammatical accuracy, their responses to other aspects of ELF remained mostly above neutral. Taken together, these results indicate Korean adult EFL learners still, though moderately, adhere to the native speaker model of English used in the Inner Circle countries. It has been relatively a short time since the concept of ELF was introduced to the field of English language teaching in Korea, and it is still highly controversial in Korea whether the concept of ELF be incorporated in the curriculum of English language teaching and the development of English textbooks. Therefore, the learners of English must not be well accustomed to the concept and use of ELF, and it might not be appropriate to expect them to fully depart from the norms of American or British English in the Korean context of English learning. For these reasons, these results of the present study are more or less consistent with some previous studies that explored Korean EFL teachers' attitudes about the introduction of ELF and/or World Englishes to the classrooms (Byun, 2016; Hwang & Lee, 2015; Kang & Lee, 2012; Shim, 2015). For example, Byun (2016) stated that because English education in Korea focuses on American English, Korean learners of English “acknowledge the importance of following American English norms” (p. 83). Regarding the Korean English teachers' perceptions of world Englishes at schools in Korea, Shim (2015) pointed out “inadequate evaluation systems, and underprepared curriculum, teaching materials, and teachers” (p. 149) as a few factors causing difficulty in introducing world Englishes to classrooms.

Further statistical analyses of the participants' perceptions about ELF by their major, study abroad experiences, and experiences of communicating with native speakers did not show big differences between groups divided by the three variables. English-major participants showed significantly more positive responses only to two statements of ELF, one of which was related to the acquisition of native speaker-like pronunciation and grammatical ability. This may sound, from the viewpoint of ELF, that Korean adult learners of English who major in English have more negative attitudes to one aspect of ELF than those who do not major in English; yet, it is also plausible to argue that they, as English majors, set a higher goal in their ELT learning and expect to aim native-like fluency. Experiences of studying abroad and communicating with native speakers also caused the participants of the study to have different attitudes to some aspects of ELF (i.e., American or British culture, and English learning from native or non-native speakers). It might be natural that the participants who had studied abroad were more interested in learning American or British culture while learning English, because half of them had learned English in the U.S. and three-fourths of them had experienced communicating with native speakers from North American including the U.S. These results, to some extent, showed negative

attitudes toward ELF of Korean EFL learners who had experienced studying abroad and communicating with native speakers; yet, the same participants' positive attitudes to ELF were observed as well in their significantly less positive (i.e., more tolerant) responses to the statement regarding learning English from non-native speakers than those with no studying abroad or communication with foreign people. These mixed results, although further investigation will be needed, might be better interpreted once one can add multi-dimensional accounts of the participants' learning experiences during study abroad and communication with foreign people. Affective aspects, for example, might come into a play if they experienced very negative aspects of learning English from native speakers or reversely, very positive aspects of learning English from non-native speakers. Likewise, their experience with interacting other speakers of English from various countries during their study abroad might have influenced their attitudes about ELF and English learning.

The second part of the survey explored the legitimacy of common grammatical features ELF in the Korean context of English language learning and teaching, by asking the participants to decide the extent of acceptability for the dialogues with given grammar items. The overall results of the acceptability judgment task revealed fairly moderate degree of naturalness on almost all the grammatical items presented. The scores were also narrowly ranged between the highest 3.74 and the lowest 3.02. With these results, it could be implied that Korean adult learners of English seem to have at least a neutral, not specifically inclined to negative, judgement stance toward the features of ELF; or that the participants do not yet perceive ELF features as a desirable form of English learning. This interpretation is in line with the results and interpretation from the first part of survey, in which the participants' overall marks for attitude statements were generally moderate; with a native-speakerism still lingering in the participants' concept of English learning, their acceptance level of ELF features that are traditionally known as grammatical errors never reached 'natural' and beyond.

As for the order of grammatical items from highest to the lowest acceptability, the results from the present study did not confirm previous studies. The grammatical items with high acceptability include: 'lack of backshifting in the complement clause' (M = 3.74) – 'overuse of general verbs like *do*, *make*, etc.' (M = 3.72) – 'incorrect use of demonstrative adjective *this* with plurals' (M = 3.68) – '*there* construction with relative pronoun' (M = 3.59) – 'double negatives' (M = 3.58) – 'redundant use of preposition' (M = 3.57). The order of acceptability from the lowest was: 'wrong reflexivization' (M = 3.02) – 'incorrect use of *that*-clause with *want*' (M = 3.11) – 'incorrect dative movement' (M = 3.13) – '*wh*-questions with no auxiliaries (M = 3.14) & embedded *wh*-questions with no inversion' (M = 3.14). These results do not appear consistent with previous studies (Kang & Lee, 2012; Hwang & Lee, 2015), which targeted Korean in-service or pre-service English teachers and tested with only nine grammatical features suggested by Seidlhofer (2007). The acceptability order presented in the previous studies was as follows: 'omission of articles' – 'dropping the third person present tense marker *-s*' – 'redundant use of prepositions' – 'incorrect use of plural forms' – 'incorrect use of tag questions' – 'overuse of general verbs' – 'incorrect use of demonstrative adjectives' – 'confusing the relative pronouns' – 'incorrect use of *that*-clauses after *to*-infinitives. The inconsistent results between the present study and the previous ones might have occurred because of the difference in judgement items. The present study tested the expanded list of grammatical features of ELF, by adding 10 more grammar items with which Korean EFL learners are believed to have learning problems on top of the 9 items suggested by Seidlhofer (2007). In addition, given the narrow range of acceptability scores between the highest and the lowest, the fine order of acceptability for common grammatical features of ELF seem to bear relatively insignificant values for EFL learners.

Further analyses of the participants' acceptability judgment on the grammatical features of ELF were performed by the participants' major, study abroad experiences, and experiences of communicating with native speakers. The statistical analyses of independent samples t-test revealed only few significant differences between the English majors and the non-English majors on the non-use of the third person present tense marker *-s*; between the participants who studied abroad and those who did not on the wrong use of ergative verbs in the passive form; and between those who had experiences of communicating with

foreigners and those who did not on the incorrect dropping of the third person present tense marker *-s* and in the lack of backshifting in the complement clause. These results mean that the three variables do not have a strong impact on the Korean adult EFL learners' acceptability of some common grammatical features of ELF, which are incorrect or erroneous.

Grammar is very different from pronunciation or accent in terms of its acceptance by Korean learners or teachers of English. "Being different" means many, and one of which is related to pedagogical importance. Grammar is the teaching area which has received much more attention and emphasis than pronunciation for a long time in Korea, and thus some English teachers would still spend a great amount of time and effort for explicit grammar explanation and corrective feedback for grammatical accuracy. Students are often expected to memorize grammatical knowledge and repeat mechanical practices to prepare themselves for English examinations. Therefore, Korean English teachers' or learners' responses to the suggestions of common grammatical features of ELF (e.g., Seidlhofer (2007)) have been very different from the suggestion of LFC by Jenkins (2000, 2002), which have focused on the diversification of pronunciation. When faced with the issues of ELF or the common grammatical features of ELF for the first time, most of English educators in Korea would express doubts about the feasibility of ELF and insist on the necessity of a standard form of English. They will argue that correct grammar based on standard English should be taught in the classroom and regard the common grammatical features of ELF as features of non-standard English or errors that should be avoided and treated.

However, many people have raised a question about the form of a standard English. Strictly speaking, standard English is only one of many forms of English that majority of people regard as the most desirable form of the language. In this sense, none of the regional variations is to be considered ungrammatical or non-standard English. In the era of EIL (English as an international language), EGL (English as a global language), or ELF, English is used globally as a 'contact language' more frequently between non-native speakers. No longer is English the property of native speakers, nor is English learned to communicate only with native speakers. The survey results of the present study and several previous studies (Kang & Lee, 2012; Hwang & Lee, 2015; Shim, 2015; etc.) indicate the change of the concepts about English is already on its way. For example, teachers and learners of English in Korea do not insist native speakers as a desired model of learning English. Moreover, their acceptability judgements for ELF grammatical features were at least above the neutral range, suggesting that their familiarity and tolerance with ELF is growing.

For English teaching classrooms in Korea, explicit discussion of the concept as well as the reality of ELF around the world will help raise students' awareness of ELF and its benefits. For that purpose, the ELF related statements suggested by Seidlhofer (2004, 2007) may be adopted for classroom teaching materials; those can be used for both preemptive and reflective examination of learner's English learning goals, their perception of a standard English, and language learning methods. Such process will facilitate teachers' decision making process for many aspects of their teaching; including supplementary teaching materials, focus of teaching contents, or the method of error treatment. The list of common grammatical features of ELF will also make a good reference for Korean teachers of English as a practical guideline to decide correct or not to correct students' grammatical errors. Not every teacher and learner of English in Korea will be willing to accept the common grammatical features of ELF in their curriculum immediately. However, as evidenced in the present study and previous studies on Korean English teachers' and learners' perceptions of ELF, it is the time for researchers and teachers to continue investigating how to incorporate ELF appropriately into Korean EFL classroom context. To this end, further studies need to be conducted with various learner groups regarding the perception about ELF, the development of teaching activities and materials, and the empirical data from on-site applications.

## **The Authors**

*Injae Lim* is a professor at the Department of English Education, Konkuk University, Seoul, Korea. Her



research interests include classroom discourse analysis, second language acquisition, and teaching English as a foreign language.

Department of English Education  
Konkuk University  
120 Neungdong-ro, Gwangjin-gu, Seoul 05029, Korea  
Tel: +82-2-2049-6007  
Email: injaelim@konkuk.ac.kr

*Jongbai Hwang* is a professor at the Department of English Education, Konkuk University, Seoul, Korea. His research interests include second language acquisition, language processing, teaching English as a foreign language, etc.

Department of English Education  
Konkuk University  
120 Neungdong-ro, Gwangjin-gu, Seoul 05029, Korea  
Tel: +82-2-450-3344  
Email: jongbaihwang@gmail.com

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